

Cycling AZ: 10 of the State's Best Bike Routes

ARIZONA HIGHWAYS

MARCH 2008

Wildflowers

**Poppies, clover,
lupine, verbena ...
we've got more blossoms
than Mother Nature.**

PLUS:
Native Treasure
Exposed by Fire

AND:
Prescott's
Hassayampa Inn

The Coolest Diner
in Metro Phoenix

Spring Training
History Lesson

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Lance Armstrong trained for the Tour de France in the Santa Catalina Mountains, but you don't have to be an elite athlete to hit the road in Arizona. Whether you ride a Madone 6.9 Pro by Trek or a Schwinn Stingray with a banana seat and sissy bar, there's a road-biking route in this state that's just right for you. Ride on. BY CHRISTINE MAXA

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In Michigan and Massachusetts, April showers bring May flowers. In the desert, there are no guarantees. Rain is rare, and without it, wildflowers are unlikely. That's where we come in. Regardless of the weather, our pages come alive with poppies, clover and verbena — as you'll see, we've got more color than Mother Nature.

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In the aftermath of Rodeo-Chediski, the largest wildfire in Arizona history, silver linings were inconceivable. A few years later, things are different. As it turns out, in the process of scorching the landscape, the blaze unearthed the ruins of a 12th century ceremonial center — a place that includes one of the largest known kivas in the Southwest. BY CRAIG CHILDS PHOTOGRAPHS BY NICK BEREZENKO

40 Judge of Character

Even in the days of Dobson Ranch, Mesa was never confused with Bedford Falls. Still, there's at least one man in town — Judge Hamblen — who's a character straight out of a Frank Capra movie. Homespun, no-nonsense, unorthodox ... that's how you'd describe this throwback to the old school. BY KATHY MONTGOMERY PHOTOGRAPHS BY DON B. & RYAN B. STEVENSON

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online arizonahighways.com

Spring is bustin' out all over Arizona. From the mountains to the valleys, March weather allows for great outdoor opportunities. Dust off the ol' Schwinn and take it for a spin using our expanded cycling guide. Along the way, you might see one of the most beautiful spectacles in the Sonoran Desert — brightly colored fields of wildflowers. If the drought stymies the flowers, experience virtual blossoms through the magnificent photography in this month's slide show — all at arizonahighways.com.

WEEKEND GETAWAY March is the prime time to see Picacho Peak from the saddle.

EXPERIENCE ARIZONA Plan a trip with our calendar of events.

Photographic Prints Available

Prints of some photographs in this issue are available for purchase, as designated in captions. To order, call 866-962-1191 or visit arizonahighwaysprints.com.



YOU TALKIN' TO ME? Two curve-billed thrashers bicker atop saguaro cactus blossoms, Arizona's state flower. Photograph by Bruce D. Taubert
 To order a print of this photograph, see information on opposite page.

FRONT COVER A river of owl clover and Mexican goldpoppies runs riot through the hills of Saddle Mountain near Tonopah, about 50 miles west of Phoenix. Photograph by George Stocking

BACK COVER Organ pipe cactus blooms, open for just one night, attract nocturnal bats to their bright white petals. Photograph by George Raymond

To order a print of this photograph, see information on opposite page.



From easy to strenuous, there are all kinds of road-biking routes in Arizona. This month, we'll tell you about 10 of the best. See page 14.



TOM BEAN



JEFF KIDA

HIPPIES, COLERIDGE AND THE Sonoran Desert. That's what I think about when I think about flowers. Although I had no idea who Alan Ginsberg was in the late '60s, I remember preaching "flower power" to Wally Elderkin and the other kids at Lake Delton Elementary. They didn't listen. The Coleridge link comes from *Youth and Age*, my favorite poem by the

English poet: "Flowers are lovely; love is flowerlike; friendship is a sheltering tree." More than anything, though, flowers make me think about the Sonoran Desert.

As you'll see in this month's cover story, there's nothing more spectacular than our desert's annual explosion of wildflowers — it's Arizona's version of the aurora borealis. Unfortunately, the explosion doesn't always have a lot of pop. In order for the flowers to fully erupt, they need a good dose of winter rain. Fortunately, we did get a couple of inches in early December, but as I write this column — a week before Christmas — it's sunny. Too sunny. Time will tell.

Regardless of the weather, our pages come alive every March with poppies, lupines, clover, globemallow and verbena, among others. So, even if Mother Nature lets you down, we certainly won't.

