

OUR HOLIDAY GREETING CARD TO THE WORLD

ARIZONA HIGHWAYS

DECEMBER 2006

Celebrate
THE
Season



Special Holiday Issue
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Ode to Joy
 Arizona's best poets and photographers
 reflect on the gifts of the landscape.

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TWICE BLESSED As seen from Mather Point, a double rainbow arcs into the Grand Canyon near Zoroaster Temple. PAUL LEATHERBURY
 ■ To order a print of this photograph, see information on opposite page.

FRONT COVER An 18-inch snowfall in March of this year lured photographer Elias Butler to Brins Mesa north of Sedona, where, nearing sunset, spiky agave leaves spearing through mounds of pristine precipitation near Wilson Mountain caught his eye. ELIAS BUTLER
 ■ To order a print of this photograph, see information on opposite page.

BACK COVER Along the West Fork of Oak Creek in the Coconino National Forest north of Sedona, manganese oxide and clay particles on a cliff's porous sandstone surface have formed streaks of desert varnish, a dramatic backdrop for a snow-covered streamside fir tree. ROBERT G. McDONALD
 ■ To order a print of this photograph, see information on opposite page.

online arizonahighways.com

Take a break from the hustle and bustle of the season to enjoy Arizona's natural beauty. This month, northern Arizona glistens with snowy landscapes while warmer parts of the state offer holiday fun in the desert sun. No matter whether you like things hot or cold, visit arizonahighways.com and click on our December "Trip Planner" for:

- Holiday happenings
- A winter recreation guide
- The lowdown on Petrified Forest dinosaurs

HUMOR Our writer visits the Ghost of Christmas Past.

ONLINE EXTRA Backpack along the challenging Safford-Morenci Trail.

WEEKEND GETAWAY Take a ride on the Polar Express.

HISTORY Read an Army scout's account of Geronimo's exploits.

EXPERIENCE ARIZONA Plan a trip with our calendar of events.

Photographic Prints Available

■ Prints of some photographs are available for purchase, as designated in captions. To order, call toll-free (866) 962-1191 or visit www.magazineprints.com.

Poets and Photographers Harmonize

PHOTONS AND POETS.

Cliffs and couplets.

Late light and last lines.

Poets and landscape photographers share a luminous vision of the same universe—seen and unseen, explicit and mysterious.

Landscape photographers are poets of the image. They don't just seek a face, an event, a moment. They seek the soul of a place. They trudge all day past foregrounds and middle grounds toward hazy horizons, searching with insatiable eyes. Finally, the sun slants through the thick atmosphere to reveal some hidden truth. They seek not a record but a feeling and succeed only when the beauty all but breaks your heart.

Like the poets of words. They also seek the soul of the moment—longing and love layered like sandstone. They don't analyze, they evoke. They seek the last long light of the four words that fit perfectly together, hoping to describe one moment so vividly that it speaks truth about all moments.

The idea for this issue emerged one day as I sat with Earl de Berge, a public opinion researcher who is a poet at heart. We enlisted the help of Cynthia Hogue at Arizona State University's Creative Writing Program and Frances Sjoberg, at the University of Arizona Poetry Center. They asked the top poets in the state to submit poems centered on the landscape.

The poets responded: A writer of children's books, who lives alongside a creek without electricity and writes on a manual typewriter; a man who remembers the Navajo sheep camp of his youth; a rancher whose day job is to save the land through enlightened livestock management; a Pulitzer Prize nominee who turns prisoners into poets.

Next we asked our Director of

Photography Peter Ensenberger to marry those poems to images submitted by the world's best landscape photographers.

Then we tried to figure out what to call it.

That's when I remembered the smudged piece of paper I found in the top drawer of my father's bedside table after he died of colon cancer. He was a brave and faithful man, who fought hard against the cancer and died with such grace and love that his death was a triumph that overwhelmed me. Dazed with grief, I found the scrap of a note on which he'd written a poem in his shaky hand, just before the cancer went to his brain and stole him away.

He wrote:

*Mark the joyful hour
Amidst life's dismay and pain,
For only it endures
And unto death remains.*

So we have called this marriage of words and images our "Ode to Joy," in hopes that the words and the images will remain with you a long while.

Merry Christmas, beloved readers.

Let me introduce you to our poets:

BYRD BAYLOR: Living in an adobe house in Arivaca without electricity and working on a manual typewriter, naturalist Baylor has written prolifically, mainly for children, animated by her passion for the desert, its animals, people and landforms. She has won numerous awards, including a Caldecott Honor with illustrator Peter Parnall for *The Way to Start a Day*.

REBECCA BYRKIT: Director of the Northern Arizona Book Festival, Byrkit lives in Flagstaff and is the daughter of historian James Byrkit, a frequent *Arizona Highways*

contributor. "A Quiescence on the Prairie" is an epithalamion, or wedding poem, for Alyssa and Shawn, and borrows lines from the work of Greek poet Adrienne Kalfopoulou.

BARBARA CULLY: Author of *Desire Reclining*, *Shoreline Series* and *The New Intimacy*, which won the National Poetry Series Open Competition, Cully teaches in the Prague Summer Program and in the University of Arizona's Department of English. Her recently completed collection *Under the Hours* includes "Pusch Ridge."

EARL DE BERGE: Founder and editor of *Rocky Mountain Poll*, de Berge is an Arizona native and a public opinion research specialist, desert lover and passionate poet who says he's "angling to retire and write poetry full time." He raises sheep on a small farm and observes, "by following no trail, getting lost is impossible."

ALISON HAWTHORNE DEMING: A professor of creative writing at the University of

Arizona, Deming's most recent books include *Writing the Sacred Into the Real* and *Genius Loci*, from which "Driving Through Nature" was taken. She has won numerous prizes including the Walt Whitman Award and a Pushcart Prize.

DRUM HADLEY: A cowboy and rancher on the New Mexico-Arizona border for 40 years, Hadley's books include *Strands of Rawhide* and *Spirit by the Deep Well Tank*. A founding member of the Malpai Borderlands Group, an ecosystem management project, his poems in this issue are from *Voice of the Borderlands*.

HERSHMAN JOHN: Navajo-born for the Deer Spring People and the Bitter Water People, John's poems and short stories have appeared in numerous journals with a book of poems to be published next year by the University of Arizona Press. He also teaches at Phoenix College.

RITA MAGDALENO: A recreational river-runner, Magdaleno's poem "River Run" appeared in *Fever Dreams*. The native Arizonan teaches in Tucson and wrote a poetic memoir, *Marlene Dietrich, Rita Hayworth, & My Mother*, published by the University of Arizona Press.

CARL MARCUM: A teacher at DePaul University in Chicago, Marcum earned an MFA in creative writing at the University of Arizona, received a fellowship from Stanford University and a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, and in 2001 published *Cue Lazarus*. "Blind Contour: Night Sky" is from his forthcoming *Constellation*.

DAVID RAY: Author of *The Music of Time* and 15 other collections of poems, Ray lives with his poet-wife, Judy, in Tucson. For information on his books and major awards, see www.davidraypoet.com.

JUDY RAY: Living in Tucson far from her native England, Ray's recent books of poetry include *Sleeping in the Larder* and *Fishing in Green Waters*. For information, see www.davidraypoet.com/JudyRay.

ALBERTO RIOS: Author of nine books of poetry and a memoir, Rios lives in Chandler and has taught at Arizona State University for 25 years. A recent finalist for the National Book Award, his latest book of poems is *The Theater of Night*.

BARRIE RYAN: Ryan's works include *How the World Was Given to Us* and *Creek Ceremony*, which contains her poem "Cradle." She taught writing at the University of Arizona and at Pima Community College, has been a social worker with homeless persons, and volunteers with hospice.

JEANNINE SAVARD: An associate professor of English at Arizona State University, Savard has taught in ASU's MFA Creative Writing Program since 1992 and published several volumes of poetry, including *Trumpeter* and *My Hand Upon Your Name*.

RICHARD SHELTON: An award-winning regents professor in creative writing at the University of Arizona, Shelton has written nine poetry books and hundreds of journal articles. He has won many honors, including a Pulitzer Prize nomination. His works include *Going Back to Bisbee*, *The Tattooed Desert* and others. He has taught at UA for 46 years and won acclaim for his prison-based writing workshops.

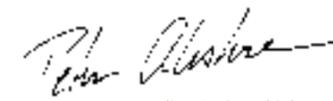
PEGGY SHUMAKER: After growing up in then-rural Tucson, Shumaker became an award-winning poet whose most recent book is *Blaze*, a collaboration with the painter Kesler Woodward. As writer in residence for the Arizona Commission on the Arts, she worked with prison inmates, gang members, teen parents and others. She currently teaches and lives in Fairbanks, Alaska. For information, see www.peggyshumaker.com.

LUSIA SLOMKOWSKA: Slomkowska's work has been published in a variety of American and European magazines and newspapers, including *Fotographia*, *Icarus*, *New Letters*, *Parnassus*, *Quarterly West* and *The Tucson Weekly*. She lives in Tucson.

DEAN STOVER: A GateWay Community College teacher of English and religious studies, Stover has lived in Phoenix since the 1960s and wrote *Grand Canyon Poems*, including "Morning in the Canyon," after a Colorado River trip.

LAURA TOHE: A Diné (Navajo) poet and assistant professor at Arizona State University, Tohe's *Tseyi'*, *Deep in the Rock: Reflections on Canyon de Chelly* was listed as a 2005 Southwest Book of the Year. She grew up near the Chuska Mountains, attended boarding and public schools as a child and earned a B.A. in psychology and a Ph.D in English.

KYLE GRANT WILSON: Wilson is a Diné (Navajo) writer born and raised in Fort Defiance. He teaches writing at Arizona State University and has published in several journals, including *Rattle* and *English Journal*.



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ODE TO

Arizona's best poets and photographers reflect on the gifts of the land

Nov

Landscape photographers are poets of light, which gave us an idea for this Christmas package for our readers. First, we asked the University of Arizona Poetry Center and the Creative Writing Program at Arizona State University to help us find the most vivid and creative poets in Arizona and to challenge them to capture the essence of our beloved state. Then Director of Photography Peter Ensenberger issued the same call to the best scenic photographers in the country, before matching words to images. Here is the result, shadows and light, words and yearning—our gift, our treasure.



Night Comes to the Desert

Like the sun growing dim on the far stone rim of the hill
In the slight-chill stillness of the darkening Earth,

The coming quiet thrill of coolness sung is the last song
Sound of the birds, and surprising. The house finches,

Grackles, the fast hummingbirds and slow pigeons,
All of them who had been in flight all day, a full day,

They finish the work of making the night into a nest
Fixed and filled enough for what comes next,

Their song, words long in the mouth of them,
Ready enough for their life in the dark, their life

In the half-hard hours that lie ahead, their nesting bed
Slept-in with eyes open, led more by noise than light.

Theirs is a sleep so like ours in the city, the sleep of us,
So many who are in their way these birds and this day.

