DECIDING WHICH TRAIL TO TAKE

I want to hike for 2 hours...4 hours...5 hours... The time it takes to complete a trail depends on how fast someone hikes, how many stops, the steepness of the trail, etc. A very rough estimate of average hiking speed is 2 miles per hour; so dividing the trail distance by 2 will give you a rough estimate of your time.

I want an easy hike...strenuous hike... How easy or difficult a hike is depends on a hiker's physical condition, experience, etc. & is very subjective. For this guide we have listed the trails as “Relatively Easy”, “Moderate”, or “More Challenging”.

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I want a long...short...medium...hike... Again, these terms are very subjective. For this guide, the trail suggestions have been broken down into three distinct categories:

1. 1-2.5 mile hikes
2. 2.5-5 mile hikes
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HOW TO READ A TRAIL SIGN

Small (approx. 12") black metal signs mark the intersections of the trails. The UPPERCASE name at the top of the sign should be the trail on which the sign is located. The name & distance to the next junction is usually shown below.

GENERAL INFORMATION & PARK REGULATIONS

Hikers must remain on trails at all times. NO OFF-TRAIL USE IS PERMITTED in areas below 4,500 feet elevation.

Hiking groups are limited to 18 people. Larger groups must be divided & remain separated.

The Cactus Forest drive is open to vehicles from dawn to dusk. Hiking at night is allowed but vehicles may not be parked anywhere on interior roads, beyond the park gate at Old Spanish Trail. Outlying trailheads are open 24 hours.

Pets must be on a leash at all times. Pets are allowed in the picnic grounds. The dirt Mica View road is a great place to walk your pet as they are less likely to get into cacti or encounter wildlife.

WATER...A smart tip is to drink some type of electrolyte beverage while hiking. Excess loss of electrolytes can lead to heat exhaustion, hypotension, etc.

DRESS PROPERLY - Good closed-toed hiking shoes, loose fitting natural-fiber clothing, a wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses, & sunscreen are a must for the desert climate. Desert temperatures can reach over 90 °F, & drop below 50 °F in one day. Summer temperatures can reach 125 °F in some locations.

WATCH THE WEATHER - Watch, or listen, frequently to weather reports on a radio or a cell phone app. Avoid deep canyons & dry river beds during stormy weather. If heavy rains occur, move to high ground immediately. Flash floods can be caused by heavy rain - it may not be raining where you are, but water can come down the canyon or river bed in a hurry! Also, do not hike on top of exposed peaks or ridges during a storm.

DEFENSIVE PLANT LIFE - Most plants are armed with spines or thorns. Stay on the trail, & watch between the cholla & you, & flick it away from the body. användare of bees going into and out of a cavity in a saguaro, tree, or other nook - honeybees in the Sonoran Desert are “Africanized” & will defend their hives aggressively. If a bee should begin “bumping” you, that is a sign you are too close to it. Most plants are armed with spines or thorns. Stay on the trail, & watch between the cholla & you, & flick it away from the body.

BE AWARE OF ANIMALS - Be aware of rattlesnakes. NEVER PLACE YOUR HANDS OR FEET WHERE YOU CANNOT SEE THEM. If a rattlesnake is encountered, give it space & do not attempt to catch, move, or touch it at all. Be aware of bees going into and out of a cavity in a saguaro, tree, or other nook - honeybees in the Sonoran Desert are “Africanized” & will defend their hives aggressively. If a bee should begin “bumping” you, that is a sign you are too close to it. Be aware of any animal that is not behaving in a normal manner. No healthy animal will approach you. Do not interact with any animal that appears injured, sick, or otherwise “not normal.”

Hiking Guide

Saguaro (sah-WAH-row) National Park’s East District has a wonderful variety of over 128 miles of hiking trails for you to explore. This guide is intended to help you decide which of the trails will meet your needs, help you to have a safe visit, & inform you about park regulations.

INTRODUCTION

Saguaro National Park - East
Rincon Mountain District

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Rincon Mountain District
GENERAL TRAIL INFORMATION

All listed distances and times reflect the total round-trip trail length.

Mileages between trail junctions are shown on this map.

Loop trails can of course be traveled in the opposite direction than described here.

1-2.5 miles - < 300ft
2.5-5 miles - 300-1,000ft
5+ miles - > 1,000ft

EASY NATURE TRAILS

DESERT ECOLOGY TRAIL
0.25mi / 0.4km - Flat - 20 minutes
An easy stroll through the desert beside Javelina Wash. Signs along the way introduce you to the residents of the Sonoran Desert “neighborhood.” The trail is wheelchair accessible and open to leashed pets.

FREEMAN HOMESTEAD TRAIL
6.5mi / 10.6km - Flat - 1 hour
Wander down this path to the site of an old homestead, a grove of large saguaros, and a cool desert wash. Signs along the way will take you deeper into the meaning of this “home in the desert.” The signs feature special restoration activities for youngsters.

