

# SCOTTSDALE — AREA —

HIKING, BIKING & TRAIL GUIDE



SCOTTSDALE  
ARIZONA

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Nature always wears the color of the spirit.  
~ Ralph Waldo Emerson



**WE'RE ALL EXPLORERS AT HEART.**

We may go about it differently – some with quiet intention, others with wild abandon – but we're all searching for a new experience to collect, a discovery that quickens our pulse just a bit. Welcome, fellow explorers, to one of the world's most spectacular natural playgrounds – Scottsdale's Sonoran Desert!

Known for its boulder-strewn mountain peaks, verdant desert washes and pristine lakes and rivers, our Sonoran Desert invites you to get out and explore. Experience the serenity of a desert trail at sunrise with only the cacti and quail as your companions. Let your curiosity ride shotgun as you bounce along rugged trails on a guided Jeep tour. Plunge through whitewater rapids or settle in to a horse's gentle sway. The choice, and the adventure, is yours.

If Scottsdale's bustling Old Town is the city's heart, then the Sonoran Desert is its soul – and we'd like to share it with you. That's why we've included in this guide some of our favorite places to hike, bike, climb, or just sit and contemplate. We hope that as you learn more about it, you'll be inspired to see the Sonoran Desert's beauty for yourself, in every season!

# SCOTTSDALE'S SONORAN DESERT BY THE NUMBERS

**30,580**

Acres in Scottsdale's McDowell Sonoran Preserve that are available for hiking, biking, climbing and horseback riding

**330**

Days of annual sunshine – perfect weather for outdoor adventures of all kinds

**230**

Miles of trails in Scottsdale's McDowell Sonoran Preserve

**6**

Lakes within a one-hour drive of downtown Scottsdale

**400+**

Miles of trails in the Scottsdale area

**36**

Designated climbing areas in Scottsdale's McDowell Sonoran Preserve

**2**

Rivers ideal for rafting, kayaking, tubing, canoeing, fishing and birdwatching



# GEOLOGY & TERRAIN

The Sonoran Desert covers more than 100,000 square miles in Arizona, California and northern Mexico, and is one of four major deserts in North America. Geologically, the Sonoran Desert lies in the vast Basin and Range province of the western United States. A land of soaring mountains and flat valleys, the Basin and Range encompasses nearly eight percent of the country's land area and is one of the nation's youngest topographies, born between 15 million and eight million years ago.



## *Fun Facts* DESERT WATER

- ▶ The Colorado River is Scottsdale's main water source.
- ▶ The Sonoran Desert boasts numerous lakes, rivers and streams that create lush riparian areas that support desert wildlife.
- ▶ The canals that channel water from area reservoirs are based on an ancient irrigation system designed by the Hohokam Indians, who inhabited the area until 1450 A.D.
- ▶ Scottsdale golf courses use reclaimed water for irrigation and water features.

# SUSTAINING LIFE IN THE DESERT

With as much sunshine (330 days per year) and as little rainfall (9 inches annually) as we get in the desert it might seem impossible that so many species could not only exist here, but actually thrive. Their success is largely due to special adaptations that make the most of what little moisture we do get.



- ▶ Most cacti have pleated stems that expand to store rainwater for times of drought.
- ▶ Cactus spines provide shade for the stem and act as a wind break to reduce water loss.
- ▶ The root systems of many desert plants are shallow and grow outward rather than down to better absorb surface moisture.
- ▶ Certain plants, like palo verde trees, conserve water by dropping their leaves during the dry season.
- ▶ Small mammals, including cottontails and jackrabbits, get most of their water from the vegetation they eat.
- ▶ Desert tortoises have large bladders that can store up to 40 percent of their weight in water for use when needed.



# DESERT PLANTS

Scottsdale's Sonoran Desert is overflowing with botanical treasures, from regal saguaro cacti and lacy mesquite trees to cactus blossoms and wildflowers in all the colors of the rainbow. Here's a sampling of the desert plants you might see as you explore.



The highly fragrant blossoms of the **Queen of the Night** open only for one night and close with the morning sun.



Juice from **Prickly Pear** fruit buds is used in drinks, syrups and candy. Prickly pears produce vibrantly colored fruit and blossoms.



The Tohono O'odham people use the leaves of one species of **Yucca** for basketry fiber. Yucca fruits and flowers are edible fresh or dried.



The bean-like pods of the **Mesquite Tree** provided a source of food for pre-Columbian desert dwellers.



The **Agave** is best known as the plant from which Tequila is made. It also was cultivated by the Hohokam as a major food crop.



It's hard to miss the bright gold blossoms and green, chlorophyll-bearing trunks and branches of the **Palo Verde Tree**.



The **Barrel Cactus** tends to grow leaning toward the south, which is why it is also called the "compass" cactus.



The barbed thorns of the fuzzy-looking **Cholla** have earned them the nickname "Velcro of the desert."



The **Jojoba** shrub is highly valued for its brown, acorn-like seeds that contain a high-quality liquid wax.



**Ironwoods** are spiny trees that sprout small leaves when the soil is moist. They bloom in May/June with violet, wisteria-like flowers.



A member of the Agave family, the **Century Plant** grows a flowering stalk that can reach up to 15 feet in height.



The whip-like branches of the **Ocotillo** sport fiery red blossoms in the spring.



**Devil's Claw** has long trailing stems and scalloped leaves. It is a signature material in baskets created by the Tohono O'odham and Pima people.



The stem of the **Brittlebush** exudes a gum that can be chewed or used as incense. This shrub blooms from late winter to early spring.



## Fun Facts GIANT SAGUARO

- ▶ The saguaro blossom is the state flower of Arizona.
- ▶ A 10-year-old saguaro may measure only about the size of your thumb.
- ▶ Saguaro arms typically appear when the plant is between 50 and 100 years of age.
- ▶ A mature saguaro can store one ton of water.
- ▶ In the right conditions, saguaros can live to be 150 to 200 years old.
- ▶ They're considered the "indicator plant" of the Sonoran Desert because they grow only here.
- ▶ It is the largest cactus in the United States and can grow to 50 feet in height.



## Fun Facts CREOSOTE

- ▶ Creosote is thought to be the oldest living plant in the world.
- ▶ A ring of creosotes looks like separate plants, but all are descendant from a common seed.
- ▶ Native people used creosote secretions to waterproof baskets and mend pottery.
- ▶ The creosote's flowers and foliage feed more than 60 species of insects.
- ▶ It gives off a fresh, unmistakable fragrance following a rain.
- ▶ These common evergreen shrubs can live to be over 100 years old.

# DESERT CRITTERS

Pause for a moment and you're likely to hear it – the scurrying of quail, the chatter of a cactus wren or, at sunrise or sunset, the howl of a coyote. The Sonoran Desert is home to hundreds of species of mammals, birds and reptiles, including these common critters.



**Coyotes** are best known for their mournful howl, the signature sound of the Southwest.



Feisty **Cactus Wrens** are strikingly spotted and typically nest in saguaros, chollas and palo verde trees.



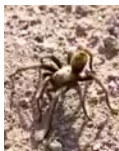
Staying true to its name, the **Roadrunner** can reach ground speeds of up to 15 miles per hour.



**Harris Hawks** can be identified by their dark brown bodies and long black-and-white tail feathers.



**Gambel's Quail** are gregarious birds that spend most of their time scurrying along the ground in search of food.



**Arizona Blond Tarantulas** are hairy-looking spiders that measure between three and four inches in length.



Resembling small wild boars, **Javelina** can weigh up to 55 pounds and live in groups of 2 to 20 animals.



Measuring nearly two feet tall, **Great Horned Owls** have white throats, striped undersides and prominent ear tufts.



**Desert Tortoises** are gentle creatures that can live for up to 40 years and measure up to 14 inches in length.



**Scorpions** fluoresce under ultraviolet light, so a black light is a must for nocturnal hunting (don't touch these venomous insects).



**Jackrabbits** are known for their huge ears, long hind legs and large feet.



Venomous **Rattlesnakes** often hide under shrubs, rocks and other desert debris. They're known for the warning buzz of their tail rattle.



**Desert Cottontails**, the most abundant desert "bunnies," rarely drink, getting most of their water from the food they eat.



**Sonoran Desert Hummingbirds** range in length from two and a half to five inches. Their wings beat up to 80 times per second.



Most of the holes you'll see in desert saguaros were drilled by **Gila Woodpeckers** for their nests.



**Butterflies**, like monarchs and painted ladies, are often spotted in the Sonoran Desert during their late summer and early fall migrations.



Venomous **Gila Monsters** can grow up to 18 inches in length and are pink and black, usually in a reticulated pattern.



The **Western Banded Gecko's** tail, which is almost as long as its body, stores food and water for the lizard to use during lean times.



## WILDLIFE WATCHING TIPS

- ▶ Dress in neutral-colored clothing that blends with the desert landscape.
- ▶ Avoid wearing perfume or other scented products.
- ▶ Head out early in the morning when most desert animals are active.
- ▶ Look near blooming or fruiting plants, as well as around moist, lush areas like desert washes, streambeds, rivers and ponds.
- ▶ If you encounter snakes or large mammals like coyotes and javelina, observe from a safe distance.
- ▶ Never get between mothers and babies of any species.
- ▶ Don't step or put your hands in places that you can't see, like burrows, under rocks, or behind bushes – you never know who might be living in there.
- ▶ Remember your binoculars and camera!

