

# VISIT MESA AUTISM TRAVEL

A travel planning resource for visitors with sensory and cognitive disorders including Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)



# A LETTER FROM OUR MAYOR



Congratulations to Visit Mesa for leading the drive for our community to become the first-ever Autism Certified City in the world. Now our visitors can tailor their experiences here in Mesa, Arizona based on a scale developed to inform travelers of the sensory impact of an activity. We also have hundreds of front-of-house staff across industries trained in providing customer service to those diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and their families.

The ASD community is growing and underserved with nearly 32 million travelers looking for a safe environment to enjoy a family vacation. Mesa is speaking loud and clear for these families around the country and around the world as we welcome them to our destination and make history.

One question you may have is, why Mesa? The answer is that one of Mesa's core values is compassion. When there is a need in our community we step up. Our businesses, non-profits, government agencies, faith-based organizations and community groups come together to do the right thing.

Mesa truly has something for everyone from the breathtaking beauty of the Sonoran Desert to the extraordinary mix of arts, museums, shops and restaurants downtown, we serve up an authentic Arizona experience for visitors of all ages and abilities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Giles". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John Giles  
Mayor  
Mesa, Arizona





**We embrace all perspectives.**

Proud to be the World's First Autism Certified City.



**VISIT MESA**

AutismTravelAZ.com

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**VISIT MESA:** 120 N Center St., Mesa 85201

**PRESIDENT & CEO:** Marc J. Garcia

**EXECUTIVE EDITOR:** Michelle Streefer

**CONTRIBUTORS:** Audrey Johnson, Jen Mallia, Denise Resnik, Nicole Thibault

**GRAPHIC DESIGN:** HAPI

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** Foskett Creative and other selected photographers

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@VISITMESA / #VISITMESA



UNIVERSITY OF ART

Wee Design

Crayon

Crayon

# VISIT MESA'S JOURNEY

## A LETTER FROM OUR CEO

One of Visit Mesa's most ambitious efforts to date has been the journey toward becoming the first-ever Autism Certified City in the country. Since we started this journey, we immediately began to raise the profile of Mesa, Arizona and the many businesses that we have shepherded to earning their Certified Autism Center (CAC) status. On a global stage, this is big news for us and for you as our welcome visitor. We hope you will see and feel the dedication behind earning this new Class A designation throughout your stay. It has been overwhelming to witness the support for this initiative as we watched all the best facets of our community come together to support the ASD community here in Mesa.

It's not an understatement to say that millions of travelers are impacted by autism. In 2018, the Centers for Disease Control determined that approximately 1 in 59 children is diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). With a 600% increase in autism diagnoses in the U.S., this is the fastest growing developmental disorder in the world. Visit Mesa's progressive march to becoming the first Autism Certified City will inject a new source of visitor activity to our region as we actively serve up a destination that is ready to welcome the ASD community to unforgettable experiences throughout our city.

This movement is motivated by my own journey as a father to a son on the spectrum. When we received our diagnosis, our world was rocked. Travel is integral to our life and I've always felt this was a terrific opportunity to educate the hospitality industry and drive our destination toward inclusivity. I know families will feel comfortable coming to Mesa knowing our hotel staff is trained, our museum staff is trained and that we offer great sensory awareness as a destination.



All City of Mesa Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities, all City of Mesa museums, the Mesa Police and Fire Departments, the Mesa Chamber of Commerce, numerous health and wellness services, non-profits and other resources have become Autism Certified. This is on top of the many Autism Certified hotels, attractions and restaurants ready to roll out the welcome mat for you and your family. Visit Mesa is committed to your needs and ready to welcome you to City Limitless®!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Marc J. Garcia'.

Marc J. Garcia  
President and CEO  
Visit Mesa



# Extra training so you feel extra comfortable.

Proud to be the World's First Autism Certified City.



VISIT  MESA

[AutismTravelAZ.com](http://AutismTravelAZ.com)

# WELCOME TO AUTISM CERTIFICATION

**IBCCES** International Board of Credentialing  
and Continuing Education Standards



When we connected with Marc Garcia at Visit Mesa at the onset of this project, we were thrilled to hear about his vision for their community. Working together on this ground-breaking initiative has been rewarding and exciting, particularly seeing so many vital organizations moving forward toward a common goal - true inclusion and accessibility.

Over the last two decades, IBCCES has worked with thousands of individuals and groups who provide care and services to individuals with autism and other cognitive disorders. As the need continues to grow for understanding and inclusion, so does the need for training and certification. We know that autism-friendly is not enough, and that certification brings a whole new level of awareness and education to accessibility efforts. Our comprehensive, evidence-based process includes educational trainings and knowledge assessments of common behaviors and sensory considerations associated with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Many Mesa area businesses also participated in IBCCES audits to further improve experiences for individuals

with autism and we've developed Sensory Guides which serve as vital planning tools in advance of their visit.

There are thousands of families and individuals looking for places to visit and create memories who don't currently feel like they have options. Visit Mesa and the regional community are changing that, leading the way for others to follow suit in the future.

We're proud to be a partner in this amazing initiative and to claim Mesa, Arizona as the very-first Autism Certified City in the world!



Sincerely,

Myron Pincomb  
Board Chairman, IBCCES

# MESA MAKES TRAVEL PLANNING EASY FOR FAMILIES ON THE SPECTRUM

**FEATURING NICOLE THIBAUT, TRAVEL SPECIALIST WITH MAGICAL STORYBOOK TRAVELS**

I'm a wearer of many hats.

The hat I'm most proud to wear is that of mom to three amazing boys. They're my life, my love, and watching them grow into little men is my favorite pastime. Raising three boys has not always been easy - one of my boys has autism, one is neurotypical, and one has sensory processing disorder and childhood apraxia of speech. We have our challenges, but it makes our successes so much sweeter.

Travel has always been a big priority for our family. Despite our hurdles, we've learned how to travel with our sons who have anxiety, sensory issues and dietary restrictions. We've learned how to explore the world with as little stress and as much ease as possible.

The second hat I love wearing is that of a Certified Autism Travel Planner. I became a travel agent in 2013 so that I could use our family's first-hand experiences with traveling with our boys and share that with other families with autism who are hoping to confidently travel with their children.

According to Autismtravel.com, 87% of families with autism don't travel at all. The thought of travel with a child with autism can be too overwhelming for some, and they're nervous to take the leap of money, time and energy going to a destination that may or may not be accommodating to their family's needs.

As a Certified Autism Travel Planner, I love guiding families to destinations that are accommodating to families with children, teens and young adults on the spectrum. The best successes my clients have had have been to Certified Autism Centers, or CACs. These destinations and attractions have gone through a







Mesa Riverview Park



Arizona Museum of Natural History



Gold panning



Sloan Park

rigorous autism training process by the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Educational Standards (IBCCES) to ensure that travelers with ASD are met with smiles, handshakes and most importantly, understanding.

Mesa, Arizona is the world's first Certified Autism Destination. As of November 2019, more than 50 businesses and attractions in the Mesa area have made the commitment to go through the autism training with IBCCES to become a Certified Autism Center. And the list continues to grow as more and more organizations understand the benefits of being able to welcome ALL families to their business.

On a recent trip to Mesa, my family visited many of the newly-certified Autism Centers in and around the city and it was an amazing few days of adventure, exploration and acceptance. Mesa, Arizona is leading the way in autism travel by creating an all-inclusive travel destination for families to enjoy - with hotels, restaurants, attractions, playgrounds and parks, and outdoor adventure destinations all on the list. There's no other place in the world where families with autism have this amount of destination choices when crafting their vacation, and I can't wait to share our experiences with my travel clients!

After our fun-filled days of vacationing in Mesa, my 11-year old son said that he loved visiting this city because they were laying out the welcome mat for families with autism. I answered, "Yes, sweetie, they sure are!"

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*Nicole Thibault is the travel planning mom and agent behind Magical Storybook Travels. Her leading travel agency specializes in family travel and travel for families with special needs. It's her own experiences that drives her passion for assisting other families achieve their travel dreams.*

# WHY MESA IS GREAT FOR EVERY FAMILY

BY JEN MALLIA



In my house, sun and fun are top considerations when it comes to family vacations. Of course, each of us have different interests and different ideas about where to go. Luckily a recent visit to Mesa, Arizona checked all the boxes for all of us!

And a major bonus? Mesa has a bunch of visitor attractions, businesses and city services that are going through dedicated Autism Certification to make sure the city is a welcoming place for everyone—including travelers on the spectrum.

Planning a family vacation is always a bit nerve-racking. If you or a member of your family has an Autism Spectrum Disorder or sensory processing issues, the stakes can feel a little higher. The heightened sense of awareness or worry some feel in new places can feel compounded when traveling. We all love vacations, but disrupted routines, different food, sleeping in strange beds—it can get to be a bit much. Knowing you are visiting a place where they have made an effort to understand some of the special considerations of an ASD traveler can make all the difference.

