



TURQUOISE

Though turquoise comes in green and white versions, it's the bright blue hues, from robin's egg to teal, which are internationally prized. It's been said that wearing turquoise jewelry is like "wearing a piece of sky." When set in silver, as in Native American squash blossom necklaces, the look is timeless.

Local sources: Numerous local merchants, including Ortega's and Wild West Pawn.

Photographer Bryan Black
Product photos taken at Spur Cross Trading Post

THE Quinessential SOUTHWEST

Writer Suzanne Wright

Maybe I'm biased, but I believe the Southwest is the most distinctive and iconic region in the United States. For starters, there's the expansive sky, the rugged mountains, the seemingly endless horizon and the stunning sunsets. The blooming cacti, the smell of creosote after rain and the chattering of Gambel's quail. There's the architecture, so harmonious with nature. The sunrise, sunset, the ever changing light ... the silence.

It's also the things we collect, display and wear, the things that punctuate our indoor and outdoor spaces, that telegraph our pride in place. Both first-time visitors as well as longtime residents can tick off a list of things that memorably represent our region. Things that embody the authentic Southwestern spirit, our western hospitality, our originality and our heritage.

I'm someone who adopted Cave Creek as home in 2011. Though I lived the majority of my life in the Southeast, the Southwest has long lived inside of me. Many of our readers have similarly staked a claim in Arizona.

The irrepressible Valerie Watters, owner of Valerie's Furniture & Accents, has been doing business in Cave Creek for 25 years. She was happy to share her thoughts on some of the things that evoke the Southwest for her.

The following is our salute to Southwestern style. Though this is by no means a comprehensive list – that would take a book! – we think you will agree that these are indelible symbols of the Southwest.

BOLO TIES

When Southwestern gentlemen of a certain age get dressed up, they often sport a bolo tie. This wearable art dates back to the late 1890s, when both Native American and Anglo men sported the iconic neckwear.

Local source: In 2011, the Heard Museum held an exhibit of Native American bolo ties. Their gift shop is one of the best sources in the Valley for genuine, handcrafted Native American jewelry.

BOOTS

You might be surprised to learn that it was Attila the Hun and his marauding nomads who were the first to wear pointed boots with two-inch heels; it was all about the fit of the foot in the stirrup. Today, cowboy boots are essential gear not only for the working cowboy but also for fashionable men and women who like the swagger and style they provide.

Local source: Cave Creek Cowboy Company has a wide selection of men and women's styles, including such brands as Corral and Old Gringo.



CHILI RISTRAS

From Santa Fe to Scottsdale, ristras – twine-strung dried red chilies – are a popular outdoor welcome decoration, especially on adobe homes and shops. They are said to bring good health and good luck.

Local source: Buffalo Bill's Trading Post offers a great selection of sizes, along with wreaths during the holidays.

DREAMCATCHERS

The best dreamcatchers are handmade Native American objects constructed using a willow hoop woven with a loose netlike web and decorated with sacred objects such as feathers, beads and stones. Hung above the bed, they are a charm to protect the sleeping – especially children – from nightmares.

Local sources: Many souvenir shops offer mass-produced, inexpensive versions. Auctions, trading posts and gift shops of museums in the Southwest are the best places to seek an original.

SKULL & HORNS

The bleached skulls and horns of steer, sheep, elk and deer are classic Western décor. Whether tacked above entrances to ranches or inside the most contemporary, upscale homes, they add organic appeal. When inlaid with turquoise or coral, they exude Southwestern character.

