The Tucson Relocation Guide

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Chapter 1: Welcome

Most people who move to Tucson can point to one moment when the place clicked. A lot of the time it happens in winter. You step outside in January in a t-shirt, the sun is out, the Catalina Mountains are right there in front of you, and you think about what the weather is doing back home. Then you look at what a house costs here compared to where you came from, and the idea stops being a daydream.

That is the honest start of most Tucson moves. People do not move here because a brochure told them to. When the National Association of REALTORS asked movers why they relocated in 2024, 42 percent said housing, 26 percent said family, and 16 percent said work. Tucson fits all three. Houses cost less here than in Phoenix and a lot less than in the coastal cities people leave. Retirees come for the winters and the golf. Families come because a normal salary buys a normal house with a yard. Military families come because Davis-Monthan Air Force Base is here. Remote workers come because the math works.

Here is what this guide is, and what it is not.

It is a plain walk through the things you actually need to decide: what it costs, what the weather really does, how the water picture looks, which part of town fits your life, where the jobs are, how the schools shake out, and how to buy a house here when you live somewhere else. Every number in it is dated, because relocation numbers go stale fast and a lot of what you will read online is years out of date or copied from some other city.

It is not a sales pitch. Tucson has real trade-offs, and this guide puts them up front in the next chapter instead of burying them. Summer is hot. You will drive a lot. The desert has animals in it that you do not have now. If those things are deal breakers, better to know it on page two than after you have bought a house.

One more thing before we start. Tucson is not one place. It is a metro of about 1.09 million people (Pima County, 2025) spread across a valley ringed by four mountain ranges, and the suburbs around it feel like different towns because they are. Oro Valley is not Marana. Green Valley is not Vail. Picking the right part of the metro matters more than picking the right house, because you can change almost anything about a house except where it sits. That is why this guide spends more time on areas than on houses.

Read it in order the first time. After that, keep it around for the checklist in Chapter 9 when your move gets real.

Chapter 2: The Honest Pros and Cons

Every relocation guide has a pros and cons page. Most of them hide the cons in soft language. This one will not, because the cons are the part you cannot find out from a listing photo.

The pros

Your money goes further. The median price for an existing single-family home in the Tucson metro was $387,600 in the third quarter of 2026 (National Association of REALTORS). The same measure put Phoenix at $471,000 and the US at $432,900. Overall cost of living sits about 3 percent below the national average (Bureau of Economic Analysis regional price data, 2024), and housing is the part that is well below average. Chapter 3 does the math in detail.

Winter is the real thing. January highs average in the mid 60s. Tucson gets about 3,800 hours of sunshine a year. From October through April, this is some of the best weather in the country, and it is not close.

The desert is not a backdrop, it is the place. Saguaro National Park sits on both the east and west sides of town. Four mountain ranges ring the valley. The Loop gives you over 130 miles of paved path for bikes and walking. People who like being outside get a lot of year out of this town.

The food is taken seriously. Tucson was the first city in the US named a UNESCO City of Gastronomy. That sounds like a trivia fact until you eat here for a month. The Mexican food alone is worth the move for some people.

It is a real city without big-city weight. About a million people, a major university, a Level I trauma center, an Air Force base, and still you can get across most of town in 30 minutes outside of rush hour. Traffic exists. It is not Phoenix traffic, and it is nothing like Los Angeles or Austin at their worst.

Taxes are low and simple. Arizona has a flat 2.5 percent state income tax, the lowest flat rate in the country among states that tax income, and Arizona does not tax Social Security. Property taxes run low by national standards too. Details in Chapter 3.

The cons

Summer is hot, and it lasts. June through September is the price of admission. Tucson averages about 68 days a year at 100 degrees or more on the long-term record, and recent years have run hotter than that average. Chapter 4 gives you the real numbers, the normal ones and the recent ones, because they tell two different stories and you deserve both.

You will drive. Tucson is spread out and the bus system mostly serves the city itself. Outside the center, walkability is low and a car is not optional. Suburb to suburb drives run 25 to 50 minutes. If you want to walk to coffee and take a train to work, this is the wrong metro.

