



**Like a Phoenix she rose and was given new life...
...from cargo to gunship she came into the fight.**

Welcome to Phoenix, Arizona, and to the 2026 AC-119 Gunship Association Reunion. I'm excited about being in Phoenix and It's fitting that we gather in a city whose very name reflects rebirth. Long before Phoenix rose from the desert floor, the Salt River Valley carried the marks of an earlier thriving civilization. When new settlers arrived, they didn't see only what had been lost, they saw what could live again. From those ancient foundations, a vibrant city emerged, symbolizing renewal, resilience, and purpose.

In many ways, the story of Phoenix mirrors the story of our gunships. The Fairchild C-119 began as a dependable cargo hauler, never intended for the demanding role it would one day fulfill. Yet in a time of urgent need, vision and determination transformed that airframe into the AC-119 Shadow and Stinger Gunships, powerful guardians of the Vietnam, Laotian, and Cambodian night, and sometimes day, sky. Like Phoenix rising from earlier foundations, the gunship emerged from an existing form but took on a new mission, proving that innovation and commitment can reshape destiny.

As we come together here in Phoenix, we celebrate more than a place, we celebrate a shared legacy of transformation, service, and brotherhood. The spirit that built this city is the same spirit that defined our ground and air crews: seeing possibility where others saw limits and forging something formidable through teamwork and resolve. The reunion this year is a continuation of that story...honoring the past, strengthening the bonds that unite us, and ensuring that the legacy of the AC-119 gunship and those who flew and supported it continues to rise strong for generations to come.

Welcome to Phoenix, and welcome home.

Bill Petrie

President, AC-119 Gunship Association

REGISTRATION and RESERVATION DETAILS

Note: all the same info is on our web at [Upcoming Reunion 2026](#)

REUNION REGISTRATION is online at <https://www.events.afr-reg.com/e/AC119Gunship26>. **Note:** you'll also find a link there to book your Hotel Reservation!

HOTEL RESERVATIONS: we have a great reunion package at the **Phoenix-Mesa Holiday Inn** that includes our Hootch, Friday Meet & Greet Buffet, Saturday Association Meeting & Banquet, & Sunday Farewell Buffet. And yes, Complimentary Hot Breakfast for two is included in the Room Rate! Our Reunion Rates are available Tuesday, October 20 – Monday, October 26, 2026, at \$135 plus taxes (currently 14.27% per night) for a total rate per night of \$154.26. Those rates are also available three days pre & post reunion dates, based on availability. Please reserve your room by 9/28/26. After that, the hotel will accept your reservation at the contracted rate based on room availability. Reserve your room now; you can cancel without charge up to 24 hours prior to your arrival date. If you need a handicapped accessible guestroom, please call the hotel directly for assistance. Scoot Around rents both manual & power wheelchairs by the day & week. Please call 888-441-7575 or visit <https://scootaround.com> for details & to make reservations. Heads Up: if you book other than thru our Reunion Bookings, breakfast & parking are not free 😊

Register early – most of us want to know who we'll get to SEE one more time!! We'll send updates on "Who Is Coming" via Flash emails to help you decide 😊 & information is also on our Association website & Facebook page. We hope to see you ALL there!

Transportation: American, Southwest, Frontier, Delta, United, & other airlines fly into Phoenix (PHX). Shuttle service is **not** available. The Holiday Inn is a 20-to-30-minute drive that is time-of-day dependent. Self-Parking is Complimentary at the hotel as a reunion guest only.

WHAT TO PLAN FOR

Our Hootch opens noon Wednesday until Sunday night, with free snacks & beverages. **except** during our Meet & Greet, Banquet, & Farewell.

Thursday, enjoy a [*Desert Belle Narration Cruise on Saguaro Lake*](#). This 80-minute nature cruise includes history, geology, geography & the wildlife native to the Sonoran Desert. Relax inside the boat in air-conditioned comfort, or on the open-air deck as you take in the towering canyon walls & dramatic desert vistas. A snack bar is onboard with water, soda, beer, wine & cocktails for purchase. But, since the cruise is mid-day, you get a box lunch to enjoy on the bus, with a choice of Turkey/Cheese or Roast Beef/Cheese sandwich, or Vegetarian, plus chips, cookie, condiments, & bottled water.

