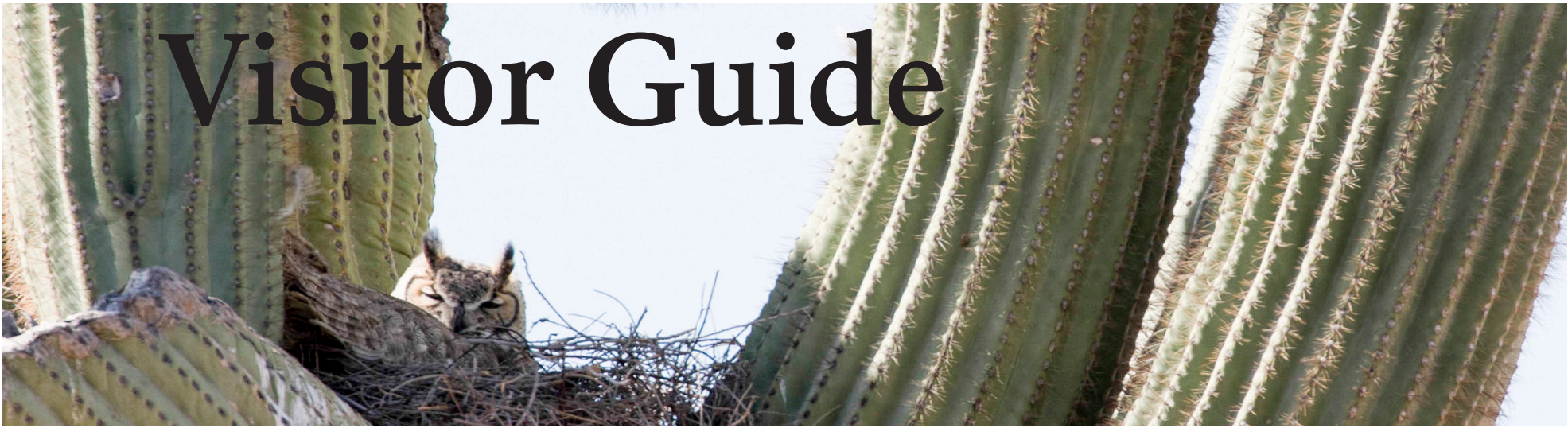


Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
December 2017 - November 2018



A True Desert Experience Awaits

Whether you are here for two hours or two weeks, there are plenty of opportunities to explore the monument. Any trip should start at the Kris Eggle Visitor Center. A fifteen minute movie, exhibits, and park rangers are available to answer your questions.

2 Hours or less:

- Stop by the Kris Eggle Visitor Center, watch the 15 minute film, explore the exhibit hall, and stroll the nature trail.
- Drive the North Puerto Blanco Drive to the Pinkley Peak Picnic Area (10 miles round-trip) for great views of the desert and cacti.
- Do a short hike near the campground.

2-4 Hours:

- Tour the Ajo Mountain Scenic Loop, a 21 mile round-trip graded dirt road. Be sure to pick up a free road guide at the Kris Eggle Visitor Center.
- Take a moderate hike in the Senita Basin area.
- Attend a ranger led hike or location talk.
- Visit Quitobaquito Springs.

All Day:

- Drive the Puerto Blanco Scenic loop. This trip will take 4-6 hours, and a high clearance 4WD vehicle is required.
- Explore the Ajo Mountain Scenic Drive and hike the Bull Pasture/Estes Canyon Loop Trail.
- Visit Quitobaquito Springs.
- Join a Ranger for a guided van tour.

One day not enough?

Stay the night at Organ Pipe Cactus and experience the calmness of the desert after dark. Camping is available at Twin Peaks Campground. Primitive and backcountry camping is also available.



During day or night, the Sonoran Desert beckons to be explored. Take one of the many scenic drives at different times of the day to see the interplay of sun and shadow across the landscape.

Welcome

No matter how long your stay, there are many treasures awaiting your discovery. Take the time to explore the spirit and secrets of the park. The variety of plants and animals found in the desert is astounding. I hope you will take advantage of our exhibits and ranger programs and learn about the fascinating ways that plants and animals have adapted to living in the Sonoran Desert.

Camping, hiking, birding, photography, exploring – the list of ways to enjoy and understand Organ Pipe Cactus’s natural beauty and history is unlimited. Experience your America, make Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument your own special place, and have a safe and memorable visit.

A visit to Organ Pipe Cactus can begin a lifetime of experiences enjoying your national parks. As we begin the next 100 years of preservation and stewardship, we invite you to Find Your Park, no matter where that may be, and to be inspired by all of these special places.

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National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

**Organ Pipe Cactus
National Monument**

Protecting 516 square miles of Sonoran Desert, Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument is a sanctuary for diverse species, some endangered. The park was established by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1937 and has since been recognized as a Biosphere Reserve by the United Nations. Over 95 percent of Organ Pipe Cactus is designated Wilderness. Come explore the wonders and the wild of the Sonoran Desert!

Superintendent

Mailing Address

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10 Organ Pipe Drive
Ajo, AZ 85321-9626

Phone

520-387-6849

E-mail

orpi_information@nps.gov

Web site

<http://www.nps.gov/orpi>

Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com/OrganPipeNPS>

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

Information and Services

Emergencies

For 24-hour emergency response, call 911. The closest medical clinic is the Desert Senita Community Health Center in Ajo, 520-387-5651. The closest hospitals are in Phoenix and Tucson.

Visitor Center

The Kris Eggle Visitor Center is open daily 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. except Thanksgiving and Christmas. There is a 15 minute film, short accessible nature trail, exhibits and park store. Ranger led talks, tours and hikes are offered December through March.

Lost and Found

Contact the Kris Eggle Visitor Center at 520-387-6849 ext. 7302.

Accessibility

The Kris Eggle Visitor Center, restrooms, and ¼-mile nature trail are fully accessible, Certain ranger programs are accessible. Ask for an accessibility brochure at the Visitor Center.

Entrance Fees

- \$12 per vehicle, \$4 per pedestrian or bicyclist. Good for seven days.
- Free with Interagency Annual passes.
- Free with Golden Age, Senior, and Access lifetime passes.
- Fees subject to change in 2018.

Pets

Pets must be on a leash at all times. Pets are allowed on roads, in campgrounds, picnic areas, the Palo Verde, and Campground Perimeter trails.

Fires

At Twin Peaks Campground fires are permitted only in campground fire grills using pressed logs, charcoal, or firewood. Wood fires are prohibited at Alamo Campground. Gathering dead or down wood is prohibited.