The desert has residents. Scorpions, rattlesnakes, javelinas, coyotes. You will probably see some of them. Encounters are rarer and less dramatic than people fear, and a quarterly pest control service handles most of the scorpion worry, but if the idea of a scorpion in the house bothers you deeply, know that it can happen here. Chapter 10 answers this one head-on.

Wages trail the coasts. The same job often pays less here. That is fine if you are retired, remote, or bringing equity from a house sale somewhere expensive. It matters if you are moving here first and job hunting second. The job market is deep in defense, health care, education, and logistics, and thin in some other fields. Chapter 6 lays it out.

Monsoon storms and dust are part of summer. From mid June to the end of September, afternoon storms roll in off the mountains. They cool things down and they are beautiful to watch, and they also flood washes, knock out power now and then, and make driving dangerous for an hour at a time. You learn the rhythm. Chapter 4 covers it.

Some areas are far from everything. The cheap new house at the edge of a fast-growing suburb can mean a long drive to work, to the hospital, and to the airport. People buy for the postcard and regret the Tuesday. This guide will keep pointing at commute times for a reason.

Neither list should decide for you by itself. The people who stay happy here are the ones who knew both lists before they came and chose the trade on purpose.

Chapter 3: What It Costs

Relocation content loves big claims about cheap living. Here is the rule for this chapter: every number has a source and a date, and where sources disagree, this guide says so instead of picking the prettiest number.

The house price picture

Start with the one series this guide uses for metro prices, and use it the same way every time:

- **Tucson metro, existing single-family median: $387,600** (National Association of REALTORS, third quarter of 2026)
- **Phoenix metro, same series: $471,000**
- **United States, same series: $432,900**

On that measure, Tucson runs about 18 percent below Phoenix and about 10 percent below the country. You will see lower numbers quoted for Tucson, around $320,000 to $368,000. Those are usually the city of Tucson only, or all home types instead of single-family, or a different

month. They are not wrong, they are measuring something else. When you compare cities, compare the same series.

Inside the metro, the spread is the story. One recent snapshot of suburb medians (November 2026) put them roughly like this:

- Sahuarita: about $350,000
- Vail and Rita Ranch: about $410,000
- Marana: about $450,000 to $470,000
- Oro Valley: about $555,000 to $580,000
- Catalina Foothills: about $670,000 to $690,000

The most expensive suburb costs about twice the cheapest one, inside the same metro, with the same weather. Where you land matters more than when you buy.

Cost of living overall

The most careful measure, from the Bureau of Economic Analysis, puts the Tucson metro at about 97 on a scale where the US average is 100 (2024). So the honest claim is this: overall, Tucson is a little below the national average, and housing is the part that is well below it. Anyone telling you Tucson is 25 percent cheaper across the board is selling something. What is true is that the biggest line in your budget, the house, costs a lot less than in Phoenix, California, Seattle, or Denver, and that is where the savings live.

A worked example of the comparison people actually make: a family selling in the Phoenix metro at the median of $471,000 and buying at the Tucson median of $387,600 is looking at roughly $83,000 of difference on the same kind of measure. For a lot of movers, that difference is the down payment problem solved, or the mortgage cut down to a size that lets one income carry it.

Property tax, with a worked example

Arizona's average effective property tax rate is about 0.48 percent, one of the lowest in the country (Tax Foundation). Pima County runs at the high end for Arizona, typically about 0.7 percent effective. Your actual bill depends on the assessed value of your home and which city, school, and fire districts overlap it, so two houses at the same price can have different bills.

Worked example: a $400,000 home in Pima County at about 0.7 percent effective comes to roughly $2,800 a year in property tax, or about $233 a month. The median property tax actually paid in Pima County is $2,272 a year. Budget with the worked example, and check the real number on any house you get serious about. It takes two minutes and it is part of the public record.

Income tax

Simple version: Arizona charges a flat 2.5 percent state income tax. It has been that way since tax year 2023. It is the lowest flat rate among states that have an income tax. Arizona does not tax Social Security benefits. For retirees and remote workers moving from high-tax states, this line alone can be worth real money every year. Run your own numbers with your own tax person before you move, because everyone has deductions and details this guide cannot see.

