

Why Babe Ruth's Daughter
Is a Big Diamondbacks Fan

Psst: The Best Olive Oil Comes
From Queen Creek, AZ. Really!

If You're at the Heritage Inn,
Order the German Pancakes

ARIZONA

HIGHWAYS

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MARCH 2010

Wildflowers

our spring portfolio

FEATURING

10 EASY HIKES FOR
SEEING THE FLOWERS

MEXICAN GOLDDOPPIES
PHOTOGRAPH BY JACK DYKINGA

+ Quartzsite: As Weird as It Gets
Our Favorite Goat Farm in Snowflake
Sands Ranch: Marlin Perkins Would Have Loved It

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14 Claret Cups Are Red,
Bluebells Are Blue ...

Springtime in Arizona is marked by two major events: Cactus League baseball and the annual explosion of radiant wildflowers. Although the boys of summer draw bigger crowds, it's the spectrum of color that really stands out.

EDITED BY JEFF KIDA

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The Sands Ranch in Southeastern Arizona is 64,000 acres of biodiversity. It's an ecological treasure — the kind of place you would have found Marlin Perkins prowling for pumas.

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David and Kathryn Heiningler run what they call an "accidental dairy." It's the last thing they expected, but there they are, living on a ranch near Snowflake, raising goats, and making artisan cheese for some of the best restaurants in the country.

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Nearly naked booksellers, camel junkies, rock hounds, vagabonds, snowbirds and more than a million other winter visitors shack up in Quartzsite every year. They come for various reasons, but they stick around for the sense of community.

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY EDWARD MCCAIN

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www.arizonahighways.com



GET MORE ONLINE:

+ Get inside scoops, bonus coverage and other great information from our new blog. This month, read Jeff Kida's blogs on how to shoot spring wildflowers. Look for the link in Online Extras.

+ For weekend getaways, hiking, lodging, dining and so much more, visit our home page.

+ Get details on some of this month's biggest events, including Chandler's Ostrich Festival, in the Events Calendar.

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POINTS OF INTEREST IN THIS ISSUE

► Sunset casts a luminous blush over the rhyolite columns along Echo Canyon Trail in Southeastern Arizona's Chiricahua National Monument. PHOTOGRAPH BY GEORGE STOCKING

BACK COVER On the San Carlos Apache Nation, the brilliant blossoms of Mexican goldpoppies make for a showy Sonoran Desert spring. PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT McDONALD



JEFF KIDA

"Postcards, letters and e-mail." Whenever I'm asked about the best part of being editor of *Arizona Highways*, that's usually the answer. There are other things — traveling the state, meeting interesting people, communing with Mother Nature — but it's the feedback from readers that makes me smile. At last count, we had subscribers in all 50 states and 120 countries around the world. Every morning, when I turn on my iMac, I'm greeted by hundreds of e-mails from those people.

People like Maureen Grandmont of Cape Cod, Massachusetts, and Pete Dixon of Queensland, Australia. They were commenting on stories they'd read in the magazine. Ditto for Mike Abbott of London and Dianne Ferro of Washington, D.C. And then there are the letters from readers like Patricia and Michael Tiffany of Phoenix,

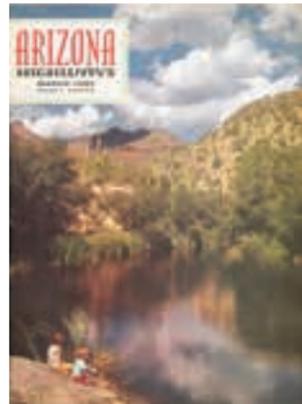
who made a generous offer to help us in our effort to send supplies to the 1st Platoon in Afghanistan. I never know for sure what I'll find when I open my e-mail or sort through the snail mail. That's why the letter from Mark Jepperson didn't surprise me.

Mark is a reader from Tucson, and he wrote to tell us that 50 years ago this month, he and his sister were featured on the cover of our magazine — their father, Dick Jepperson, had taken the photo. "What I remember about that photo of Sabino Canyon was the sand going through my toes and sandals," Mark says, "and how I wanted to jump into the lake in the worst way."

"I have so many pleasant memories of Sabino Canyon," he added. "My father discovered the

magic of this place and he showed it to me at a very young age. I've carried on the same values he gave me — appreciating the beauty and the struggle that this precious ribbon of water in the desert presents."

Normally in March, we put wildflowers on the cover, but back in 1960, we opted for a couple of cute kids in the Santa Catalina Mountains. It was a great cover, but



ARIZONA
HIGHWAYS TELEVISION



JEFF KIDA

If you like what you see in this magazine every month, check out *Arizona Highways Television*, an Emmy Award-winning program hosted by former news anchor Robin Sewell. For broadcast times, visit our Web site, www.arizonahighways.com, and click the *Arizona Highways Television* link on our home page.

this year, we're back to the wildflowers. As you'll see, we dedicate 10 pages to the desert's annual explosion of color. It's a portfolio of goldpoppies, globemallows and more, all shot by some of the best landscape photographers in the Southwest.

If you happen to live in one of the other 49 states or 119 countries, this issue might be as close as you get to springtime in Arizona. Live vicariously. If, however, you call Arizona home, and you'd rather explore the color in person, check out our wildflower hiking guide, which features 10 of the state's best trails for seeing the flowers. The Sutherland Trail in Catalina State Park is among them, and I'm sure the Jeppersons have hiked it many times. A place they haven't been is the Sands Ranch.

That's because until recently, it's been private land. Now, a piece of it belongs to Pima County, which purchased more than 5,000 acres of the 64,000-acre ranch in 2008 — it'll be used for recreation and preservation. As Doug Kreutz writes in *Wild Kingdom*, "The property is an ecological treasure because it's perched at elevations between 4,800 and 5,800 feet, in a transition zone between the Sonoran and Chihuahuan deserts."

Best of all, the ranch is home to an abundance of natural grasses, birds galore and 60 species of mammals. But not goats. For that, you'll have to flip a few pages to our story about David and Kathryn Heining. They run what they call an "accidental dairy" in Snowflake. It's a goat farm where they're churning out a variety of cheeses that are being used at some award-winning restaurants around the state, including Pizzeria Bianco in Phoenix. In *Whatever Floats Your Goat*, Barbara Yost shares the unlikely story of the Heiningers and their life in Snowflake, which, by the way, is a charming little town that makes a terrific weekend getaway.

When you go, you'll want to stay at the Heritage Inn (see page 8). This excellent B&B is co-owned by the captivating JoAnne Guderian. JoAnne is British, and she recently sent me an e-mail asking for help with some gift subscriptions for her friends and family in England. It was another e-mail that generated a smile. Thank you JoAnne, and thanks to everyone who subscribes to *Arizona Highways*. All 50 states and 120 countries around the world ... we couldn't do it without you.

ROBERT STIEVE, editor

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PRODUCED IN THE USA

JACK KURTZ

Phoenix-based photojournalist Jack Kurtz's work explores the changing West, human migration patterns and the global food chain. So when it came to shooting *Whatever Floats Your Goat* (page 32), Kurtz was a perfect fit. "Photographing on the Black Mesa Ranch was a real treat," he says. "But there was a challenge — staying ahead of the goats when they were walking through the pastures. Every time I tried to photograph the herd, the goats stampeded up and explored my pockets and camera bag. Apparently, they haven't met a photographer they haven't liked." Kurtz's work has also appeared in *The Economist*, *Time*, *The New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, among others.



DOUGLAS KREUTZ

Writer Douglas Kreutz was drawn to Sands Ranch (*Wild Kingdom*, page 24) after hearing of its grand, high-lonesome setting and lush landscapes. In contrast to the craggy peaks and snowy summits he's explored in years of mountaineering, the gently rolling grasslands of the ranch seemed to "embrace rather than challenge, to soothe rather than excite," he says. Kreutz, working with photographer Jack Dykinga, trekked agave-spiked grasslands and oak-wooded hillsides to get a boots-on-the-ground sense of the place. "Camping under starry skies in remote reaches of the ranch was a profound experience of silence and solitude," he says. Kreutz also writes for the *Arizona Daily Star* in Tucson.



MARYAL MILLER

When writer Maryal Miller heard about the Queen Creek Olive Mill (page 7), she admits she was intrigued. "Sure, Arizona has varying landscapes and topographical surprises around almost every corner, but an olive mill?" she says. "I was curious, to say the least, about the excursion to the outskirts of Queen Creek, but definitely didn't expect what came my way." Like many others looking for the mill, Miller got lost. "A word to the wise," she says, "don't take the MapQuest, Garmin or Google Maps routes on this trip. If you do, there's a good possibility you'll end up flying down an unmarked dirt road in a cloud of dust, watching



power-line servicemen frantically wave their arms in an effort to point out that the road is, in fact, not actually a road. Not that I did that. OK. I did, and it was slightly embarrassing, but mostly hilarious." Miller is a frequent contributor to *Arizona Highways*.

A DECEMBER TO REMEMBER

Being ardent nature fans, we're always looking forward to receiving your latest issue. We especially enjoyed the December 2009 issue; we just can't stop leafing through the pages full of powerful pictures! We regularly receive your magazine as a subscription from [a friend in] Winchester, Virginia. She's revealed a whole new experience for us. Thank you so much!

JOSEF GRUPP, STUTTGART, GERMANY



December 2009

I think you've been editor now for more than a year. The magazine continues to get better with every issue. What a great job you're doing. I've just finished viewing the December 2009 issue and I have to admit it's getting a little dog-eared — the images are so outstanding I keep going through the issue.

I'm an amateur photographer who wants to hang in the Guggenheim. If George Stocking is single, I'd like to marry him. What a great photographer.

J.J. GERLITZ, SURPRISE

I've been a loyal reader for many years, but I'm about to cancel my subscription. The reason I started reading *Arizona Highways* was for the short stories. Sure, the pictures are the best, but I need more. The December issue is nothing but great pictures. If this is what I'll be seeing in the future, you've lost me. I know I'm only one subscription, but maybe others feel the same way. If I cancel we both lose, and that's not what I want, and I don't think you do either.

BOB KRAFT, RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA



November 2009

OUT OF THIS WORLD

The article on diners & drive-ins [November 2009] was very well done; however, you missed the great one on West Route 66 in Flagstaff. The Galaxy Diner is a very lively place, old and with very, very good food. They have the girls dressed in poodle skirts, and back in the '50s, they sang their melodies several nights a week. You can't beat Galaxy for a great hamburger, a shake and onion rings.

NELLIE L. SORENSEN, FLAGSTAFF

FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE

It was interesting to read the article *Reeling in the Years* in your November 2009 issue. The innovation and growth that the Harkins family and company have brought to the Arizona movie industry is amazing. Then I looked over the short list of "Arizona's Blockbusters." What, no *Leave Her to Heaven* (1945)? Granted, it's a film about the dark side of human nature, but it was Fox's highest-grossing film of the 1940s at \$5 million. Gene Tierney was nominated for an Oscar as "Best Actress in a Leading Role" opposite Cornel Wilde. It also starred Jeanne Crain, Vincent Price, Darryl



November 2009

Hickman and Chill Wills. Filmed in part in Prescott, its movie set near Granite Dells included a large swimming pool (tank) that served many years as a local recreation site. It's where I learned to swim as a child. A view of the pool was in the film's background as Tierney typed under a trellis. Like most *Arizona Highways* enthusiasts, I typically enjoy the picture spreads that hallmark the natural beauty of the state. This article piqued my interest for its people's contributions. Great stuff!

RAY BRAUN, TROY, MICHIGAN



October 2009

THE RIGHT IS WRONG

I hope your readers noticed the photograph that includes Mission San Xavier del Bac in the article about the Arizona Rangers [*Too Tough to Die*, October 2009]. The contrast between the two bell towers is striking. That on the west (left) has been fully restored, while that on the east (right) remains sorely in need of repair. The east bell tower was left unfinished in 1797 because the Franciscans ran out of money. It remains untouched today because of a lack of funds. Those interested in helping save one of our nation's great historical treasures are invited to visit the Web site of the nonsectarian and not-for-profit Patronato San Xavier at www.patronatosanxavier.org.

BERNARD FONTANA, TUCSON

CORRECTION: In *Diners & Drive-Ins* (November 2009), the reference to Mr. D's root beer should have clarified that the recipe for the root beer was created by Scott Dunton and his family. ■



MOREY K. MILBRADT

Flower Power

You're going to see a lot of wildflowers in this issue, but the ideal way to experience the poppies and lupines et al. is firsthand. For regular updates on the best viewing spots in the state, call the Arizona State Parks Wildflower Hotline at 602-542-4988 or visit Desert Botanical Garden at www.dbg.org.

