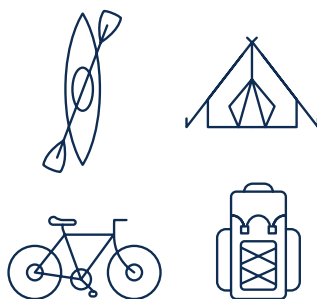




OPT OUTSIDE IN ARIZONA



ARIZONA
OFFICE OF TOURISM

OPT OUTSIDE IN ARIZONA

In his book “Desert Solitaire,” Arizona author and outdoorsman Edward Abbey wrote that people who travel “on foot, on horseback, or on a bicycle will see more, feel more, enjoy more in one mile than the motorized tourists can in a hundred miles.”

No disrespect to “motorized tourists,” but this guide isn’t for them. It’s for people who prefer to experience Arizona’s wild places through their shoe soles, their nostrils, their pores.

Every place described within—be it an Arizona classic or a lesser-known gem—was chosen with the help of a pro guide, and every photo was taken by an Instagrammer who actually went there.

This little book encourages you to follow in their footsteps, tire tracks and paddle strokes. And it provides some amazing Arizona answers to the question opt-outside travelers ask themselves at the end of every journey:

“Where to next?”



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PHANTOM RANCH





The mystique of the Superstition Mountains originated with the Pima Indians, who in the mid-1800s told local farmers about strange happenings in the area—weird noises, disappearances, mysterious deaths.

There's no mystery, however, as to why Superstition Wilderness Area is a favorite of hikers: Nowhere in America exists wilder, more rugged scenery located so close to a major metropolis.

The trek on the Siphon Draw Trail up to the Flatiron—a rock that resembles a giant clothes iron—pays off with views worth their weight in gold. This strenuous, up-and-back hike takes about 5 hours and totals about 6 miles round-trip. It starts out easy then grows steeper—always requiring attention to the trail. (When in doubt, keep left, and watch for rock falls ahead of you.)

FLATIRON PEAK

The trickiest part comes toward the end of the hike, when you're faced with a vertical 10-foot rock wall that requires a bit of scrambling.

"You'll gain 3,000 feet of elevation in three miles," says Annemarie Kruse, a guide with Arizona Outback Adventures. "Take your time. The trail is difficult and can be dangerous. But the views from the top are astounding, and the physical accomplishment of getting there is incredibly gratifying."

WHY GO

Hoodoos, 360-degree views at the top (including Weavers Needle).

BEST SEASON

Winter and spring

NEAREST AMENITIES

Apache Junction

PRO TIP

During the final stretch, look for white/blue dots and arrows to keep on the trail.

PACK THIS

Salty snacks. They'll help keep you from feeling wobbly on the way down.



HIKE

5

President Herbert Hoover authorized Canyon de Chelly National Monument in 1931 to preserve one of the longest continuously inhabited landscapes in North America, dating back nearly 5,000 years.

Although private tours and ranger-led hikes offer the widest access to the canyon and information about the area's rich history, there is one

self-guided tour. The White House Trail starts along the canyon rim before making a 600-foot descent over the course of a little more than a mile. It's a moderate hike, but be aware: You're

CANYON DE CHELLY

at an altitude of 6,000 feet, so the air will feel a little thin on the way back up, and there are some steep drop-offs and short tunnels to pass through.

The colors and views of the naturally sculpted sandstone along the way are spectacular. At the bottom of the trail, you'll be looking back in time at the White House Ruins—dwellings built into the sandstone cliff and occupied between 1060 A.D. and 1275 A.D.

"The canyon scenery is stunning, and not that many visitors make it into the backcountry," says Arizona Outback Adventures guide Brian Jump. "The White House Ruin is just one of more than 2,400 archaeological sites, and you'll get to experience active local Navajo culture, too. It's an amazing hiking trip."

WHY GO

Rich archeology and history; beauty rivaling the Grand Canyon's—without the crowds.

BEST SEASON

May to October

NEAREST AMENITIES

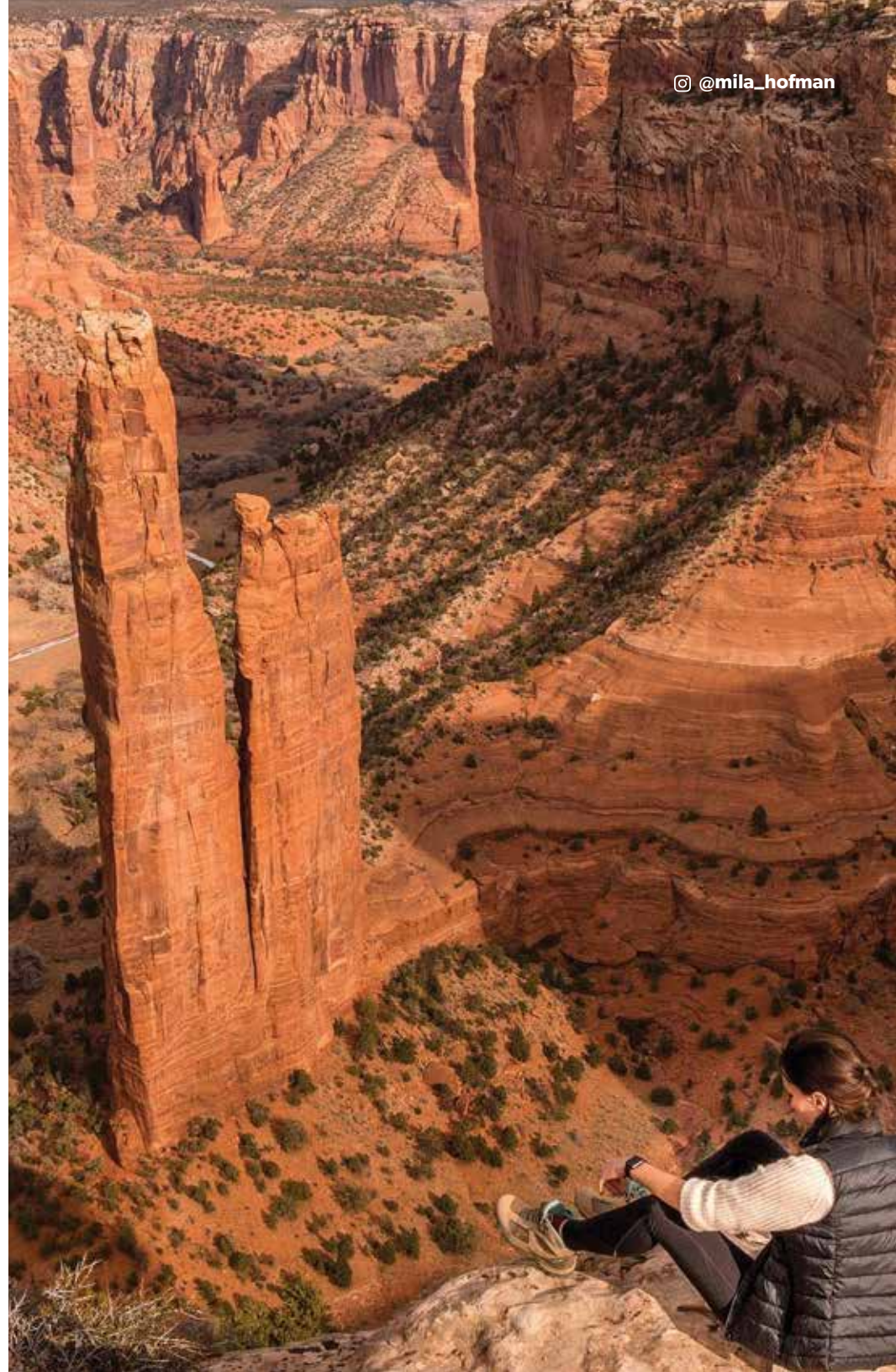
Chinle

PRO TIP

Hire an authorized Navajo guide if you want to go to the canyon floor.

