Maintaining A Resilient Ecosystem at Saguaro National Park

What might Saguaro National Park look like to future generations of visitors? If you were alive in 1000 years, do you think that you would recognize this place? The Organic Act of 1916, which established the National Park Service, states that the purpose of the National Park Service is “to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.” In 1916, it may have seemed possible to keep a designated ecosystem unimpaired indefinitely.

However, nearly a hundred years later, scientists and land managers are beginning to understand the near impossibility of this task in light of all of the external pressures on national parks, and the ecosystems they preserve. And while the Organic Act continues to serve as the guiding principle for the National Park Service, even the current director Jon Jarvis concedes “it is time for the agency, aided by scientists and public input, to address the current challenges to its fundamental tenet that the parks must preserve all their resources “unimpaired” forever for the enjoyment of all (2010 in Uncertain Path by William C. Tweed).”

Ecosystems are always changing. These fluctuations may be natural or unnatural, the result of everything from seasonal changes, the impact of pollution, or the impacts of climate change. So rather than strive for the impossible and impractical goal of maintaining ecosystems in exactly the same condition forever, we can start to focus on a realistic goal of building resilience in the ecosystems protected in National Parks.

What is a resilient ecosystem? What can we do to make the Sonoran Desert ecosystem protected in Saguaro National Park more resilient? No ecosystem is isolated from outside influences. A resilient ecosystem can absorb these impacts or bounce back from any damages and still remain essentially ecologically the same. At Saguaro National Park climate change and invasive species are two of the greatest forces that could potentially change the entire ecosystem into something other than the Sonoran Desert environment we know and love. So what can we do to help foster resilience in Saguaro National Park and in other natural places we care about?

As one of the 397 units of the National Park System, this park protects and manages 91,440 acres of cherished natural and cultural resources, flanking both the east and west sides of the bustling urban area of Tucson. Saguaro National Park was established in 1933 with the specific purpose of protecting and preserving one of the great icons of the American West: the saguaro cactus. In addition to the saguaro, the park boasts a great diversity of biotic communities, cultural features, scientific, scenic and wilderness areas.

For Saguaro National Park to be relevant 100 years from now, we need your help. The Director of the National Park Service (NPS) Jon Jarvis recently announced the NPS Call to Action: a united vision to help prepare for our centennial in 2016 and into our second century. One of the key themes and a top priority for Saguaro is to ensure the park remains relevant to the community and our visitors, so that people care about this special place for generations to come.

National Parks help produce healthy minds and bodies, and connect us to communities through trails and other means. How should Saguaro evolve to be accessible, increase our outreach to youth and diverse populations, nurture a stronger relationship with Tucson, and adapt to the changing needs of our visitors and communities?

What is it that brings YOU to Saguaro? The park offers recreation, learning, and spiritual renewal, in close proximity to a city of over one million Tucson residents. Enjoy your visit, and thank you for your stewardship of Saguaro National Park!

Darla Sidles
Superintendent

Welcome to Saguaro National Park!
Welcome to Saguaro National Park

Saguaro National Park preserves and protects thousands of acres of Sonoran Desert wilderness, offering recreation, learning, and spiritual renewal amid the impacts of an exploding urban center.

Superintendent
Darla Stiles

Headquarters Address (East)
Saguaro National Park
3693 South Old Spanish Trail
Tucson, AZ 85730

Park Information
(520) 733-5100
Fax
(520) 733-5183
E-mail
SAGU_Information@nps.gov
Website
www.nps.gov/sagu

The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

Find us on Facebook as SaguaroNationalPark

Plan Your Visit

In Case of an Emergency, call 911 or contact a ranger.
Cell phones have intermittent coverage and are not dependable in many park locations. To talk to a ranger, call the east district visitor center at (520) 733-5153 or the west district visitor center at (520) 733-5158.

Dates and Hours of Operation
Both districts of the park are open daily from sunrise to sunset. Visitor centers are open 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily, year-round, except December 25.

Entrance Fees
Private vehicles and motorcycles.................$10.00 Valid for 7 days
Bicyclists and pedestrians........................$5.00 Valid for 7 days
Saguaro Annual Pass..............................$25.00 Valid for one year
Interagency Pass.........................$80.00 Valid for one year
Interagency Senior Pass (U.S. citizen, 62 or older)........$10.00 Valid for lifetime
Interagency Access Pass (U.S. citizen, disabled).........Free Valid for lifetime

Travel Between East and West Districts

Directions
To the East District
From I-10 coming from New Mexico, take Houghton Road (exit 275) north. 8 miles to Escalante Road. Turn right (east) 2 miles to Old Spanish Trail. Turn left (north) and follow the signs .5 miles to the park entrance at 3693 S. Old Spanish Trail.

From I-10 coming from Phoenix or downtown Tucson, take Speedway Boulevard (exit 257) west 1.4 miles through the city to Freeman Road. Turn right (south) 3.6 miles to Old Spanish Trail. Turn left (east) following the signs .25 miles to the park entrance.

To the West District
From I-10 coming from Phoenix, take Ava Valley Road (exit 242) west 5 miles to Sandario Road (at the Marana Airport). Turn left (south) 6 miles to Kinney Road. Turn left (east) 2 miles to the visitor center at 2700 N. Kinney Road.

From I-10 coming from New Mexico or downtown Tucson, take Speedway Boulevard (exit 257) west. This will become Gates Pass Road. Continue 4.6 miles west through the Tucson Mountains to Kinney Road. Turn right (northwest) and follow Kinney Road 3.7 miles past the Desert Museum to the park entrance. Go 1 mile to the visitor center.

Over-sized Vehicles (West)
Vehicles exceeding 12,000 pounds GVWR are prohibited on Gates Pass Road and Picture Rocks Road through the park.

From I-10 coming from Phoenix, take Ava Valley Road (exit 242) See above for directions. From I-10 coming from New Mexico, take I-19 (exit 260) south. From I-19 take Ajo Way/State Route 86 (exit 99) west 4.8 miles to Kinney Road. Turn right (north) 10 miles (past Old Tucson Studios and the Desert Museum) to the visitor center.