Baby Ruth

Julia Ruth Stevens is excited about Spring Training, the Diamondbacks and the upcoming baseball season. The sport is in her blood. After all, her father was the Bronx Bomber.

By JAMES B. GOLDSMITH

AT 93, JULIA RUTH Stevens has been around life's bases a few times, and as the last direct descendant of baseball icon George Herman "Babe" Ruth Jr., she's no stranger to baseball analogies.

SUN CITY Stevens has lived in her Conway, New Hampshire, home for 45 years, but she and her late husband, Brenton, became inveterate Sun City snowbirds after their Florida getaway was wiped out by a hurricane in 1992. This soft-spoken lady loves baseball, the Diamondbacks and Arizona — and her reasons are simple.

"I'd say definitely the weather. I love the difference between the southern and northern parts, and the scenery and the mountains," she says. "It's just a beautiful place to live. I've always loved the West; as a girl, I read Western novels. I have a lovely home and backyard near a manmade lake."

Although Stevens hasn't traveled much throughout the state, she has been drawn like a magnet to Chase Field, a far cry from the old Yankee Stadium, where she threw out the first pitch on September 22, 2008, to open the last game played there. "I like [Chase Field]," she says. "That swimming pool near center field ... it's quite the place." And so are the walls of her East Coast living room, which are filled with candid photographs of Babe Ruth and his many friends. In addition, as the Great One's daughter and an avid baseball fan, Stevens has attended inductions at the National Baseball Hall of Fame and museum in Cooperstown, New York, since 1969.

Today, she keeps busy signing her own autograph at public functions and by playing bridge. She's excited for the start of the Diamondbacks' season and for Spring Training, and she's floored by the changes she's seen in the Valley of the Sun over the years.



BRENDAN MOORE

"I'm amazed by how Sun City has changed," she says. "Flying into Phoenix over what used to be open fields and farmland and what has been turned into buildings and commercial development is amazing. I say to myself, 'What would the cowboys think?'"

PRATT'S Q&A



Charli Turner Thorne Women's Basketball Coach, Arizona State University

When you're not busy being the winningest coach in ASU history, how do you enjoy Arizona? I love spending time with my family. During my down time, I enjoy watching my kids play sports in the sunshine.

What's your idea of a perfect Arizona weekend getaway? If I had more time, it would have to be the Enchantment Resort in Sedona. I've been there twice and would love to go back.

What's one of your favorite in-state travel memories? Our team-bonding trip to Camp Tontozona [near Payson] was very memorable.

Where's the best place to find a post-game bite to eat? After an early game, my family and I like to go to Sweet Tomatoes, because the kids can be loud and messy.

What is your favorite season — other than basketball season? I love all of the seasons because, in Arizona, we have some of the best weather in the world!

— Dave Pratt is the author of *Behind the Mic: 30 Years in Radio*



RICHARD MACK

Good Press

It's improbable, to say the least, but some of the best food around is at del Piero, the trendy little eatery at Queen Creek Olive Mill. Talk about fresh.

By MARYAL MILLER

Fascinating are things that seemingly make no sense, yet somehow manage to be both strangely fantastic and surprisingly successful — Jamaican bobsledding, the Slinky and The Governor, to name a few. Arizona's only working olive mill and farm, the Queen Creek Olive Mill, is among the conundrums.

The mill is the brainchild of Perry Rea, a Canadian-born former Detroit auto industry exec with no formal gastronomic or agricultural pedigree, who moved his family to pastoral Queen Creek 12 years ago. Recreationally, Perry planted a few olive trees on his "retirement" property, and purchased a press to see if he could churn out some oil. He triumphed when Beau MacMillan — Rea's hockey buddy (Rea is a Canuck, after all) and Sanctuary Resort's famous "Iron Chef" — sampled his EVOO (extra virgin olive oil) and bought it. The buzz was born and before long, despite the dicey drive to the mill, olive-oil lovers came knocking on Rea's far-flung door. Literally. He supplied their demand for oil and the Queen Creek Olive Mill was officially in business. As Kevin Costner can attest, if you build it, they just might come.

"People laugh when I tell them I went from motor oil to olive oil," Rea jokes. "This wasn't my plan, but this hobby of mine morphed so quickly, I couldn't stop it from growing."

Today, the completely sustainable farm harvests 16 different varieties of olives (the Spanish Mission is Rea's gem) to produce markedly fresh, Tuscan-style oils that are particularly, as Rea describes, "herbaceous." Sure, a 2,000-tree olive grove in the middle of the arid desert on the outer limits of Maricopa County might seem as outlandish as some Canadian car guy shilling olive oil, but the olive tree is actually indigenous to similar landscapes in the Mediterranean region. Moreover, in Arizona, the trees have no natural predators, so Rea's plants are pesticide free, leaving his oil unsullied.

Queen Creek Olive Mill is located at 25062 S. Meridian Road in Queen Creek. For more information, call 480-888-9290 or visit www.queencreekolivemill.com.

"I have no problem saying that I have the freshest oil in North America. No oil is fresher than mine," Rea boasts. "And it's healthier."

In fact, his funky fresh EVOO became so popular, customers beseeched Rea to open an eatery at the mill to utilize it. And so, he did just that, opening del Piero, which is housed inside a 5,000-square-foot farmer's market, amid mill-made goodies and heaps of local bounty. The curious visit del Piero in droves to taste the illustrious Kalamata sandwich, stacked with salami, leafy greens and the mill's own sun-dried tomato and parmesan tapenade. Other delights, like homemade bruschetta and gourmet paninis on rosemary focaccia, use entirely in-house and local ingredients, and shine alongside natively fermented wine.

The mill's carnivorous Queen Creek neighbor, The Pork Shop, supplies the meats, including the smoky pepper-encrusted bacon used in del Piero's fluffy egg and provolone frittata. Rea's personal favorite, the EVOO waffles, are served all day, everyday. No doubt, olive-oil waffles at a small eatery in Queen Creek sounds preposterous, but somewhere in the Greater Antilles, a Jamaican bobsledder just wept tears of joy.

QUEEN CREEK



NICK BEREZENKO

Room at the Inn

Snowflake isn't thought of as a tourism hot spot, but it has a lot to offer, including history, hiking, festivals, fishing and the delightful Heritage Inn.

By ROBERT STIEVE

AN UNEXPECTED DELIGHT. If you had to summarize the Heritage Inn in three words or less, that combination works. There are a lot of other words you could use — charming, inviting, accommodating, historic, pleasant, cozy — but unexpected needs to be in the mix. That's because the Heritage Inn is about the last thing you expect when you roll into Snowflake. That is, if you expect anything at all. Sedona, Pinetop, Bisbee, Flagstaff ... those are traditional tourist towns, where the expectations for inns and B&B's are usually pretty high, but not Snowflake. Do you even know where Snowflake is?

If you don't, grab a map. It's the small town located halfway between Show Low and Holbrook. You'll recognize it by its main street, which is lined with trees and lampposts and mom-and-pop shops. The main attraction on Main Street, however, is the Heritage Inn, which operates like a B&B. Although the town itself leans toward New England or Lake Wobegon, the inn conjures the South, especially when you're reading a book on the expansive front porch — if you have any Faulkner lying around at home, toss one in the suitcase before you go. When you arrive, you'll be tempted to stay outside on the porch, but you need to go inside. It's warm in there, literally and figuratively. Plus, that's where you'll be greeted by JoAnne Guderian. She, too, is an unexpected delight.

Not because of her enthusiasm — a lot of inn owners are like that — but because of her English accent and her genuine disposition. And that's only part of JoAnne's persona. She's also spirited, cute and playful. She's like a kid whose parents went away for the weekend and left her in charge. You won't find a more perfect host. She's hip but gracious, and your stay at the inn is an extension of her. You'll see.

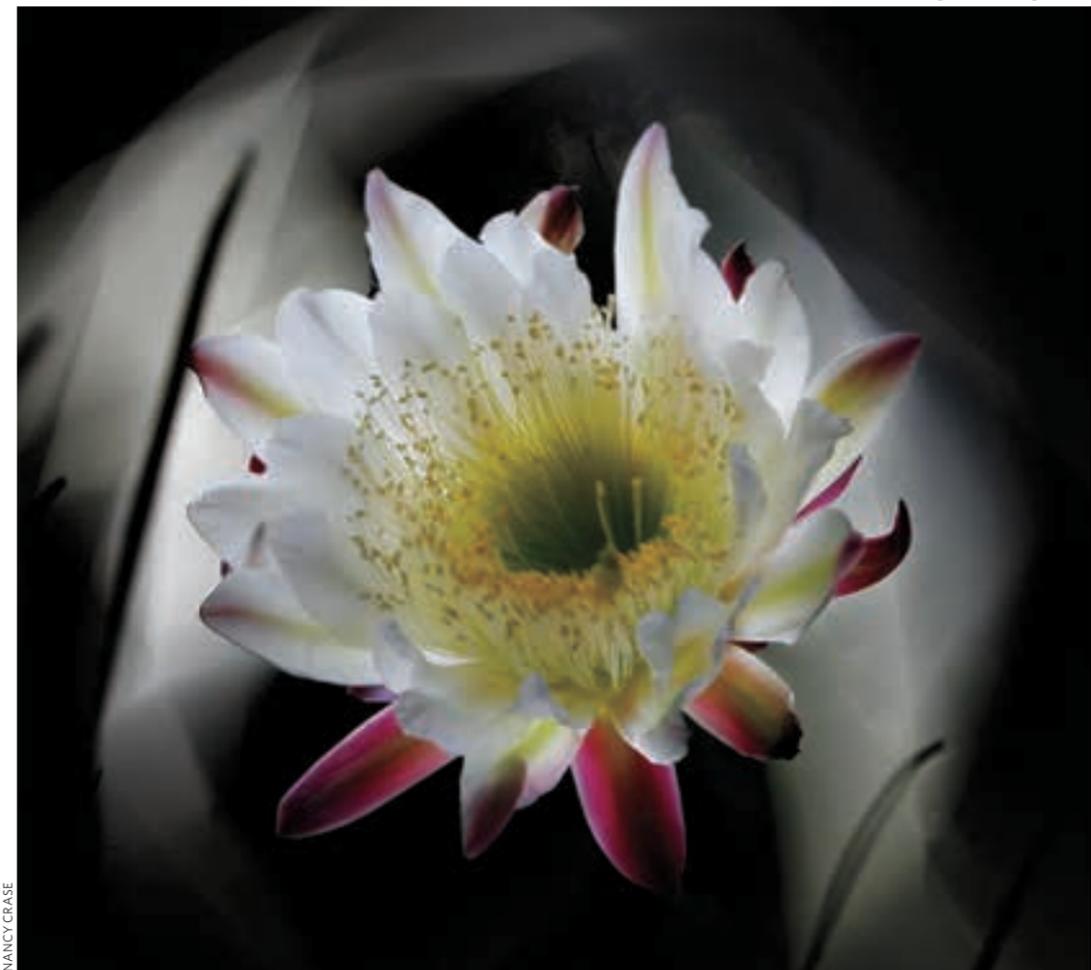
JoAnne has owned the inn with her husband, Craig, since July 2009, and in that short time

they've taken an already popular place and made it even better. The historic building, which was once the home of Osmer Flake, the sixth child of William Flake (the co-founder of Snowflake), now features a dozen rooms with big comfortable beds, full baths and the usual inn amenities. If it's available, ask for the Lucy Hanna Flake Room. It's the best, which is probably why Kirsten Dunst stayed there when she was road-tripping through the area last summer.

It's not the bedrooms, though, that'll capture your attention. It's the gardens and the courtyards, the trees and fountains and flowers, and the manicured lawns. Not coincidentally, you'll be reminded of an English garden. It's what sets this inn apart. And so do the German pancakes. Contrary to what you might be thinking, they aren't filled with sausage, potatoes or sauerkraut. They're actually quite light and lemony. It's the signature dish at breakfast, and like everything else at the Heritage Inn, it's an unexpected delight.

Heritage Inn is located at 161 N. Main Street in Snowflake. For more information, call 866-486-5947 or visit www.heritage-inn.net.

NANCY CRASE



Night-blooming cereus

Shedding Some Light

Photographer Nancy Crase paints with light. That is, she creates photographic images with the help of unique light sources, including her iPhone. Here's how she does it.

By JEFF KIDA, Photo Editor

Nancy Crase first decided to paint with light after reviewing forums on www.sports-shooter.com. Other than what she'd seen there, she says she didn't have a preconceived notion of what she might produce. "Each time I paint with light, I end up with a surprise image that may or may not be what I thought I'd get, but it always adds to my understanding of how light works with an image," Crase says. "It ignites my imagination. I've tried a standard flashlight, the cell phone light and a 2 million candle flashlight for painting very large areas, but I can imagine using all sorts of light sources."

