



# THE ARIZONA HIGHWAYS SANDWICH TOUR

*Roast beef, turkey, chicken, pastrami, pepperoni, pickled jalapeños, bacon, sauerkraut, onion rings, chorizo, scrambled eggs, egg salad, meatloaf, cheese, cheese and more cheese... that's just some of the stuff you'll find between slices of bread in Arizona. We know, because our senior editor spent four days on the road, eating every sandwich she could get her hands on.*

BY KELLY VAUGHN ||| PHOTOGRAPHS BY JILL RICHARDS

# I

JUST REALLY LIKE SANDWICHES.” It was a whisper when I pitched “The Arizona Highways Sandwich Tour” to the boss.

I laughed. He laughed, too. And then our editor, Robert Stieve, told me to go for it — in part, I think, because the idea of cruising around the state, eating two or three sandwiches a day, could become the stuff of legends around here. If nothing else, it could give everyone a good laugh and make me the envy of my friends, who still don’t really believe that my job is an actual job.

As it turns out, though, many of you really like sandwiches, too. We know because we asked for your help in identifying our destinations. There were some rules, too: No chain restaurants, no hamburgers or hot dogs, no prepackaged grocery store grabs. And, thanks to those of you who commented on our Facebook post about the tour, we learned about places that weren’t even on our radar.

Most importantly, though, we found what we believe to be some of the best sandwiches in Arizona.

Some. This story is by no means a comprehensive guide to sammies, subs, clubs, heroes, hoagies, grinders, Dagwoods or Reubens in the Grand Canyon State. What follows on these

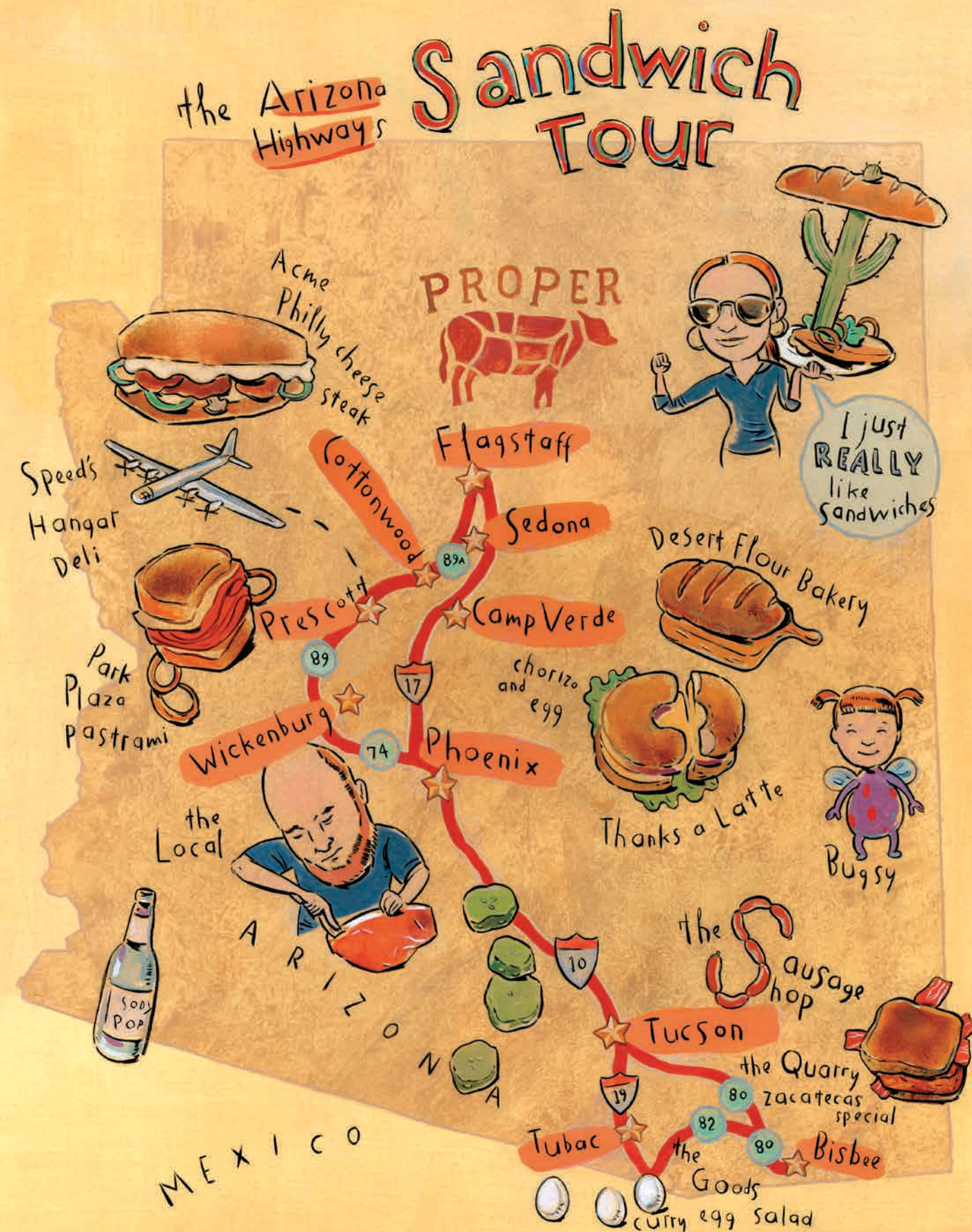
pages is, however, the story of a road trip, the story of a lot of takeout boxes and the stories of a handful of very kind people — mom-and-pop kind of people who had dreams about feeding people, then made them happen. Meeting them was my favorite part of this adventure, and I hope it will be yours, too.

