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DAY TRIP

1. Find the next mountain burn on the Buffalo Park Loop, north of downtown. 2. Pizzicletta's wood-fired oven 3. Babbitt's equips locals for everything from hiking to river running. 4. Mother Road Brewing Company encourages sampling.

WHY YOU'LL LOVE

# FLAGSTAFF, AZ

A jolt of new energy in historic downtown gives this mountain getaway an urban edge. *By Nora Burba Trulsson*

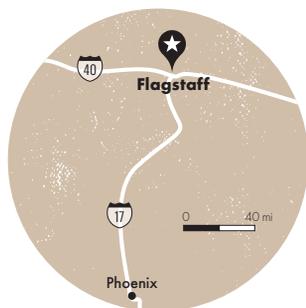
## Southside is on the rise

Five years ago, Flagstaff's Southside was littered with boarded-up storefronts and derelict warehouses. Today, there's a whiff of change in the mountain air, thanks in

part to the three indie businesses that have sprouted up in the 1925 Flagstaff Steam Laundry building. **Mother Road Brewing Company**, with its industrial skylights and dog-friendly patio, is downtown's newest brewery, specializing

in easy-sipping beers like a golden Kölsch-style ale. Owned by two former Northern Arizona University geology students, **Flag Bike Revolution** is your spot for a full-suspension rental and a zippy shot of espresso from the coffee bar.

Next door, chef Caleb Schiff biked his way through Italy before launching **Pizzicletta**, a tiny pizzeria in the appropriately wedge-shaped corner of the building. If he's not too frenzied, he'll walk your bubble-crust Margherita or



**GETTING HERE**  
Downtown Flagstaff is about 140 miles north of Phoenix on U.S. 17.

the house fave, prosciutto and arugula, to the brewery or bike shop. *Mother Road Brewing Company*: 7 S. Mikes Pike; [motherroadbeer.com](http://motherroadbeer.com). *Flag Bike Revolution*: Rentals from \$65/day; 3 S. Mikes Pike; [flagbikerev.com](http://flagbikerev.com). *Pizzicletta*: \$\$; 203 W. Phoenix Ave.; [pizzicletta.com](http://pizzicletta.com).

## The local REI isn't an REI

Everyone from professional river runners to casual day hikers gears up at **Babbitt's Backcountry Outfitters**, whose sweeping showroom overwhelms with everything you need for a trip to the outdoors: Paco Pads, moisture-wicking socks, even mini backpacks for your pooch. There's a dense library of guidebooks and topo maps of the surrounding Colorado Plateau on display, but real-life advice from one of the staff trail rats is just a question away. 12 E. Aspen Ave.; [babbittsbackcountry.com](http://babbittsbackcountry.com).

## There's a hike for everyone

The **Flagstaff Urban Trails System** spirals out from the city and connects to nearby national forest and park trails. One of the prettiest is the 2-mile main loop through the pine-dotted meadow of Buffalo Park at the base of Mt. Elden. At points along the mostly flat trail—which also connects to Coconino National Forest and the state-long Arizona Trail—stop for grab-your-camera views of the San Francisco Peaks and sweeps of summer wildflowers. *Buffalo Park*: 2400 N. Gemini Dr.; [flagstaff.az.gov/futs](http://flagstaff.az.gov/futs).

## Small plates, big flavor

Itzel Arvizu and Mitch Wiewel sold most of their worldly possessions last year to fund **Madrid Tapas y Sangria**, a pocket-size tapas bar downtown. “My dad couldn't sleep for a week when I told him we signed the lease,” says Wiewel. The menu was inspired by the couple's college travels through Spain, and most nights, you'll find the restaurant buzzing with locals thirsty for the secret-recipe sangria and *kalimotxo* (a toothsome blend of red wine and cola). The small plates lean classic: grilled octopus, paprika-dusted potatoes, and gossamer-thin slices of *jamón serrano* or *ibérico*. \$\$; 12 E. Route 66; [madridtapas.net](http://madridtapas.net).



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5. Flagstaff's other red rock landmarks 6. Tortilla española at Madrid Tapas y Sangria 7. Setting up a shot at Hotel Monte Vista's Cocktail Lounge



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## Room with a boo

The **Hotel Monte Vista** has been Flagstaff's de facto living room since 1927. Students fire up their laptops at the hotel's streetside cafe during the day, and at night the Cocktail Lounge hosts karaoke and live music. The hotel welcomed its share of celebrities back in the day, some of whom have

had rooms named after them. John Wayne. Freddie Mercury. And Zane Grey, whose room 210 is said to be haunted by a door-knocking phantom bell-boy. “If you ask, I'm happy to tell you our ghost stories,” says front-desk manager Chelsea Green. “But I also listen to yours.” *From \$80; [hotelmontevista.com](http://hotelmontevista.com).*

### THE LOCAL LOWDOWN

*“We like to say we live in ‘mountain time’ here. Everything in Flagstaff moves a bit slower. People actually take the time to stop and talk to one another on the street.”*

—ITZEL ARVIZU, CO-OWNER, MADRID TAPAS Y SANGRIA