The costs people forget

- **Air conditioning.** Summer electric bills are the trade for cheap winters. Budget for high bills June through September and near-nothing heating bills the rest of the year. A well-sealed house with a newer AC unit costs a lot less to cool. This is an inspection item, not a footnote.
- **Pest control.** A quarterly service is standard here, not a luxury. It is cheap insurance against scorpions and it belongs in your monthly budget from day one.
- **HOA fees.** Many suburbs, especially the master-planned ones and the 55 plus communities, carry monthly HOA fees, and Green Valley adds its recreation fees on top. Read them before you fall for a house.
- **Driving.** Two cars is the norm for couples here because there is no real alternative in most areas. Fuel, insurance, and tires are part of the cost of living in a spread-out metro.

Chapter 4: Climate, Monsoon, and Water

The climate, in numbers

These are the long-term normals from NOAA, the 1991 to 2020 record, which is the fair baseline:

- Rain: 10.61 inches a year
- June average high: 101.2 degrees
- July average high: 100.2 degrees
- January average high: 66.5 degrees, average low 40.8 degrees
- Days at 100 degrees or more: about 68 a year
- Days at 90 degrees or more: about 158 a year
- Nights at freezing or below: about 12 a year

Tucson sits at about 2,400 feet of elevation, which is why it runs several degrees cooler than Phoenix. In one recent comparison through early October 2025, Tucson had about 78 days at 100 or more while Phoenix had about 122. Hot is hot, but the two cities are not the same hot.

The part the normals do not tell you

Recent years have run hotter than the 1991 to 2020 baseline, and you should plan on the recent version, not the average. In 2024, Tucson set a record with 112 days at 100 degrees or more. In 2026, the first 100-degree day arrived on March 19, the earliest on record, and the year finished the monsoon season with 77 days at 100 or more. Summer is also starting earlier than it used to.

What this means in daily life: from June into September, you plan your day around the heat. Yard work, walks, and hikes happen early. Errands happen in the morning or after the sun drops. Pools, shade, and a good AC unit are not extras. Then October arrives, and you get about seven months of weather that people in most of the country would pay extra for. Locals will tell you summer is the tax and winter is the refund. That is about right.

Monsoon

The official monsoon season runs June 15 to September 30. A normal season brings about 5.69 inches of rain, close to half the year's total. In 2026 the season delivered 5.76 inches, right at normal.

Here is how it works in practice. A summer day builds heat until mid afternoon, clouds pile up over the mountains, and a storm rolls through with wind, dust, lightning, and hard rain that can drop an inch in an hour. Then it clears, the temperature falls 15 or 20 degrees, and the desert smells like creosote. It is the best part of summer.

The rules that come with it: never drive through a flooded wash (Arizona has a law about it, and people die ignoring it), expect some streets to close briefly during big storms, and know that dust storms can cut visibility to near zero on the highways. You will get the rhythm within one season.

Water: the question everyone asks

Short answer: Tucson is not running out of water, and the long answer is more interesting than the headline.

Tucson Water holds a Designation of Assured Water Supply from the state. The current designation runs through 2037 and reflects the state's 100-year sufficiency standard. In the city's own September 2026 water advisory minutes, the numbers were about 225,000 acre-feet of available resources against about 95,000 acre-feet of current drinking water demand. The city uses far less than its full supply. Tucson has been banking Colorado River water underground for decades, in recharge basins in Avra Valley west of town, and that stored water is a real cushion.

The supply mix is roughly 70 percent Colorado River water through the Central Arizona Project canal, about 15 percent groundwater, and about 15 percent recycled water. Conservation is a big part of why the math works: Tucson uses about the same total water it did decades ago with far more people in it.

Now the honest nuance, because you will read about it anyway. Colorado River cuts are real. Tucson's canal allocation is expected to fall about 14 percent in 2027, roughly 20,000 acre-feet. The city's planning treats most of that as offset by the banked water, and there is more uncertainty about 2028 and beyond. The fair way to say it: the supply is shifting, the city planned for the shift better than most desert cities, and water bills may rise over time. That is a different picture from running dry, and it is the true one.