PACK THIS

Bring cushy car-camping gear, then hire a local shuttle service to one of the canyon camping spots that can only be accessed through a local guide.





© @brandon_erdman_photography

The Kofa National Wildlife Refuge takes its name from the King of Arizona (KOFA) Mine, the largest gold producer in the Lower Colorado Basin at the turn of the 1900s. Today, the area offers a wealth of opportunity for hikers—and a chance to view resident bighorn sheep, mule deer, fox and a wide variety of birds and burrowing critters.

KOFA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

The popular Palm Canyon Trail is a round-trip hike of just over a mile to a stand of California fan palms, the only palm species native to Arizona. You'll want to bring a camera and time your ascent for a midday arrival, when the lighting is best.

The more advanced journey climbs to 4,877-foot Signal Peak, gaining more than 2,100 feet in elevation over 1.5 miles of rough terrain. (The Kofa's second-highest summit—4,720-foot Ten Ewe Mountain—lies just to the east.)

If you're feeling ambitious about peak-bagging over a weekend, 3,788-foot Castle Dome Peak is in the southern range.

"The Kofa is an incredibly rugged area. There is very little infrastructure and very few visitors," says Arizona Outback Adventures guide Josh Kloepping. "The wildlife is diverse and includes native desert bighorn sheep and desert pronghorn."

WHY GO

Peak chasing, viewing wildlife and plants.

BEST SEASON

Spring, fall and winter

NEAREST AMENITIES

Yuma

PRO TIP

Visit in the spring to catch the wildflower bloom.

PACK THIS

A detailed map of the area and more water than you think you need. A four-wheel-drive vehicle also comes in handy.



HIKE

9



f the nearly 6 million people who visit Grand Canyon National Park each year, fewer than 1 percent hike all the way to the bottom. The unofficial “club” for these one-percenters is Phantom Ranch.

Designed by Mary Colter—a persnickety chain-smoker who, as a female architect in the 1920s, was a one-percenter in her own right—Phantom

Ranch is a collection of wood-and-stone structures built along Bright Angel Creek. There are 11 cabins, four bunkhouse-style dorms and a canteen.

The descent from the Grand Canyon’s rim to Phantom Ranch

covers 7 to 14 miles (depending on your starting point) and 2 billion years of geological history. The reward for the knee-pounding hike is a cold beverage at the canteen or an even colder dip in the creek.

Whether you sleep in one of the dorms or pitch a tent downcreek at Bright Angel Campground, you can pre-arrange a hearty dinner and/or breakfast at the canteen.

“I highly recommend staying at least two nights at Phantom Ranch,” says REI Adventures guide Chris Anderson, who has led trips into the Grand Canyon for the past 15 years. “It will give your body time to recover from the descent, and give you time to explore side canyons or take a day hike to Ribbon Falls.”

WHY GO

Epic scenery, geological history, cold beer at the bottom.

BEST SEASON

May to October

NEAREST AMENITIES

Tusayan

PRO TIP

If you’re hiking out of Phantom Ranch to the South Rim, use the Bright Angel Trail. It has water sources and shaded rest houses.

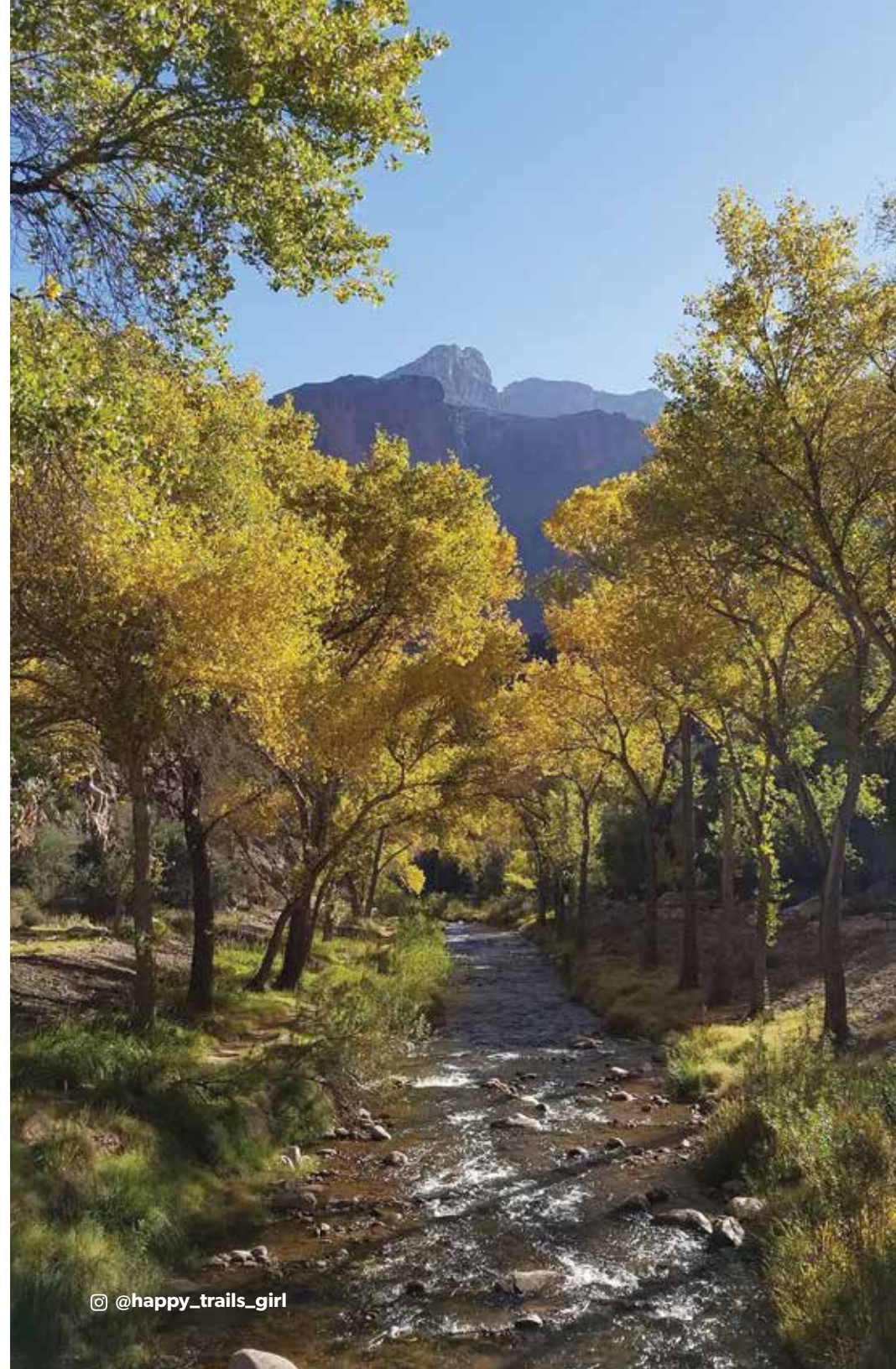
PACK THIS

Trekking poles. (Your knees will thank you.)



HIKE

10



@happy_trails_girl



The cliffs, canyons, caves and riparian habitat found in the sprawling Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness make it suited to a multiday backpacking trek.

ARAVAIPA CANYON

Parts of this desert oasis are shaded by cottonwood, maple, sycamore and willow trees, and the wildlife afoot (and aflight) includes bighorn sheep and more than 200 bird species.

The canyon can be hiked starting at either end, although the western trailhead offers easier access. Taking that route, you'll start at 2,630 feet, gaining a little over 400 feet in elevation (through plenty of ups and downs) over about 12 miles.

While the trip can be done as a one-way hike in 10 hours or less, this rich ecosystem is best experienced with plenty of exploration into the many side canyons along the way, such as Virgus Canyon or Horse Camp Canyon and its waterfall.

You'll be navigating through unmaintained trails, sand, gravel and cobble, as well as through Aravaipa Creek, so it's a must to have sturdy footwear that can get wet.

