

52 OF THE STATE'S SCENIC WONDERS

ARIZONA

HIGHWAYS

ESCAPE • EXPLORE • EXPERIENCE

JANUARY 2018

EXPLORE
**ARIZONA'S
PUBLIC
LANDS**

P.S. THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND

January 2018

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People, places and things from around the state, including a restaurant in Jerome called Grapes — it's not "another tourist trap," the owner says; the history behind Bisbee's \$2 million tunnel; and a former cattle ranch near Tucson that now features luxury casitas, a nature trail and the toy-like squeaks of Gila woodpeckers.

► Clouds cloak the snow-covered San Francisco Peaks, which are located northwest of Flagstaff.

Ted Grussing

📷 OLYMPUS E-620, 1/1600 SEC, F/5.6, ISO 200, 14 MM LENS

FRONT COVER: Monsoon runoff flows over a slick granite cliff at sunset in Palisade Canyon, located in the Pusch Ridge Wilderness near Tucson.

Joel Hazelton

📷 CANON EOS 6D, 1/5 SEC, F/8, ISO 200, 16 MM LENS

BACK COVER: An organ pipe cactus reaches toward a starry sky at Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument in Southern Arizona.

Mike Sanchez

📷 NIKON D750, 30 SEC, F/3.5, ISO 2500, 14 MM LENS; MULTIPLE IMAGES MERGED

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For nearly a century, *Arizona Highways* has been showcasing the scenic beauty of the forty-eighth state. There's a lot of ground to cover, and more than a third of it is located on public lands — this land is your land. It's too much to present comprehensively, so we've narrowed the list of great outdoor places to 52 ... one for each weekend of the year.

Edited by Robert Stieve

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A story originally published in the June 1959 issue of *Arizona Highways*.

By Vivien Keatley

52 SCENIC DRIVE

Agua Caliente Road: With all of the farmland, stockyards and solar panels around Gila Bend, it might come as a surprise that there's a scenic drive in the area, too, but this historic route fits the bill.

By Noah Austin

Photographs by Jim Marshall

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Blackett's Ridge Trail: The payoff on this hike is one of the best panoramas in the Santa Catalina Mountains. But getting there takes some doing.


By Robert Stieve


Photographs by Jeff Maltzman

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We can all fit in a 4Runner.

Or on a large chairlift. And when we go out to lunch at the Public Market or Matt's Big Breakfast, there's always a table that's big enough. We're not a big group. Just seven. That surprises some people, who imagine that all pub-

lishing houses are staffed by dozens of ink-and-paper aficionados huddled in a sterile room with bad fluorescent lighting. That's not the case at *Arizona Highways*. Although we do have bad lighting, we're just seven people. It's a small editorial team, but, collectively, we have 188 years of experience.

To give you some perspective on that, if you were to roll back the calendar 188 years, you'd end up in 1830. Andrew Jackson was the president then. City planners were sketching the grid for a place they'd call Chicago. And passenger rail service had just begun in the United States. The joke around the office is that Jeff Kida was on that first train. He wasn't, but our photo editor has been walking around with a camera for more than four decades. He has a lot of professional experience, and so much talent. And so do Barbara Denney, Nikki Kimbel, Kelly Vaughn, Keith Whitney and Noah Austin. They're the talented aficionados who create this magazine every month.

You may have seen their names on the masthead, or in bylines over the years, but I'm adding them to Page 2 this month because I'd like them to stand up and take a bow. Their work is unsurpassed. Superb. Second to none. And it's not just the magazine. They also produce an assembly line of acclaimed books, calendars and digital content, along with a long list of related products, including posters, postcards, puzzles and coffee mugs. Their first love, however, is this magazine, which in one night last fall won 21 international magazine awards, including 10 golds and five silvers. Those awards are because of Barb and Jeff, Kelly and Keith, Nikki and Noah.

Among the honors were gold medals for Photographer of the Year and Writer of the Year. Adam Schallau and Matt Jaffe won those. Another gold went to Annette McGivney for her story about the water pipeline that runs from the North Rim of the Grand Canyon to the South Rim. "An amazing, beautiful story, rich in detail and narrative," the judges wrote about *Across the Great Divide*. "The author forgets nothing in her story, recounting the unimaginable difficulties encountered in first constructing the pipeline, the heartbreak of its early washout and the perils of failing to upgrade ... it's all here."

In addition to those accolades, our national parks issue from August 2016 was a silver medal winner in the Special Focus category. The gold went to our friends at *Down East* magazine in Maine — hats off to Kathleen Fleury and her team for always doing everything right. In this issue, we're tackling the subject of national parks again, along with some of the state's other public lands.

There's a lot of it out there. If you do the math, Arizona ranks fourth in the nation with more than 35 million acres. Only Alaska, Nevada and California have more. A large swath of that sacred ground is located within our

national parks, which are home to some of Arizona's most scenic landscapes — Grand Canyon, Lake Powell, Petrified Forest, the Chiricahua Mountains. Because the parks get so much attention, we shifted the focus this time to some of the more obscure and less crowded public lands. Places like Cedar Bench.


"You're forgiven if you haven't heard of the Cedar Bench Wilderness," Kathy Montgomery writes in *Open to the Public*. "Despite its central location near Camp Verde, it's one of the least-visited areas in the Prescott National Forest. The trails are not well documented, well maintained or well marked, and most are rated as difficult." It's not for everyone, but if you're willing to push your heart rate into the triple digits, the tradeoff in Cedar Bench is unmatched solitude and sweeping views. There's more of the same in Haigler Canyon, Gila Box and the Needle's Eye Wilderness. In fact, it's the common denominator in our cover story, which features 52 places to hike, bike, camp, fish, hunt or string a hammock. If that's not enough, you can always point your 4Runner to one of the forest roads in our seven national forests.

In all, the forests add up to 12 million acres. That's plenty of room to explore and find solitude. Or, as an official for the U.S. Forest Service wrote in our October 1946 issue, there's enough room "for every Arizonan to be an emperor whenever the mood seizes him. He can roam at will over this vast, rich, green empire. This is Everyman's Empire."

Vivien Keatley used less hyperbole in June 1959, but her point was the same. "There's something for everyone in the forests," she wrote in *Arizona's Timbered Treasure*. "Once the individual learns to develop the appreciation, aptitudes and woodsman's skills necessary in the wilderness, he becomes refreshed, renewed, restored. But whether your vacation means 're-creation' or just having fun, some place in Arizona's national forests can provide it."

This month, we're resurrecting her story, which is illustrated with some great old photographs from the '40s by Ray Manley and Chuck Abbott. I can't tell you how many awards those two aficionados might have won in their day, but their work was unsurpassed. Superb. Second to none. Just like that of Barb and Jeff, Kelly and Keith, Nikki and Noah.

ROBERT STIEVE, EDITOR

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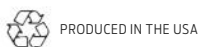
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**BRIANNA
COSSAVELLA**

We can't seem to get enough of Brianna Cossavella, who again worked with *Arizona Highways* this past fall after two semesters as our editorial intern in 2016. For this issue, she compiled information on Arizona's national forests, a key component of the state's public lands (see *Arizona's Timbered Treasure*, page 46). "The majority of my research was sifting through the forests' websites, taking note of how many hiking trails, campgrounds and other recreational opportunities each forest has," she says. "The assignment gave me a better understanding of the number of ecosystems thriving in this state — and of how much of Arizona I have yet to experience. Let's just say I have a very long to-do list now."

Before Cossavella came to *Arizona Highways*, she envisioned a career in the action sports industry, but she says the magazine changed her outlook. "It helped me nurture my relationship with Mother Nature, and it increased my desire to learn about Native Americans and other indigenous cultures," she says. "The more aware I became, the more I realized our environment needs saving and that too many voices are muffled. That's where I need to pour my energy." Cossavella also has been writing copy for Maricopa Community Colleges and is working on a documentary about Oak Flat.



STEVEN MECKLER

Photographer Steven Meckler is a relative newcomer to *Arizona Highways* — his first assignment for us was the Eldorado Suites Hotel, which we featured in *The Journal* in January 2014. "I was so anxious that I got there the night before, set up before sunrise and shot all day, including sunset," he says. "The photo that was used is the absolute first thing I shot in the morning." He was a little less nervous for his assignment for this issue, Rincon Creek Ranch (see *The Journal: Lodging*, page 14). "It's an impressive place — big and right up against Saguaro National Park," Meckler says. "What most surprised me was that the owners, Bill and Gretchen Shirley, are the only full-time workers — everyone else is contracted. It's a major undertaking to keep the venture moving forward." Meckler began shooting in high school and continued while he was majoring in biology at Stony Brook University in New York. "I've never stopped taking photos," he says. "Photography always gives me a personal satisfaction and sense of accomplishment. I enjoy the process of taking pictures almost more than seeing the final product." Meckler's work has also appeared in *Sports Illustrated*, *Wired* and *The Atlantic*. — NOAH AUSTIN

THE ARTICLE ABOUT SEDONA in your latest issue [November 2017] is the best I have ever read! Since living there in the '60s and '70s, I am always drawn back to the place of my best childhood memories. It was a joy to read of the way it was back then and even finding my house in the picture taken from the airport. The article by Lisa Schnebly Heindinger [*A Woman by the Name of Sedona*] was especially interesting. I always loved how Sedona got its name and even learned new facts. I often tell my grandchildren stories of growing up in Red Rock Country and watching old movies just to see the scenery. I can't wait to share with them your excellent article. You mastered exactly how it was. Even though too many people have ruined the way it used to be, I can understand why so many have been enchanted with the beauty of God's creation there.

Cathy Hoover, Orleans, Indiana



November 2017

In my 85 years not once have I written to any media in praise nor complaint. Now I'm going to break that record, happily, to write to *Arizona Highways*. Your October 2017 issue is a real winner. Canyon de Chelly is one of my very favorite places (I've been there five times) and Ray Manley was one of my favorite photographers. The combination of Canyon de Chelly and Ray Manley is an absolute knockout. When this issue arrived I spent the entire evening reading the articles and poring over the pictures. The

next evening I did it again. It all will be saved so I can enjoy it many more times in the future.

Barbara Boswell, Laguna Beach, California

As a native Arizonan, I commend *Arizona Highways* for showcasing our state with breathtaking photography and heartfelt articles. In the November 2017 *Scenic Drive*, which delightfully describes Middlemarch Road near Tombstone, please note the correct spelling of Sorin Pass. It is named for Thomas Sorin, a Civil War veteran who arrived in Arizona Territory in 1879. He helped found *The Tombstone Epitaph*. In addition to his journalistic talents, he played a significant role in the development of early Tombstone as a miner, rancher and speculator. His wife, Sarah Herring, was the daughter of an Earp associate and the Arizona Territory's first female attorney.

Christine Rhodes, Bisbee, Arizona

standing photographer. Thank you for bringing new perspectives on Arizona, its people and lands.

Jeremiah and Suzanne Dandoy, St. George, Utah

Reading Kelly Vaughn's essay [*Waiting for Water*, November 2017], I couldn't help but think of finding water on a hike that I did last June. It was perhaps one of the hottest days of the year when my friend Steve and I hiked the West Clear Creek Trail into West Clear Creek Canyon. Soon we started to cross the creek several times, and each time the knee-deep cold water felt more and more refreshing. Eventually, the temptation to take the plunge and completely submerge myself in the cold water became too great. It was so invigorating to escape the desert heat in this "private paradise" — the words used by Kelly in her essay.

Dennis Elley, Prescott, Arizona

We are longtime subscribers to *Arizona Highways*, going back to the 1970s, when we lived in Tempe and some issues focused on Native American turquoise jewelry, basketry, etc. We saved those special issues. Now the magazine focuses more on locations within the state, but it's just as interesting, especially this year. We have particularly enjoyed the inclusion of articles written 40 or 50 years ago about the places being featured. The one by Ray Manley [*Photogenic Canyon de Chelly*, October 2017] shows that he was an excellent writer as well as an out-

standing photographer. I just read the article about the Chiricahua Mountains [*The Chiricahua Is a Study in Rocks and History*, September 2017] and am anxious to visit there. I wanted to thank you for adding the update to what has changed since the article was originally written. We find that most helpful when planning our trips.

Barbara Leeuw, Pine, Arizona

contact us If you have thoughts or comments about anything in *Arizona Highways*, we'd love to hear from you. We can be reached at editor@arizonahighways.com, or by mail at 2039 W. Lewis Avenue, Phoenix, AZ 85009. For more information, visit www.arizonahighways.com.

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A. Total number copies printed	126,647	125,873
B. Paid circulation		
1. Outside-county, mail subscriptions	104,563	103,594
2. In-county subscriptions	--	--
3. Sales through dealers, carriers, street vendors, counter sales and other non-USPS paid distribution	6,043	6,393
4. Other classes mailed through the USPS	1,848	1,791
C. Total paid circulation	112,454	111,778
D. Free distribution by mail		
1. Outside-county	151	158
2. In-county	--	--
3. Other classes mailed through the USPS	--	--
4. Free distribution outside the mail	2,150	2,063
E. Total free distribution	2,301	2,221
F. Total distribution	114,756	113,999
G. Copies not distributed	11,892	11,874
H. Total	126,647	125,873
I. Percent paid circulation	99%	98.7%
J. Paid Electronic copies	1,537	1,541
K. Total paid print copies + paid electronic copies	113,919	113,319
L. Total print distribution + paid electronic copies	116,293	115,540
M. Percent paid circulation (print & electronic copies)	98%	98.1%

I certify that the statements made by me are correct and complete.
Win Holden, Publisher

THE JOURNAL

Night Light

Photographer Shane McDermott wears a headlamp beneath the night sky over Kofa National Wildlife Refuge in Western Arizona. Jack Dykinga, who made this photo, was testing some new camera equipment in the rugged and remote Kofa Mountains when he ran into McDermott, a fellow *Arizona Highways* contributor. The two ended up camping together.

For more information about Kofa National Wildlife Refuge, call 928-783-7861 or visit www.fws.gov/refuge/kofa.

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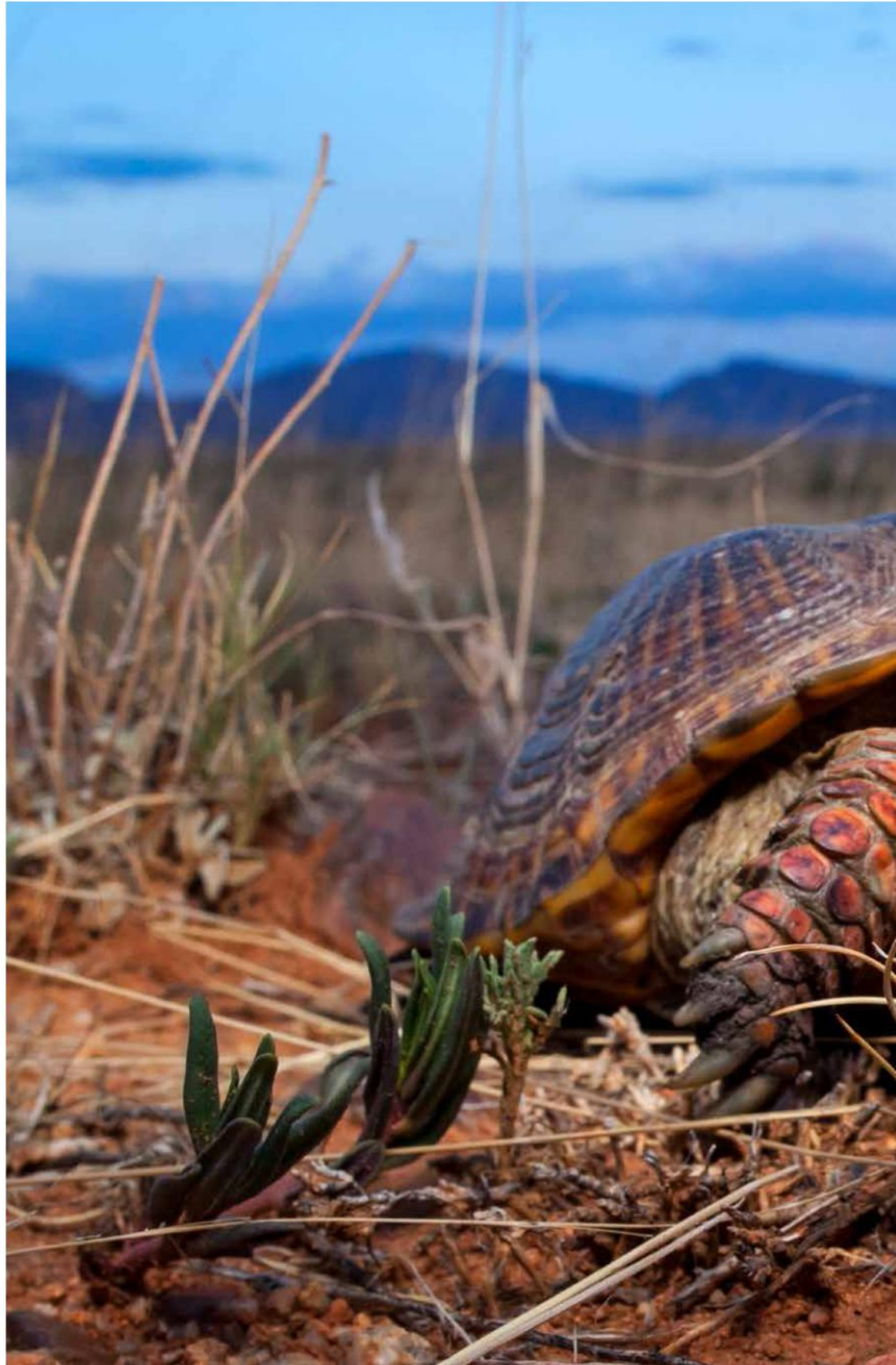


PHOTOGRAPH BY JACK DYKINGA

Ornate Box Turtles

NOAH AUSTIN

When it comes to reptiles with shells, Arizona is best known for desert tortoises, but the state has its share of other turtles, too — including this ornate box turtle (*Terrapene ornata*), a small species of land turtle whose shell can reach about 6 inches in length. Box turtles get their name from a hinge on the bottom of their shell, which allows the shell to close like a box to protect the turtle. Distinguished by their dome-shaped shells and brightly colored eyes (red or orange-red for males, orange-brown or yellow for females), ornate box turtles inhabit low valleys, plains and bajadas in the southeastern corner of Arizona, usually between elevations of 3,000 and 6,500 feet. In regard to diet, these turtles can't be boxed in — they'll eat whatever's available, including insects, cactus fruits, carrion and even other turtles.







