

Desert Safari



Autumn is a beautiful time to fly, no matter where you are. But the desert southwest provides an especially rich diversity for touring by plane: cooler mountain air, brilliant fall foliage, sculpted canyon views enhanced by lower angles of light, and more. This Desert Safari tour will begin with the Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta, continue to Arizona's Verde Canyon and Sonoran Desert areas, followed by the Mojave Desert of southern California and Nevada, then conclude among the red rock formations of the Four Corners area in southeastern Utah. This 13-night tour will cover more than 1,200 nautical miles of spectacular scenery and offer some new ways to appreciate this expansive countryside. Trip highlights include the morning mass balloon ascension in Albuquerque, the Verde Canyon train, a traditional dude ranch in southern Arizona, Joshua trees under the full moon, jet boating down the lower Colorado River, a self-drive Jeeping day through the Colorado Plateau, and more. Lunch stops on flying days include the Lindbergh airport at Winslow, breakfast in Payson, and lunch at the Marine Corps base at Yuma. You'll see some of the best of New Mexico, Arizona, Utah and California by airplane, train, jeep, jet boat, horseback, and your own two feet!

OCTOBER 8-21, 2016

Highlights:

- **Tour Length:** 13 nights
- **Trip Start:** Albuquerque, NM
- **Trip End:** Bluff, UT
- **Flight Distance:** 1250 nm
- **Tour Highlights:**
 - ABQ Balloon Fiesta
 - Native Cultures Feast & Float
 - Historic Jerome
 - Verde Canyon Train
 - Southern Arizona Dude Ranch
 - Joshua Tree Full Moon Hike
 - Oatman Gold Mining Town
 - London Bridge Jet Boat Tour
 - Grand Canyon Overflight
 - Utah Jeep Tour
- **Natural Features/Parks:**
 - Sonoran, Mojave, & Great Basin Deserts
 - Havasu NWR
 - Lake Mead NRA
 - Joshua Tree & Grand Canyon NPs
 - Natural Bridges NM
 - Valley of the Gods

Itinerary

Saturday, 10/8

Arrive at Albuquerque's Double Eagle II airport (AEG) and transfer to beautiful Hotel Albuquerque in the historic Old Town district. Group dinner at hotel. D

Sunday, 10/9

Early morning wake-up call to get out to Balloon Fiesta park to see the Mass Ascension of hot air balloons on the final day of the festival. Afternoon tour & flight briefings at hotel, then group dinner in Old Town. D

Monday, 10/10

Breakfast at the hotel, followed by a river trip down the Rio Grande for a *Feast and Float* through Pueblo Indian country with Native guides. After one and a half hours on the river we'll enjoy a traditional feast meal prepared by modern day Puebloans. Free time and dinner on own back in Old Town. L

Tuesday, 10/11

We'll say goodbye to the "Duke City" and transfer to the airport for our first group flight, to Lindbergh Regional Airport in Winslow for a brunch stop. Afterwards we'll continue on to Cottonwood for our two nights in the historically-rich-and-possibly-haunted town of Jerome, Arizona. Transfer to our former-hospital-turned-hotel, The Jerome Grand, perched high above the town. Free time to explore Jerome, and group dinner. L/D

FEATURED HOTELS:

HOTEL ALBUQUERQUE, ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO www.hotelabq.com

JEROME GRAND HOTEL, JEROME, ARIZONA www.jeromegrandhotel.net

WHITE STALLION RANCH, TUCSON, ARIZONA www.whitestallion.com

TWENTYNINE PALMS INN, TWENTYNINE PALMS, CALIFORNIA www.29palmsinn.com

EDGEWATER HOTEL, LAUGHLIN, NEVADA www.edgewater-casino.com

DESERT ROSE INN, BLUFF, UTAH www.desertroseinn.com

Desert Safari Itinerary – cont.