"It's one of the most beautiful and lush canyons in Arizona, and you get it nearly all to yourself," says Josh Kloepping, a guide with Arizona Outback Adventures. "Only 50 people are allowed in the canyon each day, so it's possible you won't see anyone else."

WHY GO

A true wilderness experience for novice and experienced backpackers.

BEST SEASON

Spring and fall

NEAREST AMENITIES

Winkelman

PRO TIP

Get your permit as early as possible, particularly on weekends or during the fall peak season.

PACK THIS

Water filter. There's water everywhere, so you shouldn't need to carry much, but you will need to filter it.



HIKE

In a single afternoon at Chiricahua National Monument you can walk in the footsteps of early pioneers, explore the remnants of an ancient volcano, and traverse an environment that resembles five biomes (large areas of plant and animal groups that are adapted to a specific environment).

This national monument in southeastern Arizona is a spectacular blend of history, geology and biodiversity that includes around 200 species of birds.

CHIRICAHUA NATIONAL MONUMENT

"The best hike, in my opinion, is the Echo Canyon Loop, which consists of Echo Canyon, Hailstone and Ed Riggs Trails," says Michael Blaylock, operations supervisor at Arizona Outback Adventures. "I love this

trail because you get to hike through multiple environments in 3.3 miles. The route takes you through spectacular rock formations, a densely wooded pine forest and a living desert populated with quintessential Sonoran Desert flora."

Plan at least 2 hours to complete the hike.

If you're up for a challenge, the Big Loop will get your heart pumping. This all-day, 9.5-mile trek covers Echo Canyon and Ed Riggs trails, plus Upper Rhyolite Canyon, Sarah Deming, Heart of Rocks, Big Balanced Rock, Inspiration Point and Mushroom Rock. Bring snacks and plenty of water.

WHY GO

To explore one of Arizona's unique sky islands, an isolated mountain range rising out of the surrounding desert "sea."

BEST SEASON

March through May (when all the flora and fauna are out)

NEAREST AMENITIES

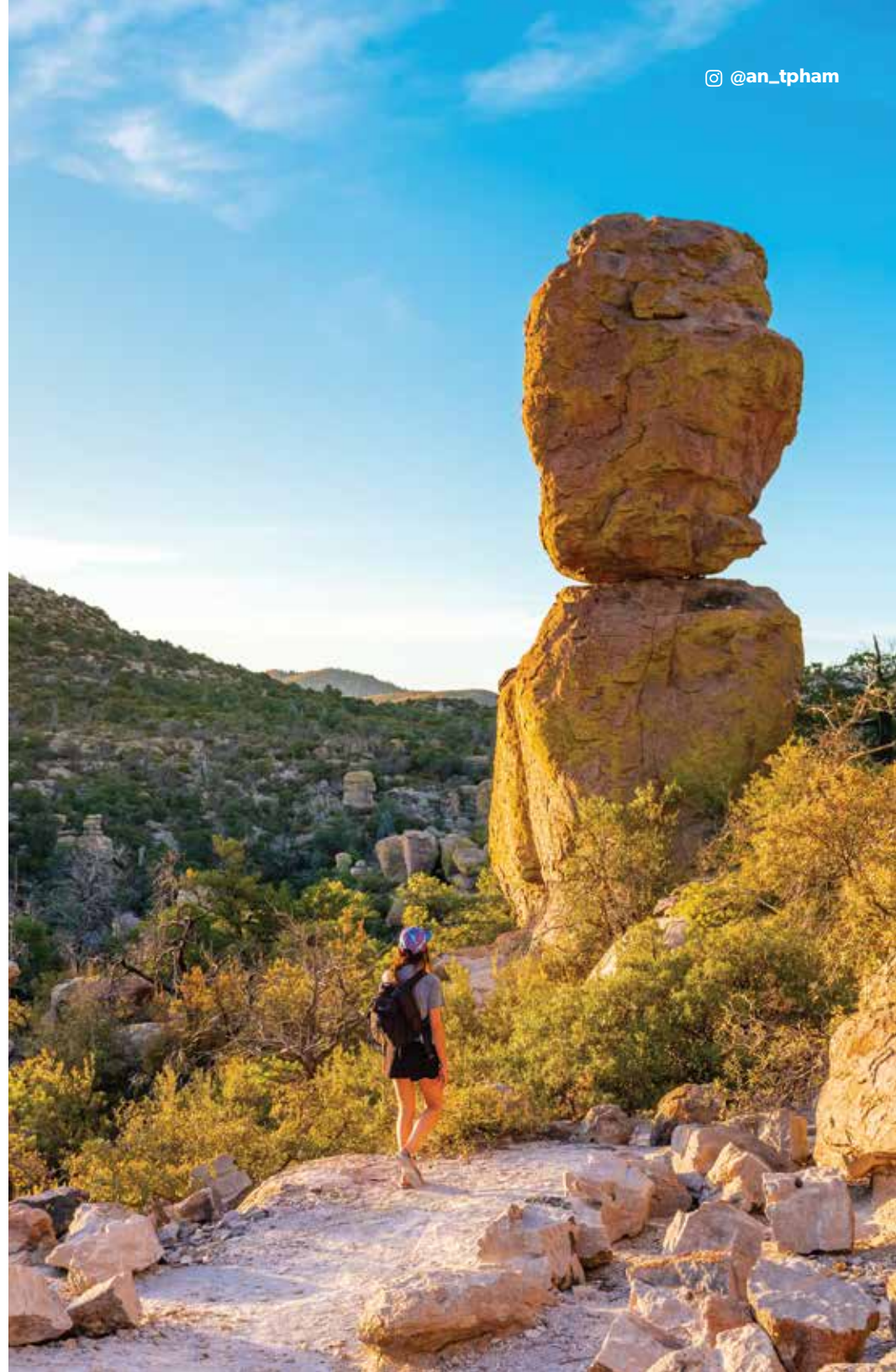
Sunizona (27 miles southwest) and Willcox (37 miles northwest).

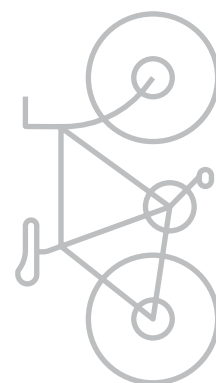
PRO TIP

Hike the Echo Canyon Loop counter-clockwise because it's less strenuous.

SPLURGE-WORTHY GEAR

Binoculars





BIKE



Among the thousands of mountain bike trails in Arizona, there's only one single-track option at the Grand Canyon: the stunning Rainbow Rim Trail, on the North Rim, in Kaibab National Forest.

It's one of the most unique rides in the desert Southwest. Over the course of about 20 miles—through meadows and piñon, ponderosa and aspen forests—there are five observation points that give riders epic views of the canyon. Unlike more highly trafficked areas on the South Rim and North Rim, you've got a good chance of having the place all to yourself (other than the occasional deer, elk, turkey or bobcat).

MOUNTAIN BIKING ON RAINBOW RIM TRAIL

Beyond the trail itself, Rainbow Rim offers access to a few of the only places you can camp on the edge of the Grand Canyon—so plan to spend two nights to make it worth the trip. Camping near Locust Point, at the midpoint of the trail, is a popular option.

"Don't forget that it's at super-high elevation—you'll spend your time between 7,500 and 9,000 feet," says Arizona Outback Adventures guide Seth Heald. "This means that acclimatizing first will make your ride more enjoyable."

WHY GO

Solitude; it's the only mountain bike trail at the Grand Canyon.

BEST SEASON

Summer

NEAREST AMENITIES

Jacob Lake

PRO TIP

This backcountry trail is extremely remote, with no services of any kind, so make sure to pack adequate food and water.

SPURGE-WORTHY GEAR

A Helio pressure shower. Being able to rinse off the trail grime at the end of a long day in the saddle is a luxury.





rgan Pipe Cactus National Monument is a UNESCO biosphere reserve, meaning it's internationally recognized as a precious ecosystem that supports the study of sustainability. It's also the only place in the U.S. where organ-pipe cactus grows wild.