Arizona Governor Ernest W. McFarland speaks at the 1958 dedication of the Mule Pass Tunnel.

Mule Pass Tunnel

Getting to Bisbee used to require a treacherous drive up and down the rugged slopes of the Mule Mountains. That is, until 1958, when a 1,400-foot tunnel was blasted through the rock.

NOAH AUSTIN

For decades, Bisbee was a mining boomtown. But after the mines went bust in the 1970s, the Southeastern Arizona city needed a new source of revenue, and it found it in a tourism industry that's still flourishing. However, Bisbee might not have lasted that long without the Mule Pass Tunnel, which 60 years ago bypassed an arduous route that motorists once took to get into town.

Early settlers of the Bisbee area usually came from Tucson or Tombstone, and that meant traversing the steep, rugged slopes of the Mule Mountains. At first, travelers forged their own paths. Eventually, though, a narrow, winding dirt road over 6,033-foot Mule Pass took shape. It later became a section of U.S. Route 80, but even as a graded federal highway, it remained daunting for motorists and truckers. A report from the 1950s indicated that more than 30 cars had to be towed off the Mule Pass section in a 15-month period, and that six people had died in car crashes in the preceding four years.

The solution arrived in 1957, when Arizona and the federal government allocated \$2 million to build a 1,400-foot tunnel under Mule Pass. That meant blasting out 55,000 cubic

yards of rock and drilling a pilot tunnel to drain water from monsoon rains and previously undiscovered springs. It was dangerous work: According to the Bisbee Mining and Historical Museum, one worker died and 400 man-days were lost to accidents.

Despite the setbacks, the Mule Pass Tunnel was completed in late 1958, and it opened on December 19 of that year. Governor Ernest W. McFarland was among the local, state and federal dignitaries on hand for the dedication ceremony. As the *Tucson Daily Citizen* reported, McFarland spoke about the time he drove over Mule Pass in the 1920s.

"The road was so steep that we had to use a hand pump to get the gasoline from the tank up to the engine," he said.

Today, the tunnel makes traveling to Bisbee much easier, but visitors still can explore the route over Mule Pass. At the top of the now-paved Old Divide Road is a monument that claims the pass is part of the Continental Divide. However, like many aspects of Arizona history, that's a tall tale — a 6,033-foot tale, in fact. The actual divide is about 120 miles to the east, in New Mexico.

THIS MONTH IN HISTORY

- In January 1947, Saudi Arabia's Prince Saud tours the Salt River Valley on a quest for ideas for agricultural development in his own country.
- On January 5, 1932, Tucson Mayor Henry O. Jaastad attempts to cut city employees' pay and working hours but is thwarted by provisions of the city's charter.
- On January 12, 1883, the Southern Pacific Railroad completes tracks that allow Tucson to be reached from the East Coast by way of San Antonio.
- On January 23 and 29, 1930, astronomer Clyde Tombaugh makes the photographic plates that later lead to his discovery of Pluto at Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff.

50 YEARS AGO IN ARIZONA HIGHWAYS



Most of the January 1968 issue of *Arizona Highways* was dedicated to Esther Henderson's words and photography. "I learned to my delight that there were many more mountains in Arizona than there were 'caterpillars' on the 1917 map, and many more rivers than hair snakes in Grandpa's rain barrel," she wrote.

Grapes

This isn't just "another tourist trap," chef-owner Michelle Jurisin says of her cozy Jerome restaurant. It's a place that expertly pairs delicious food — "simple, basic Italian cooking" — with regional wines, including several from Arizona.

NOAH AUSTIN

GRAPES IS APPROPRIATELY NAMED. For a place that revolves around wine, that might seem obvious. But just like its namesake, this Jerome restaurant took a while to achieve its final form. "Before this, we were the Jerome Brewery," says chef Michelle Jurisin, who owns Grapes with her husband, Eric. "We decided that with the way things were changing up here — the [Verde Valley] wine country, all the tasting rooms starting to open — it was time to change our concept and start pairing wines with food."

Several years later, Grapes has become another successful endeavor for the Jurisins, who also own Jerome's Haunted Hamburger and other area destinations. For Michelle, the success comes down to a simple but winning formula: spectacular food that's expertly matched with local and regional wines.

"We really liked Postino and some of

the other places in Phoenix that were doing a wonderful job with tasting menus and bruschetta," she says. The target audience, she adds, is "people who are just trying to get to know wine."

Another good fit for a restaurant built on vintages: It's housed in one of Jerome's many vintage buildings. This one dates to the early 1900s, when it was a telegraph office. Subsequent tenants included a machine shop, a Shell service station and the town's volunteer fire department. The Jurisins bought the building in the mid-1990s. It now sports a cozy, trattoria-style interior, a nod to Michelle's Italian heritage.

That heritage also inspires an extensive menu of affordable dishes "crafted the way my 98-year-old grandmother taught me about really simple, basic Italian cooking," Michelle says. They include the caprese chicken sandwich, served

on grilled focaccia and topped with prosciutto, tomato, basil, mozzarella and pesto mayo; and the Mediterranean salad, which includes grape tomatoes, goat cheese, roasted red peppers and a cabernet sauvignon vinaigrette. Burger lovers shouldn't miss the sourdough zinfandel burger, which is drizzled with red zinfandel and topped with bacon, provolone and herbed mayo. A bruschetta board, a build-your-own pasta bowl and pizzas are among many other options.

For wine novices, each menu item includes pairing suggestions. The wine list has several Arizona and California selections, along with a few from Australia and South Africa. And in 2011, Michelle began offering regular dinners that feature four courses paired with a selection of wines.

In short, visitors to Grapes, whether they're locals or just passing through, won't have trouble finding a lunch or dinner worth raising a glass (or two).

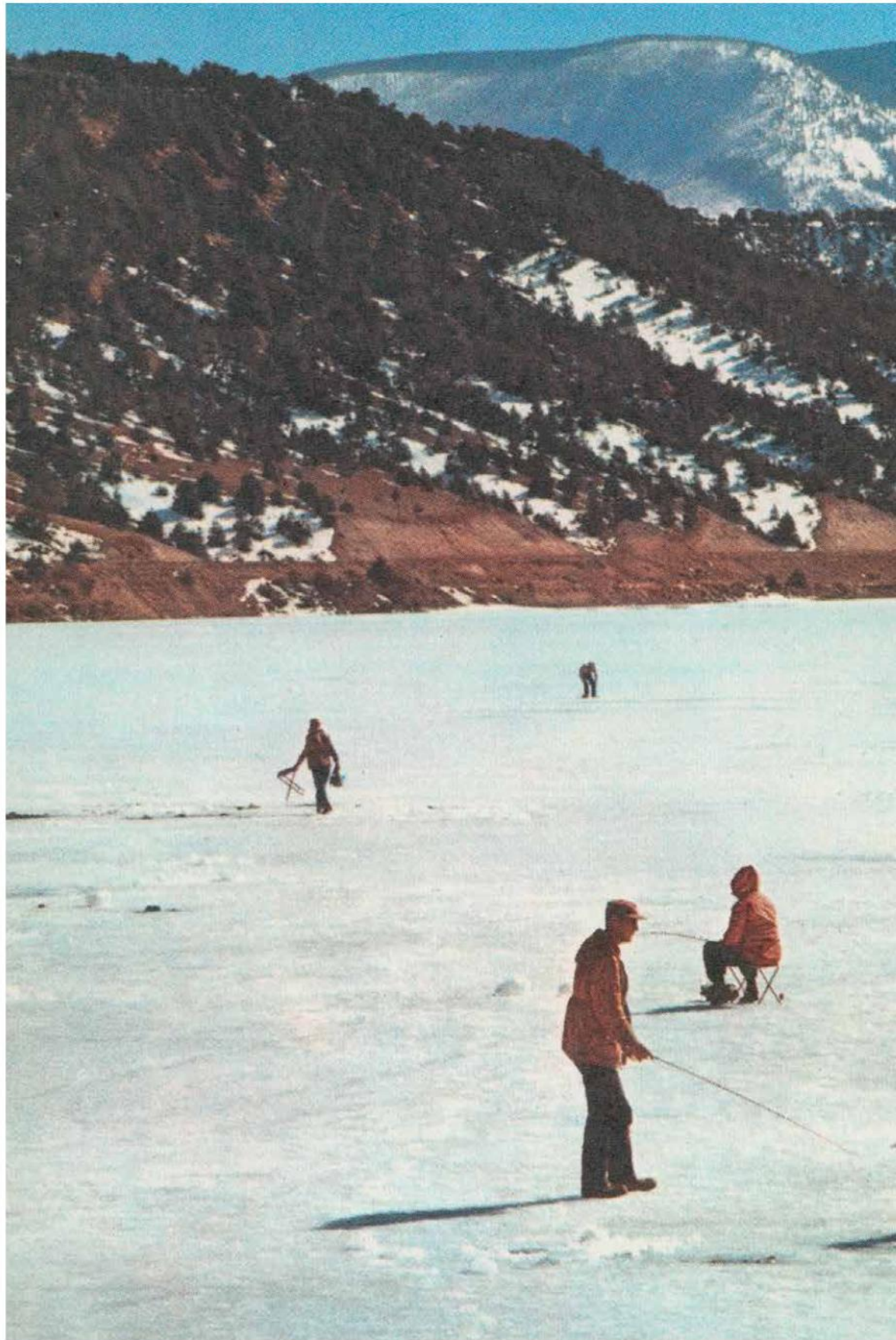
"I try to beat their expectations when they're traveling and they think they're going to stumble upon another tourist trap," Michelle says, "when they're really getting some of the best food they're going to have on their vacation."

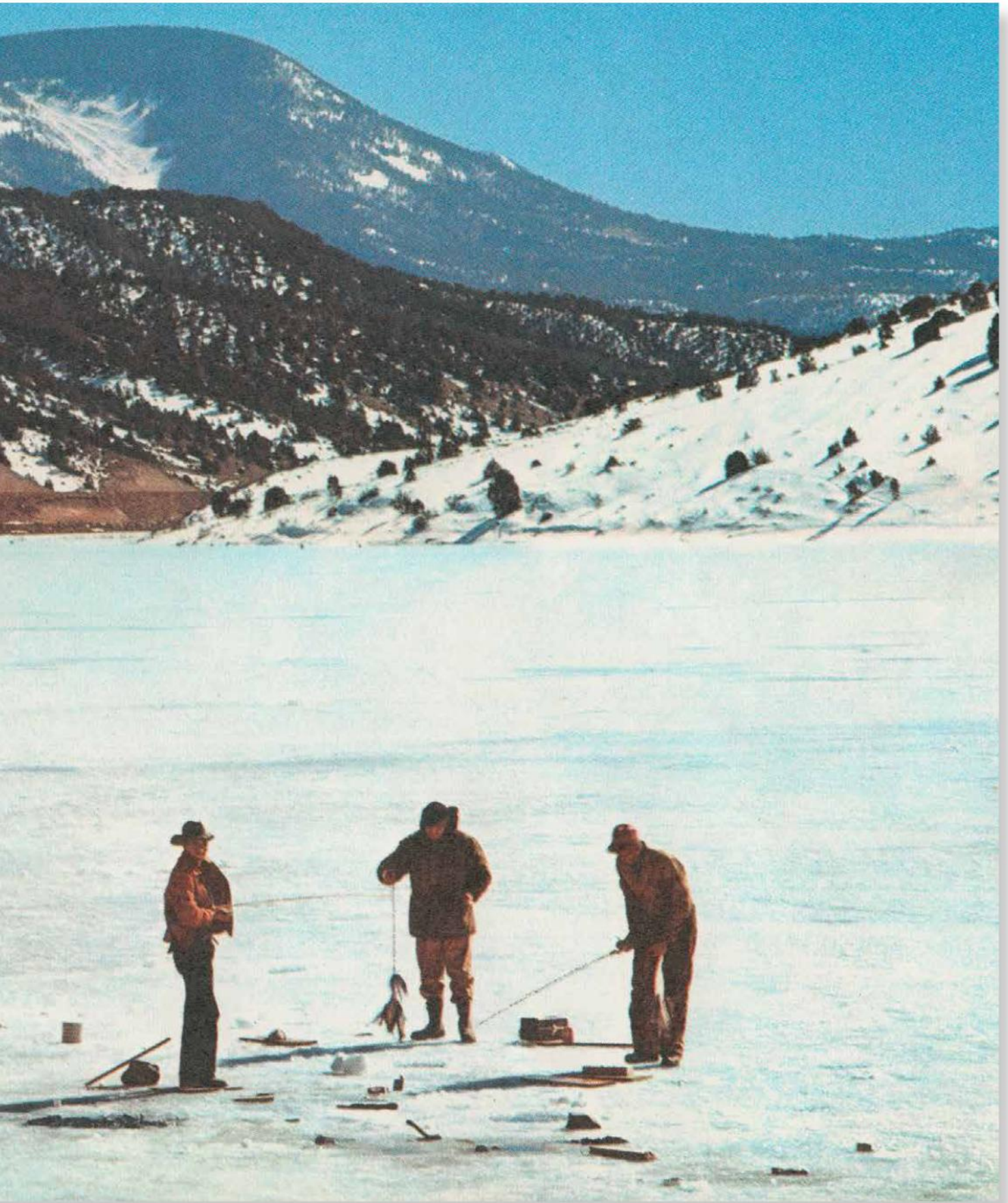


JEROME Grapes, 111 Main Street, 928-639-8477, www.grapesjerome.com



The fishing never stops in the White Mountains of Eastern Arizona. That's true even in winter, as this Josef Muench photo from the January 1963 issue of *Arizona Highways* illustrates. The photo was made at Nelson Reservoir, a narrow man-made lake located along U.S. Route 191 between Springerville and Alpine. The caption described "a lovely day in the crisp air of the White Mountains," noting that the reservoir was known for its trout population. It still is today, and brown trout are easiest to catch in spring and fall; in between, summer is ideal for rainbow trout. The photo was one of many in the issue that showcased winter in Arizona's high country. "Most Arizonans, living in the desert country, are strangers to winter and snow," Editor Raymond Carlson wrote. "But even desert dwellers like snow occasionally, even if they have to travel a half-day or so to frolic in it."





Q&A: George Andrejko

PHOTO EDITOR JEFF KIDA

JK: How did you end up at the Arizona Game and Fish Department?

GA: My younger brother's family wanted to relocate to Tempe, because my sister-in-law's sisters were going to school at Arizona State University. My mother was still in Chicago, but she took an early retirement and they all moved to Tempe. I was still in New Mexico and was traveling back and forth to visit, and eventually, I just decided I was going to move there. One day, my brother showed me a clip from *The Arizona Republic* about a job opening for a photographer at Game and Fish, and I ended up getting the job. In August, I started my 29th year there.

JK: How has your position evolved?

GA: At the beginning, it was a lot of black and white photography and work in the darkroom. Our magazine, *Arizona Wildlife Views*, was just starting the process of using color photos on the cover, but most of the magazine was black and white. I carried two cameras,

color and black and white, and shot with both. It was a classic "Murphy's law" situation: If I really wanted a shot in color, I'd end up getting it in black and white, and vice versa.

JK: Camera technology has advanced a lot since then, but you still do a lot of shooting manually, rather than with automatic settings. Why?

GA: I've been disappointed several times, on important shots, when the automatic focus would lock onto a branch or something like that. I knew my way around a Nikon FM2, which is a classic manual camera, and I just didn't want a program doing what I already knew how to do. Maybe I like the challenge, but I also want any mistakes to be mine, rather than the camera's. I probably shoot 90 percent of my photos with manual focus.

JK: You've shot just about every Arizona species, including California condors, black-footed ferrets and Sonoran pronghorns. What tips would you offer wildlife photographers?



GA: With the advancement of cameras and the digital age, you still need to know the rules of photography and your way around your camera. Study the manual, watch YouTube videos and learn everything you can. Then, in the field, try to assess

the situation and work your way around to a good angle and a good composition — as much as the animal will let you, anyway. I use a 600 mm lens, which definitely helps, since I don't have to get too close to the subject.

To learn more about photography, visit www.arizonahighways.com/photography.



A Mexican gray wolf, wearing a tracking collar, traverses a snowy landscape in the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests.



PHOTO WORKSHOP

Slot Canyon and the Colorado Plateau March 18-22, Page

Lower Antelope Canyon is the focus of this Northern Arizona workshop led by photographer Suzanne Mathia, but participants will also take a half-day float trip from Glen Canyon Dam to Horseshoe Bend.
Information: 888-790-7042 or www.ahpw.org



Rincon Creek Ranch

There are many reasons to visit this former cattle ranch near Saguaro National Park, including the fully stocked casitas, a nature trail and the toy-like squeaks of Gila woodpeckers in the morning.

KATHY MONTGOMERY

THE SUN WAKES THE DESERT gently. Despite a triple-digit forecast, the emerging sun feels mild, backlighting the fat arms of monsoon-fed ocotillos and giving the rounded tops of paloverdes a soft, brushed look. Even the saguaros look soft, their spiny skins glowing as benignly as peach fuzz. The only sounds are the *whit-weet* of a curve-billed thrasher, the musical wing beats of doves taking flight and the toy-like squeak of a Gila woodpecker. Being able to watch the desert come to life while swaddled in a fuzzy robe, sipping freshly ground coffee, is reason enough to book a casita at Rincon Creek Ranch.

Bill and Gretchen Shirley threw everything they had into creating this Sonoran

Desert sanctuary. In 2010, they bought a 78-acre former cattle ranch bordering Saguaro National Park East and set to work on seven luxury casitas overlooking the park. They've since expanded their land to nearly 100 acres, to preserve the views and the quiet, and constructed a 1.3-mile nature trail that ambles through the property's three habitats: desert, mesquite bosque and pasture.