THE WILDERNESS WITH A CITY AT ITS CENTER

In the park, trails begin where city boulevards end. There are over 150 miles of hiking trails, from flat strolls to rugged hikes in green “sky islands.” Two park districts bookend the city of Tucson, one of the southwest’s fastest-growing cities. In spite of the automobiles, supermarkets and 1 million people at its edges, much of the park—78 percent—is protected as designated wilderness. These are wild lands in their natural state, meant as places where even humans are visitors who do not remain. In these forests of cactus, scrub oak and pine, we can find refuge, as we witness in all directions the changing landscape of the American southwest.

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What’s going on

(Tohono O’odham month)

January
Gakimidg Masad Masad
DEPEND ON STORED FOODS MONTH
 Succulent plants, like cholla, are filling up with winter moisture.

February
U: walig Masad
DEER MATING MONTH
If the last months have been rainy, desert wildflowers (like Mexican gold poppies) start blooming this month.

March
Ce dagi Masad
NEW PLANTS COME UP MONTH
When brittlebush is blooming, look for feeding iron-cross blister beetles. Beetles are black, red, and yellow with a black cross-like pattern on their backs.

(continued on page 11)
Visitor Information

Information, regulations and tips—everything you need to visit your favorite park.

Accessibility

Visitor centers are wheelchair-accessible, and offer accessible cactus gardens and nature trails. All picnic areas, excluding Mam-A-Gah, have accessible picnic tables and pit toilets.

Both visitor centers offer a captioned 15-minute audiovisual program. For more visually impaired, the west side offers a descriptive audio version of the slide program.

In the west district, guides to the Desert Discovery Natural Trail are available in Braille on and cassette.

TDI Hearing-impaired please use state relay service. 1-800-352-8611.

Service Animals

Service animals are welcome anywhere their owners may legally go.

All-Terrain Vehicles

ATVs and off-road vehicle travel are not permitted in the park.

Amenities

No fuel, lodging, or food services are available in the park. Fuel and food is available 5 miles from either visitor center. Lodging is available within a 30-minute drive of either district. A list of local campgrounds is available from either visitor center.

Backpacking

Overnight backpacking is only permitted in the Rincon Mountain District at one of 6 designated campgrounds. A camping permit is required and must be obtained at the west district visitor center before noon on the day of departure. Apply in person, by fax, or by mail. The fee for this permit is 65.00 per campsite, per night. A park entrance fee is also required. The maximum number of people allowed per campsite is 6 (see “Headed into the Backcountry,” page 40).

Bicycling

Bicycles are permitted on all public roads and on the designated portion of the Cactus Forest Trail in the east district (see page 5). Bicycles are prohibited on all other trails. Bicycling is not recommended on Picture Rocks Road due to narrow road shoulders.

Helms are required for all riders and passengers under 18 years of age.

Bookstores

Western National Parks Association (WNPA) bookstores featuring books, maps, hiking guides and maps is located at each visitor center. WNPA is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving the heritage of our National Park System. See the WNPA article on page 11 of this newspaper.

Car Camping

There are no campgrounds or RV facilities in the park. A list of local campgrounds is available from either visitor center. Overnight backcountry camping is permitted in the east district only. See Backcountry Care overnight camping is prohibited anywhere else in the park.

Collecting

Removal or disturbance of any natural or cultural feature in the park is prohibited.

 Differences Between East and West?

You can have a great time visiting just one district of the park. Each offers similar services. The east district, the Rincon Mountain District (RMD), is the larger district with 8,600 ft. (2,400m) high mountains and a greater diversity of lifeways. RMD has 128 miles (206 km) of hiking trails, as well as backcountry campsites. The west district, the Tucson Mountain District (TMD), has 4,600 ft. (1,400m) high mountains and diverse stands of saguaro cactus, with 43 miles (69 km) of trails. TMD has no campgrounds. Both districts offer visitor centers, scenic drives, picnic areas and nature trails. Park headquarters is located in the Rincon Mountain District.

Filing & Photography

When filing or photography involves advertising a product or service, use of models, sets or props, a film permit is generally required. See Special Use Permits.

Firearms

Federal law permits people who can legally possess firearms under federal and State of Arizona laws, to possess firearms in the park. It is the visitor’s responsibility to understand and comply with all applicable state and federal firearms laws. Federal law prohibits firearms in certain facilities in the park such as visitor centers and administrative offices. Those facilities are signed at public entrance. Use of firearms in the park is prohibited.

Geocaching

Virtual geocaching is allowed in the park, subject to park regulations. No treasure items are permitted. Cache owners are responsible for removing any other materials that are prohibited.

Horses

See Livestock & Pack Animals.

Lost and Found

Report lost or found items at a visitor center.

Mines

Numerous historic mine sites can be found within the park. Old mine workings are extremely dangerous. Stay out and stay alive.

Do not enter old mine workings!

P Pets

Pets are allowed on all roads and at designated parking and picnic areas. They are not permitted in the West district’s Mam-A-Gah picnic area as it is accessed by trail only. Pets are not permitted on trails or inside either visitor center. Pets must be leashed at all times. Leash length may not exceed 10 ft. You may not leave your pet unattended anywhere in the park, including inside vehicles. Temperatures in a car can quickly exceed 120 degrees and kill a pet within minutes! Report all unattended pets to a ranger.

Phones

In an emergency, dial 911. Cell phones have intermittent coverage, are very expensive and are not available in many park locations. There are no payphones in the park.

Rincon Mountain Visitor Center (east) (520) 733-5158

Saguaro Visitor Information Line (520) 733-5100

As you drive through Arizona and would like information on Saguaro NP or other National Park Service sites, just dial 511. You can also receive information on closures, construction, delinquent tolls, services, maps, and weather. This service is provided by The Arizona Department of Transportation. Their website is www.az511.gov. To call outside of Arizona dial 1-888-411-ROAD.