Friday, we'll take a bus to [*Queen Creek Olive Mill*](#), Arizona's only working olive farm & mill. Family owned & operated, this 100-acre farm with over 7000 olive trees is a true blossom-to-bottle experience. The tour includes Olive Oil 101, a comprehensive class where you'll learn first-hand how olives are pressed into fresh extra virgin olive oil. The day also includes a separate, farm-to-table lunch using local & garden-sourced ingredients, with a choice of Kalamata Salami Sandwich, Lucca Turkey Sandwich, Italian Chopped Salad, or Caesar Salad plus Sicilian Slaw, Vanilla Bean Cupcake, & Fountain Drink. Before departing, you have time to taste your way through their gourmet marketplace & shop for locally made extra virgin olive oils, balsamic vinegars, olives & other local treasures. We'll split into at least two groups where one group does Olive 101 while the other does Lunch, then they'll flip-flop. You'll get to sign up for a group at the Reunion.

Friday evening we'll gather for our Meet & Greet to enjoy a great buffet of cheese enchiladas, chicken & beef fajitas with grilled onions & peppers, tomatillo Spanish rice, refried beans garnished with cheese, warm flour tortillas, guacamole, sour cream, shredded cheese, & Arizona spring salad with two dressings.

Saturday morning we hold our Association Meeting.

Saturday evening we have our Dinner Banquet with these options:

- Chicken Florentine – chicken breast stuffed with spinach, mozzarella cheese, sun-dried tomatoes, & basil. Includes potato medallions garnished with pesto cream sauce, chef's selection of seasonal vegetables, & chef's choice of dessert.
- Seared Salmon – Garden salad served with chef's choice dressing, Pacific salmon filet prepared with a lemon saffron sauce, wild rice pilaf, chef's selection of seasonal vegetables, warm dinner rolls, & whipped butter, & chef's choice of dessert.
- NY Strip – a choice cut of certified Angus beef garnished with a red wine demi sauce, roasted rosemary potatoes, chef's selection of seasonal vegetables, & chef's choice of dessert.
- Chef's selection of a Vegetarian Entrée.

Sunday morning our Board meets (while the rest of you get to sleep in)

Sunday evening we wrap up with our Farewell Buffet featuring BBQ smoked beef brisket, honey stung fried chicken, chef's house made garlic mash potatoes, chef's selection of fresh vegetables, bread & butter service, Arizona spring mix salad with two dressings, & chef's choice of dessert.

Silent Auction: this really helps us cover expenses during the year & for the Hootch. If you'd like to contribute, things that fit in luggage work well :-)

REUNION SCHEDULE

Schedule of Events ***Bold** = Ticketed Event* NOTE: Use your Free Time to Explore Phoenix

<i>Time</i>	<i>Event</i>	<i>Room Name</i>
<u>Wednesday, October 21</u>		
1200 - 2200	Hootch Open	Tempe/Gilbert Rooms
1400 - 1900	Reunion Registration Open	Superstition Ballroom Foyer
<u>Thursday, October 22</u>		
0700 - 0900	Reunion Registration Open	Foyer
1030 - 1430	Lake Saguaro Desert Belle Narrated Cruise	
0800 - 2200	Hootch Open	Tempe/Gilbert Rooms
1500 - 1700	Reunion Registration Open	Foyer
<u>Friday, October 23</u>		
0800 - 2200	Hootch Open	Tempe/Gilbert Rooms
1030 - 1445	Queen Creek Olive Mill Tour	
1700 - 2100	Cash Bar Reception	Maricopa Ballroom Foyer
1800 - 2100	Meet & Greet Buffet	Maricopa Ballroom
<u>Saturday, October 24</u>		
0800 - 2200	Hootch Open	Tempe/Gilbert Rooms
0900 - 1100	Association Annual Meeting	Mesa or Chandler Room
1700 - 2200	Cash Bar	Maricopa Ballroom Foyer
1800 - 2200	Dinner Banquet	Maricopa Ballroom
<u>Sunday, October 25</u>		
0800 - 1000	Board Meeting	Phoenix or Tucson Boardroom
0900 - 2400	Hootch Open	Tempe/Gilbert Rooms
1700 - 2000	Cash Bar	Maricopa Ballroom Foyer
1800 - 2000	Farewell Buffet	Maricopa Ballroom

What Else Is There To Do While You're There?