The Santa Fe-style casitas, painted in rich desert hues, offer full kitchens, fireplaces, laundry facilities and patios. Stocked with whole-bean coffee and fresh eggs from the Shirleys' chickens, they include all the comforts of home. A Mission-style multipurpose building serves as a gathering spot for impromptu

happy hours, with a massage studio, game room and business center.

The one- and two-bedroom casitas have similar floor plans, but Gretchen decorated each with a different theme. The one-bedroom Casa Azul is brightly painted, with Talavera tile accents, while the Appaloosa includes a signature copper tub. The two-bedroom El Ranchito offers the most privacy, with an unobstructed view of Tanque Verde Ridge and a wraparound patio perfectly positioned for sunrise and sunset. The access gate to Saguaro National Park lies within sight, and there are birding lists, trail maps and binoculars in the casitas.

Those looking for an active vacation find trail rides, jeep tours and golf nearby. Shops and restaurants in downtown Tucson are about a half-hour away. But many find no reason to leave. They feel content to enjoy the parade of cardinals, finches and towhees to the feeders, and to watch the sun gently coax open the bloom of a barrel cactus to reveal the colors of a tequila sunrise.

TUCSON Rincon Creek Ranch, 14545 E. Rincon Creek Ranch Road, 520-760-5557, www.rinconcreekranch.com

The logo for Prescott, Arizona, featuring the word "Prescott" in a large, elegant, gold-colored script font. Below it, the word "ARIZONA" is written in a smaller, gold-colored, all-caps sans-serif font, with horizontal lines on either side.

Prescott
ARIZONA

The logo for the state of Arizona, with "ARIZONA" in a large, bold, black sans-serif font. The letter "O" contains a yellow outline of the state of Arizona. Below it, "GRAND CANYON STATE" is written in a smaller, black, all-caps sans-serif font.

ARIZONA
GRAND CANYON STATE

ExploreMoreAZ.com

A scenic landscape of Prescott, Arizona, featuring rugged mountains in the background and a grassy field in the foreground. In the foreground, a Native American woman in traditional regalia is performing a hoop dance, with several hoops in motion around her. In the middle ground, two people are riding horses across the field. A crowd of people is visible in the lower left corner, watching the performance.

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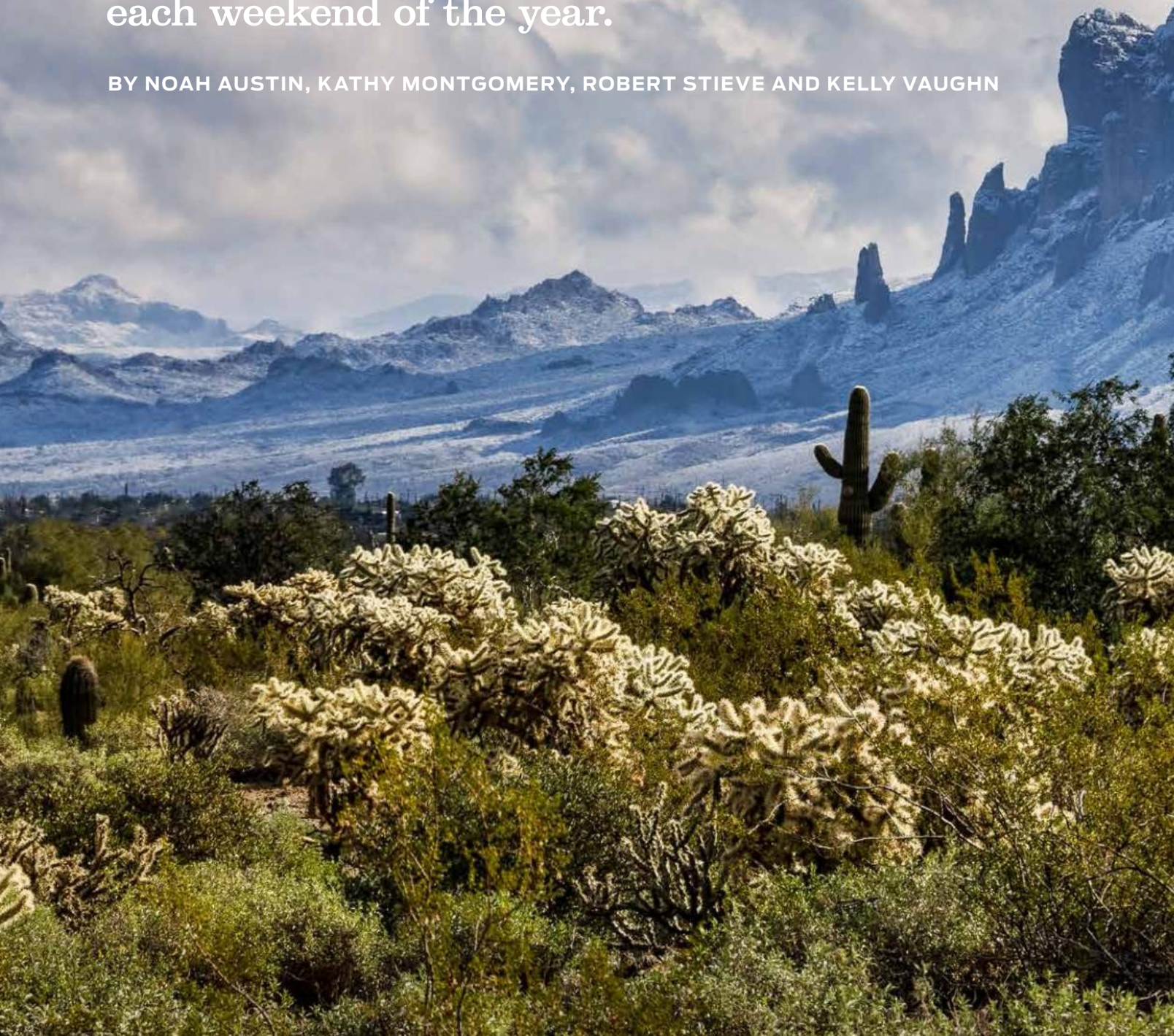
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OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

For nearly a century, *Arizona Highways* has been showcasing the scenic beauty of the forty-eighth state. There's a lot of ground to cover, and more than a third of it is located on public lands — this land is your land. It's too much to present comprehensively, so we've narrowed the list of great outdoor places to 52 ... one for each weekend of the year.

BY NOAH AUSTIN, KATHY MONTGOMERY, ROBERT STIEVE AND KELLY VAUGHN

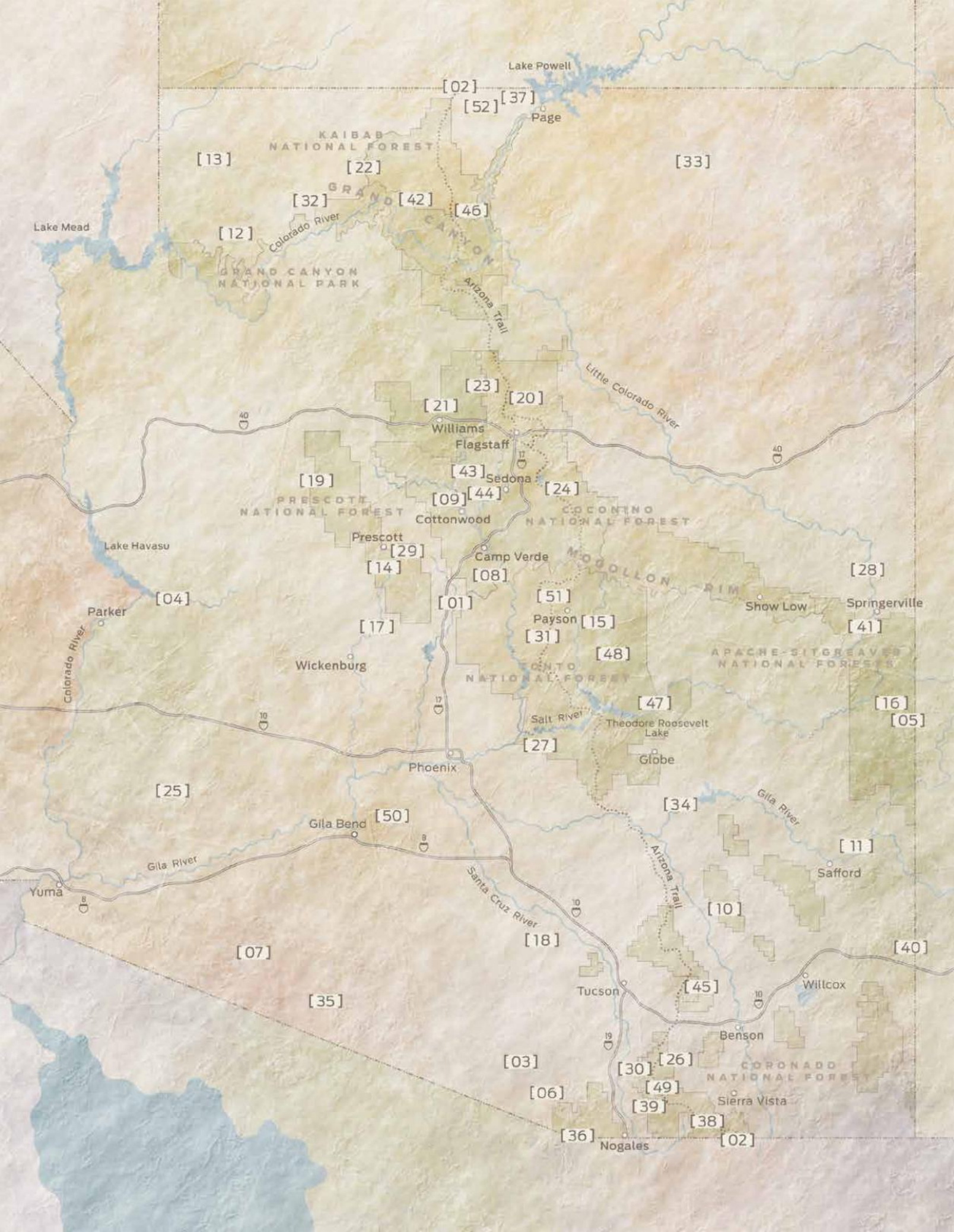




Snow covers the jagged cliffs of the Superstition Mountains east of Phoenix. The mountains are part of the Superstition Wilderness and the Tonto National Forest. *Saija Lehtonen*

WHEN IT COMES TO PUBLIC LANDS,

Alaska is the most privileged state in the union. With more than 325 million acres of state and federal jurisdiction, there's an endless stream of recreational opportunities up there. At the other end of the spectrum is Delaware, which has less than a thousand acres. Somewhere in between is Arizona — we rank fourth, behind Alaska, Nevada and California. Our 35 million-plus acres of public lands include state parks, national forests, wilderness areas, national monuments, national parks, national conservation areas and more. As a whole, they provide Arizonans and visitors from around the world with opportunities to hike, bike, camp, fish, hunt or string a hammock. Last year, our state parks alone attracted nearly 3 million visitors to their 64,413 acres. And in 2016, Grand Canyon National Park approached 6 million visitors for the first time in history. But more than people passed through the turnstiles. According to a federal report, those 6 million people at the Canyon spent \$648,170,900 in the communities near the park. And that spending supported 9,779 jobs in the local area and had a cumulative benefit to the economy of \$904,315,700. That's just one national park. Almost a billion dollars. Indeed, public lands are good for the economy, and they're good for *Arizona Highways*, too. Our mission, which was mandated by the state Legislature in the early 1920s, is to promote travel and exploration in the state. Public lands are a big part of that. Thus, this month's cover story. As you'll see, we've left out some of the obvious sites — places we feature on a regular basis — and focused instead on some of the lesser-known destinations. These are your public lands. Here's hoping you find something to do this weekend.



[01]

AGUA FRIA NATIONAL MONUMENT

The Agua Fria River runs intermittently for 120 miles, from just northeast of Prescott to the Gila River west of Phoenix. Its course includes Black Canyon, Lake Pleasant and the monument that's named for it — which, in addition to providing a home for the river, contains 71,000 acres of stunning desert landscape, ancient petroglyphs and swaths of riparian habitat. One of the best ways to experience the monument is via a hike along the Badger Springs Trail. From the Badger Springs Road exit off Interstate 17, it's

BELOW: Afternoon light shines on the Agua Fria River at Agua Fria National Monument north of Phoenix.

Joel Hazelton

OPPOSITE PAGE: Long shadows form at sunset along a section of the Arizona National Scenic Trail in the Pusch Ridge Wilderness near Tucson.

Joel Hazelton

just a short drive down a forest road to the trailhead. Really, though, this path just follows the river — or, in dry seasons, the riverbed. That means you can walk it for as long as you'd like to explore the cottonwoods, sycamores, willows, bobcats, coyotes, pronghorns and more than 175 bird species that call the monument home.

NEARBY TOWN: Phoenix

INFORMATION: Hassayampa Field Office, 623-580-5500, www.blm.gov/visit/agua-fria

[02]

ARIZONA NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL

There are many ways to hike what's commonly known as the Arizona Trail, which runs for about 800 miles from the Utah state line to the U.S.-Mexico border. Some hikers tackle each of the trail's 43 segments individually, often taking several years to cover the entire distance. Those who do it all in

one shot, known as "thru-hikers," usually start on the southern end, at Coronado National Memorial, and hike north in the spring, but some go from north to south in the fall. The whole trek typically takes a month or two, but it's been done much faster: In 2016, Arizona native and long-distance runner Michael Versteeg completed the route in just under 16 days. Most people, though, will want to take their time and enjoy the sights, which include the Grand Canyon, the San Francisco Peaks, the Mazatzal Mountains and Saguaro National Park.

NEARBY TOWN: Statewide

INFORMATION: Arizona Trail Association, 602-252-4794, www.aztrail.org

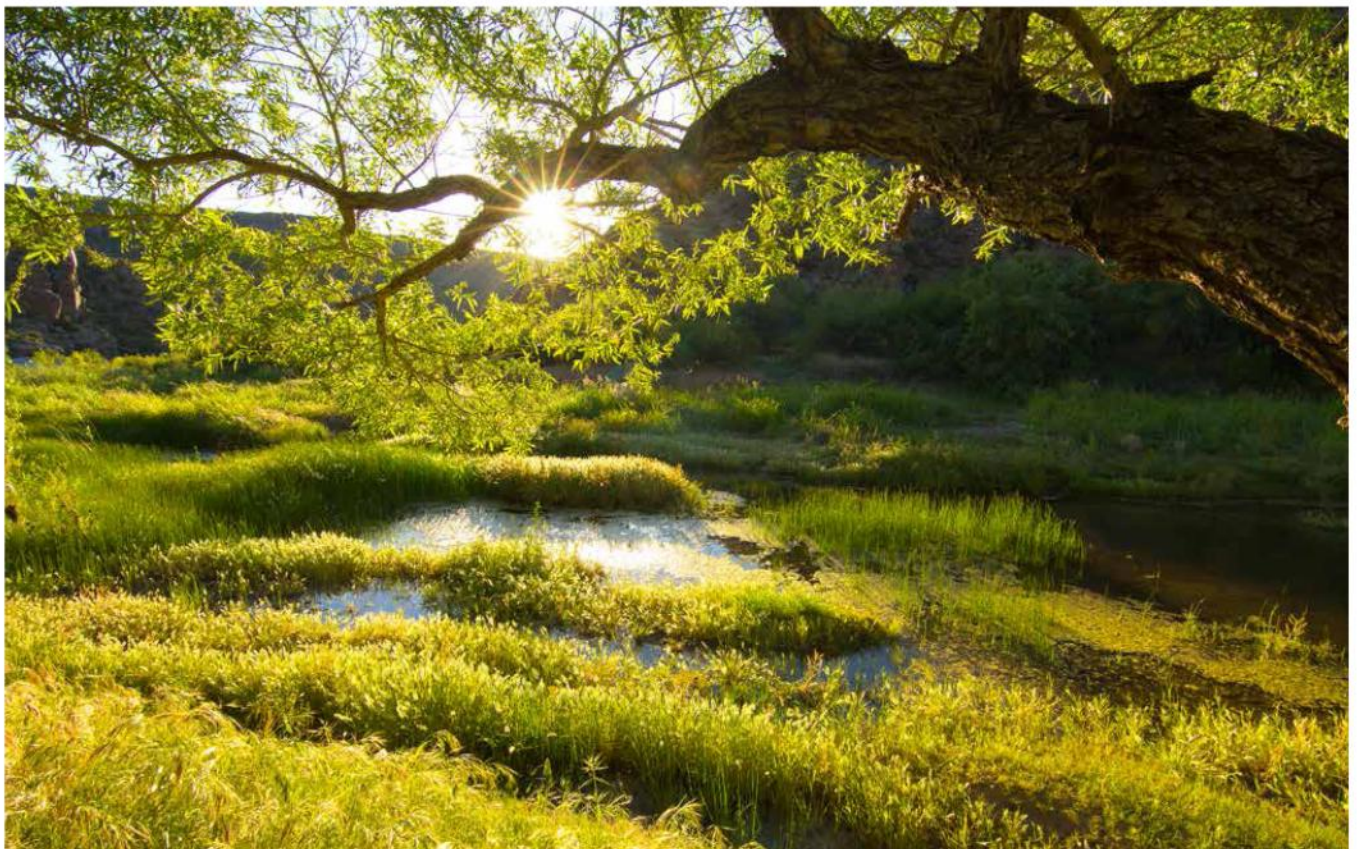
[03]

BABOQUIVARI PEAK WILDERNESS

The centerpiece of Arizona's smallest wilderness area (2,040 acres) rises dramati-

cally out of Southern Arizona's Altar Valley. Some have likened its massive, bare-rock summit, the remnant of a magma bubble, to a shark's tooth. To the Tohono O'odham people, it's the bottom of an hourglass where the sands of time pass unseen from the upper half in the spirit world. It's also where the Tohono O'odham deity I'itoyi lives. Oddly, the eastern half of Baboquivari Peak was excluded from the tribe's land in 1916, and it became a Bureau of Land Management wilderness area in 1990. Scaling the summit requires technical skill and rock-climbing equipment. Robert Forbes and Jesus Montoya made the first recorded ascent in 1898. From Thomas Canyon, their route to the summit is considered the easiest. Hikers can get as far as Lion's Ledge. The views there aren't as grand, but there is a rare perennial spring.