BIKEPACKING IN ORGAN PIPE CACTUS NATIONAL MONUMENT

portion of the Sonoran Desert can be found on the Ajo Mountain Drive," says Arizona Outback Adventures guide Brian Jump. "And, with few visitors, you can have this beautiful stretch of dirt and paved road almost all to yourself."

Another popular ride is Puerto Blanco Drive, a 37-mile stretch that provides access to the Pinkley Peak Picnic Area, Red Tanks trailhead, Senita Basin and Quitobaquito Springs. There are stops along the way with fantastic views as well as signage about the culture and ecology of the monument.

Grab an entrance permit and backcountry camping permit at the Kris Eggle Visitor Center and then start pedaling. Be aware that bikes

aren't permitted on hiking trails or after dark, and ride defensively because you'll share the road with drivers who may be preoccupied with the scenery.

The rugged but wide roads that weave throughout the park make it an excellent destination for bikepacking.

The most popular ride is Ajo Mountain Drive, a 21-mile, mostly gravel road.

"Arguably the most beautiful

WHY GO

Desert beauty, dark skies; it's a natural for bikepacking.

BEST SEASON

November through March

NEAREST AMENITIES

Ajo

PRO TIP

On a rest day, hike the Estes Canyon trail; it's a 3-mile round trip.

SPLURGE-WORTHY GEAR

A Thudbuster seatpost will save your butt from the sometimes washboard and rutted roads.

@jillrichardsphotography





Gravel riding isn't as technical as single-track mountain biking, but a journey into the many back roads of Sonoita and Patagonia (about 50 miles south of Tucson) offers the same grand feeling of traversing wild country on two wheels.

Some of the most popular rides include the Harshaw Loop (13 miles along Harshaw Creek) and the San Rafael Valley Loop, a 26-mile extended version on Forest Service roads that winds through grasslands, oaks and manzanitas before offering a payoff view of the valley.

Other sights include the Harshaw ghost town and cemetery, and historic Hale Ranch, which was a filming location for several TV and movie Westerns back in the day. If you're willing to spin a few extra miles, you can explore the Lochiel ghost town and Parker Canyon Lake.

Don't forget: Sonoita is the oldest wine-producing area in the state, so reward yourself with a well-earned glass or two at the end of the day.

"The area has a deep human history, including thousands of years of native occupation, the Coronado Entrada, Spanish colonialism, Geronimo, Cochise, and the Apache Wars, and the attempted Mexican revolution by Pancho Villa," says Jon Colby, a guide at Arizona Outback Adventures. "Make sure to leave time to stop along the ride to visit the several Nature Conservancy holdings."

GRAVEL RIDING IN SONOITA AND PATAGONIA

WHY GO

Phenomenal vistas;
wine country.

BEST SEASON

Mid to late summer
(but be aware—monsoons
can leave the forest
roads a bit mucky)

NEAREST AMENITIES

Among the amenities in
Sonoita and Patagonia
are several wineries
and tasting rooms.

PRO TIP

Use tires with good tread
and sturdy sidewalls to
prevent flats; run a lower
tire pressure (45 psi).

PACK THIS

A good chain brush



Professional cyclists and recreational riders may not have much in common, but a compulsion to climb the 26-mile road to the summit of Mount Lemmon is surely one of them.

While the 5,500-foot elevation gain might seem daunting, smooth pavement, generous bike lanes, numerous pullouts and an average grade of around 5 percent make this climb achievable. The scenery doesn't hurt, either: It progresses from saguaros and mesquite trees to pine forest, all accompanied by sweeping turns and desert vistas.

Enjoy the descent you've earned, but be alert for inattentive drivers and wandering wildlife.

ROAD CYCLING MOUNT LEMMON

"The journey from the Sonoran Desert floor to the high-altitude ponderosa pines within a single ride is nothing short of spectacular, but it presents some unique challenges in regard to temperature management," says Arizona Outback Adventures guide Paul Stevenson. "Unless you're riding in the dead of the summer, bring an extra layer or two and gloves at a minimum, because you can expect a 20- to 30-degree swing from the bottom to the top.

Another tip from Stevenson: Purchase a giant homemade cookie from the Cookie Cabin in Summerhaven. "It's the perfect reward for your effort up the climb," he says, "and the extra weight never hurt anyone on the way down, either!"

WHY GO

It's a bucket-list road ride—arguably the most scenic in Arizona.

BEST SEASON

Year-round, unless snow or monsoon rain is expected.

NEAREST AMENITIES

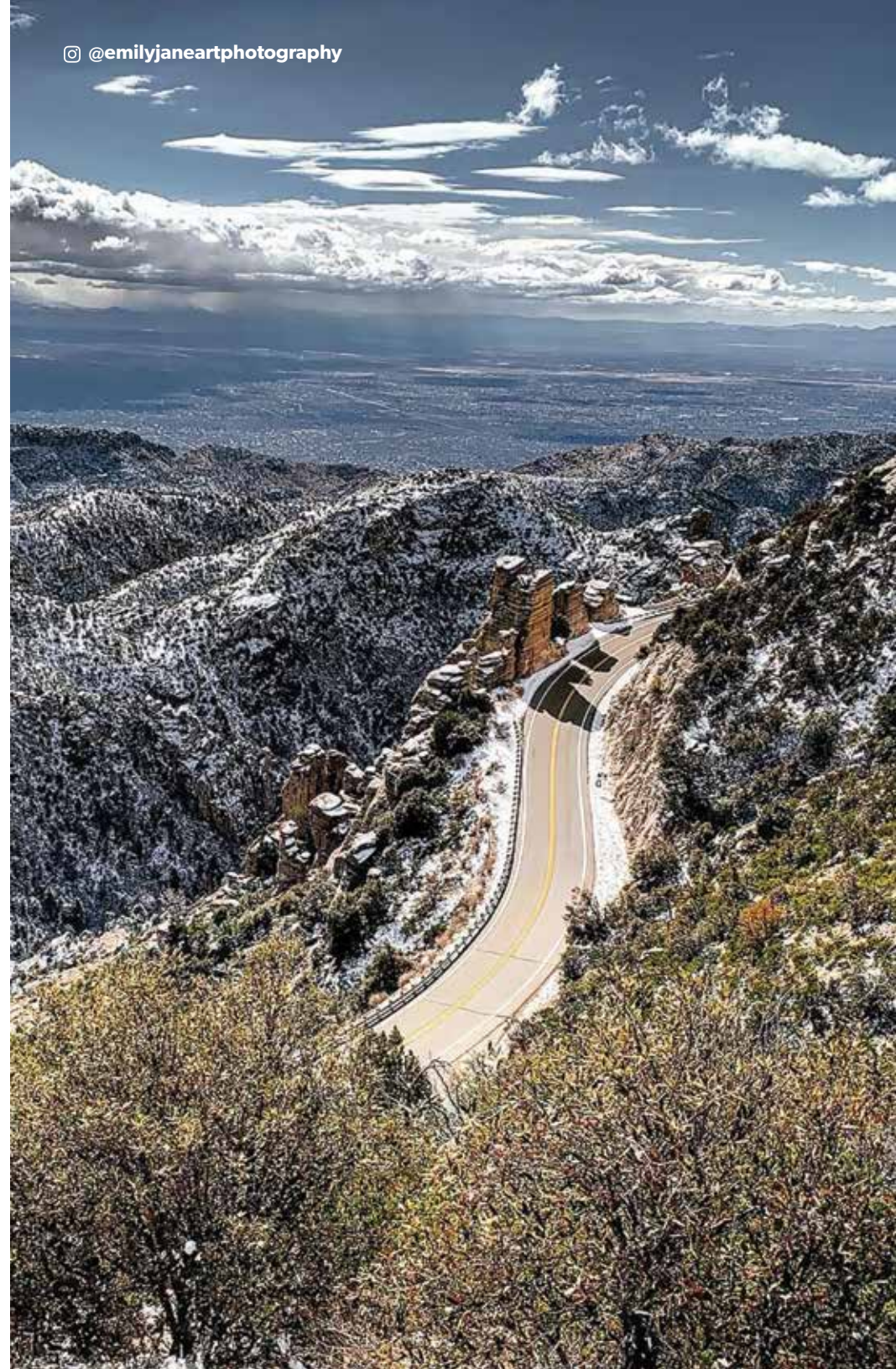
Tucson

PRO TIP

Start out at a very comfortable effort level; the ride gets harder as you gain elevation and the air thins out.