# THE FIVE SEASONS OF THE SONORAN DESERT

DATES, AVERAGE TEMPERATURES & SEASONAL RAINFALL:		WHAT TO EXPECT:
WINTER	Dec. 1 – Feb. 15 Average High: 70 F / 21 C Average Low: 40 F / 4 C Seasonal Rainfall: 2"	Mild to cool sunny days and clear, brisk nights; possible light rain Creosote sprouting new leaves after a winter rain; desert wildflowers beginning to show their colors
SPRING	Feb. 16 – April 30 Average High: 79 F / 26 C Average Low: 47 F / 8 C Seasonal Rainfall: 1.5"	Warm, sunny days and cool nights The desert landscape blooming with wildflowers and annuals
DRY SUMMER	May 1 – June 30 Average High: 99 F / 37 C Average Low: 64 F / 18 C Seasonal Rainfall: <0.25"	Clear, dry, warm days and balmy evenings; little to no rain Prickly pears blooming in early May followed by saguaros from mid-May to mid-June
WET SUMMER	July 1 – Sept. 15 Average High: 103 F / 39 C Average Low: 73 F / 23 C Seasonal Rainfall: 2.25"	Warm to hot days with moderate humidity; afternoon thunderstorms Butterflies emerging after the rains; hummingbird activity increasing before the birds head south for the winter
FALL	Sept. 16 – Nov. 30 Average High: 87 F / 31 C Average Low: 56 F / 13 C Seasonal Rainfall: 1.74"	Warm days followed by refreshing, cool nights Wintering hawks beginning to arrive; desert mammals active in the daytime and sleeping during cooler nights

## things to bring

Must-haves for exploring the Sonoran Desert.



**1 SUNSCREEN:** Sunscreen is a necessity no matter what time of year you visit! **2 WHISTLE:** If you need assistance, the sound of a whistle carries farther than your voice. **3 WATER:** Carry more than you think you'll need for everyone in your party, including pets. Bring at least one quart per person for short hikes and at least one gallon per person for longer hikes. **4 TRAIL MAP:** Maps of Scottsdale's McDowell Sonoran Preserve can be found in the back of this guide or downloaded at [scottsdaleaz.gov/preserve](http://scottsdaleaz.gov/preserve). **5 CELL PHONE:** A fully charged cell phone is the best item to have in the event of an emergency. **6 SNACKS:** Refuel with snacks like nuts, dried fruit, jerky or energy bars. **7 COMB:** A fine-tooth comb comes in handy for flicking away cholla cactus buds that can attach to shoes, skin or clothes if you brush against them.



# SAFETY FIRST

While Scottsdale's fresh air, sunshine and picturesque terrain are inviting, preparation is imperative to help ensure that your outdoor experience is both fun and safe.

## HYDRATE

Be sure you're well hydrated before hitting the trail and bring along more water than you think you'll need for everyone in your hiking party, including pets. In general, bring at least one quart per person for short hikes (less than two hours) and a minimum of one gallon per person for longer hikes. When half your water is gone, it's time to turn back toward the trailhead.

## CHECK THE WEATHER AND START EARLY

Daytime temperatures in the desert rise quickly, particularly during the summer. Know the forecast for the time you'll be hiking and avoid hiking in temperatures above 90° degrees Fahrenheit (32° C). If you get caught in one of our rare desert rainstorms, do not take shelter in washes or low-lying areas as they will flood quickly.

## TELL A FRIEND

Always let someone know where you're going and when you plan to return.

## DRESS APPROPRIATELY

Closed-toe hiking or athletic shoes are a must for desert exploration. Long-sleeved shirts and long pants offer protection from the sun and heat, as well as prickly desert plants. Other musts include a wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses and plenty of sunscreen.

## KNOW YOUR LIMITS

Choose an adventure that matches your abilities and experience. All trails in this guide are ranked by difficulty. Inexperienced hikers will do best on trails rated "Easy." Trails rated "Difficult" or "Extremely Difficult," such as Camelback Mountain's summit trails, should only be tackled by experienced hikers who are in very good health.

## PACE YOURSELF

If you become fatigued while hiking or riding, stop, rest, drink plenty of water and turn back toward the trailhead as soon as you feel able. Don't hesitate to ask a fellow hiker for assistance – most are friendly and more than willing to help.

## STAY ON THE TRAIL

Always bring a trail map to keep you on course and stay on the designated trail. Doing so not only helps you avoid natural hazards such as prickly cacti, snakes and unstable terrain, it also helps protect the desert's delicate ecosystem. If an emergency arises, staying on the trail will allow first responders to find you as soon as possible.

## FOLLOW TRAIL ETIQUETTE

Be considerate of other trail users – you're all here for the same reason. All trail users yield to horses and always follow the rider's instructions. Bicyclists yield to all other users. Downhill traffic yields to uphill traffic.

## PROTECT YOUR DOG

You wouldn't hike the desert barefoot – don't make your dog do it! Foot protection for your dog will help avoid painful injuries from sharp rocks and cactus spines. Carry plenty of water for your dog, keep your pet on a leash at all times, and remember that dogs have physical limits, too. If your dog is not used to hiking or the weather is forecast to be above 90F (32C) at any time during your hike, leave your pet at home or at your hotel. The desert heat can kill your dog with little or no notice, and you can be charged with animal cruelty under state law. Always clean up after your dog!

## LEAVE IT AS YOU FOUND IT

Do not destroy, deface or remove desert plants, rocks, artifacts, etc.





Of all the paths you take in life, make sure  
a few of them are dirt. ~ *John Muir*

# HIT THE TRAILS

Ready to get your adventure on? Great! This section of the guide will help you find your perfect hiking trail, whether you're looking for a casual stroll or a serious workout. Let's start with a look at the trail rating symbols you'll see on the following pages.

TRAIL RATING GUIDE				
RATING SYMBOL	DEFINITION	SURFACE	AVERAGE TRAIL GRADE / MAX GRADE	OBSTACLES / STEPS
○ Easiest	ADA accessible trail	Paved or hard and smooth	<5% Max 5%	None
● Easy	Mostly smooth and wide	Dirt with occasional unevenness	<5% Max 10%	2" or less, rocks and ruts
■ Moderate	Mostly smooth, variable width	Dirt with occasional unevenness	<10% Max 15%	<8", rocks and ruts, loose material
◆ Moderately Difficult	Mostly uneven surfaces	Dirt and rock	<15% Max 20%	<12", rocks and ruts, loose material
◆ Difficult	Long rocky segments with possible drops and exposure	Dirt and loose rock with continual unevenness	>15% Max >20%	12" or taller, loose rocks, exposure to drops
◆◆ Extremely Difficult	Long rocky segments with possible drops and exposure	Dirt and loose rock with continual unevenness	>15% Max >20%	12" or taller, loose rocks, exposure to drops and excessive heat >90°F

*NOTE: All trails are rated one difficulty level higher when temperatures exceed 90°F (32°C). DO NOT bring your dog if it is not used to hiking or the temperature is forecast to exceed 90°F (32°C) at any time during your hike.*



## DISCOVER SCOTTSDALE'S McDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE

**CRAVING THE FEEL OF A NEW TRAIL UNDER YOUR BOOTS?** Head for Scottsdale's McDowell Sonoran Preserve! At 30,580 acres (and growing), it's the largest urban preserve in the nation and offers more than 230 miles of shared-use trails for hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding. And you don't have to be an experienced outdoorsman to enjoy the natural beauty and tranquility of this desert gem. There are trails for everyone, from ADA-accessible interpretive paths to challenging summit climbs.

To help you get started, we've collected some of our favorite Preserve hikes on pages 22-31. Each hike includes a difficulty rating, turn-by-turn directions and a brief description of the natural wonders you'll see along the way. You'll also find removable Preserve maps in the back of this guide – be sure to take them along on your hike.

Access to Scottsdale's McDowell Sonoran Preserve is free and all 11 Preserve trailheads are open daily from sunrise to sunset. Leashed dogs are welcome at the Preserve and several trailheads, including Gateway, Lost Dog, Pima Dynamite and Brown's Ranch, offer doggie comfort stations.

For more information on the Preserve, contact:

McDowell Sonoran Conservancy  
480.998.7971  
mcdowellsonoran.org

City of Scottsdale  
480.312.7013  
scottsdaleaz.gov/preserve



# EXPLORE & LEARN WITH THE *McDOWELL SONORAN* *CONSERVANCY*

*AS YOU EXPLORE SCOTTSDALE'S MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE*, you're likely to come across someone wearing a distinctive blue shirt bearing the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy logo. Stop and say hello, because you're in the presence of a true Sonoran Desert superhero! These friendly volunteer stewards possess a wealth of knowledge about the Preserve and are happy to answer questions about trails, as well as the natural and human history of the Sonoran Desert.

In addition to knowledgeable stewards, the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy provides a variety of complimentary ways for you to get involved with nature and the Preserve, including guided hikes, educational and birdwatching walks, trailside naturalists and guided mountain bike rides. Find the full calendar of seasonal Preserve events at [mcdowellsonoran.org](http://mcdowellsonoran.org).



In addition to helping locals and visitors explore the Preserve, the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy conducts scientific research in order to better understand and protect our unique Sonoran Desert and its many inhabitants. Research priorities include understanding the effects of urban stressors and climate change on natural resources, and discerning best practices for ecological restoration and control of non-native species. The Conservancy's work also actively supports STEAM education. Keep your eyes peeled and you might see some of their citizen scientists out in the Preserve!

The McDowell Sonoran Conservancy's 650 tireless volunteer stewards, staff and partners share one vision of a culture that ensures, preserves, and values natural open spaces for all to enjoy. To learn more about this important nonprofit organization and support their work, visit [mcdowellsonoran.org](http://mcdowellsonoran.org).

The McDowell Sonoran Conservancy invites visitors of all ages to discover the secrets of the Sonoran Desert and build lasting memories!



**MCDOWELL  
SONORAN  
CONSERVANCY**  
Science is in our nature



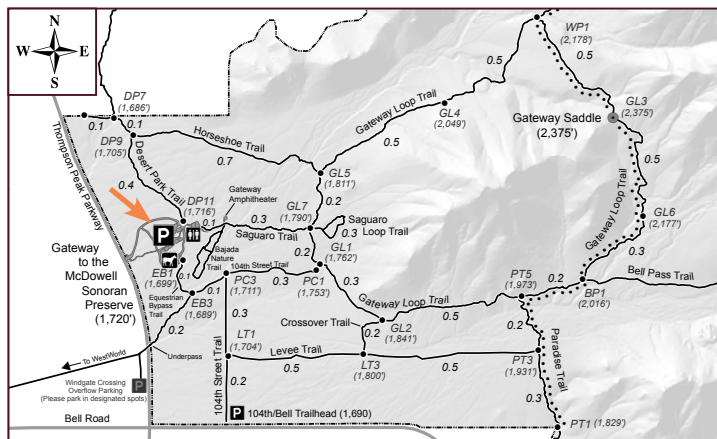
## GATEWAY TRAILHEAD

The largest of the Preserve's trailheads, the Gateway is fully barrier-free and has all the amenities an outdoor recreation enthusiast could want. Its central-Scottsdale location, ample parking and easy access make it one of the Preserve's most popular trailheads.