Since **The Holiday Inn** is giving us our Group Rate from the Monday before to the Monday after our Reunion, plan **some free time in** great places to visit, like:

- [**Sedona**](#) is an all-day affair to enjoy this unique town, with thousand-foot red sandstone pinnacles & some of the oldest exposed rocks on earth surrounding it, abundant western history, a thriving arts community, world-class hiking, golf, & the Southwest's most famous jeep tours. Recently voted by USA Today as the most beautiful city in the United States. **Note: Sedona is at a 4,500 ft. elevation.**
- [**Heard Museum**](#) is one of the best places to experience the myriad cultures & art of Native Americans of the Southwest. Described as the "nation's most prestigious private Indian arts center" by USA Today, the museum features more than 35,000 artifacts.
- [**Commemorative Air Force Museum**](#) is a combat aviation museum, See a hangar full of rare combat planes on the ground, then experience them in the air! Book a ride on a C-47, Stearman, or T-6!! Take an educational venture through history & learn how aircraft evolved as a vital partner to ground & sea operations from WWI to present. Docents answer any questions as you tour artifacts & exhibits. In the maintenance hangar, watch aircraft mechanics maintain their flying aircraft. Climb aboard bombers & cargo planes or, better yet, book a once-in- a-lifetime flight in an authentic warbird. Choose among six

WWII aircraft, from an open biplane to the rarest bombers in the world. CAF is a non-profit organization staffed 99.9% by dedicated volunteers who honor their mission.

- [**OdySea Aquarium**](#) in Scottsdale is the largest aquarium in the Southwest U.S. It holds more than 2,000,000 gallons of water with seals, sea lions, penguins, helmet diving, 300 species & 6,000 animals!
- [**Fountain Hills Fountain**](#) in Fountain Hills is home to the 4th Largest Fountain in the World. At its full 560 foot height, the fountain is higher than the Washington Monument, 10 feet taller than Notre Dame Cathedral, 110 feet higher than the Great Pyramid of Cheops in Egypt, & three times as high as Old Faithful in Yellowstone Park. The Fountain runs every hour on the hour for 15 minutes from 0900 - 2100 every day! Note: check weather. If wind speeds are above 10 miles an hour, the fountain pump may automatically shut off, & the fountain won't come on or reach its normal height. Plus, there are lots of great restaurants, as well as the Snowbird Ice Cream shop 2 blocks up from the Fountain.
- [**Desert Botanical Gardens**](#) is a great way to experience the unique & beautiful plants that thrive in some of the hottest & driest parts of the world, a great Butterfly Pavillion, & fun local musician.
- [**Arizona Capitol Museum**](#) is home to the USS Arizona Exhibit that brings a personal account of life onboard the USS Arizona in the 1920s & 1930s. The survivors of the attack of December 7, 1941 recount the ship's mighty moments. A large piece of the battleship is on display as well as the United States flag that flew on the ship that day.
- [**Cave Creek**](#) is a quirky western town with a fun mix of cowboys, art galleries, golf, hiking, great shops, history, & live bull riding, too.
- [**Apache Trail Scenic Drive**](#) is if you want more of an adventure! Some of the best scenery in Arizona is on a rugged driving tour along the Apache Trail, with magnificent views of the mountains' dense forests of saguaro cactus & deep blue lakes. This is also the area where Apache warriors roamed the mountain ranges. Enjoy lunch at Tortilla Flats, an old stagecoach stop & one of the last remnants of the Old West.
- [**Musical Instrument Museum**](#) is the world's largest museum of its type, featuring over 15,000 instruments from nearly 200 countries. Opened in 2010, it offers an immersive, 3-5 hour experience with high-quality, wearable, wireless headphones that play audio/video of instruments in action as you walk through.