## GET MOVING

Two of our favorite playgrounds in all North America are located right in Mesa. That might sound like an exaggeration, but let me assure you, it is not. My youngest is a playground connoisseur; searching out playgrounds is priority number one for him. If you have a kid whose body needs to move, you know that creative playgrounds with lots of opportunity for climbing and free-form play are a must—even on holiday. Our stamp of approval goes to Pioneer Park (which also hosts the Mesa Farmers' Market and Flea on Saturday mornings year-round) and to Mesa Riverview Park with its spider web-inspired climbing tower – the world's tallest so we were told. At Pioneer Park, accessibility





Mesa Riverview Park

is seen throughout the design with long walkways able to accommodate wheelchair users and the illusion of playing in the tree tops. Mesa Riverview features the latest hands-on play equipment including slides, spinners and swings allowing for hours of play time. On the edge of the park, curious climbers can test their skills and scale a 300 ft. natural linear climbing wall complete with a covered fort. We especially loved the 75-foot zip line and splash pad and child-size picnic tables. Both award-winning parks went through the IBCCES audit to assess how sensory processing issues may be affected. You can access the report for these parks and others through the City of Mesa Parks website, [MesaParks.com](http://MesaParks.com).



Arizona Goat Yoga

For something completely different, a drive out to Arizona Goat Yoga is a wacky and unexpected excursion. During the hour-long “goga” session, the class is led through a series of poses while the goats wander happily through the field, hopping onto participants as they go. Goat yoga works best for kids who can join in the class and don’t feel too skittish around animals, as the goats jump on participants indiscriminately. Also note that the goats aren’t all babies; you may run into goats that are quite big—up to 35 lbs. You can pet those ones and let the babies climb aboard. This is animal therapy of the fun kind.



Arizona Museum of Natural History

## HANDS ON FUN

Sometimes kids like to do a deep dive into the “how” and the “why” of the world around us. The Arizona Museum of Natural History is the ideal size to explore during a warm Mesa afternoon. It has a wide variety of things to touch and do, without being an overwhelming size. The big hits with my guys were the animatronic figures on Dinosaur Mountain and panning for gold in the Lost Dutchman Mine—ask for a baggie to collect your loot from the staff members outside at the mine.



Usery Mountain Regional Park

For iconic Arizona desert landscapes, Usery Mountain Regional Park has it all. Cactus, cactus and more cactus! Choose to hike the family-friendly Wind Cave Trail or spend your time at the Nature Center and get close access to all the desert critters and creepy crawlers. Just behind the center is “The Backyard,” an extensive piece of land where you can spot a bunch of Sonoran flora and the occasional hummingbird or heron. Check the Maricopa County Parks website for real-time programming if you want to join a family activity such as a movie in the desert or bird-watching. Find the Ranger hikes, stroller cruises or even a blacklight hunt for scorpions.

Come hungry to Jake’s Unlimited for endless food and fun for the family. Jake’s Unlimited was the first attraction in Mesa to become Autism Certified and it shows. While this is a full-sensory play zone, be sure to ask staff when you need a time out and they will find an area on site to rest. As a mom of picky eaters, the buffet options had plenty of safe choices for children with food aversions.

### FOR SPECIAL INTERESTS

One of the joys of knowing someone with ASD is the chance to learn from them. I’ve been able to learn more facts than I ever imagined I’d need to know on various subjects. If you or your child’s interests revolve around sea creatures or baseball, Mesa has what you need.

The OdySea Aquarium has been working hard with various organizations to make sure they are a welcoming, comfortable place for every family. Staff members with a seahorse above the pocket on their shirts have gone through autism awareness training and are equipped to help you with your needs. With features like their Pal Place video that helps people know what to expect at the aquarium, to a room away from the hustle and bustle that’s stocked with sensory items or to autism awareness weekends that feature lower volumes and fewer people, OdySea is a great



Jake's Unlimited





example of what welcoming autism travel looks like. My guys were taken with the Behind the Scenes Sharks tour where we enjoyed an up-close look at the inner workings of the aquarium, and the calming OdySea Voyager that lets you sit in theater-style seats and rotate through four major exhibits. If sitting for extended periods isn't for you, visit during the hour before closing when you are free to walk through the Voyager at your own pace.

### **TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALLGAME**

If baseball is in your blood, you are going to want to plan a visit in the spring. Arizona is home to the Cactus League Association which serves as the spring training host for 15 major league teams. It's the perfect opportunity to see pro ball in a smaller stadium for a fraction of the price of a regular season game. Sloan Park, home of the Chicago Cubs, is another Mesa attraction that completed Autism Certification. You can sit in the grass above the outfield for a bit more room and ease of movement than in the stands, and familiar food faves like Chicago dogs and deep-dish pizza are in abundance. As a bonus, it is steps from Mesa Riverview Park!

We felt welcomed and beyond at ease in Mesa, and I think you will too. It was a great feeling to know that so many businesses care enough about ASD travelers to make this kind of effort, with the added benefit of being able to relax knowing it will be ok if (or when!) things don't go as planned.



*Jen Mallia is a travel and lifestyle writer and member of the Travel Media Association of Canada (TMAC). Her family-focused work had appeared on Today's Parent, Family Fun Canada, BirthISSUES Magazine, and SheKnows, among others. She is a mom to two amazing kids with sensory sensitivities and shared symptoms with ASD who loves to travel and explore new destinations.*

# GEOCACHING FAMILY FUN IN MESA

**VISIT MESA HAS PARTNERED WITH THE EXPERTS AT GEOCACHING HQ TO BRING VISITORS AN INCREDIBLE HIDE-AND-SEEK TRAVEL QUEST THROUGHOUT CITY LIMITLESS®**

Visit Mesa's Autism Travel GeoTour is a strategic collection of geocaches anchored at many of Mesa's participating Certified Autism Centers and city parks — these hidden finds will get the whole family hunting and gathering for fun! All ages and all lifestyles from outdoor adventurers to tech-lovers will enjoy the thrill of searching for geocaches on this custom family-friendly tour. Visitors that find five geocaches on Visit Mesa's Autism Travel GeoTour can then visit the Mesa Visitor Center (120 N. Center St., Mesa) during regular business hours to collect a special souvenir celebrating their adventure! Find all of the geocaches and you will earn the digital souvenir directly in the Geocaching app.

## WHAT IS GEOCACHING?

Geocaching is an outdoor treasure hunting game where players use a mobile app or dedicated GPS device to find cleverly hidden containers called geocaches. Today, there are more than 3 million geocaches in over 190 countries.

## GET TREASURE HUNTING THROUGHOUT MESA IN THREE EASY STEPS!

- 1** To access on mobile, download the free Geocaching® app available in your app store.
- 2** Log in or Sign up and search for the **Visit Mesa Autism Travel GeoTour** and view the current list of geocaches hidden in Mesa and throughout our region.
- 3** Turn on your 'Location Services' and search under GeoTours **GT48C** for the Visit Mesa Autism Travel GeoTour.

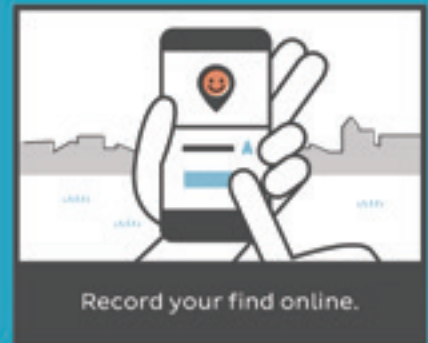
Off you go...! Remember to log your activity on the app and leave a treasure behind for others to find. Happy hunting!



## 10 TIPS BEFORE YOU GEOCACHE

- 1 Use your eyes, hands and geo-senses
- 2 Look for something that seems out of place
- 3 Geocaches are often disguised
- 4 Think like a detective
- 5 Geocaches should never be buried
- 6 Look high, look low, look around
- 7 Respect your surroundings
- 8 Check the hint
- 9 Watch for previous activity
- 10 Be patient. They're out there!

## HOW TO GEOCACHE



Find so much more at [geocaching.com/mobile](https://www.geocaching.com/mobile) and we'll see you out there.



# HIKING FOR HAPPINESS IN MESA

BY AUDREY JOHNSON

Albert Einstein once said, “Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better.”

I love seeing the world through my children’s eyes. To me, it is the best part about being a mom to two boys under the age of 10, Oren and Elam. When Elam was diagnosed with autism at age 3, I began to wonder if he would ever perform daily functions, much less hike a mountain. But I had it all wrong.

Nature reveals everything we need to know at the exact right moment. It is not delayed. It does everything in its own time. Hitting the trails is a great reminder to go at your own pace and take in all the beauty that surrounds you.

Having a son on the autism spectrum inspires me to look at the world with compassion and inclusion and wonder. The mountains around Mesa provide a place where the boys can run and be loud and marvel at saguaros that reach to the sky. A place where we can search for lost treasure and find very real treasure in the unfolding of Mother Nature.

Since we typically hike easy-to-moderate trails, I tend to pack light. I carry a backpack with plenty of water, sunscreen, a hat, a trail map, my phone for emergencies and photos, and, of course, snacks. Oren likes to bring a pencil and tiny notebook to write in, and he loves taking pictures and playing with the compass on his phone. We wear shoes with good grips, usually sneakers since we stick to the easy trails.

Here are a few of our favorite barrier-free trails (trails designed for those with disabilities) to explore around Mesa:



*Pass Trail, Usery Mountain Regional Park*

## Usery Mountain Regional Park

3939 N. Usery Pass Rd., Mesa

(480) 984-0032

[maricopacountyparks.net](http://maricopacountyparks.net)

The trails at Usery Mountain Regional Park in Mesa have just enough elevation to provide spectacular views of the surrounding desert plains and rugged mountains. The Merkle Trail is a 1-mile (round trip), barrier-free trail around a smaller mountain perfect for getting a quick hike in. The interpretive trail is wide and flat making it accessible not only for those with ASD, but also for those that use strollers and wheelchairs. This is also the site for many of the park’s family programs that take place throughout the week.







