

FOR PHOENIX + TUCSON AGENTS

The Winter Visitor Playbook

The winter visitor market runs October to April on its own clock, its own money, and its own rules. This is the dated plan: who the 2026 buyer really is, how to win the remote listing, and the words to say in both conversations.

October to April plan

4 word-for-word scripts

The 2026 seller play

Every stat sourced



WHY THIS MATTERS

The winter market runs on a different clock

Phoenix and Tucson run two housing markets a year. Family product peaks in spring, but lock-and-leave product moves on the winter visitor clock: buyers on the ground January through March, sellers gone by May. In 2026 the season comes with a twist worth planning around.

19.1%

year-over-year drop in foreign buyers' U.S. purchase dollars, down to \$45.3 billion

NAR, 2026

16%

of foreign purchases still came from Canada, the number one origin country: 10,700 homes worth \$5.2 billion

NAR, 2026

48%

of foreign buyers paid all cash, at a median purchase price of \$465,000

NAR, 2026

**Two markets, two clocks**

National best-time-to-sell articles average family homes and winter product together and miss both. Lock-and-leave condos, age-qualified communities, and golf patio homes sell when their buyers are physically in Arizona.

[List winter product for the winter window](#)

**Trust your own curve**

Before you coach any seller on timing, pull three years of monthly solds for your farm from your MLS. Ten minutes of work, it beats every national timing article, and the chart doubles as a listing-appointment exhibit.

THE 2026 REVERSAL

Fewer buyers flying in, more sellers cashing out: NAR's chief economist tied the decline in foreign buying to the broader decline in international visitors (NAR, 2026). Meanwhile, owners who bought their Arizona place decades ago are deciding this is the season to sell it, often from another country. Every one of those sales is a listing, and it goes to the agent who can run the whole transaction remotely. That is the machine this playbook builds.

THE PLAN

Your October to April calendar

The season keeps a schedule, so you can too. Put these dates in your phone in September and the winter stops surprising you.

OCT

Arrivals and check-ins

Winter clients land. Call or text every one with the October check-in script from the scripts page. You are listening for one thing: is this one of their last seasons here?

NOV

Media month

Photograph likely future listings while owners and furniture are still in town; a November shoot can list in April without a reshoot. One ListerPros visit captures photos, video, 3D tour, and floor plan in a single stop.

DEC

Build the remote kit

Use the holiday lull for logistics: confirm your title partner's remote notarization workflow, line up a mobile notary, and make your escrow introductions.

JAN

Buyers hit the ground

Barrett-Jackson runs in January and the Tucson Gem, Mineral and Fossil Showcase opens late in the month. Buyers shop between events, so guard your weekends now.

FEB

Peak week after peak week

The WM Phoenix Open opens the month and Cactus League games begin in late February. Morning open houses catch fans before first pitch.

MAR

Decision month

Spring training runs all month, and buyers who leave in April feel their own deadline. Ask every active buyer for a departure date and work backward from it.

APR

Departure surge

The listing conversation of the year. Run the departure ask, capture media before the furniture ships, and send the head-north handout to every winter client.

1.75M

Cactus League fans in 2026, 1,753,849 across 237 games, the biggest season since 2018 and the fifth straight annual increase

Cactus League Association, 2026

6 in 10

2025 spring training attendees came from out of state, part of an estimated \$764 million in statewide economic impact

ASU W.P. Carey study for the Cactus League, 2025

KNOW THE BUYER

Who winter buyers are and how they shop

Remote offers stopped being exotic years ago: at the pandemic peak, 63% of buyers made an offer sight unseen (Redfin, January 2021), and the infrastructure stuck around after the frenzy faded. Three different buyers tour the same Sun Lakes patio home; know which one is in front of you, because the money and the timelines differ.

Redfin remote-homebuying survey, January 2021



The lock-and-leave downsizer

Sold or selling the big house up north. Shops HOA rules, amenities, and maintenance load before square footage, and decides fastest of the three.