Four days. Eight hundred thirty-one miles. Ten sandwiches.

Buckle up. And bon appétit.



ILLUSTRATION BY AMANDA DUFFY/RAT UNDER PAPER  
LAYOUT AND DESIGN BY KEITH WHITNEY



## DAY ONE

### PHOENIX, WICKENBURG, PRESCOTT

The best sandwich I ever had was made by a man of average intelligence. We joke in that vein because he sometimes struggles with sleeping bag zippers. That's a story for another time, though. The sandwich is the important thing here.

It was so elegant in its simplicity: Dave's Killer Bread, turkey, mustard, (maybe) mayonnaise, a slice of Tillamook cheddar cheese. The man of average intelligence grilled that sandwich in what tasted like a quarter-stick of butter on a camp stove in the back of my car. It was Day 10 of a 12-day hiking and camping trip in Colorado, and that sandwich



The Local, the Local Press, Wickenburg

tasted so good, I didn't want to finish it for fear it could never be duplicated. Altitude can make a person hungry. And enamored of a meal.

In a way, I guess this tour is about replicating the joy I felt when I ate that sandwich, but I'm nervous.

It happens every time I'm getting ready to head out on an assignment, whether it's to interview for a profile or to backpack over mountains in a place so beautiful, the photographs, let alone words, barely do it justice.

But this feels different.

This feels like maybe my body isn't ready to eat all of these sandwiches. What if this turns me off bread, meat and cheese? Forever? What if I become some sort of sandwich fiend, getting hooked on sandwiches and rejecting all other foodstuffs? Forever?

Luckily, though, I'm traveling with a support team — Christian Otjen and Jill Richards — and I feel like they can keep me from diving headfirst into a sandwich stress spiral.

I live with Christian, even though he's a vegetarian. He's here because of his playlists, because of his navigational "expertise" and because he's the man of average intelligence with the sandwich-making skills. Together, we might find a culinary creation to put his to shame, and it feels fair for him to witness the defeat firsthand.

Jill is our photographer. We had lunch together a few weeks before the tour and discovered that we like a lot of things in common — boots, motorcycle jackets, whiskey and, you know, sandwiches. She packs a lot of personality



Zachary Pike is the chef and owner of the Local Press in Wickenburg.

into a little package. I like her already.

I hope it stays that way, too, because we're all in a big, white minivan loaded for bear, with camera equipment, duffel bags, coolers and bags of snacks, and we're on our way to Wickenburg for the first sandwich of the day, courtesy of the kind people at the Local Press.

*(Author's note: The bags of snacks, in retrospect, make absolutely no sense.)*

\* \* \*

Of all of the suggestions that came through our social media query, the Local Press was the most frequently mentioned, so we know it has to be special.

Indeed, this is an airy space, decorated with white subway tile, big windows, old newsprint and offerings from local and national vendors — Nut Sacks from Cave Creek, bottled sodas from Maine, more.