**ADDRESS:** 18333 N. Thompson Peak Parkway, Scottsdale 85255

**HOURS:** Sunrise to sunset daily

**AMENITIES:** Restrooms, water, shade ramadas, passenger vehicle and horse trailer parking, hitching rails, water trough, interpretive signage



## RECOMMENDED HIKES

### BAJADA NATURE TRAIL LOOP

This ADA accessible trail is ideal for families with young children or strollers, the elderly, people using wheelchairs or walkers, and others with mobility challenges. As the trail winds across the bajada, interpretive exhibits reveal fascinating stories of the plants and animals that call the McDowell Sonoran Preserve home. It's the perfect introduction to the Sonoran Desert!

**Route:** Head east on the Saguaro Trail for 0.1mi (0.16km) and follow the signs to the Bajada Nature Trail on your right.

**LENGTH:** Two loop options – 0.45mi or 0.7mi / 0.72km or 1.13km

**ELEVATION CHANGE:** 43ft / 13.1m

**DIFFICULTY:** ○ Easiest / ADA Accessible

**USE:** Hiking, walking, wheelchairs, strollers

### GATEWAY LOOP

One of the most popular trails in the Preserve, the Gateway Loop gives you the feeling of being immersed in the serenity of the Sonoran Desert while providing a great fitness opportunity. The trail passes over the Gateway Saddle, from which you'll enjoy expansive scenic views of the surrounding landscape. Bump up your pace if you'd like to get a good workout while enjoying the views.

**Route:** From the Gateway Trailhead, head east on the Saguaro Trail to the junction with the Gateway Loop Trail. From this point, you can go left or right, as it is a loop trail and will return you to this location.

**LENGTH:** 4.5mi / 7.2km (loop)

**ELEVATION CHANGE:** 655ft / 199.6m

**DIFFICULTY:** ■ Moderate

**USE:** Hiking, biking, horseback riding

### WINDGATE AND BELL PASS LOOP

If you're an experienced and well-prepared hiker looking for a challenging trek, this is the hike for you. Stunning desert terrain, spectacular mountain and valley views, and a great workout are your rewards for tackling this calorie-crunching hike known for its steep inclines and rugged stretches.

**Route:** From the trailhead, go east on the Saguaro Trail, then left on the Gateway Loop Trail to the Windgate Pass Trail. Follow the Windgate Pass Trail as it climbs to Inspiration Viewpoint, then on to Windgate Pass. Continue east and you'll begin your descent along the eastern slope of the McDowell Mountains. At the Bell Pass Trail junction, turn right and begin your ascent to Bell Pass. Continue west and turn left at the Gateway Loop Trail then left again on the Saguaro Trail to return to the trailhead.

**LENGTH:** Approx. 9.6mi / 15.5km (loop)

**ELEVATION CHANGE:** 1,400ft / 426.7m

**DIFFICULTY:** ◆ Difficult

**USE:** Hiking\*, biking\*, horseback riding\* (\*experienced and well-prepared only)



## RECOMMENDED HIKES

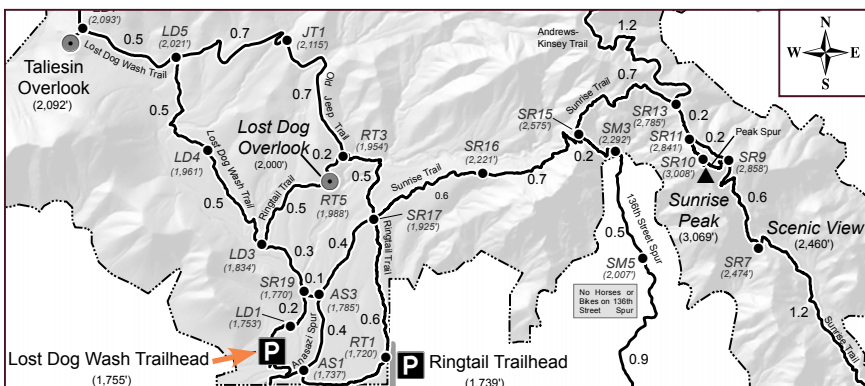
### LOST DOG WASH TRAILHEAD

This trailhead provides easy access to the Preserve’s southern regions. It offers somewhat shorter and easier trails that meander around and across a natural desert wash. The wash’s lush vegetation makes it an excellent spot for catching glimpses of desert wildlife, including Gambel’s quail, cactus wrens and lizards. You may even be lucky enough to spot an elusive bobcat or mule deer!

**ADDRESS:** 12601 N. 124th St., Scottsdale 85259

**HOURS:** Sunrise to sunset daily

**AMENITIES:** Restrooms, water, shade, passenger vehicle and horse trailer parking, hitching rails, water trough, interpretive signage



#### KOVACH FAMILY NATURE TRAIL

This trail provides a fun and exciting educational experience that emphasizes family and family relationships in nature. Signs along the trail explore such topics as “Ancient Families in the Wash,” “Water is Powerful!” and “Can Cactus Jump?” This trail is ADA accessible, making it ideal for families with young children or strollers, the elderly, people using wheelchairs or walkers, and others with mobility challenges.

*Route:* This trail is located just beyond the trailhead building on the Preserve side of the Lost Dog Trailhead.

**LENGTH:** 0.5mi / 0.8km (loop)

**ELEVATION CHANGE:** Minimal

**DIFFICULTY:** ○ Easiest / ADA Accessible

**USE:** Hiking, walking, wheelchairs, strollers

#### LOST DOG WASH TRAIL TO TALIESIN OVERLOOK

On this hike, you’ll parallel the Lost Dog Wash as it spills out of the McDowell Mountains. Your goal is the Taliesin Overlook, where you’ll enjoy scenic views of north Scottsdale and Phoenix to the west. You’ll also catch a distant glimpse of Frank Lloyd Wright’s desert masterpiece, Taliesin West, from the overlook.

*Route:* From the trailhead, take the Lost Dog Wash Trail approximately 2.4mi (3.9km) to Taliesin Overlook. Return the way you came on Lost Dog Wash Trail to the trailhead.

**LENGTH:** 4.8mi / 7.7km (round trip)

**ELEVATION CHANGE:** 300ft / 91.4m

**DIFFICULTY:** ■ Moderate

**USE:** Hiking, biking, horseback riding

#### SUNRISE TRAIL TO SUNRISE PEAK

From its juncture with the Lost Dog Wash Trail, the Sunrise Trail climbs steadily along mountain ridges studded with lush Sonoran Desert vegetation. The views from Sunrise Peak are magnificent, giving you a bird’s-eye view of the desert below.

*Route:* From the Lost Dog Wash Trailhead, travel north on the Lost Dog Wash Trail approximately 0.25mi (0.4km) to the junction with the Sunrise Trail. Turn right and head east toward Sunrise Peak. From Sunrise Peak, you can return the way you came, or take an excursion out and back from the Sunrise Trail on the Andrews Kinsey Trail for great eastern views, including the famous Fountain Hills fountain. Note: the full out-and-back side trip will add approximately 4mi / 6.4km to the distance given below.

**LENGTH:** 5.8mi / 9.3km (round trip)

**ELEVATION CHANGE:** 1,300ft / 396.2m

**DIFFICULTY:** ◆ Difficult

**USE:** Hiking, biking\*, horseback riding\* (\*experienced riders only)



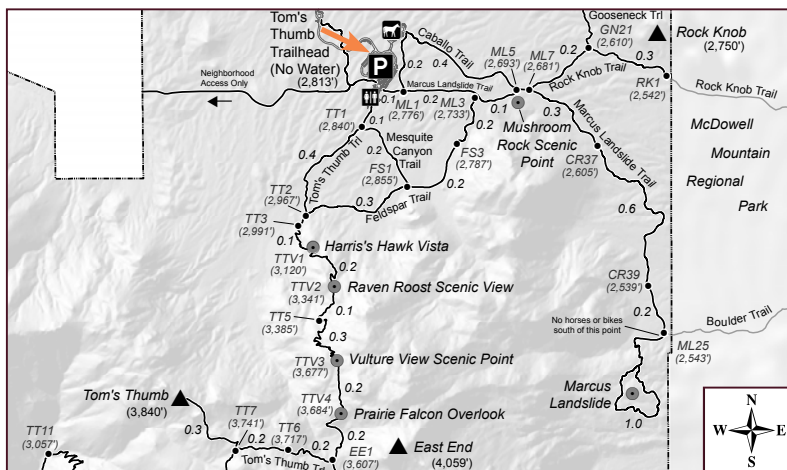
## TOM'S THUMB TRAILHEAD

The Tom's Thumb Trailhead is popular with hikers and rock climbers alike, offering access to many of the Preserve's most notable natural features, including Tom's Thumb, Gardener's Wall, Sven Slab, Windgate Overlook and FS Mesquite Canyon.

**ADDRESS:** 23015 N. 128th St., Scottsdale 85255

**HOURS:** Sunrise to sunset daily

**AMENITIES:** Restrooms, shade, passenger vehicle and horse trailer parking, interpretive signage; NO WATER



## RECOMMENDED HIKES

### TOM'S THUMB, FELDSPAR, MESQUITE CANYON LOOP

Feldspar is one of the three minerals that make up the granite boulders prominent in this area of the Preserve, which winds along the northern slope of the McDowell Mountains. This easy hike also provides dramatic views of Mesquite Canyon.

**Route:** From the trailhead, head south on the Tom's Thumb Trail, then left on the Feldspar Trail, then left again on the Mesquite Canyon Trail, back to the Tom's Thumb Trail. Take a quick right, and you will return to the trailhead. **Note:** You can extend this hike to 1.4mi (2.3km) plus 80ft (24.3m) elevation change if you stay on the Feldspar Trail until it connects with the Marcus Landslide Trail. Take a left on the Marcus Landslide Trail to return to the trailhead.

