



nileGUIDE

ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



neepster

Top 10 Hikes In Phoenix

Mesa, Phoenix, 1 Day

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Guide Description



AUTHOR NOTE: Phoenix is many things to many people: a dramatic desert ripe for exploration, a hot spot for culture, a golfer's paradise or an award-winning resort destination. From the moment visitors approach the Sonoran Desert by air, they are witness to the diversity of the landscape. Hikers in Greater Phoenix have come to the same conclusion as coyotes, roadrunners and jackrabbits: The Sonoran Desert is a great place to play. Three major mountains offer opportunities for many outdoor pursuits. Hiking on the area's numerous mountain trails provides views of the variety of flora and fauna at varying elevations.

contact:

tel: +1 520 689 2723 / +1 520 689 2811

fax: +1 520 689 5858

<http://arboretum.ag.arizona.edu/>

location:

37615 US Highway 60
Superior AZ 85273

hours:

8a-5p daily

1 Boyce Thompson Arboretum

DESCRIPTION: There are more than 1,500 different desert plants on display here. In 1927, William Boyce Thompson started this arboretum 101 miles north of Tucson in an effort to preserve desert plants and study their potential as food and medical resources. Greenhouses contain cacti and other succulents while giving shelter to many species of birds. There is a visitor's center, gift shop and miles of trails to explore. Free for children four and under. © wcities.com

contact:

tel: 480-610-3300

location:

26 N. MacDonald, Room 120
Mesa AZ 85211-5800

2 Four Peaks Wilderness Area

DESCRIPTION: Four Peaks Wilderness was established in 1984, and contains approximately 60,740 acres with a major mountain rising up in its center from the desert foothills. The Four Peaks themselves are visible for many miles, and are one of the most widely recognized landmarks in central Arizona. The rapid change in elevation produces interesting and unique plant and animal combinations. Elevations range from 1,900 feet near Apache Lake to 7,600 feet on Brown's Peak. A large part of the wilderness was burned over by a human caused fire which was started on April 27, 1996. It will take decades for the pine-covered mountains to recover. Hiking in this extreme area is a plus with the massive change in elevation that is unusual in most of Arizona over such a short area. The ruggedness is perfect for getting back in touch with nature or just spending some quiet time with the native animals populations. Situated just north of Canyon and Apache lakes, the wilderness area is best accessed via Hwy. 87 and taking Forest Road 143 to the edge of the wilderness area.

contact:

tel: (623) 580-5500

www.blm.gov/az/rec/bighorn.htm

location:

Bureau of Land Management
Phoenix AZ 85027-2099

3 Big Horn Mountains Wilderness

DESCRIPTION: This 21,000-acre wilderness lies 60 miles west of Phoenix in western Maricopa County, and offers many recreation opportunities such as hiking, backpacking, rock climbing, photography and nature study. Rugged ridges challenge expert climbers, while side canyons and plains offer easier hiking. Many desert species are found here, such as the desert bighorn sheep, Gila monster, kit fox and desert tortoise. Golden eagles, prairie falcons, barn owls and great horned owls nest in the cliffs. Access to the wilderness can be gained by exiting Interstate 10 at the Tonopah or Salome Road exits. Unmaintained dirt roads extend to the wilderness area's eastern, northern and western boundaries. Because road conditions vary and some routes are primitive, high-clearance and four-wheel-drive vehicles are recommended.



AZ desert wildflowers

contact:

tel: (623) 580-5500
www.blm.gov/az/rec/smarcop
a.htm

location:

Bureau of Land Management
Phoenix AZ 85027-2099

4 South Maricopa Mountains Wilderness

DESCRIPTION: This area's large size, varied landforms, and wildness provide outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. Hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, camping, wildlife observation and photography are some activities both experienced and family-oriented outdoor enthusiasts can enjoy. Desert bighorn sheep, desert tortoise, coyotes, bobcat, fox, deer, Gambel's quail and various raptors also inhabit the wilderness. Saguaro, cholla, and ocotillo, paloverde and mesquite are among the many plant species. The 60,100-acre South Maricopa Mountains Wilderness is located in southwestern Maricopa County, 16 miles east of Gila Bend and 30 miles southwest of Phoenix, Arizona. This wilderness area is a two-hour drive from metropolitan Phoenix, but access is difficult. Because road conditions vary, high-clearance and four wheel-drive vehicles are recommended. Interstate Highway 8 parallels the south boundary of the wilderness, but offers no access to the wilderness. The north boundary can be accessed from primitive dirt roads south of Maricopa Road, but active railroad tracks and rights-of-way restrict public crossings. No roads lead to the western and eastern boundaries of the wilderness.

contact:

tel: (623) 580-5500
www.blm.gov/az/rec/woolsey
.htm

location:

Bureau of Land Management
Phoenix AZ 85027-2099

5 Woolsey Peak Wilderness

DESCRIPTION: The diversity, ruggedness, and size of the wilderness offer excellent opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. Desert bighorn sheep, and mule deer, bobcats, cougars, hawks and owls and various raptors frequent the region. Backpacking trips, horseback riding, day hiking, wildlife observation, photography and sightseeing are common.. This 64,000-acre wilderness is in southwest Maricopa County, 11 miles northwest of Gila Bend and 32 miles southwest of Phoenix, Arizona. This wilderness is accessible via old U.S. Highway 80 and Enterprise Road south of Arlington, via various jeep trails extending south from the Aqua Caliente Road, and via Interstate 8 and the Painted Rocks Dam Road west of Gila Bend. High-clearance vehicles are needed and four-wheel-drive vehicles are recommended, except for portions of the Enterprise Road south of Gillespie Dam.

contact:

tel: 406-243-6933
www.blm.gov/az/rec/doscabe
z.htm

location:

Bureau of Land Management
Phoenix AZ 85004

6 Dos Cabezas Mountains Wilderness

DESCRIPTION: Several developed and natural springs in the wilderness provide water for the abundant wildlife. White-tailed and mule deer, mountain lions, golden eagles, bald eagles and many other animals inhabit the Dos Cabezas Mountains. The beautiful and unusual collared lizard may be found in the upper portions of Buckeye Canyon. The peregrine falcon, a state and federally listed endangered species, migrates through the area. The majority of the wilderness contains mountain shrub, desert shrub and riparian vegetation. The 11,700-acre Dos Cabezas Mountains Wilderness lies 20 miles east of Willcox and seven miles south of Bowie, Arizona in Cochise County. From Bowie travel south along Apache Pass Road then west on the dirt road leading to Happy Camp Canyon.

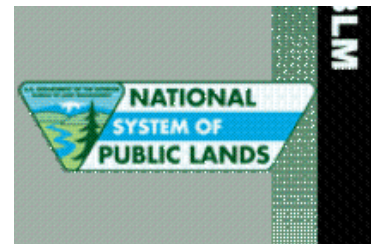


photo courtesy of Dos Cabezas Mountains Wilderness

contact:

tel: (623) 580-5500
www.blm.gov/az/rec/hellscyn
.htm

location:

7 Hells Canyon Wilderness

DESCRIPTION: Most of the wilderness is covered by Sonoran desert shrub vegetation saguaro, paloverde, barrel cactus, ocotillo, and desert grasses. Primitive camping spots are abundant, and plants, animals, and geology provide photographic and viewing opportunities. Several mountains

Bureau of Land Management
Phoenix AZ 85027-2099

with cliffs offer climbing, and the canyons offer opportunities for hiking and sightseeing. The 9,900-acre Hells Canyon Wilderness lies 25 miles northwest of Phoenix, Arizona in Maricopa and Yavapai counties.

contact:

tel: (623) 580-5500
www.blm.gov/az/rec/hrquhala.htm

location:

Bureau of Land Management
Phoenix AZ 85027-2099

8

Harquahala Mountains Wilderness

DESCRIPTION: Rugged topography and the area's sheltered Brown's Canyon interior drainage system furnish the solitude and secluded experience treasured by many wilderness visitors. Hikers, backpackers, wildlife observers and photographers will find many recreation opportunities here. High-clearance and four-wheel-drive vehicles are needed to travel to the boundary of the wilderness. Paved State Route 60 provides access to jeep trails extending to the wilderness area's north boundary. The paved Eagle Eye Road provides access to numerous jeep trails along the area's southern side. Harquahala Peak can be reached by a four-wheel drive road, but erosion and steep grades will be encountered. Only experienced four-wheel drivers should attempt this road. The 22,880-acre Harquahala Mountains Wilderness lies in Maricopa and La Paz counties, 80 miles northwest of Phoenix, Arizona.

contact:

tel: (623) 580-5500
www.blm.gov/az/rec/hssyampa.htm

location:

Bureau of Land Management
Phoenix AZ 85027-2099

9

Hassayampa River Canyon Wilderness

DESCRIPTION: Recreation opportunities such as extended horseback riding and backpacking trips, sightseeing and photography are enhanced by the diverse topography, scenic character, and size, as well as the botanical, wildlife, and cultural values of the area. The 11,840-acre Hassayampa River Canyon Wilderness is about eight miles northeast of Wickenburg and 48 miles northwest of Phoenix, Arizona in Yavapai County. From Phoenix, travel west to Wickenburg via Highway 60 or 74. From Wickenburg, take the Constellation Road north toward the Williams Ranch. Access to the wilderness area is across private land, so please ask permission first. High-clearance or four-wheel-drive vehicles are recommended for access to the wilderness boundary.

Phoenix Snapshot

Local Info

Love it or hate it, this sprawling desert metropolis has become one of the biggest, most modern cities in the American West. Rising from the ashes of the Hohokam civilization, Phoenix transitioned from dusty agricultural farm town to gleaming city of nearly two million residents (the population doubles if you include the suburbs) in the blink of an eye. Although the city keeps a low profile and is more famous for its suburban sprawl than tourist attractions, the city will reward your persistence if you take the time to seek out its hidden treasures.