At the restaurant's helm is chef and owner Zachary Pike. His wife grew up in Wickenburg; he grew up in Cambridge, Massachusetts; the couple met in Vail, Colorado; and, together, they returned to Wickenburg, opening the



Kelly Vaughn (above) tackles the B-17 Flying Fortress (right) at Speed's Hangar Deli in Prescott.

restaurant a little more than three years ago.

While their story is sweet, the menu is sweeter.

First up is the Local: layers of chicken breast stacked beautifully on ciabatta and flanked by pickled jalapeños and bacon. Pressed into a panini, it's the perfect combination of savory and spicy, warm and decadent.

What's more, it's served with horseradish pickles — all of the sandwiches from the Local Press are, including Jill's grinder and Christian's vegan cauliflower sandwich. They're bite-y and crisp, a fitting complement to the soft deliciousness of the main attractions.



According to Guinness World Records, the world's largest sandwich was made by Wild Woody's Chill and Grill in Roseville, Michigan. The sandwich weighed in at 5,440 pounds, was 12 feet long, and consisted of 150 pounds of mustard, 1,032 pounds of corned beef, 260 pounds of cheese, 530 pounds of lettuce and 3,568 pounds of bread.

*"Too few people understand a really good sandwich."*

— JAMES BEARD



Pastrami on rye, Park Plaza Liquor and Deli, Prescott

The day is crisp, too. It's clear in mid-November, and we sit outside, under a turquoise sky. It's early on in the lunch rush, and other customers begin filing in. Some stay to eat outside, too, while others grab bags of takeout.

As we say our goodbyes to Zachary and his crew, I make a note to come back here, and to tell my friends about it, too. There's something about the Local Press that inspires a taste of everything on the menu.

Just not today: There are two more sandwiches on the agenda, and miles to go before we rest.

\* \* \*

State Route 89 between Wickenburg and Prescott is a winding thing. Past the old mining towns of Congress and Stanton at the base of the Weaver Mountains, it climbs up Yarnell Hill, crosses Peeples Valley and crashes into the Bradshaw Mountains for a switchbacking descent into Prescott. This section is known as the White Spar Highway, one of the first federally funded highway projects in the state — and the setting for the first cover of *Arizona Highways* in 1925.

Some of the oaks at lower elevations cling to leaves of green and gold. I am looking out the window and dozing a little as we listen to John Prine sing about a long Monday. We are in the

middle of ours.

Finally, though, we reach Speed's Hangar Deli, located on Sandretto Drive in an industrial part of town. Here, I'm charged with eating a sandwich called the B-17 Flying Fortress.

Loaded with roast beef, turkey, ham and cheese, the bread — soft and plump and freshly made — buckles under the meat, which spills from its sides. This is exacerbated by the sauerkraut, which I added when owner Debbie Kovacs asked if I wanted any extras.

I like to live dangerously, I suppose.

Debbie, a New Yorker, has been running the deli for 26 years, and in that time, she's amassed an incredible collection of military memorabilia. Patches, photos, newspaper articles, posters and medals line the walls of the hangar (yes, the deli is aptly named). Debbie knows the legends behind all of them.

Her family is full of servicemen and servicewomen. Many of her customers are veterans, too. Some are active duty. All of them adore her. And with good reason. In addition to serving up sandwiches with names like the Marauder, the Mustang and the Liberator, she makes sure that customers sign cards for wounded warriors. She's a warm smile and a good story, and she knows I'm not going to make it through the

B-17. It's delicious, but it's massive, and Debbie's ready with a box.

With two sandwiches down for the day and one to go, we cruise to Park Plaza Liquor and Deli.

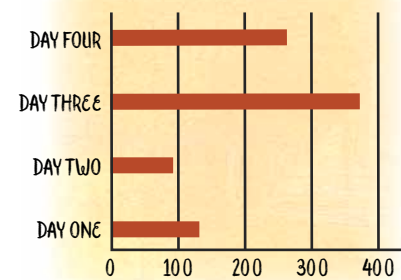
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Park Plaza is a lot of things to a lot of people — liquor store, cigar lounge, restaurant and bar. To me, though, it's where I have to face a pastrami sandwich on rye. And I have to do it less than an hour after meeting the B-17.