**LENGTH:** 1.1mi / 1.8km (loop)

**ELEVATION CHANGE:** 150ft / 45.7m

**DIFFICULTY:** ● Easy

**USE:** Hiking, biking, climbing, horseback riding

### MARCUS LANDSLIDE INTERPRETIVE TRAIL

This beautiful trail has interpretive signs explaining the origin of the Marcus landslide, one of the largest ever discovered in Arizona. Highlights include tremendous views of the little-seen eastern side of the McDowell Mountains and an interesting area of huge boulders. Add an additional 0.8mi (1.3km) of distance and 200ft (61m) of elevation change if you take the loop trail on top of the landslide.

**Route:** Follow the signs to this trail from the south end of the parking area. Go east on the Marcus Landslide Trail and stay straight on the trail past various junctions on the right and left. Return the way you came.

**LENGTH:** 3.0mi / 4.8km (round trip)

**ELEVATION CHANGE:** 280ft / 85m

**DIFFICULTY:** ◆ Moderately Difficult

**USE:** Hiking, biking\*, climbing, horseback riding\* (\*final loop on the Landslide is foot traffic only)

### TOM'S THUMB TRAIL TO THE BASE OF TOM'S THUMB

This steep trail climbs through fantastic boulder formations into an area high in the McDowell Mountains that showcases many unique plants and provides some of the finest views in the Preserve. Please note that seasonal access restrictions may be in place at the base of the thumb (approximately March through June) due to nesting birds of prey.

**Route:** From the Tom's Thumb Trailhead, head south on the Tom's Thumb Trail. After following the TT Trail for approximately 2.0mi (3.2km), you will reach the TT7 emergency marker where you will turn right and follow the 0.3mi (0.5km) spur trail to the base of Tom's Thumb.

**LENGTH:** 4.6 mi / 7.4km (round trip)

**ELEVATION CHANGE:** 1,100ft / 335.3m

**DIFFICULTY:** ◆ Difficult

**USE:** Hiking, biking\*, climbing, horseback riding\* (\*experienced riders only)



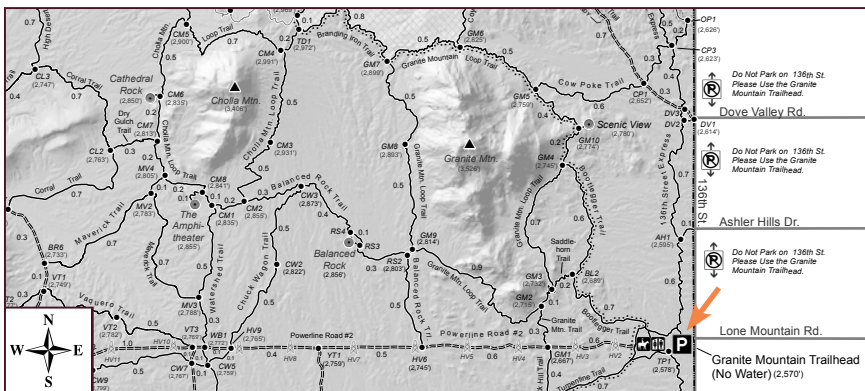
## GRANITE MOUNTAIN TRAILHEAD

This relatively new trailhead provides access to pristine areas in the Preserve's northern region around Granite Mountain. These are some of the highest elevations in the Sonoran Desert, which means the area enjoys slightly cooler temperatures and a bit more rainfall than other regions of the Preserve. As a result, vegetation is even more verdant here, including an abundance of stately saguaro cacti.

**ADDRESS:** 31402 N. 136th St., Scottsdale 85262

**HOURS:** Sunrise to sunset daily

**AMENITIES:** Restrooms, passenger vehicle and horse trailer parking; NO WATER



## RECOMMENDED HIKES

### BOOTLEGGER, GRANITE MOUNTAIN, SADDLEHORN TRAIL LOOP

This hike passes through magnificent granite boulders along the eastern slope of Granite Mountain. Be on the lookout for mule deer and Gila monsters that are commonly seen in the area. The views to the east across the Verde River Valley to the Matatzal Mountains are stunning, especially on cold winter mornings if the distant Matatzal's are dusted with snow.

**Route:** Start off on the Bootlegger Trail, named for the felonious activities that occurred in the area long ago. Travel approximately 1.3 miles to the intersection with the Granite Mountain Loop Trail. Turn left and follow the Granite Mountain Loop Trail to the Saddlehorn Trail. Turn left again to return to the Bootlegger Trail, where a right hand turn will return you to the trailhead.

**LENGTH:** 2.9mi / 4.7km (loop)

**ELEVATION CHANGE:** 175ft / 53.3m

**DIFFICULTY:** ■ Moderate

**USE:** Hiking, biking, horseback riding

### GRANITE MOUNTAIN LOOP TRAIL

This trail loops the boulder-studded slopes of Granite Mountain, affording fabulous views of the surrounding desert and distant Matatzal Mountains. Consider adding a side trip to Balanced Rock, a molar-shaped giant perched precariously on a slab of igneous stone (adds approximately 0.75mi / 1.2km to the length given below).

**Route:** From the trailhead, travel 1.3 miles on the Bootlegger Trail to the Granite Mountain Loop Trail. Turn right and follow the trail, as you circumnavigate Granite Mountain. You can follow the loop all the way around the mountain and return to the Bootlegger Trail, or you can use the Saddlehorn Trail as a short cut back to the Bootlegger Trail where you'll turn right to return to the trailhead (trims approximately 1.1mi / 1.8km off the length given below).

**LENGTH:** 6.9mi / 11.1km (loop)

**ELEVATION CHANGE:** 330ft / 100.5m

**DIFFICULTY:** ■ Moderate

**USE:** Hiking, biking, horseback riding

### GRANITE MOUNTAIN LOOP W/ EXTENSION THROUGH COYOTE CANYON

The Coyote Canyon Trail passes through a unique narrow canyon rimmed by steep granite walls. The canyon was given its name by locals who frequently saw coyotes in the area.

**Route:** Follow the route description for the Granite Mountain Loop above (Bootlegger to Granite Mountain), then turn right on the Cow Poke Trail, then left on the Dove Valley Trail, then left on the Coyote Canyon Trail, then right on the Granite Mountain Loop. Trail length below was calculated using the Saddlehorn Trail shortcut described in the prior Granite Mountain Loop route.

**LENGTH:** 7.9mi / 12.7km

**ELEVATION CHANGE:** 330ft / 100.5m

**DIFFICULTY:** ◆ Difficult

**USE:** Hiking, biking, horseback riding





## RECOMMENDED HIKES

### JANE RAU INTERPRETIVE TRAIL

This trail is named after Jane Rau, one of the original advocates for the creation of the McDowell Sonoran Preserve, and a founding member of the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy. Interpretive signs along the trail provide information about the flora and fauna of the area and the human history of the Preserve.

*Route:* The Jane Rau Trail loop begins on the eastern side of the trailhead complex.

**LENGTH:** 0.5mi / 0.8km (loop)

**ELEVATION CHANGE:** 37ft / 11.2m

**DIFFICULTY:** ○ Easiest / ADA Accessible

**USE:** Hiking, walking, wheelchairs, strollers

### BROWN'S MOUNTAIN LOOP

From the summit of Brown's Mountain, you'll enjoy a 360-degree view of the beautiful upper Sonoran Desert. To the north you'll see remnants of Brown's Ranch, which was a working cattle ranch from the early 1900s through the 1970s.

*Route:* From the trailhead, head north on Brown's Ranch Road approximately 0.7mi (1.1km) and turn left on the Brown's Mountain Trail. From the summit, continue west on the Brown's Mountain Trail to the Upper Ranch Trail and turn left. From that juncture, it is approximately 2.0mi (3.21km) back to the trailhead. For a shorter hike, simply return from the summit the way you came and deduct 1.3mi (2.1km) from the length given below.

**LENGTH:** 3.9mi / 6.3km

**ELEVATION CHANGE:** 500ft / 152.4m

**DIFFICULTY:** ■ Moderate

**USE:** Hiking, biking, horseback riding

### CHOLLA MOUNTAIN LOOP

There's plenty to see on this moderately challenging hike, from the site of the historic Brown's Ranch to the Amphitheater and Cathedral Rock formations. At Cathedral Rock, look for the indentations in the bedrock, known as metates, where Native Americans ground mesquite pods into flour.

*Route:* From the trailhead, proceed north on the Brown's Ranch Road Trail approximately 1.3mi (2.1km) to the junction of the Corral Trail. Turn right and head east on the Corral Trail. After roughly 0.75mi (1.2km), turn right on the Dry Gulch Trail and follow that to the Cholla Mountain Loop Trail. You can go left or right on this 3.1mi (5.0km) loop and return to the junction of the Dry Gulch Trail. From that point, retrace your path back to the trailhead.

**LENGTH:** 8.7mi / 14.0km

**ELEVATION CHANGE:** 300ft / 91.4m

**DIFFICULTY:** ■ Moderate

**USE:** Hiking, biking, horseback riding

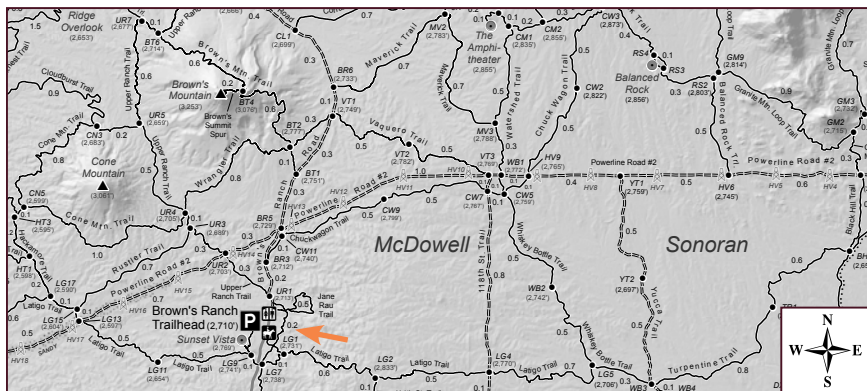
## BROWN'S RANCH TRAILHEAD

Hikers visiting the Brown's Ranch Trailhead will find interpretive exhibits about the human history of the Preserve. This trailhead serves as the major access point to the vast network of trails in the area and provides access to such unique destinations as Granite Mountain, Cholla Mountain, Brown's Mountain and Cathedral Rock.