In all, we feature 12 pages of brilliant landscape photography by some of our best contributors — Jack Dykinga, Robert McDonald, George Stocking. It's the next best thing to being there. Of course, if the weather cooperates, you'll want to get off the couch and see the flowers in living color, whether you pile in the Honda or set out on foot. Another good option is to buy a bike and hit the road.

Turns out, road-biking in Arizona is something special — flowers or no flowers. As Christine Maxa writes in *Cycling Arizona*, "With its rolling hills and soft curves knit with steely climbs, twitching descents and breathtaking stretches of open space, Arizona is rife with the classic road-biking topography that cyclists crave."

Among those with an affection for our neck of the woods is Lance Armstrong, who trained for the Tour de France in the Santa Catalina Mountains near Tucson. You don't have to be an elite athlete, however, to enjoy the state's back roads. Whether you ride a Madone 6.9 Pro by Trek or a Schwinn Stingray

with a banana seat and sissy bar, there's a road-biking route in Arizona that's perfect for you.

If you're a beginner looking for an easy route, the Cactus Forest Drive in Saguaro National Park is right up your alley. In addition to the aforementioned wildflowers, this 8-mile loop offers an up-close look at the park's namesake, as well as every other cactus endemic to the Sonoran Desert. At the other end of the spectrum is the Mining-Country Route, which, as the name suggests, snakes through Central Arizona's mining country — Superior, Globe, Winkelman. "Climb. Climb. Then climb some more." According to our writer, that's how cyclists from around the world describe this route. Good luck.

Somewhere in the middle is the Mogollon Rim route. Needless to say, you'll have to wait until summer for this one, but it's worth the wait. The course, which begins in Show Low, takes you past 40 high-country lakes and a boatload of scenery. It also passes through the world's largest stand of ponderosa pines. The same stand that was hit by the Rodeo-Chediski Fire in 2002.

If you'll remember, the fire scorched a half-million acres, making it the largest wildfire in Arizona history. At the time, it was hard to imagine a silver lining, but something good did come out of it. In particular, the blaze cleared oak and manzanita underbrush, revealing the ruins of a 12th century ceremonial center.

As Craig Childs writes in *Under Fire*, "The site, which was being excavated by a team from the University of Arizona, turned out to be one of the largest known kivas in the Southwest — a great circular building with a cluster of smaller rooms gathered on one side."

It's more than just another site, however. The discovery also reinforces the theory that some Puebloan cultures had arsonist tendencies. Like other ancient sites around the Southwest, this one had been set ablaze, presumably by the people who lived there. No one knows for sure why, but a growing number of researchers think it might have been a kind of cultural signature. In the same way the hippies used flower power to make a statement, maybe these people used fire power. Maybe. Maybe not. This much I know: Their audience had to be more receptive than the kids at Lake Delton Elementary. They had to be.

— Robert Stieve

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highways on tv

For more coverage of the Grand Canyon State, check out *Arizona Highways Television*, an Emmy-award winning show hosted by Robin Sewell. For broadcast times and more, visit arizonahighways.com and click the *Arizona Highways Television* icon at the bottom of our home page.

CONTRIBUTORS



CRAIG CHILDS

Craig Childs has rafted an uncharted river in Tibet, played trombone in the symphony and written a column for the *L.A. Times*.

For *Under Fire* (see page 34), he indulged the fiery side of his personality. "Maybe I'm a pyromaniac," he admits. "I get addicted to wild-fires and going out with crews." The lure? "Fire seems like it has a mind of its own, like it's alive." Inspiration for this story sparked when Childs joined an archaeological dig to research his book, *House of Rain*. It was a kiva site destroyed by ancient ceremonial fire, then exposed in the 2002 Rodeo-Chediski blaze. "I just thought, 'Fire on fire,' and that's how I got the idea," he says. During the excavation, Childs wandered through the charred woodland. "It was like walking through obsidian statues," he recalls. "I remember the sound of the wind groaning through these black trees." Childs has written 14 books. His work has appeared in *Outside*, *Backpacker* and *Men's Journal*. A Tempe native who has spent half his life in Arizona, he now lives off the grid in Western Colorado.