NEARBY TOWN: Sasabe





INFORMATION: Tucson Field Office, 520-258-7200, www.blm.gov/arizona

[04]

BILL WILLIAMS RIVER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Open water, verdant marshes, riparian woodlands, dramatic cliffs ... they're all on display at this wildlife refuge, which protects a section of its namesake waterway just before it empties into the Colorado River at Lake Havasu. The 6,100-acre refuge's diverse terrain attracts an equally diverse animal population, which features more than 350 documented bird species, including endangered Southwestern willow flycatchers and Yuma clapper rails. Desert bighorn sheep reside on the refuge's steep cliffs, and in the water, nearly 200 aquatic species have been spotted. There's

no fee to visit the refuge, and visitors can enjoy it via two short hiking trails, a 3.5-mile scenic drive or a 2.5-mile paddle on the river in a canoe or kayak. You also can cast for catfish, bluegills, smallmouth bass and other fish via lighted shoreline fishing facilities, which are open 24 hours a day. NEARBY TOWN: Lake Havasu City INFORMATION: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 928-667-4144, www.fws.gov/refuge/bill_williams_river

[05]

BLUE RANGE PRIMITIVE AREA

The Blue Range remains the country's only primitive area. All the others have been upgraded to wilderness areas, such as the contiguous Blue Range Wilderness in New Mexico. The reasons are complicated. Even so, this 173,762-acre preserve

is as untamed as any in the state. Home to bears and wolves, it extends from high-country forests and meadows near Alpine to the high deserts around Clifton. Like a connecting artery, the Blue River's riparian woodlands run north and south through both. Summer is the best time to explore the higher elevations. The 12-mile Bonanza Bill Trail runs along the high ridge that separates the Blue River and San Francisco River canyons on the remote eastern side; it also dips into the New Mexico wilderness area. Lower elevations are more enjoyable in cooler months. The slot canyons, pools and hot springs that line the southernmost stretch of the 17-mile Blue River Trail are simply wild.

NEARBY TOWNS: Alpine, Clifton INFORMATION: Alpine Ranger District, 928-339-5000; Clifton

Ranger District, 928-687-8600; www.fs.usda.gov/asnf

[06]

BUENOS AIRES NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Photographer Jack Dykinga, a longtime *Arizona Highways* contributor, says the grasslands of Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge remind him of Africa's Serengeti — but with mule deer instead of Thomson's gazelles. The 117,464-acre sanctuary, located near Baboquivari Peak southwest of Tucson, offers myriad opportunities to spot wildlife. More than 330 bird species have been documented there, and the refuge covers most of the U.S. range of the masked bobwhite, an endangered quail species. There are pronghorns, too, and Pronghorn Drive, a 10-mile loop that starts and ends near



the refuge's visitors center, is a good place to see them. Buenos Aires also protects Brown Canyon, a pristine example of a "sky island" ecosystem. Guided hikes into the canyon are held on the second and fourth Saturdays of each month from November to April. The cost is \$5 per person, with a maximum of 12 people per hike.

NEARBY TOWN: Arivaca
INFORMATION: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 520-823-4251,

www.fws.gov/refuge/buenos_aires

[07]
**CABEZA PRIETA
NATIONAL WILDLIFE
REFUGE**

Endangered Sonoran pronghorns and lesser long-nosed bats are among the animal species protected by this refuge, which is located along the U.S.-Mexico border between Yuma and Ajo. In fact, despite

its harsh desert climate, the 860,000-acre refuge is home to more than 275 kinds of wildlife, along with 400 Sonoran Desert plant species. Here, Gila woodpeckers carve holes in saguaro cactuses to build nests that later are reused by elf owls and other animals. And after a wet winter, more than 30 wildflower species put on a spectacular spring display. Almost all of the refuge is federally designated wilderness,

meaning motorized vehicles are prohibited, but old roads there are open to hiking. For the best photography and wildlife-watching opportunities, you should visit early in the morning or late in the evening. The refuge's visitors center in Ajo offers interactive nature displays and an interpretive trail that features bird blinds and a desert pupfish pond.

NEARBY TOWNS: Yuma, Ajo
INFORMATION: U.S. Fish and



Maple leaves display their autumn hues along Ash Creek in the Galiuro Wilderness near Willcox. *Derek von Briesen*

Wildlife Service, 520-387-6483, www.fws.gov/refuge/cabeza_prieta

[08]
**CEDAR BENCH
 WILDERNESS**

You're forgiven if you haven't heard of the Cedar Bench Wilderness. Despite its central location near Camp Verde, it's one of the least-visited areas in the Prescott National Forest. The trails are not well

documented, well maintained or well marked, and most are rated as difficult. The area takes its name from a ridge, below Tule Mesa on the Verde Rim, that separates the Agua Fria River and Verde River drainages. Early pioneers mistook the Utah junipers for cedars. A federally designated Wild and Scenic River stretch of the Verde runs along the wilderness area's eastern boundary, while the Chasm Creek Trail

accesses the upper third of the wilderness. It's rocky and steep, climbing more than 1,500 feet along its 6-mile course. Expect to be rewarded with sweeping views of the Verde Valley in perfect solitude. Just don't expect the trail to be forgiving.

NEARBY TOWN: Camp Verde
 INFORMATION: Verde Ranger District, 928-567-4121, www.fs.usda.gov/prescott

[09]
**DEAD HORSE RANCH
 STATE PARK**

The first time Calvin "Cap" Ireys' children visited a property Ireys was thinking of buying, they noticed a dead horse lying in a field. Later, after the family looked at some other properties, Ireys asked his kids which one they liked best. "The one with the dead horse," they answered, because they were kids. And so, in 1950, the place became Dead Horse Ranch. Ireys owned it until 1973, then sold it to Arizona State Parks; it opened as Dead Horse Ranch State Park in 1977. The 320-acre park, located on the Verde River just northeast of Cottonwood, now attracts anglers, canoeists and kayakers, along with hikers who enjoy more than 20 miles of trails in and around the park. If you're in Old Town Cottonwood, you can reach the park via the Jail Trail, an easy 1-mile hike that starts near Pizzeria Bocce. And these days, spotting a dead horse at the park is extremely unlikely.

NEARBY TOWN: Cottonwood
 INFORMATION: Dead Horse Ranch State Park, 928-634-5283, www.azstateparks.com/dead-horse

[10]
GALIURO WILDERNESS

Historically, not many people

lived in what later became the Galiuro Wilderness. Those who did were as obstinate as the land. The Power family eked out an existence ranching and mining before a 1918 shootout left four people dead and triggered a massive manhunt. A lesser-known "sky island," the Galiuro Mountains are unusual, with two parallel ridges separated by a pair of canyons. The preserve's irregularly maintained and sometimes hard-to-follow trails get little use. It's far more common to see bears than to see people, and old-growth trees, naturally inaccessible to loggers, also populate the canyon in abundance. Primary trails line both ridgelines. A backpackers' dream, the West Divide Trail runs along the western ridges, dipping past the Powers' cabin and mine. To the east, Bassett Peak makes a fine autumn day hike, with sycamores, aspens and oaks decked out in fall finery — and views from the summit that just won't quit.

NEARBY TOWN: Willcox
 INFORMATION: Safford Ranger District, 928-428-4150, www.fs.usda.gov/coronado

[11]
**GILA BOX RIPARIAN
 NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA**

Water is life. And in Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area, four waterways — the Gila and San Francisco rivers, and Bonita and Eagle creeks — create a lush, biologically diverse oasis in the desert. During spring, kayakers are especially lucky to float the Gila, which, depending on runoff, can be a moderately challenging course to paddle. Regardless, exploring the conservation area by kayak, canoe



or inflatable raft is a wonderful way to experience prehistoric and historic structures, more than 100 bird species, rock art and — if you're lucky — desert bighorn sheep.

NEARBY TOWN: Safford
INFORMATION: Safford Field Office, 928-348-4400, www.blm.gov/visit/gilabox

[12]

GRAND CANYON-PARASHANT NATIONAL MONUMENT

When it comes to solitude, Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument might have cornered the market. The National Park Service and the Bureau of Land Management jointly manage this monument, which contains more than a million acres of rugged, remote terrain. There are no paved roads or cellphone reception there, but there are plenty of stars in the night sky, as well as a number of opportunities

for backcountry exploration. The best way to experience the monument is to venture into its wilderness areas, of which there are four: Grand Wash Cliffs (see below), Paiute, Mount Trumbull and Mount Logan. For a bird's-eye view of the region, hike to the top of Mount Trumbull itself. With an elevation of 8,029 feet, it's the highest point within the monument. And although there are no designated campsites near the trailhead, dispersed primitive camping is allowed throughout Grand Canyon-Parashant.

NEARBY TOWN: St. George, Utah
INFORMATION: Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument, 435-688-3200, www.nps.gov/para

[13]

GRAND WASH CLIFFS WILDERNESS

Nature writes its history on the land. And in few places is that more evident than in the

Grand Wash Cliffs in Northwestern Arizona. Marking the transition from the Colorado Plateau to the Basin and Range Province, the 12-mile-long cliffs step down from the Shivwits Plateau to the Mohave Desert in two Brobdingnagian steps of between 1,000 and 2,000 feet. Above the cliffs, an 11-mile trail traverses the length of the wilderness area. The Colorado River once shaped these impressive formations, although today the river flows 20 miles to the south. The only water you're likely to find now is in natural pools after a rain. Nor are you likely to find people. You might, however, find desert bighorn sheep, as well as opportunities for canyoneering and the chance to write an intriguing chapter in your own story.

NEARBY TOWN: St. George, Utah
INFORMATION: Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument, 435-688-3200, www.nps.gov/para

[14]

GROOM CREEK RECREATION AREA

Camping, picnicking, hiking, mountain biking, bouldering, horseback riding ... there are many recreational ops at this refreshing nook in the Prescott National Forest. What's more, it's a quick getaway — just 10 minutes from Courthouse Square in Prescott. It's the pines that make it so refreshing, no matter what time of year you visit. The many trails, which are open year-round, include the Wolf Creek Loop (5.5 miles round-trip) and the Groom Creek Loop (8.7 miles round-trip). The latter climbs to the top of Spruce Mountain. That name, by the way, is a misnomer. There aren't any spruce trees in the area. What the early settlers thought were spruce are actually firs. There are picnic areas, however, including the Spruce Mountain Picnic Site at the summit of the mountain — at 7,700 feet, it's the highest

recreation site on the Prescott National Forest. Another great option for kicking back is the Groom Creek Schoolhouse Group Picnic Site. Built in 1902, the historic schoolhouse and adjacent picnic area can be reserved in advance for groups of up to 50 people. Visitors without reservations can utilize the outdoor accommodations when groups aren't present.

NEARBY TOWN: Prescott
INFORMATION: Bradshaw Ranger District, 928-443-8000, www.fs.usda.gov/prescott

[15]

HAIGLER CANYON RECREATION SITE

Fishing is the main attraction at this recreation site, which is located just below the Mogollon Rim, not far from the isolated community of Young. The creek of the same name is rugged and flows through a transitional vegetative zone that ranges from ponderosa pine forest to chaparral habitat. Although the creek offers some intense hike-in fishing opportunities, the easiest place to drop a line is at Fisherman Point, which is located about 2 miles north of Haigler Canyon Campground. If you're not interested in fishing, some of the chiseled canyons in the area make wonderful swimming holes. And just west of the site is Colcord Lookout, an 83-foot steel fire tower that's listed on the National Historic Lookout Register. Regardless of what you do in the daytime, at night, you'll want to pitch your tent at Haigler Canyon Campground.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Rocky cliffs loom over the eastern end of Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument, located north of the Grand Canyon.

Nick Berezenko

RIGHT: A fallen tree forms a bridge over Haigler Creek downstream from Haigler Canyon Recreation Site.

Joel Hazelton







Surrounded by trees, the campground offers two day-use sites and two campground areas with 14 overnight sites.

NEARBY TOWN: Young
 INFORMATION: Pleasant Valley Ranger District, 928-462-4300, www.fs.usda.gov/tonto

[16]

HANNAGAN MEADOW RECREATION AREA

Named for Robert Hannagan, a carpetbagger who did some cattle ranching in the area, Hannagan Meadow ranks as one of the most beautiful places in Arizona — had Robert Frost

ever walked by, he surely would have written something about the experience. The recreation area is composed of a couple of forested campgrounds, access to the Blue Range Primitive Area (see page 21) and the historic Hannagan Meadow Lodge, which stands alone in the middle of the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, a place generally off-limits to commercial development. The history of how that happened dates to 1926, when the U.S. Forest Service issued a rare permit for a store to be built. Later, a service station was added, along with cabins, a restaurant and the main lodge. Today, the Shangri-La of the White Mountains offers modern conveniences such as hot meals, running water, electricity and four-star service, but there are no televisions or telephones, and cell service is nowhere to be found. In their place is an expansive front porch that looks out on a meadow that attracts elk, mule

deer and other wildlife. Think of it as reality TV.

NEARBY TOWN: Alpine
 INFORMATION: Alpine Ranger District, 928-339-5000, www.fs.usda.gov/asnf; Hannagan Meadow Lodge, 928-339-4370, www.hannaganmeadow.com

[17]

HASSAYAMPA RIVER CANYON WILDERNESS

The Hassayampa River runs underground for much of its 100-mile course. But it surfaces like a mirage along the southeastern portion of this Sonoran Desert preserve, supporting as many as 280 species of birds, a native fish called the longfin dace and an unusual shrub, flannelbush, with tiny yellow blooms. Most visitors enter the wilderness area northeast of Wickenburg, via Constellation Road. The adjacent Williams Ranch runs cattle along the river. The trails here are poorly marked, so it's easiest to hike along the river, following cattle

trails that lead into the side canyons. The western section, via Fool's Canyon, offers more solitude and fewer livestock, with cross-country access to the upper elevations — including Sam Powell Peak, at just above 4,000 feet, and a dramatic rock formation called the Needle.

NEARBY TOWN: Wickenburg
 INFORMATION: Hassayampa Field Office, 623-580-5500, www.blm.gov/arizona

[18]

IRONWOOD FOREST NATIONAL MONUMENT

This 190,000-acre monument safeguards its namesake trees — *Olneya tesota*, formally — which are among the longest-living trees in the Sonoran Desert. In addition to its diverse and significant plant life, the monument is also home to several desert mountain ranges — Silver Bell, Waterman and Sawtooth — as well as cultural and archaeological sites that

LEFT: A blooming hedgehog cactus overlooks the Hassayampa River Canyon Wilderness near Wickenburg. This view is from a hill above Constellation Road, one of the wilderness area's main access routes.

ABOVE: Ragged Top, the defining geological feature of Ironwood Forest National Monument near Tucson, looms over saguaros and chollas. *George Stocking*



date back 5,000 years. Ragged Top, an appropriately named mountain, is the crown jewel of the monument in terms of biological and ecological diversity: It's home to several endangered species, including the lesser long-nosed bat and the Nichol's echinocactus. Primitive camping, mountain biking, hiking and horseback riding are the best ways to explore this wild landscape, but a 33-mile drive through the monument is an option as well.

NEARBY TOWN: Tucson
 INFORMATION: Tucson Field Office, 520-258-7200, www.blm.gov/visit/ironwood

[19]
JUNIPER MESA WILDERNESS

The drive along Williamson

Valley Road to this remote wilderness area, in the northwest corner of the Prescott National Forest, is reason enough to visit. Once you're there, seven maintained trails lead into the small preserve, which is marked by an ancient upwelling of the Colorado Plateau. Named for the area's predominant geological feature, the 5.5-mile Juniper Mesa Trail runs east and west along the mesa's broad, juniper-dotted surface, overlooking the Apache Creek Wilderness and Granite Mountain. It terminates at a junction with the Oaks and Willows Trail, which descends the mesa's southwestern edge through George Wood Canyon's thick stands of junipers, ponderosa pines and oaks. That trail also features the north fork of Walnut Creek and views of

Aztec Pass, an early pioneer route.

NEARBY TOWN: Prescott
 INFORMATION: Chino Valley Ranger District, 928-777-2200, www.fs.usda.gov/prescott

[20]
KACHINA PEAKS WILDERNESS

Altitude is everything in this wilderness area, which encompasses the San Francisco Peaks' summits, including Humphreys Peak. At 12,633 feet, Humphreys is Arizona's highest point, and it's also the centerpiece of the state's only tundra region. The Peaks are the only place on Earth where the San Francisco Peaks groundsel, a small flowering plant, blooms each September. The Peaks are sacred to 13 tribes, and

the wilderness area's name acknowledges the Hopi spirits who dwell in the Peaks for half the year. If attaining the highest heights is your goal, the 5-mile Humphreys Trail, which starts at the Arizona Snowbowl parking lot, will get you there. For a lower-key approach, the Kachina Trail is superlative in its own way, passing ancient pines, massive firs and the biggest bracken ferns you're likely to ever see — plus aspens so lovely, they'll leave you quaking.

NEARBY TOWN: Flagstaff
 INFORMATION: Flagstaff Ranger District, 928-526-0866, www.fs.usda.gov/coconino

[21]
KAIBAB LAKE

There's a good chance you've blown past this wooded lake



A solitary hoodoo rises from the rocky landscape of the Kanab Creek Wilderness on a foggy spring morning. *Mark Frank*

campground, too, which offers individual, double and group campsites with picnic tables and campfire rings. Tents, trailers and motor homes up to 40 feet can be accommodated. If you need more than that, the South Rim is an easy day trip away.