"In my first light-painting, in 2006, I used a flashlight to photograph my car," Crase adds. "On another night that same year, I chose a night-blooming cereus, but had to change light sources because the flashlight

overwhelmed the flower. Standing in my driveway at 1 a.m. didn't leave me many options, so I pulled out my cell phone and, again, the final images weren't anything I expected. The technique became a dramatic demonstration of light in photography."

After attending a June 2008 seminar with light-painting photographer Dave Black, Crase was inspired to return to the idea of painting with a cell phone, but this time, she had a new tool with which to shoot the night-blooming cereus — her iPhone.

"The use of the iPhone was a natural extension of my first experiment, but the myLite application offered so many more possibilities," she says. "I could light the flower (see below) with the white light, then change colors and sweep behind the flower to produce the colored streaks."

TIME TO SHINE

The tool kit for light-painting is minimal. All you need is a camera, a tripod and a movable light source, such as an iPhone or a small flashlight. Before you get started, make sure your surroundings are



JEFF KIDA

sufficiently dark and decide what you want to photograph. Next, attach your camera to a tripod and set the ISO to 100 or 200 (depending on the camera). Working with a small LED flashlight and the camera set on aperture priority, or "A" mode, try shooting at f-8. In manual, or "M" mode, a 15-second exposure at f-11 and the same flashlight placed just a few feet from the subject should provide good results. If you don't have a digital SLR, you can use a point-and-shoot camera set on the "night scene" mode. Keep in mind that your results will vary depending on the camera, subject and light source.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Look for *Arizona Highways Photography Guide*, available at bookstores and www.arizonahighways.com.

ONLINE

For more photography tips and other information, visit www.arizonahighways.com and click "Photo Tips."



Oriental Saloon, Tombstone

This month in history

■ After a long campaign against the Navajo Indians, in March 1864, Colonel Kit Carson led a large group of surrendered Navajos from Arizona to the Bosque Redondo Reservation in New Mexico on one of several marches now known as The Long Walk.

■ During its first session in March 1912, the Arizona State Legislature decided that child laborers under 14 years old could not work during school hours.

■ Tucson glowed at night when the town's gas-powered street lights operated for the first time on March 20, 1882. Lamps had to be individually lit.

Another reason for faro's popularity was its simplicity. In other words, it was easy to cheat. Players bet against the house, placing their chips on or near playing cards that rested on top of a green cloth-covered table. Only the face value of the cards, not the suit, counted. As the dealer doled out two cards per turn from a standard deck, the object was for players to predict which cards would appear.

When the game was played honestly, a gambler could make some serious money. The house didn't have much of an edge, so cheating by dealers became commonplace. Sleight of hand, trick decks and modified dealing boxes were just a few of the tactics used by the likes of Wyatt Earp, Doc Holliday and Bat Masterson, who frequented Tombstone's faro tables. In fact, cheating at faro was so prevalent that 19th century editions of *Hoyle's Rules of Games* declared that a single honest faro bank could not be found in the United States.

At Tombstone's Oriental Saloon, an argument over a faro game between Luke Short and Charlie Storms in February 1881 led to a fatal gunfight, with Storms coming out on the short end. Tombstone resident George Parsons witnessed Storms' death and wrote in his journal, "The faro games went right on as though nothing had happened." Chances are, it wasn't the only gunfight that erupted over claims of cheating at faro.

By 1900, the Arizona Territory was still home to nearly 1,000 gaming establishments, but, eventually, public pressure to end the practice won out and faro was outlawed. A March 31, 1907, *Prescott Journal-Miner* headline read: "The Tiger is Dying!" By midnight, dealers had called their last faro turn.

COURTESY BISBEE MINING & HISTORICAL MUSEUM

Easy Money

Gambling, cheating ... they went hand in hand in the Old West, especially when it came to faro, a card game that occasionally turned deadly.

By SALLY BENFORD

IT WASN'T POKER OR blackjack. In saloons and gambling halls around Arizona and the Old West, faro was the name of the game for gritty gamblers.

A card game of French origin, faro became extremely popular throughout Europe in the 18th century. It spread to America and migrated west with betting prospectors during the California Gold Rush. High-stakes gamblers in the Arizona Territory favored the game for its easy odds, while novices enjoyed the quick action. Money earned through faro even provided the land for the University of Arizona. It also provided Yavapai County Sheriff William Owen O'Neill with a nickname. The law enforcement officer was known as "Bucky," for his winning ways at "bucking the tiger," as the game was also called.



50 years ago IN ARIZONA HIGHWAYS

In our March 1960 issue, we traced the names of the state's canyons, mountains, rivers and cities back to their origins. The names ranged from Native American words to the musings of Mormon settlers. In addition, we featured the work of John W. Hilton, whose paintings explored the simple beauty of Arizona's deserts.

Sweet Somethings They're not very big, but their impact is enormous. In addition to producing \$150 billion worth of honey annually, honeybees also pollinate more than 90 commercial crops around the world. That's sweet. BY MARK CRUDUP

Don't forget to call her Honey. That's the first piece of advice for male drones — in the hustle-and-bustle world of a beehive, female honeybees dominate the working males. The second piece of advice: Enjoy it while you can. That's because drones are doomed to die after mating, while the drones that don't mate are denied food, meaning they die as well. What's worse, there's nothing they can do to fight back. Among honeybees, it's the females that sting; males aren't given any defense mechanisms.

Clearly, there's no glass ceiling in a beehive. The females run the show, and their primary objective is to serve the queen and protect her larvae. Of course, the males do have a purpose. Their job is to mate with the

queen, and it's a tall order: The queen is a bee-producing machine, laying up to 2,000 eggs a day, according to researchers at Texas A&M University.

As a result, honeybees are everywhere, including Arizona. They first came to the United States in the 1600s, and today they swarm the globe, producing honey and pollinating more than 90 commercial crops in the process. Honey, however, is their main line of work, and they're very good at what they do, generating more than \$150 billion worth of honey annually. It doesn't come easy, though. In fact, a bee must pollinate 2 million flowers just to make a single pound of honey. Even with 50,000 bees in a colony, that's a lot of buzzing around.

nature factoid



NICK BEREZENKO

Flashdancer

Parry's penstemon is a favorite among hummingbirds, and with good reason. This wildflower boasts flashy fuchsia blooms in the shape of an easily accessible funnel. Vibrant between February and May, the desert-friendly plant does best in chalky or sandy, very dry soil, and most commonly blooms in clusters throughout the state's lower elevations.



BRUCE D. TAUBERT



ANSEL ADAMS

Ansel Adams: Discoveries

MARCH 1-31
PHOENIX

This Phoenix Art Museum show features 120 prints and dozens of supporting documents from master photographer Ansel Adams' early career, along with material from his archival collection, including camera equipment, personal letters, negatives and snapshot albums. The exhibit also includes Adams' photographs from the American Southwest, his color work and prints of the national parks. *Information: 602-257-1222 or www.phxart.org.*

Gem & Mineral Show

MARCH 14-16 COTTONWOOD



Need a little sparkle? Head to the Verde Valley Fairgrounds for this annual show. The event features gems and minerals from around the world, as well as jewelry, lapidary tools, supplies and information. Free gem and mineral identifications, children's activities, raffles and silent auctions round out the event. *Information: 928-634-7452 or www.mingusclub.org.*

MS Round-Up Ride

MARCH 27-28 FLORENCE

The weather should be beautiful this month, so hit the pavement and support multiple sclerosis research efforts. This two-day bike ride, which begins in Florence, is the largest fully catered cycling event in Arizona, and attracts nearly 1,000 cyclists from across the country.



KIM MORRIS PHOTOGRAPHY

Information: 480-968-2488 or www.bikemsarizona.org.



Renaissance Festival

MARCH 1-28 APACHE JUNCTION

Step back in time to a European-style country fair each Saturday and Sunday throughout the month. Knights, rogues, royalty and craftsmen roam a 30-acre village filled with 200 shops, 12 entertainment stages, a jousting arena, pubs and cafés. Grab a turkey leg and a mug of mead, then settle in for a jolly good time. *Information: 520-463-2700 or www.renfestinfo.com.*

Photo Workshop

APRIL 24-28 SLOT CANYONS

Carved by wind and water through time, Arizona's slot canyons are on every photographer's "must-see" list. In these mysterious places, beams of light and whorls of colored sandstone help create striking images. Join professional photographer Jerry Sieve for this workshop, which also includes opportunities to photograph from Horseshoe Bend Overlook, the Vermilion Cliffs and the Paria Bluffs. *Information: 866-790-7042 or www.friendsofzhighways.com.*



MARK MOFFETT

National Geographic Live

MARCH 17 MESA

Join Harvard-trained ecologist Mark Moffett for "Army Ants and Flying Frogs," a National Geographic Speaker Series event at Mesa Arts Center. Moffett, a dynamic storyteller, will make you fall in love with the unexpected: insects, frogs and other small wonders of nature. *Information: 480-644-6500 or www.mesaartscenter.org.*

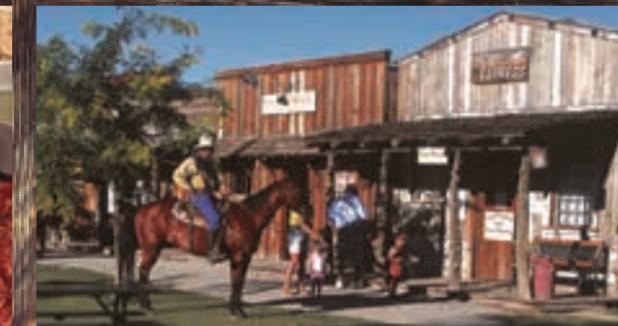


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MEETS OLD WEST
SHENANIGANS**

Plan a stopover at the Blazin' M Ranch dinner theatre where "Happy Trails" are just the beginning. The rustic ambiance, chuckwagon-style, all-you-can-eat barbecue; and knee-slapping crooning with tall-tales and tomfoolery are guaranteed to tickle your funny bone.



CLARET CUPS ARE RED,
BLUEBELLS ARE BLUE ...

Springtime in Arizona is marked by two major events: Cactus League baseball and the annual explosion of radiant wildflowers. Although the boys of summer draw bigger crowds, it's the spectrum of color that really stands out. As you'll see, this is the big show in this neck of the woods, and we have the photos to prove it. Of course, seeing flowers in a magazine is nothing like experiencing them in the wild. To that end, we offer 10 scenic hikes for getting to a place where you can stop and actually smell the primroses.

 EDITED BY JEFF KIDA



Claret cup cactus bloom



☞ PRECEDING PANEL: Desert bluebells mingle with a Parry's agave, creating a striking spring scene. PHOTOGRAPH BY TIM FITZHARRIS

☞ Golden brittlebushes favor rocky hillsides, such as those along the Peralta Trail in the Superstition Wilderness. PHOTOGRAPH BY MOREY K. MILBRADT

To order a print of this photograph, call 866-962-1191 or visit www.arizonahighwaysprints.com.



☞ **ABOVE:** Purple owl clover grows alongside a patch of Mexican gold-poppies, painting the desert near Stewart Mountain with bands of brilliant color. PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT McDONALD

☞ **RIGHT:** The blooms of desert lupines range in color from pale blue to deep violet. With their unusual color and attractive fragrance, these wildflowers are a favorite of bumblebees. PHOTOGRAPH BY MOREY K. MILBRADT





MOREY K. MILLBRADT

Owl clover

☞ LEFT: Below Four Peaks in the Tonto National Forest, Mexican goldpoppies seem to reach for the sky. PHOTOGRAPH BY NICK BEREZENKO

To order a print of this photograph, call 866-962-1191 or visit www.arizonahighwaysprints.com.



WHERE TO HIT THE TRAIL | *By Amanda Fruzynski*

CENTRAL ARIZONA

JACOB'S CROSSCUT TRAIL | Lost Dutchman State Park, Apache Junction

In nearly every famous photograph of the Superstition Mountains, it looks as if the craggy rocks have risen directly from a pool of colorful wildflowers. It's a beautiful scene, one you can easily wade into on the Jacob's Crosscut Trail. This easy 0.8-mile trail skirts the base of the range and is thick with Mexican goldpoppies, lupines, wild hyacinths and chuparosas. Keep your eyes peeled for butterflies, too.

DIRECTIONS: From Phoenix, drive east on U.S. Route 60 for approximately 25 miles to Exit 197, Tomahawk Road, and turn left (north). Drive north for 3 miles to State Route 88 (Apache Trail), turn right (east), and drive approximately 4 miles to Lost Dutchman State Park.

