



Arizona's official state historian, **Marshall Trimble**, is a cowboy singer, a humorist, and a storyteller.

More than  
**90**  
percent of  
the people  
live on only 2  
percent of the  
land, and  
**85**  
percent live  
in either  
the greater  
Phoenix area  
or Tucson.

**DID YOU  
KNOW**

Maricopa  
County is  
larger than  
the state of  
Massachusetts.

## Land of Superlatives

Sunbaked Arizona beckons with a beguiling mix of myths, legends, and truths.

Arizona is a place that lives by its myths and legends. Located in the wild, untamed country between New Mexico and California, it was a wild, desolate, sunbaked land of jagged mountains and barren deserts. Travelers passing through the stark pinnacles rising from the desert floor dappled with low, scrubby vegetation claimed the wind was hot as dragon's breath, so dry that the lizards carried canteens and so hot that cowboys could heat their branding irons just by aiming 'em at the sun.

But those mountains held a king's ransom in gold and silver, and that's what attracted the wide gamut of boisterous, devil-may-care reprobates to stampede to the area in search of the elusive mother lode. Rumors ran amuck, and each one sent thousands of would-be millionaires tramping up nameless canyons. In one of

my writings—I can't remember which—I imagined one of these rounders yipping, "If ya stumble on a rock, don't cuss it, cash it. Window curtains assay out to \$10 a ton after a dust storm, and if ya wash yer face in the Hassayampa River, ya can pan four ounces of gold dust from yer whiskers."

Wherever there was a rumor and a hole in the ground, they built a town around it, gracing them with picturesquely whimsical names like Tombstone, Total Wreck, Bagdad, and Timbuktu. Each one claimed its streets would soon be cobbled with golden nuggets.

Following on the bootheels of the miners and prospectors in hopes of "mining the miners" were the tin-horn card sharks and other such obstreperous riffraff as Jake the Dude, Jimmy the Harp, and Coal Oil Georgie. They were



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**Arizona is the nation's sixth-largest state, with nearly 114,000 square miles. Only 17 percent is privately owned.**

joyously joined by "soiled doves" like Crazy Horse Lil, Frenchy Mustache, and The Roaring Gimlet.

Arizona was also the last of the refuge of the rapscallion desperadoes of the Old West. Its rugged mountains, lack of roads, and proximity to the Mexican border made it ideally suited to men riding the "Owl Hoot Trail." Stagecoaches and railroads carrying express boxes loaded with gold and silver coin along with large herds of cattle made for easy pickings in the remote regions where outlaws were still operating well into the 20th century.

The Apache wars began prior to the creation of the Territory of Arizona in 1863 and continued until the surrender of Geronimo's tiny band in 1886. All of this added to Arizona's wild and wooly image.

Arizonans began lobbying, to no avail, for statehood in the

**In 1950,  
Phoenix was  
the 95th-largest  
city in the U.S.  
Fifty years later,  
it was the fifth  
largest.**

1890s. Opponents declared Arizona was cursed with cactus, heat, rattlesnakes, scorpions, gila monsters, marauding Indians, and outlaws and wasn't civilized enough to become a state.

After years of trying, statehood finally came in 1912. A year earlier, Theodore Roosevelt Dam became the first of a series of dams to harness the capricious Salt River. The 13,000-square-mile watershed in the mountains to the north provided the

Salt River Valley with enough water to guarantee a bright future in the forthcoming years.

World War II and the postwar years brought new industries that would bring great changes. That, along with the advent of affordable air conditioning, made the Salt River Valley a desirable place to live year around.

The geography and biotic life are more diverse than anyplace else in the nation. Elevation varies from over 12,600 feet in the San Francisco Mountains to sea level in the south-

western corner of the state. The disparate climate can yield both the highest temperature across the nation and the lowest temperature across the nation on the same day.

All this leads to the question of what people love the most about Arizona. In a word, it's lifestyle. Our state is a great place to work and play. It has a moderate climate, beautiful scenery, and the four seasons of the desert: 1) almost summer 2) summer 3) still summer 4) Christmas Day.

The state has **26** peaks that are more than **10,000** feet in elevation.

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*Night*



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