ALBERTO RIOS

Storm clouds viewed from Hopi Point (pages 4-5) unleash their own kind of powerful poetry over the Grand Canyon at sunset. PAUL LEATHERBURY

■ To order a print of this photograph, see inside front cover.

The sun sings its final song of the day and finds its way toward nightfall over the Tucson Mountains (left). JACK DYKINGA

JACK DYKINGA

■ To order a print of this photograph, see inside front cover.



Blind Contour: Night Sky

Tonight the heavens murmur their promise:
bright and distant violence. And you've driven
a switchback road out past jagged, small
mountains that border west this small and jagged
town where your heart's consecutive failures

have been as carefully charted as the codex
of stars folded *in-out*—*in-out* and tucked away
in your breast pocket. Because tonight you hate
yourself for being lonely, recline against
hood and windshield, dark and parked

and gazing—because this is all you know.
Because you misbelieve, because you mistake
yourself for ancient: vision unveiled by saguaros
yearning skyward—arms beckoning the gauzy
ribbon of dust and stars as the stun and halo

of headlights fade from your eyes' edges;
though you're still left dark and wandering.
Apogee begins to focus: Betelgeuse, Rigel
arm and leg of Orion—his belt, those
diamond seams. And you forget

why it is he stalks the skies. Draw your eyes
back. See the night for all her breadth
when coyotes wring the pale and petty
arguments. And catch now, peripherally,
a streaking light, an acute and failing

angle earthward—all atmosphere and friction,
a brilliant production. A meteor, you know,
though seconds away from smoldering *-ite*.
And because it may amount to nothing—
a quintessence of dust—cast that well-worn wish.

CARL MARCUM

A Sheep Dog Laments after a Navajo lullaby

"Náshdóí yéé bikee' ditiib."

The white woolly head chews empty air,
Green cud. The still sheep dog's ears
Are caught changing into moving
Radar dishes left listening to the locusts
Chanting the Enemy Way, in the half moon,
To the harmonic corn pollen dusting the night.

"The Mountain Lion's paws hurt. Come help
me, little sheep."

"Náshdóí yéé bikee' ditiib."

A lonely lamb finds the hurting
Mountain Lion-yawning and crying on
A boulder. A falling star becomes an epitaph.
The sheep dog walks a few steps
Into the blowing wind trying to find
The lost lamb. Above, a star falls bright blue.

"The Mountain Lion's paws hurt. Come help
me, little sheep."

"Náshdóí yéé bikee' ditiib."

The sheep dog howls deeply, emptily.

"The Mountain Lion's paws hurt. Come help
me, little sheep."

Overhead, a jet shakes the hogan as my mom
Wonders where the missing sheep have gone.
She knows we have fine sheep dogs, three
Rough mutts. At first light, we'll take the pick-up
Over the sand dunes to the edge of the canyons
To listen for a dog's howl. A shoe-game song
Turned lullaby, my mom sings of a terrible cat
Luring helpless lambs. My mom blows out
The kerosene lamp, I smile to hear it again:

"Náshdóí yéé bikee' ditiib."

HERSHMAN JOHN

A Navajo shepherdder drives his flock by the Ear of the Wind arch (above) at Monument Valley on the Navajo Indian Reservation. CHUCK LAWSEN
The constellation Orion dangles over Cathedral Rock near Sedona (right). LARRY LINDAHL





Five Lies About the Moon

1. The Full Daytime Moon

She is a bald-headed woman. When someone shouts "Fire!" she rushes from the building without her wig. She becomes confused in the crowd and turns down the wrong street. We try not to look at her, pale and fragile as a lost button in search of a shirt.

2. The Waning Crescent Moon

She is young and elegantly thin. She goes to many parties but does not dance, preferring to drape herself across a couch where she is always surrounded by men. Any of them would gladly place his neck beneath her delicate foot. She is in love, nobody knows with whom, and it is hopeless. When she smiles sadly, they are overcome. She goes home early and alone.

3. The Half-Moon

She loved her husband. The day he left her for another woman, one side of her face became paralyzed. Now she turns that side away and faces the world bravely in profile. It is unfair that she, of all women, should have a Roman nose and a weak chin.

4. The Gibbous Moon

She has lost both her money and her figure and is defenseless, wearing secondhand light. Still, she does the best she can to keep up appearances, and goes from place to place as she did in the past. Often when she arrives at the proper address, perspiring and late, nobody is home.

5. The Full Harvest Moon

She wears gold carelessly, because it is expected, but she glows from within. Although she has pressing duties to perform, she moves through the crowd in the palace hall as if there were no hurry. The men gasp at her beauty and the women turn pale with chagrin. Without slowing her progress toward the door, she offers a sincere word and a special look to each of them.

RICHARD SHELTON

A rising moon dances over Totem Pole and Yei Bichei rock formations in Monument Valley of northern Arizona.

ROBERT G. McDONALD

■ To order a print of this photograph, see inside front cover.



We Wait

With the fingers of my left hand,
I dig in the sand to follow the vanishing seep spring down.
Among the rocks and the lizards, I come to drink.
A bee moves over the rock beside me.
Grey-winged butterflies light on the willow tree.
Each day I follow the water table down through the sand,
Each day going a little bit deeper.
A curved bill thrasher and quail come to drink.
In this canyon reaching towards the dark holes in space,
We wait for the new water to well into our pool.

DRUM HADLEY

Arizona Satori

Why should the old man
not feel young again
when he stops to consult

for fifty minutes or so
the great saguaro standing
tall—300 years of wisdom

speaking with silence,
sending no bill, keeping no
illegible records, having

no license at all on the wall?

DAVID RAY

Coyote Knows

All water is Holy Water.
Any Coyote can tell you that.
He knows dark foaming arroyos
and hidden tinajas,
and he drinks from mirages
when times are bad.

But holiest of waters,
the sweetest on Coyote's tongue,
the one true sacrament,
the song,
is scent of rain that stays
forever cupped
in slick rock crevices
on mountainsides.

Put your tongue against that rock
And you can taste
Coyote's ancient thirst —
and ours.

BYRD BAYLOR



Water equals life in the desert, as Gambel's quail
and coyotes know. BOTH BY TOM VEZO.
The grand, old, wise saguaro (opposite) may sip it
slowly for hundreds of years. STEVE BRUNO





River Run

*“ . . . you will know the loss
of guile and that the journey
has begun.”*

—Barry Lopez, *River Notes*

Among the mesas and soft
lavender hills, there is
silence, birds circling
in spirals of light
and forgiveness.

Out there in the hills,
juniper laces the land,
a nickel moon shining,
smell of sagebrush
and dirt creeping
into our bones.

There, the ice-edged
night will begin to fall
away, a cloudless sky
bright with stars.

At dawn, we will enter
water, begin to speak
the names of river places:

*Crystal Rapid,
Lava Falls,
Havasu Creek.*

There, an arbor of cottonwood
and willow will gather
in the distance, and
small fish will breathe
beneath our boat, flicker
of gills, glisten of fins
and oars—*first run,
the joy we bear.*

RITA MARIA MAGDALENO

Conquistador Aisle, seen from Blacktail
Canyon, sits backlit in a Grand Canyon
morning, an invitation to Colorado River
runners. JACK DYKINGA

■ To order a print of this photograph,
see inside front cover.

NĪETSĀ BIKĀ'

NĪtsā bikā'
Aadēp' lĭi' dilbilgo t'ēē' nahalingo bil ch'ēldloozh
bā hāchĭ'go naayēē'ee k'ebgo ts'ida deesk'aazgo āboolaa
tó yĭlqad dóo níyol tsoh āboolaa

Hasbké nĪtsā bikā' naazbaa'
t'ēē' biigbab atah nāzhmoodahgo yiskā
āádóo lĭi'bil anāáldloozh
anaa' yēe t'āá 'ākóógo 'ayitlaa

Male Rain

Male Rain
 He comes riding a dark horse
 angry malevolent cold
 bringing floods and heavy winds
 Warrior rain having a 49 night
 then rides away leaving
 his enemy behind

LAURA TOHE

NĪETSĀ BI'ÁÁD

NĪtsā bi'áád
Sbā'di'āāhdēp'go dab naaldogo 'alzbish
k'ós hazlĭi'
honeezk'ázi
nĪtsā bi'áád bitázhool bijooltsā
āádóo nĪtsā bi'áád biyázbi bídiina'

Naantiniilkaahgo
nĪtsā bi'áád biyázbi hazlĭi'
ch'ĭl látab hōzhóón dabtoo'bee 'alch'ĭ' báazbab
āádóo nibik'inizdidlláád

LAURA TOHE

Female Rain

Female Rain
 Dancing from the south
 cloudy cool and gray
 pregnant with rainchild

At dawn she gives birth to a gentle mist
 flowers bow with wet sustenance
 luminescence all around



Summer lightning jabs at Red Mountain (above), east of Scottsdale. STEVE BRUNO
 A gentler rain cloud (right) catches soft sunlight near Yaki Point at the Grand Canyon. PAUL LEATHERBURY
 ■ To order a print of this photograph (right), see inside front cover.



A Rancher's Daughter in Arizona

She was born close to Baboquivari,
that sacred peak rising from the southern desert,
lived on the ranch where Durham cattle
and Arabian horses were raised.

The family's fortunes fell when the father
was thrown from his horse spooked
by a snake on the trail, hit his head
on a rock, and couldn't manage hard work again.

There were Indians who worked on the ranch,
too. They heard others call them "Papagos"
but knew themselves by another name.
They also were born close to that sacred peak.

A century later, the rancher's daughter says,
"The Baboquivari was the only thing in this world
I was jealous of when I found out it didn't belong to us."
But she is content that she has known its long shadow.

JUDY RAY

Baboquivari Peak, long a sacred
symbol to those who dwell in the
desert southwest of Tucson, warms
up to the sun. ADRIEL HEISEY

Morning in the Canyon

The river is the first thing we look to
even before ourselves and it is bloody
from the land come to philosophize with it.
There is no direction of survival.

Cliffs steal pink flames
while blue lavender godly surrounds.
The moment gives birth to a fog
like a vein of lava.

I look to the river. All of this is me.
The earth's patience has worn greatly.

DEAN STOVER



Cradle

Just touching top leaves
of the cottonwoods, light.

Creek dark flow beneath,
a boldness of cold, of fresh,
I stand near as it moves.

From up creek two plaintive hoots
for the passing of darkness.

I want to stay still, still
and let the Earth, let the Earth.
I want to be pressed into,
printed, imprinted
by this sandbank cradling its waterbody,
smell of mud and dry grass,
light sifting down to lift us.

Always I want to come from here
when I turn into word traffic
on the media way,
when I hold
the mute weight
of what the hurrying world
runs over.

BARRIE RYAN

Soap Creek Rapid looks tame
from the high rim of Marble
Canyon (left). GARY LADD
■ To order a print of this photograph,
see inside front cover.
Arnett Creek (right) peeks shyly
through golden Fremont
cottonwoods southwest of
Superior. MOREY K. MILBRADT
■ To order a print of this photograph,
see inside front cover.