Pics

Both districts offer picnic grounds with picnic tables and grills, shaded ramadas, and pit toilets. Picnicking is not allowed at the visitor centers. Picnic groups larger than 20 must obtain a Special Use Permit. No reservations may be made and no area held for the exclusive use of any group. To locate picnic areas, see the district maps starting on page 7.

Special Use Permits

Permits are required for special events such as weddings, commercial filming, or any events which involve over 20 people, including picnics. Permits may be obtained by contacting the District of Ranger Services. For west district permits call (520) 733-5116. For east district permits call (520) 733-5111.

Livestock & Pack Animals

Livestock, which includes horses, burros and pack animals, may only be permitted on trails. Stock groups may include up to a maximum of 15 animals. Stock groups may not travel off-trail in the park. All other animals, including pets, are prohibited on park trails.

Translations

Translations of the park brochures in Spanish, French, Dutch, German, Italian, Chinese and Japanese are available at visitor centers and online at http://www.nps.gov/sagu/planyourvisit/brochures.htm. Audio in German, French and Japanese is available in the east district’s audioscopic presentation.

Trash

Pack out all trash when hiking. Dispose of your trash in a responsible manner. Aluminum can recycling is available at visitor centers and many picnic areas.

Vehicles

Speed Limits

Motorists and bicyclists must obey all posted speed limits. Reduce speed in heavy rains and stay alert for pedestrians, bicyclists, and wildlife on the roadways. Bicycles are not to enter old mine workings!

Do not attempt to cross running washes (stream beds) in your car during rainfall! State and federal vehicle laws apply within the park.

Vehicle Restrictions

Vehicles, including bicycles, are prohibited from leaving established roads.

Vehicles exceeding 12,000 GVWR are prohibited on Picture Rocks Road.

Vehicles wider than eight feet and trailers longer than 35 feet are prohibited from traveling on Kinney Road and the scenic loop drive of either district.

High clearance or four-wheel drive is not needed on park roads in either district.

Driving the Rincon Mountain District

The Carrot Forest Drive Scenic Loop is a winding, eight-mile, paved, combination one- and two-way road.

Driving the Tucson Mountain District

The east district has both paved and graded gravel roads. The district’s scenic drive, the Scenic Bajada Loop Drive, is a 5 mile, graded, combination one-and two-way gravel road. This road contains many large dips and may be rough.

Visitor Centers

There are two visitor centers in the park: the Rincon Mountain Visitor Center in the East District and the Red Hills Visitor Center in the West District. Visitor centers are open year-round from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., except December 25. They offer visitor information services, slide shows, cultural and natural history exhibits and nature trails, as well as books, videos, maps and other items for sale. First aid, restrooms, and drinking water are available at both visitor centers.

Water

Saguaro National Park is no longer providing bottled water or drinks in vending machines. Water on loan to visitors with new bottle fillers are available at both visitor centers. Water is available 24 hours a day in the west district, and to walk-ins and bicyclists in the east district. The WNPA bookstores provides inexpensive, reusable water bottles.

Natural water sources in the park must be protected before use.

Wildflowers

Spring wildflower blooms vary with elevation, temperature, soil quality and accumulated seasonal rainfall. You can get current information by calling the park or checking the park’s website. The wildflower hotline is available year-round.

All plants, and all plant parts, are protected—leave them for the next visitor to enjoy as well.

Wildlife

Treat wildlife with respect. Do not use artificial lights to draw animals near. Recordings or artificial sounds to lure them near. View wildlife from a non-threatening distance. Leave enough space for wildlife to make an escape.

Do not feed wildlife. Protect wildlife, your foodstuffs by storing in sealed containers.

Saguaro Sentinel 3

Parks & Recreation

Parks & Recreation

Parks & Recreation
Headed into the Rincon backcountry?

Backpacking in the east district's higher elevations requires special preparation. These tips will get you started.

Backpacking and Camping

Overnight camping is permitted, with a backcountry permit, in designated campgrounds in the Rincon Mountain District. Campgrounds are accessible by foot and horseback only. There are six campgrounds located 6 to 12 miles from public access trailheads.

Backcountry Camping Permits

Backcountry camping permits are available on a first-come first-served basis at the Rincon Mountain Visitor Center. A permit costs $6.00 per campsite, per night. The maximum number of people allowed per campsite is six. The maximum size of any one group is 18 persons. Permits must accompany the permittees into the backcountry and be openly displayed. Campground stays are limited to five consecutive days per camp and no more than 10 days in the park, with 10 days between successive permits. Permittees must be at least 16 years of age.

Water

Backcountry water sources can be unpredictable, especially during a drought. Inquire at the visitor center for current water availability before beginning your trip. All natural water sources must be treated before use.

Bears

The Rincon Mountains have a small population of black bears. Proper food storage, in bear boxes located in all six backcountry campgrounds, is required for your safety and protection of the bears.

Backcountry Livestock Use

Stock animals are defined as horses, burros, and mules. All stock are required to stay on designated trails. In the Rincon Mountain District overnight stock use is permitted at all campgrounds except Juniper Basin. Riders must carry in all horse feed; grazing is not permitted. “Weed-free” feed is recommended to prevent the introduction of exotic species. Stock animals are not allowed on the Tanque Verde Ridge Trail, Miller Creek Trail and the last half-mile of the Rincon Peak Trail.

Backcountry Safety Tips

• Treat all water before consuming.
• Carry plenty of water. On hot days, 1 gallon or more per person is a necessity.
• Use sunscreen and wear a hat with a full brim.
• Tell someone your travel plans.
• Practice proper food storage techniques to avoid attracting bears.

For a permit application, download the Saguaro Wilderness Area brochure from www.nps.gov/sagu/planyourvisit/brochures.htm

Desert Invasion

Buffelgrass Overpowers Native Species

The plant and animals at Saguaro National Park are increasingly threatened by buffelgrass (Pennisetum ciliare), an invasive grass from Africa. Buffelgrass was introduced primarily to increase forage for livestock and for erosion control. In a very few years buffelgrass has spread exponentially across southern Arizona.