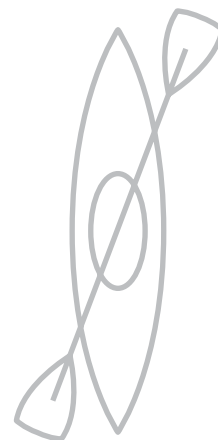
SPLURGE-WORTHY GEAR

Upgrade your bike with a chainset geared for climbing. And, if you're riding in cool weather, wear knee warmers for the descent.





@lucid_shadow_
GLEN CANYON



PADDLE



One of two reservoirs at Prescott's Granite Dells, Watson Lake is small but mighty when it comes to offering an escape for paddlers—whether your craft of choice is a kayak, canoe or stand-up paddleboard.

On the northern half of the 200-acre lake you can explore coves among the dells' distinctive boulders, which were formed 1.4 billion years ago. The southern half of the lake is wide open but equally peaceful. Boat owners can launch at the north ramp, while rentals are offered at the south end of the lake during peak season.

WATSON LAKE

What makes Watson particularly appealing is the "no wake" rule for motorized boat traffic, providing a nice change from the turbulent conditions found on many Arizona lakes. If you bring your fishing gear, you can catch bass, crappie, bluegill, catfish and carp. (The lake is stocked with trout in winter, too.)

Off the water, make sure to explore some of the hiking trails, or do the full 4.6-mile loop around the lake.

WHY GO

Easy access, "no wake" rule for boats.

BEST SEASON

Spring through fall

NEAREST AMENITIES

Prescott/Prescott Valley

PRO TIP

Watch for boulders hidden just below the surface.

SPLURGE-WORTHY GEAR

A soft-sided ice chest to keep your water and lunch cool, and a waterproof housing to keep your phone/camera dry.



I

COLORADO RIVER BELOW GLEN CANYON DAM

In 1963, the diversion tunnel gates at 710-foot-high Glen Canyon Dam were closed, creating Lake Powell. While the taming of the Colorado River changed the Southwest landscape forever, river runners still have access to the 15 miles that run through lower Glen Canyon to Lees Ferry,

an area well worth exploring via kayak or a snout rig (a boat with two inflatable pontoons and an aluminum deck).

To make life easy, you can hire a snout rig from a local day-trip tour company, which will also take you and your gear to the launch point. As your flat-water

float trip progresses, you'll pass (or can make stops at) famous sites such as Petroglyph Beach, Horseshoe Bend and Hislop Cave.

In addition to fantastic hiking and camping, this section of river is renowned for offering some of the best trout fishing in the state. So make sure to bring a fly rod, fishing license and appropriate gear to wade into the chilly waters.

"If you think of the cliffs of Zion National Park, stretching for 180 miles but underwater, that's Glen Canyon," says OARS rafting guide Jimmy Fulmer. "This stretch is all that's left of the canyon's beautiful Navajo sandstone walls after the dam flooded it."

WHY GO

Scenery, plus some of the best trout fishing in Arizona.

BEST SEASON

Spring through fall

NEAREST AMENITIES

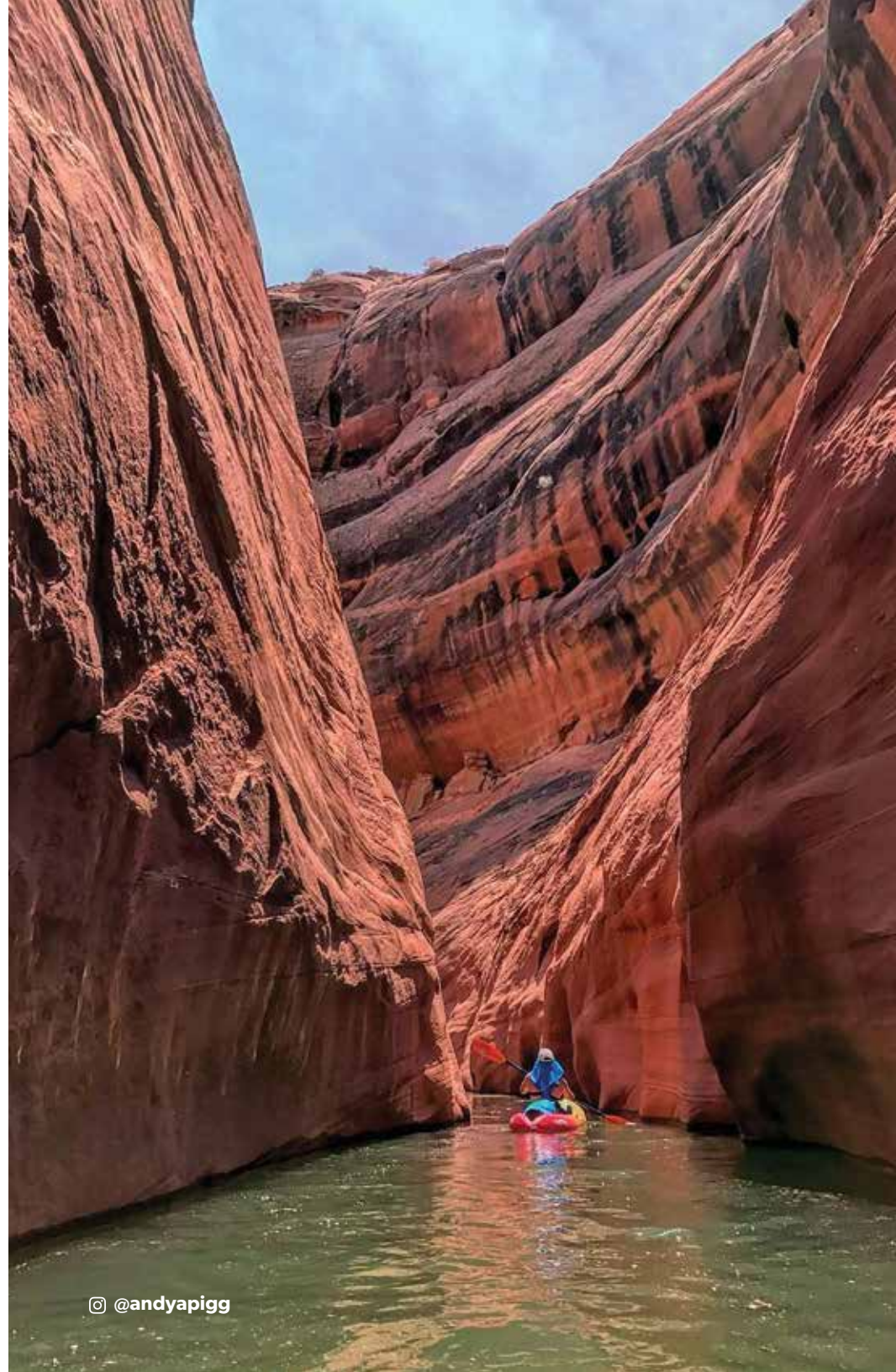
Lees Ferry

PRO TIP

In addition to all your safety gear, don't forget firewood if you're camping.

PACK THIS

A dry suit will keep you more comfortable if you paddle the canyon in cool weather.