We're Visiting the Petrified Forest

as the park is closing
so any time is better than none,
though this is exactly how
these woods were not created.
The logs needed not only a long time
but nearly perfect conditions
for each wood fiber
to be replaced by silica,
to empty into stone.

What remains are reminders
that what is taken
continues to become.
For it was water that brought
the logs here
and water that still washes
what is ancient
from this forest of repose.

As the logs lengthen
into shadows as bark-colored
as the trees once were,
we know it's time to leave, but pause
and wish we could return the forest
to where it used to be,
to see what no one else saw happen,
for what happened, happened slowly
over 225 million years ago.

LUSIA SLOMKOWSKA

Pedestal logs, the epitome of patience and time, greet the morning at Blue Mesa in Petrified Forest National Park. Much of the left-hand log has since fallen from its pedestal.

JACK DYKINGA

■ To order a print of this photograph, see inside front cover.





Hidden Waters

Then one day, your horse's hooves
 Will carry you down around that bend,
 In the curves of the shifting arroyo sands,
 Where what you have waited for, for a lifetime,
 Will suddenly be there before you,
 To be seen and not seen only once or twice,
 In those flows of a lifetime,
 Every few hundred years.
 There, what you have waited for,
 Will appear in the shape of a *tinaja*,
 A beautiful clear pool,
 Where the mixing arroyo sands and the waters
 Have cut the deep pool downward,
 Ever deeper and deeper,
 Into the flows of the waiting rock.
 It is there, that you will drink
 In those waters that wait before you.
 So now, deer, mountain lions, coatimundis, javelina,
 Come drink here, by the shy lips of this pool
 Lips touching lips, you and I.

DRUM HADLEY

The water waits, hidden and inviting, in the Tinajas Altas (left), east of Yuma. ROBERT G. McDONALD

A great horned owl nests in a saguaro near Tucson (below). TOM VEZO
 Red monkeyflowers (right) say a bold hello in Sawmill Canyon on the San Carlos Apache Reservation. JEFF SNYDER

■ To order a print of this photograph (right), see inside front cover.

Pusch Ridge

The big-horned sheep in the Catalinas
 repeating their footholds from cliff to cliff

have no days more angled nor sharper
 than the crevice, serpentine, between us.

No screech of an owl, no talons prying us apart —
 the unrelenting blue sky building.

In air so dry the solar heat hurts right through it,
 a spider's rope leads me to the trail crest where

I do not leave a mark.

BARBARA CULLY



Waving

Gold dry grasses
 in the narrow canyon
 appear ruby tipped
 in the late sun.
 Framed against a small
 red boulder
 another small life in the
 wilderness
 grows quietly, unnoticed,
 gray of leaf.
 Raising its head
 to bloom,
 it makes an elegant flower,
 so small
 that smiles as it sways
 on slender stalk
 waving to the warm
 sun passing.

EARL de BERGE



Sudden Hail

She's resting on the earth
under a *sundog's* tattoo. It is December
and the scrub grass switches-back on the hill.

Among a swerve of brittle bush and creosote
a herd of wild mustangs lose their heads,
a couple of maverick calves, their tails. Tumbleweed
collects at the fence. As she concentrates on the way
a lizard scuttles, her mind replays

the light in her husband's eyes that morning,
an understanding deepens —
she's been struck as much by their softness
as by her only half-desiring to come to him sooner.

The wind and her heart stop for a moment on the trail.
She brushes off the small white stones of sky.

JEANNINE SAVARD

North of Sonoita, cattle laze and graze about the
grassland, and it's time to call it a day. RANDY PRENTICE
To order a print of this photograph, see inside front cover.

Light

in a flash
at the end of the day
greasewood and palo verde
give back the light they have hoarded

then they go under
drowning in shadows
through which dozens of bats
maneuver like tiny umbrellas
opening and closing unexpectedly

the desert has no burning bush
no Jacob's ladder no pillar of smoke or fire
but thousands of small things
with shining eyes
are searching for food in the dark

RICHARD SHELTON



How to Amuse a Stone

command the stones in a loud voice
or speak to them
just to the left of silence
or sing them a love song in Spanish
they will not respond

write a letter
in it confess all your sins
place it under a stone
leave it there for months
and when you return you will find
your letter unopened and unread

stones have a sense of dignity
greater than that of kings
a sense of honor
stronger than that of friends

stones are fulfilled like prophecy
tendentious as rain
and have a sense of humor
more subtle than we can comprehend

it takes a long time to amuse a stone
first you must capture one
carry it away
imprison it with mortar in a wall
the stone will not complain

then you must wait
and years after you are gone
under another stone on which
some stranger carved your name
the mortar in your wall will crumble
and the stone you captured
will fall to the ground
amused and free and going home

RICHARD SHELTON

A bat zooms to dinner (above left). BAT CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL. Sculptured stones (left) lie in wait, just for laughs, near Lower Tuna Rapid on the Colorado River. GARY LADD. Wotans Throne and Vishnu Temple in the distance, (above) get ready to give up the light in Grand Canyon. LES DAVID MANEVITZ. To order a print of this photograph (above), see inside front cover.



Driving Through Nature

Past the canyon's rosy gouge and spires,
past the whack of copter blades and booked rooms,

past ponderosa and piñon scrub, the shacks begin.
Dirt lot, brush fence, nomad shelters built for shade.

American flags snap on the scrapwood stalls
where the Navajo sell rugs and beads,

behind them, the planet's skin
stretched out bare and raw so that it seems

the land will tell its story to anyone—
rifts and upheaval, wear and rest.

I'm tired of trying to find a place
where history hasn't left its scars and wounded.

There is only one Earth and its laws
are a mystery we're here to solve.

ALISON HAWTHORNE DEMING



A Quiescence on the Prairie

(... as we gather our living ...)

O how the great old days alight, and the glasses clink along.
Sonnets aspire. Promises are made ~
Summer (white) in all our bones, and in the long young night, our song.

Aspens glister in the pines like blondes.
Completely still in the hour, a dozen nephews blaze in the glade ~
O love, our great old days alight, and the glasses clink along.

O literature! Strange fires surround us 'til the full butter moon falls down.
Guitars on the grass are played ~
Summer (white) in all our bones, and in the long young night, our song.

A Kaibab quarrels with wrens for seed, another epithalamion.
Teachers strike, skunk squawk and bite, the belles *avant* unfazed ~
The great old days do alight tonight, love, and the glasses clink along.

Brocatelle, tulle, and daffodil superscintillate on the lawn.
Remember the sharp blown sand on the windows of brown Chevrolets?
Summer (white) in all our bones, and in the long young night, our song.

No one rages in the lonely Colorado for long.
The bow is knotted. The rent is paid.
O Love, how the great old days alight like light and the glasses clink along.
Summer (white) in all our bones, and in the long young night, our song.

REBECCA BYRKIT



Ocotillo

Candlewood,
spread with palm fronds—

strong ramadas.
Mean fences, sprouting

new spines
overnight.

Slimwood. Bare
most every month

except after rain
when each pore

spruts green gloss
and the tip

of every arm
in the desert

explodes into salsa.
Firecrackers.

Jacob's staff.
Flaming sword.

Many-armed
hope. Ocotillo.

PEGGY SHUMAKER



U.S. 260: The Mogollon Rim

Alone an elk is all hooves and antlers; one elk moves in whispers.
But together form muscle—the sinew bark of a cedar that somehow spines horizontally.

From a dense fog the elk river through the juniper like fish on a line.
In the pitch darkness they find each other and emerge like breath from within.

And like the river, they marry and separate—shadowdance from concept to flesh
With potential to be an ocean with places to go— inching at the surface of a large.

Once connected to the moon, dawn crawls over the horizon,
An explosion of breath from nostrils becomes visible—a heartbeat's exhale.

The half-light storms in with the silence of elk in sixty numbers.
In unison they slip across the narrow paved road, unheard.

It is a quiet rhythm; it could be the midnight for all I know
I could be deaf for all I all know; all I am sure of is what I see—

Horses with clipped wings, silenced by the distance between them and me.
Horses that rest in a bed of pine with needles that cup the belly while they sleep.

Legs arch, toes tip the paved road like volcanic ash
Each one needles by; each has a task to stitch one side of the trees to the other

The elkened night is the fabric that ties the treelines
Split by a slender paved road between that goes places for miles.

KYLE GRANT WILSON



The aspens fairly glow
(left) in Saddle Mountain
Wilderness of Kaibab
National Forest. JERRY SIEVE
■ To order a print of this
photograph (left), see inside
front cover.

An ocotillo spreads, green
and red and hopeful
(above left). ROBERT G.
MCDONALD
For miles and miles, one
can see far, along the
Mogollon Rim (above).

JERRY SIEVE
■ To order a print of this
photograph (above), see
inside front cover.



a flop,
a slide,
a dream



BACKCOUNTRY ADVENTURE MAKES THE MOST OF WINTER IN RED ROCK CANYONS
BY DOUG MCGLOTHLIN PHOTOGRAPHS BY GEOFF GOURLEY

BLADE RUNNERS Along with his trusted snow hound, author Doug McGlothlin and Flagstaff outfitter Brady Black trudge through a pristine winter wonderland at the base of Pumhouse Wash in search of some cutting-edge adventure.



canyon skating was in an **early evolutionary stage:** a group of friends running around on ice in hiking boots. **dogs joined in.**

HARD DAY'S DELIGHT An unexpected snowfall proves challenging for the "perfect skating rink" search party. Equipped with a shovel, borrowed hockey skates and a pair of cross-country skis, McGlothlin and Black trek across powder-laden Coconino National Forest property (opposite page) before descending into the icy, wet narrows of Oak Creek Canyon (left), where they and their four-legged companions trek approximately 2 more miles.



SKATE KEY Winter's minimal daylight hours create the ideal mix of frozen creeks and low temperatures. Too much sun and too little space make for an uncertain surface (top), while the best spots (above) huddle in full shade throughout the day.

Most people don't associate ice-skating with Arizona, although we do have a professional hockey team, when they're not on strike. We also have public rinks in Phoenix and Tucson, plus one outdoor rink in Williams, just west of Flagstaff.

But never mind all that organized ice.

This is a story of canyon skating on Arizona's "native ice." "Canyon skating" may not qualify as a real term, like downhill skiing or snowboarding, and it is certainly not something tourists travel to Arizona to do. But, fortunately, places like the Grand Canyon draw all the tourists, leaving the many smaller canyons to the locals.

I never put backcountry hiking and native ice-skating in the same sentence until one Thanksgiving Day on a little family outing. My brother, a carpenter in the Phoenix area and an admitted desert rat, announced that he would like to do a belly-slide across a frozen pool in Pumphouse Wash, a small canyon near my home in Kachina Village outside Flagstaff. He backed up a few feet and eyed the long frozen pool cupped in a small slot of red-brown sandstone. We fell silent for a moment, wondering if he was serious, then he was off and running. Just as he approached the pool, he did a low belly-dive as if he were stealing second base. We watched him glide until he stopped about 2 feet from the other side. He lay motionless for half a second before scrambling to his feet and reaching for the rock bank and stumbling on ice we were sure would break. It didn't.