KATHY MONTGOMERY

Judge Hamblen (see *Judge of Character*, page 40) came to our attention when a reader called to gush about a wonderful experi-

ence he'd had in traffic court. Hamblen was right out of a Capra movie, the caller said. A real Jimmy Stewart character. Kathy Montgomery took on the assignment and headed to the West Mesa Justice Court, where she hoped to sit quietly in the back and observe. It didn't work. On the first morning, Hamblen spotted her and, afraid she'd fallen through the cracks, asked why she was there. Then he proceeded to charm her, too. "When writing a profile, you usually need to spend a lot of time with your subject, hoping to catch them in unguarded moments," Montgomery says. "But Hamblen laid himself bare from the beginning. His sincerity was disarming." Montgomery is a former editor and reporter for *The Arizona Republic*. She's lived in Arizona since 1996, and enjoys watching the sun set over Weaver Peak with her husband.



NICK BEREZENKO

Nick Berezenko's journey to Arizona began in a wastepaper basket. Growing up in Chicago, his mother was a cleaning lady

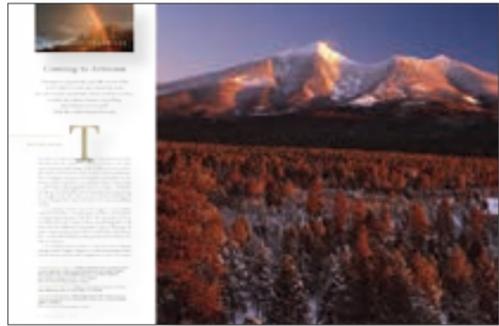
whose boss subscribed to *Arizona Highways*. When the boss finished reading, he'd toss the magazine into the trash, and she'd sneak it home to her family. They fell in love with the photographs, and eventually moved to Arizona. While shooting *Under Fire* (see page 34), Berezenko found out how difficult it can be to get those photos. "It was the assignment from hell," he says. First, no one knew where the site was. Through detective work, he tracked down the site's name. But the Forest Service wouldn't give him directions. So, he drove on his own to the area, a charred wasteland littered with tree stumps that chewed up the bottom of his truck. "It caused over \$1,000 worth of damage," he says. He was forced to turn back and hike up, only to find ... nothing. "The archaeologists had covered the kiva up!" He still managed to capture spectacular photographs, thanks to imagination and luck: "There were a lot of great clouds," he says.



TOM VEZO

When Tom Vezo ventured out to photograph the *Hike of the Month* (see page 48), he had a vision: to shoot the Galiuro

Mountains reflected in Bass Creek. "I always have a vision," Vezo says. "And most of the time it doesn't work out." This hike was no exception. "I took about 140 pictures, but still didn't get anything that excited me," he says. Fortunately, this avid birder is tenacious. "[Photographer] Jack Dykinga and I have this argument," Vezo explains. "Jack says, 'How can you photograph animals? It takes so much patience.' I tell him, 'Jack, I do both landscapes and animals, and they're the same. With landscapes, I wait for the light. I'm always waiting.'" When Vezo hiked out later, the afternoon light was brilliant. He abandoned his "creek shot" vision and pointed his camera at the mountains. Mission accomplished. In addition to *Arizona Highways*, Vezo's photographs have appeared in *National Geographic*, *Nature Conservancy* and *Audubon*.



Moving Pictures

I awakened for some reason at 5 a.m. to a cold fall morning here in New England. With a cup of coffee in hand, I opened my December issue of *Arizona Highways*. Being mesmerized by the *Editor's Letter*, I began reading from cover to cover. The stories were so moving; the photography so outstanding that at times I found myself in tears. Thank you from a sometimes visitor to Arizona and a longtime reader of *Arizona Highways*.

Betty Ripsom, Chelmsford, Massachusetts

First Time for Everything

I'm a first-time subscriber, first-time writer, so bear with me. I just wanted to say that your magazine is very inspiring and inviting. What I mean by that is this: It says, "Get up and come on over and visit us." I've never been west of Erie, Pennsylvania. I'm a Native American, of the Seneca Tribe of the Iroquois Confederacy. I live here in New York state on the Allegany Indian Reservation. I'd like to come visit your beautiful state someday. The photographs, people and stories of that part of the country are breathtakingly memorable. There's just so much to see and do, I wouldn't know where to start. Unbelievable. I plan on keeping my yearly subscription, and I thank you very much for publishing such an exquisite magazine.