**Western National
Parks Association**

The Association is our partner and operator of the park bookstore, located in the visitor center lobby. It sells educational books, post cards, local arts, and cultural items.

Internet Access

Free public wifi is available at the Kris Eggle Visitor Center. After-hours, visitors can access the wireless from outside the building.

Firearms

As of Feb. 22, 2010, federal law allows people who can legally possess firearms under federal, Arizona and local laws to possess firearms in Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument.

It is the visitor’s responsibility to understand and comply with state, local, and federal firearms laws. Federal law prohibits firearms in certain facilities within the monument. These are identified by signs at public entrances. If you have questions, please contact the Arizona Department of Public Safety at (800) 256-6280 or visit their website http://www.azdps.gov/Services/Concealed_Weapons/.

Nearby Attractions

**Cabeza Prieta
National Wildlife
Refuge**

Bordering Organ Pipe Cactus to the west, this refuge preserves a vast wilderness and many important species. (520)-387-6483

**Tohono O’odham
National Museum
and Cultural Center**

Learn and explore the vibrant history and culture of the Tohono O’odham. (520) 383- 0201

**El Pinacate y Gran
Desierto de Altar**

Located in Sonora, Mexico, Organ Pipe Cactus’ sister park preserves an amazing ecosystem marked by large extinct volcanoes. 01 (638) 384-9007

**Saguaro National
Park**

Just outside of Tucson, Arizona, Saguaro National Park protects impressive stands of desert plants and mountain ranges. (520) 733-5153

Special Programs *(January through March)*

Special educational and recreational opportunities for the public are offered throughout the season. Check with a ranger, on a bulletin board, or at the Kris Eggle Visitor Center for more information. Programs are subject to change and cancellation. All programs take place at the visitor center unless otherwise noted.

Star Parties: Explore the night sky with park rangers. Parties will include a short program, followed by night sky viewing through a variety of devices, including telescopes. January 16, February 16, March 17	Moonlight Hikes: Hike the Desert View Trail with a Ranger by the light of the moon. Dress warmly, wear sturdy shoes, and bring a flashlight and water. Limited to 25 hikers. Sign up for a hike at the visitor center . January 1-2, 30-31 February 28 March 1, 30	Lecture Series: Speakers include biologists, archaeologists, rangers and other specialists who delve more deeply into subjects tied to Organ Pipe Cactus. 2 pm Second Wednesdays of the month. 1 hour	Border Patrol 101: Join agents from the U.S. Border Patrol in the Kris Eggle Visitor Center Auditorium to explore their role and mission. 2 pm January 24 and first and third Wednesdays of February and March. 45 minutes	Chief Talks: Meet members of the Monument’s management team and learn about how different divisions in the park work towards a common goal. 11:00am First and third Thursdays of the month. 20 minutes
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Explore the Night Sky

Occasionally during the winter months, park rangers and volunteers will have telescopes set up in the Twin Peaks Campground. Check bulletin boards for dates and times.

Ranger-Led Programs *(January through March)*

Please check park bulletin boards or call the visitor center at (520) 387-6849 x7302 for more information. Bring sunscreen, water, and snacks to all outdoor programs. Van spots may be reserved by calling the visitor center up to seven days in advance. Children must be accompanied by parents. Programs and shuttles are offered from mid-December through early April unless otherwise noted. Programs may be cancelled due to inclement weather and staff availability.

		Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
9:00am 3 hrs	Ajo Mountain Van Tour: <i>Reservations Required</i> Enjoy a unique three hour experience on a ranger led van tour of the scenic Ajo Mountain Drive. Several stops will provide an intimate look at the monument. Seating limited to 10.	●			●			●
11:00am 20 min 	Patio Talk: Meet on the back patio of the Kris Eggle Visitor Center for a short ranger-led presentation. Topics vary, check bulletin boards.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
1:30pm 1 hr	Location Talk- Quitobaquito Spring: Join a ranger at this gorgeous desert oasis and learn about the unique animals and its rich cultural history. Meet ranger at Quitobaquito or reserve a spot in a van - seating limited to 11. Van departs at 12:45pm. <i>Begins January 2018</i>		●			●		
1:30pm 45 min 	Location Talk- Blankenship Well: Join a ranger at Blankenship Well (Dos Lomitas) to explore the historic ranch stead from the early twentieth century. Meet ranger at Dos Lomitas or reserve a spot in the van - seating is limited to 11 passangers. Van departs at 1:00pm. <i>Begins January 2018</i>			●			●	
2:00pm 20 min 	Patio Talk: Meet on the back patio of the Kris Eggle Visitor Center for a short ranger-led presentation. Topics vary, check bulletin boards.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
3:30pm 20 min 	Patio Talk: Meet on the back patio of the Kris Eggle Visitor Center for a short ranger-led presentation. Topics vary, check bulletin boards for topics.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
7:00pm 45 min 	Evening Program: End your evening with a traditional ranger program. Presentations cover a variety of topics, including natural and cultural history. Check at bulletin boards for topics. <i>Begins January 2018</i>			●	●	●	●	●
Varies 45 min	Night Sky Program: Join a Nighth Sky Ranger to view and explor the night skies over the monument. Check program schedule for times and location. Night sky programs replace Evening Programs for that day. <i>Begins January 2018</i>							

Hiker Shuttles *(January through March)*

Free hiker shuttles depart from the information kiosk at the Twin Peaks Campground. Call the Kris Eggle Visitor Center at (520) 387-6849 x7302 or register in person to reserve a spot. Shuttles are one way transportation and allow visitors to hike back to the campground. Seating is limited to 13.

		Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
8:30am	Senita Basin Trailhead: Access the Puerto Blanco trails from the south. Experience the diversity of Senita Basin and see the senita, saguaro and organ pipe cacti together. 4.6 mile hike back to the campground. <i>Begins January 2018</i>			●			●	
8:30am	Red Tanks Tinaja Trailhead: Access the Puerto Blanco trails from the north. Trail gains slight elevation and offers great views of the desert. 6.7 mile hike back to the campground.		●			●		

Scenic Drives

There are a number of scenic dirt roads that can take you into the heart of the Sonoran Desert. Roads have varying degrees of difficulty, and offer great experiences for visitors in all kinds of vehicles. Bring plenty of water and food for long full day drives. Always obey posted speed limits. Be mindful that some roads are two-way, and other vehicles might be approaching. All scenic drives have a speed limit of 25 mph unless otherwise posted.

Easy - passenger cars

Ajo Mountain Loop: 21 mi (34 km) 2 hours round-trip.