Canyon skating wasn't exactly born on that day, but we planted the seeds. I convinced others we would find frozen pools if we hiked farther into the canyon in the middle of the winter, although I was more curious than certain. That same January, we hiked deeper into Pumphouse Wash, a canyon that begins just south of Flagstaff and eventually reaches Oak Creek Canyon. We soon found frozen pools dotted along the canyon bottom.

Canyon skating was in an early evolutionary stage: a group of friends running around on ice in hiking boots. Dogs joined in.

Falling was considered more a sign of proper effort than lack of skill. Yelling loudly bothered no one with the possible exception of curious wildlife watching from a safe distance. We celebrated with hotdogs cooked over an open fire and beer before hiking out of Pumphouse Wash.

The small canyons around Flagstaff channel water to bigger creeks, then rivers, such as the Verde and the Little Colorado. They are home to red-tail hawks, eagles, deer, elk and even black bears and mountain lions. Perhaps, though, we were the endangered species—the rare middle class of Flagstaff: the teacher, firefighter, biologist, small-business owner, musician and photographer all redefining the "cost of living" by simply living.

Last fall, in the spirit of cheap thrills and the anticipation of winter, I spoke of our well-kept secret. Sliding around on ice was fun (and free) enough to do at least once a year; all agreed. This time I suggested that we actually wear real ice skates, a suggestion met primarily with polite nods. "Sure," they said. "That would be great." It wasn't exactly the beginning of a lengthy conversation, but it did raise a couple of questions: Did I know how to ice-skate? Did I own any ice skates? My answers were fairly honest: "kind of," and "no, don't you?"

Canyon skating would not be suppressed for a mere lack of ice skates. I had an Alaskan friend at Jay L. Lively Ice Arena in Flagstaff who offered me a pair of skates for a day, free of charge. He was another Flagstaff resident who stayed in town, turning down other jobs to live in the high country with winters mild enough to enjoy snow and sunshine in the same week. Smiling, he wished me luck.

Northern Arizona had just welcomed a fresh layer of powder with open arms. The storm lasted two days, snowing steadily. On our first official day of canyon skating with real ice skates, the sun rose to see the storm on its way east. Roads were still icy and pine branches sagged with caked snow occasionally brushed by a lazy wind.

Because the Forest Service roads leading to the trails were closed for the winter, we parked at a pullout off State Route 89A near Oak Creek Canyon. We began our trek across a blanket of fresh powder, as yet undisturbed by human feet.

We descended through the surreal landscape, stopping at the canyon bottom to appreciate the sunlight and the random breeze. Looking back up at the rim, we wondered if we were in a glass ornament being handled by a child anticipating Christmas. The canyon walls caught the first sunlight, the red rocks with golden-brown and silver-grey patterns contrasting with the cool glare of fresh snow.

We crossed the confluence of James Canyon in a symphony of birdsong. Shaded by large oaks and old-growth pines, we found our frozen pools. We studied the frozen pools that we had stumbled and slid upon last year, but this year's warm winter had made the ice dangerously thin. No one was interested in tempting hypothermia. Not 50 yards farther, the canyon bends to create a wall that shades the creek bottom, where water had carved the sandstone like a divine sculptor. And at the foot of it all, ice.

After some shoveling and grooming, it was time to skate. Since we had only one pair of skates, we took turns racing around our little canyon rink while the others kept the ice groomed and clocked time trials. We attempted to build speed in the short stretches before the corners. Above us, the bright sunlight melted the fresh blanket of powder off of the canyon walls and tree boughs. Small streams began to flow from the rock walls.

Hiking out on the disappearing snow, which would soon become water flowing through Oak Creek Canyon, we stopped a few times to look back down with a tug of regret for the melting of winter. The canyon bottom faded from our sight as we reached the top of the rim, and we began our walk back to the highway, grateful for what would be this winter's final storm.

Maybe next winter will be cold enough for canyon hockey. ■

Doug McGlothlin is a former wildland firefighter and now a high school English teacher who enjoys wandering in the state's lesser-known canyons with his dog and friends. He lives in Flagstaff.

Geoff Gourley enjoys accompanying imaginative writers on harebrained adventures to beautiful and unusual places. He lives in Flagstaff.

online Slip and slide away at other skating, skiing and snowboarding venues at arizonahighways.com (Click on the December "Trip Planner").



CIRQUE DE SNOW PLAY After serving ample time as a human Zamboni, Doug McGlothlin enjoys the frozen fruits of his labor beneath a Coconino sandstone arch.

Ghost of Christmas Past

FORT HUACHUCA HISTORIC HOME TOUR INCLUDES HOLIDAY SPIRITS



SANTA AT EASE One of nearly 200 Santas in Col. Jon and Judy Hunter's collection, this relaxed elf greets visitors to the Morrow House, traditional home of Fort Huachuca's commander, during last year's Holiday Tour of Historic Homes.

by Janet Webb Farnsworth photographs by Edward McCain

THE BRISK BREEZE blowing down the sides of the Huachuca Mountains serves to boost Christmas spirits for the annual Holiday Tour of Historic Homes at Fort Huachuca, where holidays have always been special. In "Christmas at Huachuca in 1918," from *Huachuca Illustrated: Voices from the Canyon*, Cornelius C. Smith Jr. remembers:

"Father was commanding officer of the 10th Cavalry and served simultaneously as post commander. Christmas in our house in 1918 was memorable, because among other things, a part of the regimental band came into the house and piped the plum pudding around the table, British style. World War I, 'the war,' had ended just six weeks earlier, on November 11, and so there was much for which to be grateful. Still mother and her friends were making woolen helmet liners and mittens for the doughboys over in France."

THE PERSHING HOUSE, Smith's old home, is just one of the houses open for a tour that draws some 1,200 visitors. Senior officers now occupy the elegantly decorated, 100-year-old buildings, and uniformed soldiers from Fort Huachuca's B Troop, 4th Regiment, U.S. Cavalry (Memorial), which honors a unit that served at the fort during the 1880s, stand ready to escort guests up the front steps.

Founded in 1877 during the Apache Wars, Fort Huachuca is the last Old West outpost still an active military installation. Backed up against the imposing Huachuca Mountains, the post now houses the U.S. Army Intelligence Center.

The old homes are large, more than 5,000 square feet, and furnished with antiques and collectibles the families have accumulated from around the world. They



TOURING THE POST Sponsored by the Fort Huachuca Community Spouses Club, the four-hour holiday tour allows visitors access to several century-old structures along Grierson Avenue (top), with proceeds underwriting scholarships and civic projects. Dressed in period costume, the Hunters (above) welcome guests to Morrow House, where variously themed Christmas trees grace every room.

are named for military personnel with ties to the post. The homes have thick walls (some 21 inches) with tall "coffin windows" that allowed a wagon to back up to the house. Coffins were handed through the windows so the deceased could "lie in state" in the living room.

OUTSIDE THE SHERBURNE HOUSE, Cameron Miller, 9-year-old son of current residents Lt. Col Tom and Dawn Miller, plays "Up on the House Top" on his trombone. Inside, even a lobster pot and a potato wagon sport holiday decorations but, Merlin, the family's golden retriever, hides from the crowd behind a chair. Upstairs, a Christmas tree, miniature sleigh and candy canes all hang upside down from the ceiling to add a quirky Christmas style.

The Morrow House, home to Col. Jon and Judy Hunter, is the "Christmas Tree House," sporting 8 trees decorated in varied themes, like an orange and white one for the University of Tennessee, the Hunters' home state. Colonel Hunter, honorary commander of the B Troop, greets his guests in a traditional 1880s cavalry uniform.

The 6,112-square-foot Pershing House, the tour's highlight, is traditionally home to the post's ranking officer, currently Maj. General Barbara Fast and her husband Paul (U.S. Army retired). Built in 1884 for \$9,000, the house was named for Gen. John J. Pershing. The general so admired his black troops that the white officers nicknamed him "Black Jack." Now with an apple pie baking in the kitchen, the Pershing House smells

Christmasy. Cornelius C. Smith remembers Christmas smells, too.

"Beautiful and savory aromas assailed the air; there was fudge cake icing, popovers, sage and chestnut dressing, whipped potatoes and candied yams. . . . The turkey was an absolute whopper, looking more like an ostrich than a turkey and done to a crackling golden brown. . . ."

Carlton House, the oldest building at Fort Huachuca, is nicknamed "Ghost House." Once the hospital and morgue, the home is supposedly haunted by a friendly ghost called "Charlotte." Her baby died at the hospital and the grieving mother still visits the house looking for her child. Eleven-year-old Ashley Laszok lived in the Ghost House. She says she played with Charlotte, a blonde, pretty woman wearing a white gown, who would disappear when an adult entered the room.

During Fort Huachuca's progression from cavalry to military intelligence, one thing remains the same. Smith recalls:

"In the bracing mountain air, families walked along Officers' Row . . . pausing to exchange greetings and linger awhile." These days, visitors to the post's Officers' Row are still enjoying Christmas the same way. ■■

EDITOR'S NOTE: The holiday decorations in the historic homes vary from year to year. The Sherburne House is currently undergoing historical renovation, so this year's Tour of Historic Homes will feature different residences.

Janet Webb Farnsworth admits she's an Arizona history buff, so Fort Huachuca's colorful past and equally colorful decorations added to her Christmas spirit.

Edward McCain of Tucson has enjoyed visiting Fort Huachuca many times since his first trip there in 1988.

when you go



Location: 70 miles southeast of Tucson.
Getting There: From Tucson, drive east on Interstate 10 40 miles to Exit 302. Drive 30 miles south on State Route 90 to Sierra Vista. State 90 becomes Buffalo Soldier Trail

when entering Sierra Vista. Fort Huachuca is on the west side of the road at Fry Boulevard.
Date: Always held first Sunday in December (this year on December 3) in afternoon only.
Travel Advisory: Children under 10 years old not allowed on home tour. No wheelchair access, but golf carts transport persons who are unable to walk between homes. No photos or videos are allowed. Visitors without Department of Defense decal must obtain a visitors' pass.
Additional Information: For tickets, e-mail amy.mangelsdorf@us.army.mil, or call (520) 459-2686.

online Take pleasure in the season and other holiday happenings at arizonahighways.com (Click on the December "Trip Planner").

A SHIVER OF HISTORY

CHRISTMAS SPARKLES IN
CANYON DE CHELLY

by Gregory McNamee * photographs by Steve Strom

THE NIGHT IS COLD, PIERCINGLY COLD. The cold is the kind that finds its way through your nose and fingers and permeates your very core in a matter of seconds, making you wonder why you ever left the comfort of the indoors, why anyone would ever venture outside until summer. It is so cold that the stars themselves seem to shiver in the night sky, so cold that the air feels brittle and glasslike, as if it were about to shatter into shards of ice.