Jon Dowdy, Salamanca, New York

I've never written a letter to the editor before, but I was so inspired and moved by the October issue I felt compelled to write and give a heartfelt thanks for such an amazing issue. I felt like every article and picture was fantastic, and I read it cover to cover several times throughout the month. I have relatives who live in Cottonwood, and they kindly introduced me to your wonderful magazine. I've made several trips to visit them, and have enjoyed many travels throughout the northern part of the state. Unfortunately, too much time has passed since my last visit, so I really enjoyed this issue in particular. It contained many of the familiar sites I've been missing.

Getting to see the San Francisco Peaks, my favorite little town of Jerome, and the view of Cottonwood from Mingus Mountain was a thrill. I also enjoyed the article titled *The Inner World of Stone*. In all my visits, I've never been to the Petrified Forest, but after seeing the beautiful photos by the talented Bill Atkinson, I can't wait to go. I didn't realize how amazing petrified wood is. In addition, fall is such a beautiful season, and I love Halloween, so this issue was also perfect for getting me in the spirit. I have a busy schedule, but this issue reminded me of how great fall is and made me stop and take a moment to appreciate that. My birthday also falls in October, so this issue was an unexpected and much appreciated birthday surprise. Thanks again for reminding me how special Arizona is each and every month.

Lauren Adduci, Loveland, Ohio

Through the Years

I don't know if it's of any value to you or not, but every year I give a calendar to each of my sons and married grandchildren for their birthdays. I missed one year and really heard about it. Everyone loves the photos in your calendar.

Betty Finton, Kingman

EDITOR'S NOTE: Thank you, Betty. Your support is extremely valuable to us. We're very proud of the photography we feature in our annual calendars, as well as in our books and magazines. By the way, we've recently redesigned our Web site and all of our products can

be ordered online at arizonahighways.com. We'd hate to have you miss another year.

Thrown for a Loop

My husband and I drove to Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument mentioned in your September issue [*Hikes to Write Home About*, page 22]. To our surprise (and, admittedly, we are Midwesterners), we were greeted at the door to the visitors center with a large sign eulogizing the death of a young ranger there. Apparently, it's no longer safe to wander this area due to the prevalence of drug runners and illegal aliens. The campground is closed, and the 52-mile driving route is closed after the 6-mile marker. We just drove the 21-mile loop and enjoyed that. I'm not a political person, so I'm not writing this to comment on drugs or immigration policies, but it's just kind of sad.