This scenic loop crosses the Diablo Mountains to the base of the Ajo Mountains and returns through Sonoyta Valley. Along the way there are dense concentrations of saguaro and organ pipe cactus. Picnic tables and hiking trails are accessible along this route. A free interpretive guide is available at the visitor center. Route begins across Highway 85 from the visitor center entrance.

North Puerto Blanco to Pinkley Peak: 10 mi (16 km) 45 minutes round-trip

This road has scenic views of mountains and dense concentrations of saguaro cactus. At the turnaround there is a picnic area with views of the Valley of the Ajo and Pinkley Peak. *The road continues as a rugged one-way loop recommended for high clearance vehicles only.*

South Puerto Blanco to Quitobaquito: 28 mi (45 km) 3 hours round-trip

This drive parallels the international border for several miles, and provides access to Quitobaquito Spring, an oasis in the middle of the desert. Great examples of organ pipe, senita, and saguaro cactus can be seen. *The road can be washboarded- slow down and allow extra time.*

South Puerto Blanco to Senita Basin Trailhead: 7 mi (11.2 km) 2 hours round-trip from Hwy 85

This drive offers the quickest access to the Senita Basin trailhead. Here, you will see the greatest concentration of senita cactus in the Monument. Kino Peak can be seen from the road. A large network of hiking trails can be accessed from this point. *The road can be washboarded - slow down and allow extra time.*

Camino de Dos Republicas: 9.6 mi (14 km) 1 hour round-trip from Hwy 85

Starting from Hwy 85, the road is rough as it crosses several washes. First you will encounter the Gachado line-shack just before the junction of the Roosevelt Easement Road. The road will then parallel the international border to the ranch buildings at Dos Lomitas. The road is closed to the public beyond this point.

Medium - high clearance

North Puerto Blanco - South Puerto Blanco Loop: 41 mi (66 km) 4 to 5 hours round-trip

This scenic drive provides the greatest variety of plants and vistas in the Monument. It is a rugged route with few facilities. The road provides access to several trailheads as well as historic sites. Quitobaquito is accessible from this loop. There are picnic tables and vault toilets along the route.

Bates Well Road to Cabeza Prieta Wildlife Refuge: 26 mi (41.8 km) 2 hours one-way

Starting from Hwy 85 north of the monument, this road will provide access to Bates Well Ranch (17 mi, 27 km) and the Pozo Nuevo Rd (23 mi, 37 km) before reaching the monument boundary. Highlights include the Bates Well Ranch site and access to the El Camino de Diablo in Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge.

Hard - high clearance and 4x4

Pozo Nuevo Road: 7 mi (11.2 km) 2 hours one-way from either start of the road.

This rugged road in the western portion of the Monument connects the South Puerto Blanco Drive to the Bates Well Road. This route offers great views of the Cipriano Hills, the Growler Valley, and the historic Pozo Nuevo line-camp.



Ajo Mountain Drive



Quitobaquito Pond



North Puerto Blanco Drive



Bates Well Ranch



Ranch House at Blankenship Well

Bikes, Horses, and More- Your Guide to Adventure



Equestrian Trails

Equestrian use is welcome at Organ Pipe Cactus within designated Wilderness areas. Horses are also allowed on certain developed trails in the Monument. Refer to pages 6 and 7 and look for the horse symbol to find your trail.

Remember:

- Horses must only be fed certified weed-free hay, and digestion systems must be purged.
- Water is scarce, plan ahead
- Horse camping is available at Twin Peaks Campground by reservation.



Bicycles

The winding roads of Organ Pipe Cactus provide great opportunities to explore the desert on bicycle. All vehicle roads in the monument are open for bicycles. Please follow all road laws, obey speed limits, and move to the side of the road to allow vehicles to pass. Please prepare there is no water available along any of the routes carry enough for your needs.

Popular Routes:

Ajo Mountain Loop: 21 mile (33 km) improved gravel road, 1,000 feet elevation change over the route. Restrooms are located halfway at Estes Canyon trailhead.

North Puerto Blanco Drive to Pinkley Peak: 10 miles (16 km) round trip along a winding road. Slight elevation change along the washes. Restrooms are located at Pinkley Peak Picnic Area.

South Puerto Blanco Drive: 28 miles (45km) roundtrip. Road is wash-boarded for the first 3 miles. No facilities.

Note: Ninety-five percent of the monument is a designated Wilderness. Bicycles are not permitted. Please stay on the roads.



Hike For Health Challenge

Explore the beautiful trails and get some exercise. Organ Pipe Cactus invites you to hike for health and challenges you to hike at least 5 miles during your visit. Stop by the Kris Eggle Visitor Center for more information on how to earn your reward.

Look for other hiking challenges across the National Park Service.

Consider the weather and temperature before hiking.



For Your Safety

Every year, Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument receives visitors from around the world. They come to see this Biosphere Reserve, an unparalleled portion of the Sonoran Desert. In addition to these visitors, others come as well. The 31-mile southern boundary of the Monument is the border between the United States and Mexico.

People do cross the border, but National Park visitors are unlikely to encounter illegal activity in the Monument. Migrants and smugglers want to evade detection and therefore try to avoid contact with other people. In rare instances when migrants or smugglers approach a visitor it is usually because they are lost, need water, or are in medical distress.

You can reduce your likelihood of encountering illegal activity by avoiding unofficial hiking trails. Be aware of your surroundings. Report suspicious activity or people to a ranger, or call 911 if your phone has a signal. When parked, secure your vehicle and keep valuables, water, and food out of sight.

If you should encounter someone or a group traveling cross-country with backpacks, bundles, or black water bottles, do not make contact. If driving, continue to drive and call for help without inviting strangers into your vehicle. If you are hiking move away from them to avoid contact.

You should not provide water or food as they may continue further into the desert and become distressed, needing assistance in an area where there is no help available.

In reality, the biggest hazards for visitors are not other people but the desert environment. The monument encompasses 516 square miles of the Sonoran Desert, much of it rugged mountains with the remainder being arid scrublands with little or no water. Water found here is not potable without treatment and is the only source of water for wildlife. When hiking or camping in the wilderness you should carry sufficient water for twice the amount of time you plan to be in the wilderness.

Be aware and respectful of wildlife. Some animals can be dangerous if cornered or handled. Harassing, handling, or posing with animals is illegal and can put you and the wildlife at risk of injury. Some animals are venomous - do not put your hands where you cannot see them.