The winter solstice is upon us, announcing its arrival in the high country of the Colorado Plateau with a sudden blast of polar wind. The thermometer stands a couple of degrees north of zero; the ceaseless gusts mean it is colder still. As if to warm herself, Venus hugs close to the waxing moon, a super-bright beacon in the night. Geminid meteors streak through the pitch-black sky, on their way to somewhere else. The North Star gleams, and the Milky Way spills out across the universe.

An astronomer by training and photographer by avocation, Steve Strom blows on his fingertips to warm them up enough to capture the brilliant night sky with his camera and gazes contentedly into the far distance. He takes a few long exposures, and then we surrender to the brightly lit, tinsel Christmas tree that beckons us inside Canyon de Chelly's Thunderbird Lodge. We and our wives are about the only outside guests braving the cold for a holiday sojourn, but a dozen or so Navajos of all ages have gathered in the dining room. The older ones

visit with each other while the younger ones play under the tree, singing along to carols playing over the radio.

WE MAKE A MODESTLY DRAMATIC ENTRANCE, pushed through the door by the wind. A stranger wrapped in a down jacket and several layers of sweater, I resemble the Michelin man—or perhaps, more suited to the wild setting, a bulked-up bear, casting a big shadow on the dining room.

A child darts past me. His mother calls, “*Nidlohish?*” (“Are you cold?”). He nods and scampers over to sit beneath the tree, where hot cocoa is soon delivered to him. At least it's not only me who finds the weather a touch nippy.

No one seems alarmed by my appearance, but indeed I'm hungry as a bear. A big bowl of lamb stew laced with lots of chile, a big disc of frybread smothered in honey, and a big cup of hot tea eventually takes the chill away. Steve and I, no longer having to grit our teeth, talk about astronomy, football, Navajo history and the next day's plans. I refill my tea cup, saying “*axéhee*” (“thank you”) to the young Navajo woman at the cash register. It's a lovely, nasal tongue-twister of a word. The cashier and her colleagues giggle, sharing delighted looks at the shambling, stammering bear who is mangling their tongue.

When cold, a bear will tell you, the best thing to do is hibernate. It seems sound advice, and we make for our rooms and burrow in against the long night. Still, I am enchanted, and from time to time I awake



Snowy Fields Forever
Below Canyon de Chelly's Tsegi Overlook, a Navajo home fights off winter's assault as a neighboring cornfield succumbs to the snowstorm.



Stone Walls Sandstone pillars line the walls of Canyon de Chelly as seen from Spider Rock Overlook, named for the Spider Woman of Navajo legend.

‘It’s like church. This canyon is a sacred place to all the Navajos . . . it clears your mind . . .’

to look out the window to see how the stars have wheeled their way across the night sky, following their ancient path.

DANIEL STALEY IS TEACHING ME TO MAKE A FIRE. Sitting beneath the ancestral Puebloan ruin called Antelope House, he takes strips of cottonwood bark, lays them against a log and steadily scrapes one of them with a larger chip of cottonwood. Three minutes go by, four, while Daniel talks, quietly, about the things his grandfathers taught him. And then a slender plume of smoke rises.

We have been traveling through Canyon de Chelly National Monument—the Navajo word *tséyi’*, of which Chelly is a Spanish approximation, means “within the rocks.” For a few hours, we have bounced in a truck along the sandy bed of a steadily narrowing wash, cracking our way over thick layers of ice. Normally at this time of year, only a trickle of water flows through the wash, but up at the little town of Tsaille at the canyon’s head, the reservoir is full of water from the steep, well-watered Lukachukai Mountains, and so some of its supply has been freed to spill down the wash. The result is that Canyon de Chelly’s floor is a winter wonderland of thick, glittering ice that sends spectral beams of light into the dark-red corners of the canyon’s high walls, illuminating their store of tucked-away caves and ancient rock dwellings like pixies.

When we set off early on this bright December morning, slipping and sliding along the wash, it was a scant 5 degrees above zero. We have been traveling slowly, steadily, up the ominously named Canyon del Muerto (“Canyon of Death”), an 18-mile-long tributary of Canyon de Chelly. The sun has risen above the canyon’s walls, filling the valley floor with light, and it has warmed up to a crackling 28 degrees. Grateful for this newly arrived balminess, we stop below Antelope House to make an alfresco picnic of salami, cheese, apples and chocolate, a perfect outdoors feast.

The little fire flickers merrily as we eat. Not that Daniel has been complaining about the cold in the first place. When we met him early this morning, we came wrapped up as if for an Arctic expedition, gloves and mufflers and balaclavas and thick wool socks deployed. Daniel strode up wearing a sweatshirt and a denim jacket, looked us over, and smiled. What he was thinking I can only guess.

Karen Strom, also an astronomer, stands in a curve of shade below Antelope House, peering at a rock ledge 20 feet overhead. “Look,” she says, excitedly, “there’s Cassiopeia!”

“Does it make a W?” I ask, searching for its faint outline on the rock ceiling. I have thereby come close to exhausting my store of Boy Scouts-won star knowledge, but I press on by saying, “And that up there looks like Ursa Minor.”

“Could be,” says Karen. “Probably Ursa Major. There’s Polaris over there, and there’s the morning star.”

I finally make out the W shape of Cassiopeia, what the

Navajos call Náhookos Biáadii, and the Big Dipper, Náhookos Bika’ii. Both figured prominently in last night’s starscape, as did the morning star, Venus. Their representations here, scratched long ago into the crumbling sandstone alongside one of the canyon’s best-preserved ruins, suggests their importance to the ancient inhabitants of the Colorado Plateau. Those people sited their cliff houses for many reasons, not the least of them being ease of defense and proximity to productive agricultural fields, but also for the best possible views of the night sky, that infinite source of stories and metaphors. Indeed, just as the stars guided Europeans before we learned to let machines do our looking for us, the ancestral Pueblos organized many of their lifeways around the heavens.

The Puebloan people’s knowledge of stars is well attested in Canyon de Chelly, where dozens of “planetaria” grace walls, ledges and caves. The winter night sky is particularly well represented, since winter was traditionally a quiet time, the harvest in and stored and the planting yet to begin, a time to make art and plan for the future. So it is in Canyon de Chelly today: Some 80 Navajo families still own farmland there.

We hear the whinnying of a farmer’s horse, and a curl of smoke rises above a nearby hogan tucked into a spectacularly, explosively golden grove of cottonwood trees. Daniel walks up to me and says, “It’s like church. This canyon is a sacred place to all the Navajos. When you come here, it clears your mind, and you go home strong. The canyon is our mother, and she feeds us.”

Standing beneath the cottonwoods, their leaves rattling in a now soft wind, I understand.

Daniel knows of another planetarium up the canyon, not far from Mummy Cave. It will take some work and some climbing to get there, but the day is steadily warming—it will soon break the freezing point—and we’re ready to wander. We clamber into Steve’s well-weathered truck and move deeper into Canyon del Muerto, past the rock island that marks the mouth of Black Rock Canyon, the walls growing higher and higher. Daniel sings softly:

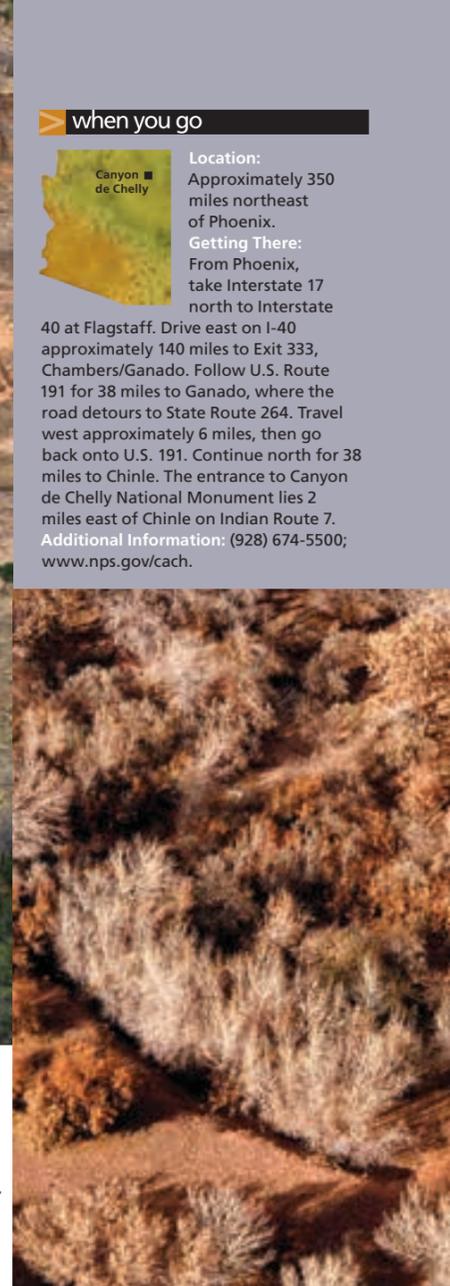
*We can chase my horse
We can chase my horse
In my Jeep Wrangler
In my Jeep Wrangler . . .*

*I can show you a shooting star
I can show you a shooting star
In my Jeep Wrangler
In my Jeep Wrangler . . .*

The melody could be a thousand years old, rhythmic and gentle, but the words are his own. They’d do both Merle Haggard and an ancient Indian astronomer proud, and they make a pleasing Christmas carol now, echoing off the redwall cliffs.



Stay Cool As winter takes hold of the canyon, sparse cottonwoods line the shore of a frozen wash (above) while seasonal plants force their way through the soil (right).



when you go



Location: Approximately 350 miles northeast of Phoenix.
Getting There: From Phoenix, take Interstate 17 north to Interstate

40 at Flagstaff. Drive east on I-40 approximately 140 miles to Exit 333, Chambers/Ganado. Follow U.S. Route 191 for 38 miles to Ganado, where the road detours to State Route 264. Travel west approximately 6 miles, then go back onto U.S. 191. Continue north for 38 miles to Chinle. The entrance to Canyon de Chelly National Monument lies 2 miles east of Chinle on Indian Route 7.
Additional Information: (928) 674-5500; www.nps.gov/cach.

We halt. The ever-warmer sun has finally bored through the thick ice, and the little cottonwood-lined draw before us has suddenly transformed into a small but deep lake. Daniel, Steve and I climb out of the truck and stand at its edge, sounding the depth with an obliging branch that has fallen from a dead tree. We debate it a little, poking and stroking chins, then decide that Tsegi Creek has become a touch too high for our comfort zone. Daniel remarks, brightly, “Well, it’d only take us until sunset to walk out,” whereupon we decide to leave the planetarium for a drier, warmer day.