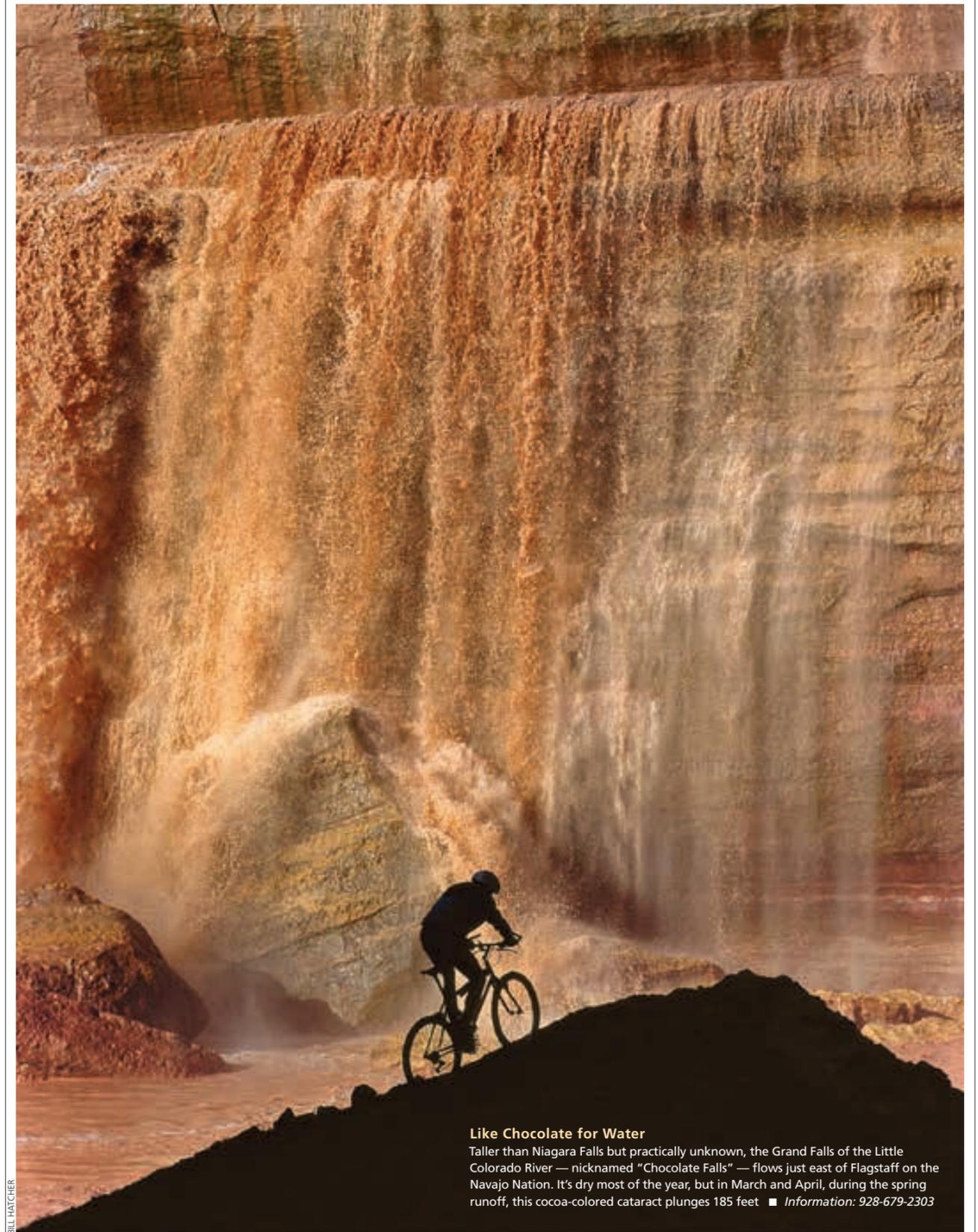
Katherine Gorski, Champaign, Illinois

EDITOR'S NOTE: You're not alone, Katherine. According to the National Park Service, the issue of illegal immigrants is serious, in terms of both safety and the environment. "Most criminals operate after dark and in remote areas of the park," government officials report. To help protect visitors, some of the roads in the national monument have been closed. However, much of the park remains open, including the scenic loop drive, which we feature in this month's Back Road Adventure; see page 44. For safety tips and other information, visit nps.gov/orpi.

Hidden Treasure

I recently inherited the family home here in Barrie, Ontario. While cleaning the attic of close to a century of accumulated "stuff," I came across your magazine. To my knowledge, my parents never traveled to Arizona, but they obviously enjoyed your magazine and added it to their "treasures."

Elaine Smith, Barrie, Ontario, Canada



BILL HATCHER

Like Chocolate for Water

Taller than Niagara Falls but practically unknown, the Grand Falls of the Little Colorado River — nicknamed "Chocolate Falls" — flows just east of Flagstaff on the Navajo Nation. It's dry most of the year, but in March and April, during the spring runoff, this cocoa-colored cataract plunges 185 feet ■ Information: 928-679-2303

contact us

If you have thoughts or comments about anything in *Arizona Highways*, we'd love to hear from you. We can be reached at editor@arizonahighways.com, or by mail at 2039 W. Lewis Avenue, Phoenix, Arizona 85009. For more information, visit arizonahighways.com.



PEOPLE

Norma Jean

The Heard Museum is world-renowned, and for nearly 50 years, Norma Jean Coulter has been donating her valuable time to this precious repository.

A MUSEUM, TO MOST PEOPLE, is a series of exhibits. To Norma Jean Coulter, it's an extended family. Since 1962, Coulter has volunteered at the Heard Museum, guiding tours, serving as guild president for two years, and helping foster the museum's growth from a family run affair to a world-class destination.

Despite being a history buff, Coulter would never have guessed she'd devote so much of her life to the Heard. Born in Tucson, she studied history at the University of Arizona, where she met her husband, Rufus, then a law student. After graduation, they moved to Phoenix, and it was there that a friend nudged Coulter into volunteering. "She said, 'You're the wife of a prominent attorney, you have to get involved,'" Coulter recalls.

The friend ushered her around cultural institutions brimming with sophisticated ladies dressed to the nines. Their last stop was the Heard Museum, where, in addition to the hats-and-gloves entourage, there were women in Levis and traditional Indian dresses. Coulter had found her place. "I was also comfortable there because it was about history," she says.