The second-home buyer

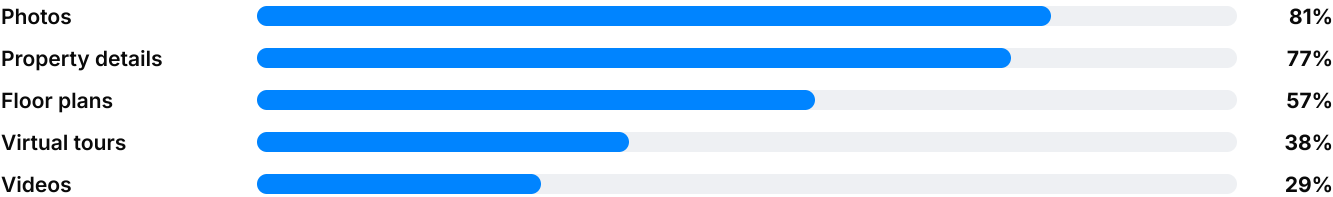
Keeps a primary elsewhere, and financing got structurally pricier: FHFA raised upfront fees on second-home loans by 1.125% to 3.875% of the loan amount (FHFA, 2022). Many simply pay cash, so ask about funds early and kindly.



The future full-timer

Testing communities for a move two or three seasons out. Longest timeline, highest lifetime value. They pick the agent before the house, so stay in the relationship year-round.

WHAT BUYERS RATE VERY USEFUL ON A LISTING



NAR 2026 Generational Trends

WHAT MOST AGENTS GET WRONG

Second-home demand did not collapse; the financed buyer left. Redfin counted 86,604 second-home mortgages in 2024, down 5% and the lowest on record, with second homes at just 2.6% of all mortgages (Redfin, May 2025). True, and easy to misread: mortgage data cannot see cash, and this segment leans on cash, with 48% of foreign buyers paying all cash (NAR, 2026). The fee increases above priced out financed buyers while cash buyers kept right on shopping. So qualify for proof of funds, not just pre-approval.

THE 2026 PLAY

The remote seller pipeline

This is where the season pays now. When a Calgary or Chicago owner decides this was the last winter, the listing goes to the agent who makes selling from half a continent away feel boring. Six steps build the machine; the checklist runs every file.

- 1 Start in April, not September.** The departure ask on the scripts page plants the seed while the owner is still here. Even a maybe earns a media day before the furniture ships.
- 2 Shoot before the movers come.** Photos, video, 3D tour, and floor plan in one visit while the home still shows like a home. If it empties before you list, virtual staging fills the gap without anyone flying back.
- 3 Put the communication contract in writing.** One named point of contact, a written update every Friday, and call windows that respect time zones. Arizona skips daylight saving, so your 4:00 pm is Toronto's 7:00 pm for half the year; write the windows down.
- 4 Stack the remote closing.** Remote online notarization has been legal in Arizona since 2020; confirm the exact workflow with your title partner and keep a mobile notary as backup. E-signing covers the rest.
- 5 Ask the FIRPTA question on day one.** Is anyone on title a non-U.S. person? If yes, see the box below and loop in the escrow officer the same week, not at closing.
- 6 Verify wires by voice.** Before any money moves, the seller confirms wire instructions by phone at a number they already know. You never handle or redirect funds; your job is making sure that call happens.

THE FIRPTA FLAG

When a seller on title is a foreign person: Federal law generally requires 15% of the amount realized to be withheld at closing, and the buyer is the withholding agent (IRS FIRPTA Withholding guidance, current as of 2026). A residence exemption can apply at \$300,000 or less, with reduced withholding between \$300,000 and \$1,000,000, but whether anything applies is a question for the escrow officer and a CPA, never a promise you make. Your job is the early flag; their job is the math.

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ FIRPTA question asked on day one and the answer documented | ☐ Escrow officer introduced the week you list, not the week you close |
| ☐ RON workflow confirmed with title, mobile notary as backup | ☐ Wire instructions verified by phone at a known number |
| ☐ Owner confirms property class and any rental registration with the county assessor | ☐ If it was rented: statutory agent and current rental tax rules checked with your broker, the city, and AZDOR |
| ☐ Insurance vacancy clause reviewed once the home sits empty | ☐ Media captured before departure, virtual staging plan ready |
| ☐ Weekly written update scheduled, day and time fixed | |

STEAL THESE

The scripts, word for word

Four conversations decide the season. Say them in your own voice, keep the structure, and fill the [brackets] before you dial.