Karen and my wife, Marianne, warm in the truck, are laughing as we climb back in. “You looked just like little boys out there,” Marianne says. “The stick was a nice touch,” Karen agrees. True enough, but Christmas cookies and hot chocolate await. We wind our way back to the national monument headquarters, leisurely backtracking to take in a view of another magnificent ruin, White House. An ever-brisker wind herds us along, just to remind us of the cold night to come, and the sun slowly begins its descent.

I ask Daniel how he’ll spend the holiday. “Oh, I don’t know,” he replies. “Maybe I’ll go to Paris.” He looks at me, and since he is a well-traveled man who would find much of interest in the City of Light—and the Parisians much of interest in him—I take the remark at face value. Then he breaks into a smile. “Naw,” he says. “I’d like to go there, maybe, but my family would miss me. I’ll be here with my children and grandchildren. It’s a day for family. It’s Christmas!”

NIGHT FALLS, AND VENUS TUCKS HERSELF IN CLOSE to the moon. The canyon’s walls loom in the soft white light, and the stars burn brightly in their courses, wheeling above us in much the same configuration, I imagine, as they did above three riders crossing another desert long ago, looking for a newly arrived king. Horses whinny in the near distance, their calls echoing off the cliff faces, and I am reminded of the words of the Navajo poet Laura Tohe: “Every time I return to Tséyi’ it’s as if I had never laid eyes on it.”

In this season of transformation, it is all new, and it is a wonderful pleasure to be alive to behold it. The air fills with the smell of wood smoke mixed with the inviting scent of frybread, and trees wrapped in festive lights gleam merrily. There is so much promise, so much beauty in the world. ■■■

Gregory McNamee of Tucson travels to Canyon de Chelly whenever he can, even when it’s cold. He is the author of Moveable Feasts: The History, Science, and Lore of Food (Praeger, 2006) and many other books.

Steve Strom of Sonoita has photographed the Southwest for more than 25 years, mostly in conditions less “thermally challenging” than this assignment.

EDGE^{OF} TRANSFORMATION

GRAND CANYON'S RIM DIVIDES LOSS FROM REDEMPTION BY PETER ALESHIRE

WINTER WONDER A blazing sunrise breaks through storm clouds after a fresh morning snowfall at Yavapai Point at the Grand Canyon. JIM COLE

■ To order a print of this photograph, see inside front cover.



IN THE SPOTLIGHT Sun parts powdery clouds to highlight Comanche Point north of Desert View as a storm rolls away from Navajo Point. PAUL LEATHERBURY

■ To order a print of this photograph, see inside front cover.

I fled the storm of my life into the storm of a lifetime, up Interstate 17 toward

the nowhere that was somewhere different than the flounder of my career, my family and my home. ▼ The bitter 40-mph wind hurled the sleeted snow at the windows of my battered Trooper as I picked my way by headlight through the premature night. ▼ I had nowhere to go. ▼ I had no business on this road. ▼ I had no hope of redemption. ▼

For I had screwed up my life beyond recognition, and now felt as baffled as a man reading a compass atop the North Pole.

Not long before, my pride and carelessness got me fired from the only newspaper in the state that paid enough to support my wife, three kids, one dog, two cats and one mortgage. A top-scale reporter in his 40s, I'd sent resumes to a hundred newspapers without provoking a single call back. Cheaper to hire some recent J-school graduate, I guess. So I'd been crashing back and forth through my life, making my wife cry, drinking too much and worrying my kids. I should have gone to law school, toed the line, tried harder, saved my money, sold real estate—anything but indulge my writer's ego while ticking off random editors.

So I made up a lie about having a freelance assignment and fled the house with the overdue mortgage and the forlorn Christmas tree. I ignored the strident travelers' advisories on the radio—in truth, the storm drew me. I yearned to lose myself in the wind and the snow and the fury.

Stupid. But what do you expect from a man who can't hold a job or support his family?

Past Flagstaff, I headed down the long slope off the backside of Humphreys Peak, whose feeder tubes spewed lava just 1,000 years ago. Humphreys Peak gathers storms to her perhaps because she rises above 12,000 feet. Perhaps because the Katsina spirits of the Hopi people live there, speaking in thunder.

Suddenly, I was going to the Grand Canyon. Perhaps I had been going there all along, but I didn't know it until I started down that long slope into the Painted Desert, exchanging pines for juniper and finally for the aching purity of Navajo sandstone counterpointed by snow. I pictured myself standing on a slab of Kaibab limestone looking over a 600-foot cliff, wrapped in the storm. I knew then the Canyon had been there all this while, waiting.

Filled now with purpose, I drove through the storm, into the night, toward the Canyon.

I gave the ranger most of the cash left in my pocket to enter, and drove to the lodge parking lot in the dark. I got out, barely noticing the cold in my light jacket and jeans as I walked through the slanted snow in the darkness. Standing at an overlook, I stared intently into the void.

Nothing. I might as well have squeezed my eyes closed.

Filled with the storm, the Canyon released not a single photon

of light. It was the most absolute black I'd ever seen. I was a blindfolded man in a closet—except for the wind and the penetrating chill of the snow accumulating on my hair, around my collar, against my cheek. I could walk off that cliff and never know it until I hit the bottom.

I slipped past the guardrail and groped my way to the edge of the great wedge of rock that formed a jutting promontory into the ocean of darkness. I brushed the snow off the stone, made of the skeletons of creatures that died their pointless deaths 270 million years ago in the warm waters of an inland sea. I sat on my island of skeletons, soaking myself in the absolute dark until I was as numb and smooth as the stone. The wind died and the snow came down with perfect grace, weightless and slow.

I don't know how long I sat there. But finally I rose stiffly, blocky and thick with the cold, and crawled back to the guardrail, to the path, toward the twinkling lights of the lodge. I considered entering there, to seek the fire, to sit steaming until I could feel my feet again. But I had no money for a room and felt alien and strange and unable to explain myself.

So I stumbled back to my Trooper and ran the engine and the heater until I got warm again. Then I wrapped myself in the sleeping bag I always carry and reclined the seat.

I slept like a dead man.



GRAND GLOW Light pours into the Grand Canyon after a winter storm. At 7,000 feet, the South Rim sees steady winter snowfall and cool summer nights. GEORGE STOCKING

I awoke abruptly, as though someone had called my name. ▼ My breath, moist and vital, made a cloud. Snow covered the window; I was in a womb, reborn. ▼ The silence was perfect, except for my breath and the beating of my heart. ▼ I struggled out of the sleeping bag, pulled on my cold boots and opened the car door, creating a flurry off the roof. I took my camera out of the bag and loaded the film clumsily. ▼ The camera was heavy and cold, reassuringly solid in my chilled hands.

Dawn's flush hushed the trees, the stone, the crystals of snow. The snow had transformed the parking lot, turning the ugly metal forms of the cars into fantasies—internal combustion snowmen finally at peace. I released a breath, surprised that I'd been holding it, hoarding it. I moved through the snow toward the Rim, noting the piñons, junipers and ponderosa pines. Every bough sagged with a load of snow, untouched, perfect. I released another breath, a cloud, a puff of life.

I have always loved the ponderosas, with bark that smells of vanilla and does not become golden and beautiful until the

tree has proven itself a survivor. The world's greatest expanse of drought-tolerant ponderosas sprawls across Arizona's Mogollon Rim Country. I wondered at all the winters these giant yellow bellies had outwaited. Did that monster there stand here when Francisco Vasquez de Coronado's brave commander García López de Cárdenas in 1540 stumbled upon the impassable Grand Canyon in his quest to confirm rumors of a large river?

I turned and walked through the pristine snow toward the Rim, regretting the smudge of my footprints, but needing now to see the Canyon filled with light.



CRITTER COMPANY Mule deer are often seen on the South Rim. Other species range from ringtails, the state mammal, to the Grand Canyon pink rattlesnake. PETER ALESHIRE



LOOKING DOWN INTO THAT MYSTERY OF ROCK

ON THE EDGE Slow-growing, sturdy piñon pines use strong water-storing roots to secure gnarled trunks to plains, plateaus, canyons and foothills, providing views like this familiar snow-dusted vista at Yaki Point on the South Rim. LAURENCE PARENT
 ■ To order a print of this photograph, see inside front cover.

IN THE UNSPOILED LIGHT OF MORNING FELT ODDLY REASSURING.

The Canyon opened up at my feet, the towers and spires rising from the mists of dawn like the kingdoms of mythology. Shadow and light, breadth and width, rising up and falling down. The Earth suddenly dropped her veils to reveal herself.

I gazed, without comprehension, upon the Canyon's revelation of almost 2 billion years of Earth's history. The short time we human beings have existed washed off the Rim long ago, a trifle not worth mentioning. But beneath the 270 million-year-old Kaibab limestone on the Rim lie the layers with hypnotic names—Toroweap, Coconino and Bright Angel, Supai and Hermit, Redwall and Mauv down to Tapeats, a white layer of trilobite-bearing sandstone formed in the bottom of a Cambrian sea 525 million years ago, before flowers and their ilk made the land's surface fit for such as you and me. Then down beneath more than 1 billion years of missing rock I could see the inner gorge, with its treasure of 1.8 billion-year-old Vishnu schist and intruded Zoroaster granite.

It's all a mystery as far as the eye can see. The geologists argue fiercely about the origins of the Canyon, partly because the tributaries flow into it at the wrong angle in its upper stretches. Some geologists believe that a different, older river once flowed north into some great interior basin and eventually changed direction and flowed south. But five or six million years ago, when a plate shift opened the Sea of Cortes, a new, younger river system back-cut into the rising plateau until it captured the drainage of that older river. In any case, over the last five million years, the river chewed through the uplifted layers of sediment and flowed down into the rift assuming roughly its present configuration. Looking down into that mystery of rock in the unspoiled light of morning felt oddly reassuring, reducing my fears to the miracle of the warm cloud of my breath.

I turned then from the spectacle of the Canyon to gaze on the intimate wonder of the snow, glittering with the scattered diamonds of dawn.

I followed the snow-covered trail, leaving it repeatedly to go

out to the tip of some ridge jutting into the layered abyss. Each turn of the trail astonished me. Each new view into the Canyon flummoxed me. I felt like a simpleton stirring from amnesia to look upon trees and clouds and water droplets for the first time he can remember.

It was as though I had never in my life seen snow sparkle, the grain of limestone, the bark of a piñon, the bristle of pine needles, the fluff of fresh snow, the pattern of coyote tracks, the fur of a squirrel, the flay of a raven's wing, snow on a pine bough, a hawk on a thermal, snow avalanching off a branch, the gradations of sky or the billow of a cloud.

Sitting, marveling, on the cliff edge 2 miles along the Rim from my forgotten car, I caught movement at the corner of my eye. Turning my head slowly, I saw a small mule deer with jaunty, 9-inch-long ears standing at the edge of the Canyon, browsing casually. The deer ignored me. So I carefully raised my camera to my eye. The deer continued to move toward me.

I finished the roll of film, then simply sat in the snow watching her. She eventually looked straight at me, curious but fearless. I wanted to explain myself, but realized I had no need. We each had our reasons and our right to be there.