Over the years, millions of people have come to Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument and have left with good memories. Follow these safety guidelines, to assure that your visit will be memorable too. For the right reasons.

Key Points for Desert Safety

- Carry and drink plenty of water - one gallon per person per day is recommended.
- Sun protection is important. Wear sunscreen and protective clothing.
- Desert vegetation is spiny, avoid contact.
- Flash floods occur quickly and are dangerous. Avoid washes when rain is threatening.
- Never enter a flooded roadway. Wait for the water to subside and it is safe to cross.
- Do not put your hands or feet anywhere you cannot see. Snakes, scorpions, and spiders often hide in these areas.
- Africanized bees inhabit many areas of the monument. Leave areas with large concentrations, and do not swat or kill them.
- Hike with a partner. Let someone know where you are going, when you plan to return, and who to contact if you are overdue.



Your Hiking and Camping Guide

Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument offers dozens of miles of hiking trails to help you explore the Sonoran Desert. The following is for trip planning only; please use a map or trail guide for your trip. Bring plenty of water, snacks, and sunscreen. Know your own limitations when planning a desert hike. Certain trails are open to horse use; hikers must yield to horses. Take part in the Hike for Health Challenge, see page 5 for more information. *Sign up for a hiker shuttle (pg 3) and hike a trail back to the campground.*

Visitor Center and Campground Trails

Use the map on the back of the newspaper for these easy, yet rewarding hikes. All hikes are accessible from either the Twin Peaks Campground or the Kris Eggle Visitor Center.



Head out and explore the many trails of the Monument.

Visitor Center Nature Trail: 0.10 mi (0.16 km) 10 minutes one-way.  
Easy brick path from the visitor center with interpretive information. See different cactus up close and the pupfish pond. Accessible to wheelchairs and scooters. Pets allowed on a leash when entering from parking lot.

Campground Perimeter Trail 1 mi (1.6 km) 30 minutes one-way.  
Easy loop trail around Twin Peaks Campground. Offers great views of the desert flats and various cacti.

Palo Verde Trail 2.6 mi (4.2 km) 1.5 hours round-trip. 
Easy trail between Twin Peaks Campground and Kris Eggle Visitor Center with great views of the Ajo Mountain Range.

Desert View Trail: 1.2 mi (1.9 km) 1 hour round-trip.
Easy loop trail with beautiful views, impressive stands of organ pipe cactus, and great for sunrise and sunset.

Ajo Mountains Trails

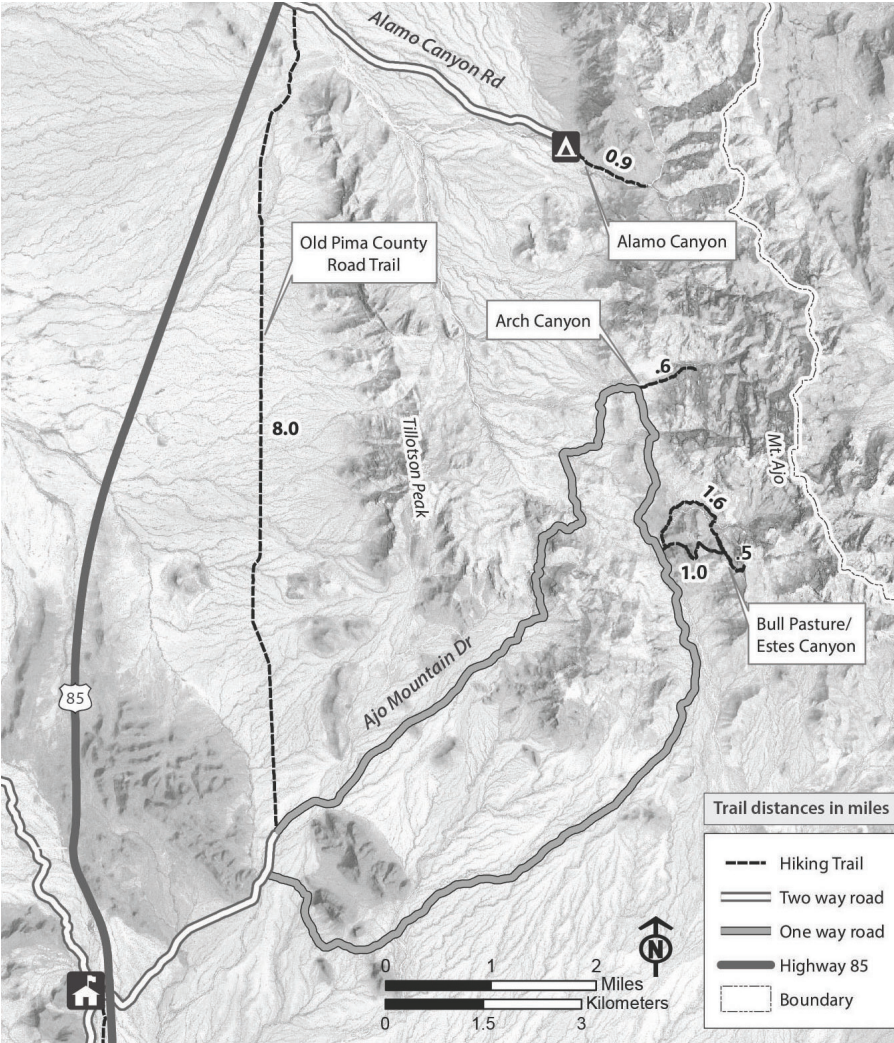
Old Pima County Road: 8 mi (12.8km) one way. 4.5 hours one-way. 
This is an easy trail that follows the old county road which was later abandoned after AZ Highway 85 was built. The trail meanders through several washes and provides great views of Pinkley Peak and great up-close encounters with a variety of cactus.

Alamo Canyon: 1.8 mi (1.7 km) 1 hour round-trip.
Easy trail that follows an old dirt road to a historic ranch house and corral. Trail follows an impressive wash that is great for birding.