*Lost Dutchman State Park*

### **San Tan Mountain Regional Park**

6533 W. Phillips Rd., Queen Creek  
(480) 655-5554 • [maricopacountyparks.net](http://maricopacountyparks.net)

San Tan Mountain Regional Park has a day use trailhead perfect for accessing barrier-free trails in the Sonoran Desert. The Littleleaf Trail is an easy 0.7 mile out and back trail that highlights the beauty of the Littleleaf Palo Verde Tree. Elam's favorite part: enjoying an apple in the shade of the green-barked tree halfway through our hike. Be sure to stop by the visitor's center to say hello to the chuckwallas and desert tortoises in their outdoor enclosures.

### **Lost Dutchman Arizona State Park**

6109 N. Apache Trail, Apache Junction  
(480) 982-4485 • [azstateparks.com](http://azstateparks.com)

Treasure Loop is one of our favorite trails to explore at Lost Dutchman for one obvious reason: treasure! The boys love to pretend that they are treasure hunters looking for the legendary lost gold that's rumored to be hidden in the Superstition Mountains.

It's a little long for the boys at 2.4-miles round trip. So, we opt to move at our own pace and go about a mile to the base of the Superstition Mountains before heading back. Both Oren and Elam have been sworn in as Junior Rangers, vowing to protect the land and the plants and animals that call it home. (Pick up a packet at the Ranger Station on your way in.)

Last time we were there we had just given up on finding the lost treasure when Elam poked his arm with a stick and let out a loud cry. Two hikers heard him and called out, “Are you ok?” We assured them we were fine. One of the hikers introduced himself as Holden and pointed to the rolling hills that were covered with shade from rain clouds overhead. The rain was about two miles off and headed our way fast.

Concerned that it would make the trail slick and difficult to navigate, Holden offered to piggyback Elam down the mountain. But Elam wasn’t sure about this new friend. So, I gave him a piggyback ride while Holden carried our backpack. His brother chatted with Oren pointing out interesting things along the way, like the jumping cholla cactus. We made it back to the car safe and sound just as the rain started to fall.

This is just one example on our many hikes in the surrounding Sonoran Desert that illustrates the best thing about Mesa – here, the people are so friendly and always eager to help.



*Audrey Johnson resides in Queen Creek with her two sons, Oren and Elam, who was officially diagnosed with autism at age 3. When she’s not writing, Audrey enjoys reading, homeschooling, cooking, traveling, and, of course, hiking. Audrey’s work has also appeared on Travel Channel.*



## DISCOVER MORE WHEN YOU DOWNLOAD THE NEW ADVENTURE EXPLORER GUIDE

Download the brand-new Adventure Explorer Guide at [VisitMesa.com](http://VisitMesa.com). The pocket field guide outlines even more ways to discover the unique and exotic terrain on display in the Sonoran Desert with lists for Birding, Desert Wildlife, Desert Vegetation and more.



## KNOW BEFORE YOU GO TIPS FOR THE TRAILS

Before heading out to explore the vast Sonoran Desert, take caution. While the desert offers breathtaking scenery, it can also be unfamiliar territory for out-of-town guests not acclimated to the varied temperatures and rugged terrain. Below is a list of tips before hitting the trails.

### **ALWAYS PACK WATER**

Avoid dehydration by drinking water often throughout your hike. A good rule of thumb is to pack one gallon of water for a full-day of desert exploring.

### **APPLY SUNSCREEN – OFTEN**

Even in the winter months, Arizona's direct sunlight can cause severe burns.

### **NEVER STRAY FROM THE DESIGNATED TRAIL**

Desert terrain is rugged and unpredictable. Most parks offer maps and marked guides along the trail.

### **DRESS APPROPRIATELY**

Desert temperatures can hit extreme highs and extreme lows in a 24-hour period. Wearing layers helps slow dehydration and limits your sun exposure. Always wear closed-toe shoes. Wearing a hat and sunglasses are also recommended.

### **BE ALERT!**

The desert is full of critters that will attack if approached. Watch for rattlesnakes, Gila monsters and scorpions to name a few. If necessary, make noise so critters know of your presence. Be mindful of their surroundings and treat them with caution and respect.

## DESERT OASIS

# WATER WORKS

Think you can't take the family to the beach when visiting Mesa? Think again! Believe it or not, water flows throughout City Limitless® and visitors have access to miles of shoreline around three lakes and the Lower Salt River. Adventurers can kayak in the shadows of towering canyon walls at Canyon Lake, take a relaxing float along the flowing river, and soak up sun at Butcher Jones Beach. For boaters and fishermen, easy lakefront access can be found at both the Saguaro and Canyon Lake Marinas. Guests can rent or purchase everything they need from a variety of outdoor outfitters throughout Mesa. Learn more about all of Mesa's outdoor water recreation options from Riverbound Sports Paddle Company, a Certified Autism Center.

### **Riverbound Sports Paddle Company**

(480) 463-6686 • [riverboundsports.com](http://riverboundsports.com)



*Lower Salt River*

# SENSORY GUIDES

## AN INTRODUCTION



As part of the Autism Certification education offered through the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES), many Mesa organizations completed an audit of their place of business. This onsite review of their facility by an IBCCES expert includes a comprehensive report with suggested changes or modifications to better serve individuals on the spectrum as well as the development of Sensory Guides for activities.

IBCCES Sensory Guides help individuals determine the impact on each of the five senses that an activity or interaction may have. The goal is to empower individuals with sensory sensitivities to fully understand what to expect when visiting a location and, if needed, to adjust their visit to ensure the most positive experience. IBCCES Sensory

Guides are not meant to dictate or indicate an individual's abilities or limitations, but rather to better inform individuals what to expect so they can plan accordingly. The rating scale for each sense ranges from 1 (low sensory impact) to 10 (high sensory impact) and the guide includes a description of each activity as well as features/experiences that may have a sensory impact.

Visitors planning stays in Mesa, Arizona can download and view online Sensory Guides for these Certified Autism Centers at [AutismTravelAz.com](http://AutismTravelAz.com):

- Arizona Museum of Natural History
- i.d.e.a. Museum
- Jake's Unlimited
- Mesa Arts Center
- City of Mesa: Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities
- Town of Queen Creek: Parks & Recreation Department
- Sloan Park, Chicago Cubs Spring Training

These businesses have completed audits with IBCCES to obtain recommendations and suggestions on how to best service the ASD customer. Contact directly for more information:

- Delta Hotels by Marriott Phoenix-Mesa
- Hilton Phoenix Mesa
- Sheraton Mesa Hotel at Wrigleyville West



## WHAT IS A SENSORY GUIDE?

IBCCES Sensory Guides help individuals determine the impact on each of the five senses that an activity or interaction may have. The goal is to empower individuals with sensory sensitivities to fully understand what to expect when visiting a location and, if needed, to make adjustments to their visit to ensure the most positive experience. IBCCES Sensory Guides are not meant to dictate or indicate an individual's abilities or limitations, but rather to better inform individuals what to expect so they can plan accordingly. The rating scale for each sense ranges from 1 (low sensory impact) to 10 (high sensory impact) and the guide includes a description of each activity as well as features/experiences that may have a sensory impact.

**IBCCES Sensory Guide™**

Sensory Guide Sample      Anytown, USA      ISG#1

**TOUCH**      **TASTE**      **SOUND**      **SMELL**      **SIGHT**

Sensory Level (1 = low sensory stimulation, 10 = high sensory stimulation)

**1.5**      **1.5**      **3.5**      **1.5**      **1.5**

**Participant Guidelines**

- Water slide
- Kids laughing/teased on a rubber inner tube
- Open area to play in water
- Chance of water splashing in mouth (small amounts)
- Water and splashing sounds
- During busy times, crowd noise levels can be very high
- Slight chlorine smell in the water
- Other natural smells associated with outdoor parks
- Glare from sun reflected on the water may be bright
- Open area to play in water

**Activity Summary**

Single or double riders float on an inner tube down two twisting slides and land in a splash pool. Great family fun! Ideal for parents and small children to "ride the slide" together on double inner tubes.

1. Activity or attraction that has been reviewed.
2. Location of the activity that has been reviewed.
3. **IBCCES Sensory Guide Number:** Assigned after the activity has been reviewed.
4. **Sensory Level:** Each number represents the stimulation effect on a scale of 1 – 10. This number will provide you with insight on how an individual with sensory processing issues or sensitivities may be affected by each sense during this activity.
5. **Participant Guidelines:** These details list the parts of this activity that may affect each sense and should be reviewed prior to participation.
6. **Activity Summary:** Summary of the activity or attraction that has been reviewed.

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*Sheraton Mesa Hotel at Wrigleyville West*

# CERTIFIED AUTISM CENTERS IN MESA CITY LIMITLESS®



## ACCOMMODATIONS

### Best Western Plus Mesa

1563 S. Gilbert Rd., Mesa  
(480) 926-3600

[bestwesternarizona.com/hotels/best-western-plus-mesa](http://bestwesternarizona.com/hotels/best-western-plus-mesa)

Best Western Plus is located on the North East corner of US-60 and Gilbert Rd, ideal location for visitors wanting to explore all that the East Valley has to offer. A hot buffet style breakfast, secure Wi-Fi internet and parking are all included in the offered rate. Guests will also receive complimentary access to the heated pool and hot tub, as well as the brand new fitness and business centers.