She drifted right past me, nibbling as she went.

I sat alone on the edge of the Canyon after she left, in my right and proper place. I could scarcely remember my own storm—although I have remembered the fall of the snow into the dark Canyon perfectly ever since.

Then I went home to be a husband and father and a writer. It was a good Christmas, without many presents. I raised my boys into fine men. I sold some articles. I wrote some books. I got a teaching gig. I lucked into the world's best job with the world's best magazine.

But I have never forgotten the gift of the Canyon and the deer and the waking up. ■■

Peter Aleshire is editor of Arizona Highways magazine.

USS Arizona Mourns Her Dead 65 Years Later Black Tears Still Seep

ON EACH DECEMBER 7, the name "Arizona" assumes a special significance. On this day, the word "Arizona" doesn't conjure the Grand Canyon or Apaches or roadrunners or Wyatt Earp, but rather Hawaii and a doomed battleship commissioned in 1916, the same year as one of history's great naval battles and four years after Arizona became a state.

The *USS Arizona* dropped anchor at Pearl Harbor in July 1941 and is still there today, but at the bottom of the harbor in shallow water so close to the surface that from above it can be clearly seen. It has been said that it cries black tears; every day approximately a quart of oil bubbles up to the surface from somewhere inside the battleship, which had been refueled shortly before being sunk. Most people don't notice the iridescent oil rings, which are inconspicuous and dissipate quickly. The image of black tears is especially appropriate because most of the 1,177 crewmembers who died when the ship was sunk are still onboard.

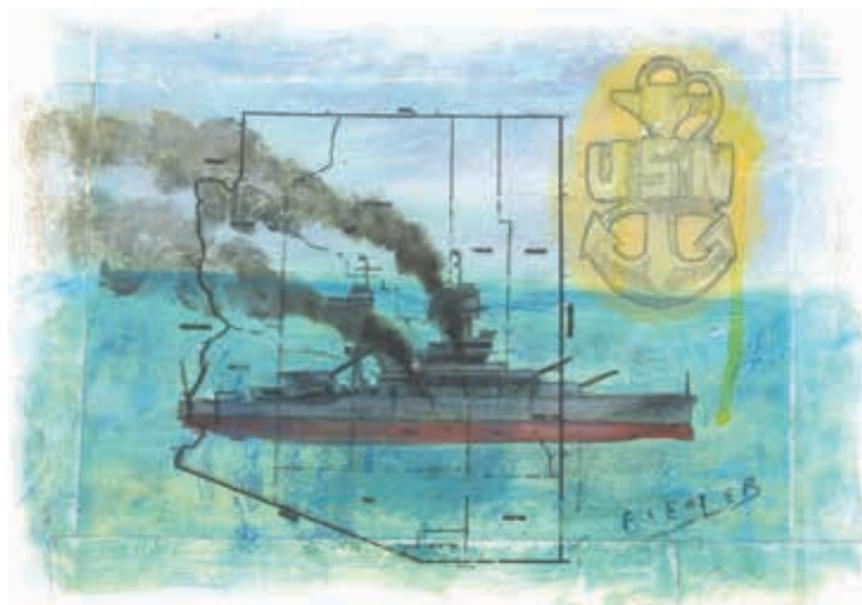
The *Arizona* was built in the New York Navy Yard in Brooklyn, not far from the site where the World Trade Center would later be built. I was looking forward to seeing the *Arizona* monument in the fall of 2001, but it was not to be because FedEx delivered the ticket for my trip to Hawaii on September 10.

I didn't make it to Hawaii. I spent the next few days watching the news about the World Trade Center on TV. The pictures of the buildings coming down are filed in my memory, alongside other newsreel pictures of great warships foundering in Pearl Harbor, the air thick with black smoke.

I've seen *Tora! Tora! Tora!* and *Pearl Harbor*, the two big Pearl Harbor movies, on TV. A Sony television set. History is a tricky chameleon. When I was a boy, the media was universally geared toward conditioning me to hate the Japanese. "Remember Pearl Harbor" was the title of the most popular war song in the country in 1942, and the phrase was a rallying cry, a call to arms against an enemy generally considered to be subhuman.

Today one is expected to remember Pearl Harbor differently, without hatred for the country that launched the attack. Our allies and enemies change continuously like the players in an endless somber game.

The *USS Arizona* constitutes the most salient memory of Pearl Harbor. It is still visible and so unavoidable. A film



and audio narration aboard a boat that ferries tourists to the *Arizona* describes the events leading to the attack, and the narration ends with these words, "How shall we remember them, those who died? Mourn the dead. Remember the battle. Understand the tragedy. Honor the memory."

The *Arizona* was in the movies long before the attack on Pearl Harbor. It was the location for a 1934 movie titled *Here Comes the Navy* with James Cagney and Pat O'Brien. Their love interest in the movie was Gloria Stuart, who 63 years later would play a part in a movie titled *Titanic* about the sinking of a grand cruise ship in the year 1912, just a few weeks after *Arizona* joined the union.

In 1924, a young woman named Madeline Blair stowed away on the *Arizona* on its voyage from New York to San Pedro, her destination being Hollywood.

Her discovery resulted in prison sentences for 23 sailors convicted of helping her in exchange for favors.

When the *Arizona* was being built, it was expected to be called the *USS North Carolina*, after the home state of the secretary of the Navy. But *Arizona* ended up getting the honors. Esther Ross, the daughter of prominent Prescott pioneer W.W. Ross, christened the ship, and in 1917 there was a statewide fund-raising campaign to pay for a silver service to present to the *Arizona*.

The silver service is still aboard the *Arizona*. Nobody knows what became of Madeline Blair, who never made it to Hollywood (she was returned to New York). But Gloria Stuart, who walked the deck of the *Arizona* in real life 70 years ago, is still making movies.

The oil leaking out of the *Arizona* is expected to do so until after the last Pearl Harbor survivor dies. ■

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Take the Long and Winding Road

to See Stanton's Naked Saloon Hussy

I'LL GET TO THE NAKED saloon hussy in time. First, some advice: Heave your cell phone off a bridge and prepare for a wandering good time through western Arizona's most colorful old mining camps. The stories that spring from these once-roaring towns are as fresh and exciting as they were in Territorial times.

But that's only part of the journey. The second half combines dirt road and pavement as it brings the adventurous through one

of the state's most beautiful valleys, into a still-operating Old West saloon, and down a 20-mile stretch of dirt road once traveled by Arizona's greatest Indian fighter.

Beginning in Wickenburg, I drove 4.7 miles north on U.S. Route 93 to the Scenic Loop Road, a dirt track that curls in a northeasterly direction through picturesque Sonoran Desert.

The first stop of interest

comes 11.4 miles into the trip on Scenic Loop Road at a shadowy gash on the landscape called Box Canyon. The Hassayampa River flows through it, the water hidden even from a canyon overlook on the right side of the road. But look east and you can spot the river exiting the box canyon and meandering in a silver streak across the distance, a beautiful sight on a clear morning.

At the bottom of the hill just beyond Box Canyon, exit the Loop Road by making a sharp left at 11.9 miles. This road—locals call it the Octave/Stanton back road—proceeds due north. At about the 20-mile mark, the road forms a T, the right fork leading to the ruins of Octave and Weaver, the left to Stanton. These towns sprouted after explorer Paulino Weaver's fabulous

goats along Weaver Creek.

I had the pleasure of having at my side on this trip a man whose father knew Josepha. Pablo Moralez came to Arizona's western desert by horse-drawn wagon in 1918, eventually becoming a rancher. Today, his son Angel, my guide, continues the tradition.

Signs along the road point to Angel's Ranch, where the 65-year-old, with help from three sons and a daughter, operates a cactus nursery. He knows this land as if it were his back yard—because it is—and he has a keen memory for stories his father told, especially about Josepha.

Every morning she'd walk the creek bed and find gold nuggets that had washed up the night before. She'd put them in her mouth and keep going, grabbing more as she went. She kept the gold in a jar and hid it in a hole in the floor under her bed.

"My mother asked why she did that," says Angel. Pointing to Rich Hill, Josepha responded, "These nuggets brought the white man here.

Maybe if I pick them all up, no more will come."

Angel also tells about miners hunting quail and finding gold stuck in their guts. The birds spotted nuggets gleaming on the ground and swooped down to eat them. "People think that's legend, but I know it's true," says Angel.

Except for scattered hillside ruins, Weaver and Octave are gone. Not so Stanton, where three original buildings still stand—a stage station, hotel and combination opera house and saloon. Visitors can stroll the board sidewalks and step inside these wonderfully evocative structures, complete with tin roofs, potbellied stoves and, in the saloon, bullet-pocked walls.

Behind the bar of the old groggery hangs the obligatory portrait of a lounging saloon girl. She's naked, of course, and a bit of a cliché. But the Wild West aficionado finds the constancy of her presence reassuring.

To get from Stanton to State Route 89 at Congress, drive west on Stanton Road, or take

the more scenic Old Stage Road, also known as the Old Yarnell Road, which twists over the hills out to Yarnell, 5 miles away.

Located at the intersection of this road and State 89, the Ranch House Restaurant is a good spot for travelers to enjoy lunch in a colorful cafe. The town also has offbeat shops for antique hunting and the famous hillside shrine to St. Joseph, patron saint of happy homes. This pretty spot, a few hundred feet off 89 at Yarnell, has provided a spiritual retreat for visitors since its 1939 dedication.

The trip's second portion involves lots of driving, but if your plan is to scratch an entire day off the calendar, this is how it's done.

From Yarnell, drive north on 89 through Peeples Valley. This postcard meadowland of white-iron fences, willow

INFAMOUS FOUNDER

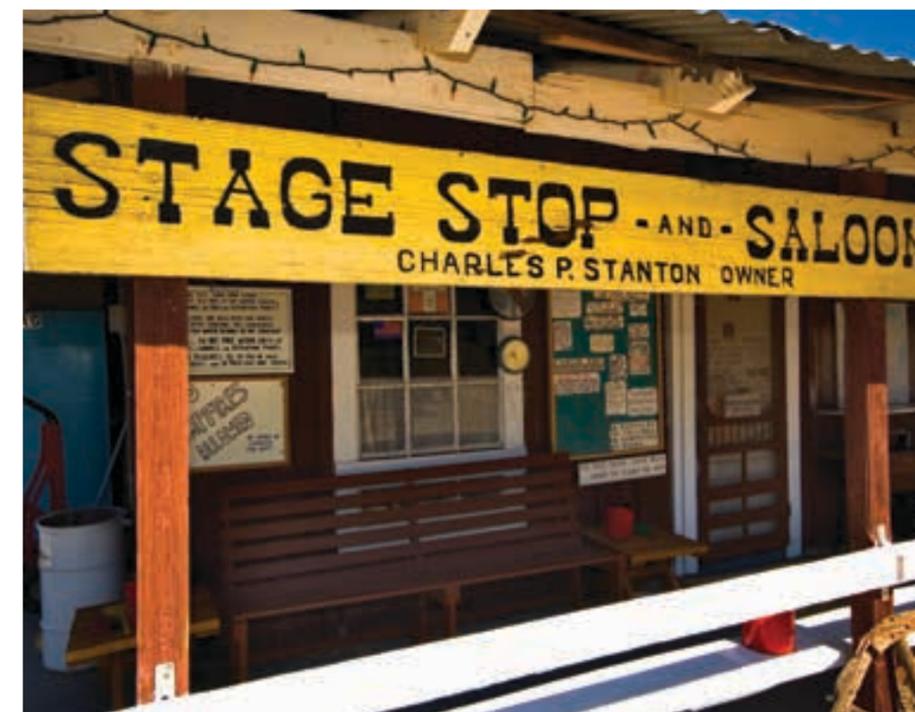
The mining town of Stanton was named after Charles P. Stanton, a notorious "town boss," who, though never convicted, was accused of many crimes, including murder.

