

Our Community (updated 10-2021)

City of Chandler, Maricopa County, Arizona



Welcome to the Valley of the Sun!

Valley Unitarian Universalist Congregation is located in Chandler, Arizona, a suburb of the sprawling metropolitan area around Phoenix, which itself is the capital of Arizona, and the fifth largest city in the country (pop. 1.6m). VUU actually serves a broad swath of the region collectively known as the “East Valley” which includes parts of south Phoenix, Tempe (pop. 181k), Chandler (pop. 276k), Mesa (pop. 504k), Gilbert (pop. 268k), and more. Because the city is so large, many long-term residents have yet to explore all that the metropolis has to offer. So VUU is happy to provide you with our own special “insider’s guide” to the community, and some of our favorite places and activities.

The City of Chandler is one of the fastest growing communities in the country over the past twenty years. Chandler was voted one of Money Magazine’s “100 Best Places to Live” and serves both an older and a younger demographic. It has been named one of the “5 Great Places to Live (and retire)” by AARP, and among the “100 Best Communities for Young People” by the Alliance for Youth.

In 2019, 20,887 millennials migrated to Arizona (and primarily to the Phoenix area), according to [SmartAsset](#), which used the most recently available US Census Bureau data. The migration meant that 23% of Phoenix's population is now millennials, and the city’s medium age is now 34.

VUU is located just on the border of Chandler, Tempe and Phoenix. In fact, the school district for the community is the Tempe Union High School District and Kyrene (Tempe) District for elementary and middle schools. Both are among the highest rated public schools within the

state. And Tempe is home to one of the largest public universities in the country, Arizona State. Our membership includes many current and retired professors and staff, as well as many graduate and undergraduate students. Beyond college-bound students and professionals, the community also features an outstanding vocational training program at the East Valley Institute of Technology. For over 30



years this school has offered career training in fields from Arts, Audio/Video Tech & Communication, Auto & Transportation Services, Construction Technologies, Culinary Arts & Hospitality, Engineering, Health Sciences, Human Services, Information Technology, Manufacturing Trades and Public Safety.

The economic base for Phoenix is diverse and growing. Founded in the 1800's for its ideal agricultural two-season growing conditions, it grew tremendously in the early 1900's to serve those with respiratory conditions (which led to a large medical sector that still exists today). The next big growth spurt happened around WWII as Phoenix became a military training base, especially for pilots, and that aircraft industry is still here producing parts for helicopters and training pilots at Luke Air Force base in the West Valley. The semiconductor industry became a major employer 40 years ago in Chandler anchored by Intel Corp which is currently adding to their operations, building one of the largest Fabs in the world. The auto industry has long operated test drive facilities in the Valley because of the ideal weather conditions. And now three electric car companies have set up manufacturing facilities in Arizona. Due largely to the weather, the Phoenix area boasts a significant tourism industry, including the popular resort destinations in Paradise Valley and Scottsdale (two more suburbs) and the many golf courses throughout the area.

The large population of both young and old has attracted significant investments in medical research. So, Phoenix has a vast downtown genomic research consortium, and top rated national medical centers. These including Barrow Neurological Institute, MD Anderson Cancer Center, Mayo Clinic & Hospital, Cancer Treatment Centers of America, and Phoenix Children's Hospital all collaborating with all three state public universities and Translational Genomics Institute, a division of City of Hope.

For entertainment, you will have easy access to the arts and culture of the Phoenix area, such as the renowned [Heard Museum](#) (for Native American art and culture), [Musical Instrument Museum](#), [Phoenix Art Museum](#), [Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin West](#), and [Desert Botanical Garden](#) (especially their Luminaria Nights each December) to name but only a few. The downtown Phoenix area has a thriving live music scene, from the nationally recognized jazz club

[The Nash](#), to indie rock, and country venues. There is also a healthy arts district that includes galleries and a “First Friday” monthly street festival with sidewalk artists, and where many of the galleries and gardens are free to the public on these nights, including the [Japanese Friendship Garden](#) and the [Irish Cultural Center](#). Also make sure to check out the popular [murals of Phoenix](#).



The food scene is similarly packed with diverse opportunities, with some top-rated national restauranteurs exploring new concepts in Phoenix all the time. Fusion restaurants, like Chino Bandito, pop up here in ways that they don't in Texas or Southern California. Some other local favorites include: Barrio Café/Barrio Queen, Cocina Madrigal, Pizzeria Bianco, Postinos, Snooze Eatery, Bobby-Q's, Lo-Lo's Chicken & Waffles, Pomo Pizzeria, Blanco Tacos, Matt's Big Breakfast, Fez, St. Francis, Farmhouse Restaurant, Joe's Real BBQ, Joyride Tacos, Culinary Dropout and many more. Phoenix also is a secret vegan paradise, with several great locations along 7th Street.

Pair your culinary adventures with the areas growing brewery and distillery scene. We have one of the best curated bar experiences in the country: Platform 18 serves early 20th century cocktails in a mocked-up train car. Undertow is like having a drink on the Jungle Cruise at Disneyland. Bitter and Twisted has one of the best cocktail menus in the U.S. Other local favorites include: Brickhouse in Chandler, FilmBar in downtown Phoenix, OHSO Brewery, Four Peak's Brewery, Arizona Distilling Company, SanTan Brewing, State 48 Brewery, Adventurous Stills, and more. If coffee is more your scene, we've got a great host of local shops, including: King Coffee, Extreme Bean, Gold Bar, Romancing the Bean, Infusion, Coffee Rush, Grand Central, Lux, Press, Giant, and others.