One caution. The assured supply rules work differently for rural lots and homes on wells outside the city's service area. If you fall for a property outside Tucson Water's system, ask where the water comes from and get the answer in writing before you buy. Chapter 8 comes back to this.

Chapter 5: The Areas

Read this chapter with a map open. Prices below are the November 2026 suburb snapshot from Chapter 3, given so you can feel the spread, not as a quote on any one house. Commute times are to downtown or the University of Arizona area unless noted, and all of them get worse at rush hour. Test your real commute at the real time before you buy. That one habit saves more regret than any other advice in this guide.

Tucson itself

The city is the center everything else orbits: the University of Arizona, downtown, the hospitals, and neighborhoods with real age on them, from adobe houses near the university to mid-century ranches further out. Sam Hughes, near the university, is the classic in-town neighborhood people picture. Midtown puts you 15 minutes from almost everything. The trade-off for city living is the school picture, covered in Chapter 7, and housing stock that ranges from beautiful to tired on the same street. Who it fits: people who work at the university or the hospitals, people who want to be near things more than they want a big new house, and anyone who finds the suburbs too quiet. City medians run lower than the metro number, roughly $320,000 to $368,000 depending on the measure, because the mix includes older and smaller homes.

Oro Valley

The polished suburb northwest of the city, sitting against the Catalina Mountains. Master-planned neighborhoods, golf courses, good shopping, and some of the best mountain views in the metro. Median around $555,000 to $580,000. It draws retirees, professionals, and families who want the Amphitheater school district's two big high schools, Ironwood Ridge and Canyon del Oro. The feel is calm, clean, and a little formal. Trade-off: you pay for it, and the drive to the south side, the airport, or Davis-Monthan is long. Oro Valley to the base can run close to an hour.

Marana

The growth story of the metro. Marana went from about 14,000 people in 2000 to about 66,700 in 2025, and the building has not stopped. Dove Mountain, on the west side against the Tortolita Mountains, is the upscale end with golf and resort living. The rest of Marana is new subdivisions, new schools, and new everything. Median around $450,000 to $470,000. Marana Unified is an A-rated district, which is a big reason young families land here. Trade-off: distance. Marana to the university or downtown runs 30 to 45 minutes in good traffic, and the northwest side can feel far from the rest of the metro's life.

Sahuarita

South of Tucson on I-19, and the most affordable suburb in the metro, with a median around $350,000. Rancho Sahuarita, the big master-planned community, is built around a lake, parks, trails, and clubhouses, and it is full of young families. Sahuarita grew from about 4,000 people in 2000 to about 38,400 in 2025. The Sahuarita school district is B-rated, a step below the A districts, and some families weigh that against the price. Trade-off: most jobs are a commute north into Tucson, about 30 minutes to the south side and more to midtown, and the town itself is still growing into its shopping and services.

Green Valley

A retirement community in the full sense of the word, about 25 minutes south of Tucson. Median age is 73.6, and about 80 percent of residents are 65 or older. Golf, recreation centers, clubs for everything, single-story houses built for aging in place, and a quiet pace. If you are retiring and want your social life built into the neighborhood, it is hard to beat. Trade-offs: it is not a fit for families, services and nightlife are limited, the recreation fees add to the HOA cost, and you will drive to Tucson for the big hospital and the airport. Snowbirds and part-year residents are a large share of the community, so winters are lively and summers are quiet.

Vail and Rita Ranch

The southeast side, and the school story of the metro. Vail Unified was ranked the top district in Arizona among districts with 10 or more schools in the state's 2025-26 grades, with 21 of its 22 schools rated A. Rita Ranch is the big subdivision area inside that district, full of newer homes at a median around $410,000. This is also the most popular area for Davis-Monthan families: 10 to 15 minutes to the base gates, good schools, and houses that fit a military budget. Trade-off: the southeast corner is far from the northwest side. Vail to Oro Valley is a cross-metro drive of 45 minutes or more.