Buffelgrass, listed as a state noxious weed in 2005, poses an immediate threat to the integrity of the Sonoran Desert ecosystem and has the potential to dominate the natural landscape by altering natural ecological processes. It competes with and excludes native plants, reduces critical habitat for unique desert wildlife, and introduces fire into an ecosystem not adapted to fire.

Buffelgrass and the ensuing threat of fire is a major concern to all levels of government in Southern Arizona as well as individual home owners. In addition to expanding into natural areas, buffelgrass has invaded Tucson and neighboring communities, carrying fires into the wildland-urban interface where it threatens lives, homes, and businesses.

Since the mid-1990s, Saguaro National Park has been managing buffelgrass through manual removal and herbicides. With vigilant and consistent control efforts, buffelgrass patches can be removed.

Other invasive plants that Park staff actively manage are fountain grass (a relative of buffelgrass), salt cedar, onion weed, African sumac, and Sahara mustard. Some invasive plants such as red brome, Lehmann’s lovegrass, Bermuda grass, and the plant and animals at Saguaro National Park are increasingly threatened by buffelgrass (Pennisetum ciliare), an invasive grass from Africa. Buffelgrass was introduced primarily to increase forage for livestock and for erosion control. In a very few years buffelgrass has spread exponentially across southern Arizona.

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Driving the Loop
The Cactus Forest Scenic Loop Drive (shown on inset map on page 8 highlighted in yellow) in the east district is a paved, combination one- and two-way road. The 8-mile long (12.9 km) Loop Drive features several trailheads, scenic vistas and pullouts. Trailers longer than 35 feet or any vehicle wider than 8 feet are not permitted.

Biking
Always maintain a safe speed for road conditions and your own riding experience. The Loop Drive is narrow with many tight corners and steep hills. Use extra caution when approaching the first steep downhill after passing the entrance station! Bicyclists must obey all posted speed limits.

Mountain Biking
Trail riding is permitted only on the 2.5 miles (4.0 km) multi-use portion of the Cactus Forest Trail circled by the Cactus Forest Loop Drive. The trail may be ridden in either direction, but you may not ride against traffic on the one-way section of the Cactus Forest Loop Drive.

Restrictions
Hiking
Hiking off-trail in the Cactus Forest and Rincon Valley is prohibited. Above 4,500 feet, hiking off-trail is permitted. Limit hiking parties to 10 people on trails, 10 people while hiking off-trail.

Multi-use Trail
The portion of the Cactus Forest Trail inside the Cactus Forest Loop Drive is open to horseback riding, bicycling and hiking. Bike riding is not permitted on any other portion of the Cactus Forest Trail. The Hope Camp trail is proposed to be multi-use. Check back summer of 2012 to see if that rule was accepted.

Stay Alert! Make your presence known to other trail users well in advance, particularly when approaching from behind. Cyclists yield to all other trail users and hikers yield to equestrians.

Stock and Pack Animals
Horseback riding off-trail is prohibited. Livestock is restricted from the Cactus Forest Loop Drive and these trails:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trail</th>
<th>Info</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wildhorse Trail south of the Cantilla Trail</td>
<td>5.2 miles/8.4 km 1 1100 ft./335 m elevation gain 3-4 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanque Verde Ridge Trail</td>
<td>strenuous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope Camp Trail</td>
<td>moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rincon Mountain Backcountry</td>
<td>time varies according to destination</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RMD Map 5
What can I do in the time I have?

**East District**

- Walk the Cactus Garden Trail .......................................................... 0:10
- View the A Home in the Desert slideshow ........................................ 0:15
- Explore the visitor center exhibits .................................................. half an hour
- Walk the Desert Ecology Nature Trail .............................................. 0:45
- Drive the Cactus Forest Loop Drive (no stops) .............................. 1:00
- Hike the Freeman Homestead Trail ............................................... 1:15
- Stroll at sunset from the Javelina Picnic Area ............................... 1:30
- Hike to the Garwood Dam ............................................................. 1:45
- Drive the Bajada Loop Drive (no stops) .......................................... 2:15
- Walk the Desert Discovery Nature Trail ........................................ 2:30
- Hike to Douglas Spring Campground and back ........................... 3:00
- Attend a ranger-led program .......................................................... 3:15
- Hike up King Canyon wash & down the trail ............................... 3:30
- Enjoy a sunrise, sunset or moonrise .............................................. 3:45
- Hike the Signal Hill Petroglyph Trail .......................................... 4:15
- Hike to Bridle Wreath Falls .......................................................... 4:30
- Hike to the Lipan Point Picnic Area .............................................. 4:45
- Picnic at Mica View or Javelina Picnic Areas ............................... 5:00
- Lunch at a historic CCC picnic area ............................................. 5:15
- Hike the Freeman Homestead Trail ............................................... 5:30
- Walk the Desert Discovery Nature Trail ........................................ 5:45

**West District**

- Walk the Javelina Wash Trail ....................................................... 0:10
- Walk the Cactus Garden Trail ...................................................... 0:15
- View the Voices of a Desert slideshow ........................................ 0:15
- Explore the visitor center exhibits .............................................. half an hour
- Walk the Desert Discovery Nature Trail ........................................ 0:45
- Drive the Bajada Loop Drive (no stops) ......................................... 1:00
- Attend a ranger-led program ....................................................... 1:15
- Hike the Signal Hill Petroglyph Trail .......................................... 1:30
- Hike to the ridge on the Hugh Norris Trail ................................. 1:45
- Enjoy a sunrise, sunset or moonrise .............................................. 2:15
- Picnic at a historic CCC picnic area ............................................. 2:30
- Hike the Hugh Norris Trail to the bottom of the switchbacks beginning just west of Amole Peak ................................................................. half a day
- Hike the Hugh Norris Trail to Wasson Peak .................................. 3:45
- Drive the Cactus Forest Loop Drive (no stops) .............................. 4:15
- Hike to the Lipan Point Picnic Area .............................................. 4:30
- Hike the Freeman Homestead Trail ............................................... 4:45
- Hike to Wasson Peak ................................................................. 5:00
- Hike the Desert Discovery Nature Trail ........................................ 5:15
- Hike the Sweetwater Trail to Wasson Peak ............................... 5:30
- Hike the Freeman Homestead Trail ............................................... 5:45