INFORMATION: 480-982-4485 or www.azparks.gov/parks/lodu

MESQUITE CANYON TRAIL | White Tank Mountain Regional Park, Waddell

This hike starts out with a moderately difficult half-mile climb, but after that it's easy going on a flatter surface. The full Mesquite Canyon Trail loop covers about 8.3 miles and offers a wider variety of wildflowers than many other desert trails. Hikers will see California poppies and the surprising spiny red fairy duster. To catch a glimpse of a beautiful spring, take the Willow Canyon Trail on the way back.

DIRECTIONS: From Phoenix, drive west on Interstate 10 to Exit 124, Cotton Lane, turn right (north) and continue as the road becomes Loop 303. At Olive Avenue, turn left (west) and follow the signs to the park.

INFORMATION: 623-935-2505 or www.maricopa.gov/parks/white_tank

BARTLETT LAKE | Carefree

This is a less-structured wildflower hike. That's because seeing the flowers means simply wandering into the wilderness surrounding the lake. Although the lake and marina aren't exactly out in the wilderness, the nearby hillsides are still full of blooming ocotillos, goldpoppies, white poppies and lupines. It's a free-for-all of flowers. Look for the road that leads to Rattlesnake Cove for the best views.

DIRECTIONS: From Scottsdale, drive north on Loop 101 toward Cave Creek to Exit 36, and merge right (north) onto Pima Road. Drive 12 miles to Cave Creek Road and turn right (east). Drive east approximately 7 miles to Bartlett Dam Road, turn right, and follow the signs to Bartlett Lake.

INFORMATION: 480-595-3300 or www.bartlettlake.com

BAJADA TRAIL | South Mountain Park, Phoenix

Seeing wildflowers doesn't have to mean leaving the city. South Mountain Park has always provided a respite right in the heart of metropolitan Phoenix.

In the early spring, the park also provides a good, but occasionally sparse, look at desert marigolds, brittlebush, globemallows and Mexican goldpoppies. The best way to see the wildflowers is the Bajada Trail, which is rated easy to moderate. The 2-mile hike has a slight elevation change.

DIRECTIONS: From downtown Phoenix, drive south on Central Avenue for approximately 5 miles to the park entrance. Once inside the park, take the main road from the Central Avenue entrance to the right for 2 miles and turn right, following the signs to San Juan Valley. At the 2.5-mile marker, turn left into the gravel parking area.

INFORMATION: www.phoenix.gov/parks/hikesoth.html

SOUTHERN ARIZONA

PALO VERDE TRAIL & AJO MOUNTAIN DRIVE | Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument

There are two good ways to enjoy the wildflowers in this area, hiking or driving, and both offer great opportunities to see wildflowers. On foot, the Palo Verde Trail leads from the visitors center to the nearby campground. By car, the Ajo Mountain Drive loops around for several miles into the Diablo Mountains.

DIRECTIONS: From Phoenix, drive west on Interstate 10 for 42 miles to Exit 112, State Route 85, and turn left (south). Drive 35 miles to Gila Bend, and continue on SR 85, driving south for another 70 miles to Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument.

INFORMATION: 520-387-6849 or www.nps.gov/orpi

SUTHERLAND TRAIL | Catalina State Park

The surplus of saguaros is often the most noticeable feature of the Santa Catalina Mountains, but after a few good rains there just might be marigolds, poppies and lupines poking up from between the spiky figures. The best bet for finding these brave flowery souls is along the 10.8-mile Sutherland Trail. It's a moderately difficult trail, mostly because of the elevation change toward the end. While the first few miles are flat, the elevation eventually reaches 8,600 feet.

DIRECTIONS: In Tucson, drive north on Oracle Road for approximately 20 miles to the park entrance.

INFORMATION: 520-628-5798 or www.azparks.gov/parks/cata

WILDFLOWER GARDEN | Tucson Botanical Gardens

Some years, Mother Nature can be a little fickle. One extra rainy day between Thanksgiving and March can make all the difference between wildflowers being abundant, sparsely patchy or simply nonexistent. At Tucson Botanical Gardens' Wildflower Garden, things are different. With some careful tending, the flowers will bloom in spring as they do in the rest of the state. Look for unique flowers like the blackfoot daisy, tufted evening primrose and wild Canterbury bells.

DIRECTIONS: Tucson Botanical Gardens is located

at 2150 N. Alvernon Way in Tucson.

INFORMATION: 520-326-9686 or www.tucsonbotanical.org

CABEZA PRIETA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE | Ajo

Cabeza Prieta, a protected area, is one of the largest wildlife refuges in the country. The only designated hiking trail in the refuge is a short interpretive trail near the visitors center. However, those carrying a permit, lots of water and a four-wheel-drive vehicle can roam about finding wildflowers galore. Mexican goldpoppies are especially plentiful in the area. Just make sure to get a Refuge Entry Permit and sign the Military Hold Harmless Agreement at the refuge office beforehand.

DIRECTIONS: From Phoenix, take Interstate 10 west for 42 miles to Exit 112, State Route 85, and turn left (south). Drive 35 miles to Gila Bend and continue south on SR 85 for another 40 miles to Ajo. The refuge office is on the west side of SR 85 at the north end of Ajo.

INFORMATION: 520-387-6483 or www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges/arizona/cabeza

WESTERN ARIZONA

PALM CANYON TRAIL | Kofa National Wildlife Refuge, northeast of Yuma

Although the refuge is mostly roadway (which means stopping the car to take photos of flowers), there is a half-mile hike that leads to Palm Canyon. The canyon is best known for having some of the only native palms in the state, but a variety of unique wildflowers can be seen throughout the refuge as well. Creosote, verbenas, tall desert lilies and dune primroses all bloom in the refuge during springtime.

DIRECTIONS: From Quartzsite, drive south on U.S. Route 95 for 18 miles to a small sign for Palm Canyon. At the sign, turn onto the dirt road and drive approximately 9 miles to the parking lot.

INFORMATION: 520-783-7861 or www.southwest.fws.gov/refuges/arizona/kofa

LIGHTNING BOLT TRAIL | Buckskin Mountain State Park, Parker

The next time you're making a road trip to California in March, make a quick pit stop to enjoy some of the last wildflowers growing on this side of the state line. Buckskin Mountain State Park is part of the Parker Strip along the Colorado River. Across the Colorado sits California, but the state park on the Arizona side offers a few short and easy trails with picturesque flowers. Try the steep, winding Lightning Bolt Trail, which runs a half-mile round-trip. By connecting with the Buckskin Trail, it turns into a 3- to 4-mile hike.

DIRECTIONS: From Phoenix, take Interstate 10 west, toward California, for 135 miles to Exit 19, U.S. Route 95, and turn right (north) onto U.S. 95, driving 35 miles to Parker. At Parker, continue north on U.S. 95 for another 15 miles to the park entrance.

INFORMATION: 928-667-3231 or www.azstateparks.gov/parks/bumo

 **LEFT:** Evening primroses and sand verbenas carpet the landscape of Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge. PHOTOGRAPH BY NICK BEREZENKO



THE SANDS RANCH IN SOUTHEASTERN ARIZONA IS 64,000 ACRES OF BIODIVERSITY. RECENTLY, PIMA COUNTY PURCHASED A SWATH OF THE LAND FOR RECREATION AND PRESERVATION. MORE SO FOR THE LATTER, CONSIDERING THE RANCH IS HOME TO AN ABUNDANCE OF NATURAL GRASSES, BIRDS GALORE AND 60 SPECIES OF MAMMALS. IT'S AN ECOLOGICAL TREASURE — THE KIND OF PLACE YOU WOULD HAVE FOUND MARLIN PERKINS PROWLING FOR PUMAS.

WILD KINGDOM

BY DOUGLAS KREUTZ PHOTOGRAPHS BY JACK DYKINGA

Stands of agaves grow amid the dense amber grasses of Sands Ranch.



I

IT IS RIGHT ON THE CUSP OF DUSK, with the last red of sunset bleeding out of the western horizon, when I lose myself in the landscape of the Sands Ranch. The sensation — of shrinking to a mere human speck in a high-onesome expanse of grassland and sky — is as calming as deep meditation or a loved one's touch. That might sound a little dramatic, but the ranch near Sonoita in Southeastern Arizona really is one of those reach-out-and-touch-you places, and the acquisition of 5,040 acres of the sprawling spread by Pima County means a portion of the land will be protected from overuse and development ...

T

and the Mustang Mountains to the south — rise in tree-topped ridges, but our immediate world is one of grass, grass and more grass. A 2008 report, the “Biological Reconnaissance of Sands Ranch,” prepared for the Arizona Land and Water Trust, includes this description of grasses growing wild on the ranch:

“An abundance of native grass species was observed during the field review of October 22-23, 2008. They included three-awns, six-weeks needle grama, side-oats grama, slender grama, Rothrock grama, tanglehead, sprangle-top, wolf-tail, bush muhly, tobosa, plains bristlegrass, sacaton, cotton-top and the exotic annual fingergrass. Another exotic, Lehmann lovegrass, is also quite common in the area.”

In our first hours of exploring the vast grasslands trimmed with agaves, a few native trees and some shrubs, I can see the Sands Ranch quite clearly but cannot really grasp it. If you’ve watched old John Wayne Westerns, one of which was filmed just south of the Sands Ranch, you have a sense of the place. But only a sense. This is cowboy country — rolling away as far as the eye can see. It’s not until we park the truck and put boots on the ground that the “bones” of the landscape begin to show through.

Jack has already mentally framed a half-dozen must-have photos, and now he tramps off with his cameras in a quest to make them real. I go the other way, dropping into a shallow drainage, and imagine myself in the tawny hide of a mountain lion.

Lions, Baldwin told me before our visit to the ranch, are but one of some 60 mammal species that roam the Sands ranges, along with at least 97 species of birds that live, breed, migrate through or occasionally show up in these parts. Something he’d mentioned about the ranch serving as a corridor for wildlife seemed to me an even more important value to the public. In this very desirable section of Arizona, where new housing developments and roads are a fact of life, wild animals will suffer if they cannot find travel routes between stands of civilization. Now, as one of the first members of the public to explore the place since its acquisition by the county, I want to figuratively slip out of my skin, mentally impersonate a puma, and check out the quadrupedal byways.

So down the drainage I pad, far from the

cars on State Route 82 and free of the ranchettes or subdivisions that could have begun popping up in the area without public ownership of the land. I make my way stealthily, speedily, encountering no fellow travelers other than a soaring hawk and occasional towhees flitting in the air. It’s wide-open country now, a place where a lion is free to roam en route from mountains to marshlands, known as *cienegas*, and I’m beginning to work my way into it.

Jack and I rendezvous with some friends who will camp with us tonight. We remount our motorized steeds and head deeper into the Sands.

Real steeds, of course, are an ideal form of transportation in this landscape, and visitors might occasionally come across working cowboys on horseback. That’s because the acquisition agreement allows for cattle grazing to continue on a carefully monitored basis.

“In the big picture, the Sands Ranch is a part of the county’s whole conservation lands system,” Baldwin said in an interview after our days on the land. “Ranching is a historic value out there, part of the cultural history, and we need to honor that. These large landscapes are working landscapes. They’re not being acquired and locked up.”

“The Sands family can continue to graze cattle on the county’s 5,040 acres,” Baldwin added, noting that the county’s acquisition amounts to a fairly small portion of the 64,000-acre ranch. “But the land will also be a place available to the public for recreation.”

Marilyn Harris, a co-owner of the ranch, along with other descendants of ranch founder Louis Sands, says the acquisition is “a win-win situation for our family and the people of Pima County.”

“We can continue ranching on the land” as the family has done since Sands bought the property in 1919, Harris says. “We’ve worked on a coordinated ranch management plan with several government agencies and the University of Arizona.”

