



THE *Sedona* SCENE

THE DEFINITIVE RETIREMENT GUIDE

Retire Where Everyone Else Vacations

Full-time life in Sedona and the Verde Valley: where to live, what it really costs, and what your weeks fill up with once the moving boxes are gone.

FROM KELLY ZAHODANIS · LICENSED REALTOR · SEDONA & THE VERDE VALLEY

START HERE

The Tuesday That Sells People

Forget the postcard for a minute. Here is an ordinary Tuesday in November.

You are on the Bell Rock Pathway at 7:15 in the morning, and you have it nearly to yourself. The air is 48 degrees and smells like juniper. By 9 you are home for coffee on the patio, watching the light climb Courthouse Butte. Pickleball at Posse Grounds Park at 10, where the regulars already know your name and someone is organizing a potluck. Lunch is a sandwich at home or a patio in West Sedona where the server remembers your order. In the afternoon there is an OLLI lecture at the Sedona Center, or your ceramics class at the Arts Center, or nothing at all, which is also allowed. Dinner with friends. Home by 8:30 under a sky so dark you can see the Milky Way from your driveway, because the whole town protects its night sky by ordinance.

That is what retiring here actually looks like. Not a vacation that never ends, but an ordinary life set inside one of the most beautiful places in America. This guide is about what that life actually costs, where it works best, what to watch out for, and what your weeks fill up with once the moving boxes are gone.



THE HONEST BIG PICTURE

People retire here for four reasons: the landscape, the climate, the activity, and the community. All four are real.

The landscape you know about. What surprises people is that it never becomes wallpaper. Twenty years in, locals still pull over for a sunset.

The climate is the part most people get wrong in the best way. Sedona sits at about 4,500 feet, which means four genuine but gentle seasons: summers warm but nothing like Phoenix, winters crisp with an occasional light snow on the red rocks that melts by lunch, and spring and fall that feel engineered for being outside.

The activity is the difference between retiring here and retiring somewhere you slowly run out of things to do. More on this below, because it deserves its own section.

The community is smaller and tighter than visitors ever see. Roughly ten thousand people live in Sedona full time, with tens of thousands more across the Verde Valley. Full-timers find each other fast, through the trails, the pickleball courts, the classes, the volunteer shifts, and the standing Tuesday card game.

And the honest part: this is a place with a visitor economy, and there are weekends when Uptown is not yours. Locals do not fight this; they orchestrate around it, and frankly, it becomes part of the fun. More on that below too.

| *Twenty years in, locals still pull over for a sunset.*

WHERE TO LIVE

The Full-Time Picture

Where you land matters more here than in most retirement destinations, because each pocket of Sedona and each Verde Valley town offers a genuinely different daily life.

West Sedona is where full-time life happens. The grocery stores, the Sedona Public Library, the medical campus, Posse Grounds Park, and most of the town's year-round residents are all here. Streets range from established mid-century neighborhoods to newer custom homes, many with serious red rock views. If you want to be five minutes from everything on this guide's lifestyle list, start here.

The Chapel area, south of the Y near the Chapel of the Holy Cross, trades commercial convenience for quiet and drama. Almost nothing commercial, spectacular home sites, silent nights. You drive to West Sedona for groceries and consider it a fair deal.

Uptown is for the retiree who wants to walk to dinner and galleries and does not mind sharing the sidewalk in high season. The only truly walk-to-everything option in Sedona.

The Village of Oak Creek, seven miles south, is its own community with its own grocery, restaurants, golf, and a quieter pace that many retirees prefer. It sits under Bell Rock with trail access from the neighborhood, and it offers some of the best relative value close to the red rocks. Village Yoga is here, the library has a branch here, and the golf courses anchor much of the social life.



One thing worth understanding before you shop: some properties around here are inside the Sedona city limits, and others, including the entire Village of Oak Creek, are in unincorporated county. It matters because the city can be more restrictive about what you can do with a property, while county areas generally offer more flexibility. It is the kind of distinction that is invisible in listing photos and very visible after closing, and it is exactly the sort of thing a local agent walks you through on a specific address.

LOOK TWENTY MINUTES WIDER

The Verde Valley Ladder

Here is the advice I give friends: fall in love with Sedona, then look at the whole valley before you decide. Twenty minutes changes the math substantially, and you give up almost none of the lifestyle.