Tucson Mountain District

**Hiking Trails in the West**

**Desert Discovery Trail**
- You will find the trailhead to this self-guided nature walk on Kinney Road, one mile northwest of the Red Hills Visitor Center. Here you can familiarize yourself with the native plants, animals and ecology of the Sonoran Desert. An audio tour for the visually impaired is available at the visitor center.
- Elevation gain: 0 feet
- Distance: 1.6 miles
- Estimated time: 1 hour

**Valley View Overlook**
- This trail was built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the 1930s.
- The trailhead is located at 1.34 miles along the Bajada Loop Drive. While hiking this trail, you will pass through two washes and then gradually ascend stone steps to a ridge. The view from the ridge includes Ajo Mountain Valley sprawled below and Picacho Peak to the north.
- Elevation gain: 30 feet
- Distance: 1 mile
- Estimated time: 30 minutes

**Signal Hill Trail**
- This short climb takes you to dozens of ancient petroglyphs more than 800 years old. The trail starts from the Signal Hill Picnic Area located off Golden Gate Road, at 3.3 miles along the Loop Drive. The trail climbs numerous stone steps, some of which have a large rise, through a wash and up a hill. For some, climbing these steps may be difficult.
- Elevation gain: 30 feet
- Distance: 0.5 miles
- Estimated time: 20 minutes

**King Canyon Trail**
- This hike starts 1.2 miles from the intersection of Golden Gate and Hohokam Roads, across from the Ez-Kim-In-Zin picnic area. The trail's first section follows an old roadway constructed by the CCC in the 1930s. At 3.9 miles hikers pass the Sendero Esperanza trail junction and continue .3 mile to reach the top of Wasson Peak. From here, continue 3 miles to reach the top of Wasson Peak, elevation 4,687 feet.
- Elevation gain: 1,839 feet
- Distance: 7 miles
- Estimated time: 4-5 hours

**Sendero Esperanza Trail**
- This trail is 1.2 miles long and leads to dozens of ancient petroglyphs more than 800 years old. The trailhead is located off Golden Gate Road, at 3.3 miles along the Loop Drive. The trail ascends a series of steep switchbacks to the Hugh Norris Trail. From here, continue 1.4 miles to the south, past the Gould Mine Trail junction, where it meets the King Canyon Trail.
- Elevation gain: 30 feet
- Distance: 0.5 miles
- Estimated time: 3-4 hours

**Hugh Norris Trail**
- This is the longest trail in the Tucson Mountain District. The trailhead is 8 miles from the start of the Bajada Loop Drive. The trail begins with a series of switchbacks that climb to a ridge overlooking the cactus forest. From there, the trail follows the ridge-top through areas with unique welded tuff rock formations until it reaches Amole Peak, approximately 4.1 miles from the trailhead. From here, continue 0.8 mile up a series of switchbacks to the top of Wasson Peak, the highest point in the Tucson Mountains.
- Elevation gain: 1,839 feet
- Distance: 10 miles
- Estimated time: 5-6 hours

**Scenic Loop and Belmont Area Trails**
- This is the longest trail in the Tucson Mountain District. The trailhead is 8 miles from the start of the Bajada Loop Drive. The trail begins with a series of switchbacks that climb to a ridge overlooking the cactus forest. From there, the trail follows the ridge-top through areas with unique welded tuff rock formations until it reaches Amole Peak, approximately 4.1 miles from the trailhead. From here, continue 0.8 mile up a series of switchbacks to the top of Wasson Peak, the highest point in the Tucson Mountains.
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- Elevation gain: 1,839 feet
- Distance: 10 miles
- Estimated time: 5-6 hours
Scenic Bajada Loop Drive

Driving the Loop
The west district’s Scenic Bajada Loop Drive (shown on map in yellow) is a popular way of exploring the Tucson Mountain District’s foothills. This unpaved, combination one- and two-way graded dirt road offers scenic pullouts, picnic areas and hiking trailheads in a 5 mile (7.8 km) loop. High clearance or four-wheel drive is not needed.

The Bajada Loop Drive begins at the intersection of Kinney Road and Hohokam Road. Exit the Red Hills Visitor Center, turn right onto Kinney Road, and continue northwest 1.6 miles (2.6 km) to the loop’s entrance on the right.

The Loop Drive ends where Golden Gate Road meets Sandario Road. To return to the visitor center, turn left onto Sandario Road. Continue 0.2 mile (300 m) to the junction with Kinney Road. Turn left. The visitor center is 2 miles (3.2 km) ahead.

Hiking Checklist

- Review park safety, regulations, fees and permit information.
- Pack a park map showing accurate trail information.
- Leave itinerary with a friend or relative.
- Pack breathable, long-sleeved clothes in light colors, a wide-brim hat, hiking boots with ankle support, raingear.
- Bring day packs with water (1 gallon per person in summer), salty snacks, watch, sunscreen, comb or knife (to remove cactus spines), cell phone, pencil and notebook.
- Call for up-to-date road and weather information: (520) 733-5153 or (520) 733-5158.
- Check online for more trip planning advice: www.nps.gov/sagu/planyourvisit.htm

Hiking

The Tucson Mountain District offers more than 40 miles (64 km) of hiking trails. Check at the Red Hills Visitor Center for trail conditions and special notices before you leave.

Restrictions

Driving Restrictions
Trailers longer than 35 feet or any vehicle wider than 8 feet are not allowed on the Loop Drive.

Horses & Pack Animals
Stock groups are limited to 15 animals. Stock animals are prohibited from traveling off-trail in the park. Stock are not permitted on any of the trails listed in the table below. Stock trailers should use Cam-bob, Camino del Cerro, and Sondoro Esperanza trailheads.

State Trust Lands
State trust lands are parcels of land within the park held by the Arizona State Land Department. A State Land Recreational Permit is required to hike in these parcels. For more information and to obtain a permit, call (602) 542-4631 or visit www.land.state.az.us.