Catalina Foothills

The prestige address. Custom and semi-custom homes tucked into the foothills of the Catalinas, with desert landscaping, views in both directions, and the top-rated Catalina Foothills school

district, which posted the highest test proficiency of any large district in Arizona. Median around $670,000 to $690,000, the top of the metro. The feel is established, quiet, and private, with resorts and high-end shopping woven in. Trade-offs: the price, and the housing stock skews older, so remodel budgets are part of the deal. Some properties sit on septic systems or wells at the edges, which Chapter 8 tells you to check.

Casas Adobes

The established northwest, just south of Oro Valley and west of the Foothills. Older ranch homes on bigger lots, mature trees, and a lived-in feel that the newer suburbs do not have yet. Prices run below Oro Valley for a similar location, which is the draw: northwest side life without the newest-suburb premium. It sits in the Amphitheater school district. Trade-off: the housing stock is older, so you are buying location and lot and budgeting for updates, and some streets have no HOA and no uniformity, which people either love or do not.

Tanque Verde

The east side's ranch country. Large lots, horse properties, mountain views, and a rural feel inside the metro. The Tanque Verde school district is small and A-rated, which pulls in families who want space and good schools together. Sabino Canyon, one of the most loved recreation areas in Tucson, is right there. Trade-offs: rural means longer drives to shopping and work, many homes are on wells and septic systems, and services thin out as you go east. If you want land and quiet and you accept the driving, this is the place. If you want convenience, it is not.

A note on picking

Notice what decided most of those descriptions: schools, commute, and price, in some order. That is the right order to think in. Families here often choose the school district first and the house second. Retirees choose the lifestyle and the hospital drive. Military families choose the gate commute. Start with your version of that list, then go look at houses.

Chapter 6: Work and Employers

Tucson's job market has a shape, and you should know it before you move. The big three anchors are the university, defense, and the Air Force base, with health care right behind them.

A note on numbers first. Employer headcounts are the kind of stat every source counts differently: direct employees or total impact, one campus or the whole system, this year or three years ago. Two solid sources looking at the same employers give different counts, so this chapter gives you honest ranges instead of fake precision.

- **University of Arizona.** The largest employer in the region, somewhere in the range of 15,000 to 20,000 jobs depending on how the count is drawn, plus about 41,700 students

on the Tucson campus as of fall 2024. The university drives midtown housing, the academic calendar, and a steady flow of relocating faculty, staff, and researchers.

- **Raytheon (RTX).** The big defense employer, roughly 12,000 to 14,000 people in the Tucson area. Engineers and defense workers relocating for Raytheon usually look at the east side, Vail, and the foothills for the commute to the airport-area plants.
- **Davis-Monthan Air Force Base.** Roughly 10,000 to 11,000 military and civilian jobs, home to the 355th Wing and the 309th AMARG, the aircraft boneyard you will see from the road. The base is in the middle of a mission change, with the A-10 retiring, so check current base news if your move depends on a specific unit. Military families: the 2026 housing allowance for an E-3 or E-4 with dependents in Tucson is $1,695 a month. Use the official Department of Defense BAH calculator for your rank rather than any table, including this one, because rates change every year.
- **Health care.** Banner University Medical Center Tucson is the anchor: Southern Arizona's only Level I trauma center, 649 beds, and the teaching hospital for the university's medical school. Add Tucson Medical Center, Carondelet's St. Joseph's and St. Mary's hospitals, and Northwest Healthcare on the northwest side, and health care is one of the metro's biggest job engines and a big reason retirees feel safe moving here.
- **The rest of the list.** Tucson Unified School District is one of the largest employers in the county. Freeport-McMoRan, US Customs and Border Protection, Caterpillar, Tucson Electric Power, and a logistics corridor near the airport round it out. Amazon runs a large fulfillment center here, announced in 2018 at more than 1,500 full-time jobs; treat that as the size of the operation, not a current headcount.

The honest summary: if your work is defense, health care, education, the military, or logistics, Tucson has depth. If it is not, check the market for your field before you move, not after. Wages here trail the big coastal metros, which is the flip side of the housing costs in Chapter 3. Remote workers and retirees get the best of that trade. People moving here to job hunt in a thin field get the hard side of it.

Chapter 7: Schools in Short

This is the short version, on purpose. School choice is personal and it changes year to year, so this chapter gives you the map and the rules. The details belong in a conversation about your kids and your address.