In 1962, the museum looked nothing like it does today, she says. It was a sleepy little place where fourth-graders took field trips to ogle a mummy and a lineup of shrunken heads,

and then they'd buy the "recipe" for shrunken heads in the gift shop. (Visit today and you'll see perhaps the finest collection of Indian artifacts, jewelry and contemporary art in the nation, but no shriveled bodies.)

In those days, Coulter and other guild members traveled around the state scouting out talented native dancers to perform at events. Now, the best dancers in the country come to them. Guild members also hosted Indian artists in their homes. "It was a family affair, a bonding experience," she says. Though visiting artists now stay in hotels, the family atmosphere continues. "They're still guests in our home," she says. Home, of course, being the museum.

As the museum evolved, so did its volunteers. "In the '60s and '70s, women came to the museum to help," Coulter says. "Today, there's a tremendous desire for learning."

Coulter's own thirst for knowledge and love of her home state prompted her to join the Arizona Historical Society, where she served as president from 2004 to 2006. She also taught Arizona history and government to junior high students.

You can still find Coulter volunteering at the Heard Museum shop, likely wearing Indian jewelry and Levis. If you do, be sure to ask her about the early days of the museum's fair, when they gave away a burro, or anything else about Arizona history. "I'm very much an Arizonan," she says. "Working at the museum gives me the chance to showcase and talk about Arizona."

■ *The 50th annual Heard Museum Guild Indian Fair & Market takes place March 1-2. For information, call 602-252-8848 or visit heard.org.*

— Keridwen Cornelius

CELEBRITY Q & A

Derrick Hall

President,
Arizona Diamondbacks

by Dave Pratt

AH: If you were making a solo road trip to Sedona — no wife, no kids, no Arizona Diamondbacks — which would you choose: Harley-Davidson or Mustang convertible?

DH: Without question, I'd choose the Harley. I'd feel one with the land on my bike. There are so many beautiful sites in Sedona; it would be nice to have the freedom of the motorcycle, to just pull over anywhere, anytime, to take in the scenery, without worrying about where to park.

AH: What's your favorite place in Arizona and what's your favorite memory?

DH: My favorite place, not only in Arizona, but also in the world, is Sedona. ... I can remember blindfolding my wife for her first visit, driving her up Airport Road, walking her out slowly to near the edge of the scenic marker, and then watching the look of joy and amazement on her face when she first set eyes on the whole valley there.

AH: If you had designed the new Arizona quarter, what would you have put on it?

DH: I'd have put the 2001 Arizona Diamondbacks World Series celebration image on there ... or the Grand Canyon. That's what defines our great state, and it's why we have our name. It's one of the wonders of the world, and it deserves a spot on our currency.

— Dave Pratt is the host of the "Dave Pratt in the Morning" show on KMLE 107.9 FM in Phoenix.



RESTAURANTS

MacAlpine's

Now in its 80th year, the coolest soda fountain in Phoenix is serving ice cream, burgers and a blast from the past.

1928. A LOT HAPPENED THAT YEAR. Walt Disney released his first Mickey Mouse cartoon. Penicillin was discovered. And MacAlpine's, a small pharmacy in Central Phoenix, opened its doors. The world has changed a lot since then, but the pharmacy, which became MacAlpine's Restaurant & Soda Fountain in 1991, has remained about the same.

Like most old drugstores, MacAlpine's featured a soda counter, which, although cracked and rusted, still stands today. In addition, the walls are covered with nostalgic pieces, including a huge Wrigley's Gum sign and a Coca-Cola poster; several diner booths with miniature jukeboxes complete the vintage feel.

Cary Heizenrader has owned the restaurant with his wife, Monica, for seven years. He appreciates the history of MacAlpine's, and tries to incorporate the building's past into the present.

"A lot of former employees and customers come in, and they haven't seen the place for 15 or 20 years," he says. "We haven't changed anything." The couple hopes to hear from others who remember the place fondly. Well-known fans from the past include Barry Goldwater and his family, Wayne Newton and Frank Lloyd Wright.

Naturally, the hostesses and servers dress in retro black-and-white skirted diner uniforms, designed with help from Amanda Newsum. If you're lucky, you'll meet Amanda, a perky waitress who looks like a cross between Betty Boop and Betty Grable, with her pinned-up hairdo and a 1940s red polka-dot dress.