NEARBY TOWN: Williams
INFORMATION: Williams Ranger District, 928-635-5600, www.fs.usda.gov/kaibab

[22]

KANAB CREEK WILDERNESS

Located north of the Grand Canyon, this 68,000-acre wilderness area is a land of extremes, prone to flash floods and radical elevation changes. Summer temps can reach 120 degrees, while the creek's water can be numbingly cold. But it's also a land of dramatic beauty. From its origins in Southern Utah, Kanab Creek carves a labyrinth of canyons and gorges, one that features fins, knobs and stunning vertical walls. Landmarks with enchanting names such as Scotty's Castle and Whispering Falls contain grottoes, hanging gardens and, in some seasons, waterfalls and efferescent pools. Sowats Point is one of five trailheads that access more than 90 miles of primitive trails in the wilderness area, which is managed by the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. Backpackers generally spend several days working their way along minimally marked and maintained trails to the Colorado River and back.

NEARBY TOWN: Fredonia
INFORMATION: North Kaibab Ranger District, 928-643-7395, www.fs.usda.gov/kaibab

without even knowing it — it's located just off State Route 64 between Williams and the South Rim of the Grand Canyon. Although swimming isn't allowed in the lake, fishing is. And the fishing is good. Because the lake averages a depth of 37 feet, the deepest of the Williams-area lakes, it's known for having some especially large rainbow trout. Largemouth bass, channel catfish and sunfish are found in the 45-acre lake as well. In addition to fishing, the area makes a great picnic spot. That is, if you like nature. The lake, which sits at an elevation of 6,800 feet, is lined with pines and wild grasses. And in late spring and summer, wildflowers add a splash of color to the landscape. Kaibab Lake has a

[23]

KENDRICK PARK WATCHABLE WILDLIFE TRAILS

There are two trails at this beautiful site, which is about 20 miles northwest of Flagstaff in the Coconino National Forest. One is a short, paved loop (a quarter-mile round-trip) that's wheelchair accessible, and the other is a longer loop (1.5 miles round-trip) that's made of smooth dirt. Both are easy and feature interpretive signs, which add an educational element to the experience. In addition, the park sits at an elevation of 7,900 feet and bridges the habitats of forest and grassland, making it an ideal place to see northern flickers, red-tailed hawks, mule deer, porcupines, pronghorns, elk, Abert's squirrels, badgers and coyotes.

NEARBY TOWN: Flagstaff
INFORMATION: Flagstaff Ranger District, 928-526-0866, www.fs.usda.gov/coconino

[24]

KINNIKINICK LAKE PICNIC AREA

There are a few lakes on Anderson Mesa in the Coconino National Forest. Some are busier than others. One of the quieter options is Kinnikinick, a spring-fed, 126-acre lake on a rocky high prairie that attracts pronghorns, elk and bald eagles. And because the lake has some good-sized brown and rainbow trout, it attracts anglers, too. Although camping is no longer allowed at the day-use area, the lake is still a great place to launch a kayak or canoe. And, of course, as the name implies, the area is ideal for a picnic. In addition to the wildlife you might see, you'll have some great

panoramic views of the San Francisco Peaks on the horizon, with open grasslands and old junipers in the foreground. By the way, in case you're wondering, the unusual name of the lake comes from kinnikinnick, which is spelled slightly different and is another name for the bearberry plant. Kinnikinnick also refers to a Native American mixture of tobacco, dried sumac leaves and bark.

NEARBY TOWN: Flagstaff
INFORMATION: Flagstaff Ranger District, 928-526-0866, www.fs.usda.com/coconino

[25]

KOFA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

The rugged canyons of the Kofa Mountains, located northeast of Yuma, harbor one of Arizona's rarest sights: California fan palms (*Washingtonia filifera*), the only species of palm tree native to the state. The trees grow only in narrow side canyons that get the right amounts of sunshine and moisture. You can explore these microclimates via Kofa National Wildlife Refuge's Palm Canyon Trail. From U.S. Route 95, a dirt road leads 7 miles east to a parking lot and a half-mile hike into the canyon. If you visit at midday, there's a short time period when the trees are in the sun and easily photographed; the rest of the day, they're in the shade. But the palms aren't the refuge's only attraction. Other plants you might see include ironwoods, paloverdes and rare Kofa Mountain barberries, found only in a few Southwestern Arizona mountain ranges. And along the way, you might spot desert bighorn sheep or hear the yelp of a coyote.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 32]





Yuccas, agaves and chollas grow beneath the jagged peaks of the Kofa Mountains in the Kofa Wilderness. This view is from the summit of Ten Ewe Mountain (4,715 feet). *Joel Hazelton*



[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 29]

NEARBY TOWN: Quartzsite
 INFORMATION: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 928-783-7861, www.fws.gov/refuge/kofa

[26]

LAS CIENEGAS NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA

Tucked into a transitional zone between the Sonoran and Chihuahuan deserts and fed by perennial Cienega Creek, Las Cienegas National Conservation Area protects one of the most significant riparian zones in Southern Arizona. Whether you choose to hike or bike to experience this NCA, you'll have a place to stay. While dispersed camping is allowed along the back roads of Las Cienegas, there also are two designated campgrounds. Set camp, then consider a hike along the Heritage Discovery Trail at the NCA's Empire Ranch headquarters, or connect to the Arizona Trail via Oak Tree Canyon. You can also choose your own path — responsibly, of course. Many of the back roads make great hiking trails, too.

NEARBY TOWN: Sonoita
 INFORMATION: Tucson Field Office, 520-258-7200, www.blm.gov/visit/las-cienegas

[27]

LOST DUTCHMAN STATE PARK

The Dutchman was actually German, not Dutch. You probably knew that. You probably also knew that Jacob Waltz's fabled gold mine has never been found — turning his treasure into one of Arizona's most enduring myths. Lost Dutchman State Park, located east of the Phoenix area, celebrates Waltz's legacy, but it's tough to get lost on its well-marked hiking trails, most of which begin in the park before heading into the Tonto National Forest and the Superstition Mountains. The park's 134 campsites are popular most of the year, but wildflower hunters like to visit in February and March, when brittlebushes, chuparosas and globemallows bloom. For the best wildflower viewing, the park recommends the Siphon Draw and Jacob's Crosscut trails. If you're looking for a leisurely morning hike, though, try

the Treasure Loop Trail, which climbs toward the Superstitions and offers spectacular views of the Phoenix area to the west.

NEARBY TOWN: Apache Junction
 INFORMATION: Lost Dutchman State Park, 480-982-4485, www.azstateparks.com/lost-dutchman

[28]

LYMAN LAKE STATE PARK

Lyman Lake has been a state park since 1961, but the human history of this site, near St. Johns in Northeastern Arizona, goes back much further. Several large Ancestral Puebloan ruins, which date to the 1300s, are located near the reservoir, and the park's Peninsula Petroglyph Trail offers views of Hopi rock art. The lake itself is one of the few in the area without restrictions on watercraft size, and boats can be launched from two paved ramps. In addition to big boats, Lyman Lake attracts eagles, ospreys, hawks and a variety of waterfowl. If you'd like to stay overnight, you can choose from the park's 56 campsites, most of which

have RV hookups, or eight camping cabins, which have bunk beds, climate control and electricity. Picnic tables, restrooms and showers are nearby, and the cabins' covered porches make great places to watch sunrise or sunset.

NEARBY TOWN: St. Johns
 INFORMATION: Lyman Lake State Park, 928-337-4441, www.azstateparks.com/lyman-lake

[29]

LYNX LAKE RECREATION AREA

You won't be alone at Lynx Lake. More than 90,000 people a year visit this popular recreation area, which is located just southeast of downtown Prescott. But don't let the crowds discourage you. The scenic 55-acre lake attracts people for many reasons, including the fishing — the lake was built along Lynx Creek specifically for that purpose. Hiking and mountain biking are popular, too. There are seven trails in the area, ranging in length from a half-mile to 7 miles. If you've never been, the Lynx Recreation Trail, which winds around the lake, is a good introduction to the area (the west side is paved and accessible to wheelchairs). But keep in mind that the east side of the trail is closed from December 1 to June 30 each year to protect nesting bald eagles. Other wildlife includes ospreys, great blue herons and mule deer. You can learn more about the critters and their surroundings at the nearby Highlands Center for Natural History, which has a

ABOVE, LEFT: Ponderosa pines and other evergreens surround Lynx Lake, the centerpiece of Lynx Lake Recreation Area near Prescott. *Nick Berezenko*

RIGHT: The sun sets over the west side of the Mazatzal Wilderness, a diverse and rugged wilderness area in Central Arizona. *Joel Hazelton*

learning center and trail system on 80 acres along Walker Road.

NEARBY TOWN: Prescott

INFORMATION: Bradshaw Ranger District, 928-443-8000, www.fs.usda.gov/prescott

[30]

MADERA CANYON RECREATION AREA

Rare birds make their way to Madera Canyon. And so do many birders. The holy grail for the latter is the elegant trogon, a colorful bird related to quetzals. Seeing one is a big deal, but birds are hardly the only reason to visit this beautiful canyon, which was carved out of the northwest face of the Santa Rita Mountains in the Coronado National Forest. In addition to the birds, Madera Canyon is home to black bears, mountain lions, deer, coatimundis, coyotes, bubbling springs, green grasses, big trees and

panoramic views. There are hiking trails, too, including the Bog Springs/Kent Springs Loop (5 miles round-trip), which offers a quick and easy introduction to the area. Another great hike is the Old Baldy Trail (10.8 miles round-trip), which leads to the summit of Mount Wrightson, the highest point in the area. At the end of the day, you can look forward to a quiet night in the canyon. There are three lodging facilities and a campground with 13 campsites suitable for tents or RVs.

NEARBY TOWN: Green Valley

INFORMATION: Nogales Ranger District, 520-281-2296, www.fs.usda.gov/coronado

[31]

MAZATZAL WILDERNESS

Despite its proximity to Phoenix, the Mazatzal Wilderness remains surprisingly wild,

perhaps because of its early protection — it was designated wilderness in 1940, then an official wilderness area in 1964 — or its rugged terrain. Today, 240 miles of trails cross more than 250,000 sprawling acres, a diverse swath of Central Arizona that includes 7,884-foot Mazatzal Peak as well as desert and riparian habitats.

Two trails highlight the area's extremes. The 27-mile Mazatzal Divide Trail runs north and south along a ridgeline from Mount Peeley to North Peak before ending near Payson.

That route, which doubles as a section of the Arizona Trail (see page 20), passes scenic campsites and springs, along with a succession of long-range vistas. The lightly traveled Verde River Trail crosses its namesake waterway twice, sometimes becoming hard to follow as it meanders 28 miles from the

Verde River Sheep Bridge, north of Carefree, to near Strawberry.

NEARBY TOWNS: Payson, Strawberry

INFORMATION: Payson Ranger District, 928-474-7900, www.fs.usda.gov/tonto

[32]

MOUNT TRUMBULL WILDERNESS

Ever wonder what Arizona looked like 100 years ago? This remote, undeveloped land on the road to the Grand Canyon's Toroweap Overlook probably comes close. Located on the remote Arizona Strip between the Grand Canyon and Utah, the region's namesake peak is the high point of the Uinkaret Mountains and lies about 40 miles from the nearest paved road. You're more likely to encounter a wild turkey than another human being. The basalt-topped shield volcano





looks more like a mesa than a mountain, rising gently from the surrounding high-desert landscape. But while the Mount Trumbull Trail sounds moderate, climbing about 1,500 feet over 2.5 miles, the climb isn't without its challenges, including a hard-to-follow trail and a false summit. The persistent find their reward in a stand of pristine ponderosa pines at the summit, which offers 90-mile views of an area where cell-phones are as useless as eight-track tapes.

NEARBY TOWN: St. George, Utah
 INFORMATION: Arizona Strip Field Office, 435-688-3200, www.blm.gov/arizona

[33]

NAVAJO NATIONAL MONUMENT

Named for the people who now occupy the region, Navajo National Monument protects three ancient ruins: Betatakin, Keet Seel and Inscription House. The latter has been closed to the public since 1968, but the other two can be

explored through the National Park Service. Betatakin is the easiest to see — the half-mile Sandal Trail leads from the visitors center to an overlook of the dwelling, the name of which means “ledge house” in Navajo. A more adventurous experience is to make the 17-mile (round-trip) trek to Keet Seel, which is the best-preserved large Anasazi site in the Southwest. Archaeologists believe it was first occupied around 1250 and flourished between 1274 and 1286. By 1300, however, the Anasazis had moved on, leaving behind few clues as to why they split. Today, with a permit, up to 20 people per day get the privilege of hiking to the ruins.

NEARBY TOWN: Kayenta
 INFORMATION: Navajo National Monument, 928-672-2700, www.nps.gov/nava

[34]

NEEDLE'S EYE WILDERNESS

The Gila River unspools like a verdant ribbon along the

southern boundary of this slender preserve. Bisecting the Mescal Mountains, it threads its way through the narrowest part of the Gila River Canyon, a deep, narrow gorge 8 miles below Coolidge Dam that gives the wilderness its name. River rats have called the stretch from Coolidge Dam to Winkelman one of the most scenic and inaccessible in Arizona. There are no established trails, just cross-country hiking and exploring the path of least resistance. Getting into the wilderness area isn't as hard as getting a camel (or a boat) through the eye of a needle, but it does involve navigating rough, primitive roads. And because the public land is surrounded by state, tribal and private property, it also requires obtaining permission — and, in the case of the San Carlos Apache Tribe, a permit.
 NEARBY TOWN: Globe
 INFORMATION: Tucson Field Office, 520-258-7200, www.blm.gov/arizona

[35]

ORGAN PIPE CACTUS NATIONAL MONUMENT

More than just a monument, Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument is also an International Biosphere Reserve, a UNESCO designation that honors a balanced relationship between people and nature. This Sonoran Desert gem, located along the U.S.-Mexico border, features a variety of rare plant species, including its namesake cactuses, desert capers and more. Hike one of the monument's 16 trails to gain access to some of the desert's most beautiful scenery. Or, as rangers themselves admit: “Some of the best hiking

ABOVE: With a summer storm in the distance, a lone tree grows on the rim of Tsegi Canyon, located near Navajo National Monument on the Navajo Nation. *George H.H. Huey*
 RIGHT: Warm light bathes the mountains and cactuses of Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument as lightning strikes in the distance. The monument is located along the U.S.-Mexico border. *Mike Olbinski*

is off the beaten trails and out in the canyons with a map and compass to guide you.” Regardless of which path you choose, always carry plenty of water and snacks, and avoid hiking during the hottest parts of the day.

NEARBY TOWN: Ajo

INFORMATION: Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, 520-387-6849, www.nps.gov/orpi

[36]

PAJARITA WILDERNESS

Pajarita means “little bird,” and that’s what 90 percent of visitors come to see at this tiny gem of a wilderness area located near Nogales. Sycamore Canyon, with its year-round stream, draws both birds and birders in search of the jewel-like elegant trogon, the ruby-chested painted redstart and the 160 other avian species documented there. But birds are not the only wealth the canyon holds in abundance. Home to many rare and endangered plants and animals, it’s rich in

both biodiversity and beauty. The Sycamore Canyon Trail — which is often the stream — cuts through the canyon, past towering pinnacles, sculpted spires and soaring vertical cliffs that reflect in pools strung along the creek like pearls. At its terminus, a connecting trail runs along the barbed-wire fence that constitutes the Mexican border, passing through the rolling grasslands of the Pajarito Mountains’ foothills. It’s an experience to treasure.

NEARBY TOWN: Nogales

INFORMATION: Nogales Ranger District, 520-281-2296, www.fs.usda.gov/coronado

[37]

PARIA CANYON-VERMILION CLIFFS WILDERNESS

The Paria Canyon-Vermilion Cliffs Wilderness includes much of Vermilion Cliffs National Monument (see page 41), surrounding the rest of the monument like the iris

of an eye. The 3,000-foot cliffs form the southern and eastern crescent of the wilderness, the colors of their ancient sandstone shifting with the light. They also mark the edge of the Paria Plateau. Paria Canyon curves 38 miles along the eastern and northern wilderness boundary, from near Lees Ferry into Southern Utah. The canyon’s Buckskin Gulch, in Utah, is one of the country’s longest and deepest slot canyons. Some of Arizona’s most stunning geology lies within the Coyote Buttes. A 5.5-mile (round-trip) trail leads to an otherworldly formation called the Wave, with swirling, striated sandstone as stretched and smooth as saltwater taffy.