@andyapigg





On a map, the 52-mile blue ribbon of the Upper Salt River in the Salt River Canyon Wilderness doesn't look much different from the generally placid section below Roosevelt Dam. However, experience the Upper Salt from a whitewater raft in the 2,000-foot-deep granite canyon, and you'll know its true character—as you're splashing, bouncing and roaring through a series of Class II, III, and IV rapids that rival river experiences anywhere in the West.

WHITewater RAFTING ON THE UPPER SALT RIVER

Outfitters offer options from half-day trips to multiday camping excursions for all skill levels. Off the water, there's ample opportunity to play in pools and waterfalls in side canyons, photograph blooming Saguaro cactus and wildflowers, or just chill on a secluded beach.

"The whitewater rafting on the upper Salt River offers world-class scenery, rapids and wildlife, and would receive a lot more visitation if the water flow were more predictable," says Jon Colby, director of single-day programs at Arizona Outback Adventures. "Since the flow of the river is completely dependent on snow melt and runoff from the White Mountains, the best time to visit is in the early spring."

WHY GO

To run the rapids in "Arizona's other Grand Canyon."

BEST SEASON

Early spring

NEAREST AMENITIES

Globe or Show Low

PRO TIP

Bring high-energy snacks and dry clothes to change into when you're off the river—both will make the day more enjoyable.

SPLURGE-WORTHY GEAR

Good synthetic clothing with a waterproof outer layer (because the water is cold).





© @jaredmurray
LOCKETT MEADOW

SEEK





T

he director John Ford, who introduced multiple generations of movie watchers to Monument Valley, called it the “most complete, beautiful and peaceful place on earth.” The Navajo, some of whom still make their homes in Monument Valley, simply call it *Tsé Bii Ndzigaii*, or “Clearing Among the Rock.”

CAMPING IN MONUMENT VALLEY

By any name, this panorama of richly hued sandstone towers, pinnacles and buttes is one of the most unforgettable places in the world to pitch a tent.

Aptly named, The View Campground, located within the Navajo Nation near Arizona’s border with Utah, offers one of the best views of Monument Valley. A clear night will cover you in stars, and waking up to this otherworldly landscape is nothing short of surreal.

WHY GO

Soul-stirring views, photo ops and a dose of Navajo culture.

BEST SEASON

April through October

NEAREST AMENITIES

Kayenta

PRO TIP

Wake up early to catch the sunrise.

PACK THIS

A tent with a wide door to enjoy the view.

During the day, the 3.2-mile round-trip Wildcat Hike is the only self-guided hike available for visitors, while the 17-mile Tribal Park Loop is a DIY scenic drive on dirt and gravel roads through many of the most popular rock formations.

Other activities at Monument Valley include horseback rides, four-wheel drive tours, and private tours focused on photography or American Indian art. Navajo guides can get you closer to the main attractions, as well as teach you about the valley’s history and culture.

“Parking is just a short distance away behind the campground, which makes access easy,” says Arizona Outback Adventures guide Cimarron Anderson. “Pitch your tent facing out over the valley and wake up at sunrise for the breathtaking views.”



Located within the San Pedro River Basin and flanked by the Huachuca Mountains, Ramsey Canyon Preserve offers an interplay of geology, biogeography, topography and climate that creates a rarity in the desert: a consistently damp and cool environment.

BIRDING AT RAMSEY CANYON PRESERVE

The Nature Conservancy, which manages this beautiful preserve, describes the area as an “ecological crossroads” that serves as a stepping stone to the tropics. For birders, it’s an exceptional opportunity to observe neo-tropical species that reach the northern extent of their range, just sneaking across the Mexican border into Arizona’s Sky Island mountains. More than 170 types of birds have been spotted within the high-walled canyon.

In addition to 15 species of hummingbirds (such as berylline and violet-crowned), additions to a life list could include elegant trogons, red-naped sapsuckers, ruby-crowned kinglets, yellow-rumped warblers and northern goshawks.

Guided walks are available from March through November. Be aware that parking at Ramsey Canyon Preserve is limited to 27 spots on a first-come basis.

“Don’t forget to look down, too,” says Arizona Outback Adventures guide Seth Heald. “The canyon is filled with biological wonders that extend far beyond the bird life. Exotic mammals like coati mundi are common, plus you’re almost sure to observe the endangered Chiricahua Leopard Frog if you look carefully in the small pools along the creek.”

WHY GO
Diversity of plant
and animal life.

BEST SEASON
Depends on the species
you want to see. The best
birding generally occurs
from April to September.

NEAREST AMENITIES
Sierra Vista

PRO TIP
The staff at the Nature
Conservancy visitor center
is a fantastic source
of information about
the preserve.

PACK THIS
A good pair
of binoculars



@feistywandering





Camping at Lockett Meadow in the fall—when the aspens change color—isn't only an Arizona must, it's also one of the best ways to view the San Francisco Peaks at their most majestic.

Hiking the Inner Basin Trail, which starts at the meadow, is the most popular route into the heart of the caldera and the only region of tundra in Arizona. Surrounded by quaking aspen, spring and summer hikers will be treated to blue, red and yellow wildflowers; in the fall, it's all about the changing yellows and golds of the aspens. Don't be surprised if you also see elk, porcupine, the sweet-singing hermit thrush or even one of the local black bears.

CAMPING AT LOCKETT MEADOW

"Wake up early and hike up the Inner Basin Trail in the dark to watch the sunrise come up through the golden aspens," recommends Josh Kloepping, a guide with Arizona Outback Adventures.

The primitive campground at Lockett Meadow includes 17 single-unit sites, fire rings, picnic tables and a vault toilet—but there's no water, so make sure to bring your own. The campground is first-come, first-served, and the trails get crowded during peak season, so you might want to plan your trip during the week.

WHY GO

Amazing leaf peeping.

BEST SEASON

Fall

NEAREST AMENITIES

Flagstaff

PRO TIP

Shortly before the main campground as you drive in, there are several dispersed camping spots. They're a nice option if the main campground is full.

PACK THIS

Headlamp for a predawn hike



Just shy of 11,000 feet, Escudilla Mountain is Arizona's third-highest peak, and nearby Sipe White Mountain Wildlife Area is arguably No. 1 when it comes to viewing a wide range of animals and birds.

Four different trails offer hikers viewpoints and benches amongst a diverse group of habitats, from streams and wetlands to meadows,

WILDLIFE VIEWING AT SIPE WHITE MOUNTAIN WILDLIFE AREA

pastures, grasslands and piñon-juniper woodlands. (The High Point Trail Overlook has a 20x spotting scope to assist in glimpsing wildlife.) Large mammals in the area include elk, pronghorn, mule deer and coyotes; the smaller set includes porcupines, badgers, beavers, skunks and several species of squirrels, as well as numerous bat species. For birders, the visitors' area is packed with hummingbirds, while the orchard and the 3-mile Rudd Creek Loop Trail are the best bets to spot any of a dazzling array of songbirds, waterfowl, raptors and game birds. The Rudd trail also includes a prehistoric ruin and Ancestral Puebloan petroglyphs.

"The wild open grasslands and tall peaks make visiting Sipe feel like exploring the roof of the world," says Arizona Outback Adventure guide Annemarie Kruse. "The biodiversity here is

amazing. It's perfect for getting out of the heat of the desert and catching fall colors. Look for wildlife in the early morning or just before sunset when animals are most active. You may even hear Mexican gray wolves howling."

WHY GO

Diverse wildlife; photography.

BEST SEASON

September

NEAREST AMENITIES

Springerville/Eagar

PRO TIP

Don't rush. Take a few hours to wait and watch—you'll see a lot more if you slow down.

PACK THIS

Coffee thermos and binoculars





Located in the northwest quadrant of Vermilion Cliffs National Monument, White Pocket isn't as famous as its nearby sibling, The Wave in Coyote Buttes North. Its swirling, vibrantly colored rock domes, hoodoos, "brain rocks," gullies and potholes are every bit as photogenic, though, and might just make you feel like you've landed on Mars.