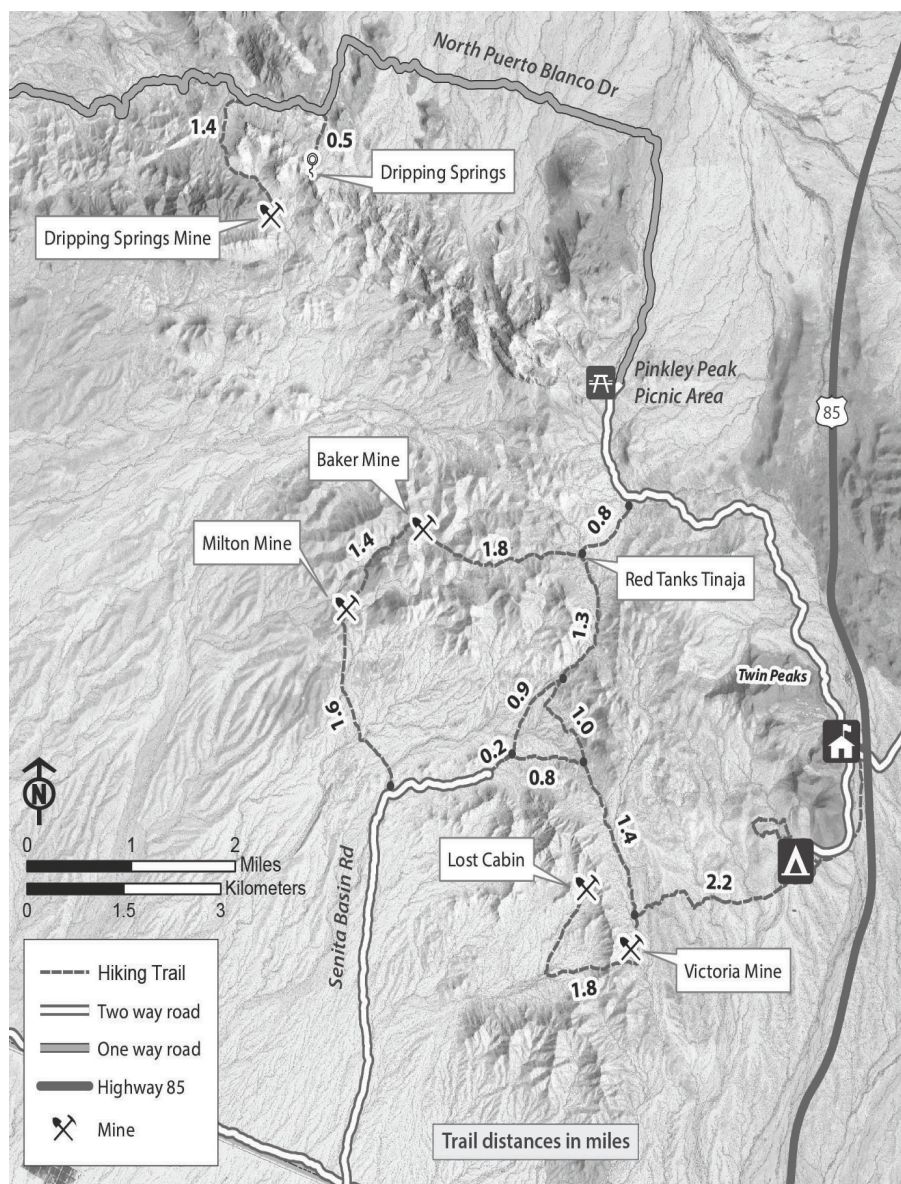
Arch Canyon: 1.2 mi (1.9 km) 1 hour round-trip.
Easy trail that steadily climbs into Arch Canyon’s riparian vegetation. Good views of the arch from the parking area. Great birding opportunities.

Bull Pasture: 3 mi (4.8 km) 1-2 hours out and back.
Difficult trail with steep grade and exposed cliffs. Spectacular views of the Monument and Mexico.

Estes Canyon: Distance and time varies with route choices 1-3 hours round-trip.
Trailhead to Bull Pasture Junction and back. 3.2mi (5.1km)
Trailhead to junction returning on Bull Pasture trail. 2.6mi (4.2km)
Trailhead to Bull Pasture summit returning on Bull Pasture trail. 3.6mi (5.8km)
Moderate trail is great for birding. The trail crosses several washes but is relatively flat until the switchback climb to the Bull Pasture trail junction.



Puerto Blanco Mountains Trails



Victoria Mine: 4.4 mi (7.2 km) 3.5 hours round-trip.



Easy trail that will cross several washes on the way to Victoria Mine, home of one of the oldest historic sites on the Monument. The mineshaft and ruins of the old mine store remain.

Lost Cabin Mine Trail 8 mi (12.8 km) 4.5 hours round-trip.



This is a moderate trail that follows an old mining road. The trail is primitive, but provides great views of the Sonoyta Mountains to the south. Trail ends at the ruins of the old stone mining house, and several prospecting holes can be seen.

Senita Basin Loop: 2.9 mi (4.6 km) 1 hour round-trip.



Easy loop trail that meanders through an impressive grove of the rare senita cactus with great views of the Puerto Blanco Mountains.

Milton Mine: 3.2 mi (5.1 km) 1-2 hours round-trip.



Easy trail that leads to a mine operated by legendary Arizona lawman, Jeff Milton. Trail provides great views for sunset.

Red Tanks Tinaja: 1.6 mi (2.6 km) 1.5 hours round-trip.



Moderate trail which leads to a natural water collecting basin carved into the bedrock by erosion. *Do not drink the water.*

Dripping Springs: 1 mi (1.6 km) 1 hour round-trip.

Easy trail to Dripping Springs, one of the few natural water sources in the area. Do not drink the water. Wildlife can be abundant in the area. Trail to the ridgeline is difficult.

Dripping Springs Mine: 2.8 mi (4.5 km) 1-2 hours round-trip.

Moderate trail to a historic mine site used by bootleggers during Prohibition. Trail offers commanding views of the Saguaro lined horizon.

Many trails can be combined into loop hikes of various lengths and difficulties. Rangers can help plan additional hiking opportunities.

Camping

There are a number of camping opportunities at the Monument: Check our website or call the Kris Eggle Visitor Center for camping and/or reservation information.

Twin Peaks Campground is a developed 208-space campground near the visitor center with RV sites up to 40 ft. and a designated tent section. There are 34 tent sites and 174 RV sites, six rest rooms, three with solar showers and a dump station with potable water located at the south end of the campground. There are several potable water faucets on each row.

There are no electrical or water hookups at the campsites.

Register at the visitor center, campground kiosk, or self-register at kiosk after business hours. Open all year. Fee: \$16 per night or \$8 for holders of Golden Age/Access/Senior Passes. Call in advance for vehicles over 40 feet in length. Generator hours vary by season check with park staff or at bulletin boards for details. If you are en route and concerned about site availability, please call the visitor center. Fees subject to change in 2018.

