

The city is in Arizona's Sonoran Desert, rimmed by the Catalina Mountains, and the nearest body of water is 80 miles away on the coast of Mexico. Springtime in Tucson is delightful, because the nights are very cool and, by early February, the days are sunny with temperatures in the 70s and 80s. That's my kind of town, and we've been here since we retired and fled the cold, humid, clammy East in 1991. If you have arthritis, you should bring it to the desert heat of Tucson. It won't cure the nasty ailment, but the dry climate will certainly make it much easier to live with.



Tucson is a very modern city of one million residents, and home of the University of Arizona. There are many upscale hotels and resorts in the area, and some of the most beautiful golf courses anywhere. World-class restaurants offer dining menus from around the world, including Italian, Indian, Mexican, Chinese, French and many other ethnic and American styles.

As February ends, the city gradually is surrounded by an explosion of desert wildflowers, from the bright yellows of marigolds to the brilliant reds and whites of the thousands of statuesque giant saguaro cacti. Those proud tall sentinels can grow to heights of 30 feet or more. They stand guard on the slopes of the mountain's foothills, and even more so in concentrated clusters in the nearby Saguaro National Forest.

Springtime brings out the desert critters in Tucson to greet morning hikers and joggers. On any day, you can see and listen to the bands of coyotes who sing out melodies to each other. Rattlers slither across your hiking trail, but when they start clicking their castanets at you, hurry away. Javalinas, resembling big hairy pigs, grunt and ramble through the desert. There are also bobcats and occasional mountain lions to admire, but make it from afar.

We have a quail couple that raises its brood every year in bushes near our house. It's always a pleasure when we see them parade around our yard throughout the summer, poppa in front and momma in the rear, with six or more little puffballs scurrying along in the middle.

I swim in our Olympic-sized community pool every day, and it's rare on any of the 365 in Tucson that I find it too cold to do my 30 laps. Although the summer daytime temperatures may spike up to a fiery hot and dry 110 degrees, savvy joggers and hikers get out on the nearby desert trails by sunrise at 5 am, and find it comfortably in the 70s and 80s for at least the first three hours. Of course, swimmers can always thrive and dive into the pools when the weather hits 100 and up.

When we first retired to Tucson, the population was 400,000. Because of growing business and the rising retiree population, the little city has become a big one of a million residents. While that has been a boon to realtors and retailers, there are days when the roads and highways resemble busy Los Angeles freeway.

However, unless you venture out during drive time in the morning and afternoon, it is easy to get around town. Because of the never-ending growth, it seems there are crews always out widening the roads at all hours of day and night.

Whenever we get impatient about the growth and road repairs happening in Tucson, we look at the news on the Weather Channel, and feel sorry for all those people in other cities who must struggle with snow, smoke, freeway gridlock, sleet, ice, hurricanes, sunamis, smog, typhoons and monsoons. If you want to get away from all of that from about Presidents' Day on, pack your swimsuit, suntan lotion and/or your golf shoes and come to Tucson.