Downtown Phoenix

Downtown Phoenix is still not what one would hope for in a city of this size, but development has been growing steadily over the years and there's plenty to see and do. The recent inauguration of the Arizona State University Downtown Campus has brought some much-needed new blood to downtown, with new student-centered businesses and living facilities adding a whole new energy to the area. Perhaps the biggest boon to downtown Phoenix in years is the new light rail system that connects downtown to points north and east, and makes it easier than ever to get around downtown.

Downtown becomes a frenzy of big-city pedestrian activity and traffic jams during major events. The Phoenix Suns play at the U.S. Airways Center, and the Arizona Diamondbacks are just a stone's throw away at Chase Field--expect big traffic delays during a game day. The Phoenix Civic Center drives traffic into the area with an ongoing schedule of national conferences and events, and visitors have plenty of choices in terms of museums and attractions. The Arizona Science Center is a favorite with kids and adults alike, while the Phoenix Art Museum regularly brings world-class exhibits to the Valley of the Sun. Other top museum destinations include the world-famous Heard Museum, home to one of the largest collections of Native American artwork, pottery, textiles, and jewelry, and the popular Phoenix Children's Museum, featuring hands-on exhibitions and activities for children of all ages.

The Downtown Phoenix Business Improvement District (formerly known as Copper Square) is the sleek 90-square

block nucleus of shops, eateries, and businesses. Here you can observe office workers criss-crossing the busy streets at lunchtime, with a slew of sandwich shops and cafes feeding the downtown masses with impressive speed. After business hours, however, the business district can start to look like a ghost town.

West Phoenix

The Westside, which makes up a large part of the Valley of the Sun, is a gathering of suburban neighborhoods largely developed throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Generally speaking, the homes and communities get newer the further west you drive, although there are pockets of historic points of interest. For vintage charm, check out Historic Downtown Glendale, touted as "Arizona's Antique Capital." Indeed, there's much antique hunting to be done at the shops of Caitlin Court.

Concertgoers should familiarize themselves with Cricket Pavilion, home to annual music festivals and major touring acts. Desert Sky Mall caters to West Valley's Latino population, while Arrowhead Towne Center in Peoria is a mecca for suburban shoppers. The Westside got a big shot in the arm with the development of the recent Westgate City Center, billed as "Times Square in the Desert," featuring chic boutiques, eateries, and multiplex movie theater. Westgate is home to the Phoenix Coyotes, who play at Jobbing.com arena, and just a stone's throw away is the huge University of Phoenix Stadium--lovingly nicknamed the Spaceship or Toaster by the locals--where NFL action looms large every Sunday in the fall with the Arizona Cardinals.

South Phoenix

This is one of the oldest parts of Phoenix and home to South Mountain Park, one of the largest municipal parks in the United States. Dobbins Lookout is located at 2330, the highest point in the park, and is easily accessible by car. Make sure to stop by for amazing panoramic views of the city. Horse rentals and trail hiking make this a perfect spot to spend the day.

South Phoenix is a culturally diverse area with thriving Latino and African-American communities. For comfort food ecstasy, South Phoenix is home to perennial favorites like Carolina's Mexican Food and

traditional soul food at Lo-Lo's Chicken and Waffles and Mrs. White's Golden Rule Cafe.

Northwest

A mix of old and new, the Northwest Valley is comprised of communities like Peoria, Glendale, Sun City, Sun City West, Youngtown, and Surprise. Sun City and Sun City West are large active living retirement communities. Some of the best hiking in the Valley of the Sun can be found at White Tank Mountain Regional Park, and animal lovers can get an eyeful at the Wildlife World Zoo and Aquarium.

East Side

Some of the oldest and most exclusive communities in the Phoenix area are located on the Eastside. The Valley's rich and famous find their sanctuary among the red rocks and hills of Paradise Valley, while Scottsdale remains a major draw for its high-end boutiques, art galleries, and fabulous resorts. For exclusive shopping, dining, and weekly outdoor markets, the Borgata of Scottsdale brings a unique Mediterranean-in-the-Desert flavor to North Scottsdale.

Tempe, located south of Scottsdale, brings college town amenities and energy to the Valley of the Sun. Arizona State University, one of the biggest universities in the country, is the beating heart of Tempe. Mill Avenue, with its assortment of hamburger joints, cafes, boutiques, and bars, is the major artery and gathering point, home to the Tempe Festival of the Arts and major Fourth of July Festivities. Tempe Beach Park, built around the wide, artificial Tempe Towne Lake, offers temporary respite from the desert with boat rides, walking trails, and snack kiosks selling premium gelato.

Further east are the cities of Mesa, Chandler, and Gilbert. Mesa, once a busy agricultural community, is now a major city boasting the Mesa Arts Center complex and a busy downtown area. Chandler too has experienced a renaissance, with downtown receiving a major face-lift, and a full performing arts schedule showing at the Chandler Center for the Arts.

Continuing east we find Mesa, Chandler and Gilbert. Chandler remained largely an agricultural community until a growth spurt, which began in the 1970s. Much of this area houses young families and

Phoenix Snapshot continued

middle-class professionals in stucco and tile developments. Local shopping is enjoyable at the Superstition Springs Center Mall at

the northwest corner of Highway 60 and Power Road.

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