BIKING / HIKING TRAILS

ACCESSIBLE TRAILS

Cactus Forest (Inside Loop Drive)
5mi / 8km - 150ft / 46m - 2 to 3 hours
The portion of this trail within the loop drive passes the remains of two lime kilns used in the 18th and early 19th century, and the site of an earlier ranger station. Mountain biking includes some sandy and single-track areas. Start at North or South Cactus Forest parking area.

HOPE CAMP TRAIL
6.6mi / 10.6km - 300ft / 92m - 2 to 3 hours
This trail begins at the lower end of the wash and offers expansive views of the desert landscape. The trail is pet-friendly and suitable for all ages.

ACCESSIBLE TRAILS

DESERT ECOLOGY TRAIL
0.25mi / 0.4km - Flat - 20 minutes
See “EASY NATURE TRAILS” above.

MICA VIEW TRAIL (IN/OUT)
1mi / 1.5km - Flat - 1 hour
The section of Trail from Mica View Picnic Area to the Broadway trailhead has been hard-surfaced with a mixture that is suitable for wheelchair. Some users may need assistance getting to the trail surface from the gravel parking area if accessible spaces are in use.

TRAILS FOR PETS

DESERT ECOLOGY TRAIL
0.25mi / 0.4km - Flat - 20 minutes
See “EASY NATURE TRAILS” above.

Another good pet walk.

MICA VIEW PICNIC AREA ROAD
6.6mi / 10.6km - 150ft / 46m - 2 to 3 hours
Unpaved and lightly used, this is almost like a trail. One-mile round-trip, out and back. Pets welcome on Cactus Forest Loop Road and in picnic areas too. Always on a leash no more than 6 feet long. Dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities are allowed to go wherever their owner goes.

RINCON VALLEY TRAILS

RUGGED VALLEY TRAIL
3.8mi / 6km - 850ft / 250m - 4 hours
All start at Loma Alta trailhead. Directions to Loma Alta trailhead: Travel south from the park entrance on Old Spanish Trail (on left), if leaving the park. At 0.5 miles, turn left on Camino Loma Alta. Proceed 3 miles to the equestrian parking area, or another 0.5 miles (nugget dirt road) to hiker trailhead.

N. COYOTE WASH/RUIZ LOOP
5.8mi / 9.3km - 730ft / 225m - 4 hours
A great way to explore part of the park added to the list of “easy” trails for young kids. The trail begins at the Loma Verde trailhead. Take to the trailhead at the north end of the park. From the Loma Verde trailhead, follow the hope Camp trail. After 1 mile, turn left (downhill) on the Rincon Valley trail, then left again on the Loma Verde trailhead. Continue on the Rincon Valley trail.

SCENIC LOOP ROUTES IN THE CACTUS FOREST

Note: These routes are NOT recommended for you. You must follow signs and descriptions of the route as described here.

MICA VIEW/CACTUS FOREST
2mi / 3km - Flat - 45 minutes
Begin at the Mica View picnic area and head north on the graded Mica View trail. Young saguaros under nurse trees and Gila woodpeckers, cactus wrens, and curve-billed thrashers nesting. At the Broadway trailhead, turn right on Shantz trail, then a quick right on Cactus Forest trail heading south. Enjoy the views of Mica Mountain and Tumacazquez Peak. Turn right on Mica trail to return to your starting point.

DEER VALLEY/RUIZ/ALTA\RIDGE
2.5mi / 4km - 300ft / 92m - 2 hours
From the Wildhorse trailhead, proceed south on Wildhorse trail. Riding has a long tradition in this area, even before the park was established. At 0.9 miles, you’ll reach a single-junction trail. Bear right (south) on Garwood Trail. Unusual saguaros abound in this area. At the Carrillo trail turn right - sometimes there will be water running in the wash nearby! Walk downhill to Deer Valley wash, below Deer Valley to Squeeze Pen trail bearing left. Take the left turn right on Deer Valley Wash. Notice the deep-rooted mesquite trees along the banks. Continue down the wash for 0.9 miles, then turn right on the Shantz trail. Your starting point is 1 mile east on Shantz trail.

DOUGLAS SPRING/GARWOOD/CARRILLO/DEER VALLEY/XANTHE
4mi / 6.4km - 200ft / 61m - 3 hours
From the Douglas Spring trailhead, follow north on the graded Mica View trail and pass the site of Garwood's weekend ranch. The trail continues through lands once part of the Carrillo family cattle grazing leases, climbing to the Steel Tank and Rincon Mountains and Valley are the best fine overlook of the Cactus Forest. Continue on the Carrillo trail turn right (the trail name is from cowboys days). After 1 mile, turn right on the Loma Verde trail and turn left back to your starting point.

This Hiking Guide was generously provided by our official fundraising partner, Friends of Saguaro National Park
Arizona, except for the Navajo Nation, does not observe Daylight Savings Time. Please note that sunrise and sunset times are approximate and will vary slightly from year to year.

IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY, CALL 911 FIRST; THEN CONTACT A RANGER. IF YOU SEE CRIMES AGAINST PARK RESOURCES CALL 1-800-637-9152.