**ADDRESS:** 30301 N. Alma School Pkwy., Scottsdale 85262

**HOURS:** Sunrise to sunset daily

**AMENITIES:** Restrooms, water, shade ramadas, passenger vehicle and horse trailer parking, hitching rails, water trough, interpretive signage



# FIVE LOVELY SURPRISES ON Scottsdale Trails

When the McDowell Sonoran Preserve was established in 1995, the intent was to protect a beautiful swath of desert and enhance the quality of life for Scottsdale residents and visitors alike. Mission accomplished. Within the 30,580 acres sheltered by the preserve, you'll find incredible scenery, a network of trails and more than a few surprises.

BY ROGER NAYLOR  
PHOTOS BY AN PHAM



## Number One

### **BALANCED ROCK**

Balanced Rock, located near Granite Mountain, always comforts me. It has absolutely no business being upright, yet there it stands, a multi-ton, mushroom-shaped boulder, precariously perched on a foundation of bare stone. Completely exposed and alone in the desert, it serves as a reminder that seemingly impossible things exist. See *Granite Mountain Loop Trail* on pg. 29 ■

## Number Two

### **DOUBLE CRESTED SAGUARO (left)**

The saguaro is the unquestioned king of the Sonoran Desert, towering over the landscape. Yet despite their royal status, few wear a crown. Those that do are called crested saguaros.

When the growing tip of a saguaro produces a fan-like shape instead of columnar arms, it's referred to as crested or cristate. The specimen at the junction of the Coyote Canyon and Desperado trails is one of the most rare. The main trunk forks, with both ends fanning out into a regal double crest. It's beautiful and eerily reminiscent of Princess Leia's twin-bun hairdo. See *Granite Mountain with Coyote Canyon extension* on pg. 29 ◆

## Number Three

### **CATHEDRAL ROCK METATES**

On the loop surrounding Cholla Mountain, I stop to enjoy Cathedral Rock where mighty boulders are stacked together and pocked with shady grottoes. In the largest room, metates, the shallow indentations in the bedrock where Native Americans would grind food such as mesquite pods, are still visible. See *Cholla Mountain Loop* on pg. 31 ■





*Number Four*

**TALIESIN OVERLOOK**

Lost Dog Wash Trail slips immediately into the embrace of mountains, leaving all trace of the city behind. Ramble through desert flora, crossing washes and making a gentle climb. Just as you forget there's even a city nearby, you crest a ridge with a signed overlook. From this short path you savor views of the sprawling urban valley and Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin West, the famed architect's winter home and architectural school. See *Lost Dog Wash to Taliesin Overlook* on pg. 25 ■

*Number Five*

**FACES OF COYOTE CANYON (right)**







Boulders give shape to narrow Coyote Canyon and also provide it with personality. This is a canyon full of whimsy. It's only a sliver of a defile but erosional forces have added flavor, carving a variety of shapes and faces into the rough skin of the granite. I notice eyes peering at me, and world-weary grins. This, I decide, is where the Easter Island heads go to retire. See *Granite Mountain with Coyote Canyon extension* on pg. 29 ◆



# OTHER SCOTTSDALE-AREA TRAILS

CITY	TRAILHEAD / PARK NAME	TRAIL & ACCESS Nearest trailhead with parking	APPROXIMATE LENGTH (MI / KM) (one way unless otherwise noted)	ELEVATION CHANGE (FT / M)	DIFFICULTY RATING	USE	FACILITIES AT ACCESS TRAILHEAD (restrooms may be porta-potties or plumbed)	LEASHED DOGS ALLOWED	ENTRANCE FEE	PARK HOURS	TRAIL NOTES
SCOTTSDALE	<b>Florence Ely Nelson Desert Park</b> 480.312.PARK scottsdaleaz.gov/parks	<b>Nature Trail</b> 8950 E. Pinnacle Peak Rd.	< 1.0 / <1.6	Minimal	○ Easiest	Walking	Restrooms, picnic areas, ramadas, playground, spray pad	Y	N	Sunrise to 10:30 p.m. daily	Easy trail exhibiting desert plants and cacti.
	<b>George “Doc” Cavalliere Park</b> 480.312.PARK scottsdaleaz.gov/parks	<b>Hiking Trail</b> 27775 N. Alma School Pkwy.	1.0 / 1.6 Loop	Minimal	● Easy	Hiking	Restrooms, water, picnic tables, ramadas, basketball courts	Y	N	Sunrise to 10:30 p.m. daily	This short loop trail provides a nice introduction to the North Scottsdale desert.
	<b>Indian Bend Wash Greenbelt</b> 480.312.PARK scottsdaleaz.gov/parks/greenbelt	<b>Varies</b> Along Hayden Rd. from Shea Blvd. south to Tempe	Varies	Minimal	● Easy	Walking, Biking, Rollerblading	Restrooms, ramadas, picnic tables, lakes, sports courts, dog park	Y	N	Greenbelt pathways are open 24/7. City parks open sunrise to 10:30 p.m. daily.	Eleven miles of paved paths connect Scottsdale to Tempe. The greenbelt doubles as a flood-control channel during rare times of heavy rain.
	<b>Nature Area</b> 480.312.PARK scottsdaleaz.gov/parks	<b>Nature Area Trail</b> 6901 N. Hayden Rd.	<1.0 / <1.6	Minimal	○ Easiest	Walking	Restrooms, ramada	Y	N	Sunrise to 10:30 p.m. daily	An easy walking trail located within a nine-acre park adjacent to the Arizona canal.
	<b>Pinnacle Peak Park</b> 480.312.0990 scottsdaleaz.gov/parks	<b>Pinnacle Peak Trail</b> 26802 N. 102nd Way	1.75 / 5.6	1,300 / 396.2	■ Moderate	Hiking, Climbing	Restrooms, drinking fountain, ramada, picnic tables	N	N	Sunrise to sunset daily	This scenic trail has a very smooth tread with a number of ups and downs and offers panoramic Valley views. Interpretive desert tours, astronomy talks and other programs are held throughout the year.
	<b>Scottsdale Ranch Park</b> 480.312.PARK scottsdaleaz.gov/parks	<b>Desert Garden Park</b> 10400 E. Via Linda	<1.0 / <1.6	0 / 0	○ Easiest	Walking	Restrooms, ramadas, sports courts, playground, exercise course	Y	N	Vary seasonally; see website for details	The Garden Park has three zones: a hummingbird nest for the low desert area, a saguaro and bat sanctuary for the high desert area, and a butterfly garden for the riparian community area.







# OTHER SCOTTSDALE-AREA TRAILS

CITY	TRAILHEAD / PARK NAME	TRAIL & ACCESS Nearest trailhead with parking	APPROXIMATE LENGTH (MI / KM) (one way unless otherwise noted)	ELEVATION CHANGE (FT / M)	DIFFICULTY RATING	USE	FACILITIES AT ACCESS TRAILHEAD (restrooms may be porta-potties or plumbed)	LEASHED DOGS ALLOWED	ENTRANCE FEE	PARK HOURS	TRAIL NOTES
SCOTTSDALE	<b>Stonegate Equestrian Park</b> 480.312.PARK scottsdaleaz.gov/parks	<b>Nature Trail</b> 9555 N. 120th St.	<1.0 / <1.6	Minimal	 Easiest	Walking, Horseback Riding	Restrooms, ramada, equestrian arenas, playground	Y	N	Sunrise to 10:30 p.m. daily	A scenic nature trail within a 23-acre equestrian park.
CAVE CREEK	<b>Cave Creek Regional Park</b> 602.506.2930 ext. 8 maricopacountyarks.net	<b>Go John</b> 37900 N. Cave Creek Pkwy. <i>Through park entrance to north end of picnic area</i>	5.8 / 9.3 Loop	411 / 125	 Moderately Difficult	Hiking, Biking, Horseback Riding	Restrooms, water, picnic tables, horse staging area	Y	\$7 per motorized vehicle + \$3 per person	May 1 - Oct. 31: 5 a.m. - 9 p.m. daily Nov. 1 - April 30: 6 a.m. - 8 p.m. daily	This popular loop trail offers views of New River, Mesa, Piestewa Peak, Elephant Butte, Camelback Mountain and other local landmarks.
		<b>Overton</b> 37900 N. Cave Creek Pkwy. <i>Through park entrance to picnic area</i>	2.1 / 3.4	408 / 124	 Moderate	Hiking, Biking, Horseback Riding	Restrooms, water, picnic tables, horse staging area	Y	\$7 per motorized vehicle + \$3 per person	May 1 - Oct. 31: 5 a.m. - 9 p.m. daily Nov. 1 - April 30: 6 a.m. - 8 p.m. daily	You can hike this scenic trail out and back or use it to create longer or shorter routes with the Go John trail.
		<b>Quartz</b> 37900 N. Cave Creek Pkwy. <i>Through park entrance to north end of picnic area (Go John Trailhead)</i>	1.4 / 2.3	300 / 91	 Moderate	Hiking, Biking, Horseback Riding	Restrooms, water, picnic tables, horse staging area	Y	\$7 per motorized vehicle + \$3 per person	May 1 - Oct. 31: 5 a.m. - 9 p.m. daily Nov. 1 - April 30: 6 a.m. - 8 p.m. daily	A well-graded trail that slowly descends and follows the contours of the hills on the park's southern end.
		<b>Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area</b> 602.506.2930 ext. 8 maricopacountyarks.net	<b>Spur Cross Trail</b> 44000 N. Spur Cross Rd.	5.2 / 8.4	485 / 148	 Moderate	Hiking, Biking, Horseback Riding	Restrooms, picnic tables, horse staging area	Y	\$3 per person	May 1 - Oct. 31: 5 a.m. - 9 p.m. daily Nov. 1 - April 30: 6 a.m. - 8 p.m. daily
FOUNTAIN HILLS	<b>Fountain Hills</b> 480.816.5100 hikearizona.com experiencefountainhills.org	<b>Adero Canyon Ridgeline Trail</b> 14800 N. Eagle Ridge Dr.	3.7 / 5.9 Out and Back	675 / 205	 Moderate	Hiking	Restrooms, shaded picnic tables	Y	N	Sunrise to sunset daily	This trail starts from a higher vantage point along a ridgeline, so it offers beautiful panoramic views – including the famous Fountain Hills fountain – with minimal elevation gain.