Rule one: families here pick the district first and the house second. It is the single most common pattern in Tucson moves with kids, and the good agents and the good school guides all say the same thing.

Rule two: the assigned school follows the exact address. Two houses on the same street can feed different schools. Never assume. Verify the assigned schools for the specific house before you write an offer.

Here is the district picture from the Arizona Department of Education grades for 2025-26:

- **Vail Unified** was ranked the top district in Arizona among districts with 10 or more schools, with 21 of its 22 schools rated A. It covers Vail and Rita Ranch on the southeast side.
- **Catalina Foothills** is an A district and posted the highest test scores of any large district in the state, about 72 percent proficient in English and 59 percent in math on one 2025 measure.
- **Marana Unified** is an A district, serving fast-growing Marana.
- **Tanque Verde** is an A district, small, on the east side.
- **Flowing Wells** is also an A district, a smaller district on the northwest side of the city.
- **Amphitheater** (Oro Valley and Casas Adobes) is a B district overall, anchored by two well-regarded high schools, Ironwood Ridge and Canyon del Oro. Plenty of families choose it on purpose for those schools.
- **Sahuarita** is a B district. Families trade a step down in rating for a big step down in house price.
- **Tucson Unified**, the big city district with about 41,500 students, was listed as under review in the 2025-26 release. Do not write it off on that alone: it contains University High, a nationally ranked magnet school. District averages hide school-by-school differences, and this district is the clearest example.

Beyond the districts: Arizona has open enrollment, which means you can apply to schools outside your assigned area if they have room, and it has a strong charter scene. BASIS and other charter schools run on lotteries with their own calendars, so if a charter is your plan, the application timing matters as much as the house timing. Start that research early, before the scouting trip, not after the offer.

Last word on method: letter grades and test scores are a starting screen, not a verdict. Visit the school if you can, or ask for a video walk-through of the neighborhood around it on your scouting trip. The right school in the wrong commute is its own problem, which is why this chapter sits next to the areas chapter instead of replacing it.

Chapter 8: Buying a House From Out of State

Most Tucson relocations are bought at a distance, at least in part. Here is the playbook that works, in the order it works.

1. Get pre-approved before you look. Not pre-qualified, pre-approved, with a lender who has your documents. Sellers here expect it, and if your move involves a job change or an offer letter instead of pay stubs, a good lender sorts that out up front instead of at contract time. If you are military, get your VA loan paperwork moving early too.

2. Narrow the areas from home. Use Chapters 5 and 7 to cut the metro down to two or three areas before you spend a dollar on travel. Watch video tours of neighborhoods, not just houses. Drive times, school assignments, and the feel of an area decide more than any single listing.

3. Make one scouting trip count. Plan on two or three days. Drive your real commute at rush hour. Visit at the times of day you would actually live there, morning and evening. Walk the neighborhoods on your short list, eat in them, and if schools matter, drive past them at drop-off time. If you can, come once in summer too, or at least talk honestly with yourself about Chapter 4 if your only visit is in January.

4. Tour houses by video, the right way. Between trips, your agent walks houses with a camera while you watch live and ask questions in real time. Slow pans, water pressure, the AC unit's age plate, the roof from the yard, the view from the back patio, the street in both directions. Video touring is normal here and it works, as long as it feeds a decision instead of replacing the next step.

5. Do not waive the inspection. This is the rule that matters most in the desert. Tucson inspections should cover the things this climate eats: the roof (sun and monsoon are hard on roofs), the AC system, plumbing in older homes, evidence of termites and pack rats, and the condition of any pool equipment. If the home is on a well or septic system, which is common in Tanque Verde, parts of the Foothills, and rural edges, inspect those too, and get the water picture in writing. A house bought sight unseen with a full inspection is a reasonable risk. A house bought sight unseen without one is a gamble.

6. Mind the seasonal timing. Tucson's market breathes with the weather. Winter brings snowbird demand and more competition for the nicest homes. Summer is slower and sellers get more flexible, but you are shopping in 105 degrees and the inventory is thinner. Neither is wrong. Know which market you are shopping in and set your expectations to match.