*(Author's note: This was poor planning.)*

First, though, we cruise the aisles and aisles and aisles of bottles. The sun is starting to set outside, and the light shines on the rows of whiskey and wine, creating prisms of green, gold, red and pink. When the sandwich arrives, Jill prepares to make its portrait, and I'm grateful for a little bit of extra time to tell my brain to tell my stomach that we're in the homestretch for the day. It

### MILES TRAVELED



takes her about 15 minutes to nail the shot, and then I'm left with my opponent.

The cooks have plated the pastrami with golden, crisp onion rings. Usually, I'd dive into those with the ardor of a woman fueled solely by fried things and aioli, but today, I just stare at them. I feel both sadness and shame, knowing that I have to reject their crispy glaze to make it through the sandwich.

It's a thing of beauty — glazed with butter, grilled perfectly and stacked with pastrami, mustard and cheese.

I eat a quarter of it, alone, in a private dining area, and the Talking Heads' *Once in a Lifetime* plays in my head. I wonder if my sudden spike in cholesterol is making me question my purpose in life.

Only time will tell.

\* \* \*

Hours later, we go to dinner. No. Jill and Christian go to dinner. I pick at a side salad, hoping vegetables might counter the salt assault I've launched on my insides. That I'm sitting in another restaurant with food in front of me is mind-boggling, but it is happening. Mostly, I just want to go to sleep.

That happens later, at the Hotel Vendome, a little boutique hotel on Cortez Street that dates to 1917. We're here on Jill's recommendation, and it's a good one. Tomorrow, we'll land in Flagstaff, by way of Cottonwood and Sedona, but first, a sleep that comes naturally. Carbs will do that to a person.

*"It has been well said that a hungry man is more interested in four sandwiches than four freedoms."*

— HENRY CABOT LODGE JR.

## DAY 2 COTTONWOOD, SEDONA, FLAGSTAFF

Morning at the Hotel Vendome is a sleepy, slow-moving thing. But thanks to George at the coffee bar downstairs, caffeine hits our veins like an 18-wheeler on a Texas highway. It's cool and foggy in Prescott as we load our gear and head north and east toward Cottonwood on State Route 89A.

There are more switchbacks, a slow gain in elevation as we inch toward Jerome. We'll have breakfast here, at

a place called the Mine Café. Again, I eat vegetables, while Christian and Jill choose sturdier things. Eggs and potatoes and toast and the like.

As we leave town, though, I'm excited to drive past Katie Lee's house. Although it's no longer her physical space — she's somewhere on a river, in a canyon, on another plane — that turquoise beauty with "Sing" above the door makes me smile and think of my friend and miss her even more in the year or so, or more, that she's been gone.

The house is coming up on our left,

Owner Ronilee Oates and employee Ricky Owsian (below) work in the kitchen at Cottonwood's Acme Pizzeria, home of a killer Philly cheesesteak (left).



*The "chip butty" is a popular sandwich in England. Fried potatoes and butter are the "meat" of this sandwich, which is usually served between two slices of white bread. Ketchup optional.*

but it's fenced off and for sale. The "Sing" is gone. I feel the hot swell of sadness in my cheeks and eyes, but this is not the time for tears. I imagine Katie rolling her eyes at me, and I pull it together.

Besides, Willie Nelson is coming through the speakers. Well, you ought to see my blue-eyed Sally. She lives away down on Shinbone Alley.

It's not quite noon when we reach Acme Pizzeria in Cottonwood. Tucked away in a busy row of shops, the restaurant is packed with regulars. They come for the food, of course — the menu is loaded with cold and hot subs, Philly cheesesteaks, chicken wings, salads, pizza, pasta, "lobsta" rolls and "ham-burgahs."

One gentleman, a college professor from Alaska, spends a month or two in Arizona each winter. He frequents Acme for Da Wise Guy, a burger smothered in barbecue sauce, bacon and onion rings. He's a little bit of a wise guy himself, but I don't mind — people who love talking about food are people worth making time for.

But I'm not here for burgers. When I go up to the counter, I order the Philly cheesesteak and make it "special," with peppers, mushrooms and onions. I'm

Chorizo and egg bagel, Thanks a Latte, Camp Verde



Turkey on cranberry walnut bread, Desert Flour Bakery, Sedona

greeted there by Ronilee Oates, who, along with her husband, Roland, moved from Massachusetts more than a decade ago and opened Acme here in Cottonwood.