# OTHER SCOTTSDALE-AREA TRAILS

CITY	TRAILHEAD / PARK NAME	TRAIL & ACCESS Nearest trailhead with parking	APPROXIMATE LENGTH (MI / KM) (one way unless otherwise noted)	ELEVATION CHANGE (FT / M)	DIFFICULTY RATING	USE	FACILITIES AT ACCESS TRAILHEAD (restrooms may be porta-potties or plumbed)	LEASHED DOGS ALLOWED	ENTRANCE FEE	PARK HOURS	TRAIL NOTES
FOUNTAIN HILLS	Fountain Hills (continued)	<b>Botanical Garden Trail</b> Fountain Hills Blvd. at Kingstree Blvd.	0.6 / 0.9	50 / 15.2	● Easy	Hiking	None	Y	N	Sunrise to sunset daily	Twenty-nine desert plants are identified along this meandering trail that provides interesting views of rock formations, desert flora, animal life and an abandoned P-Bar Ranch campsite next to the April 25, 1941 constructed dam wall.
		<b>Dixie Mine</b> Golden Eagle Rd. north of Palisades Blvd.	5.9 / 9.5	1,115 / 339.9	◆ Difficult	Hiking	Restrooms	Y	\$2 Self-Pay	Sunrise to sunset daily	This trail meanders over rolling hills in the scenic McDowell Mountain foothills.
		<b>Lake Overlook Trail</b> Trailhead is across Panorama Dr. from lake's eastern parking lot	1.5 / 2.4 Loop	150 / 45.7	■ Moderate	Hiking	Nearby Fountain Park includes restrooms, ramadas, water fountains, playground, splash pad, picnic tables	Y	N	Sunrise to sunset daily	Although this urban trail passes close to hillside homes, it offers spectacular views of the town's famous fountain, desert flora and fauna, and the Four Peaks mountains. The fountain goes off for 15 minutes on the hour from 9 a.m. – 9 p.m.
	<b>McDowell Mountain Regional Park</b> 602.506.2930 ext. 3 maricopacountyparks.net	<b>Lousley Hill</b> 16300 McDowell Mountain Park Dr.	1.2 / 2.0 Roundtrip	268 / 81.7	■ Moderate	Hiking	Park offers restrooms, nature center, gift shop, horse staging and water fountains.	Y	\$7 per motorized vehicle	May 1 - Oct. 31: 5 a.m. - 9 p.m. daily Nov. 1 - April 30: 6 a.m. - 8 p.m. daily	This scenic trail offers views of Bartlett Lake, Verde Valley, Superstition Mountains and Four Peaks.
		<b>North</b> 16300 McDowell Mountain Park Dr.	2.9 / 4.7 Loop	<170 / <51.8	● Easy	Hiking, Biking	Park offers restrooms, nature center, gift shop, horse staging and water fountains.	Y	\$7 per motorized vehicle	May 1 - Oct. 31: 5 a.m. - 9 p.m. daily Nov. 1 - April 30: 6 a.m. - 8 p.m. daily	A loop trail, the North Trail offers outstanding views of desert vegetation as well as distant views of the Four Peaks, Mazatzal and Superstition mountains.
		<b>Pemberton</b> 16300 McDowell Mountain Park Dr.	15.4 / 24.9 Loop	800 / 243.8	◆ Difficult	Hiking, Biking, Horseback Riding	Park offers restrooms, nature center, gift shop, horse staging and water fountains.	Y	\$7 per motorized vehicle	May 1 - Oct. 31: 5 a.m. - 9 p.m. daily Nov. 1 - April 30: 6 a.m. - 8 p.m. daily	The longest of the park's trails, the Pemberton passes through very dense desert vegetation. Lots of dips and climbs, gorgeous scenery and a long downhill stretch at the end make it a favorite ride for mountain bikers.

# OTHER SCOTTSDALE-AREA TRAILS

CITY	TRAILHEAD / PARK NAME	TRAIL & ACCESS Nearest trailhead with parking	APPROXIMATE LENGTH (MI / KM) (one way unless otherwise noted)	ELEVATION CHANGE (FT / M)	DIFFICULTY RATING	USE	FACILITIES AT ACCESS TRAILHEAD (restrooms may be porta-potties or plumbed)	LEASHED DOGS ALLOWED	ENTRANCE FEE	PARK HOURS	TRAIL NOTES
FOUNTAIN HILLS	McDowell Mountain Regional Park (continued)	<b>Scenic</b> 16300 McDowell Mountain Park Dr.	3.5 / 5.6	Minimal	 Moderate	Hiking, Biking, Horseback Riding	Park offers restrooms, nature center, gift shop, horse staging and water fountains.	Y	\$7 per motorized vehicle	May 1 - Oct. 31: 5 a.m. - 9 p.m. daily Nov. 1 - April 30: 6 a.m. - 8 p.m. daily	The trail ascends a low ridge with good views from the top. The valley portion of the trail follows several washes, which, when lush with vegetation, offer good opportunities to spot birds and other desert wildlife.
		<b>Wagner</b> 16300 McDowell Mountain Park Dr.	1.1 / 1.8	117 / 35.7	 Easy	Hiking, Biking	Park offers restrooms, nature center, gift shop, horse staging and water fountains.	Y	\$7 per motorized vehicle	May 1 - Oct. 31: 5 a.m. - 9 p.m. daily Nov. 1 - April 30: 6 a.m. - 8 p.m. daily	The low-rolling Wagner Trail offers you a choice between a "short loop" and "long loop," both of which run through easy desert terrain.
PHOENIX	Camelback Mountain 602.534.5867 phoenix.gov/parks/trails	<b>Echo Canyon Summit</b> 4925 E. McDonald Dr.	1.2 / 1.9	>1,400 / >426.7	 Extremely Difficult	Hiking	Restrooms, picnic table	N	N	Sunrise to sunset	Warning: Experienced hikers in good health ONLY. Do not attempt in temperatures above 90F/32C. Spectacular sandstone formations and Valley views reward hikers along this legendary trail. Trailhead parking is limited.
		<b>Cholla Summit</b> 6131 E. Cholla Ln.	1.5 / 2.4	1,420 / 432.8	 Extremely Difficult	Hiking	Restrooms, drinking water	N	N	Sunrise to sunset	Warning: Experienced hikers in good health ONLY. Do not attempt in temperatures above 90F/32C. This summit trail features panoramic views of the Valley and The Phoenician resort. Trailhead parking is limited.
		<b>Bobbie's Rock ▲</b> 4925 E. McDonald Dr.	0.2 / 0.3	200 / 61.0	 Easy	Hiking	Restrooms, picnic table	N	N	Sunrise to sunset	This short path off the Echo Canyon Trail winds its way along the head of the Camel. Parking is limited.
		<b>Desert Botanical Garden</b> 602.941.1225 dbg.org	<b>Desert Discovery Loop</b> 1201 N. Galvin Pkwy.	0.3 / 0.5	Minimal	 Easiest	Walking	Access to full Garden amenities including restrooms, snack bar, etc.	N	See website for current admission prices.	Regular Garden Hours (vary seasonally)

▲ Only accessible via other trails. Please refer to the map and account for the access trail mileage when planning your hike.

# OTHER SCOTTSDALE-AREA TRAILS

CITY	TRAILHEAD / PARK NAME	TRAIL & ACCESS Nearest trailhead with parking	APPROXIMATE LENGTH (MI / KM) (one way unless otherwise noted)	ELEVATION CHANGE (FT / M)	DIFFICULTY RATING	USE	FACILITIES AT ACCESS TRAILHEAD (restrooms may be porta-potties or plumbed)	LEASHED DOGS ALLOWED	ENTRANCE FEE	PARK HOURS	TRAIL NOTES	
PHOENIX	Desert Botanical Garden (continued)	Plants & People of the Sonoran Desert Loop 1201 N. Galvin Pkwy.	0.3 / 0.5	Minimal	○ Easiest	Walking	Access to full Garden amenities including restrooms, snack bar, etc.	N	See website for current admission prices.	Regular Garden Hours (vary seasonally)	Learn about plants that have been used for food, fiber, medicine and cultural purposes for 2,000 years. You'll also explore examples of Tonoho O'odham, Western Apache and Hispanic houses.	
		Sonoran Desert Nature Loop 1201 N. Galvin Pkwy.	0.25 / 0.4	Minimal	○ Easiest	Walking	Access to full Garden amenities including restrooms, snack bar, etc.	N	See website for current admission prices.	Regular Garden Hours (vary seasonally)	This trail focuses on the plants and animals of the Sonoran Desert. Experience majestic organ pipe cactus and find out if the cholla cactus really jumps.	
		Center for Desert Living Trail 1201 N. Galvin Pkwy.	0.1 / 0.16	Minimal	○ Easiest	Walking	Access to full Garden amenities including restrooms, snack bar, etc.	N	See website for current admission prices.	Regular Garden Hours (vary seasonally)	A desert gardener's delight – this trail showcases ideas and strategies that demonstrate efficient, useful, sustainable and harmonious ways to work with nature in the desert environment.	
		Desert Wildflower Loop 1201 N. Galvin Pkwy.	0.3 / 0.5	Minimal	○ Easiest	Walking	Access to full Garden amenities including restrooms, snack bar, etc.	N	See website for current admission prices.	Regular Garden Hours (vary seasonally)	This trail boasts interpretive exhibits illustrating the complex relationships between desert wildflowers and their pollinators (bees, butterflies, hummingbirds, moths and bats).	
		Papago Park 602.495.5458 phoenix.gov/parks	Hole in the Rock Papago Park Rd. east of Galvin Pkwy.	0.2 / 0.3	200 / 61	● Easy	Hiking	Restrooms, ramadas, picnic areas within Papago Park	Y	N	Sunrise to sunset daily	This short trail leads to a large, wind-eroded hole in the rock where visitors can look over the Phoenix metropolitan area.
			Nature Trail Papago Park Rd. east of Galvin Pkwy.	0.5 / 0.8 Loop	20 / 6.1	● Easy	Walking	Restrooms, ramadas, picnic areas within Papago Park	Y	N	Sunrise to sunset daily	This trail, which begins at the ranger office, features interpretive signs that describe Sonoran Desert plants and animals.