Cottonwood is the practical heart of the valley and, quietly, one of the smartest retirement moves in northern Arizona. It has the region's full hospital, real neighborhoods at meaningfully lower prices than Sedona, and an Old Town that has become a genuine destination, with wine tasting rooms, restaurants, and a Friday-afternoon farmers market. You are twenty minutes from the red rocks and zero minutes from everything daily life requires.

Clarkdale is pure small town, and proudly so. A historic center, summer concerts in the town park, a beloved local brewery in a century-old building on Main Street, and quiet streets in the middle of a genuine revitalization. People move here for calm and community and get both.

Cornville and Page Springs offer rural living along Oak Creek in the heart of Verde Valley wine country. Acreage, horse property, and vineyards for neighbors. For retirees who want land and quiet with wine tasting five minutes away, nothing else in the region compares.



THE LIFE

What Your Weeks Actually Fill Up With

This is the section that separates this place from every golf-community brochure you have read. Here is what full-time people here actually do, all of it real, all of it going on right now.

Pickleball and the pool at Posse Grounds Park. The park is West Sedona's living room: pickleball courts with a standing cast of regulars, ballfields, and the community pool that anchors summer. If you are new in town and want to know people by Friday, show up at the pickleball courts on Monday.

Tennis at Outbound Sedona. The resort along Oak Creek on 179 has four courts for tennis and pickleball in a creekside setting most tennis clubs would kill for, carrying on one of Sedona's longest-running racquet traditions.

Golf, with scenery that ruins other courses for you. The Village of Oak Creek is the golf hub: Oakcreek Country Club's 18 holes designed by Robert Trent Jones Sr. and Jr., the championship course at Sedona Golf Resort playing straight at the red rocks, and the executive nine at Canyon Mesa when you want a quick morning round. Seven Canyons, the private club tucked into the canyons west of town, anchors the high end. Fair warning from every golfer who moves here: it takes a while to stop staring mid-backswing.

Yoga at Village Yoga. The Village of Oak Creek studio runs daily classes across every level and style, from vinyasa to restorative, and it is as much a community as a workout.

OLLI at Yavapai College. This is the amenity almost nobody knows to look for and everybody ends up loving. Yavapai College is one of only five community colleges in the nation with an Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, offering six-week terms five times a year for adults 50 and up, with classes at the Sedona Center, the Verde Valley campus in Clarkdale, the library branch in the Village of Oak Creek, and online. History, geology, writing, cooking, film, current events. Retirees here do not stop learning; they finally have time for it.

Classes at the Sedona Arts Center. Painting, ceramics, photography, and workshops with working artists, in the historic Art Barn in Uptown. This town has been an arts colony for seventy years, and the Arts Center is where that tradition stays hands-on.

The library. The Sedona Public Library in West Sedona, with its Village of Oak Creek branch, is one of the busiest civic hubs in town: talks, book groups, and programs nearly every week.

Cards and community. Standing bridge, mahjong, and game groups run through the community center, the library, and living rooms all over town. The Sedona Community Center is also the home of programs built around local seniors, including Meals on Wheels, which is powered largely by retired volunteers.



Movies. The Mary D. Fisher Theatre in West Sedona is the film lover's reward for moving here: independent and international films year-round, plus the Sedona International Film Festival every winter, when the whole town turns into a movie town.

Farmers markets. Sunday mornings at the Sedona Community Farmers Market are a ritual: produce, honey, baked goods, and half the people you know. When you want a change of pace, Old Town Cottonwood runs its own market on Friday afternoons.

Your dog is going to love it here too. The dog park at Posse Grounds has its own social scene, and a hundred miles of forest trails start ten minutes from every driveway in town.

Live music, constantly. A local wine bar in West Sedona hosts live music every single night of the week. Posse Grounds Park hosts its own summer concert series, Tlaquepaque's courtyard fills with free flamenco on summer Sunday evenings, and Clarkdale does concerts in the park all summer. And the wineries host musicians on their patios most weekends.

Wine country as a lifestyle. The Verde Valley is Arizona's wine region, and living here means the tasting rooms along Page Springs Road and Old Town Cottonwood are your locals, not your vacation splurge. Wine events, release parties, and festival weekends run through the valley all year.