Ronilee and Roland are the type of people you'd be proud to know. They're kind, with ready laughs and easy banter about sports (go, Sox!), life and community. When Ronilee delivers my cheesesteak, I'm surprised by how excited I am to dive in. Sandwich No. 4 isn't too big, and it isn't too small. It's hot and soft, with the cheese draping over those thin, perfect slices of steak like a baby's favorite blanket. The peppers and mushrooms are cooked just the way I like them, too — kind of al dente, I guess.

*(Author's note: I can't believe I ate the whole thing.)*

I can't help but hug Ronilee when we leave, and I make yet another mental note to visit again. Ronilee and Roland, get the griddle ready. I'll drive some magazines up if you'll make me another Philly.

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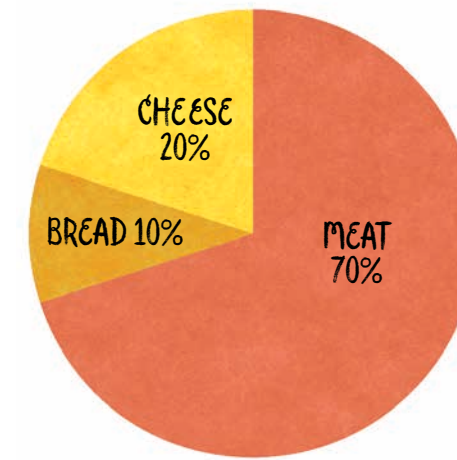
From Cottonwood, we drive the short stretch of SR 89A to Sedona, stopping at Desert Flour Bakery just inside

town. Of all the sandwiches on my list, this is the one that might be genetically similar to what I've just started calling "the golden sandwich" — that turkey and cheese from Colorado. I order the roasted turkey on cranberry walnut bread, at the suggestion of one of our Facebook followers.

It's after the lunch rush at the bakery, and there's not much left in the pastry case, which is the landmark of the restaurant's interior. As I wait, though, I imagine what it must look like fully stocked — croissants, lemon bars, cookies, more.

The sandwich itself is an architectural marvel, piled so high with turkey, I think the top layer of bread will topple. Garnished with lettuce and tomato, and served with a side salad, the sandwich

### RATIO OF MEAT TO CHEESE TO BREAD:



is a simple tribute to a classic. Sadly, my order doesn't come with mustard, so it needs a little bit of saucy oomph to make it less pedestrian. That said, the bread alone is well worth the price of admission.

But, alas, the golden sandwich will retain its status as my favorite turkey — at least for now.

If you know anything about Sedona, you know that it's a hotbed of spirituality, both real and imagined. Naturally, we go to have our auras read.

I am orange and green.  
Christian is a deep red.

Jill's aura isn't read. She shoots instead, and I feel that I should be self-conscious here. Aware. Concerned.

Maryanne, our fortune-teller, is a vegan, and she doesn't eat any refined



According to a September 2014 survey by the Huffington Post, of those surveyed, 36 percent said strawberry jam makes the best peanut butter and jelly sandwich. By an overwhelming majority, members of Arizona Highways' editorial team choose berry preserves over grape jelly as the best way to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

Proper Meats and Provisions now occupies the Flagstaff space that used to be Grand Canyon Café.

sugar. She knows that I struggle with this whole idea. She tells me I should eat differently.

She tells me I should be more aware and concerned.

Because bread and meat and cheese and salt make nothing from nothing.

Whether these things matter or not, we have miles to go again, and I'm still eating.

\* \* \*

We've driven the spine of Oak Creek Canyon, stopped at Indian Gardens for a photo opportunity, been chilled by the bone of winter. We reach Flagstaff, and I meet my muffuletta.

I was raised in New Orleans by parents who understand what a sandwich is. There were so many po'boys, so many nights at places whose French names I can't remember, in quarters and on streets. Still, I remember the value of an olive tapenade, of meat, of cheese and bread and Longfellow's story of Acadie.

To me, the forest primeval is — *peut être* — made of sandwiches.