SILVER STREAK

A sliver of the Hassayampa River (above) can be seen from an overlook at Box Canyon. The river's path is evident in the cottonwood trees that line its banks.

1863 gold strike, the largest placer find in Arizona. He and his men grabbed potato-sized nuggets off the ground atop Rich Hill, creating a rush that brought thousands seeking their fortune.

But beginning in the early 1900s, the mines declined, and it couldn't have come too soon for Josepha Alvarez, an Indian woman who raised





PICTURE POSTCARD
Billowing clouds dot an azure sky above Peeples Valley (left). Travelers may see rolling hills with horses (above), and bikers at the Ranch House Restaurant (below).

trees and grazing horses looks like a scene from the old TV show “Dallas” and has to rank among Arizona’s prettiest places.

Six miles north of the valley, turn left onto Kirkland Valley Road, which is Yavapai County Road 15, and drive

4.5 miles to Kirkland, site of the Kirkland Bar and Steakhouse. Opened as a store in the late 1800s, the building has since housed a Wells Fargo office, stage and rail stop, hotel and brothel. Be sure to ask the bartender about the murdered prostitute whose face shows up on its back wall. Her image appeared there five years ago and has grown clearer every year. “You can even see where her throat was slit,” says



route finder

Note: Mileages are approximate.

- **Begin in Wickenburg** on U.S. Route 93; drive northwest for 4.7 miles to Scenic Loop Road and turn right.
- **Follow road for 6.7 miles** to Box Canyon, where there is a large overlook on the right side of the road. (34°03.05' N; 112°43.13' W)
- **Continue along Scenic Loop Road** another .2 of a mile and make a sharp left onto the Octave-Stanton Road. Follow road for 8.3 miles to a T. Turn left and drive 7.3 miles to the old mining town of Stanton, where the road forks.
- **To tour buildings at Stanton**, take the left fork and then an immediate right into the parking lot of the Lost Dutchman Mining Association property. Check in at office for permission to tour.
- **When leaving Stanton**, turn left out of parking lot and take an immediate left on to Old Stage Road (also called Old Yarnell Road); drive for 5 miles to intersection with State Route 89 at Yarnell.
- **Turn right (north) onto State 89** and drive 6 miles to Kirkland Valley Road, also known as Yavapai County Road 15, and turn left (west).
- **Drive 4.5 miles to Kirkland** to the Kirkland Bar and Steakhouse; continue straight for another 16 miles to Hillside.
- **At Hillside, turn left (south)** onto Date Creek Road; drive 21 miles to junction with 89 at Congress. Turn right onto 89; drive 10 miles to U.S. 93; turn left (southeast) and drive 6 miles to Wickenburg.



bartender Rose Clem. “We checked at the museum in Prescott and there was a girl murdered here. We call her Mary the Madame.”

County Road 15 continues northwest through Thompsons Valley for another 16 miles before reaching the Hillside turnoff. Travel through this tiny community on Date Creek Road, which parallels the railroad line through the Hawkins and Piedmont crossings, all the way to Congress.

Date Creek Road stretches for 21 easy miles through remote ranch country, populated mostly by jackrabbits—and the spirit of Gen. George Crook. On September 8, 1872, Arizona’s top military officer nearly died at Camp Date Creek when Yavapai Indian renegades—“uneasy and suspicious, and in very bad temper”—tried to assassinate him.

One of Crook’s officers deflected a renegade’s rifle as he fired at the general, thereby keeping this brilliant tactician and warrior in the field and helping win Arizona’s tumultuous Indian Wars.

The Date Creek Road makes for a fun last leg of the day spent exploring Arizona’s rich present and her lively past, hussies and all. **AH**



RANCHING ANGEL
Angel Moralez operates Angel’s Ranch, a cactus nursery near the old mining towns of Octave, Weaver and Stanton.

travel tips

Vehicle Requirements: High-clearance vehicles should have little difficulty—with one exception—at the 14.9-mile mark (which includes the 4.7 miles of driving on State Route 93). Travelers must cross a wash with loose sand, about 50 feet wide.
Warning: Back-road travel can be hazardous. Be aware of weather and road conditions. Carry plenty of water. Don’t travel alone, and let someone know where you’re going and when you plan to return.
Travel Advisory: Shortly after turning north onto the old Octave/Stanton back road, travelers encounter two gates that must be opened to pass through. Be sure to close all gates. At the 15.8-mile mark, the road forks. Take the left fork. The right fork leads to the headquarters of Angel Moralez’s ranch.
Additional Information: Angel Moralez operates a public cactus nursery and leads trail rides and hunting trips. (928) 427-3357.

Lions Guard Seven Falls

Tucson's Bear Canyon offers a splash of beauty to cap a 4-mile desert trek

THE HIKE TO SEVEN FALLS comes with a warning label. Look out for mountain lions because they like to hide on cliffs and steep slopes and in thick brush, where they can rush prey and drag their kill back to a protected area.

Oh, great. The trail into Bear Canyon, adjacent to Sabino Canyon on Tucson's far northeast side, consists of nothing but cliffs, slopes and ambush brush. Mountain lions find this area perfect for their hobbies and habits, which lately include such aberrant behavior as daylight prowling, showing no fear of humans and even stalking humans.

Coronado National Forest officials hand out a two-page warning sheet to hikers headed into Seven Falls, and my advice is to read it and forget about it. I couldn't, of course, because I'm not, you know, insane.

But the possibility—admittedly remote—of attack by such a shy killer only added spice to my 4-mile round-trip hike along Bear Canyon Trail. It offers the ultimate desert hiking experience, with the sublime payoff, under the correct

conditions, of powerfully cascading water and rock pools in which to frolic.

For most of its length, the trail parallels Bear Creek, and includes a sufficient number of guideposts to keep hikers on course. But it jumps the creek numerous times, and for a hundred yards or so the trail disappears. Hiking temporarily turns into high-stepping and boulder-jumping, with arm-waving landings, during which you plot your next leap.

If the creek is running with, say, December snowmelt or recent rainfall, the wrong leap can mean an impromptu bath in impossibly cold water. But it can be great fun, if a bit soggy.

Magnificent cliffs shelter the trail on both sides, and they soar taller as you proceed. Canyon shadows and midday light conspire to confound your perception of shapes and distance, and this allows those of properly wild imagination to see whatever they choose.

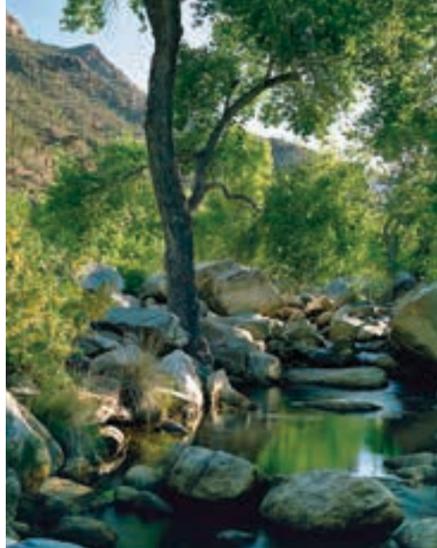
I chose mountain lions. My son, Patrick, chose a scene from his favorite author, J.K. Rowling. That remained beyond my reasoning until

I noticed that some of the peaks were decorated with tall saguaros. And those saguaros, rising fingerlike to the azure sky, looked like the magic wands wielded by Harry Potter, Hermione Granger and their stalwart pal, Ron Weasley.

Even in broad daylight a 10-year-old can find something to scare him witless.

We climbed as the trail climbed, keeping wide of the grabbing brush and cacti while quail hooted their songs and lizards rustled through the brush. This isn't a difficult hike. I'd place it in the easy-to-moderate category, if only for the rocks on the trail, its disappearing act, and the climbing required. The falls sit at 3,490 feet elevation.

In some spots, the canyon offers a rear-view window down toward Tucson, a reminder of your proximity to the city's heartbeat. At the same time, the falls say you're a world away. That's especially true when the water is hurtling over the rocks, but we had no such luck this time.



LION'S SHARE OF BEAUTY

A quiet wading pool sits beneath boulders and cottonwoods (above), echoing the silence of Sabino Canyon. The water tumbles at Seven Falls (right) along Bear Canyon Trail during the wet season.

■ To order a print of this photograph (right), see inside front cover.

The drought had turned the falls dry, leaving only a few stagnant rock pools.

If your fortune is better, you'll see what my friend Larry Cheek called the Sonoran Desert's most spectacular waterfall. Some years ago in these pages he wrote: "Seven Falls appears suddenly around a bend, an astonishing cascade tumbles halfway down the canyon's north face. The source of the uppermost falls is beyond earshot, so it seems like the craggy mountain is belching the water from some mysterious internal source."

Beautifully put. Now put that pesky mountain lion thing out of your mind and hit the trail. ■■



▶ trail guide

Length: 2 miles one way from the trailhead at end of the shuttle road to Bear Canyon, or hikers can also begin at the visitors center, for a one-way trip of 4 miles.

Elevation Gain: 750 feet. The elevation at the visitors center is 2,740.

Difficulty: Easy to moderate.

Payoff: Seven seasonal waterfalls at the top, and rock pools.

Location: On Tucson's northeast side.

Getting There: Take Speedway Boulevard east to Wilmot Road. Turn north onto Wilmot Road and continue 1.7 miles. The road will become Tanque Verde Road. Turn left onto Sabino Canyon Road. Take Sabino Canyon Road north 4.5 miles to the park entrance, on your right, just after the intersection with Sunrise.

Travel Advisory: A shuttle operates between the Sabino Canyon Visitors Center and points along Bear Canyon Trail. Cost is \$3 for adults and \$1 for children ages 3 to 12. Always carry plenty of water, at least 1 gallon per day per person. This trail is popular in the winter, when melting mountain snow creates the falls. But the falls might also be running in the spring, the fall and after the summer monsoons. Parts of the trail are rough due to summer monsoon landslides.

Additional Information: Coronado National Forest, (520) 749-8700; www.fs.fed.us/r3/coronado.



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