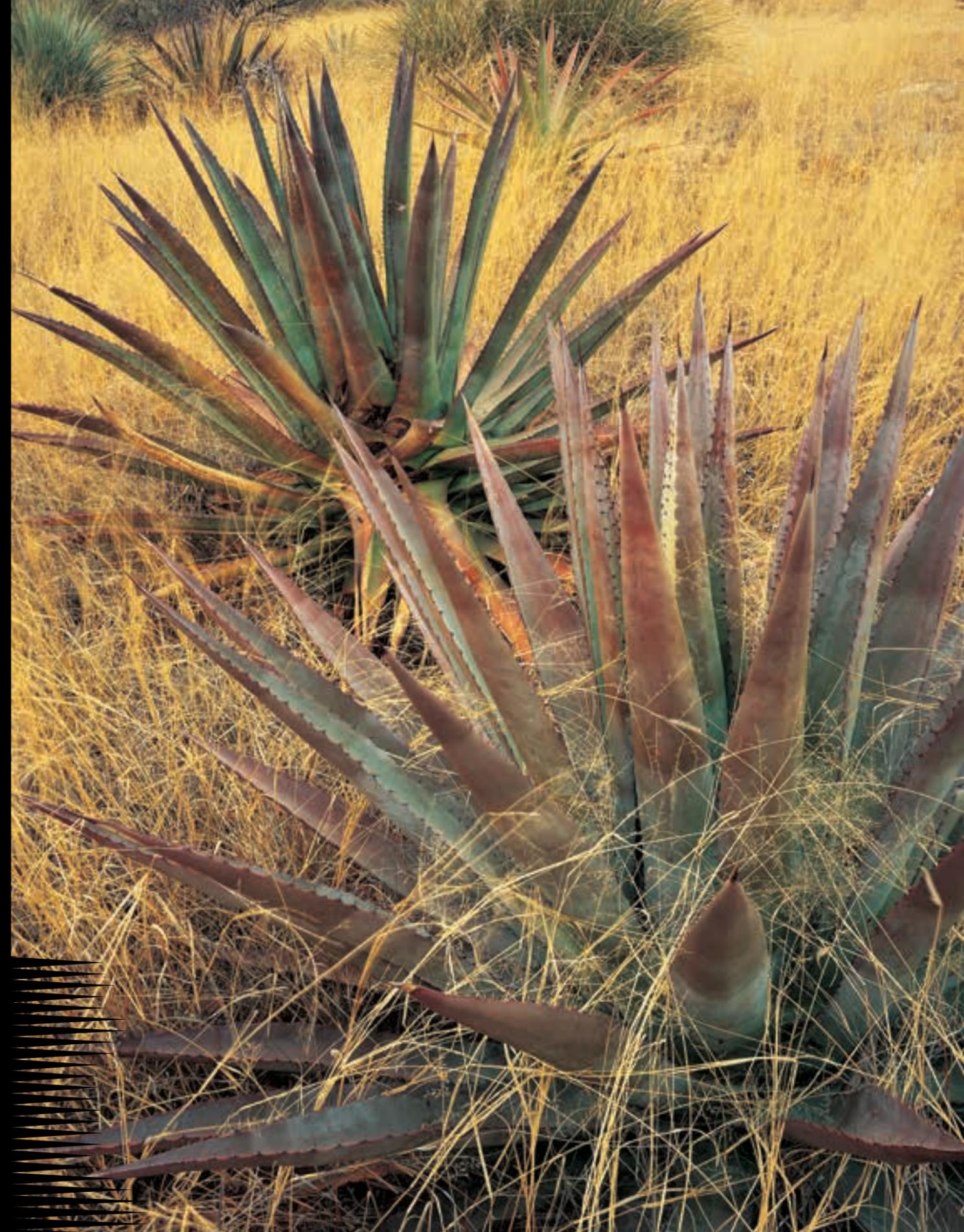
Harris adds that her own rich experiences on the ranch over many years make her certain it can be a good place for “quiet, peaceful and refreshing” public recreation.

he property, purchased in late 2008 for \$21 million from the Sands family, is considered an ecological treasure because it’s perched at elevations between about 4,800 and 5,800 feet in a transition zone between the Sonoran and Chihuahuan deserts. After decades of conscientious ranching practices, the land is rated Class A grassland by The Nature Conservancy — meaning that native grasses dominate over invasive species.

“We consider the acquisition of Sands Ranch vitally important because of two fundamental elements,” says Kerry Baldwin, natural resources division manager for Pima County Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation. “First, it’s a high-quality grassland with the plants and animals that thrive in such an environment. Second, it lies right between the Whetstone Mountains of the Coronado National Forest and Las Cienegas National Conservation Area. In that position, it creates a critical corridor for the movement of wildlife.”

There’s only one way to fully understand big country such as the Sands Ranch. Go there. Ride the terrain. Walk it. Camp on it. Enter the landscape.

On a breezy, blue-sky spring day, I do just that with photographer Jack Dykinga. Entering the area on Clyne Ranch Road, about 9 miles northeast of Sonoita, we more or less give the pickup its head, and rumble at poke-along speeds up and down dirt roads that are sometimes pretty good and sometimes not. Mountains — the towering Santa Rita range to the west, the Whetstones to the east



Agaves emerge from a tangle of native grasses.



ABOVE: Dawn casts a golden swath of light across the Mustang Mountains and the agave-studded grasslands of Sands Ranch.

RIGHT: A rainbow cactus, with its foreboding spiral spines, is tucked among the area's grasses and agaves.



By the evening of our first day on the ranch, Jack and I have gained a sense of what recreation means in this kind of country. It is, we've quickly discovered, an entirely different experience than climbing up snowy summits or wriggling down rugged canyons — trips we've done together in the past. As I pitch a tent not far from

the truck near a site known as Cottonwood Spring and wait for the first stars to come online in the night sky, I'm beginning, just beginning, to get the idea. This is not so much a place to ascend or endure or survive. Rather, it is a place just to *be*.

Or maybe it's a place for people mostly *not* to be. We could be pleased that it's here and protected, but leave it largely to the grass and the wildlife.

Baldwin will tell me later that this isn't too far off the money. And he notes that the county's plans for the land aren't aimed at anything like full-service tourism.

"We plan to have an access point at Clyne Ranch Road," off State Route 82, he says. "But we plan no road improvements, no restrooms or ramadas. If you don't have a four-wheel-drive vehicle and the ability to read maps, this

may not be the place for you."

I can practically hear my would-be puma pals chanting: "Yeessss!"

The next morning, Jack, like all serious landscape photographers, is up early, brewing hair-on-your-chest coffee and quickly marching off in search of the quintessential Sands sunrise. He finds it, along with gorgeous agaves and grasses in all their amber waves.

Later we head for what I think of as the ranch's highlands — an area of ridges and deep-cut canyons along a steep, rutted rattle-and-bang road leading toward a lush site known as Bear Spring. We get wonderfully lost at one point, finding ourselves unable to make our maps jibe with reality.

We find splendid shade in a lovely little draw, forget the map and take a nap. While Jack enjoys an extended snooze, I walk far out across grasslands growing out of stony soil. I scan the rolling hills with binoculars for more than an hour and fail to spot a single animal other than birds. It could be a good sign, I decide. Perhaps the mammals are finding plenty of good travel corridors to detour around me.

By late afternoon, we've migrated across a more wide-open expanse and have dropped into a comely oak-lined watercourse. Jack sets up a tripod. I walk and look and listen. I hear something on the breeze and don't know what. I see a bird I can't name. Those might be cirrus clouds, but I'm not certain.

We set up camp on a broad ridge near a big,

bushy juniper tree. The view below is grassland ad infinitum. Above, a grand dome of sky waits to play real-time planetarium when day fades to night. Jack hoists his heavy pack full of photo gear and heads off to stalk the sunset. I wander aimlessly, looking for nothing.

That is when I find what I am seeking. Somewhere out on that ridge, far from the truck, far from Jack, far from the carefully researched reports and helpful tutelage of experts such as Baldwin, I simply fade into the landscape. The last light burns out of the sky. Dusk surrenders to darkness. I am merely here in the shadows, a small part of it, and that's enough. So it is, far out in the big country of Sands Ranch. ■

WHEN YOU GO

DIRECTIONS: From Tucson, drive about 20 miles southeast on Interstate 10 and exit onto State Route 83. Follow SR 83 for 24 miles south to Sonoita. Continue northeast from Sonoita on State Route 82 for about 9 miles to the access point on Clyne Ranch Road.

TRAVEL ADVISORY: Sands Ranch, unlike some other public lands, is managed primarily for its plants, animals, watershed and other ecological values, rather than for recreation. No improvements have been made to accommodate visitors. Many roads on the property are unsigned and rough enough to demand a high-clearance, four-wheel-drive vehicle. No gas, water, food, lodging, developed campgrounds or other services are available to the public. Before planning a trip, contact Pima County Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation.

INFORMATION: Pima County Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation: 520-877-6000.



A herd of Nubian dairy goats poses for our photographer at the Black Mesa Ranch in Snowflake. The goats' milk is handcrafted into artisan cheese and distributed to restaurants and natural-food stores across Arizona.

Whatever Floats Your GOAT

David and Kathryn Heiningen run what they call an “accidental dairy.” It’s the last thing they expected when they were racing through a speed-of-light existence in urban Arizona. That said, there they are, living on a ranch near Snowflake, raising goats, and making artisan cheese for some of the best restaurants in the country. It’s not for everybody, but for the Heiningers, it doesn’t get any better than this.



“Our backgrounds are country. We didn’t want to be city people.”

David and Kathryn Heininger (above) walk a group of goats across the high-desert pasture of Black Mesa Ranch. David (opposite page) shares a moment with one of his kids.

IF IT RAINS, WE’RE STRANDED. When normally dry washes flood in this part of Arizona’s high desert, they create currents only a fool attempts to cross. Although there are enough fools in the state that Arizona has enacted a Stupid Motorist Law to charge drivers requiring rescue from flooding, photographer Jack Kurtz and I don’t wish to be among them.

Under threatening black clouds and grim forecasts, we’re hoping we can make it to the Black Mesa Ranch, 9 miles east of Snowflake, and back to Phoenix without being marooned between washes.

At the gate to the ranch, we slip off the chain and enter, as we’ve been instructed to do. Two Anatolian shepherds, large dogs tasked with guarding the ranch’s goat herd,

bolt and in seconds are visible only as brown specks among scrub cactus and juniper trees in the distance. A minute later, David Heininger, owner of the ranch and master goat cheese-maker, arrives in a golf cart. We point to the disappearing specks, and he takes off.

At the ranch house, which also serves as the milking room and a cheese kitchen, David’s wife, Kathryn, welcomes us and assures us the dogs aren’t lost. David and the prodigal shepherds make it back just in time for the 7 a.m. milking. Thirty goats are lined up on the wooden deck outside the milking room, udders begging for relief.

Since 2003, Black Mesa Ranch has been producing artisan goat cheese prized by chefs across Arizona, and sold to consumers over the Internet. The ranch also hosts an

agritourism business that brings in members of the public who love goats, cheese or both.

For David, 50, and Kathryn, 49, life with their goats and a small dairy operation couldn’t be more of a dream come true. “I never know if I want to have more hours in the day or less,” David says.

MILKING IS THE FIRST STEP IN THE CHEESE-making process. Twice a day, the dairy goats are milked, six at a time. Each goat has a name, and each comes when called — if she has a mind to.

First through the door this morning are Moon, Lutzi, Luna, Langley, Lela and Espeze. Moon and Lutzi are Oberhaslis, goats of Swiss origin. The Heiningers also keep a few Saanen goats, which are all white and have pointed ears. The rest are Nubians with

brown and black coats and long, floppy ears that give them a rabbit-like appearance. Nubian milk has the highest butterfat content and makes the richest cheese. The herd’s average: 7 percent.

In the milking room, each goat knows its designated station. Kathryn passes along the row of goats and wipes each udder with an antiseptic solution, then dries the teats and squirts a test sample into a tin cup. David covers each teat with an “inflation,” a clear silicone tube attached to the vacuum hoses of the milking machine.

They’ve dubbed the machine “Chupacabra” after the legendary goat-sucking monster of Mexico and Puerto Rico. David flips a switch and hoses begin to make the *squish-shush*, *squish-shush* sound of milk being pumped.

After milking, David sprays the does’ teats

with a chilly aerosol antiseptic to contract the opening and prevent bacteria from entering. The goats pass through the exit door to the left of the milking room and receive a tasty animal cracker. The next six come through the entrance on the right and take their place on the platform.

Milking and cheese-making go hand-in-hand at Black Mesa Ranch. Both are seasonal. Pregnant goats begin to give birth around March 1, stimulating lactation. Goat kids are bottle-fed mother’s milk, leaving the surplus for cheese.

During hot summer months, milk production decreases. As winter approaches, milk becomes richer with a higher butterfat content to fatten up the kids for cold weather.

The Heiningers allow their goats to dry up in December, after the does have been impregnated by the five bucks on the ranch. Cheese production stops.

The ranch also has six cows, raised for beef, four dogs, three Hampshire-Duroc pigs and about 30 fowl, including egg-laying chickens, guinea fowl, a peahen and a resplendent peacock. The pigs are useful for slurping up the whey left over from cheese-making. Eventually the pigs become bacon, but the goats are seldom eaten. Kathryn says she’s not fond of goat meat. And, says David, “They’re just so darned cute.”

Three Anatolian shepherds and a black lab constantly patrol the property. The shepherds are fawn-colored with black markings and massive heads. Their job is to watch for intruders such as coyotes, bobcats, mountain lions, bears, rogue domestic and feral dogs, and humans.

