Sedona & Grand Canyon

A 3-Day Road Trip — I-Journey

A 3-day self-drive loop through northern Arizona's red-rock country: Sedona's Uptown galleries and a sunset over Airport Mesa on arrival, a full day of jeep-trail switchbacks through Broken Arrow and a hike up Cathedral Rock's saddle, then the switchback drive up Oak Creek Canyon to a night on the rim of the Grand Canyon itself — with real hotels, licensed tour operators, and 2026 prices for every stop.

DURATION	BEST TIME TO GO	FROM
3 Days	March–May & September–November	$820 USD / person

DAY 1 — Phoenix to Sedona: Red Rocks & Sunset

Land in Phoenix, drive two hours north into red-rock country, and spend the afternoon settling into Sedona's Uptown before a first sunset over the buttes.

Self-Drive & Uptown Sedona

~2 hours drive from Phoenix, then ~2 hours self-guided · Rental car from $70 USD/day, mid-size SUV

Pick up a rental car at Phoenix Sky Harbor and drive north on I-17 and Highway 179, watching the desert give way to red sandstone buttes. Spend the afternoon browsing Uptown Sedona's shops and the Spanish-colonial courtyards of Tlaquepaque Arts & Crafts Village, a short walk from the center of town.

Sunset at Airport Mesa Overlook

~45 minutes, self-guided · Red Rock Pass required, $5 USD/day parking

A short, steep road climbs to a mesa above the Sedona airport for one of the best panoramic sunset views in town — Capitol Butte, Coffee Pot Rock, and Thunder Mountain all catch the evening light at once. Arrive 30 minutes early; the small lot fills fast.

Dinner — Elote Cafe

~1.5 hours · $30–45 USD/person · no reservations, arrive at opening

A Sedona institution for modern Mexican cooking — roasted corn with cotija and lime, smoked pork shank, and a red-rock-view patio. The restaurant doesn't take reservations, so plan to arrive right at opening or expect a wait.

Elote Cafe · +1 928 203 0105 · elotecafe.com

Overnight — Amara Resort & Spa

From $280–350 USD/night, for 2 people

A creekside boutique resort a five-minute walk from Uptown, with a terraced pool deck looking straight at Sedona's red-rock skyline — the most central base for a two-night stay, walkable to dinner both evenings.

Amara Resort & Spa · +1 844 489 9662 · amararesort.com

DAY 2 Jeep Trails & Cathedral Rock

A full day in red-rock country: a bone-rattling Pink Jeep tour through Broken Arrow in the morning, then the short, steep climb up Cathedral Rock's iconic saddle in the afternoon.

Pink Jeep Tours — Broken Arrow

~2 hours · $157 USD/adult, $147 USD/child

Sedona's original jeep-tour operator, running since 1960, takes its open-air pink jeeps over slickrock domes and through the narrow sandstone squeeze of Devil's Dining Room on the Broken Arrow trail — the single most-booked adventure in town, so reserve at least a few days ahead.

Pink Adventure Tours (Pink Jeep Tours) · +1 800 873 3662 · pinkadventuretours.com

Cathedral Rock Trail Hike

~1.5 hours round-trip, moderate-to-strenuous · Red Rock Pass, $5 USD/day parking

A short but steep 1.2-mile round-trip climb, with some hand-over-hand scrambling near the top, to the saddle between Cathedral Rock's twin spires — arguably Sedona's most photographed formation, and the reward is a 360-degree view over Oak Creek and the Village of Oak Creek.

Dinner — Mariposa Latin Inspired Grill

~1.5 hours · $45–65 USD/person · reservations recommended

South American grilled meats and ceviche on a bluff-top patio with unobstructed red-rock views at sunset — book a window or patio table a day or two ahead, especially on weekends.

Mariposa Latin Inspired Grill · +1 928 862 4444 · mariposasedona.com

Overnight — Amara Resort & Spa

From $280–350 USD/night, for 2 people

A second night at the same creekside resort — no need to repack before tomorrow's early start north.

Amara Resort & Spa · +1 844 489 9662 · amararesort.com

DAY 3 Oak Creek Canyon to the Grand Canyon

The switchback drive up Oak Creek Canyon gives way to ponderosa forest and, two hours later, the first overlook of the Grand Canyon itself — a night on the South Rim closes out the trip.

Scenic Drive — Oak Creek Canyon (Highway 89A)

~1.5 hours, self-guided · Free (Red Rock Pass not required north of Sedona)

Highway 89A climbs out of Sedona through Oak Creek Canyon's switchbacks, a shaded corridor of red-rock walls and creekside cottonwoods that turns gold in October and November — pull off at the Oak Creek Vista overlook at the top of the switchbacks before continuing north toward Flagstaff and the canyon.

Grand Canyon South Rim — Rim Trail & Mather Point

~2 hours, self-guided · $35 USD/vehicle, 7-day park pass

Mather Point is most visitors' first look into the canyon, just steps from the visitor center — from there, the paved Rim Trail runs both directions along the edge with free shuttle stops, making it easy to walk a mile or two between overlooks without backtracking to the car.

Grand Canyon National Park · +1 928 638 7888 · nps.gov/grca

Desert View Watchtower & Sunset

~1 hour, self-guided · Included with park entry

A 70-foot stone watchtower designed by Mary Colter in 1932, 25 miles east along Desert View Drive, with an interior spiral staircase past Hopi murals to an observation deck framing the canyon's widest, quietest view — a fitting spot for the trip's final sunset.

Overnight — El Tovar Hotel

From $350–450 USD/night, for 2 people · book 6–13 months ahead

A 1905 log-and-limestone lodge perched directly on the canyon rim, the only hotel at Grand Canyon Village with that distinction — rooms book out many months in advance, so reserve as soon as the trip is confirmed; Yavapai Lodge, a short shuttle ride from the rim, is the reliable budget alternative when El Tovar is full.

El Tovar Hotel (Central Reservations) · +1 888 297 2757 · grandcanyonlodges.com