### Courtyard Phoenix Mesa

1221 S. Westwood, Mesa  
(480) 461-3000

[marriott.com/phxmex](http://marriott.com/phxmex)

Style and convenience blend seamlessly at Courtyard Phoenix Mesa. Located 15 minutes from Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport (PHX), our hotel offers easy access to an array of attractions and activities. After a busy day of seeing the sites and soaking up the sun, relax in spacious guest rooms featuring bright decor, free wireless Internet, plush bedding and flat-panel TVs. Or enjoy a brisk workout at our outdoor swimming pool or modern fitness center. Stop by The Bistro, our stylish on-site eatery, and indulge in tasty breakfast and dinner items as well as signature cocktails and specialty Starbucks beverages.




### Delta Hotels by Marriott Phoenix-Mesa

200 N Centennial Way, Mesa  
(480) 898-8300

[marriott.com/phxdec](http://marriott.com/phxdec)

A multi-million dollar, full-scale renovation has just been completed on the Marriott Phoenix Mesa, located in the heart of Downtown Mesa, Arizona. Newly refreshed interiors throughout all 274 guest rooms, corridors, lobby, and common areas feature a color palette and textiles embracing the desert, its flora, fauna, skies, minerals, sunrises and sunsets. Guest rooms have been equipped with a new television entertainment package and high-speed internet upgrade.



 [Sensory Guide Available Online](#)

### Four Points by Sheraton at Phoenix Mesa Gateway Airport

6850 E Williams Field Rd, Mesa  
(480) 579-2100

[fourpointsphoenixmesaairport.com](http://fourpointsphoenixmesaairport.com)

This Four Points by Sheraton is located less than one mile from Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport. Hop in the free shuttle to get around town and see the sites, or visit the ASU Polytechnic campus. Looking to enjoy some Arizona golf? Toka Sticks Golf Club, an 18-hole course, is on site. You'll also find fast & free WiFi throughout the hotel, free bottled water in your room, great local beer with Best Brews® and much more.




### Hilton Phoenix/Mesa

1011 W Holmes Ave, Mesa  
(480) 833-5555

[phoenixmesa.hilton.com](http://phoenixmesa.hilton.com)

The Hilton Phoenix/Mesa provides all of the amenities that you have come to expect from Hilton; and then adds a generous dose of genuine southwestern hospitality. Relax in the luxury of their spacious guest rooms and suites. Distinctive amenities and services at this hotel include: 260 guest rooms and suites, executive club lounge, heated pool, 24-hour fitness center, adjacent nine-hole executive golf course, 24-hour business center, High-speed internet access in all rooms, wireless connectivity in public areas, onsite restaurant The Resident, atrium lounge, room service, free shuttle service within three-mile radius, bell staff and valet services.



 [Sensory Guide Available Online](#)

### Hyatt Place Phoenix-Mesa

1422 W Bass Pro Dr, Mesa  
(480) 969-8200

[phoenixmesa.place.hyatt.com](http://phoenixmesa.place.hyatt.com)

Relax and enjoy the resort-style pool or the nine-hole executive putting green, access to the fitness & business center with free Wi-Fi. The hotel is just 8 miles from the Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport, located in the Mesa Riverview Shopping Center. Complimentary transportation service is available within a 5-mile radius.



### Residence Inn Phoenix Mesa

941 W Grove Ave, Mesa  
(480) 610-0100

[residenceinnphoenixmesa.com](http://residenceinnphoenixmesa.com)

Residence Inn Phoenix Mesa is the premier extended stay hotel in the East Valley and your home away from home. The hotel offers spacious studio, 1-bedroom and 2-bedroom suites with separate living, working and sleeping areas as well as fully equipped kitchens. Complimentary amenities include daily hot breakfast buffet, Social hour on select evenings, Wi-Fi and parking. Relax in the outdoor pool or take advantage of the Sport Court and 24-hour fitness center. Residence Inn Phoenix Mesa is conveniently located just off US 60 and Highway 101, minutes from Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport, and Downtown Mesa.



### Saguaro Lake Guest Ranch

13020 Bush Highway, Mesa  
(480) 984-2194

[saguarolakeranch.com](http://saguarolakeranch.com)

Whether you're here for an active vacation, a weekend wedding, a corporate retreat, or just to relax and unwind, Saguaro Lake Guest Ranch is the perfect destination. Their trail rides operate seasonally from October 1st through May 1st. If you're here in the warmer months, try your hand at kayaking the Lower Salt River (May through September) or the beautiful Saguaro Lake (available year-round). And if you've never tried river tubing, this is your chance to savor the majestic Lower Salt River in all its glory as you serenely float downstream. There are numerous hiking trails in the area ranging from easy to extremely challenging.



### Sheraton Mesa Hotel at Wrigleyville West

860 N Riverview, Mesa  
(480) 664-1221

[sheratonmesa.com](http://sheratonmesa.com)

Sheraton Mesa at Wrigleyville West is nestled between the Chicago Cubs' Spring Training stadium and Riverview Park. Discover a host of vibrant shopping, entertainment and dining options within walking distance. The hotel's 180 elegantly-appointed guest rooms, including 51 Junior Suites and 8 VIP suites each featuring plush furnishings, modern amenities, and thoughtful. Enjoy La Plancha Grill for dinner or Stats Sports Grill for breakfast,



lunch or dinner. The hotel's one-acre resort-style pool area has two swimming pools, two plunge pools, a hot tub, poolside services and modern fire and water features throughout. Make time for a workout in the state-of-the-art Sheraton Fitness center or to be pampered in the full-service salon. The Sheraton Mesa offers complimentary transfers to Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport from 5:30am to 9:30pm.

## FAMILY ATTRACTIONS

### Arizona Museum of Natural History

53 N Macdonald St, Mesa  
(480) 644-2230

[arizonamuseumofnaturalhistory.org](http://arizonamuseumofnaturalhistory.org)

*Hours of Operation:*

*Tuesday-Wednesday 10AM-5PM;*

*Saturday 11AM-5PM; Sunday 1PM-5PM*

One of the premier museums in the state!

"Dinosaur Mountain" is the largest dinosaur exhibit west of the Mississippi River. See a constantly flowing 50-foot-high indoor waterfall and hear the thrilling roar of life-size, animated dinosaurs, including a saber-tooth cat and a Columbian Mammoth. Displays also include: Arizona Highways permanent photography gallery, Hohokam Indian dwellings, Native cultures of West North America, and a re-creation of the Lost Dutchman's Gold Mine.

 *Sensory Guide Available Online*

### AZ Goat Yoga

26601 S Val Vista Dr, Gilbert  
(480) 269-4144

[goatyoga.com](http://goatyoga.com)

Goat Yoga includes your regular yoga fitness routine while incorporating goats in a natural setting. They are always adding animals, or elements of surprise, such as alpacas or cows, even hedgehogs. AZ Goat Yoga is now among the top 10 things to do in Arizona, and attract tourist from all around the world.

### Butterfly Wonderland

9500 E. Via de Ventura, Scottsdale  
(480) 800-3000

[butterflywonderland.com](http://butterflywonderland.com)

*Hours of Operation:*

*Monday-Sunday 9AM-5PM*

A Rainforest Experience - The largest indoor butterfly conservatory in America, Butterfly Wonderland offers a truly unique rainforest experience including 3,000 friendly butterflies, birds, reptiles, fish, and more!



### Escape Rooms Mesa, LLC

86 W University Dr, Mesa  
(602) 632-1542

[escaperoomsmesa.com](http://escaperoomsmesa.com)

*Hours of Operation:*

*Monday-Friday 12PM-9PM;*

*Saturday & Sunday 12PM-10:45PM*

Escape Rooms Mesa offers the best escape room experience in Arizona, with the largest number of unique rooms in North America.

There are over a dozen original escape rooms to choose from, ranging in difficulty level, great for new players and experts alike!



### i.d.e.a. Museum

150 W. Pepper Place, Mesa  
(480) 644-2468


[ideaMuseum.org](http://ideaMuseum.org)

*Hours of Operation:*

*Tuesday-Thursday 9AM-4 PM;*

*Friday 9AM-6PM; Saturday-Sunday 9AM-4 PM*

The fun, inspiring, and educational hands-on art museum for children and families. Their museum includes popular art and art-inspired activities, while adding science, engineering and design-thinking in the multi-sensory experiences provided with an increased use of technology to support these offerings and even more opportunities for families to create together.

 *Sensory Guide Available Online*

### Jake's Unlimited

1830 E Baseline Rd, Mesa  
(480) 926-7499

[jakesunlimited.com](http://jakesunlimited.com)

*Hours of Operation:*

*Monday-Thursday 11AM-10PM;*

*Saturday & Sunday 10AM-2AM*

Jake's Unlimited is a 90,000 square-foot indoor entertainment venue for all ages - kids, young adults, adults, and families - offering over 170 arcade games, dual-level laser tag arena, 12 bowling lanes, VIP bowling suites, 6 mini-bowling lanes, thrilling amusement park rides and attractions, carnival-style midway games, an unlimited buffet, a-la-carte dining, cocktail program, event spaces and more all in one destination.

 *Sensory Guide Available Online*



### Mesa Arts Center

1 E Main St, Mesa  
(480) 644-6500

[mesaartcenter.com](http://mesaartcenter.com)


*Hours of Operation:*

*Monday-Friday 10AM-7PM;*

*Saturday 10AM-5PM;*

*Sunday 12PM-4PM*

The Mesa Arts Center is the cultural jewel of Mesa, Arizona. The campus encompasses four state of the art performance theaters, Mesa Contemporary Arts Museum and classrooms for artistic experiences. There are a number of free events open to the public throughout the year such as: Out To Lunch concert series, Mesa Arts Festival, Dia De Los Muertos and other fun festivals.

