

# THE PEOPLE *of* SOUTHERN ARIZONA

A FEW OF OUR  
FAVORITE LOCALS PUT  
THEIR SPIN ON PLACES  
TO VISIT **BY STACEY GREGORY**

*By C. Jill Hofer with  
an introduction by  
Stacey Gregory*

The mild fall, winter, and spring weather draw people from all over the world to Southern Arizona. This collection of fun and funky residents come from all walks of life, each with a unique perspective on the desert lifestyle and landscape. We've invited a few to share their recommendations to put a local spin on your visit to our wildly wonderful oasis.



C. JILL HOFER TUCSON

You'll be hard-pressed to meet a more positive person than C. Jill Hofer. This Tucson transplant was born near Cincinnati, Ohio, and found her way here in 1996 with her lifelong partner, Brad. She's a jeweler, fire dancer, volunteer, world traveler, landlord (their residential rentals come complete with "Tucson To Do" lists), and a writer. In fact, you might recognize her name; she's a feature writer for Tucson Guide. So, who better to tell her story than Jill?

#### IN JILL'S WORDS

I fell under Tucson's sunny spell fast and hard. The Old Pueblo is like a dust devil, swirling with inspiring connections, synchronicities, and a myriad of open-door opportunities to learn, connect, uplift, and create.

One of my top tips is to take advantage of continuing education via Pima College, Parks & Recreation, and Xerocraft, among others. I've been greatly influenced by countless classes and the abundance of talented visionaries who call T-Town home. Befriending Alex Streeter, famed NYC silversmith turned Tucsonan, was pivotal. Learning the art of fire dancing from Nadia Hagen of Flam Chen, our world-class pyrotechnic theatrical group, also changed my life.

Get involved! Volunteering deepened my desert roots and paved the way to lifelong friendships and proud accomplishments, including being named Humane Individual of the Year by the Humane Society. Tucson's bursting creativity and civic sensibility combined to spark my imagination and galvanized into my own fundraising jewelry company.



I founded A Nice World to serve dual purposes. It's a creative outlet and a conduit to support causes I hold dear. Each collection donates accordingly, from Braille jewelry and nature-based designs to stars, halos, and boomerang charms that acknowledge kindness. Custom fundraiser jewelry, membership items, and donor gifts have benefited the All Souls Procession, Rialto Theatre, BICAS (Bicycle Inter-Community Art and Salvage), El Casino Ballroom, the YWCA, Juneteenth, KXCI Community Radio, Operation Underground Railroad, and more.

## RAVES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Over the years, I've developed a Tucson "To-Do & Ta-Da" list, and I'll share a few faves. Wander the Presidio District to see the Museum of Art, Old Town Artisans, and Creative Machines' public art. Get a taste of history at El Charro and a glimpse of our Indigenous cultures at the Presidio Museum. Wind through the colorful streets of Barrio Viejo to place a candle at the

Tiradito Shrine and peruse the free sidewalk art gallery on Simpson Street between Stone and Convent Avenues. Cross the Luis Gutierrez Bridge for solar art, and walk through the Snake Bridge for an "only-in-Tucson" stroll.

Time your trip with a Downtown Saturday Night or an Art's District Walk. Hop the streetcar to explore Congress Street, 4th Avenue, University Boulevard, The University of Arizona campus, and to catch an event at the MSA Annex. Drive Gate's Pass, bike The Loop, or walk up "A" Mountain. Visitors can take a piece of Tucson home via KXCI Community Radio online.

I never miss the All Souls Procession, the Easter Deer Dance, or African Village at the Gem Show. Outside Tucson, "GLOW!" is an otherworldly illuminated art ranch experience in Oracle, Arizona. The Artemizia Foundation in Bisbee, Arizona, boasts a contemporary art collection beyond belief. In Safford, Arizona, the Essence of Tranquility hot springs is an annual pilgrimage.

## CUISINE FROM COMFORT TO CONTEMPORARY

My "Tucsonilicious" recommendation list is packed with innovative fusion restaurants and international hot spots like BATA, Bambolé, Hee Mee, Roma Imports, Govinda's, American Eat Co., Sushi Lounge, and Monsoon Chocolates to impress the guests.

I have a saying. "A day without Mexican food...is a sentence I won't bother finishing." Take a slow roll down 12th Avenue for an authentic vibe and a smorgasbord of choices. Visit the city of South Tucson, a unique one-square-mile municipality bursting with historic eateries. This city has stolen my heart; I purchased a community corner on 6th Avenue, and I share the love on Instagram @CityofSouthTucsonAtoZ.

Tucson is a veritable treasure chest overflowing with gems to explore, discover, and devour. My best advice is to pick up a Tucson Guide to even begin to grasp the wealth of opportunities the Old Pueblo has to offer.