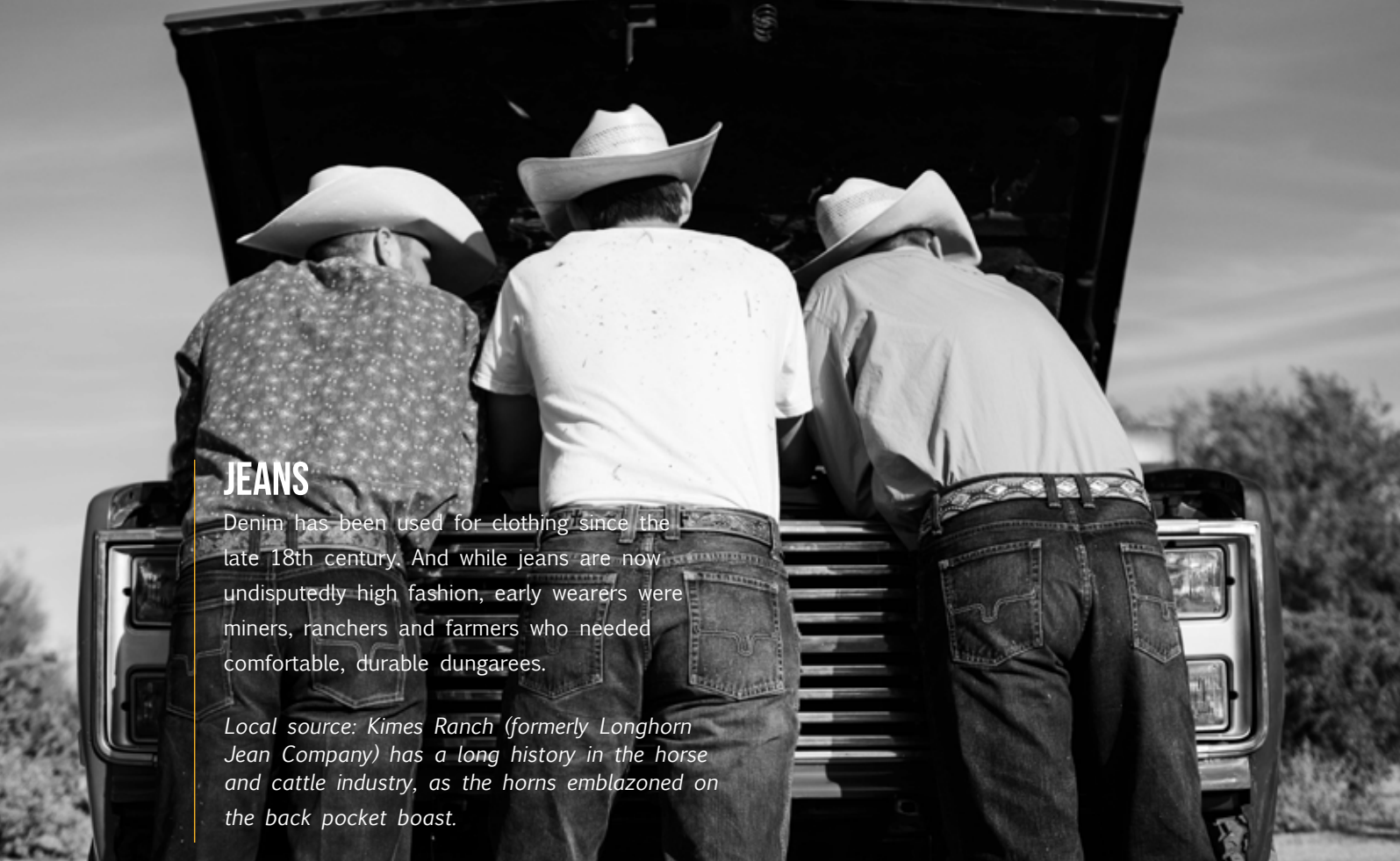
Local source: Visit the Spur Cross Trading Post.



COWBOY HATS

Recognized worldwide, the cowboy hat is a piece of American history that was developed for the harsh conditions associated with our nation's westward advancement.

Local source: Watson's Hat Shop uses American materials and hat making techniques from the early 1900s to create custom toppers for men and women.



JEANS

Denim has been used for clothing since the late 18th century. And while jeans are now undisputedly high fashion, early wearers were miners, ranchers and farmers who needed comfortable, durable dungarees.

Local source: Kimes Ranch (formerly Longhorn Jean Company) has a long history in the horse and cattle industry, as the horns emblazoned on the back pocket boast.

DAY OF THE DEAD

Dia de los Muertos is a Mexican tradition honoring friends and family members who have died. Many Valley cities host celebrations each year on the first two days of November. Participants often don skull masks and create altars in memory of deceased relatives.

Local source: The Desert Botanical Garden brings its 12th annual festival to life through song, dance, storytelling and food.

HIDES

Cowhide and leather are Southwestern design staples. Cowhide rugs, pillows and tooled leather ottomans and furniture are always on trend.

Local sources: Check out Big Bronco, Turn West Design and Valerie's Furniture & Accents.

HORSE TACK

Cave Creek is a town of equestrians, and our love affair goes well beyond riding. Saddles, saddle blankets, lassos, spurs and horseshoes are reminders of a not-so-distant trail blazing past that find their way beyond the barn and into our homes.

Local source: Family-owned Dynamite Horseman Supply has been serving the North Valley for 17 years.

KOKOPELLI

Revered by the Hohokum, Hopi and other ancestral Pueblo peoples, the humpbacked flute player represents fertility. Along with the howling coyote and the gecko, Kokopelli is visual shorthand for the Southwest. Depictions of human figures and critters are found in ancient petroglyphs and pictographs on rocks and in caves throughout the American Southwest.

Local source: Mexicana Rose offers a wide-ranging selection of kitschy and colorful metal and ceramic yard art.

LUMINARIAS

Come Christmas, the Southwest is aglow with luminarias. Simple brown paper bags are filled with sand and a small votive that is lit at dusk. Many North Valley residents eschew bright electric lights in favor of luminarias.

COPPER

Arizona mines more copper than any other state. Custom-made copper tables and bars are hammered and chemically treated to exude burnished warmth.

Local source: Valerie's Furniture & Accents



Local source: The 2014 Cave Creek Luminaria Run is open to spectators as well as participants. Luminarias also line the road to Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area for the annual Christmas pageant.

MESQUITE

Found throughout northern Mexico and the southwestern United States, the plentiful (i.e., sustainable) hardwood has long been popular in furniture making. Tabletops and mantels inlaid with turquoise are especially Southwestern.

Local source: Valerie's Furniture & Accents

NAVAJO RUGS

Along with Mexican serapes and Pendleton blankets, these colorful textiles are used to add texture, character, color, warmth and softness to a space.

Local source: Visit the Spur Cross Trading Post.

SAGUAROS

As denizens of the Sonoran Desert know, the statuesque and long-lived saguaro is a protected species. The woody ribs of the saguaro, when responsibly harvested, make for a unique accent that finds its way into headboards, lamps and cabinets.

Local source: The Cave Creek Tumbleweed Hotel sells saguaro skeletons of various sizes. Their arms resemble angel wings.

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