# OTHER SCOTTSDALE-AREA TRAILS

CITY	TRAILHEAD / PARK NAME	TRAIL & ACCESS Nearest trailhead with parking	APPROXIMATE LENGTH (MI / KM) (one way unless otherwise noted)	ELEVATION CHANGE (FT / M)	DIFFICULTY RATING	USE	FACILITIES AT ACCESS TRAILHEAD (restrooms may be porta-potties or plumbed)	LEASHED DOGS ALLOWED	ENTRANCE FEE	PARK HOURS	TRAIL NOTES
PHOENIX	Papago Park (continued)	<b>Ranger Office Loop</b> Papago Park Rd. east of Galvin Pkwy.	0.6 / 1.0	20 / 6.1	● Easy	Walking	Restrooms, ramadas, picnic areas within Papago Park	Y	N	Sunrise to sunset daily	A short, scenic trail that passes two of the park's lakes.
		<b>Big Butte Loop ▲</b> Papago Park Rd. west of Galvin Pkwy.; access from Double Butte Loop Trail	0.8 / 1.3 Loop	50 / 15.2	● Easy	Hiking, Biking	Restrooms, ramadas, picnic areas within Papago Park	Y	N	Sunrise to sunset daily	A spur off the Double Butte Loop that encircles the larger of the area's two buttes.
		<b>Double Butte Loop</b> Papago Park Rd. west of Galvin Pkwy.	2.3 / 3.7 Loop	50 / 15.2	● Easy	Hiking, Biking	Restrooms, ramadas, picnic areas within Papago Park	Y	N	Sunrise to sunset daily	The trail circles two of the Papago Buttes' namesake formations.
		<b>Elliot Ramada Loop</b> Papago Park Rd. west of Galvin Pkwy.	2.7 / 4.4 Loop	50 / 15.2	● Easy	Hiking, Biking	Restrooms, ramadas, picnic areas within Papago Park	Y	N	Sunrise to sunset daily	A partially paved/part dirt trail that is accessible to people using wheelchairs. The trail offers spectacular views of the downtown Phoenix corridor.
		<b>Little Butte Loop ▲</b> Papago Park Rd. west of Galvin Pkwy.; access from Double Butte Loop Trail	0.5 / 0.8 Loop	50 / 15.2	● Easy	Hiking, Biking	Restrooms, ramadas, picnic areas within Papago Park	Y	N	Sunrise to sunset daily	From the Double Butte Loop, this spur trail makes a close circle around the smallest of the buttes in the western portion of the park.
		<b>Papago Park 5K Fitness Trail</b> Papago Park Rd. west of Galvin Pkwy.	3.1 / 5.0	70 / 21.3	● Easy	Hiking, Biking	Restrooms, ramadas, picnic areas within Papago Park	Y	N	Sunrise to sunset daily	This trail is a multi-use crushed granite trail that features multiple outdoor exercise stations, giving users the opportunity to stretch or work different muscle groups.

▲ Only accessible via other trails. Please refer to the map and account for the access trail mileage when planning your hike.



Life is like riding a bicycle, to stay balanced you must keep moving. ~ Albert Einstein



## URBAN BIKING

Looking for a cycling experience that's more urban than off-road? There are plenty of ways to have fun on two wheels throughout the city – here are some of our favorites:

**Explore the Indian Bend Wash Greenbelt:** The Indian Bend Wash Greenbelt is an oasis of parks, lakes, golf courses and paved, shared-use trails that stretches 11 miles through the heart of the city. Riders can access the greenbelt at almost any point, and its 24 grade-separated crossings allow users to easily avoid major cross traffic. This world-renowned flood control project is one of the top urban “green spaces” in the state.

**Take the Self-Guided Mountain Vista Bike Tour:** The Mountain Vista Route is a 2.3-mile loop that begins and ends by the banyan tree at Main Street and Brown Avenue in Old Town. The route includes two stops where mountain views are framed within interpretive art panels that tell the story of the peaks on display.

**Rent an Electric Bike:** Old Town's Pedego Scottsdale rents top-of-the-line electric bikes that are easy and fun to ride. Do as much (or as little) pedaling as you'd like while you explore the area's galleries, restaurants and shops. For an urban ride on the edges of the Sonoran Desert, head to Pedego McDowell Mountain. They can recommend routes within the DC Ranch and McDowell Mountain Ranch communities that give you easy access to restaurants and amenities while serving up spectacular Sonoran Desert views. [pedegoscottsdale.com](http://pedegoscottsdale.com)

**Ride with REI Co-op Experiences:** In addition to offering bike rentals for DIY tours, REI's Scottsdale Adventure Center offers 1/2-day guided road bike tours tailored to each guest. Each tour is led by an experienced professional guide who knows the city's best cycling routes. [destinations.rei.com](http://destinations.rei.com)



## MOUNTAIN BIKING

The undulating mountain foothills of Scottsdale's Sonoran Desert are ideal for mountain biking. If you're a beginner, Scottsdale's adventure outfitters provide all-inclusive, guided experiences that include transportation, how-to and safety briefings, and interpretive information about the desert's geology, flora and fauna. For those who don't want to do all the pedaling, there's even a battery-assisted bike tour option (note: not allowed in the McDowell Sonoran Preserve). If you prefer to hit the tracks on your own, select outfitters will deliver rental bikes, helmets and accessories right to your resort.

🕒 **TOUR TIME:** Guided tours from 4 hours to a full day are available. Visit [ExperienceScottsdale.com](http://ExperienceScottsdale.com) for a list of local adventure outfitters.



## CYCLING TIPS

- ▶ For a desert riding experience, Scottsdale's McDowell Sonoran Preserve offers more than 230 miles of gorgeous shared-use trails. *Note: Motorized and battery-assisted bikes are not allowed in the Preserve.*
- ▶ McDowell Mountain Regional Park also offers miles of desert biking trails.
- ▶ Dress in layers based on the forecasted temperature and always wear sunscreen.
- ▶ Always wear a helmet.
- ▶ Carry snacks and more water than you think you'll need.

# FIVE GREAT RIDES IN SCOTTSDALE'S McDowell Sonoran Preserve

*If asked for a list of small- to mid-sized cities in the American West with incredible mountain biking trails, you might answer Moab, Boulder, or Sedona. It's time to add Scottsdale to the shortlist. Check out this selection of some of the best mountain bike routes in Scottsdale's McDowell Sonoran Preserve.*

BY ANNEMARIE KRUSE

Windgate Pass



## *Number One*

### **CORRAL LOOP AT BROWN'S RANCH** *Beginner, 6 miles*

From the Brown's Ranch trailhead, head north along Brown's Ranch Road, a historic wagon trail built by EO Brown to access the ranch house he built on the property in 1916. Ride this route as a lollipop loop heading clockwise along Corral trail. As you wind along, you'll notice the vegetation changes to an oasis of lush grasses and leafy trees as you round a small peak of volcanic rock. Enjoy the mellow gradients of climbs and descents along this easy-to-navigate, decomposed granite trail until it brings you back to Brown's Ranch Road.

## *Number Two (left)*

### **DESERT PARK TRAIL TO GATEWAY LOOP** *Advanced, 5+ miles*

The Gateway Trailhead at the base of the McDowell Mountains offers the right kind of challenge for every advanced mountain biker. This loop shows off the best of the McDowell's advanced terrain over an easy distance, mixing rocky climbs with technical descents. Pace yourself as you climb Desert Park trail to reach Windgate Pass trail. Enjoy ascending chunky washes and punchy climbs, then take a breather at the intersection to appreciate the mountain views before heading down the mountain until you reach the Gateway Loop. Head left on the Gateway loop, low gears at the ready, and climb up to the saddle for your final exhilarating descent back to the trailhead through a series of rocky switchbacks.

*Number Three (right)*

**SOUTH AND NORTH DIABLO TRAILS AT BROWN'S RANCH** *Advanced, 5+ miles*

These trails in the northern section of Scottsdale's McDowell Sonoran Preserve offer a totally different experience for riding Scottsdale's granite boulders. You can enter at the south end of South Diablo trail to ride the two trails consecutively or use the access point where South Diablo ends and North Diablo begins to make your route shorter. Choose from "difficult" and "more difficult" routes and take the time to session every line – including slickrock-like drops and options to ride up, down, over, and between the giant boulders. There are many options to ride to the start and end of the Diablo trails, so you can make your ride as long as you like.



*Number Four*

**TALIESIN & QUARTZ TRAIL LOOP**

*Intermediate, 8 miles*

Park at the WestWorld Trailhead and warm up with an easy pedal along a paved trail and dirt access road before beginning a steady climb along Taliesin trail. You'll pass under a bridge and hit the first rocky features of the trail. Keep pedaling for a moderate ascent to an intersection with Quartz trail. Look down and you can pick out Scottsdale's famous landmarks, including Camelback Mountain, perfectly silhouetted in the distance. From here, advanced riders can opt to make the technical climb to Taliesin Overlook, (+1 mile), or turn left at the main intersection to descend the Quartz trail, winding through a lush desert wash. Small rock gardens and perfectly banked turns offer the best combination of flow and challenge.