Alamo Campground is a four space primitive campground with a maximum occupancy of five people per site per night. Sites are for tents, camper vans, and pickup campers only. There is a single vault toilet on site, but no water. Camping is first come, first served; self-registration occurs at the campground. Being a remote campground, the visitor center only has limited information on availability. Open all year. Fee \$10 per night or \$5 with a Golden Age/Access/Senior Pass.

Group camping is available by reservation only; please call the Kris Eggle Visitor Center for more information. 520-387-6849 ext 7302

Backcountry camping is available in select areas of the Monument; you must register at the Kris Eggle Visitor Center to get a camping permit. \$5 per permit.

Ground fires are not permitted anywhere in the monument.



Organ Pipe Cactus: Fun Facts

Creatures of the Sonoran Desert feast on the juicy fruit and disperse the seeds across the desert.



Average height at maturity is 15 feet.

Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument is the only place in the United States where you can see large stands of organ pipe cacti growing naturally.

Just before and during the summer rains, the organ pipe fruit ripens and splits open to reveal its red pulpy flesh.



Early settlers who encountered dead cacti were reminded of church pipe organs and called these cacti organ pipes.

Columnar cacti such as the organ pipe and saguaro can form these unusual growths called "crisates."



Organ pipe cactus may live 150 years.

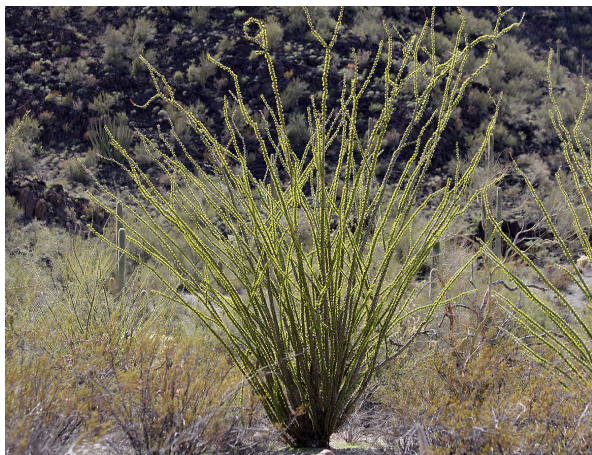


An organ pipe cactus produces its first flowers at around 35 years. The bat pollinated flowers blossom at night and are closed by mid-morning the next day.



Ocotillo- It's not a cactus?

Depending on when it last rained, the ocotillo may look like either a bundle of sticks in the ground, or a burst of green fireworks with vermillion tips when blooming. It has long sharp spines that cause some to think it must be a cactus. In reality, it is a shrub from the candlewood family, common to the Chihuahuan, Sonoran, and lower Mojave deserts of the U.S. and Mexico.



Ocotillo in leaf

Ocotillo seems to defy our common idea of "shrub." From a distance, the plant looks dead.

A closer look may reveal bits of green in a very woody, rough-textured bark.

That indicates the plant is alive. Look even more closely and you will see the small circles on top of the base of the thorns and the place where leaves form. Most of the time the shrub is leafless and dormant, waiting for rain.

When rain comes, as either gentle soaking rain of winter or thunderstorms in summer, it will trigger an amazing transformation. Within 48 hours, the stems turn greener, and new leaf buds appear. A few days later, the ocotillo will be hiding thorns under a luxurious coat of green leaves.

If you are fortunate and visit Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument from late February through early April, you may see clusters of vermillion flowers atop those wavy stems.



Ocotillo flowers and buds

These flowers are magnets for migrating and resident hummingbirds, orioles, pollinating insects, and other nectar-lovers.

Once the soil dries and the ocotillo finishes blooming, the plant has used its last spurt of rain-induced energy; the leaves turn yellow to red - a hint of autumn in the summer.



Dormant ocotillo

Flower Guide

When Does the Sonoran Desert Bloom?

If you are lucky, you may see the desert carpeted in flowers. After heavy winter rains, plants burst into bloom, some flowering only days after receiving water. Other plants wait patiently for the summer rains to come.

Sonoran Desert wildflowers grow quickly and in large numbers after it rains. Once the soil dries, plants die back. Desert wildflowers are not only beautiful, but they are essential to the survival of many desert creatures.



Saguaro cactus



Pincushion cactus



Prickly pear cactus



Mexican gold poppy



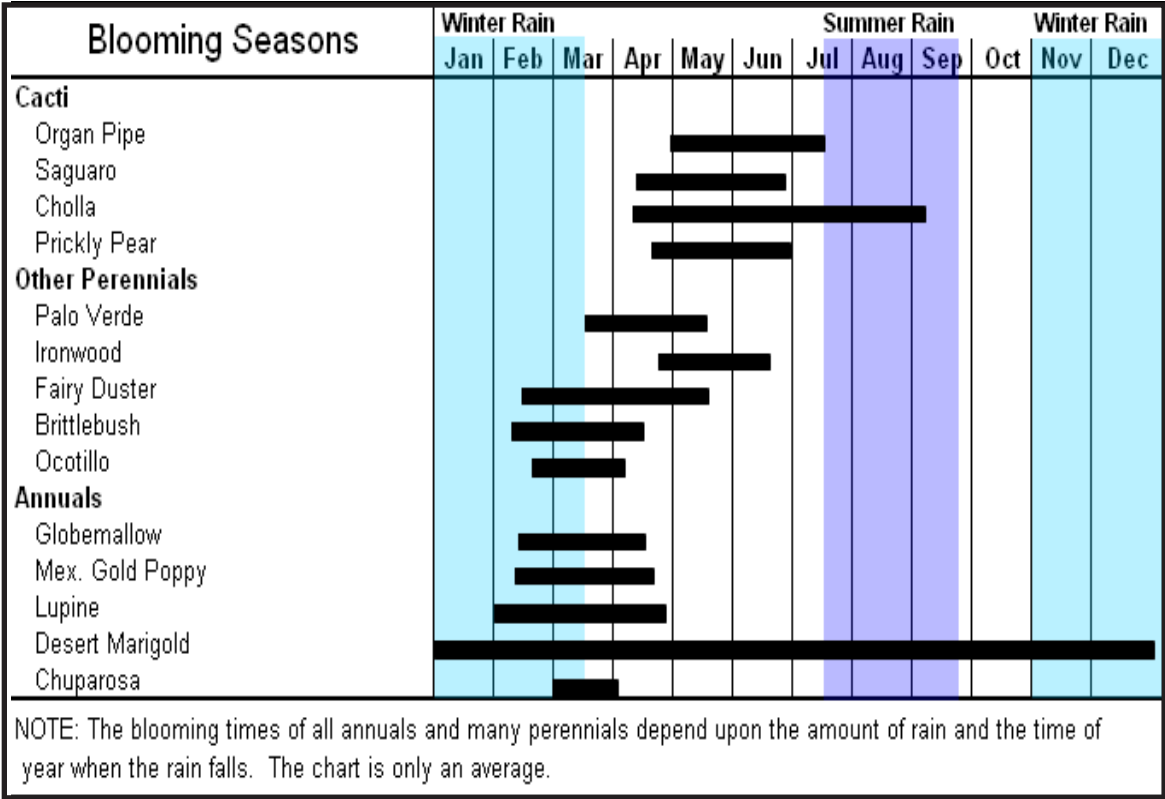
Mojave lupine



Fairy duster



Desert marigold



Teddy Bear Cholla



Compass Barrel Cactus

How do you say that?

