Community Profile for

Safford

Arizona Commerce Authority Logo

Map of Safford

The city of Safford is located in the Upper Gila River Valley in the southeast corner of Arizona where the San Simon and Gila Rivers meet. The foothills of the Pinaleño Mountains begin about five miles southeast of the city. Mount Graham, the highest peak in the mountain range, and its companion peaks have a marked effect on the local climate by reducing winter precipitation. Safford, the county seat of Graham County, was established in 1874 and almost immediately became an agricultural area. Water is drawn from the Gila River to create 40,000 acres of irrigated agriculture.

Principal Economic Activities

Safford serves as the retail center for southeastern Arizona and western New Mexico, serving roughly 65,000 people. Substantial employment occurs in a wide variety of retail and service businesses, as well as mining, agriculture and light manufacturing. Agriculture has been a mainstay of the Safford and Graham County economies with cotton as the principal commodity, and remaining acreage used for hay and small grains. NatureSweet®, LTD operates a 20-acre greenhouse that produces tomatoes and cucumbers year-round and distributes them throughout the United States. Mining is a a driving economic force and local employment and businesses receive a substantial boost from Freeport-McMoRan Copper & Gold Inc. with its two local mines: one in Safford and the other in Morenci. The Arizona Department of Corrections has two prison facilities, and the Federal Bureau of Prisons has one near the Safford area. Eastern Arizona College is a community college located in nearby Thatcher. Mount Graham Regional Medical Center is a major employer in Safford.

Scenic Attractions

Safford, ten miles north of the Coronado National Forest, provides many recreational facilities. Popular spots are the 10,720-foot Mt. Graham and Pinaleño Mountains. The Pinaleño Mountains are home to the largest binocular telescope in the world. Swift Trail, a 36-mile tour and one of many scenic drives in the area, provides a route to the summit and features many picnicking and camping sites. Discovery Park is a 160-acre, world-class attraction that includes the Natures Hideaway Riparian Wetlands, a narrow-gauge 1880s railroad and Governor Aker Observatory. The Bureau of Land Management administers 740,800 acres of land within Graham County. Some of the unique recreational opportunities are the Hot Wells Dunes, Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area and Black Hills Back County Byway. Roper Lake State Park, south of Safford, has overnight camping and day-use picnic areas, plus mineral water hot springs.

Community Facilities

The city of Safford offers two historic museums, a senior community center, a fine arts center, a Boys and Girls Club, a library, a bowling alley, two indoor theaters, a swimming pool, an 18-hole golf course, several tennis and paddleball courts, seven parks, numerous picnic areas at Mt. Graham and Roper Lake, 12 baseball diamonds (six lighted), several soccer fields and one rodeo arena.

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BASIC INFORMATION

Founded:	1874
Incorporated:	1901
Elevation:	2,900 ft.
Location:	Graham

Distance to major cities:

Phoenix:	164 miles
Tucson:	130 miles
Las Vegas:	458 miles
San Diego:	535 miles
Los Angeles:	537 miles

POPULATION

	2000	2010	2023 (est.)
Safford	9,232	9,580	10,324

Office of Economic Opportunity

SALES TAX / TRANSACTION PRIVILEGE TAX

Safford	2.50%
Graham	1.00%
State	5.60%

Arizona Dept. of Revenue & Arizona Tax Research Foundation

LABOR FORCE

	2000	2010	2022
Civilian Labor Force	3,581	4,228	5,280
Unemployed	129	596	144
Unemployment Rate	3.6%	14.1%	2.7%

Office of Economic Opportunity

WORKFORCE EDUCATION ATTAINMENT

	Count	Share
Less than high school	767	13.2%
High school or equivalent, no college	1,437	24.8%
Some college or Associate degree	2,621	45.2%
Bachelor's degree or advanced degree	977	16.8%

American Community Survey

INDUSTRY (RANKED BY EMPLOYMENT)

	Count	Share
Education, health care & social assistance	870	19.0%
Arts, entertainment, food & recreation services	545	11.9%
Retail trade	508	11.1%
Construction	491	10.7%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, & mining	348	7.6%
Public administration	336	7.4%
Finance, insurance & real estate	316	6.9%
Professional, scientific, & administrative services	309	6.8%
Manufacturing	244	5.3%
Transportation, warehousing, & utilities	234	5.1%
Other services, except public administration	217	4.7%
Wholesale trade	120	2.6%
Information	32	0.7%

American Community Survey

This profile was prepared by the Arizona Commerce Authority in cooperation with local sources. For further information, please contact:

Safford Economic Development

Sandy Findley / Horatio Skeete

717 W. Main St.

Safford, AZ 85548

Phone: 9284324010

Email: sfindley@ci.safford.az.us / hskeete@ci.safford.az.us

Website: www.cityofsafford.us

Graham County Chamber of Commerce

1111 Thatcher Blvd.

Safford, AZ 85546

Phone:

Email: Admin@grahamchamber.org

Website: https://grahamchamber.org/

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