THE OCTOBER CHECK-IN

Welcome back to [community], [name]! Quick question while you unpack: is this shaping up to be one of your last seasons here, or are we good for a few more? Either answer helps me help you. And you have my cell all winter if the house needs anything.

THE VIRTUAL-TOUR ASK

I would love to walk you through [address] live on video today. One step first: I need your signature on a short agreement that spells out how I work for you and what my services cost, and every term in it is negotiable. It takes two minutes electronically, and then we tour this afternoon.

THE REMOTE-SELLER PITCH

You never have to fly back. One media day before you leave, showings handled through [access plan], a written update from me every Friday at [time] your time, and a remote-notary closing, which Arizona has allowed since 2020. Your job is answering your phone twice: once to approve the price, once to approve the offer.

THE APRIL DEPARTURE ASK

Before you head north on [date], can I grab 20 minutes? If selling is even a maybe in the next couple of years, let's photograph the home while the furniture is still here. Then you can list whenever you decide, from wherever you are, and it will show like a home instead of an empty box.

WHY THE VIRTUAL-TOUR ASK EXISTS

Sign first, then stream: Under the 2024 practice changes, MLS participants need a written buyer agreement before touring, and NAR's own guidance says touring includes live virtual tours (NAR, Written Buyer Agreements 101, 2024). Most agents built the opposite habit: FaceTime first, paperwork later. Flip the order, and ask your broker how your forms handle a remote signature.

THE LONG GAME

Farm the season, not just the listing

The agent who owns a winter community in five years is the one who was useful in April and visible in October, season after season. Pick your geography, then earn the job of year-round Arizona contact.



Farm geography and turnover, never a demographic

Pick one or two communities by turnover rate: East Mesa, Sun City and Sun City West, Sun Lakes, Gold Canyon, Green Valley, SaddleBrooke. Market to the place: homes in [community] is a farm, while perfect for retirees is a fair housing problem. If the HOA is age-qualified, that is a property fact you may state; who should live there is never yours to say.



Give remote buyers enough to act on

86% of buyers are likelier to view a home whose floor plan they like (Zillow, 2025), and buyers rate floor plans very useful at 57%, ahead of virtual tours at 38% and video at 29% (NAR 2026 Generational Trends). So list winter product with photos, floor plan, video, and a 3D tour every time. One ListerPros visit captures all four, with photos back within 5 hours of the end of the shoot.

[The remote-offer media standard](#)

STEAL THIS: THE HEAD-NORTH HANDOUT

Send it to every winter client the first week of April, sellers or not: Copy the list below onto your letterhead. It costs you nothing, it reads as pure service, and when something leaks during monsoon season, you are the first call.

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Irrigation on a summer schedule, with a person checking it monthly | ☐ Pool service confirmed in writing for the full summer |
| ☐ Mail forwarded and package deliveries paused | ☐ Insurance checked for a vacancy clause before the house sits empty |
| ☐ AC on a summer setback, never fully off | ☐ A trusted neighbor or house watcher holding a key |
| ☐ A monsoon plan: patio furniture secured, gates and roof checked after storms | ☐ My cell number saved as your local Arizona contact |

PRINT IT, PIN IT, RUN IT

The winter visitor checklist

- ☐ Pull three years of monthly solds for your farm from your MLS and mark the real winter window
- ☐ November: photograph likely listings while owners and furniture are in town
- ☐ January to March: guard your weekends and work the event calendar
- ☐ Ask the FIRPTA question on day one and loop in escrow and a CPA early
- ☐ Send the head-north handout to every winter client, sellers or not
- ☐ October: check-in call or text to every winter client, script in hand
- ☐ December: confirm the RON workflow, a mobile notary, and your escrow introductions
- ☐ Get the written buyer agreement signed before any live video tour
- ☐ April: book the departure sit-down before your sellers book flights
- ☐ Put a weekly written update on the calendar for every absentee seller



ListerPros

ListerPros has photographed Arizona real estate since 2013, for thousands of agents across Phoenix and Tucson. One visit captures photos, vertical video, aerials, 3D tour and floor plan, and everything is back within 5 hours of the end of the shoot. Guaranteed.

Every stat in this guide is sourced: the research named where it appears, 2019 to 2026. Sources on request. © 2026 ListerPros · Mesa, AZ

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