But at Proper Meats and Provisions, now occupying the building that formerly housed Grand Canyon Café, the bread is so soft, you could bury your face in it. Here, I think of our retired senior editor, Randy Summerlin, and miss him. He'd have loved this sand-

*"'You alarm me!' said the King. 'I feel faint — give me a ham sandwich!' On which the messenger, to Alice's great amusement, opened a bag that hung round his neck, and handed a sandwich to the King, who devoured it greedily. 'Another sandwich!' said the King."*

— LEWIS CARROLL

wich. There's an inheritance of salt there, between the meat and olives and bread.

I'm heartbroken that the café didn't make it, but I'm bolstered by the idea

that Proper did. *Laissez les bons temps rouler.*

We sleep soundly at the Doubletree Inn. Tomorrow will be the longest day.

### DAY 3 CAMP VERDE, TUCSON, BISBEE

Once, Robert (technically my boss, but also my friend) sent me an email that detailed the geographical center of Arizona. I lost the email. I lost the story. Heretofore, it's been a joke. But when we arrive at Thanks a Latte in Camp Verde, and the owner tells me how the geographical center is 15 miles downstream from where I stand, I laugh and text Robert and remember. And I vow to take my kayak 15 miles downstream to find it.

*(Author's note: Redemption is valuable. Fifteen miles downstream is something for another time.)*

My sandwich now, though, comes in the form of breakfast: a chorizo patty nestled in a doughy, toasted bagel with scrambled egg.

I go outside and admire the bones of a mural that will adorn this place in a few weeks' time.

There's a bird and a river, and an idea that art can make things lovely again.

The idea becomes real, and we take Interstate 17 to Interstate 10 to Tucson.

\* \* \*

This is where it gets tricky. This is where I become biased and where journalism goes somewhere else.

I don't know when I learned of Sausage Shop Meat Market and Deli. But I remember taking our photo editor, Jeff Kida, there. I remember trying a few things from the menu. Mostly, though, I remember being intrigued by the Buggy.

It's possible (I won't commit to it, though, because of journalistic perspective) that this is my favorite sandwich from the tour — mostly because of its genesis.

When Buggy was 3 years old, her parents gifted her a pair of A Bug's Life

Numerous sandwich options are on display at Sausage Shop Meat Market and Deli in Tucson.



Bugsy, Sausage Shop Meat Market and Deli, Tucson

**The Local Press**, 69 N. Frontier Street, Wickenburg, 928-684-8955

**Speed's Hangar Deli**, 1030 Sandretto Drive, Prescott, 928-759-7253

**Park Plaza Liquor and Deli**, 402 W. Goodwin Street, Prescott, 928-541-9894

**Acme Pizzeria**, 280 S. Main Street, Cottonwood, 928-634-2263

**Desert Flour Bakery**, 6446 State Route 179, Sedona, 928-284-4633

**Proper Meats and Provisions**, 110 E. Historic Route 66, Flagstaff, 928-774-9001

**Thanks a Latte**, 348 S. Main Street, Camp Verde, 928-567-6450

**Sausage Shop Meat Market and Deli**, 1015 W. Prince Road, Tucson, 520-888-1701

**The Quarry**, 40 Brewery Avenue, Bisbee, 520-366-6868

**The Goods**, 26 Tubac Road, Tubac, 520-398-2001

*A hot dog is not a sandwich.*

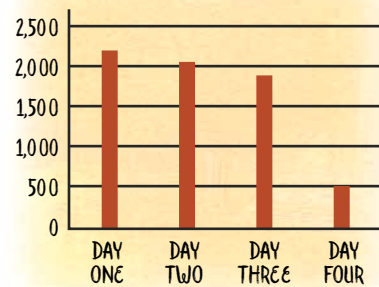
slippers. She walked around her house saying, “Bug, bug, bug, bug, bug.” So they named a sandwich after her. This is more of a legacy than can be said for so many children.

I named my own daughter after a Pink Floyd song, but chances are good she’ll never be a sandwich, no matter how much she wishes to be one.

Bugsy’s sandwich, though, is turkey and pepperoni on a jalapeño roll. It’s served by Bugsy and made by her mama, under the watchful eye of her grandfather, who’s slicing meat in the back of their shop in a sleepy courtyard on Prince Road.

The rest is just ephemera. Visit the Sausage Shop and read the menu on the wall. Buy a bottled soda. Sit outside. You’ll understand.