7. Close from home if you need to. Remote closing is routine now. Title companies here handle out-of-state buyers constantly, with mobile notaries and wire transfers (and wire fraud warnings worth listening to: always confirm wiring instructions by phone at a number you already have, never from an email alone).

8. Set up the landing before you land. The week before closing, line up the utilities and services in Chapter 9 so the house is livable the day you get the keys: power, gas, water, trash, internet, and a pest control visit in the first week.

One mindset note to end on. People get in trouble here buying for the postcard instead of the Tuesday. The postcard is the mountain view at sunset. The Tuesday is the commute, the school

run, the grocery store, and the AC bill in August. Shop for the Tuesday and let the postcard be the bonus.

Chapter 9: The Moving Checklist

Work backwards from your move date. Cross things off in order.

Six months out

- Decide your areas using Chapters 5 and 7. Two or three areas, not nine.
- If schools matter, start charter and open enrollment research now. Lottery calendars do not wait for your house hunt.
- Talk to a lender and get the pre-approval started.
- Start watching listings in your areas so you learn the prices before you have to act on them.

Three months out

- Book the scouting trip: two or three days, built around commutes and neighborhoods, per Chapter 8.
- If you are military, apply for on-base housing at Soaring Heights as soon as you have orders if base housing is part of your plan. Waitlists are common.
- Start the sell-side or lease-end plan for where you live now, timed to your Tucson closing.

One month out

- Offer, inspection, and appraisal should be underway or done.
- Get homeowner's insurance quotes. Desert risks and roof age drive these numbers.
- Book movers or the truck. Summer slots fill up.

The week of closing

- Set up utilities to start on your closing date:
- **Electric:** Tucson Electric Power (TEP) for most of the metro. Some edges of the county are served by Trico Electric Cooperative, including parts of Marana and the northwest.
- **Gas:** Southwest Gas.
- **Water and sewer:** Tucson Water inside its service area. Oro Valley has its own water utility, and some areas use smaller water companies or private wells. Confirm who serves the exact house.
- **Trash:** the City of Tucson inside city limits; private haulers like Waste Management or Republic Services in most suburbs and county areas.

- **Internet:** Cox and Xfinity cover most of the metro; check the exact address, because speed and provider vary by neighborhood.
- Confirm wiring instructions for your closing funds by phone, at a number you already have. Never trust wiring instructions that arrive by email alone.
- Schedule a pest control service for the first week in the house.

First 30 days

- **Vehicle registration and driver's license:** Arizona gives new residents a short window to switch over. You will need an emissions test for most vehicles in the Tucson area before registering. Bring your title and be ready for the vehicle license tax, which is based on the car's value and surprises people used to flat fees.
- **Voter registration** can be handled with the license change if you want it done in one trip.
- **Find your people:** a primary care doctor (Banner and TMC both run clinics across the metro), a dentist, and if it applies, a vet. Waitlists for new patients exist here like everywhere else, so book early.
- **Learn the house:** where the water shutoff is, how the AC filter schedule works, whether your irrigation or drip system runs and when, and who to call for the roof if a monsoon storm tests it.
- **Desert basics:** shake out shoes left outside, do not leave pet food outdoors (it draws javelinas and coyotes), keep the pest service on schedule, and learn which washes near you flood in storms.

Chapter 10: FAQ

The questions movers actually ask, answered straight.

How hot does it really get? Hotter than you are picturing, for longer than you are picturing. The long-term average is about 68 days a year at 100 degrees or more, June is the worst month before the monsoon cools the afternoons, and recent years have run hotter than the average, with 112 days at 100 or more in 2024. The honest counterweight: mornings and evenings are usable most of the summer, humidity is low outside of monsoon season, and October through April is close to perfect. Chapter 4 has the numbers.

Will I have scorpions in my house? Maybe, at some point. It depends heavily on the area and the house. Newer subdivisions in the middle of the metro see fewer than older homes against open desert. What works: a quarterly pest control service, sealing gaps around doors and pipes, keeping wood and debris away from the house walls, and shaking out shoes and towels. Stings are painful and rarely dangerous for healthy adults. Most long-time residents have a story or two and a pest service on contract. If this is a hard no for you, it is better to know now.