- Ajo:** AH-ho. Spanish for garlic; also a Tohono O’odham word for a copper-colored pigment.
- Bajada:** ba-HAH-dah. The gravelly slope at the base of a mountain range. Many diverse species take advantage of the bajadas’ well drained soil. They are good places to look for wildlife.
- Cholla:** CHOY-yuh. A group of cacti known for painful spines and easily detachable, jointed branches. Also called “jumping cactus.”

- Gila:** HEE-lah. As in Gila monster, Gila woodpecker and Gila River.
- Ocotillo:** OH-koh-TEE-yo. A very thorny plant, often mistaken for a cactus. The ocotillo has the ability to sprout leaves within 48 hours of rain.
- Saguaro:** sa-WA-roh. Arizona’s tallest cactus (growing to over 70 feet - usually 45 to 50 feet) and a major indicator species for the health of the Sonoran Desert.

Birding:

The Sonoran is a vibrant desert. Every season of the year, one can find a diversity of birds flitting amongst the cholla, soaring above the Ajo Mountains, or sitting atop saguaro cacti. There have been more than 270 birds documented at Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument.

There are many birds here during different times of the year. Phainopeplas are a common sight in the winter, with their glistening black plumage and rakish crest. The cactus wren, the state bird of Arizona, builds its nests in the safety of cholla cactus. The Gambel's quail is almost comical as it dashes quickly through the underbrush of the desert, its thick dark plume dancing with each motion of its head.

Some areas of the monument are especially good places to see a variety of birds. Hike the Alamo Canyon Trail, which parallels the Alamo Wash, out to the old corral. At the end of the one-mile trail, find a spot under a tree in view of a bit of water, bring out a bird book and binoculars, and wait. The lush vegetation along the wash and the water, make this a good place to see birds. Early morning is a great time to make this trek.

The small ponds behind the Kris Eggle Visitor Center are another good birding spot. The pond and the many trees and flowering plants draw a variety of birds sightings of common and unusual birds have happened here. Harris' hawk, gila woodpeckers and the northern mockingbird often light on the towering saguaro near the patio. Warblers, finches, sparrows, or even a Costa's hummingbird might visit the pond for a quick drink in the shade.

Other good locations to see birds include the Twin Peaks Campground, Estes Canyon along the Ajo Mountain Drive, and Quitobaquito.

Some birds, like the gila woodpecker and cactus wren, are permanent residents nesting here year-round. Most are seasonal, spending only part of the year here.

Many birds, including a number of flycatchers, are migrants stopping in on their way north in the spring or south in the fall.

Vagrants are birds that are some distance from their normal range, but will make an appearance here every now and then such as the Summer Tanager, Painted Bunting, and Eastern Meadowlark.

No matter the time of year, there are opportunities to see a variety of birds here.



Gambel's quail



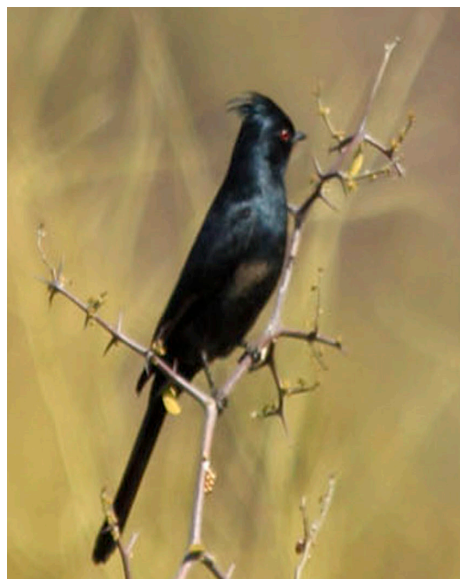
Harris' Hawks



Vermilion flycatcher



Cactus wren



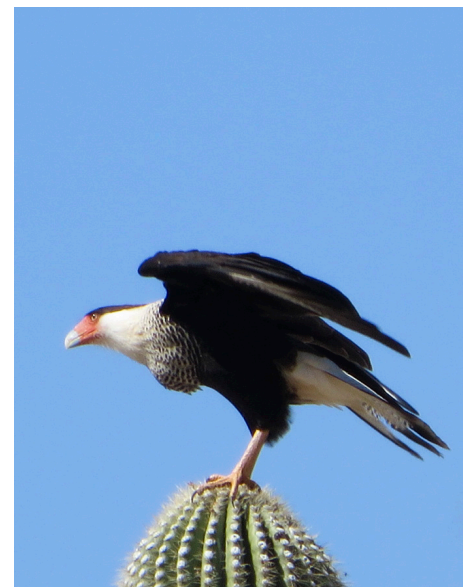
Phainopepla [fay-noh-**pep**-luh]



Costa's hummingbird feeding



Dusky-capped flycatcher



Crested caracara

Night Skies

A resource so threatened, yet so recoverable

We all have a personal connection to the night sky. The stars are at peace, drifting slowly through the darkness and into our deepest being. Every culture through all of human time has had its own imaginary sky, full of myths, mysticism and supernatural explanations for natural phenomena.

Native Americans saw the skies as a part of an organic whole with the earth and all the trees, rocks, animals, and people on it. Other cultures such as the Greeks saw in the sky the work of gods, powerful but flawed super-humans, who interfered with human affairs.

Our neighbors, the Tohono O'odham, view the stars as cornmeal, or beans, strewn across the dark fabric of the night sky by a coyote. The Mongols of the Eurasian Steppe and the Sioux of the American Plains saw the night sky as the cover of their yurts and tepees with pinholes being the stars and the seams being the Milky Way.

Today still, we gaze skyward. In the desert, we enjoy clean, clear, dry air that makes the stars appear closer and more approachable. The Big Dipper is obvious in any season. The Milky Way spills across the night sky year-round, but is especially magnificent in summer.