 *Sensory Guide Available Online*

### OdySea Aquarium

9500 Via De Ventura, Scottsdale  
(480) 291-8000

[odyseaaquarium.com](http://odyseaaquarium.com)

*Hours of Operation:*

*Monday-Friday 9AM-7PM,*

*Saturday & Sunday 9AM-6PM*

Located in the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, OdySea Aquarium is the largest aquarium in the Southwest, spanning 200,000 square feet. The two-level, state-of-the-art facility holds more than 2 million gallons of water. With over 50 exhibits and 500 different species, there are more than 30,000 animals that call OdySea home. OdySea Aquarium offers an entertaining, interactive, and educational experience for guests of all ages by combining theme-park-style amusement with highly engaging presentations of aquatic life like no other in the industry. The facility includes a 3D theater, SeaTREK™ underwater ocean walking, and a one-of-a-kind voyage through the "Living Sea."



## FRESH FOODIE TRAIL®

### True Garden Urban Farm

5949 E University Dr, Mesa  
(480) 305-8985

[truegarden.com](http://truegarden.com)

*Hours of Operation:*

*Farmer's Market on Wednesdays*

*& Saturdays 8AM-12PM*

True Garden is the premier vertical aeroponic food farm in the Southwest U.S. This first-of-its-kind facility, operated by solar power, was designed in partnership with Future Growing LLC with a vision to drastically reduce the region's agricultural water consumption while making local, living produce available year-round in the hot desert regions of Phoenix and the Southwest US. True Garden is the first high-tech greenhouse in the U.S. capable of producing most cool season food crops year-round.






## PARKS & RECREATION

### City of Mesa Parks Recreation & Commercial Facilities

708 W. Baseline Rd. #4, Mesa  
(480) 644-7529

[mesaparks.com](http://mesaparks.com)

Mesa Parks and Recreation contributes to a healthy and vibrant community by providing exceptional experiences and services to those who live, work and play in Mesa. Mesa is home to over 65 public parks. The signature parks include: Pioneer Park, Riverview Park, Red Mountain Park and Quail Run Park. Other programs are hosted throughout the year from sports to swimming. All Mesa Parks have been Autism Certified and complete sensory guides for each park are available at [mesaparks.com](http://mesaparks.com).

 [Sensory Guide](#)  
Available Online



*These area parks serve as Certified Autism Centers. Download or view the entire Sensory Guide online at [mesaparks.com](http://mesaparks.com) or call 480-644-PLAY (7529).*

#### Dobson Ranch Park

2359 S. Dobson Rd., Mesa  
Dobson Ranch Playground gives all children regardless of abilities the opportunity to play. The park is universally inclusive and equipped with play structures designed to allow all children the opportunity to experience the park.

#### Pioneer Park

526 E. Main St., Mesa  
Pioneer Park gives children and adults the feeling of playing in the trees. Pioneer Park is an 18-acre community park offering volleyball, basketball, covered picnic areas and a playground. The park is very engaging and fun for all ages.

#### Riverview Park

2100 W. Rio Salado Parkway, Mesa  
Riverview Park is now home to the Chicago Cubs Spring Training Facility, Sloan Park, and the park itself is one of the premier recreation destinations in the Valley. Riverview Park is a very inclusive and fun park for visitors of all abilities.

#### Skyline Aquatic Center

845 S. Crismon Rd., Mesa  
Skyline Aquatic Center is open for lap swim year-round and open for public swim from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day Weekend. The City of Mesa pools are available year-round for rent for private pool parties and other occasions based on staff availability. The venue has holiday hours and rates will vary. Please visit the website for details.

#### Red Mountain Center

7550 E. Adobe, Mesa  
[redmountaincenter.com](http://redmountaincenter.com)  
Monday-Friday 5:30AM-9PM  
Saturday: 8AM-1PM

Sunday: Closed (Holiday hours may apply)

The Red Mountain Center is a 65,000 square foot multi-use facility offering residents and visitors access to amenities including a well-equipped fitness center, group fitness classes, drop-in basketball, indoor rock-climbing wall, facility rental space, youth activities, fitness coaching, massage therapy services and more! The Red Mountain Center is a great community resource and could be a huge benefit for families with children on the spectrum.

#### Mesa Convention Center

263 N. Center St., Mesa  
[mesaconventioncenter.com](http://mesaconventioncenter.com)


The Mesa Convention Center is a full-service event facility located in the heart of downtown Mesa. The campus is situated on 22 acres of mature park land, and is comprised of Buildings A, B and C. The facility features 19,000 square feet of exhibit space and an additional 19,000 square feet of flexible meeting space. The fifteen meeting rooms offer a wide variety of sizes and configurations. The 5,000-capacity outdoor Mesa Amphitheatre is located on the property and is a fun, unique venue for outdoor events, festivals, and concerts.

#### Town of Queen Creek: Parks & Recreation Department

21802 S Ellsworth Rd,  
Queen Creek  
(480) 358-3095

[queencreek.org/recreation](http://queencreek.org/recreation)

The Town of Queen Creek strives to accommodate all residents and visitors, and in an effort to enrich opportunities for individuals and families with autism, the parks and Recreation Department recently completed a training and certification program through the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES). All Town of Queen Creek Parks have been Autism Certified and complete sensory guides for each park are available at [queencreek.org/recreation](http://queencreek.org/recreation).

 [Sensory Guide](#)  
Available Online



*Queen Creek Parks and Recreation is a proud IBCCES Certified Autism Center. To find out more information and review sensory guides visit [queencreek.org/departments/parks-recreation](http://queencreek.org/departments/parks-recreation)*

#### Desert Mountain Park

22201 S. Hawes Rd, Queen Creek  
Desert Mountain Park features covered playgrounds and space to run, as well as baseball fields, basketball courts, and sand volleyball courts. Features include equestrian parking and trails, a botanical garden, a small amphitheater, sand volleyball courts, families will enjoy the fossil dig areas and shaded ramadas and picnic tables.

#### Mansel Carter Oasis Park

19535 E. Appleby Rd., Queen Creek  
This new 48-acre park includes a five-acre urban fishing lake, four lighted baseball fields, two lighted multi-purpose fields, two lighted basketball courts, two sand volleyball courts, shipwreck-themed splash pad, peninsula with rock waterfall, one central, inclusive playground, sand discovery dig zone, pathways with three fitness pods, skatepark, maintenance yard, eight picnic ramadas, restrooms and concessions buildings.

#### Founders' Park

22407 S. Ellsworth Rd., Queen Creek  
Founders' Park is an 11-acre park located across the street from Town Hall in the heart of Queen Creek. This neighborhood park is a community gathering place and host to many special events including Founders' Day. Located at Founders' park is the 4,000 square foot splash pad.

#### Library Recreation Annex

21802 S. Ellsworth Rd., Queen Creek  
*Hours: Monday-Thursday 8AM-7PM;  
Friday 8AM-3PM. Closed Saturday & Sunday.*  
Check out the variety of recreation classes ranging from monthly programs to one-day workshops to week-long creativity camps. Fitness and wellness classes are available including classes for all ages and each member of the family.

## DINING & NIGHTLIFE

### Jarrod's Coffee, Tea & Gallery

154 W Main St, Mesa  
(480) 822-7146

[jarrodscoffeeteaandgallery.com](http://jarrodscoffeeteaandgallery.com)

*Hours of Operation:*

*Monday 9AM-2PM; Tuesday 9AM-6PM;  
Wednesday 10AM-10PM; Thursday 9AM-6PM  
(last 2 Thursday's each month 9AM-9PM)*  
*Friday & Saturday 9AM-10PM*

Jarrod's Coffee, Tea & Gallery is a coffee & tea house displaying local art and vintage jewelry, with live art shows on weekends and upcoming poetry nights open mic and improv located in downtown Mesa.



### Main Street Bar and Grill

127 W Main St, Mesa  
(480) 629-5721

[facebook.com/](https://www.facebook.com/MainStBarAndGrillMesa)

[MainStBarAndGrillMesa](http://MainStBarAndGrillMesa.com)

*Hours of Operation:*

*Wednesday & Thursday 11AM-9PM, Friday & Saturday 11AM-11PM, Sunday 11AM-3PM*

Main St. Bar & Grill is a locally owned eatery and community gathering place in Downtown Mesa. Serving pizza, burgers, and hot dogs. Make sure to check out the weekly specials!



## OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

### Longbow Golf Club

5601 E Longbow Pkwy, Mesa  
(480) 807-5400

[longbowgolf.com](http://longbowgolf.com)

*Hours of Operation:*

*Monday-Sunday 6AM-6:30PM*

Longbow is a must-play. The intrigue and shot making choices that players will face are infinite. The distinctive Arizona contemporary clubhouse is a one-of-a-kind structure that offers every amenity including a spacious outdoor event patio with fans, heaters, misters, outdoor kitchen and bar, enormous patio fireplace, convenient drive-up snack shop, cozy restaurant, and well-appointed pro shop.



### Riverbound Sports

#### Paddle Company

1425 E University Dr, Tempe  
(480) 463-6686

[riverboundsports.com](http://riverboundsports.com)

Riverbound Sports Paddle Company has been the valley's top service provider when it comes to stand up paddleboarding (SUP) and kayaking since 2013. Join one of Riverbound's scheduled Saguaro or Canyon lake events, meet-up groups or any of the SUP Fitness classes held throughout the valley. Riverbound sports is also a full-service paddleboard shop conveniently located in Tempe offering sales on the highest quality paddle boards, kayaks, and paddling gear.