### TOTAL CALORIES



\* \* \*

The space between Tucson and Bisbee is a wild one. Big grasslands and yuccas and century plants. The legends of a thousand cowboys and Indians.

We arrive at the Shady Dell, and I feel that I’m home in a sense.

This wild space belongs to my friend Justin Luria, and we’re lucky to stay in one of his trailers. I met Justin and his girlfriend, Claire, on my very first date with Christian, in November 2016. I’d purchased an extra ticket to the Amanda Shires show at Valley Bar in Phoenix, hoping my date with Christian would be OK. Claire and Justin were



Curried egg salad, the Goods, Tubac

there because Claire likes the opener, Colter Wall. After the show, though, we ended up in Justin’s 1976 Chevy van, driving to Phoenix’s Welcome Diner. We argued about the engine displacement of a ’71 Chevelle (it’s a 454, and I won) and ate fried-green-tomato sandwiches. The rest was — as they say — history.

Fast-forward a few years, and we’re staying in Justin’s Spartan Manor, which dates to the 1950s. Jill is in another trailer, and she’s a little wiggled out because it skirts Evergreen Cemetery. Not totally, though, because, as I anticipated, Jill is cool.

Headstones aside, we venture to the Quarry, on Brewery Avenue. I’ve writ-

ten about this place before. About how chef and owner Dana House believes in locally sourced ingredients and rock ’n’ roll music.

I’ve already ordered the Zacatecas Special when Justin and Claire (she’s six months pregnant with a baby girl) arrive.

The sandwich is bordered by two slices of Dave’s Killer Bread and stuffed with meatloaf, bacon, cheese and ranch dressing. The Strange Trip, an Orlando, Florida-based band, is onstage. The drums are heady. The vocals are lilting. We’re swaying as though we’ve not seen a show like this before.

Mostly, though, I’m grateful that this assignment is nearing its end.

Jill will photograph the sandwich at the Shady Dell in the morning, and a tarantula will creep into the shoot. Christian will lift it with a barbecue spatula, and we’ll all laugh and be a little wiggled out by it all.

## DAY FOUR

### BISBEE, TUBAC, TUCSON, PHOENIX

Finally, we’ve arrived at the last day of the sandwich tour. We drive along the border, and I remember my friend Jim Harrison. “In a life properly lived, you’re a river,” he wrote. He loved food as I do, so I feel he’d be OK with a modification.

In a life properly lived, friend, you’ve eaten nine sandwiches in three days, and you’re on your way to your 10th.

Jill stops to photograph the road, State Route 82, between Bisbee and Nogales. The leaves are changing. No one is home. Everything is rural and lovely. It will be nostalgic someday.

We hit Tubac with the fire of mothers who are excited to see their babies. Jill’s son, Hank, is 2. My son, Jack, is 9, and my daughter, Vera (cue the Pink Floyd), is 7. We’ve been away from them for too long now, and there’s just one sandwich left: a curried egg salad at the Goods.

When we arrive, it’s after the lunch



Cheryl Snyder, owner and chef of the Goods in Tubac, came to the area from the East Coast.

rush again. Chef and owner Cheryl Snyder is inside. She moved to Green Valley from the East Coast when her mother retired.

“I had to do something, and I always loved food,” she says.

She was attracted to the artistic element in Tubac, so when she opened the Goods, the art and food and eclectic

style came naturally.

The sandwich is meaty in its depth, sweet and savory and decadent. I’m unsure about eating anything else, but this one is worth it. Everything feels handcrafted here. Golden and lovely and served with a sample of margarita, this egg salad is the caloric equivalent of a very good day.

\* \* \*

It is early afternoon on that very good day — a Thursday — and we’re heading home. Jill’s done some work for Whiskey del Bac, so we stop and take a tour and pick up the toils of her labor. The owner is slight and steady and bespectacled, lovely and informative. The dogs are polite. The air is thick with malt. We’ll be home in 90 minutes, and all of this feels right.

And I just really love sandwiches.

Zacatecas Special, the Quarry, Bisbee



Postscript: I didn’t eat bread for a month. Jill is still cool. Christian figured out his sleeping bag. Claire’s baby girl is due on Justin’s birthday. I still love sandwiches and tapenade and Willie Nelson. [AH](#)

NASA reprimanded astronaut John Young for smuggling a corned beef sandwich onto the Gemini 3 mission in 1965.