*Number Five*

**GRANITE MOUNTAIN FROM 136TH STREET TRAIL** *Beginner, 6 miles*

Offering incredible scenic views to the east of Scottsdale, the route around Granite Mountain is best enjoyed by bike. Begin at the 136th Street trailhead and pedal out Bootlegger trail to kick-off a counterclockwise loop on Granite Mountain trail. It's easy to appreciate the Dr. Seuss-like geology of Granite Mountain when navigating between oddly shaped, house-sized boulders punctuated by giant saguaros and strange, spindly ocotillo plants. The smooth trail surface allows your attention to be drawn to the panoramic views of the Mazatzal Mountains, the Superstition Wilderness, and Arizona's iconic Four Peaks on the eastern horizon. Work on your cornering skills as you pedal up around the back of the mountain to be rewarded by a long descent that takes you nearly back to Bootlegger.



## New On the Scene

*by Scott Hamilton*

**SCORPION LOOP** *Technical, 7.5 miles*

For mountain bike riders looking for an easily accessible technical ride, try the Scorpion Loop! This route is roughly 7.5 miles long and is accessible from the McDowell Sonoran Preserve's recently opened Pima Dynamite Trailhead. Along this route you'll experience the thrilling combination of flowy, cross-country trail riding and technical stretches of exposed granite bedrock for which the northern region of the Preserve is so well known. There are plenty of challenging alternate lines as you pass through the Sidewinder area, as well as along various sections of the Scorpion, Dare A Sarah and Snake Eyes Trails. Be sure to take the marked side route and enjoy the breathtaking views from the Scorpion Point overlook.



Study nature, love nature, stay close to nature.  
It will never fail you. ~ *Frank Lloyd Wright*

# USING AN ADVENTURE OUTFITTER

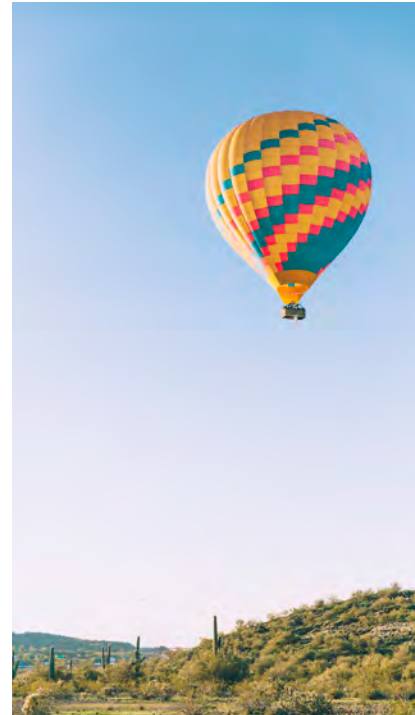
Working with an adventure outfitter is a great way to take the guesswork out of exploring a new area or trying a new sport. In addition to providing you with interesting information about the desert's history, geology and ecosystem, they know of hidden treasures (like secret caves and petrogllyph sites) that you might not find on your own.



- ▶ Confirm what gear is included in the tour cost and what you are responsible for providing. Most outfitters offer rental equipment at an additional cost.
- ▶ Find out if your outfitter provides transportation from your hotel or if you need to meet them at a rendezvous point.
- ▶ Ask if the outfitter provides water and snacks, or if you'll need to bring your own.
- ▶ Wear comfortable clothing that is weather-appropriate and allows freedom of movement.
- ▶ Tips are customary and are always appreciated on guided tours, so you may want to have some cash on hand.



# CHOOSE YOUR ADVENTURE STYLE



## LOW-KEY ADVENTURE

- ▶ Wander along the themed trails at the Desert Botanical Garden.
- ▶ Explore Old Town on a segway tour.
- ▶ Enjoy a calm-water float on the Lower Salt River.
- ▶ View the desert from above on a guided helicopter tour.
- ▶ Saddle-up for a two-hour horseback ride.
- ▶ Glide over the desert in a hot air balloon.



## HIGH ADVENTURE

- ▶ Traverse rugged trails and rocky streambeds behind the wheel of a Tomcar or C2 vehicle.
- ▶ Conquer class III and IV rapids on the Upper Salt River (seasonal).
- ▶ Don your night-vision goggles for an after-dark Jeep or Hummer tour.
- ▶ Try your hand at stand-up paddleboarding on the Lower Salt River.
- ▶ Go target shooting with NRA-certified instructors.



## CRUISE

Climb aboard an open-air Jeep or heavy-duty Hummer for a guided off-road tour of the Sonoran Desert. There are even you-drive options in Tomcars, C2 vehicles and ATV/UTVs. No matter which tour you choose, expert interpretive guides provide insight into the desert's delicate ecosystem, as well as the area's colorful history. Options include ecotours, night-vision tours, cultural history excursions and combination adventures that add in activities like river rafting, hot air ballooning, horseback riding, or target shooting.

🕒 **TOUR TIME:** Guided tours range from 4 hours to full day. Visit [ExperienceScottsdale.com](https://www.experiencescottsdale.com) for a list of local adventure outfitters.



### OFF-ROAD TOUR TIPS

- ▶ Wear sturdy closed-toe shoes since you may leave the vehicle to explore on foot.
- ▶ Off-road tours travel on uneven terrain, so be prepared for a bumpy and exciting ride.
- ▶ Classic Jeeps, some Hummers, and Tomcars/C2 vehicles and ATV/UTVs are open-air, while other Jeeps and Hummers are climate-controlled; inquire when you make your reservations.
- ▶ Many off-road tour companies provide resort pick-up and drop-off. Those that don't will meet you at an easily accessible location to begin your adventure.
- ▶ Carry a small day pack for keys, money, ID and other necessities.
- ▶ Leave good jewelry, purses and other valuables secured at your hotel.



Photo by: Mark Hartman

## RIDE

Saddle up and get a taste of the Old West on a horseback riding excursion. You'll experience the beauty of Sonoran Desert plants and cacti, see curious critters and, on some rides, cross pristine desert streams. Whether you're a first-time rider or have logged some serious saddle time, Scottsdale's experienced outfitters will match you with a horse that complements your abilities and will be the perfect companion for your cowboy-style adventure. Some stables also provide cookouts, hay wagon rides and other activities.

🕒 **TOUR TIME:** Guided tours from 2 hours to a full day are available. Visit [ExperienceScottsdale.com](https://www.experiencescottsdale.com) for a list of local adventure outfitters.



### HORSEBACK RIDING TIPS

- ▶ Wear jeans or long pants and closed-toe shoes to protect you from the sun and brushes with prickly desert plants.
- ▶ Carry a small day pack for keys, money, ID and other necessities.
- ▶ Leave good jewelry, purses and other valuables secured at your hotel.
- ▶ Dress in layers depending on the weather forecast.
- ▶ Wear a hat and sunglasses with a securing strap.
- ▶ A bandana will help protect you from dust.





## CLIMB

Whether you're new to the sport or are a certified rock rat, you'll find your perfect climb in the Sonoran Desert. Scottsdale's McDowell Sonoran Preserve alone is home to 36 designated climbing areas with a wide range of difficulty ratings on formations like Tom's Thumb, Sven Slab and Granite Ballroom. Beginners will love the personalized instruction and encouragement from Scottsdale's experienced climbing guides.

🕒 **TOUR TIME:** Guided climbs range from 4 hours to a full day. Visit [ExperienceScottsdale.com](http://ExperienceScottsdale.com) for a list of local adventure outfitters.



### CLIMBING TIPS

#### If you're climbing on your own:

- ▶ Research the route you're planning to take so that you know what to expect.
- ▶ Climb with a buddy if at all possible.
- ▶ Tell someone where you're going and when you expect to be back.
- ▶ Carry snacks and more water than you think you'll need.
- ▶ Make sure your cell phone is charged and carry it with you at all times.

#### If you're climbing with an outfitter:

- ▶ Confirm what gear is provided in the tour cost and what you are responsible for providing. Most outfitters offer rental equipment at an additional cost.
- ▶ Ask if the outfitter is providing water and snacks or if you are responsible for bringing your own.



## FLOAT

The Scottsdale area is home to eight scenic lakes and rivers that are perfect for getting your feet wet on a river rafting, tubing or kayaking adventure. The calm waters of the Lower Salt River are ideal for wildlife watching from a raft, kayak or inner tube, while the Upper Salt's class III and IV rapids (seasonal) provide plenty of whitewater thrills and chills. On local lakes, choose from waterskiing, fishing, jet skiing, kayaking, wake boarding, canoeing, SUPing and touring by paddle boat.

🕒 **TOUR TIME:** Guided tours range from 4 hours to full day. Visit [ExperienceScottsdale.com](http://ExperienceScottsdale.com) for a list of local adventure outfitters.



### WATER ADVENTURE TIPS

- ▶ A swimsuit and/or shorts are ideal for most water adventures.
- ▶ You may want a t-shirt to wear over your swimsuit to help protect you from the sun.
- ▶ Bring a change of clothes and a towel for after your trip.
- ▶ Wear water sandals that secure with straps (not flip flops) as lake and stream bottoms can be rocky.
- ▶ Waterproof sunscreen and a waterproof camera are musts.
- ▶ A valid Arizona fishing license is required for anglers 14 years or older fishing any public accessible water in Arizona. Licenses may be purchased through Arizona Game and Fish or at local sporting stores.



## SOAR

For the most expansive scenic views of the Sonoran Desert, take to the skies! Hot-air balloon flights offer a serene experience as you float quietly over rolling desert terrain, at times low enough to see desert creatures scurrying about below. Helicopter and fixed-wing tours to popular sites like the Grand Canyon, Sedona and Monument Valley are also great ways to enjoy Arizona from the air.

🕒 **TOUR TIME:** Guided tours from ½ day to full day are available. Visit [ExperienceScottsdale.com](http://ExperienceScottsdale.com) for a list of local adventure outfitters.



## AERIAL ADVENTURE TIPS

- ▶ Get ready for an early morning – most flights take place at sunrise because that’s when wind and thermal conditions are calmest.
- ▶ Dress in layers – temperatures at altitude will be cooler than on the ground.
- ▶ Wear sturdy, closed-toe shoes since balloon take-offs and landings will be in the desert.
- ▶ A hat is recommended for hot air balloon flights since the radiant heat from the burners can be warm on your head.
- ▶ Please note that most balloon outfitters preclude pregnant women from flying.



One way to get the most out of life is to look upon it as an adventure. ~ *William Feather*



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