Unlike The Wave, White Pocket has no daily permit limit—the challenging access route naturally keeps visitors to a minimum. The drive in from Lone Tree Reservoir tracks through unpaved road and stretches of soft, deep sand that require a high-clearance, four-wheel-drive vehicle. If you're not equipped with a 4WD or off-road driving skills, taking the southern route through Corral Valley and Red Pocket gets you close enough to reach your destination with a 3-mile hike.

"White Pocket truly is an otherworldly place," says Tara Davies, multi-days guide supervisor at Arizona Outback Adventures. "The best way to experience White Pocket is an epic night camping underneath the galactic star systems. You won't want to close your eyes, because the stargazing is some of the best in the world. Lastly, leave it as you found it and avoid disturbing any pools. There are rare desert plants and animals that live there."

CAMPING IN WHITE POCKET

WHY GO

To transport yourself to another world.

BEST SEASON

Year-round, but avoid times when heavy rain is expected; it makes certain tracks impassable.

NEAREST AMENITIES

Marble Canyon

PRO TIP

You're traveling in remote territory, so take extra water, food and a first-aid kit in case of an emergency.

SPLURGE-WORTHY GEAR

Unless you're skilled with a map and compass, a high-quality GPS is the smart way to navigate.





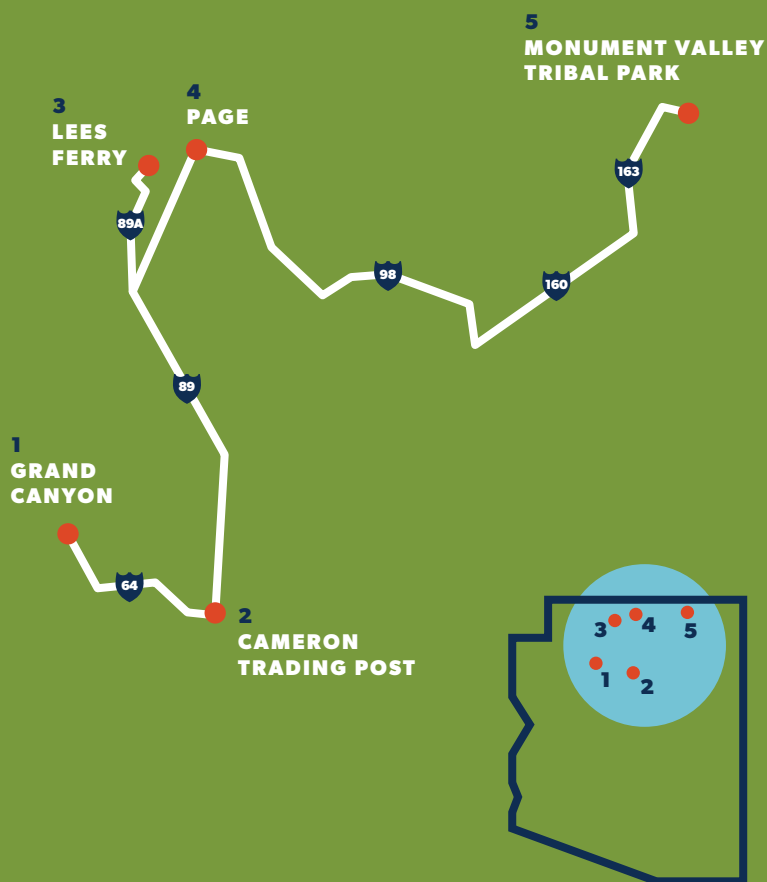
ROAD TRIP IDEAS

Arizona is a road tripper's dream. It has an embarrassment of geological wonders and biodiversity. It's got more national monuments than any other state. It's full of mountain towns, mining towns and ghost towns. And connecting all of it, around canyons and over rivers and through Indian country, is an filigree of what author William Least Heat Moon called "blue highways"—roads, often colored blue on old maps, that roll past little towns and campgrounds rather than ubiquitous freeway exits. If you prefer to travel such highways, these itineraries are for you.

→ **ITINERARY**

GRAND CANYON TO MONUMENT VALLEY

This road trip takes in some of northern Arizona's—and America's—most epic scenery. After setting forth from one of the Seven Wonders of the Natural World, you'll travel past Horseshoe Bend and Lake Powell before reverently motoring toward the cinematic skyline of Monument Valley.



Grand Canyon →

A celebratory dinner at the historic El Tovar Dining Room on the South Rim is the perfect way to cap a rim-to-rim hike of the Grand Canyon. Don't leave the national park without checking out Kolb Studio, which preserves the photos, films and legacy of the adventurous Kolb Brothers.



Cameron Trading Post

When it was established in the early 1900s, this trading post was frequented by Navajo and Hopi, who bartered their livestock and weavings for dry goods. A century later, it remains an excellent place to shop for American Indian art (and buy road-trip essentials like gas and snacks).

Lees Ferry

Stroll out onto Navajo Bridge to watch California condors soar. Take a gander at the Colorado River's first rapid through the Grand Canyon. Cast a line for trout at Glen Canyon Dam. Set up camp at Lees Ferry Campground.

← Page

For better or worse, this town is a siren's song for Instagrammers. Rent a watercraft to explore Lake Powell. Take the shuttle to see Horseshoe Bend. Hire a Navajo Guide to tour Antelope Canyon (or another slot canyon such as Canyon X or Cardiac Canyon).

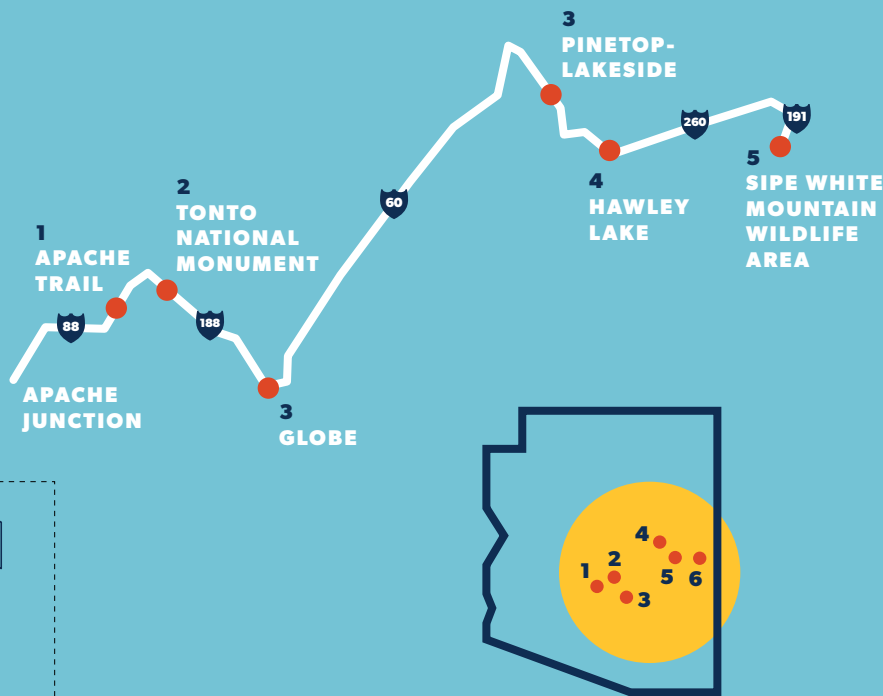
Monument Valley Tribal Park

Take a self-guided loop hike along the 3.2-mile Wildcat Trail or book a guided tour from one of more than two dozen Navajo outfitters. Road-tripper's tip: Stop at the Burger King in Kayenta to see its exhibit on Navajo Code Talkers, who helped the Allies win World War II.



SUPERSTITION WILDERNESS AREA TO SIPE WHITE MOUNTAIN WILDLIFE AREA

If you like to take things slow, this is the road trip for you. It follows a few unpaved roads, skirts beautiful lakes and climbs into Arizona's lesser-known high country. It's best undertaken with a tent, a kayak and a set of binoculars.