Hiking Restrictions
- Hiking groups are limited to a maximum of 18 persons when hiking on designated trails.
- Limit off-trail travel. When hiking off-trail, groups are limited to 10 people.
- Access is prohibited in the sensitive resource area (shown in blue) near the Red Hills Visitor Center.
- Bicycles are not permitted on any trails in the district. Bicycling along Picture Rocks Road is not recommended.

TOHONO O’ODHAM RESERVATION

TMD Map

7
Rincon Mountain District (East) Day Hikes

Legend:
- Visitor Center
- Drinking water
- Picnic area
- Campground
- Trailhead
- Access Gate
- Wheelchair Accessible
- Equestrian Trail
- Bicycle Trail
- Hiking Trail
  - Road, paved
  - Road, unpaved
  - Trails (see restrictions)
  - Trail (mutli-use)
- Wash Designated as a Trail
- State Trust Land
- Private Land

Use a topographic map when hiking in the Rincon Mountain backcountry. Maps are available at the Visitor Center.
Saguaro flowers are waxy and white, about three inches across. They open at night and are pollinated by Mexican long-tongued and lesser long-nosed bats. Flowers stay open until the following afternoon, allowing birds and insects an opportunity to pollinate them.

Gila woodpeckers and glied flickers make nest holes in the stems of saguaros. The cactus quickly produces a thick material to heal and dry the wound. This nest-lining structure sometimes survives after the saguaro dies and rots, and is called a saguaro "boot" because of its shape. Woodpeckers build new nests each year, and older nests become homes for cactus wrens, elf owls, mice, snakes, spiders and other animals that appreciate the water-cooled cavities in the cactus.

While the cause is not known, sometimes damage occurs to the growing tip of a saguaro, causing a fan-like growth. Crested, or cristate, saguaros are thought to occur once in every 200,000 plants.

The fruiting of the saguaro signals the beginning of the Tohono O’odham new year. Families camp in the desert and collect the fruit for jams, jelly, candy, and a ceremonial wine used to bring on the summer rains.

In a 150 - 200 year lifetime, a saguaro might produce 40 million seeds. Dispersal, rainfall, and other factors result in about one of these seeds living to maturity to replace the parent plant!

Why grow “arms?” More arms equals more surface area for photosynthesis, and more places to grow flowers, thus increasing the number of seeds produced.

Saguaros are fully protected by law, not only in Saguaro National Park, but throughout Arizona.

The saguaro blossom is Arizona’s state flower.

The spines of a cactus not only protect it from animals that might eat it, they also shade the plant’s skin.

Saguaros can grow to 50 feet tall and are the largest member of the cactus family in the United States (though not in the world).

Saguaro tissue may be 85% water; a large plant may weigh 8 tons or more!

Saguaros grow slowly. In the most favorable conditions it may take 35 years for a plant to reach 6 feet; more commonly it takes 47 to 67 years.

Saguaro branches always grow upward. Occasionally frost or snow will freeze the tissue at the base of a limb and damage it, and the weight of the branch pulls it down.

If the branch survives, the growing tip will turn upward again.

Saguaro tissue may be 85% water; a large plant may weigh 8 tons or more!

The Saguaro FAQ
Junior Ranger Discovery Pack Program

The Junior Ranger Discovery Pack program is designed for children of all ages who want to explore the plants, animals, and people of the Sonoran Desert. The Discovery Pack contains all the tools children need to complete the program including binoculars and field guides. There is no charge for the program.

Junior Ranger booklets, available for a variety of ages and abilities, offer a wide range of fun and exciting activities including field observations, animal identification and habits, scavenger hunts, crossword puzzles, art, and more. Every child that finishes the booklet will be awarded an official National Park Junior Ranger certificate and badge.

Please allow a minimum of 2-3 hours to complete the program. The Junior Ranger program may be started no later than 2:00 p.m. and children must check back into the visitor center no later than 4:30 p.m. to go over their booklets with a ranger.

Curriculum-Based Programs

Come for a Field Trip!

Saguaro National Park offers a variety of exciting curriculum-based, educational field trips throughout the year. A previsit to the classroom is provided before each field trip, preparing your students for the trip and providing them with a base knowledge which enhances their park experience. Programs cover the natural and cultural history of the Sonoran Desert and meet a wide range of science and social studies state standards. Students will experience a memorable and educational field trip as our programs are interactive and hands-on. All programs are free and require advance reservations. Contact information is in the yellow box on this page. For schools with restricted travel budgets, we have a limited number of travel grants available. This offer is restricted to those with a base knowledge which enhances their park experience. Programs cover the natural and cultural history of the Sonoran Desert and meet a wide range of science and social studies state standards. Students will experience a memorable and educational field trip as our programs are interactive and hands-on. All programs are free and require advanced reservations. Contact information is in the yellow box on this page.

Classroom Travel Trunks

Invite a ranger to your classroom! We bring the material and do the program. Teachers looking for a presentation to augment an existing science or desert unit may request one of our Traveling Trunks. These programs are free.

These 60-minute presentations are designed to enhance your in-class teachings. These programs support many state curriculum standards. More information is available on our website which is in the yellow box on this page.

Junior Ranger Camps

The park offers a variety of Junior Ranger Camps throughout the year. All camps are day camps and range from 1-3 days. A large variety of activities include hiking and safety, how to pack a well-equipped day pack, tracking desert tortoises, dissecting owl pellets, learning about plants and animals, wildlife protection, games, crafts, camp site selection and how to set up a tent, using a light weight cook stove, building a campfire, outdoor travel and survival skills, using a map and compass, orienteering and way finding, and what to do if they become lost. Camps vary between districts. Give us a call to see when the next camp is scheduled! Contact information is available in the yellow box on this page.

Outreach Programs

The park offers a multifaceted outreach program to connect diverse communities throughout the greater Tucson area with the park. Outreach efforts are designed to expose groups and organizations to nature, our unique Sonoran Desert environment, and the mission of the park.