### Salt River Vaulters

26601 S Val Vista Dr, Gilbert  
(213) 509-0505

[saltrivervaulters.com](http://saltrivervaulters.com)

Salt River Vaulters is an equestrian organization dedicated to making the sport of equestrian vaulting accessible to riders of all ages and abilities. We offer small group classes and private lessons for both beginners as well as experienced riders wishing to learn the sport of vaulting, including sessions for special needs children and veterans with disabilities. We also offer both English and Western riding lessons and private trail rides.



## HEALTH & WELLNESS

### Lexington Therapy

1555 S Gilbert Rd #111, Mesa  
(480) 900-1009

[lexingtonservices.com](http://lexingtonservices.com)

At Lexington, they care for children, protecting their welfare and preparing them for the future. Lexington Therapy's services include: Life Academy, Learning Center, Home & Community Based Services, Behavioral Health Services, Emotional Disabilities Program and Individually Designed Living Arrangement (IDLA).



### Copa Health, Powered by Marc Community Resources and Partners In Recovery

924 N Country Club Dr, Mesa  
(480) 969-3800

[copahealth.org](http://copahealth.org)

COPA Health, Powered by Marc Community Resources and Partners In Recovery is a private not-for-profit organization providing educational, therapeutic, rehabilitation and social services to children and adults with developmental and physical disabilities and behavioral health challenges.



### Pawsitive Friendships

3317 S Higley Rd #114-778, Gilbert  
(480) 353-7833

[pawsitivefriendships.org](http://pawsitivefriendships.org)

Pawsitive Friendships help children with special needs who are not engaging, complying, or progressing in their therapy by providing Animal Assisted Therapy, thereby supporting and encouraging the kids through the unconditional love of an animal-human friendship. They believe that working hand-in-hand with the children's therapists, aids, and teachers in schools and clinics, our animals can encourage the children to achieve their therapy goals.



## GROUND TRANSPORTATION

### All Aboard America

230 S Country Club Dr, Mesa  
(480) 962-6202

[allaboaridamerica.com](http://allaboaridamerica.com)

Family-owned company, that prides itself on superior customer service and professionalism. All Aboard America is Arizona's largest tour and charter company. Their fleet consists of fully equipped mini and full size coaches, committed to protecting our environment and preserving our precious natural resources integrating various practices of "green" performance into their daily business routine.



## COMMUNITY PARTNERS

### Arizona Office of Tourism

118 N 7th Ave #400, Phoenix  
(602) 364-3700

[visitarizona.com](http://visitarizona.com)

*Hours of Operation:*

*Monday-Friday 8AM-5PM*

The Arizona Office of Tourism strives to enhance the state economy and the quality of life for all Arizonans by expanding travel activity and increasing related revenues through tourism promotion and development.



### East Valley Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

120 N Center St, Mesa  
(480) 223-0157

[evhcc.org](http://evhcc.org)

Developing partnerships and building creative associations with business and community organizations are important to those interested in growing their brand in the Hispanic market place. The East Valley Hispanic Chamber of Commerce understands the value of working together to provide businesses the opportunities to position their products and services among Hispanic consumers.



### East Valley Partnership

2333 W University Dr #103, Tempe  
(480) 834-8335

[evp-az.org](http://evp-az.org)

The East Valley Partnership is a coalition of civic, business, educational and political leaders from Apache Junction, Chandler, Florence, Fountain Hills, Gila River Indian Community, Gilbert, Mesa, Queen Creek, Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, Tempe and Pinal County dedicated to the economic development and promotion of the East Valley of Greater Phoenix, Arizona. They actively advocate in areas such as economic development, education, transportation and infrastructure, arts, behavioral health, and other important areas.



### Mesa Chamber of Commerce

165 N Centennial Way #208,  
Mesa  
(480) 969-1307

[mesachamber.org](http://mesachamber.org)

With a history that extends more than 110 years, the Mesa Chamber of Commerce has come a long way. The Chamber continues to bring top of the line networking opportunities to the community. Witnessing the growth and expansion of Mesa has given the Chamber more motivation to stay ahead of the curve and offer effective, up to trend events and programs throughout the years. The Mesa Chamber of Commerce is the recognized resource and celebrated leader for the Mesa business community.



### Salt River Project

1500 N Mill Ave, Tempe  
(602) 236-8888

[srpnet.com](http://srpnet.com)

Providing electricity and water services to commercial and residential customers throughout Arizona. As a community-based not-for-profit water and energy company, SRP provides reliable, affordable water and power to more than 2 million people living in central Arizona. SRP has provided these essential resources for more than a century to meet the needs of customers and help the region grow



### College Bound AZ

4222 E Brown Rd, #33, Mesa  
(602) 550-3161

[collegeboundaz.org](http://collegeboundaz.org)

A nonprofit community resource, shares the journey to college with aspiring under-represented students through mentorship, guidance, and support resources for their advancement to a better future through education.



### Helen's Hope Chest

126 E University Dr, Mesa  
(480) 969-5411

[mesaunitedway.org/helenshope](http://mesaunitedway.org/helenshope)

Helen Paula Simmons' legacy will live on through Helen's Hope Chest, providing the community with a priceless opportunity to help instill in foster children the love, security and self worth that every child needs and deserves. Helen's Hope Chest offers a place where children in foster care will have their own "store" where they can pick out whatever they need at no cost. Helen's also provides an outfit, books, and gifts for biological and adopted children if the family has a current foster placement.



### House of Refuge

6935 E Williams Field Rd, Mesa  
(480) 988-9242

[houseofrefuge.org](http://houseofrefuge.org)

House of Refuge provides safe, stable housing to families who are experiencing homelessness. Located in Southeast Mesa, our professional staff work with families on regaining dignity, finding employment, and ultimately obtain permanent housing.



## PUBLIC SAFETY: POLICE & FIRE

### City of Mesa Fire and Medical Department

13 W First Street, Mesa  
(480) 644-2101

[mesaaz.gov/residents/fire-medical](http://mesaaz.gov/residents/fire-medical)

Mesa Fire and Medical Department was established and organized in 1898. It has grown to twenty stations that house twenty-four Engines, five ladders, one ladder tender and three ARFF units at two City of Mesa airports.



### Mesa Police Department

130 N Robson, Mesa  
(480) 644-2211

[mesaaz.gov/residents/police](http://mesaaz.gov/residents/police)

Mesa's Police Department is dedicated to working with you, fighting crime, defending human rights and protecting life. More than 1,200 of Mesa's law enforcement personnel will have completed Autism Sensitivity Training through IBCCES. This interactive training focused on role-playing teaches first responders how to interact with individuals on the spectrum in community and emergency settings and reduce the possibility of misunderstanding or escalation when real situations arise. Learn more at [ibcces.org](http://ibcces.org).



### Town of Queen Creek Fire & Medical

22358 S Ellsworth Rd,  
Queen Creek  
(480) 358-3360

[queencreek.org/fire](http://queencreek.org/fire)

The Queen Creek Fire & Medical Department (QCFMD) was established in 2008. QCFMD currently has four stations, with a fifth station under construction. The Town of Queen Creek strives to ensure a high quality of life, promote a strong sense of community, protect our residents, and provide world-class public service.



## EVENT VENUES & FESTIVALS

### Mesa Convention Center

201 N Center St, Mesa  
(480) 644-2178

[mesaconventioncenter.com](http://mesaconventioncenter.com)

The Mesa Convention Center and Mesa Amphitheater offer public events such as convention and concerts for the public. See the calendar of event for those events coming up that are open to the public.



### Mesa Music Festival & Mesa Film Festival

Various Locations

Annual fall events celebrating the entertainment industry throughout Downtown Mesa. See sites for upcoming dates

*Mesa Film Fest: October 17-20 2019,*

[mesafilmfestival.com](http://mesafilmfestival.com)

*Mesa Music Fest: November 14-15 2019,*

[mesamusicfest.com](http://mesamusicfest.com)



## SPRING TRAINING

### Hohokam Stadium (Oakland A's Spring Training)

1235 N Center St, Mesa  
(480) 644-4451

[mesaaz.gov/things-to-do/hohokam-stadium](http://mesaaz.gov/things-to-do/hohokam-stadium)

Hohokam Stadium is the Spring Training home of the Oakland A's (Athletics) in February and March. Hohokam Stadium is conveniently located just North of downtown Mesa and hosts special events throughout the year. Such as Western Athletic Conference Baseball, local & national baseball tournaments, festivals and concert events.



### Mesa Hohokams

PO Box 261, Mesa

[hohokams.org](http://hohokams.org)

The Mesa Hohokams continue the legacy of the HoHoKams through their enhancement of Spring Training Baseball in Mesa, AZ, while investing their time and resources to better the community.




### Sloan Park (Chicago Cubs Spring Training)

2330 W Rio Salado Pkwy, Mesa  
(480) 668-0500

[cubs.com/mesa](http://cubs.com/mesa)

For over 50 years, Mesa has been home to the Chicago Cubs during the month of March for Spring Training. Sloan Park host other events throughout the year such as: Arizona Fall League, Mexican Baseball Fiesta, Western Athletics Conference, food festivals and other corporate events.