NEARBY TOWN: Page

INFORMATION: Arizona Strip Field Office, 435-688-3200, www.blm.gov/arizona

[38]

PARKER CANYON LAKE

Lakes are an unexpected phe-

nomenon in Arizona. And so are rolling hills and lush grasslands surrounded by rugged mountains. You’ll get all of the above at Parker Canyon Lake, a 132-acre recreation magnet situated in the Canelo Hills, south of Patagonia and west of the Huachuca Mountains of Southern Arizona. Built in 1962, the lake offers a range of recreation options, including fishing (rainbow trout, bass, sunfish and catfish), boat rentals and hiking. The Parker Lakeshore Trail, as the name suggests, winds for 5 miles around the lake, which has an average depth of 82 feet. Whatever you do to pass the time, keep your eyes peeled for bald eagles, ospreys and hummingbirds. You might also see coatimundis, javelinas, roadrunners and Coues white-tailed deer, one of the smallest subspecies of white-tailed deer in the U.S. The recreation area features two campgrounds, a country store and a beautiful, mile-high environment of oaks,





pinetrees and grasslands in the Coronado National Forest.
 NEARBY TOWNS: Sonoita, Patagonia
 INFORMATION: Sierra Vista Ranger District, 520-378-0311, www.fs.usda.gov/coronado

[39]

PATAGONIA LAKE STATE PARK

The fish grow big at Patagonia Lake: In 2014, a Tucson man was fishing for bass there but reeled in a 56-pound flathead catfish instead. The Southern Arizona reservoir, constructed in the 1960s and made a state park in 1975, also features channel catfish, crappies, bluegills and sunfish, along with rainbow trout, which are stocked in winter. Other aquatic-themed activities at Patagonia Lake include boating, via two boat ramps, and swimming, at Boulder Beach. Tent and RV camping is available at more than 100 campsites in the park. Just west of the campsites, a footbridge spans one arm of the 2.5-mile-long reservoir. The bridge is popular with photographers but also with youngsters, who enjoy

watching motorboats kick up water as they pass under the bridge. If the water is clear, you might spot a big catfish from up there, too.
 NEARBY TOWN: Patagonia
 INFORMATION: Patagonia Lake State Park, 520-287-6965, www.azstateparks.com/patagonia-lake

[40]

PELONCILLO MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS

From just south of the U.S.-Mexico border, the Peloncillo Mountains curve north for 100 miles along the Arizona-New Mexico state line. The Bureau of Land Management wilderness area lies in a small northern section of the range, a rumple of ridges and canyons that resemble the sheets of an unmade bed. The Butterfield Overland Mail stagecoach service ran through Doubtful Canyon, near the wilderness area's southern boundary. The canyon's name supposedly came from early settlers thinking it doubtful the Apaches would let them make it through alive. A good place for cross-country

exploring, West Doubtful Canyon lies a short drive from San Simon, while most visitors access the northern part of the wilderness area from Duncan. The area around Engine Mountain, named for its distinctive profile, draws rock hounds in search of fire agates. Whichever part of the wilderness area you visit, you'll find immodest rewards — without a doubt.
 NEARBY TOWNS: Duncan, San Simon
 INFORMATION: Safford Field Office, 928-348-4400, www.blm.gov/arizona

[41]

POLE KNOLL RECREATION AREA

Although it's best known as a playground for cross-country skiers, this easy-access, four-season recreation area in the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests is also a great place for hikers, horseback riders and anyone who owns a picnic basket. In all, there are nearly 18 miles of interconnected trails in the area. Many are short and easy, but the Viewpoint Trail (1.3 miles one way) and the Summit Trail (2.1 miles one

way) climb almost 800 feet to the top of the knoll, where the views of the surrounding White Mountains are worth the energy it takes to get there. Otherwise, the rest of the routes are easy, and easy to follow, which makes this an ideal destination for parents with young children. Or those who are inherently lazy.
 NEARBY TOWN: Greer
 INFORMATION: Springerville Ranger District, 928-333-6200, www.fs.usda.gov/asnf

[42]

RAINBOW RIM

There are two good ways to see the Grand Canyon from the seat of a mountain bike. One is to rent a set of wheels from Bright Angel Bicycles on the South Rim. It's simple, but crowded. The other option is to head to the north side of the Canyon and ride the Rainbow Rim Trail. Although it's open to hikers and horseback riders, too, it's become especially popular with cyclists. In all, the trail runs for 18 miles, from Timp Point on the south end to Parissawampitts Point up north. Those are two of the five major points that jut into the Canyon from the western edge of the Kaibab Plateau. The other three are Fence, Locust and North Timp. As you might expect, the views at each point are very different, but equally spectacular. Among the landmarks you'll see are the Powell Plateau, Steamboat Mountain, Great Thumb Mesa and Tapeats Amphitheater, as well as the Mount Trumbull Wilder-

ABOVE, LEFT: The light of sunrise illuminates the namesakes of the Peloncillo Mountains Wilderness in Southeastern Arizona. *Jack Dykinga*
RIGHT: Fog and snow shroud Coffeepot Rock, one of many sandstone formations in the Red Rock-Secret Mountain Wilderness near Sedona. *Derek von Briesen*

ness (see page 33) to the northwest. And in between those points are steep side canyons surrounded by aspens and old-growth ponderosa pines.

NEARBY TOWN: Jacob Lake
INFORMATION: North Kaibab Ranger District, 928-643-7395, www.fs.usda.gov/kaibab

[43]

RED ROCK-SECRET MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS

The beauty of this wilderness area is hardly a secret: It includes some of Arizona's most photographed red-rock cliffs and canyons. If you've ever hiked along the West Fork of Oak Creek, you already know the beauty of its landscapes. It's also one of the state's most accessible wilderness areas, with plenty of short, easy trails. If you're looking for solitude, the Secret Mountain Trail is one of the paths less traveled. That's partly because of rough-and-tumble access roads, and partly because the path is sometimes hard to follow. But it's worth the effort, with successive canyon views that

compete for superlatives. The trail passes the remnants of a homestead that a polygamous Mormon family figured was remote enough to keep their lifestyle private. But, from all appearances, the word got out.

NEARBY TOWN: Sedona
INFORMATION: Flagstaff Ranger District, 928-526-0866 (Secret Mountain Trail); Red Rock Ranger District, 928-203-2900 (all others); www.fs.usda.gov/coconino

[44]

RED ROCK STATE PARK

Red Rock State Park, southwest of Sedona, got its start with Bruce Babbitt, who was Arizona's governor from 1978 to 1987. In 1980, the story goes, Babbitt was hiking along Oak Creek with friends when someone approached the group, told them they were on private property and asked them to leave. Concerned about a loss of public access to Oak Creek's scenery and hiking routes, Babbitt worked with Arizona State Parks to acquire the 286-acre property via a land exchange.

That deal was finalized in 1986, and in 1991, Red Rock State Park opened to the public.

Within the park boundaries, a 5-mile network of trails offers views of red-rock vistas and lush greenery along Oak Creek, which attracts mule deer, javelinas, coyotes and bobcats. Avian species are abundant, too, and the park hosts bird walks every Wednesday and Saturday, year-round.

NEARBY TOWN: Sedona
INFORMATION: Red Rock State Park, 928-282-6907, www.azstateparks.com/red-rock

[45]

RINCON MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS

The Rincon Mountains don't get a lot of love. But while crowds mob Mount Lemmon in the neighboring Santa Catalinas, the Rincons serve as a welcome alternative, with some of the best hiking in the area. The Rincon Mountain Wilderness surrounds Saguaro National Park East and the Saguaro Wilderness on three sides, like a protective blanket. Three trails

cross the wilderness area, all of them serving as connectors to national park trails leading to higher ground: Mica Mountain and Rincon Peak, the highest points in the range, and the Spud Rocks (oddly, there are two). The Turkey Creek and Miller Canyon trails enter the wilderness area from the east, winding through open grassland and a wooded riparian area, respectively. The little-used Italian Spring Trail enters from the west, ending at a seep. All are steep, rocky and reached by long drives on gravel roads. That means solitude. And that's something to love.

NEARBY TOWN: Tucson
INFORMATION: Santa Catalina Ranger District, 520-749-8700, www.fs.usda.gov/coronado

[46]

SADDLE MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS

Buffalo (or, more accurately, bison) roam this high-country wilderness area, which gets its name from the profile of its highest ridge. Bounded on three sides by deep canyons, it







features trails that are steep and difficult, running between the eastern edge of the Kaibab Plateau and House Rock Valley, with trailheads on both ends. The 2016 Fuller Fire burned through the southeastern portion of the wilderness, including parts of the Saddle Mountain Trail, which follows the main ridge for 4 miles. It intersects Grand Canyon National Park's Nankoweap Trail, a difficult, multi-day route to the Colorado River from the North Rim. The 7-mile North Canyon Trail crosses the northern part of the wilderness area, winding back and forth across a small stream populated by endangered Apache trout. And the 4-mile South Canyon Trail leads through aspen and mixed conifer forests, offering glimpses of Marble Canyon.

NEARBY TOWN: Fredonia

INFORMATION: North Kaibab Ranger District, 928-643-7395, www.fs.usda.gov/kaibab

[47]

SALT RIVER CANYON WILDERNESS

The Boy Scouts and the Sierra Club began organizing rafting trips through Salt River Canyon in the 1950s. They piloted surplus Army rafts through unnamed rapids, flying by the seats of their pants. Since then, a lot has changed. What hasn't is that rafting season remains as fleeting as desert wildflowers. Lucky for river runners, melting snowpack swells the Salt just as yellow monkeyflowers and other varieties bloom along the river's edge. More enduring is the canyon itself, with some of the oldest

The Salt River winds through the expansive canyon that bears its name. The Salt River Canyon Wilderness protects a remote section of the gorge.

Shane McDermott



exposed rocks in the Southwest among its stunning layers of shale, quartzite and limestone. High on its cliffs, bald eagles nest in woody fortresses. These days, about 1,800 hopefuls with requisite whitewater skills and equipment apply for an annual lottery of 304 U.S. Forest Service permits to run the river through the otherwise inaccessible wilderness area in the spring. Others employ commercial outfitters. A typical float goes by fast. But memories remain.

NEARBY TOWN: Globe

INFORMATION: Globe Ranger District, 928-402-6200, www.fs.usda.gov/tonto

[48]

SIERRA ANCHA WILDERNESS

The pristine condition of the prehistoric ruins in this wilderness area tells you everything you need to know about how hard it is to get to them. Among the remote cliff dwellings in the canyons of the Sierra Ancha, you're likely to see pictographs, potsherds and metates. But if Indiana Jones-style bushwhacking, edging behind spectacular waterfalls and squeezing underneath enormous boulders aren't your style, there are established trails, too. One of them is the 4-mile Coon Spring Trail, which winds through a riparian area, passing an old line shack and pit houses. For a small wilderness area, the nature is surprisingly diverse and spectacular, with geology akin to Salt River Canyon and draped in canyon grapes, orchids and violets. Fall

LEFT: A single tree reaches toward a starry sky in the Sierra Ancha Wilderness north of Globe.

Mike Sanchez

OPPOSITE PAGE: Flowing water nourishes a profusion of greenery at Tonto Natural Bridge State Park near Payson. *Suzanne Mathia*

colors are magnificent, thanks to sycamores, bigtooth maples, Gambel oaks and aspens. The only question is, why not go? NEARBY TOWNS: Globe, Young INFORMATION: Pleasant Valley Ranger District, 928-462-4300, www.fs.usda.gov/tonto

[49]

SONOITA CREEK STATE NATURAL AREA

Located adjacent to Patagonia Lake State Park, the nearly 10,000-acre Sonoita Creek State Natural Area includes a portion of its namesake, a verdant riparian corridor where cottonwoods, willows and other trees flourish. Created to protect the area's natural resources, the site is home to hundreds of butterfly and bird species, which visitors can experience on 20 miles of trails — some of which are open to equestrians. The natural area also has three private backcountry camping sites, each of which features three tent pads and a steel fire ring. If you reserve one of them, be sure to keep your food secured to prevent a curious ringtail from making off with it.

NEARBY TOWN: Patagonia INFORMATION: Sonoita Creek State Natural Area, 520-287-2791, www.azstateparks.com/sonoita-creek

[50]

SONORAN DESERT NATIONAL MONUMENT

If you've lived in the Sonoran Desert for decades, saguaros might have started to, well, blend into the scenery a little bit. But visit Sonoran Desert National Monument, and you'll be blown away by its extensive saguaro forest. What's more, the monument also contains three congressionally designated wilderness areas, many archaeological and historic sites, and remnants of several important historic trails, includ-

ing the Butterfield Overland Mail stagecoach route. Basically, it's a place of incredible environmental, cultural and biological importance, and there are many ways to experience it. To travel deep into the North Maricopa Mountains Wilderness, for example, try the Margie's Cove Trail. The 11-mile route is best traveled in winter or early spring, because summer temperatures can soar to 120 degrees or higher. Motorized vehicles are not allowed within the monument's wilderness areas.

NEARBY TOWN: Phoenix INFORMATION: Lower Sonoran Field Office, 623-580-5500, www.blm.gov/visit/sonoran-desert

[51]

TONTO NATURAL BRIDGE STATE PARK

Tonto Natural Bridge, near Payson, is a relative newcomer to its surrounding landscape. According to geologists, more than 5,000 years ago, precipitation began to seep underground in narrow Pine Creek Canyon, resulting in aquifers full of dissolved limestone. Springs formed, and the dissolved calcium carbonate in the water became a travertine dam in the canyon. Pine Creek then eroded through the dam to create Tonto Natural Bridge, which, at 183 feet high and featuring a 400-foot tunnel, is believed to be the largest natural travertine bridge in the world. It's been drawing visitors since the 1800s, but it didn't become a state park until 1991; today, visitors can explore it via four short hikes of varying difficulty. Groups can book overnight accommodations or host weddings at Goodfellow Lodge, built in the 1920s and located above the bridge.

NEARBY TOWN: Payson INFORMATION: Tonto Natural Bridge State Park, 928-476-4202, www.azstateparks.com/tonto




[52]

VERMILION CLIFFS NATIONAL MONUMENT

Just south of the Utah state line, Vermilion Cliffs National Monument protects its eponymous cliffs, the Paria Plateau, the Coyote Buttes and Paria Canyon. Its more than 293,000 acres are characterized by sweeping vistas, colorful sandstone layers, slot canyons and rare wildlife — California condors soar over the monument. Its beauty alone was enough to warrant panic when the president designated it for review — along with Arizona's Grand Canyon-Parashant, Sonoran Desert and Ironwood Forest national monuments — with an executive order last April. In addition

to its beauty, Vermilion Cliffs is remote and rugged, which means visitors should pay special attention to detail before planning any excursion. Permits are required for hiking in Coyote Buttes North (the Wave) and Coyote Buttes South, and for overnight backpacking trips into Paria Canyon. Deep sand, rattlesnakes, flash floods and extreme temperatures are among other considerations. So, if you're intrepid, prepared and maybe just a little bit fearless, go — the magnitude and beauty of Vermilion Cliffs will move you.

NEARBY TOWN: Page INFORMATION: Arizona Strip Field Office, 435-688-3200, www.blm.gov/visit/vermilion-cliffs 



ROUGH COUNTRY

AN ESSAY BY KELLY VAUGHN

Purple cliffs loom over autumn-hued trees along Haigler Creek in the Hellsgate Wilderness. Access to this spot requires miles of swimming through narrows, wading through pools and scrambling over slick rocks. *Joel Hazelton*



Tonto Creek flows beneath hillsides of firs and ponderosa pines below Bear Flat in the Hellsgate Wilderness.
Nick Berezenko

and dirt that rolled my ankles six times in 2 miles and made me wonder what I'd gotten myself into. Again.

Chollas. Agaves. Yuccas. Those red-branched manzanitas like flares. No blooms this time, only the drape of heat and the sometimes sound of an unseen bird. After 5 miles, we came to the wilderness boundary, another sign.

In 1984, Hellsgate earned protection under the Wilderness Act. Its 37,457 acres cannot be mined. Nothing mechanized can enter its boundary. It, according to the act itself, "is an area where earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man."

This wilderness, named for the 1,000-foot-deep canyon that runs through its center, is Bobbie Holaday's legacy. For years, she hiked it, explored it and fought to protect it. She won. Because she saw value in its ruggedness, its challenges. Its curves and angles and shadows and reflections. I've not enough words here to adequately tell her story or share my admiration, but her story has been told in the pages of this magazine before. I will tell you this: Wilderness needs more people like Bobbie Holaday — to protect our inheritance.

Too often on a trail, my thoughts turn to the *state of things*. And I've heard it more and more from people who share a passion for wild places, too. The meditation of a hike is broken by worry that we'll lose it someday to growth — and not the natural kind. The kind, instead, that comes when greed overcomes reason and respect for place or person.

Even in Hellsgate, where the trail could break me, my mind wandered. That is, until we made it to water.

After 8.5 miles of elevation gains and losses and a final, mile-long stressor of a descent into the canyon, the confluence of Tonto and Haigler creeks. Perennially, Tonto runs through the wilderness, creating pools of green and gray and feeding a habitat of grasses, oaks, sycamores and cottonwoods. When it merges with Haigler, the creeks pass through the gate like lovers, meandering quietly through the desert until, their waters combined, they pour into Theodore Roosevelt Lake.

As the late-afternoon light hit the water, I forgot briefly the distraction of fear and politics and the slow swell of pain in my body. Butterflies dipped and danced along the water, somewhere along the route of their migration, deep inside my own rich inheritance.

Then the sky darkened, and they were gone. The flash of their wings disappearing into rough country.

WILDERNESS IS INHERITED.

The beautiful traits. The rough ones. The rock and dirt and woods and sky — elemental chromosomes that weave themselves into people, if and when we're open to receiving them.

When you read the words of Edward Abbey or John Muir or Aldo Leopold or Charles Bowden, you get the idea.

Living the idea is different. But only a little.

One Tuesday morning, my friend and I drove a little east of Payson to Hellsgate Trail No. 37. I had been once before. In spring. The earth was snow-melted and fresh then, and the manzanitas bloomed with puffy pink flowers, their red-brown branches warm with promise.

That Tuesday, though, October. It was too hot still, and the earth was swollen with summer and a pregnant anticipation of autumn. The sign at the trailhead warned of Hellsgate's danger and that we couldn't count on a rescue if we needed one. Two years ago, the sign scared me. This time, it felt more like a reminder of humanness and fragility, a reminder that the wilderness is so much bigger than we.

This is a thing to remember always.

The first part of the trail was forested, shady. The next was not. It cut through an expanse of rock



AUTHOR'S NOTE: A sincere, but direct warning to our readers: You shouldn't attempt to hike the trail I used to access the Hellsgate Wilderness. That is, unless you're an experienced adventurer — an expert adventurer, really. The terrain is steep and rocky, and the trail is long and exposed. At times, it's hard to find. Snakes, mountain lions and black bears find a happy home in Hellsgate, and gnats and mosquitoes thrive near the confluence. Should you go, spring and fall are ideal. To attempt the trail in summer would be foolish — deadly, even. Consider the sign at the trailhead, which reads in part: "Do not assume you will be rescued if something goes wrong. It is your responsibility to

have the necessary knowledge, experience, and equipment before you hit the trail." In short, know yourself and your abilities before you attempt a journey into Hellsgate.

IF YOU GO

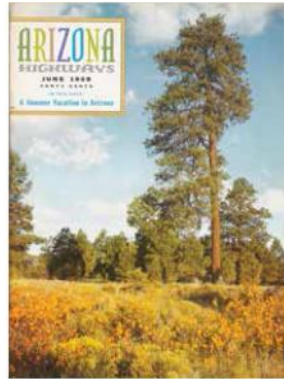
LENGTH: 17 miles round-trip

DIFFICULTY: Strenuous

ELEVATION: 5,655 to 3,984 feet

DIRECTIONS: From Payson, go east on State Route 260 for approximately 11 miles to Mile Marker 263. Turn right just past the mile marker and continue 0.5 miles to the trailhead.

