

To beat the Valley heat, go up north, garage saler!



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It's Saturday morning in Payson. There's a light breeze out of the north, and the thermometer is hovering around 80, a nice break from the heat of the Valley.

My husband, Kevin, and I are driving from Mesa to Salina, Kan., to visit family. So, as always, I stop at garage sales along the way. There's nothing like garage saling when you're on the road. You never know what you're going to find. Like this day in August, when we pull up to Bob Bartee's sale.

He has a long driveway, so from the street you can't see what he has for sale. As I walk toward his merchandise I admit at first I'm a bit disappointed. There's a lot of "guy stuff" - fishing rods, tools, sports equipment. But as I get closer I see a few possibilities, unusual items, some of them antiques. One thing in particular catches my eye. I buy it. To this day no one is quite sure what it is. I call it a totem pole. Bob calls it "some kind of pine wood carving." My husband calls it a Scandinavian-style "whatchamacallit."
"Yeah, it's interesting," Bob says. "I bought that about eight years ago at an antique store in town and it was old then. It used to sit right next to my fireplace."

I handed Bob \$5, and the carving is now hanging next to my laundry room on a wall in a hallway. Although I love it, I'm not quite sure what the attraction is.



Bob, 81, is a garage sale fanatic.

"This is the garage sale capital of the world, I think," he said. "People go crazy for garage sales." Thanks to the cooler weather up north, Bob can search for treasures all day long. He starts at 8 and goes until about 4. That's different from garage saling in the Valley, where folks in the summer are out by 6 and done by 10 thanks to the heat.

The average high temperature in Payson during August is 89. Here in the Valley it hovers around 103 (if we're lucky!) at Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport.

So let's say you love looking for bargains but just can't take the heat another Saturday. Try taking a 100-mile drive north on Arizona 87 for a change of pace. Payson's elevation at 5,000 feet and cooler mountain climates make for a pleasant change.

Sheila DeSchaaf is the planning specialist for Payson. She says that Payson is a destination for folks from the Valley during the hottest months and that garage saling is one of the favorite activities.

In fact, she also hits garage sales at least once a month.

"Yeah, I go get a Starbucks, get the paper and plan my route," she said. "The newspaper here prints an entire page highlighting the sales. Plus, in Payson you can have a 'hot' coffee in the summer."

Still plenty of heat left in the Valley this season if you just can't handle the heat anymore. In September, the average high is 99, while in Payson it's a cool 82.

Lynda Hammond runs www.GarageSaleGal.com, where you can list and look for garage sales online, and read past columns. Reach her at lynda@garagesalegal.com. She also appears on 3-TV's Good Morning Arizona.