We bring our message to fairs, expos, school fairs and events, and a variety of community events as well as to many after school/weekend programs for children. Our booth is staffed by friendly and outgoing professionals, offering exciting hands-on activities, valuable information about the park and its events, and contact information about other park related programs. To have us attend your event, or to schedule us to visit your organization for a program, contact information is in the yellow box to the right.

Cactus Rangers: Teen Stewardship

There is a group of helpful, responsible teenagers in Saguaro National Park with a strong awareness for nature. Their goal is to learn about the environment and spread awareness about national parks and other special areas. They are called the Cactus Rangers and I am one of them. The west group is led by Ranger Chip Littlefield and the east group is led by Ranger Jeff Walden. (See yellow box below)

Before someone can be a Cactus Ranger, they must demonstrate leadership skills and complete a Junior Ranger Camp. In my case, I did about four camps before I became a Cactus Ranger at twelve years old. Since then, everything I have done with this group has been rewarding. Hiking to a stone arch under Baboquivari Peak and summiting the round peak of “Sierra Ana” near the Red Hills Visitor Center are just two of the rewarding excursions I have experienced with this group. Being a four-year Cactus Ranger has given me loads of valuable experience. Leading Junior Ranger camps in the summer and Wilderness camps in the winter have given me plenty of know-how around younger children. The Wilderness camps have also helped me develop backcountry as well as I am grateful to have the chance to be a part of this program. The other Cactus Rangers and their families are wonderful people to work with. I am thankful to all the Park Rangers, the Teacher Rangers, and volunteers, especially Ranger Chip, at Saguaro National Park for being so enjoyable to work with. I encourage anyone who gets the chance to become a Cactus Ranger in either district of the park, or get outside and get involved in some way.

For Information

Call, e-mail, or check our website!

- Education Programs
  West
  chip_littlefield
  520.733.4157
  chip_littlefield@nps.gov

  East
  melanie_florez
  520.733.5151
  melanie_florez@nps.gov

- Outreach Programs
  estee_rivera@nps.gov
  520.733-8613
  estee_rivera@nps.gov

- www.nps.gov/sagu
Since 1938, Western National Parks Association (WNPA) has promoted the educational and scientific activities of the National Park Service. As a nonprofit organization authorized by Congress, the association operates visitor center bookstores and produces park-related publications. All proceeds support more than 60 affiliated parks in 12 western states to fund educational, scientific, and research programs not supported by taxes. Saguaro National Park is among those parks that receive donations from WNPA.

Membership support allows us to continue much-needed aid to the parks. Members of WNPA receive valuable benefits, including:

- Discount privileges of 15 percent on bookstore purchases (Does not apply to craft items).
- 20 percent discount privileges on bookstore purchases for seniors 62 and older.
- Discount privileges of 15 percent on purchases from the WNPA web site at www.wnpa.org.

WNPA gratefully accepts tax-deductible contributions to further the goals of the National Park Service. These contributions can be designated to support a particular project or park served by WNPA.

For more information on WNPA, please call (520) 733-5159, or visit our website www.wnpa.org.

You can help assure that the incredible experience you enjoyed at Saguaro National Park will be available for your family, friends, and thousands of others for years to come. The Friends of Saguaro National Park has donated hundreds of thousands of dollars to our park for trail construction, new picnic tables and benches, educational materials, safety equipment, and funds for research on saguaros and the wildlife that lives in the cactus forests. They also fund the Gila Monster tracking, Saguaro Censuses programs and the innovative Teacher to Ranger to Teacher program, reaching under-served students throughout Tucson. Public funding no longer meets some of the most pressing needs of our parks. A non-profit organization, the Friends of Saguaro has a single purpose: to provide dollars for desperately needed projects at Saguaro National Park. Join us, and give something back to these stunning “sentinels of the desert” today. Call (520) 733-8610, visit us online at www.friendsofsaguaro.org, or find us on facebook.com/friendsofsaguaro to learn more.

**Your Fee Dollars Make It Possible**

**Have you enjoyed a picnic in the shade of a historic shelter at Signal Hill?** Have you learned about the natural and human history of the saguaro from signs along the Freeman Homestead trail? Are you better informed by the new trailhead exhibits and maps found throughout Saguaro National Park? If so, you are enjoying facilities provided by park entrance fees, paid by you and other visitors to Saguaro National Park.

Like hundreds of recreation areas across the country, Saguaro National Park operates under the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act of 2004. Under this program, 100% of all entrance and user fees are put to use within the National Park Service and at least 80% of the funds stay in the park where they are collected. Which means, the money you spend in Saguaro National Park, stays in Saguaro National Park. Your fees are not returned to the government’s general fund.

The effects of time, use, and a rugged desert climate have been tough on the recreational facilities of the park. The picnic areas of the Tucson Mountain District were built in the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps. The structures are wonderful, but historic saguaro rib ramadas require special care. Facilities in the Rincon Mountain District were installed by the National Park Service in the 1950s, when visitation was a small fraction of what it is today.

Projects paid for by fee dollars at Saguaro cover a wide range of visitor needs. Recently completed projects include new trailhead signs at the Broadway and Loma Alta Trails in the Rincon Mountain District, rehabilitation of eleven historic fireplaces at picnic areas in the Tucson Mountains, and installation of traffic safety signs throughout the park. Projects you will see coming in 2012 and 2013 include updating of the Tucson Mountain District’s audiovisual equipment for the popular Desert Speaks program and new exhibits for the Rincon Mountain visitor center. Your fee dollars make these important upgrades possible.

Whether you purchase a seven-day permit to the park, a Saguaro Annual Pass good for one year’s worth of visits, or the Interagency Pass to be used anywhere in the USA, you can be happy knowing that your fee dollars are used for projects directly related to the facilities and resources of your Saguaro National Park.

**What’s going on**

**April**

U'us Whihogdag Masad

**Desert in Bloom Month**

Snakes are coming out of hibernation. You may see them settled in rock crevices, near their dens—be careful where you place your hands and feet.