 [Sensory Guide Available Online](#)

## COMMUNITY RESOURCES

### Friendly Auto Centers

5026 E Main St #25, Mesa  
(480) 470-8083

[friendlyautocenters.com](http://friendlyautocenters.com)

*Hours of Operation:*

*Monday-Friday 8AM-5PM*

Friendly Auto Centers is a family-owned business delivering honest and professional automotive repair and auto maintenance services to the people of Mesa and surrounding areas. The quality ASE (Automotive Service Excellence) certified technicians at Friendly Auto Centers employ today's latest automotive technology and are equipped to handle all major and minor repairs on foreign and domestic vehicles.



### Gateway Bank

6860 E Warner Rd, Mesa  
(480) 358-1000

[gcbaz.com](http://gcbaz.com)

*Hours of Operation:*

*Monday-Friday 9AM-5PM*

Gateway Bank represents a return to how banking used to be, where the staff knew everyone by name and treated you like a person instead of a number. They're proud to serve as Mesa's only independent, hometown bank and a trusted partner for customers across the Valley.



### Mesa Public Library at Dobson Ranch

2425 S Dobson Rd, Mesa

[mesalibrary.org](http://mesalibrary.org)

*Hours of Operation:*

*Monday-Saturday 10AM-5PM*

Expanding minds, empowering individuals, and enriching our diverse community. Check out books, movies, games as well as utilize computers. (temporary passes available)



### Norris Air

3841 E Main St, Mesa  
(480) 832-3330

[norrisairinc.com](http://norrisairinc.com)

*Hours of Operation:*

*Monday-Friday 7AM-5PM*

Providing Professional Quality Home Comfort Since 1973, Family Owned and Operated. We offer both residential and commercial installation, maintenance, and repair services for the following HVAC systems: air conditioners, heat pumps, gas and electric furnaces, electric heat strips, indoor air quality systems, mobile home air and heating systems, and packaged HVAC units.



## MESA VISITOR INFORMATION

**VISIT MESA**  
CITY LIMITLESS™

### Visit Mesa Visitors Center

120 N Center St, Mesa  
(480) 827-4700

[visitmesa.com](http://visitmesa.com)

*Hours of Operation: Monday-Friday 8AM-5PM*

Visit Mesa is the first Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) to be certified in the world! Visit Mesa along with assistance from the City of Mesa and the Mesa Chamber of Commerce has spearheaded the autism certification effort to lead our city into an officially designated tourism destination.

The Mesa Visitor Center features a digital concierge providing guests visitor information that can be shared directly to their smart phone or tablet. Printed and digital brochures and maps are available for all regional attractions, activities and outdoor fun, as well as statewide visitor information.

## SPECIAL RECOGNITION



### City of Mesa

20 E Main St, Mesa  
(480) 644-2211

[mesaaz.gov](http://mesaaz.gov)

With dynamic recreational, educational and business opportunities, Mesa enjoys the best in a variety of amenities including parks within easy walking distance from home, a variety of sports facilities that cater to athletes young and old, highly rated golf courses for every skill level, a diversity of special events and community festivals, and Mesa's ever-popular Chicago Cubs and Oakland A's Spring Training baseball.





# A destination mindful of all your senses.

Proud to be the World's First Autism Certified City.



VISIT  MESA

[AutismTravelAZ.com](https://AutismTravelAZ.com)

# BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH AUTISM AND THEIR FAMILIES

**FEATURING DENISE D. RESNIK, ARIZONA CHAMPION AND PIONEER FOR THE ASD COMMUNITY**

“Love, accept and plan to institutionalize him.” That’s what we were told 26 years ago at the time our two-year-old son was diagnosed with autism. Following a period of great sadness, vigilant research, therapeutic interventions of all kinds and the shock of it all, we determined that if we could not change Matt’s autism, then we had to change his world—and ours.

More than two decades later, PBS NewsHour dubbed Metro Phoenix the “most autism-friendly city in the world.” Thanks to public, private, nonprofit and philanthropic leaders and collaborators throughout the Valley, people here recognize that each of us can do something to create a kinder, more welcoming community for everyone, including people with different abilities—everywhere from neighborhoods, schools and homes to places of work, worship and fun.

Consider Marc Garcia’s epiphany on a beach vacation, when he recognized that the tourism industry can be much more accommodating to individuals with autism and their families. The result: Visit Mesa and nearly 60 other businesses (as of this writing) have completed autism training through the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards to become Certified Autism Centers. Marc’s tireless efforts led to Mesa being named the first “Autism Certified Travel Destination” in the world.

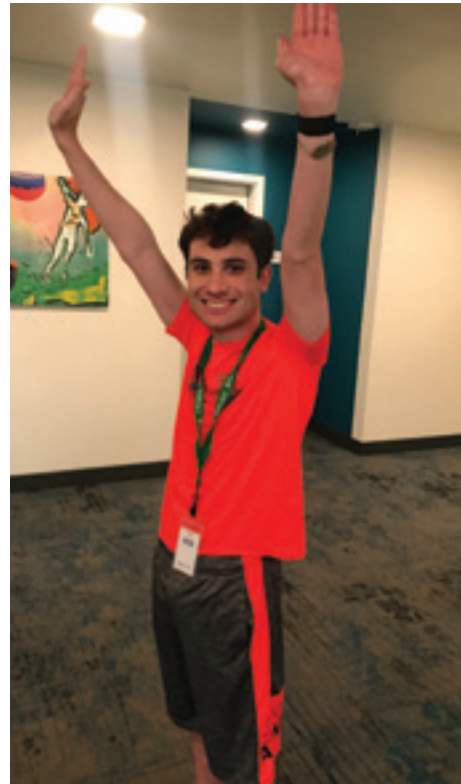
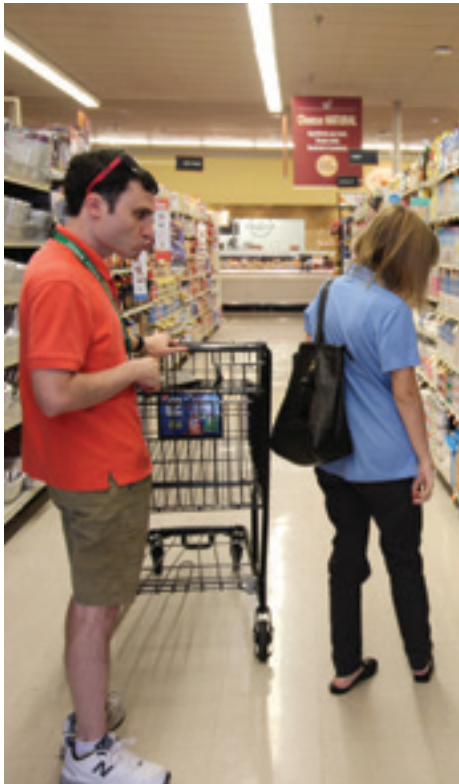
This certification continues building the community of opportunity started 22 years ago through the creation



of the Southwest Autism Research & Resource Center, launching of the Arizona Autism Coalition and development of First Place® AZ, an innovative and integrated supportive housing property in the heart of Phoenix now leasing apartments for adults with autism and other neuro-diversities, and enrolling Transition Academy students with autism.

Community building is a process. It requires vision, passion, grit, resilience and an ability to connect the dots—lots of them. It also requires sound fundamental strategies. Other things to consider in building community:

**CONNECT:** Get out of the “silo mentality” of one box for a specific age group and another for a different disorder. Organize by need, interests and complementary strengths to celebrate diversity that’s integrated, multilevel, multiagency and multigenerational. This vantage point produces richer experiences for everyone, as well as supports a life trajectory versus a specific destination, allowing for change and growth.



**REACH OUT:** Involve the broader community, not just the special needs community, in addressing pressing issues. Building community support is essential for the continuity of care and important life transitions. Coordinate among agencies at the local, state and federal levels; promote interagency collaboration, which can increase the efficiency, quality and cost-effectiveness of systems and reduce the enormous stress on individuals and their families.

**SCAFFOLD:** Identify and evaluate what’s already working in your community. Build and expand on your community’s assets. Collaboration, viable models and replication are all needed to create greater long-term equity, impact and sustainability.



First Place® Phoenix

**INNOVATE:** Public, private and charitable interests must be engaged. Consider how we can work together creatively to restructure the way existing government funding is allocated to housing resources for the developmentally disabled in order to grow a sustainable real estate supply over time.

**MEASURE:** Support the creation of new metrics to track value and quality of life outcomes. Only through collective efforts will public policy advances be possible.

**LEAD BY EXAMPLE:** The best way to change the undesirable statistics for individuals with autism is to work together, innovate, demonstrate success and open more doors for adults seeking homes, jobs, social connection and supportive communities.

Autism and its many related, pressing issues are not going away any time soon. But through dedication and collaboration, we are moving the needle toward enlightened and lasting change for the better—and Mesa is helping lead the way.



*Denise D. Resnik is the co-founder of the Southwest Autism Research & Resource Center (SARRC) and the founder and president/CEO of First Place AZ.*





# IN-MARKET CARE RESOURCES



Because Copa Health, powered by Marc Community Resources and Partners In Recovery, believes helping families and children with unique needs strengthens relationships and provides successful outcomes, we have partnered with Visit Mesa in offering services for families with children with Autism Spectrum Disorders. Copa Health strives to deliver support and resources to people throughout the community.

Copa Health, in support and partnership with Visit Mesa as an Autism Certified Destination, can offer specifically designed autism respite support for families to participate in leisure or other activities without guilt, fear or anxiety. We provide state-of-the-art, therapeutically-designed activity centers and planned activities led by a team of Board Certified Behavioral Analyst Professionals.

Copa Health's Autism Respite program strives to help autistic children and teens by reducing depression, stress and anxiety, building confidence and increasing socialization so that they can enjoy greater independence in a one-on-one program.