NOW IN ITS SIXTH YEAR OF PRODUCTION, Black Mesa Ranch was something of an

accidental dairy. It’s also a love story — about a man, a woman and their goats.

David grew up in Connecticut and wanted to be a chef. After attending the culinary program at Johnson & Wales University in Providence, Rhode Island, he began working in restaurants and eventually found himself cooking at a Holiday Inn in Tucson.

Kathryn was an Air Force brat, born in Kansas and raised in Michigan and Minnesota. She attended the University of Arizona and Brigham Young University. She met David while working as a server at the Holiday Inn. They married in 1982.

For several years, the Heiningers worked in restaurants and renovated houses and apartment buildings in Connecticut and Arizona. By 2000, they had saved enough and made enough through investments to retire.

The couple determined they wanted to stay in the United States. Next, they checked off climate deal-breakers: too hot, too cold, too humid, any place prone to natural disasters.

“We knew we both wanted to be rural,” David says. “Our backgrounds are country. We didn’t want to be city people.”

When they spotted an online real estate ad for acreage in Eastern Arizona, they were intrigued, and traveled five hours to check out a property that had been on the market for a decade.

Once a cattle ranch that had been partitioned into plots that included a commune, the place had fallen into disrepair. Windows were broken. The well wasn’t working. Toilets had been stolen. Two-story buildings had no decks or stairs; access was by ladders.

Their real estate agent was embarrassed. “She hated the property,” David says with a laugh.



The Heiningers draw a crowd while tending to goats in the barn (above). David processes goats' milk for artisan cheese (below).

But the two renovators were giddy. They knew they'd found their home.

Kathryn loved the expansive desert, dotted with prickly pear cactuses, juniper and cedar trees, saltbush and barberry. She liked the backdrop of Black Mesa, a ring of flat-topped hills darkened by veins of coal. The air there is so clear and still, the only sounds are crickets chirping, flies buzzing and the faint *cheep* of a faraway bird.

They bought it for a song — \$160,000 for the first 240 acres and \$15,000 for another 40 — and moved in in October 2000 with the four dogs.

"We started to work right away," David says of their transition to the ranch.

First they dropped a new well. They began to finish the buildings and make them habitable. David planted a garden. Because the isolated ranch is off the electrical grid, they installed solar panels and a windmill to make their own power. Today they use a diesel generator only to power the milking and pasteurization machines.

On a whim, they decided to buy a goat, knowing nothing about livestock and thinking of them only as pets. "We didn't come out here to do a dairy," David says.

They bought two goats, both pregnant. David was eager to try making cheese. Too impatient to wait for

spring kidding, he bought cow's milk at the store and experimented.

He calls that first batch "OK."

Kathryn calls it "boring."

With the first supply of goat's milk, though, magic happened. When the economy began to falter, they decided to supplement their income by selling goat cheese. Soon they had a whole herd of goats and became a licensed dairy.

The Heiningers fell in love with their floppy-eared, four-legged kids. For the first few days of goat-ranching, they sat by the window, captivated by the animals gamboling around the yard. "They were so friendly, so loving," David says.

IN 2003, THE HEININGERS PRODUCED THEIR first commercial cheese. David took a sample to a natural-food store in Snowflake. The owner tasted it and ordered more. Then David got a call from chef Chris Bianco, a



Phoenix restaurant owner and winner of the 2003 James Beard Foundation Award for Best Chef: Southwest.

"Send me your goat cheese," he told David.

New York native Bianco, who owns Pizzeria Bianco and Pane Bianco, had been searching for local artisan cheese. He now uses the Heiningers' fresh chevre on his roasted pepper and arugula sandwiches and on crostini at his wine bar. Several years ago, Bianco scored a block of Black Mesa Ranch aged cheese for a Beard House dinner he was cooking in New York.

"You can taste how herbaceous the cheese is by what the animals eat," Bianco says. "Kathryn and David are so dedicated to the product and the animals. They are doing something world class."

After Bianco's endorsement, word spread. The Heiningers now have a client list that includes Kevin Binkley of the eponymous high-end restaurant in Cave Creek, Todd Sawyer of Atlas Bistro in Scottsdale, Amanda Stine of Garland's Oak Creek Lodge in Sedona, and Chrysa Robertson, chef/owner of Rancho Pinot in Scottsdale.

"It's worked out for us," Kathryn says. "David is a really good cheese-maker."

WHEN IT'S TIME FOR THE NEXT SIX DOES TO be milked, the agile goats clamber up the stairs to the milking room, taking their turn at Chupacabra. Kathryn notices a small trail of mucus on the floor.

"Somebody's in heat," she says, wiping up the spot. "It looks like Pepper."

Sure enough, Pepper is acting frisky, tossing her head, eager for her animal cracker treat or perhaps for a buck to come courting.

Milking is over in less than a half-hour. This morning, the ladies have produced 129 pounds of milk, or 15 gallons. As David shoos the last of the does out the back door, Kathryn begins scrubbing the milking room. It's time to make the cheese.

David goes into the kitchen and dumps the 15 gallons of snow-white milk into a \$10,000 pasteurization machine. It's essentially a large double boiler. A water jacket heats the milk in one of two ways: to 145 degrees Fahrenheit for 30 minutes or to 161 degrees for not less than 16 seconds — "flash" pasteurization.

"We heat to 145 because it's the gentlest form of pasteurization that's legal," David says.

If he could, he would eliminate pasteuriza-



A pair of precocious goats attempt a joyride in one of the ranch's working vehicles.

tion. The heating process kills off beneficial bacteria.

"From my point of view it's a waste," he says. "We have healthy goats and a clean environment. It's silly to pasteurize."

BLACK MESA RANCH IS NOT ORGANIC BUT IS certified for humanely raised and handled animals. Antibiotics are not routine. All of the livestock is free range.

Today, David is making feta, a brine-cured cheese. Black Mesa Ranch produces only fresh cheese. Let others brag about aging, David says. "We say our cheese was grass a week ago."

His product line consists of three kinds of cheese: a creamy goat cheese — plain, herbed, jalapeño and chipotle (smoked jalapeño); an original mozzarella boule; and three varieties of feta — plain, hot pepper and garlic, and sun-dried garlic with basil.

We sample a log of Black Mesa Ranch goat cheese on crackers. It's as creamy as cream cheese with a mild but distinctive flavor. Heaven. The chipotle and jalapeño varieties have a nice kick.

David brings out a boule of goat mozzarella. It has the rubberiness of cow's mozzarella and is good for cooking, he says. Then he cuts a slab of feta made earlier. With none of the strong tang of Greek feta, it has a rich milk flavor with a pleasant salty finish. It's addictive.

When the milk warming in the pot has reached 145 degrees, David turns down the heat and cools it to 90 degrees. To replace

the bacteria that have been killed off, and to increase acidity, he'll add two teaspoons of commercial freeze-dried culture and one teaspoon of liquid rennet. Rennet is an enzyme that causes the proteins in milk to bind and coagulate.

After a half-hour, the surface of the milk is firm, and trickles of whey have begun to leach out. With a long stainless steel tool called a cheese harp, David cuts through the surface and stirs. The whey separates even more quickly. He takes a stainless steel pot and begins to scoop out the whey.

The curds left behind resemble soft cottage cheese and taste only of milk. They go into a rectangular mold lined with cheesecloth. After 24 hours at room temperature, the curds will have formed a solid brick. The brick is cut into one-pound pieces, dry salted and left for another 24 hours. Finally, the cheese is submerged in brine and refrigerated for a few days or a week and becomes feta.

Then a big brown UPS truck will arrive to ferry it down to Phoenix. Feta made on Saturday will be in Phoenix restaurants by Friday.

DAVID MAKES 250 POUNDS OF CHEESE PER week. Though the Heiningers' cheese operation is turning a profit, they've added an agritourism element, not for promotion but for education. On the third Saturday every other month, they invite the public to tour the facility and meet the goats.

During the season, they also hold six to nine three-day workshops on goat-ranching and cheese-making. About half of the par-

"You can taste how herbaceous the cheese is by what the animals eat."

ticipants are starting their own businesses. Hotels send their food and beverage directors; chefs come to trace the source of the cheese they serve.

Workshops cost \$1,000 per person, which includes accommodations in the bunkhouse and gourmet meals prepared by Chef David. Guests do everything from milking goats to making cheese.

"By the time it's over, we're exhausted," Kathryn says. Participants "go away so happy."

In truth, the cheese is secondary. Black Mesa Ranch is still about the animals. "We're here to support our goat habit," David says.

As we begin to leave the ranch and head back to Phoenix, the sky has turned bright blue and the clouds are as white as goat's milk. We won't be spending the night in the bunkhouse after all.

The Heiningers miss little about city life.

"We're in the middle of nowhere. We've got a great bunch of animals, and we're making a living at it," David says. "Who could ask for anything more?"

Information: 928-536-7759 or www.blackmesa-ranchonline.com.

A vintage Airstream trailer is parked in a desert landscape at sunset. The trailer is white with a blue stripe and has its interior lights on. The background features a range of mountains under a colorful sky with shades of blue, pink, and orange. The overall scene is peaceful and scenic.

A SITE TO BEHOLD

Nearly naked booksellers, camel junkies, rock hounds, vagabonds, snowbirds and more than a million other winter visitors shack up in Quartzsite every year. They come for various reasons, but they stick around for the sense of community.

BY TERRY GREENE STERLING
PHOTOGRAPHS BY EDWARD MCCAIN

Paul Winer is a 65-year-old poet, cartoonist, civil-rights activist, community leader, musician and merchant. He owns a used bookstore called Reader's Oasis, situated on the east end of Main Street in Quartzsite. The store consists of a series of stalls filled with thousands of used reads — vintage magazines, antiquarian books, pulp fiction, bestsellers, Western literature, historic novels, self-help volumes, cookbooks, travel guides. Other stalls offer records, CDs, tapes, posters, toys and tchotchkes.

Winer is a small, wiry man with a gray beard. A Massachusetts native, he came to Quartzsite in 1991 and stayed, in part, because the town tolerated his counterintuitive idea of “business casual,” which he interprets as wearing little more than a thong. On the day I visited, he was decked out in a wide-brimmed hat, a turquoise necklace, a thong and sandals. He signed autographs, posed for photos with tourists, rang up sales and boogie-woogied on the store's upright piano. (His stage name is Sweet Pie and he sounds a lot like Jerry Lee Lewis, by whom he was influenced.) Most of his customers are

elderly snowbirds who would probably not patronize a nearly naked bookseller in their hometowns in the Midwest. Yet the customers I observed seemed perfectly comfortable patronizing Reader's Oasis in Quartzsite.

This is because Quartzsite is a live-and-let-live town unlike any other in Arizona.

You get the feeling this offbeat community in the Western Arizona outback is a place where anything goes as long as it doesn't bother anyone else. Quartzsite has a way of mellowing its 1.5 million-plus winter visitors, many of whom camp in RVs, either in town or on nearby desert campsites operated by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management.

Locals boast that in January and February, at the height of the tourist season, Quartzsite grows from a town of 3,497 (the latest U.S. Census Bureau tally) to one of Arizona's largest cities. The season's high point is a rock, mineral and gem show called the Pow Wow, which draws tens of thousands of “rockaholics” (Quartzsite lingo for rock hounds) who swap, sell, buy and gawk at millions of rocks harvested all over the world. During the winter months, Quartzsite hosts car shows, hobby shows, RV shows, a chili cook-off and a bluegrass festival. There's even a parade in honor of Hi Jolly, the town's most famous historic character, a camel driver who took part in a 19th century U.S. Army experiment to use camels for desert transport.

Unless you're a camel freak, rockaholic or RVer, though, you've probably never heard of Quartzsite. Or maybe you've stopped for gas in the little community sprawled around the intersection of Interstate 10 and U.S. Route 95, and then raced west to Los Angeles or east to Phoenix.

Quartzsite sits in a valley ringed by peaks that tint mauve and blue and gray as the sun travels across the sky. The Sonoran Desert is rich with ironwood trees and saguaros, and after a good rainy season, buttery yellow poppies dance on the hills and the air smells like honey.

Q-town doesn't exactly blend in with the ecosystem. The first time I drove down Main Street, I saw an auction tent, RV

parks, gas stations, a tire shop, a vet clinic, a few restaurants, some rock shops, RV sales lots and swap meets. The swap merchants vied for attention by decorating their booths with flags that read *sale* or *flea market*, as well as American flags, Arizona flags, skull-and-crossbones flags, red flags, orange flags, blue flags. When the wind slapped at the flags, the cacophony drowned out the rumbling rigs racing down the freeway.