INFORMATION: Payson Ranger District, 928-474-7900, www.fs.usda.gov/tonto 



FROM OUR ARCHIVES
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN JUNE 1959

ARIZONA'S TIMBERED TREASURE

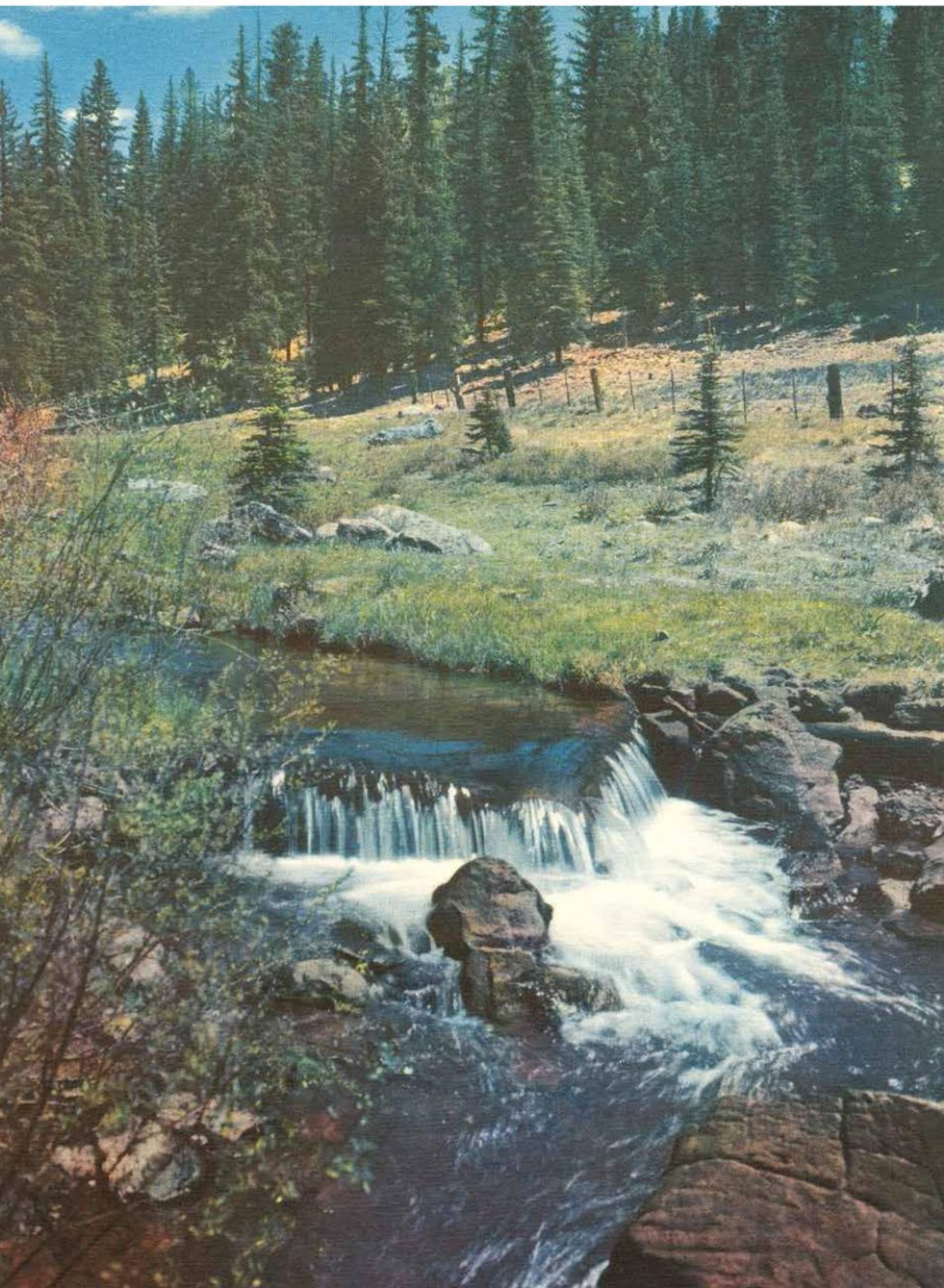
BY VIVIEN KEATLEY

Editor's Note: Over the years, the names and jurisdictions of Arizona's national forests have changed, but their shared mission is essentially as it was when this folksy piece was written almost six decades ago. Today, we have seven national forests in Arizona, although two are managed as one (see page 50). In all, they comprise about 12 million acres. That's plenty of room to explore. Or, as Robert H. Kelleher, an information specialist for the U.S. Forest Service, wrote in our October 1946 issue, there's enough room "for every Arizonan to be an emperor whenever the mood seizes him. He can roam at will over this vast, rich, green empire. This is Everyman's Empire."

ARIZONA'S MIDRIFF IS FAR FROM BARE. If you scurry across the much-used southern routes, you may think we haven't enough wood to make a totem pole. But that's because you've bypassed our 11-million-acre vacationland — our national forests. With more than a hundred species of trees, these stretch from the "Strip" north of the Grand Canyon to the south and to the east.

One tree, the ponderosa pine, grows in a single, continuous stand nearly 300 miles long, from 20 to 60 miles wide, from north of the Grand Canyon well into New Mexico, through the northern and central part of the state. It grows at a higher elevation. Our state tree, the filmy palo verde, prefers the washes of the deserts.

The old Crook National Forest, named for that intrepid General George who ended the Indian Wars with the respect of Indians, has been gobbled up by other national forests. But we're still



A mountain stream tumbles over a small waterfall near the ponderosa pines of the Apache National Forest in 1946. Today, the forest is managed jointly with the Sitgreaves National Forest. *Jack Breed*



Sheep graze amid tall ponderosa pines near a watering hole in the Sitgreaves National Forest in the 1940s.
Chuck Abbott

left with all of six, and part of two, within the state's borders. Their roll call sounds our history.

Francisco Vázquez de Coronado's expedition of 1540 is suitably commemorated by the only national forest touching Mexico's border. Its 1,386,000 acres are scattered in disconnected areas from Rodeo, New Mexico, to Tucson, including Douglas, Patagonia and Nogales. Zane Grey immortalized the Tonto. The Sitgreaves was named for Captain Lorenzo. The Prescott National Forest reminds us of our first state capital. Add the Coconino ("piñon nut people"), the Kaibab (habitat of the peculiarly charming Kaibab squirrel), the Apache (mostly in New Mexico) and the Gila (with Silver City, New Mexico, as headquarters), and you have Arizona's history — and her forests.

In one of them, at every season of the year, there is the ideal vacation and recreation for everyone who seeks the land of room enough, and space enough.

Snows at higher elevations lure those who love winter sports,

and feel happiest when tired, after a day's great exertions, and stretched out before an open fireplace filled with roaring pine logs. Spring weaves a lace mantilla of pale green for the white-stemmed aspens of the Kaibab, a halo of yellow gold for the palo verde. In the northern forests autumn paints shimmering aspen leaves with a lavish brush dipped into a paint pot of gold. As the days turn brisk, hunters add their red caps and jackets to the scene, seeking the wide variety of wild game that made Zane Grey, noted outdoorsman, build two hunting lodges in our forests.

Summer sends those of us on the desert inside our cooled houses. Or to the forests, where sunshine is filtered through pine or fir or spruce leaves — or even the lowly liveoak and manzanita. Desert dwellers take to the woods when summer comes, for lazy outside living near a tent or travel trailer, or with just a sleeping bag to roll out beneath the stars.

Our lakes are threatened now with drought. But you can still swim and skim a canoe at Lakeside, water ski at Canyon and Apache and Roosevelt, and you can fish lakes and several hundred miles of natural and man-controlled rivers and streams.

In all of the forests, wherever practical, land has been set aside for recreational uses including picnic areas, camping sites, and even cabin sites leased to individuals at modest annual fees of from \$25 to \$50 a year. There's always a waiting list for these home sites, of course, and they develop slowly. It takes

There's something for everyone in the forests. For those who want all the comforts of home including a hot bath at night, there are excellent lodges and inns and hotels built on commercial leases in the forests and nearby. For those lucky enough to acquire them, there's a chance for a summer home on land leased for the purpose.

money to develop roads and a water supply "just for fun."

The national forests, unlike the national parks and monuments under the Department of Interior, were not set aside as playgrounds, nor to preserve natural or historic beauty. Managed under the Department of Agriculture, the forests have two major purposes: protection of the nation's water supply and production of timber. Farmers and ranchers graze sheep and cattle on forest lands, under lease arrangements and careful supervision.

Recreational use of the forests came about almost as an afterthought.

Not too many years ago, vacationers, hunters and fishermen were considered a "damned nuisance" in the forests. We started fires, got lost, polluted streams, stuck our noses into logging and grazing commercial enterprises where we had no practical reason for being. The general public was tolerated, but not welcomed. And we were supposed to take things as we found them, including finding a place to camp or getting through the forests. The fewer who came, and the sooner they left, the better those who ran the forests liked it.

You might almost say the Depression introduced Americans to their forests — and foresters to the public. Recreation was named one of forest land's many uses in 1932. And the next year fish and game sanctuaries and refuges were authorized within the forests — and the Civilian Conservation Corps was organized.

In forestry alone, around 730,000 man-years were devoted by these young men in their camps, half of which were in forests. They built firebreaks, fought fire, improved timber stands, planted trees, built roads, trails, bridges, telephone lines, lookout towers. They set up picnic tables, constructed fireplaces, dug garbage and toilet pits, installed water lines.

Without the CCC, our recreational facilities in the forests would have been much slower in developing — and the forests have not yet caught up with the public's demand. Perhaps they never will.

In Depression years, the campgrounds of the national forests were one of the few places a family could "set up camp" and live rent-free, with firewood and water available. As the Depression years dimmed into memories, the tensions of war, of a fast-paced economy, of inflation and rapidly increasing cities, sent more and more of us into the woods. In 1953, more

than 35,000,000 visitors were registered in the national forests, breaking all records — topping the highest before World War II by 83 percent!

"People don't visit the national forests just to be outdoors," writes Bernard Frank in his wonderful book *Our National Forests*. "They can find fresh air, birds, and trees in the well-tamed city parks, out in the country, even on a roof top, or in the back yard. Nor do they come merely to roast hot dogs, splash in a stream, or take a sun bath. Many are impelled by a deep-seated urge to return to the 'primitive' and sometimes to act the role of ... pioneers in the days when virtually all America was in a natural state.

"If they return often enough, the stimulating, health-giving properties of the forest will get under their skins."

There's something for everyone in the forests. For those who want all the comforts of home including a hot bath at night, there are excellent lodges and inns and hotels built on commercial leases in the forests and nearby. For those lucky enough to acquire them, there's a chance for a summer home on land leased for the purpose. For all of us, when we don't try to find one on a summer holiday or weekend, there are good campgrounds from near Douglas to the North Rim of the Grand Canyon. There are many other places, reached both by main paved road as well as graded forest roads, where we can picnic.

Streams for fishermen, game for hunters, a chance to feel and hear and see and touch nature, are everywhere.

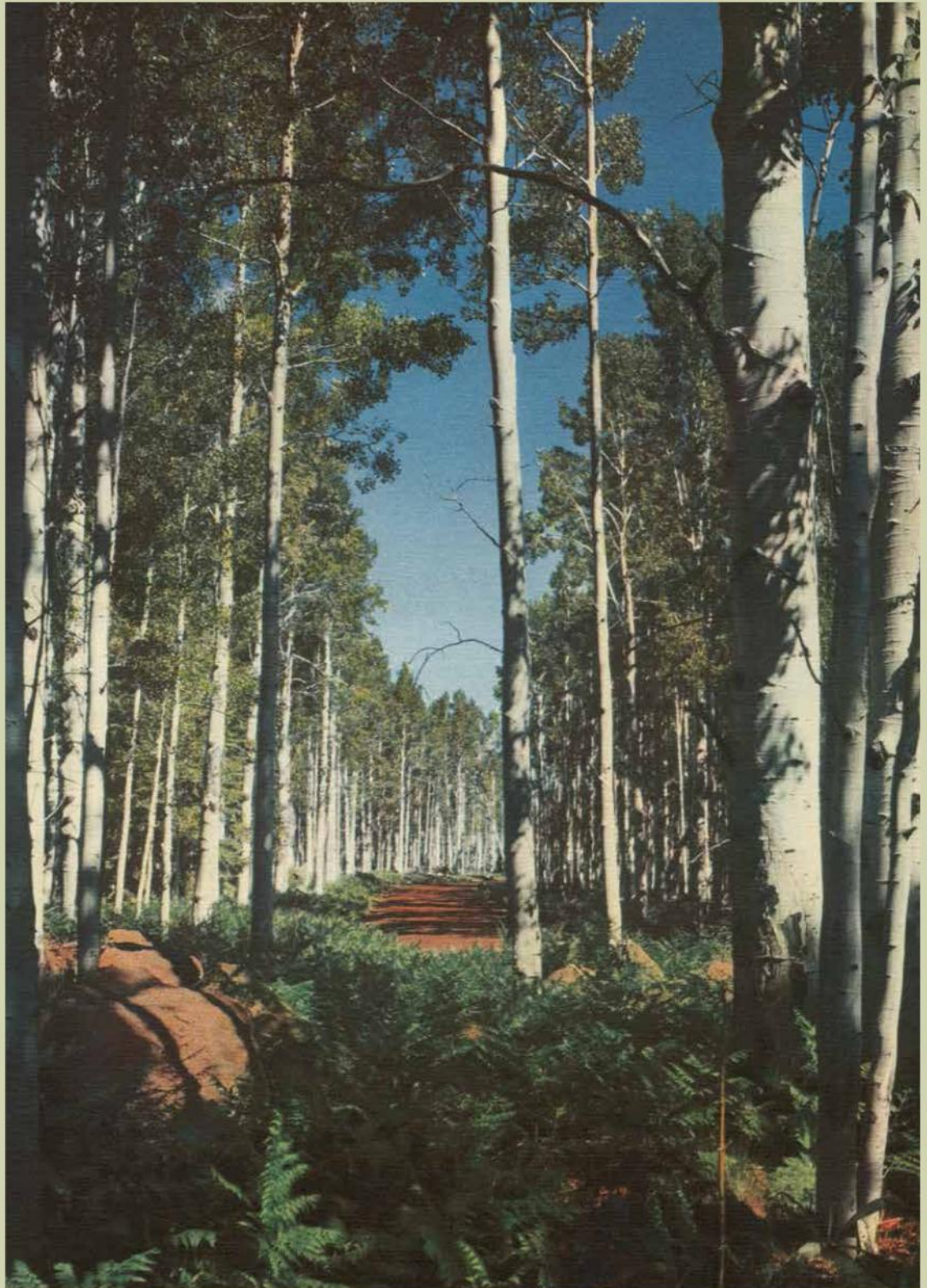
But we have even more than that. We have, within our national forests in Arizona, some of the nation's wonderful wilderness and wild areas. Robert Marshall, who is called the father of the forests' wild areas, defined them as "regions which contain no permanent inhabitants, possess no means of mechanical conveyance, and are sufficiently spacious that a person may spend at least a week or two of travel in them without crossing his own tracks."

In these areas often it is impossible even to ride horseback. Only hikers and mountain climbers tackle them. Commercial timber cutting is prohibited, and a man is alone with nature as it was before man discovered it — almost. Many people cannot bear a wilderness experience; once the individual learns to develop the appreciation, aptitudes, and woodsman's skills necessary in the wilderness, he becomes refreshed, renewed, restored.

But whether your vacation means "re-creation" or just having fun, some place in Arizona's national forests can provide it. There's a wealth of leisure — or activity — to suit every man's interest: camping out or skiing, picnicking, fishing, hunting, swimming, boating, mountain climbing, horseback riding, hiking, looking for unusual rocks or precious minerals, studying ancient Indian ruins, discovering fossils, examining an infinite variety of plant, animal and bird life, exploring caves and meteor craters, collecting pine cones, or just sitting — and enjoying — the solitude of the great outdoors. Hunting with a camera yields scenic rewards. Just vacationing — for an afternoon, a day, a week, a month or a summer — yields memories you'll treasure always.

ARIZONA'S NATIONAL FORESTS

From rugged desert to alpine mountaintops, the state's seven forests offer 12 million acres of recreational opportunities.



In this 1946 photo, aspens and ferns line a secluded forest road in the Coronado National Forest of Southern Arizona.
Ray Manley

APACHE-SITGREAVES NATIONAL FORESTS

The Mogollon Rim and the White Mountains are the crown jewels of the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, which have been managed as one U.S. Forest Service unit since a 1974 merger. Together, they span more than 2 million acres in Central and Eastern Arizona. In Rim Country, visitors flock to several lakes, including Woods Canyon and Willow Springs; farther east, it's easy to find solitude in the White Mountains' alpine meadows and ponderosa pines. Within the forests' boundaries are roughly 1,000 miles of trails that weave through a variety of terrain and habitat, allowing hikers to spend their days strolling through dense forests or challenging themselves with high summits. About 50 developed or dispersed campgrounds are found on the forests, and about a third of them offer fishing opportunities; more opportunities to cast a line can be found along numerous rivers and streams. "The forests in this area are unique," forest Supervisor Steve Best says, "in regard to their resources, landscapes and employees, as well as the communities we serve."

ACRES: 2.6 million (Arizona and New Mexico)
INFORMATION: 928-333-6280, www.fs.usda.gov/asnf

COCONINO NATIONAL FOREST

From arid Southwestern desert to alpine tundra, with red rocks and ponderosa pines in between ... that's the Coconino National Forest, one of America's most diverse forest units. It covers about 1.9 million acres of mountains, canyons, lakes and creeks. It's home to 12,633-foot Humphreys Peak, the highest point in Arizona, along with scenic drives in Oak Creek Canyon, the San Francisco Peaks and the Lake Mary area southeast of Flagstaff. In spring, summer and fall, fishing is available at a handful of the roughly 20 campgrounds on the forest, and mountain biking is another popular warm-weather activity. In winter, skiers and snowboarders have been hitting the slopes at Arizona Snowbowl since 1938. "The forest is also rich in Native American heritage and is held sacred by numerous tribes," forest Supervisor Laura Jo West says.