It is recommended to schedule your care needs ahead of your visit by contacting:



**Copa Health, Powered by Marc Community Resources and Partners In Recovery**

924 N. Country Club Dr., Mesa

(480) 969-3800

[copahealth.org](http://copahealth.org)

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & RESOURCES

Visit Mesa gives special thanks and gratitude to these organizations that serve our community – both visitors and residents - with sensory and cognitive disorders including Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).



## Anderson Center for Autism

(845) 889-4034

[andersoncenterforautism.org](http://andersoncenterforautism.org)

Anderson Center for Autism is a residential school for 124 students ranging in age from six to 21 years old who have autism based in New York. Their mission is Optimizing the Quality of Life for Individuals with autism. They produce 1 in 59, an educational radio show discussing topics related to ASD. Visit Mesa was recognized on their program in September 2019.



## Arizona Autism United

5025 E. Washington St., #212, Phoenix  
(602) 773-5773 • [azunited.org](http://azunited.org)

The mission of Arizona Autism United is to help as many families as possible with individualized supports. Our vision is to become a model autism organization that provides comprehensive services across the lifespan, with facilities throughout the state of Arizona.

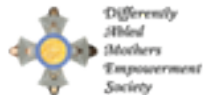


## Autism Society of Greater Phoenix

P.O. Box 10543, Phoenix

(480) 940-1093 • [phxautism.org](http://phxautism.org)

The Autism Society is the nation's leading grassroots autism organization. We work to increase public awareness about the day-to-day issues about people across the spectrum, advocate for appropriate services for individuals of every age, and provide the latest information regarding treatment, education, research, and advocacy.



## D.A.M.E.S.

**Differently Abled Mothers Empowerment Society**

9920 S Rural Rd #108-141, Tempe  
(602) 320-6556 • [damesusa.com](http://damesusa.com)

D.A.M.E.S. was created for mothers, by mothers of differently abled children with a mission to provide mothers with access to a community of peers via an online forum, monthly webinars with experts in education rights and disability rights, financial wellness and self-care, as well as access to weekly meditation, yoga and exercise classes that mothers can take whenever they find time in their busy schedules.



## DRA Collective

717 East Maryland Ave., #110, Phoenix  
(602) 956-8834 • [dracollective.com](http://dracollective.com)

DRA Collective represents a carefully curated team, deep with professional talent. The influence of founder, Denise D. Resnik, persists throughout their bespoke approach to public relations and marketing. Each client receives the utmost attention to detail and benefits from strategic planning customized around their mission and vision.



## East Valley Autism Network (EVAN)

[facebook.com/East-Valley-Autism-Network](https://facebook.com/East-Valley-Autism-Network)

EVAN is a parent-led support group providing hope, resources, information, and support for families with children on the autism spectrum. We welcome all families who would like to network and help each other get the services and education our children need. Reach out today to learn more about this amazing group of parents in the East Valley.





### First Place®

3001 N 3rd St, Phoenix  
(602) 464-6600 • [firstplaceaz.org](http://firstplaceaz.org)

First Place Fosters community connections, promotes independent living & improves quality of life for adults with autism, Asperger's, Down Syndrome & more.



### Hopebridge Autism Therapy Centers

3602 E. Greenway Rd, Suite 102, Phoenix  
(855) 324-0885 • [hopebridge.com](http://hopebridge.com)

Hopebridge Autism Therapy Centers improve the quality of lives of children and families touched by Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).



### Pal Experiences

(608) 345-0507 • [palexperiences.org](http://palexperiences.org)

Pal Experiences mission is to more successfully include people of all abilities in society. We do this by partnering with venues and creating custom tools that support families impacted by autism and related developmental disabilities, building a community where everyone gets to go.



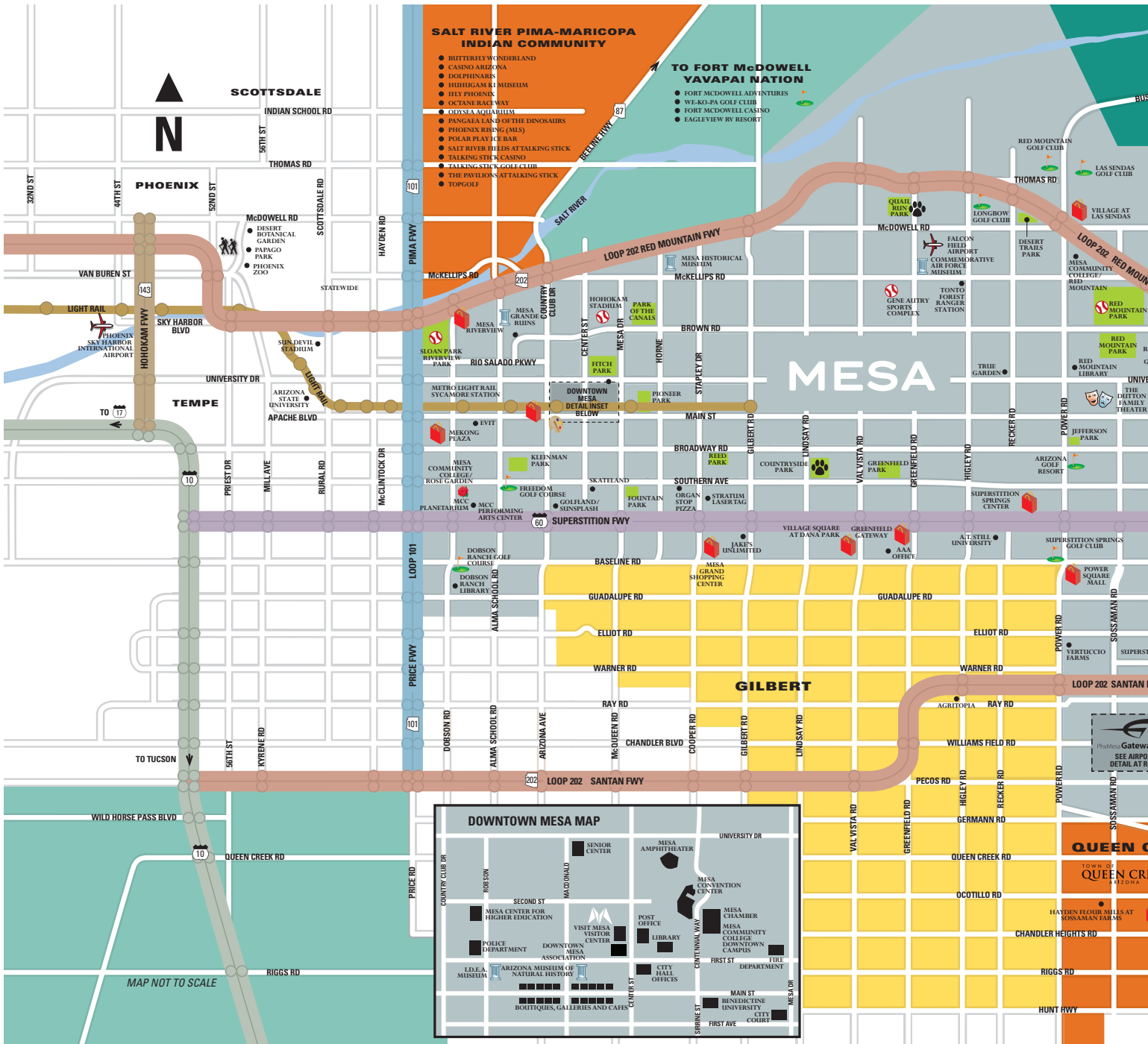
### Southwest Autism Research & Resource Center (SAARC)

300 N 18th Street, Phoenix  
(602) 340-8717 • [autismcenter.org](http://autismcenter.org)

Southwest Autism Research & Resource Center (SARRC) is an internationally recognized nonprofit that conducts innovative research, promotes evidence-based practices, disseminates effective training and builds inclusive communities for individuals with autism and their families.



*Sloan Park, Home of Chicago Cubs Spring Training*





## GETTING HERE

### Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport

6033 S. Sossaman Rd, Mesa  
(480) 988-7600 • [gatewayairport.com](http://gatewayairport.com)

Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport makes travel **just plane easy**® with nonstop service to more than 45 destinations! Passengers will enjoy delicious dining, eclectic shopping, private Mother's Rooms, and two outdoor courtyards while awaiting departure. Passengers arriving at Gateway will appreciate the ease of travel from a conveniently located baggage claim to rental cars parked just steps away from the terminal.

#### Allegiant

(702) 505-8888 • [allegiant.com](http://allegiant.com)

#### Swoop

(587) 441-1001 • [flyswoop.com](http://flyswoop.com)

#### WestJet (US)

(888) 937-8538 (US)  
[westjet.com](http://westjet.com)

### Falcon Field Airport

4800 E. Falcon Dr., Mesa  
(480) 644-2450 • [falconfieldairport.com](http://falconfieldairport.com)

In the heart of Mesa and the surrounding metropolitan region, Falcon Field is Mesa's general aviation airport serving private, corporate and military aircraft. Amenities include a newly renovated terminal, full pilot/passenger services, aircraft charters, recreational and sight-seeing flights, and a vintage aircraft museum and warbird rides.

### Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport

3400 E. Sky Harbor Blvd., Phoenix  
(602) 273-3300 • [skyharbor.com](http://skyharbor.com)





*Bulldog Cliffs, Lower Salt River ©Michael Paul PhotoWorks*





[autismtravelaz.com](http://autismtravelaz.com)