We have many unique institutions in the Valley, and in the East Valley that add to the quality, diversity and richness of our lives. Founded in 2009, [Local First Arizona](#) is a nonprofit organization committed to community and economic development throughout Arizona. This not only promotes our local economy, but promotes equity and sustainability. Some of the businesses they champion are themselves, treasures of our community. [Changing Hands](#) has been nationally recognized as one of the top five independent bookstores in America, that it hosts more than 300 events yearly at its two locations in Tempe and

Changing Hands Bookstore
September 1

AUTOGRAPH ALERT. PREORDER NOW! We've got a limited supply of THE 1619 PROJECT: A NEW ORIGIN STORY, signed by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, author, editor, professor, and #1619Project creator @nikolehannahjones.

Out 11/16. Preorder yours: bit.ly/1619Signed

Signed Copies
AVAILABLE FOR PREORDER NOW

The
1619
Project

WHILE SUPPLIES LAST

Phoenix and that many famous authors only come to Changing Hands and one or two other independent bookstores for signing talks. Another local business that promotes local groups and causes is [State Forty Eight](#), a Chandler-based apparel line company (primarily t-shirts, hats, etc) shares their passion and appreciation for the great state of Arizona.

Cultural attractions in the Phoenix area include several excellent performing arts venues like the [Herberger Theater](#) and [the Orpheum](#), that feature groups including Phoenix Theater Company, Arizona Theater Company (Az's regional Equity theater). And [Gammage Auditorium](#) on the ASU Tempe campus hosts an annual schedule of touring Broadway productions. Other great local venues include the Rhythm Room, Crescent Ballroom, Rebel Lounge, The Van Buren, and Celebrity Theater.

Phoenix is home to almost every imaginable professional sport: Arizona Cardinals football (and the occasional Super Bowl is hosted here town as well), Arizona Diamondbacks baseball, Phoenix Suns and Phoenix Mercury pro basketball, Phoenix Rising soccer club, NASCAR Cup series, PGA, LPGA and Senior Tour stops. There are major college sports here too, with both



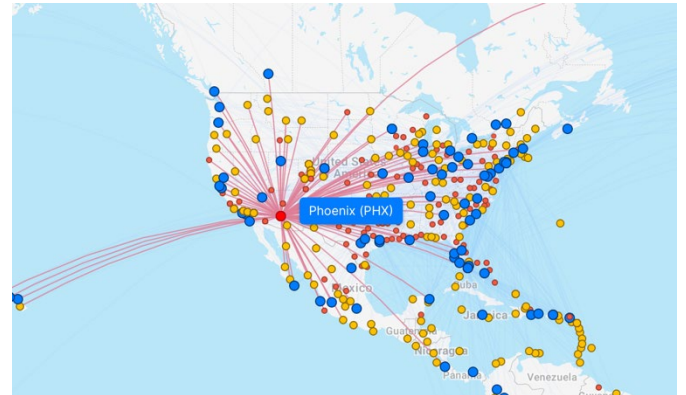
Arizona State University and Grand Canyon University fielding Division I sports teams. And many special sporting events are held annually or frequently, including MLB spring training (for 15 teams), the Fiesta Bowl, frequent Final Four and other NCAA tournament events, and more. We've even got roller derby!

Beyond that, Arizona has a myriad of outdoor activities to choose from year-round: gardening, hiking, golf, and mountain-biking are just a few. South Mountain Preserve is the largest urban park in the United States and is within minutes of VUU, and a bit further afield with a 45-minute drive, you can hike, camp and even explore white water rafting in the stunning Superstition Mountains to the east of the Valley, or escape to entirely different terrain within two hours drive to enjoy forested camping in the Arizona "Rim Country" or explore the snowboarding and skiing opportunities in Flagstaff or in Arizona's White Mountain Sunrise Resort. Suffice it to say, residents of the state enjoy active lifestyles.

Phoenix is a great central location to explore the Great American Southwest. Within a spectacular three-to five-hour drive, you can gaze at the red rocks of Sedona, the extraordinary rock spires of Monument Valley, the amazing grandeur of the Grand Canyon and the astonishing colors of the Painted Desert, among other places. Prescott, Pinetop and Flagstaff are popular summertime getaways where you will enjoy a 20-30 degree drop in temperatures from those in Phoenix, and in wintertime, there are three ski resorts to check out. Other popular "get aways" include Las Vegas (5 hr drive/40 min flight), San Diego and its beaches (6 hr drive/1 hr flight), Los Angeles and Anaheim (6 hr drive/1 hr flight), and Rocky Point, Mexico (<4

hr drive). The natural beauty of the Arizona desert and its variety are truly wonders and the reason Arizona is one of the premier tourist destinations in the world.

Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport is under twenty minutes drive from VUU. The airport serves numerous national carriers, which provide direct flights to 80+ locations throughout the country and to over 17 international destinations within England, Germany, Canada, Mexico and Costa Rica. The East Valley is also home to a newer regional airport, Phoenix-Mesa Gateway, with service by five airlines to over 80 cities across the U.S.



All and all, the Valley of the Sun is a great place to live, play, work, raise a family and retire!