Volunteering, which is the real social network. Sedona and the Verde Valley run on retired volunteers, and it is the fastest way to belong here. Friends of the Forest works alongside the Forest Service maintaining the trails everyone loves. The Humane Society of Sedona always needs hands. The Sedona Community Food Bank, the library, the film festival, and the state parks all run robust volunteer programs. Ask anyone deeply happy in their retirement here what their week looks like, and a volunteer shift is almost always in it.

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Living With the Seasons

Yes, Sedona gets visitors. Millions of them, mostly compressed into spring and fall weekends and holiday weeks. Here is what the brochures will not tell you: full-timers do not experience the Sedona that tourists do, because we are not on their schedule.

The local rhythm looks like this. Trails at sunrise, when even Cathedral Rock is quiet. Errands and restaurants on weekdays. Uptown in January, when the town exhales and every restaurant has a table. Summer evenings after the day-trippers head back down the canyon, when the heat breaks and the patios are ours again. On the biggest weekends, locals simply point the car the other direction, toward Page Springs wine country or Old Town Cottonwood, and let the visitors have the roundabouts.

Living here full time means you get the town in all its moods, including the ones visitors never see. That off-season intimacy is, ask any local, the best-kept secret of the whole arrangement.



The Money Part Arizona Gets Right

Beyond the home itself, Arizona is quietly one of the friendlier states in the country to retire in. The state does not tax Social Security benefits, its flat income tax rate is among the lowest anywhere, and property taxes here are comparatively modest. None of this is why people fall in love with Sedona, but when you are comparing this life against staying put or choosing another state, the math deserves a seat at the table. Your situation is your own, so confirm the specifics with your tax professional, and I am happy to point you to trusted local ones.

The Healthcare Reality

This is the question every serious retiree asks, so here is the straight answer.

Sedona has its own medical campus: the Verde Valley Medical Center Sedona campus in West Sedona, which includes an emergency department along with imaging and outpatient services. The region's full hospital, Verde Valley Medical Center, is in Cottonwood, about twenty minutes from Sedona, with a 24-hour emergency department, and it is part of Northern Arizona Healthcare, the region's largest health system. For higher-level care, Flagstaff Medical Center is about an hour up the canyon, and the Phoenix metro area, roughly two hours south, has every specialist and major medical center in the state.

The practical takeaway: day-to-day care, primary care, and emergencies are handled locally, and the retiree population here keeps attracting more medical services every year. For complex specialty care, plan on Flagstaff or Phoenix. If specific ongoing care is central to your situation, this deserves a real conversation before you pick a neighborhood, and it is something we can map out together.

Getting Here, and Getting Them Here

The practical geography works better than most people expect. Phoenix Sky Harbor, with nonstop flights to nearly everywhere, is about two hours south, and daily shuttle services run between the Verde Valley and the airport, so nobody has to drive you at 5 am. Flagstaff's airport is about an hour up the canyon for quick connections. And Sedona's own small airport sits right on top of Airport Mesa, mostly serving scenic flights and private planes, plus the best sunset view in town.

Which brings up the question every future grandparent is quietly asking: will they visit? Constantly. You are about to become the favorite destination in the family. Summers mean Slide Rock State Park, which is what water parks wish they were. The Verde Canyon Railroad out of Clarkdale turns a Tuesday with grandkids into an event. Add easy hikes, ice cream in Uptown, and stargazing that city kids have never experienced, and you will find the guest room books up faster than you planned.



MAKING IT REAL

The Town in April and the Town in January Are Different Places

Here is how people actually get this decision right: they spend real time here in more than one season. The right neighborhood for you depends on which versions of this place you love.

Then they talk to someone who lives here. Not to be sold, but to have the conversation this guide can only start: what your budget actually buys right now, which neighborhoods fit the way you want to live, what the city-versus-county distinction means for the specific properties on your list, and what full-timers know about each street that listing photos will never show.



That conversation is what I do. I am a licensed Realtor serving Sedona and the Verde Valley, and this valley is home: I live here, work here, and my family runs businesses here. The consult is free, it takes about thirty minutes, and whether your timeline is six months or someday, you will leave knowing exactly what your next step is.



Book your free retirement consult

thesedonascene.com/book-a-consult

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