ACRES: 1.9 million
INFORMATION: 928-527-3600, www.fs.usda.gov/coconino

CORONADO NATIONAL FOREST

The Coronado National Forest, made up of several non-contiguous districts in Southeastern Arizona and Southwestern New Mexico, is known for its "sky islands" — isolated mountain ranges rising above the surrounding desert. Plants and animals atop those ranges can't survive in the arid desert below, creating isolated ecosystems that sometimes support flora and fauna found nowhere else in the world. It also creates tantalizing opportunities for hikers and day trippers, who can start a trek in the desert heat and end it amid ponderosa pines and mountain breezes. Pitch a tent at any of the 20 campgrounds on the forest's 1.8 million acres, or enjoy numerous opportunities for horseback riding and mountain biking. Migratory birds attract visitors from around the globe, says Kerwin Dewberry, the forest's supervisor, adding that visitors craving solitude can explore the backcountry via the Coronado's eight wilderness areas.

ACRES: 1.8 million (Arizona and New Mexico)
INFORMATION: 520-388-8300, www.fs.usda.gov/coronado

KAIBAB NATIONAL FOREST

The Kaibab National Forest's 1.6 million acres of canyons, prairies, peaks and plateaus include land directly north and south of Grand Canyon National Park; some of the forest's 300 miles of hiking trails even cling to the Canyon's rim. And given the forest's range of elevations — from 3,000-foot grasslands to the 10,418-foot summit of Kendrick Peak — there's plenty to see and do. There are seven developed or dispersed campgrounds, six designated fishing areas and 17 mountain-biking trails, along with the North Rim Parkway (State Route 67), which leads from Jacob Lake to the Canyon's North Rim and is among Arizona's most scenic roads. "There is not a day that goes by that I'm not amazed by the beauty, the peace, the connection and the adventure that can be experienced in this incredibly special place," forest Supervisor Heather Provencio says. "For me, one of the most valuable things for people visiting the Kaibab National Forest is the opportunity to find solitude, quiet and clarity in the midst of the busy lives that we all lead."

ACRES: 1.6 million
INFORMATION: 928-635-8200, www.fs.usda.gov/kaibab

PRESCOTT NATIONAL FOREST

The Prescott National Forest borders three other forests — the Kaibab, Coconino and Tonto — but has wonders all its own within its 1.2 million acres of Central Arizona. The Juniper, Santa Maria, Sierra Prieta and Bradshaw mountains are there, as are the Black Hills, Mingus Mountain, Black Mesa and the headwaters of the Verde River. An easy loop drive that starts and ends in Prescott takes day trippers past three scenic lakes: Lynx, Hassayampa and Goldwater. There's fishing at seven of the forest's lakes and at eight sites along the Verde River, and thanks to the area's relatively mild climate, most of them can be accessed year-round. There are nine campgrounds, too, but forest Supervisor Tammy Randall-Parker says the forest is best known for its top-notch trail system, which features 450 miles of hiking and mountain-biking routes. It's the result, she says, of "years of collaboration between local communities, recreationists and the forest."

ACRES: 1.2 million
INFORMATION: 928-443-8000, www.fs.usda.gov/prescott

TONTO NATIONAL FOREST

At nearly 3 million acres, the Tonto National Forest is the country's fifth-largest forest. And its rugged, fascinating environment, which ranges from saguaro cactuses to pine-forested mountains, makes it easy to see why nearly 6 million people pay the Tonto a visit every year. Some of its best-known attractions are the Salt River, Saguaro Lake, the Superstition Mountains and Fossil Creek, but there also are plenty of opportunities to hike, rock-climb or explore ancient ruins. And for those who don't think a day trip is enough time to explore 3 million acres, the forest has more than 30 developed campgrounds and more than 20 dispersed sites. Whatever your pleasure, forest Supervisor Neil Bosworth says, rest assured that "the Tonto National Forest has something for almost everyone."

ACRES: 2.9 million
INFORMATION: 602-225-5200, www.fs.usda.gov/tonto

— Brianna Cossavella 

AGUA CALIENTE ROAD With all of the farmland, stockyards and solar panels around Gila Bend, it might come as a surprise that there's a scenic drive in the area, too, but this historic route fits the bill.

BY NOAH AUSTIN / PHOTOGRAPHS BY JIM MARSHALL



Mer- merson had it right: “There are many things of which a wise man might wish to be ignorant.” And these days, the constant stream of information to your smartphone can make ignorance seem particularly blissful. Luckily, despite the phone companies’ best efforts, there still are swaths of Arizona where you can’t get a signal. And many of them happen to be especially beautiful, too. Agua Caliente Road, which offers Sonoran Desert panoramas and a bit of history, is one of those.

The route begins in Gila Bend, about 90 minutes from Phoenix. From Gila Bend, head north on Old U.S. Route 80, which once ran from San Diego to the

Georgia coast. After a 22-mile jaunt past farmland and solar panels, you’ll reach the historic Gillespie Dam Bridge over the Gila River. Built in the 1920s, the steel truss bridge, one of the longest ever created in Arizona, was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1981. It’s fared better than the dam just upstream, which partly collapsed in 1993 — turning the area around the bridge into a verdant riparian area that’s home to fish and waterfowl.

After you cross the bridge, it’s another 3.4 miles to Agua Caliente Road, on the left. A half-mile later, the road veers right and turns to dirt as it begins to wind through the low vegetation of

the Sonoran Desert. To the south is the Woolsey Peak Wilderness, identified by its namesake rounded mountain (3,153 feet). To its northwest is the smaller Signal Mountain Wilderness. Both are home to desert bighorn sheep, mule deer and a variety of raptors.

After you curve around the Yellow Medicine Hills, you’ll start to notice more saguaros — there’s an interesting one with two long, vertical arms at Mile 40.5. About 5 miles later, past

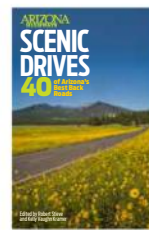
ABOVE: The Gillespie Dam Bridge, which dates to the 1920s, carries Old U.S. Route 80 over the Gila River. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Agua Caliente Road offers expansive views of saguaro-dotted hills and distant mountain ranges northwest of Gila Bend.

Fourth of July Butte, is a nice view of the Gila Bend Mountains, which stretch across this area from northwest to southeast. Here, ocotillos and chollas are more prevalent than before, though saguaros still dominate the scenery — don't miss the impressive one on the right side of the road around Mile 51.

Just past that cactus, the road begins to twist as it gains elevation. You'll hit a high point at Mile 53.5. Pull over to enjoy the expansive view of the surrounding mountain ranges, then consider your next move. If you'd like a bit more history, you can continue on Agua Caliente Road to the ghost town of Sundad (accessible via a short hike or four-wheel-drive road), then turn left onto 555th Avenue and make your way south to Hyder, the old Agua Caliente resort and Interstate 8.

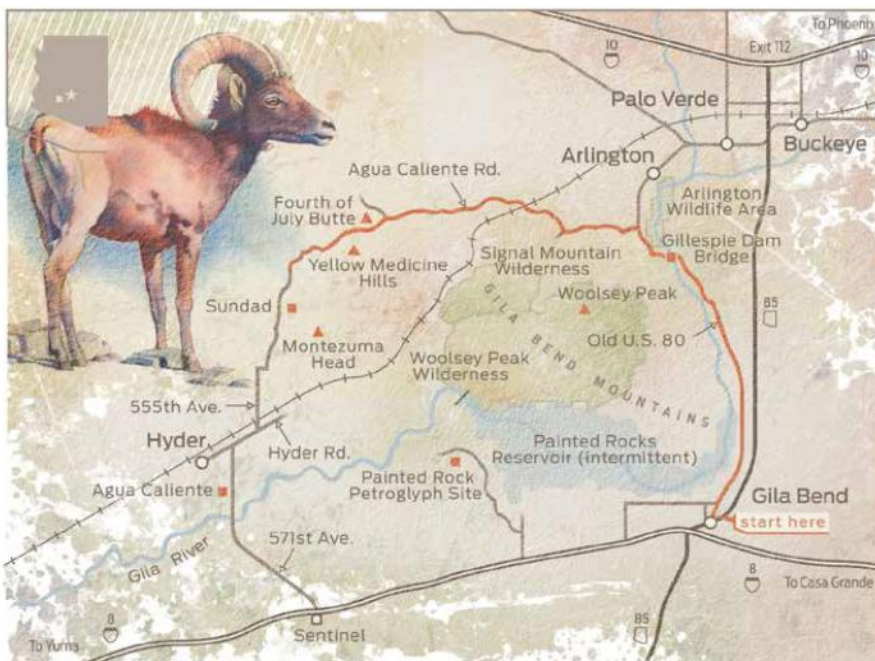


But if you'd like a different perspective on the beauty you just experienced, turn around and head back to Old U.S. 80, then return to Gila Bend or go north to Interstate 10 and the Phoenix area. Just be prepared for a lot of notifications on your phone once you get there. Ignorance is bliss, but it's fleeting, too.



ADDITIONAL READING:

For more adventure, pick up a copy of our book *Arizona Highways Scenic Drives*, which features 40 of the state's most beautiful back roads. To order, visit www.shoparizonahighways.com/books.



TOUR GUIDE

Note: Mileages are approximate.

LENGTH: 53.5 miles one way

DIRECTIONS: From Gila Bend, go north on Old U.S. Route 80 for 25.4 miles to Agua Caliente Road. Turn left (west) onto Agua Caliente Road and continue 28.1 miles to the drive's stopping point.

VEHICLE REQUIREMENTS: A high-clearance vehicle is recommended, but the route is passable in a standard sedan in good weather. Do not attempt the drive after heavy rain or if rain is in the forecast.

WARNING: Back-road travel can be hazardous, so be aware of weather and road conditions. Carry plenty of water. Don't travel alone, and let someone know where you are going and when you plan to return.

INFORMATION: Lower Sonoran Field Office, 623-580-5500 or www.blm.gov/az

 Travelers in Arizona can visit www.az511.gov or dial 511 to get information on road closures, construction, delays, weather and more. 

BLACKETT'S RIDGE TRAIL The payoff on this hike is one of the best panoramas in the Santa Catalina Mountains. But getting there takes some doing. BY ROBERT STIEVE / PHOTOGRAPHS BY JEFF MALTZMAN

As backyard playgrounds go, Tucson might have every other city beat. To the east and west are the two districts of Saguaro National Park, and to the north is Sabino Canyon. There's adventure to the south, too, but it's not as simple. In the other three directions, Mother Nature rubs elbows with the city limits. The flip side to that proximity is overcrowding, but if you know where to look, you can usually find some breathing room.

In Sabino Canyon, the locals tend to hit the Blackett's Ridge Trail. There's no guarantee of solitude along the way, but it's much quieter than the expressway to Seven Falls or the short loops around the visitors center. To get there, though, you will have to jostle a bit at the outset. Like other routes in the recreation area, the Blackett's Ridge Trail is accessed by a series of connecting trails, including the heavily trafficked pathway that heads east from the restroom at the visitors center.

Technically, that path is the beginning of the Bear Canyon Trail, but the name's not important. Instead, watch for the signs that point to the Phoneline Trail. That's where you're headed first.

Within minutes, you'll be amid the Sonoran landscape that makes this place so special. Saguaros. Paloverdes. Chollas. Prickly Pears. Mesquites. Ten minutes later, you'll come to one of the park's paved roads. Veer right. The trail parallels the road and then drops into an unexpected riparian wash.

On the other side, you'll come to another park road. This time, hop across, hike about 100 yards, and then turn right

onto the Phoneline Trail. To this point, the trail has been mostly horizontal, but this is where it starts to climb. That's significant because the rest of the route is only 2.2 miles, and in that short distance, you'll ascend almost 2,000 feet. Those numbers tend to thin out the crowds.

Although the hiking gets harder, the

huffing and puffing is mitigated by the beauty of the desert, which is especially lush in this area. The hillside is covered with familiar and unfamiliar plant species. And in March, it's sprinkled with the colors of Mexican goldpoppies, brittlebushes and other desert wildflowers. But any time of year, this stretch is stunning.

Moving on, after a half-hour of overall hiking, you'll arrive at an intersection with the Blackett's Ridge Trail. This is where the serious ascent begins. But before you take off, take a look around. There are some great views of Tucson to the south and the Rincon Mountains to the east.



RIGHT AND OPPOSITE PAGE: The Blackett's Ridge Trail passes wildflowers, saguaros, ocotillos and other Sonoran Desert plants as it winds to a point that overlooks two canyons.



From the intersection, turn right onto the Blackett's Ridge Trail. After 10 minutes, you'll come to the first switchback. After that, they keep coming. And getting steeper. It's like setting your elliptical machine on "random." The workout continues for about 20 minutes until you reach a point that overlooks Sabino Canyon. A few minutes later, the trail levels off briefly and enters the Pusch Ridge Wilderness. Looking ahead, you'll see what you'll think is the summit. (Spoiler alert: It's not.)

Take a deep breath and start climbing again. This time, though, there are no

switchbacks. It's straight up to the false summit you saw from below. Once you finally get there, the trail dips slightly downhill and levels off again. As you head along the ridge into the home stretch, the canyons on either side start closing in, and you'll get a sense that you're running out of real estate. Then, you'll see a steel sign that confirms your instincts. "End of the Blackett's Ridge Trail," it reads.

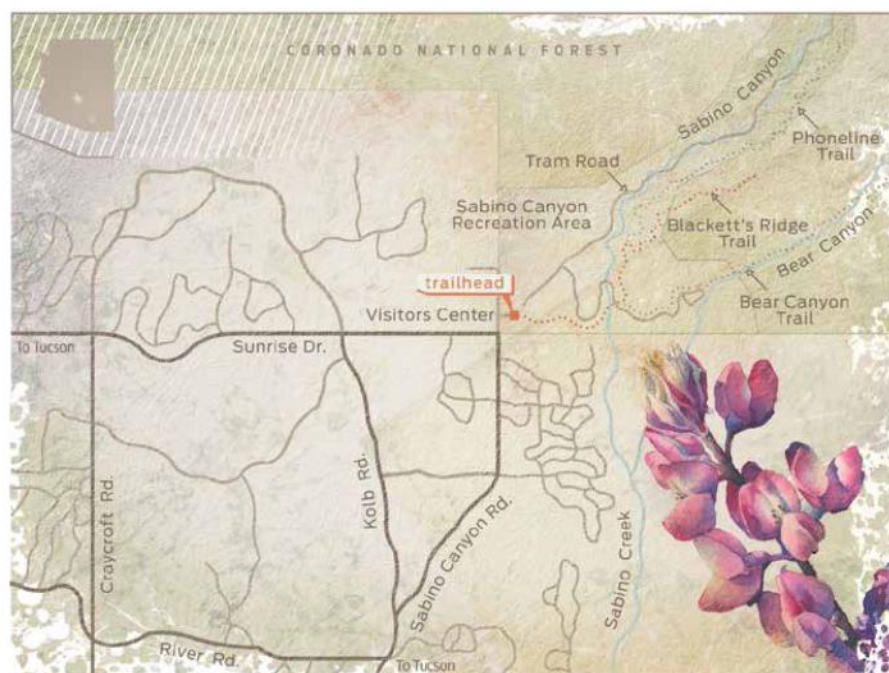
Just beyond those words is a rock ledge that insists you sit down. To the east is Bear Canyon; to the west, Sabino. Collectively, the panorama is one of the

best in Tucson's backyard. You can even hear the trickling sounds of Sabino Creek a few thousand feet below. It's enough to make you think you're in the middle of nowhere, even though you're just beyond the city limits of Tucson.



ADDITIONAL READING:

For more hikes, pick up a copy of *Arizona Highways Hiking Guide*, which features 52 of the state's best trails — one for each weekend of the year, sorted by seasons. To order a copy, visit www.shoparizonahighways.com/books.



TRAIL GUIDE

LENGTH: 6 miles round-trip

DIFFICULTY: Strenuous

ELEVATION: 2,725 to 4,409 feet

TRAILHEAD GPS: N 32°20.627', W 110°46.830'

DIRECTIONS: From Tucson, go east on Tanque Verde Road to Sabino Canyon Road. Turn left onto Sabino Canyon Road and continue 4 miles to the Sabino Canyon Recreation Area visitors center, which is open from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATION: A \$5 day pass is required.

VEHICLE REQUIREMENTS: None

DOGS ALLOWED: No

HORSES ALLOWED: Not suitable for horses.

USGS MAP: Sabino Canyon

INFORMATION: Santa Catalina Ranger District, 520-749-8700 or www.fs.usda.gov/coronado

LEAVE-NO-TRACE PRINCIPLES:

- Plan ahead and be prepared.
- Travel and camp on durable surfaces.
- Dispose of waste properly and pack out all of your trash.
- Leave what you find.
- Respect wildlife.
- Minimize campfire impact.
- Be considerate of others. **AH**



Long Shadows

Bands of shadow provide welcome relief from the desert heat at this structure, located in a section of public land that celebrates some of Arizona's most recognizable inhabitants. The structure itself is named for a nearby topographical feature whose color contrasts with the surrounding landscape. We'd show you, but we can't. This is a black and white photo.



October 2017 Answer & Winner

Starlite Motel, Mesa. Congratulations to our winner, Dolly Evans of Aberdeen, South Dakota.



November 2017 Answer & Winner

Wolf Creek Falls, near Prescott. Congratulations to our winner, William Deuel of Sun City, Arizona.

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To enter, correctly identify the location pictured at left and email your answer to editor@arizonahighways.com — type "Where Is This?" in the subject line. Entries can also be sent to 2039 W. Lewis Avenue, Phoenix, AZ 85009 (write "Where Is This?" on the envelope). Please include your name, address and phone number. One winner will be chosen in a random drawing of qualified entries. Entries must be postmarked by January 15, 2018. Only the winner will be notified. The correct answer will be posted in our March Issue and online at www.arizonahighways.com beginning February 15.

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

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