**May**

U'us Wihogdag Masad

**Month to Gather Beans Time of Hunger**

White fragrant nocturnally-blooming plants in the cactus family are flowering. Look for saguaro and night-blooming cereus flowers.

**June**

Hasan Bak Masad

**Month to Gather Saguaro Fruit**

New saguaro fruit is ripening and falling to the ground. This is the month the Tohono O’odham traditionally make trips to gather the cactus fruit, knocking it from the cactus with saguaro rib poles called a kuipod.

**July**

Jukiabig Masad

**Month of Rain**

Male Sonoran desert toads, Red-spotted toads, and spadefoot toads croak to attract mates throughout the night.

**August**

Sopol Esabig Masad

**Short Month of Planting**

Barrel cactus, aster, trailing four-o’clock, devil’s claw, buffalo gourds, summer poppies, and morning glories are all flowering.

**September**

Wosai Gakidak Masad

**Month of Dry Grass**

Bats and hummingbirds are preparing for early October migrations—activity increases this month. First-year juveniles must gain strength for their first long flights to wintering grounds in the south.
Safety in the Park

Snakes Six species of rattlesnakes are found at Saguaro National Park. They seek shelter in the shade of bushes or rock crevices in the heat of the day. Avoid placing your hands or feet in hidden areas. **Treatment:** If you are bitten by a snake, remain calm. Immobilize the limb and get to a doctor as soon as possible. Report any bites to a ranger.

Bees Africanized honey bees (“killer” bees) are found throughout the park. These bees will attack only when they feel their hive is threatened. Stay alert for sounds of bee activity and watch for them entering or exiting a hive. **Treatment:** If you are stung, scrape away embedded stingers to a ranger.

Heat Hike within your ability and rest often while hiking in the heat. Know the symptoms and treatment for heat exhaustion, and life-threatening heat stroke. **Heat exhaustion:** This is the result of dehydration due to intense sweating. Symptoms: pale face, nausea, cool and moist skin, headache, and cramps. **Treatment:** drink water, eat high-energy foods, rest in the shade, and cool the body, especially around the neck, head and groin.

**Heat stroke:** If left untreated, heat exhaustion can turn into heat stroke. This is a life-threatening emergency where the body’s heat-regulating mechanisms become overwhelmed. Symptoms: flushed face, dry skin, weak and rapid pulse, high body temperature, poor judgment or confusion, unconsciousness. **Treatment:** find shade, cool the victim with water, call 911 and seek help immediately.

Water During the summer, drink at least one gallon of water per person, per day, even if you don’t feel thirsty. In the winter, carry at least two quarts per day. Don’t ration your water when hiking—turn back when half your supply is gone. **Hypotremia:** Drinking too much water over a short time can lead to hyponatremia, where sodium electrolyte levels in the body become dangerously low. Symptoms of hyponatremia are similar to those of heat exhaustion. **Treatment:** Drink both water and sports drinks and eat salty snacks to keep electrolytes balanced.

Flooding During the summer rainy season, the desert is prone to flash flooding. Avoid hiking in washes (dry riverbeds) during thunderstorms. Do not try to cross a flooded road in your vehicle under any circumstances!

Lightning Be prepared for rain even on sunny days. If you see lightning, move quickly to the nearest safe place. Avoid hill tops, ridges, and flat open areas. If you can’t find shelter, do the “lightning crouch”: put your feet together, squat low, tuck your head, and cover your ears.

Mountain Lions Mountain lions—also known as pumas, or cougars—are found in both districts of the park. Human-lion encounters are rare, but possible. **What to do if you encounter a mountain lion:** Most lions will avoid confrontation—give the lion a way to escape. Stay calm and speak loudly and firmly. Do not run from a mountain lion—rather, stand and face it. Make eye contact. Appear as large as you can. Throw stones or whatever you can reach without crouching or turning your back. Wave your arms slowly. Protect small children so they won’t panic and run. Finally, fight back if you are attacked. Use whatever you have to defend yourself: rocks, sticks, caps, or your bare hands. Since a mountain lion usually tries to bite the head or neck, try to remain standing and face the animal.

Cacti Many desert plants are spiny or thorny. Some species of cactus, such as cholla, have barbed spines which detach easily and embed in skin. Carry a comb and tweezers to flick off cactus segments and remove spines.

**Arizona Department of Transportation
511 Traveler Information Service**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Average Maximum</th>
<th>Minimum Temperature</th>
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**Sunrise/Sunset Times for Tucson, Arizona**

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<th><strong>Sunrise</strong></th>
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<td>6:36 AM</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dec</strong></td>
<td>6:33 AM</td>
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</tbody>
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**Arizona, except for the Navajo Nation, does not observe Daylight Savings Time. Please note that sunrise and sunset times are approximate will vary slightly from year to year.**

**Experience Your America**

The Saguaro Sentinel is published by Saguaro National Park with assistance from Western National Parks Association (WNPA).

**For more information, please visit:**

- [Saguaro National Park](https://www.nps.gov/sagu)
- [Western National Parks Association (WNPA)](https://www.wnpa.org)
- [511 Traveler Information Service](https://www.511traveler.com)
- [Arizona Department of Transportation](https://az511travel.az.gov)
- [National Weather Service](https://www.nws.noaa.gov)

**What’s on**

- **October**
  - **A l J u b ig Masad**
  - **Cactus wrens begin to build winter nests in cholla cactus.**

- **November**
  - **S-ke:g S-he pjig Masad**
  - **Ocotillo, Fouquieria splendens, produces new leaves within five days of winter rainfall.**

- **December**
  - **Ge’s-e:pij Masad**
  - **Desert Mistletoe is bearing fruit, as is desert Christmas cactus. Look for mistletoe in dark green clumps in tree branches. Look for Christmas cactus in shady spots under trees.**

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**Additional Resources:**

- [Arizona—The Land of the Sun](https://www.nps.gov/aour/index.htm)
- [Saguaro National Park](https://www.nps.gov/sagu)
- [511 Traveler Information Service](https://www.511traveler.com)
- [Western National Parks Association (WNPA)](https://www.wnpa.org)

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