I vowed to stay in Quartzsite long enough to understand the place. Paul Winer's bookstore gave me immediate insights. It's a hidden cultural refuge that told me two things about Quartzsite. First, it is a community of readers. Second, the town tolerates booksellers in thongs.

The book merchant conducts business nearly *au natural* partly because he likes it and partly because he is a self-described civil-rights activist who believes “individual freedoms can be compromised if they aren't practiced.”

Spend a few minutes with Winer, though, and you'll sense a generosity of spirit that has not been compromised by personal tragedy. Thirteen years ago, he and his wife, Joanne, lost their only child, 8-year-old Celia, who died unexpectedly of a virus. The Winers chose to stay in Quartzsite, where they grieved mightily and deeply. The town grieved with them. Joanne (she's not a nudist) started a memorial garden called Celia's Rainbow Gardens. Community volunteers have helped Joanne develop the garden and add improvements. It sits on the edge of town, a contemplative desert place with paths winding past colorful, whimsical memorials to deceased relatives, veterans, renegades, prospectors and nomads. Among the dozens of memorials: a lively shrine to a cow-girl and one to a guitar player. The dead are honored, no matter who they were or how they lived.

The garden is Quartzsite's true, warm egalitarian heart.

Hi Jolly's memorial — a pyramid topped with a camel — is located on the west end of town, far away from Celia's Rainbow Gardens. The Hi Jolly gravesite rests in the town cemetery, which is just north of the Main Event Swap Meet. One morning quite early, I visited the memorial and ran into Melissa Cannon and her black mutt, Yahweh. Melissa is 27, a former hairdresser from Salt Lake City. She wore a thin cotton skirt and blouse, and a tattoo of a beehive was etched on her chest, a reminder, she said, of her Mormon heritage.

Six months before, Melissa had joined her boyfriend on a serendipitous trip to see the USA in a 1972 Volkswagen bus.

“I realized everyone dies and I don't know when I'm going to die, so I'd better enjoy it,” she said.

Melissa claims to subsist on about \$200 monthly. To make money, she cuts hair occasionally, and also sells scarves, her boyfriend's homemade jewelry and other crafts from a stall in the Main Event Swap Meet. The Main Event is one of several swap meets in town, and, like every other big swap meet, it has dozens of stalls. Each stall is its own secret world. While Melissa's stall is a vibrant throwback to the 1960s, the Silvarado stall across from hers hints of human struggle in the Old and New American West. At least 50 tables are covered with tools, cutlery, kitchen equipment, old irons, records, dark glasses, rickety mining equipment, clothes, hats and other items. An antique baby stroller, saddles and chairs clog the aisles.

The Silvarado drew a lot more customers than Melissa's stall, but this didn't seem to worry her. She's a prototypical swap merchant — she lives and lets live.

“No one is more liberal than a swap-meet person — you've gotta accept everybody,” said Jim Kirk, the owner of nearby Hi Ali Swap

PRECEDING PANEL: A travel trailer takes up residence in the desert just south of Quartzsite.

BELOW: Shopkeeper Steve Hardies sweeps the sidewalk in front of his Main Street store.

OPPOSITE PAGE: For three months of the year, silversmith John Shackelford and his wife, Terry, enjoy campfires and desert sunsets at their home-away-from-home near Quartzsite.





Surrounded by their quirky collection, Jim and Rena Kirk have made Quartzsite their home for more than 30 years.

Meet. Blue-eyed and bearded, he's a former Utah advertising executive who moved to Quartzsite 32 years ago to escape what he viewed as an unhealthy, rushed lifestyle.

"I've never looked back, never regretted anything," Kirk said. He and his wife, Rena, have survived by buying and selling real estate, although Rena does sell rocks and minerals from time to time. The Kirks are both in their 60s and live in a charming house constructed of salvaged redwood. A giant saguaro named David dominates their playful garden, which is decorated with bottle collections, antique road signs and funky furniture. For fun, Kirk restores cars and grows hothouse tomatoes. For fun, Rena studies rocks. In a way, Quartzsite healed Rena, a tall woman with soft brown eyes. She immigrated to Quartzsite in 1974 with her family because her mother was a rock hound. At the time, Rena had recently received a teaching degree from the University of Kentucky, where she learned that she didn't really enjoy teaching. But she loved Quartzsite. It gave her a sense of freedom she never had in Kentucky. She became a passionate and lifelong student of the rocks, animals and plants of the Sonoran Desert.

Healing is a theme that surfaces again and again in Quartzsite.

One evening, I visited Jeanne and Allen McCloud and their dog, Kundun, at their BLM campsite. The spot where they'd chosen to park their RV was carpeted with green grass and protected by a large ironwood tree, which Jeanne had decorated with hearts. The McClouds are unabashed rockaholics. Rocks sat on their outside dining table. Rocks soaked in buckets nearby. Rocks lined the workshop. The only place I didn't see rocks was the interior of the couple's meticulously restored purple 1947 Chevy coupe. Jeanne, 58, and Allen, 61, first came to Quartzsite in 2000, and began camping at this spot in 2002. Both suffered irreversible injuries from their jobs — she was a professional housekeeper and he installed offices for a technology company — and found that the warmth and peace of the Sonoran Desert reduced their pain and increased their mobility.

"This is a healing place," Jeanne said.

"I can *think* out here," Allen said.

Quartzsite's Kuehn Street area is a rock hound's paradise. In one warehouse-like building I visited, shelves were lined with hundreds of purple geodes split in half like ripe fruit. Lynn Porter, a 58-year-old veteran from California who works at a nearby fossil shop, looked at the geodes and confessed: "I want to swallow every stone."

A few doors down, Doug True showed me an intricate 350-pound Brazilian geode called "Celestial Gardens." The giant geode was born of a rare geologic event, True said, and he used words like "anhydrite crystals" and "quartz pseudomorph" to describe it. He hoped to sell Celestial Gardens for \$80,000. Although I wasn't in the market for the geode, True helped me understand that tens of thousands of Americans are dedicated rock hounds who live out their lives crossing the nation to gather and swap rocks and attend shows.

Quartzsite is one of their premier destinations. Even the town's history is rocky. In 1856, Charles Tyson built a fort in the Quartzsite area to ensure the safety of a precious well, and the place became a stagecoach stop. But not much happened until the late 18th century, when the area began to be mined for gold, lead and mercury. In the 1960s, Quartzsite became a rockaholic hangout, in part because rock devotees enjoyed foraging for rocks around the mine sites.

At the Quartzsite Gem and Mineral Club, people are absolutely adrenalized by rocks. The club has more than 800 members, and sponsors field trips to the nearby desert, where rock hounds prospect for rocks, haul them back to the club's well-equipped workshops and fashion them into artwork. Some people make intricate bracelets, rings and necklaces. Others carve arrowheads. Still others fashion memorials for Celia's Rainbow Gardens.

In the club's silver shop, I watched retired welder John Shackelford painstakingly create a delicate silver chain. He is 65, a tall, slender guy. He grew to appreciate rocks in his golden years, after he and his wife, Terry, 62, retired and moved from California to Montana. The Montana property came with a treasure trove of agate, and the Shackelfords



ABOVE: Quartzsite Gem and Mineral Club member Richard Hosmer inspects an opal that he polished.

LEFT: Lynn Porter and Doug True check out loads of geodes at Quartzsite's Gem and Mineral International Store.

became rockaholics. Now they come to Quartzsite every winter and park their trailer on BLM desert. This season, they paid \$180 for a three-month camping permit, about half the cost of one night at a high-end resort in Scottsdale. To the Shackelfords, the BLM campsite is preferable. Armadas of RVs surround them during high season, but the Shackelfords find their neighbors interesting, quiet and friendly. What's more, they can forage for rocks in the desert, not far from camp.

One evening, after the high season had ended and most of the campers had left Quartzsite, I visited the Shackelfords at their desert campsite. They lit a bonfire, which popped and sparked and infused the air with smoky perfume. The Shackelfords sat in their chairs, and the orange fire highlighted their contented faces. In the western sky, the setting sun turned a wispy airplane contrail as pink as a summer zinnia. The hum of cars on the freeway reminded us that most people seem always to be in a hurry or in search of something.

Not the Shackelfords. They were perfectly happy to sit by the fire and let the rest of the world whiz by. They'd found all they needed in Quartzsite.

Reluctantly, I left their campsite and headed back to Phoenix. I'd found all I needed to find in Quartzsite, too. I'd learned that the little town that seemed at first glance to be dull and uninspired is actually a magnet for a diverse, vibrant group of people who are passionate about life.

I pulled onto the interstate, remembering what Rena Kirk had told me shortly after I'd arrived in town: "Some of the most fascinating people I've met in my life, I've met in Quartzsite." ■

WHEN YOU GO

Quartzsite is located near Interstate 10, about 125 miles west of Phoenix and 20 miles east of Blythe, California. Although Quartzsite has plenty of accommodations for campers, it has only a few motels. Reservations are suggested. If motels are full, you can always grab a room at nearby Blythe. Regardless of the season, visitors to Quartzsite should not forget their hats, sunscreen and water.



BLACK HILLS BYWAY Prison laborers and Geronimo once roamed this area. It's historic, in many ways, and the scenery is pretty special, too.

BY KELLY KRAMER
PHOTOGRAPHS BY
GEORGE STOCKING

Cruising among the Black Hills near Safford, it's easy to get carried away in an imaginary game of cowboys and Indians. Patches of prickly pear cactuses and fields of native grasses cover the talus slopes, which were crafted by volcanic activity more than 20 million years ago. The foliage would make for some seriously great cover should a battle break out or, better yet, a pretty prickly corner into which the enemy could be backed. Either way, it's easy to see why Geronimo wandered these hills during raids into Mexico and back.

The 21-mile drive begins at its southern point off of U.S.

Route 191, approximately 20 miles east of Safford. You'll turn left onto the Black Hills Back Country Byway, a gravel road that's maintained by the Bureau of Land Management. Although a four-wheel-drive vehicle isn't necessary — unless you plan to explore one of the numerous side roads along the way — a high-clearance vehicle is recommended.

Prison laborers built the byway between 1914 and 1920, during which a few managed to escape. Most, however, behaved. Just as the hillsides are great for a Wild West game of hide-and-seek, they're also foreboding. If you venture outside the car for a closer look, be sure to keep your eyes peeled for rattlesnakes and other desert critters.

Several interpretive areas pepper the route, and there are other potential stops along the way. The first comes approximately 3 miles into the drive, where the road crests above the Twin C Ranch. There, you can take a side trip to the Black Hills Rockhound Area in search of fire agate or continue past an abandoned mine shaft. Just down the road, a cinder pit looms red and dusty against the

onyx hills. In the 1950s, miners pulled pumice from the pit and trucked it to Safford, where it was converted into cinder blocks.

This is a good spot to look up. On a crisp, clear day, a swath of mountain-studded desert paints the horizon, and the Dos Cabezas Mountains rise a scant 50 miles away. From there, the road climbs steadily into the hills as cholla and bursts of yucca punctuate the abundant prickly pear. The road reaches its highest point near the 12-mile mark, and then descends in a series of twists and turns.

The remnants of the labor camp, where the prisoners rested each evening, are a quick walk from the roadside between Mileposts 16 and 17. The old structures are nothing special — just block and rebar — but they do speak to the ruggedness of the terrain. Life in the Black Hills at the beginning of the 20th century couldn't have been easy. Nor is the sight of the Phelps Dodge open-pit copper mine at Morenci easy on the eyes. Mining is big in Eastern Arizona, just as it was during Arizona's boom days, when cotton and copper were king in this neck of the woods.

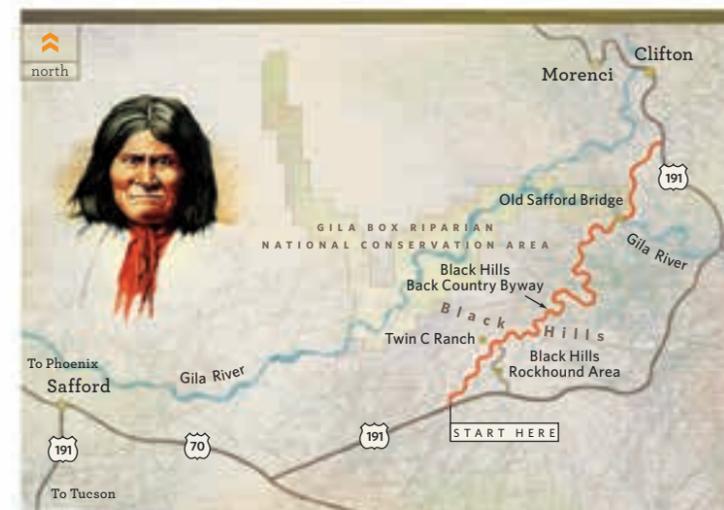
The road winds back to U.S. 191 after traversing the Old Safford Bridge, which crosses the Gila River. The bridge, constructed in 1918, doesn't look a day over 39 — its concrete is wrinkle-free. You'll have to use your imagination, though. Unless you're passing through after a good rain, the Gila River usually runs dry.