Wednesday, 10/12

We'll have free time this morning to visit the quaint shops and historic charm of Old Town Cottonwood before boarding the Verde Canyon Railroad—in a reserved first-class rail car, no less—for a beautiful, 4-hour trip. This popular tour features an abundance of native flora and fauna, rugged, high-desert rock faces and spectacular vistas in Verde Canyon, a region only accessible by rail. Once the train returns, we will “saddle up” and head out to the Blazin' M Ranch for western-style barbeque dinner and cowboy entertainment. Yee haw! B/D

Thursday, 10/13

After a light breakfast at the hotel, we'll make our way back to the airport for another two-flight day: first to Payson with its popular fly-in café, then on south to the Tucson area for a 3-night stay at the renowned White Stallion Ranch. This award-winning property provides the personal touch and hospitality of a traditional dude ranch blended with the service and amenities of a fine resort. Settle into the relaxed atmosphere of this beautiful place the True family has called home for 50 years. B/L/D

Friday and Saturday, 10/14 & 15

All meals are included with our stay at the White Stallion, as well as all the horse-back riding you care to enjoy. Other amenities include hiking trails, swimming pool, petting zoo and game room. Anyone up for another Parkwest Ping Pong tournament in between trail rides? B/L/D

Sunday, 10/16

After breakfast we'll say goodbye to the horses and return to our planes for another two-flight day to California. We'll stop first in Yuma to enjoy a lunch of Hawaiian food at the Yuma Marine Corps Air Station, then on to Twentynine Palms. We'll have just one night here at the fun and funky 29 Palms Inn, long enough to enjoy a full-moon stroll amongst the Joshua trees and Mojave desert landscape at Joshua Tree National Park. B/L/D

Monday, 10/17

After breakfast at the Inn, we'll depart California and return to the Copper State of Arizona, landing in Kingman for our two days of fun in the desert along the Colorado River. We'll first drive to historic Oatman, a former gold mining hub on historic Route 66 and now home to free-roaming burros, daily gunfights, saloons, and ladies wandering the streets in 1890's dress. After lunch and free time, we'll move on to Laughlin, Nevada, a mini-Vegas along the Colorado River. We'll stay at the Edgewater Hotel which, as its name implies, is right along the shore of the Colorado River and provides a variety of evening entertainment and gaming opportunities. B/L

Tuesday, 10/18

Today we'll get to enjoy a 60-mile stretch of Colorado River, twice, as we travel by jet boat to Lake Havasu City and the London Bridge. The journey takes us through Topcock Gorge (affectionately known as the “Baby Grand”) the 17-mile red rock cleft of sheer volcanic walls, secluded beaches and wildlife-filled marshes. Once we arrive in Lake Havasu, there is time to have lunch, browse around and learn the crazy history of this 1830 bridge that once spanned the River Thames. Afterwards we'll retrace the river back upstream to Laughlin, catching the late afternoon shadows on the gorge. All meals on your own today.

Wednesday, 10/19

After a restful sleep and perhaps a winning hand or two, we'll return to Kingman airport for brunch at their popular café, then continue through yet another corridor over the Grand Canyon, this time the Dragon Corridor, en route to Blanding, Utah. We will be met by a fleet of Jeeps, which we will have for the duration of our stay here. After securing our planes, we'll drive to Bluff and check in to the Desert Rose Inn, get settled, then have a group dinner together in town. L/D

Thursday, 10/20

This is going to be a spectacular day in Utah's red canyon country. We'll arrange ourselves in groups of 4 for a self-driving Jeeping tour of Valley of the Gods, up the jaw-dropping Moqui Dugway, then on to Natural Bridges for a picnic lunch and tour of the one-way, 9-mile drive through this National Monument. Return to Bluff for Farewell Dinner. L/D

Friday, 10/21

We'll coordinate our schedules to make the 26-mile drive back to Blanding, turn over the Jeep keys, and depart for our respective homes.



2016 Desert Safari

Tour Route Map:



Airport Data:

Airport	Identifier	Elevation	Length	Comments
Albuquerque / Double Eagle II	KAEG	5,837	7,400	Class D
Winslow	KINW	4,941	7,100	
Jerome / Cottonwood	P52	3,560	4,252	No Jet A
Payson	KPAN	5,156	5,504	
Tucson / Marana	KAVQ	2,031	6,901	
Yuma	KNYL	213	13,300	Class D/ MCAS
Twentynine Palms	KTNP	1,888	5,531	No Jet A
Laughlin / Kingman	KIGM	3,448	6,827	
Bluff / Blanding	KB DG	5,867	5,781	