The Monument provides an opportunity to enjoy a spectacle that is steadily fading from sight in the United States. An estimated two-thirds of Americans cannot see the Milky Way from their homes. Visiting national parks is a great way to connect with the night. The wilderness, however, is surrounded by non-wilderness. At night from the monument, we can see signs of Phoenix, Tucson, Ajo, and Sonoyta. Their lighting casts a glow into the sky, blotting out stars and constellations.

This evidence of wasteful lighting is light pollution. As with any other type of pollution, each of us can make a difference—and save some money as well—with the following measures:

- Use energy efficient lightbulbs in outdoor fixtures.
- Use shields or downward fixtures to prevent light from shining upward.
- Use motion sensors on outdoor lights so they are only when needed

For more information about preserving the night sky, visit the International Dark Sky Association at www.darksky.org.

Your Fees at Work



New ADA accessible picnic area at the Kris Eggle Visitor Center.

Fee dollars paid for the recent upgrades of the Kris Eggle Visitor Center. A new exhibit hall containing eight interactive displays depict the monument's natural and cultural history, while a accessible picnic area was added across the parking lot. Further, crumbling asphalt trails at the visitor center and the campground amphitheater were replaced with brick pavers, making them accessible.

This year we are replacing educational signs outside the visitor center and Desert View Trail, and are repainting picnic tables at the Twin Peaks Campground.

At Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, all fees collected stay here to help maintain and improve the facilities. Visitors can see evidence of improvements paid for with their entrance and campground fees as we work to make Organ Pipe Cactus a better and safer place to visit.

WNPA: The Park Store People

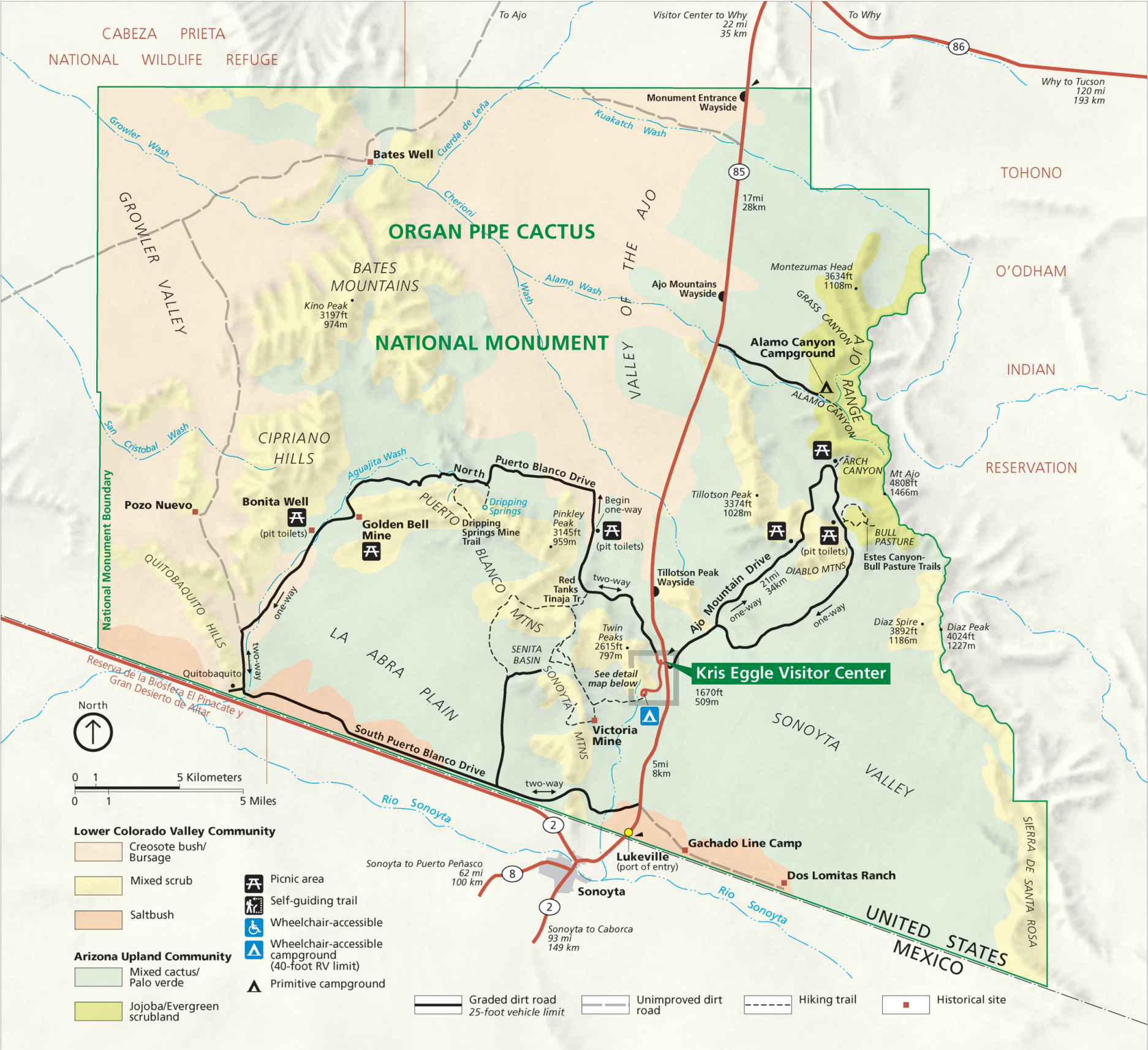


Myrna Dollar, WNPA Store Manager with visitor.

Western National Parks Association (WNPA) promotes preservation of the national park system and its resources by creating greater public appreciation through education, interpretation, and research.

In partnership with the National Park Service, WNPA operates the park store in the Kris Eggle Visitor Center. It offers a wide selection of books and educational materials about birds, wildflowers, plants, ecology, geology, history, and archaeology. There are also postcards, bookmarks, Native American artwork, tee and sweatshirts, and hats for sun protection. An assortment of snacks are available as well.

Proceeds from this and other bookstores at national parks across the West are used in direct support of education, interpretation, and research in the parks, as well as outreach programs at schools and in local communities.



Visitor Center

The Kris Eggle Visitor Center is open 8am–5pm. Stop by for an informative slide presentation, take a stroll on the 1/10-mile handicapped-accessible nature trail, view the museum exhibit room, and talk with a park ranger at the information counter.

Ranger led talks, walks, and guided tours are offered January through March.

More Information

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