EDITOR'S NOTE: For more scenic drives, pick up a copy of our book, *The Back Roads*. Now in its fifth edition, the book (\$19.95) features 40 of the state's most scenic drives. To order a copy, call 800-543-5432 or visit www.arizonahighways.com.



LEFT: The Old Safford Bridge spans the Gila River along the Black Hills Back Country Byway.

ABOVE: Prickly pear cactuses and soaptree yuccas dot the Black Hills of Southeastern Arizona.



KEVIN KIBSEY

Note: Mileages are approximate.

LENGTH: 21 miles one way

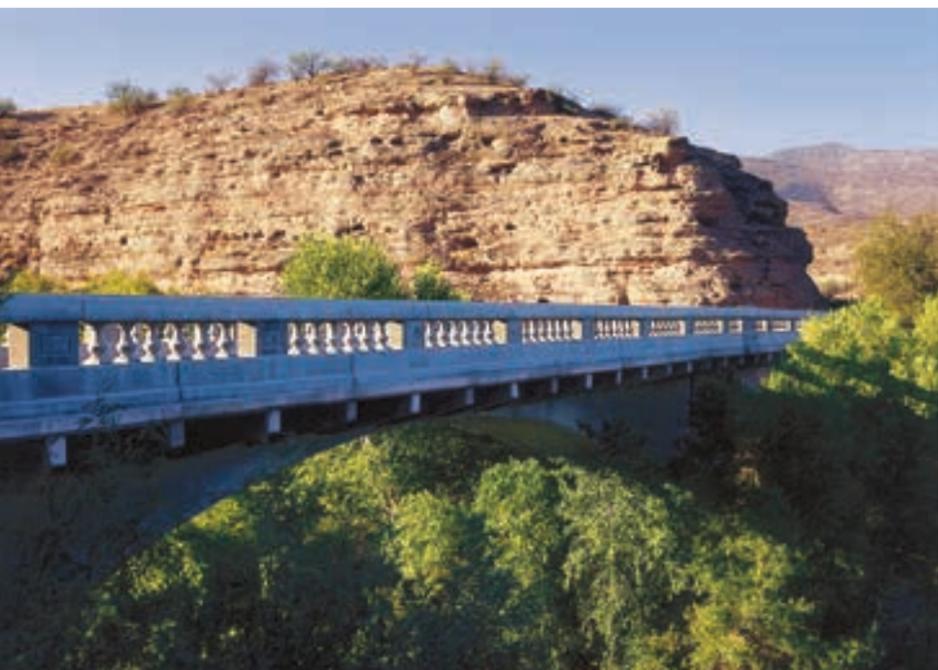
DIRECTIONS: From Safford, drive east on U.S. Route 70 (concurrently, you'll be on U.S. Route 191) for approximately 10 miles until the two routes split. Turn left onto U.S. 191 and drive north on 191 for 10 miles to the junction with Black Hills Back Country Byway and turn left. Continue 21 miles to the byway's northern junction with U.S. 191. To return to Safford, turn right. Turn left for Clifton, approximately 4 miles away.

VEHICLE REQUIREMENTS: A high-clearance vehicle is recommended. A four-wheel-drive vehicle is required to travel the roads that branch from the byway.

WARNING: Back-road travel can be hazardous, so be aware of weather and road conditions. Carry plenty of water. Don't travel alone, and let someone know where you are going and when you plan to return.

INFORMATION: Bureau of Land Management, 928-348-4450 or www.blm.gov

511 Travelers in Arizona can visit www.az511.gov or dial 511 to get information on road closures, construction, delays, weather and more. ■





STERLING PASS TRAIL There are a lot of hikes to choose from in the Sedona area. This is one of the best.

BY ROBERT STIEVE
PHOTOGRAPHS BY LARRY LINDAHL

You're either going up or you're going down on the Sterling Pass Trail. There's no in-between. No middle ground, no plateaus, no real respites. No matter, it's still one of the best hikes in Oak Creek Canyon. And that's saying something, because the canyon, which includes the world-famous Red Rock/Secret Mountain Wilderness, of which this trail is a part, is loaded with great hikes. A.B. Young, West Fork, Loy Canyon ... there aren't any bad options in this vicinity, but Sterling Pass ranks near the top because it's easy to find, moderate to climb and extreme in the way of scenic beauty.

Named for a local settler — as so many hikes in Arizona are — the Sterling Pass Trail is located about 10 feet from the side of the highway, and you need to be careful. Although State Route 89A through Oak Creek Canyon is one of the most spectacular drives in the world, there are still people who feel a need to race down the road as if they were Tony Stewart. Again, be careful. Once you're on the trail, the engine noises will quickly disappear and be replaced by

the idyllic sounds of the birds and the breeze.

The trail kicks off with a series of short switchbacks,

nothing too strenuous, that lead to an unnamed drainage. At this point, the trail is a little hard to see, but if you cross the wash, you'll see a cairn marking the route. The trail is easy to follow the rest of the way, which allows you to focus on Mother Nature, in particular, the vermilion- and buff-colored cliffs, mesas and spires that make Sedona one of the state's scenic wonders — it's second only to the Grand Canyon in terms of recognition around the globe.

Among the rock formations is the trail's namesake, Sterling Pass, which is a short saddle that sits between Wilson Mountain and the Mogollon Rim. It also separates Oak Creek Canyon and Sterling Canyon. The saddle is easy to see, but to get there, you'll first have to climb 1,100 feet through a mixed conifer forest dominated by ponderosas, junipers and manzanitas. About 10 minutes into the hike you'll come to some dead trees, too. They're the victims of a fire, and because the trail cuts right through the burn area, you'll get an up-close look at what happens to the Earth when fire restrictions are ignored.

Even with the burnouts, the trail is gorgeous, and after about 20 minutes you'll begin the switchbacks up to Sterling Pass. The climb offers a good workout, like Camelback Mountain in Phoenix, and the switches get tighter near the top. Enjoy the views from above, because you're about to start switching again. Immediately. This time, zigzagging downhill into Sterling Canyon. The terrain is similar to what you saw coming up, but the views are more open, more panoramic.

Eventually, after 2.4 miles, you'll come to the end, where the trail meets the Vultee Arch Trail, which is yet another one of the area's great hikes. In fact, if you were to hike every trail in the Red Rock/Secret Mountain Wilderness, you'd realize that it's impossible to make a wrong turn. Every hike is worth taking. Sterling Pass just happens to be the one we chose for this month's issue. ■



ABOVE: Hikers enjoy the view from Vultee Arch, near Sedona's Sterling Pass Trail.

OPPOSITE PAGE: The sun bursts through a grove of lush trees along the trail.

trail guide

- LENGTH: 4.8 miles round-trip
- DIFFICULTY: Moderate
- ELEVATION: 4,850 to 5,950 feet
- DIRECTIONS: From Sedona, drive north on State Route 89A for 6 miles to the trailhead on the west side of the road, about a half-mile north of Milepost 380. Park in one of the roadside pullouts across from Manzanita Campground.
- USGS MAP: Munds Park, Wilson Mountain
- INFORMATION: 928-282-4119 or www.fs.fed.us/r3/coconino
- LEAVE-NO-TRACE ETHICS:
 - Plan ahead and be prepared.
 - Travel and camp on durable surfaces.
 - Dispose of waste properly and pack out your trash.
 - Leave what you find.
 - Respect wildlife and minimize impact.
 - Be considerate of others.



KEVIN KIBBEY

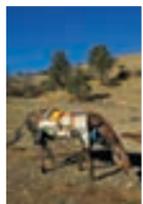


where
is this?

Weird Science

BY KELLY KRAMER
PHOTOGRAPH BY
NICK BEREZENKO

Since 1970, this desert destination has been a model of self-reliance and a fusion of ecology and design — kind of like a Prius, only bigger. And funkier. It's a place for education and experimentation, and one day, it could be home to as many as 5,000 people, which is far more than a Prius can hold.



January 2010 Answer: Phippen Museum. Congratulations to our winner, Carolyn Rhodes of Ash Fork, Arizona.



Win a collection of our most popular books! To enter, correctly identify the location featured above and e-mail your answer to editor@arizonahighways.com — type "Where Is This?" in the subject line. Entries can also be sent to 2039 W. Lewis Avenue, Phoenix, AZ 85009. Please include your name, address and phone number. One winner will be chosen in a random drawing of qualified entries. Entries must be postmarked by March 15, 2010. Only the winner will be notified. The correct answer will be posted in our May issue and online at www.arizonahighways.com beginning April 15.

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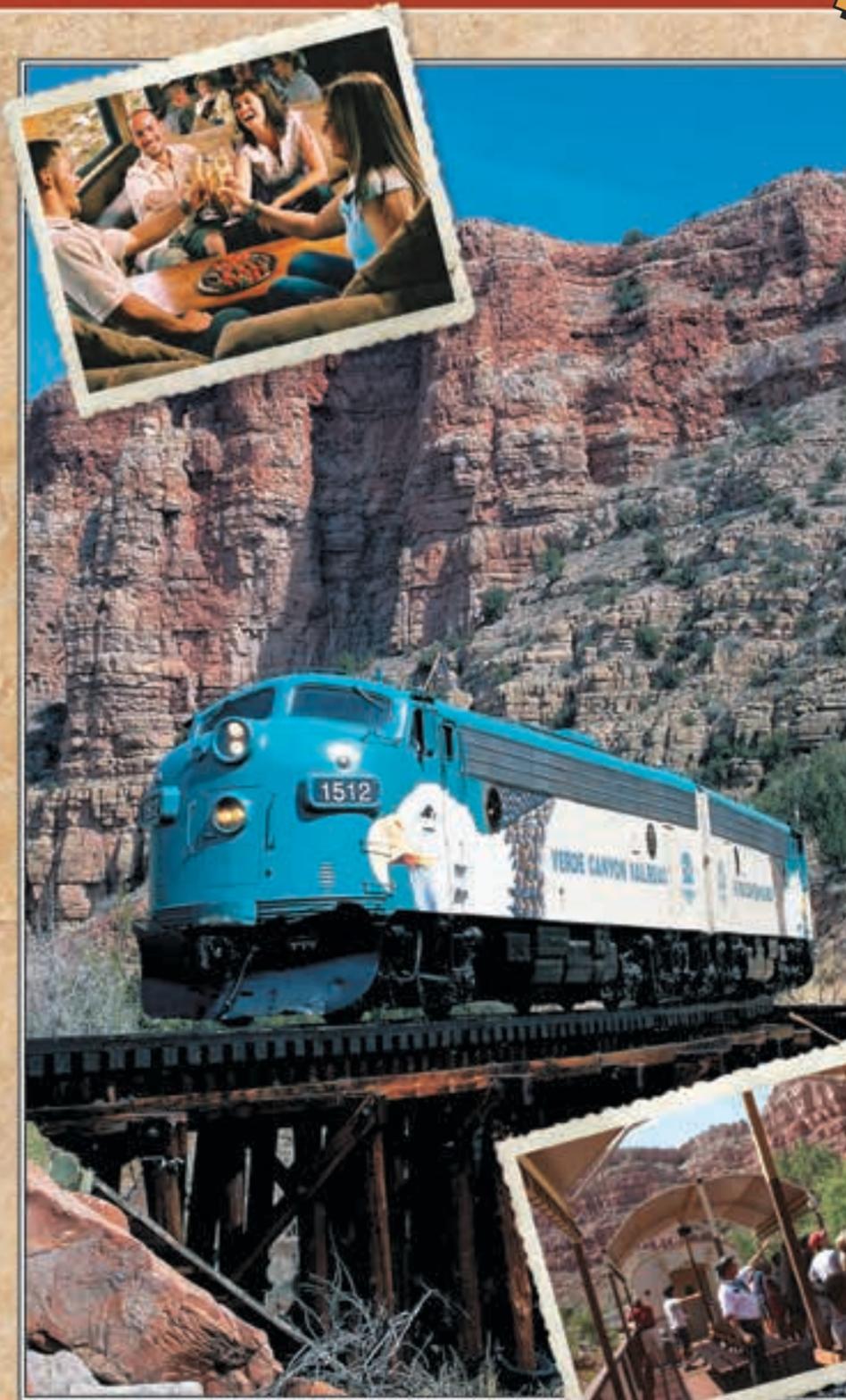
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