Apache Trail

Theodore Roosevelt said the Apache Trail “combines the grandeur of the Alps, the glory of the Rockies and the magnificence of the Grand Canyon.” Teddy was given to oratorical flourish, but, all the same, this 42-mile road (half of which is unpaved) is one of the most scenic drives in Arizona. Gawk at Canyon Lake, grab a snack at the old stagecoach stop of Tortilla Flat and pitch a tent at Burnt Coral Campground.

Tonto National Monument

This roadside national monument preserves two cliff dwellings of the Salado people, who lived in the area 700 years ago. Check out the Lower Cliff Dwelling via a short walk or book a guided tour of the Upper Cliff Dwelling (November through April).



← Globe

Take a stroll or trail run among mining relics at the Old Dominion Historic Mine Park, where, if you stop to read the signs, you'll learn everything you ever wanted to know about copper extraction. Bonus: The Mexican food in this mining town is held in high esteem by old-school Arizonans.

Pinetop-Lakeside

These twin towns in the White Mountains are aptly named, because pines and lakes define this region of Arizona. Picnic or kayak at family-friendly Woodland Lake Park, or hike the out-and-back Blue Ridge Cave Trail.

Hawley Lake

Tucked within the Fort Apache Indian Reservation, deep in the White Mountains, this lake is the picture of rugged seclusion. Kayak. Fish. String up a hammock. FYI: The coldest temperature ever recorded in Arizona—40 degrees below zero—was at Hawley Lake, so don't plan on visiting after September.

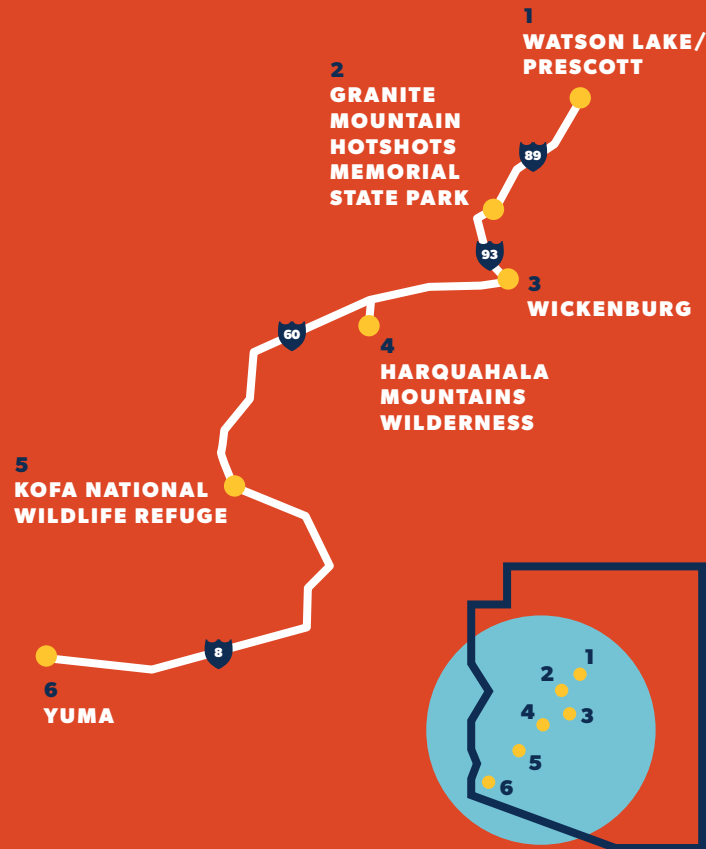
Sipe White Mountain Wildlife Area

This is a don't-fence-me-in kind of place. You're free to hike, bike or ride horseback through wide-open wildlife habitat with nary an entrance fee. Worthy side trip: the White Mountain Dinosaur Exploration Center, in nearby Springerville, where you can book a backcountry paleontology tour.



WATSON LAKE TO KOFA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Arizona isn't for wimps, and neither is this road trip. It invites you to climb granite boulders, belly-up to whiskey bars and hike through obscure wilderness. Along the way you'll get a chance to appreciate cowboy life and pay homage to fallen firefighters. If there's some gentle birdsong at the end of the road...well, you earned it.



Watson Lake/Prescott →

Besides paddling, Watson Lake is great for rock climbing and bouldering. Climbers compare the quality of the granite around Watson Lake to that of Joshua Tree. After a day on the water/rocks, belly up to a bar on legendary Whiskey Row in downtown Prescott.



Granite Mountain Hotshots Memorial State Park

This park is dedicated to the 19 firefighters who died while battling the Yarnell Hill Fire, and whose heroic plight is dramatized in the movie "Only the Brave." Hike the 7-mile roundtrip trail to an observation deck and memorial. Signs and plaques along the way tell the story of the fire and the men who died fighting it.

Wickenburg

If you're even remotely intrigued by cowboy art, visit the Desert Caballeros Western Museum, which displays works by the greats—Remington, Catlin, Bierstadt, Moran, Russell. Or stroll through Hassayampa River Preserve, where six short trails afford an intimate theater to 280-plus bird species.



← Harquahala Mountains Wilderness

The name of this wilderness, little known even among Arizonans, comes from a Yavapai word for "running water." Follow cairns up the steep Harquahala Pack Trail (5.4 miles one way) to the highest point in southwestern Arizona, where sits the ruins of a 1920s Smithsonian observatory. Tip: It's best to explore the wilderness with a high-clearance vehicle and *not* in summer.

Kofa National Wildlife Refuge/Yuma

Forty miles south of the refuge is the city of Yuma, which is equally famous for its summer heat (record high: 124 degrees) and winter pleasantness (average high: 72). Scope out petroglyphs at Antelope Hill or Painted Rock, or paddle a canoe down the placid Lower Colorado River.



ORGAN PIPE CACTUS NATIONAL MONUMENT TO RAMSEY CANYON PRESERVE

If cycling, winetasting and stargazing rank among your fondest pleasures, this is your Arizona road trip. It dives into state's southern side, where the climate and terra firma are ideal for pedaling and growing grapes, and the clear desert sky renews one's wonderment at the planets and stars.



Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument/Ajo

Bikepacking isn't easy on the body. Recharge in Ajo (pronounced "AH-ho"), a tiny desert oasis with a grassy, palm-lined town plaza that seems plucked from a Hollywood backlot. Get a room at the Sonoran Desert Inn, a former school with guest rooms, artist-in-resident digs and a lovely public garden. If you're in town on a Saturday, hit the local farmer's market before hitting the road.

Kitt Peak National Observatory

Stop here to see one of largest arrays of optical and radio telescopes in the world. Take a docent-led tour during daytime or at night. Tip: Because Kitt Peak is located on the Tohono O'odham Nation, the observatory's gift shop is a great place to purchase authentic Tohono O'odham baskets and handicrafts.

Tucson →

The "Old Pueblo" is Arizona's second-largest city and the first U.S. location to be designated a UNESCO City of Gastronomy. So have more than one meal here, and make one of them a Sonoran Hot Dog. Great hikes abound: Try Seven Falls in the Santa Catalina Mountains or Yetman Trail in Tucson Mountain Park (which is near two tour-worthy spots: Old Tucson movie studio and the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum).

Sonoita

For the past 30 years the rolling, golden grasslands of Sonoita have produced some of Arizona's best wines. Sip big, earthy reds at an outdoor bar at the "off-grid" winery Rune, or stay overnight in an on-site casita at Dos Cabezas WineWorks.

Sierra Vista/Ramsey Canyon Preserve

Before getting birdy at Ramsey Canyon Preserve, go mountain biking on Brown Canyon Trail. Or, for a big road ride, embark on the Bisbee Loop, which rolls from Sierra Vista to the funky mountain town of Bisbee and back. At Coronado National Memorial, grab your headlamp and make the short hike to Coronado Cave, rumored to be one of Geronimo's hideouts from the U.S. Army.



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