Is Tucson running out of water? No. Tucson Water holds a state assured water supply designation through 2037, has about 225,000 acre-feet of resources against about 95,000 acre-feet of current demand, and has banked Colorado River water underground for decades. The real story is that Colorado River allocations are being cut, about 14 percent for Tucson in 2027, and the city offsets most of it with banked water. Supply is shifting and bills may rise. That is not the same as running out. Chapter 4 explains it fully.

Is Tucson safe? It depends on the neighborhood, like every city of a million people. Crime concentrates in specific areas, and one of the jobs of your area research in Chapter 5 is to look at the specific neighborhoods on your list rather than the city's average. Drive your candidate streets at different times of day on the scouting trip. That tells you more than any ranking.

How far apart is everything? Farther than the map suggests. The metro is wide. Suburb to suburb drives run 25 to 50 minutes: Oro Valley to the airport is about 40 minutes, Vail to Oro Valley can be close to an hour, Marana to the university is 30 to 45 minutes. Downtown and the university are not the center of most people's daily lives here. Your commute, your school, and your hospital are the three drives to test before you buy.

Do I need a car? Yes, for most of the metro. Bus service is real inside the city and the streetcar serves downtown and the university, but most suburbs have no practical transit. Plan on a car per adult in most households.

When is the best time to come look? Come in the season you are most worried about. If summer heat is your question, visit in June and walk a neighborhood at 4 in the afternoon. If you can only make one trip and it is in winter, that is fine, just read Chapter 4 twice and believe it. For the market itself, winter has more buyers competing and summer has more room to negotiate.

Tucson or Phoenix? Phoenix is bigger, with more jobs, more pro sports, more flights, and more of everything, and it is hotter by several degrees and pricier by about $83,000 at the median on the same national measure. Tucson is smaller, slower, cheaper, and surrounded by mountains and a national park. People who want a big metro pick Phoenix. People who want the desert and a calmer pace pick Tucson. Neither answer is wrong, and plenty of people look at both before deciding.

Can I buy a house without ever visiting? People do it, and Chapter 8 is built for it: video tours, a full inspection, a remote closing. The version of that plan that works always includes the inspection and usually includes at least one scouting trip to pick the area. Buying the house remotely is reasonable. Buying the neighborhood remotely is where the mistakes happen.

What about rattlesnakes and other wildlife? Rattlesnakes live here. You are most likely to meet one on a trail or at the desert edge of a yard, and they would rather leave than fight. Javelinas travel in herds and mostly want your garbage and your pumpkins. Coyotes are everywhere and matter most if you have small pets: do not leave them outside alone, day or night, in desert-edge neighborhoods. A block wall, a leash, and not feeding wildlife handles nearly all of it.

Chapter 11: About Kyle, and Your Next Step

I'm Kyle Berglund. I'm a real estate agent in Tucson with Tierra Antigua Realty.

I wrote this guide because relocation is the move I help with most carefully. Buying a house in a city you do not live in yet is a different job from buying across town. The questions are bigger, the mistakes cost more, and most of the work happens before you ever see a house in person. A guide that tells you the truth about the heat, the water, and the commutes is a better start than one that only shows you sunsets, so that is the guide I tried to write.

If you are thinking about a move here, the next step is a short call. We talk through your timeline, your budget, and the two or three areas that fit your life, and you leave with a plan for the search, whether your move is three months out or a year out. No pressure and no obligation to work with me after. If we do work together, the plan in Chapter 8 is the one we will follow: areas first, pre-approval early, one scouting trip that counts, video tours between trips, and an inspection on everything.

Book a relocation call through movemetotucson.com, or reach out through the site if you would rather start by email. If you are not ready for a call yet, keep the guide, watch the prices in your areas, and come back when the timing is right.

Welcome to Tucson. It is a good place to land.

Facts and figures in this guide are dated where they appear and were current as of November 2026. Prices, tax rates, school grades, and housing allowances change. Verify the numbers that matter to your decision, and treat this guide as a starting point, not a substitute for advice from your own tax, legal, or financial professionals.