The food, like the ambience, is simple, with several hot and cold sandwiches and four salads — nothing is more than \$8. Standard diner fare is what MacAlpine's does best. The tuna salad sandwich is popular, and the Mac burger will make you think twice about ever ordering fast-food again.

And then there's dessert — a key part of the MacAlpine's experience. The old-fashioned shakes are made with six scoops of ice cream, and they're blended in a jadeite-green Hamilton Beach shake machine.

For a bonus blast from the past, you can browse the antiques store attached to the diner — look for things like a 1960s carousel horse and old phone booths. Although you might leave the shop empty-handed, you won't leave MacAlpine's with an empty stomach. They've been making sure of that for 80 years now.

■ *MacAlpine's is located at 2303 N. Seventh Street in Phoenix. For more information, visit macalpinessodafountain.com or call 602-262-5545.*

— Hilary Griffith





DAVID H. SMITH

LODGING

Hassayampa Inn

When it comes to historic hotels in Arizona, this one, built two years before the famed Biltmore Resort in Phoenix, is one of the very best.

“IF ALADDIN HAD LIVED IN THESE MODERN DAYS, he would not have thought of building a palace, but would have commanded the genie to transport him and his fair bride to the Hassayampa Inn.”

That's what the *Journal Miner* of Prescott had to say about the Hassayampa when it opened its doors in November 1927. High praise, to be sure, but relative to everything else in the mile-high city, it was a big deal — not unlike the opening of the Biltmore in Phoenix two years later. No doubt, Grace Sparkes was all smiles on the day of the Hassayampa's debut.

Sparkes, who had been a secretary at the chamber of commerce in Yavapai County, first pitched the idea of a first-class hotel in 1919. There was a practical reason, of course — automobiles were sweeping the nation, and tourists needed a place to spend the night — but more than that, she envisioned a palatial point of pride that could offset the seediness of nearby Whiskey Row. It took awhile, but the town's civic leaders eventually embraced the idea and issued the Hassayampa Hotel Company prospectus, paving the way for what would become a publicly owned hotel.

A few years later, in 1925, the Prescott Kiwanis Club appointed a committee to raise funds for the hotel, and Mayor Morris Goldwater — the uncle of Senator Barry Goldwater

— urged local citizens to invest in the project. In the end, 400 different stockholders purchased thousands of stocks for \$1 per share.

Today, the four-story Hassayampa is privately owned, and it's still impressive. Although the exterior looks more like something you'd see in one of the Dakotas, the interior is distinctly Southwest, particularly the lobby, which features an incredible hand-stenciled, wood-beamed ceiling. It's gorgeous. And then there's the antique furniture, the chandeliers and the polished Talavera tile. The tile and the chandeliers are original, and so is the Chinese-red, hand-operated elevator.

Along with the elegant porte cochere — the covered passageway into the hotel — the elevator is one of the things you'll remember most about the Hassayampa. It's a link to the past, and even though it's probably quicker to take the stairs to your room, a ride in the elevator is a must.

Either way, the rooms are cozy and furnished with the inn's original oak furniture. And thanks to a major renovation a few years ago, they're immaculate. Never mind that the floors are a little uneven, and the hallways tend to creak, that only adds to the character of the place — a place Sam Peckinpah used as the setting for *Junior Bonner*, his 1972 movie starring Steve McQueen. Like the Hassayampa, *Junior Bonner* is one of Prescott's claims to fame. It didn't make as much money as *Aladdin*, but where would you rather sleep, in a room named for a guy who carries a lamp, or the Steve McQueen Room? Enough said.

■ *The Hassayampa Inn is located at 122 E. Gurley Street in Prescott. For more information, call 800-322-1927 or visit hassayampainn.com.*

— Robert Stieve

PHOTOGRAPHY

Up Close and Personal

If you're looking for an excuse to get outside, grab your camera and a zoom lens, and enter the world of macro photography.

“All photography is about patterns.”
— Gary Ladd, photographer

MARCH IN ARIZONA. The boys of summer have checked their cleats at spring-training facilities, and preseason baseball is under way. Agua Fria Freddie, Arizona's version of Punxsutawney Phil, has spied his shadow, and if the winter rains have been generous, desert wildflowers will be in bloom all over the place. What better time to break out the camera gear?

Not enough time for a weekend getaway? Not a problem. Think small — in terms of both time and scope — and consider the intricate and amazing world of macro (close-up) photography. No kidding, in a space no larger than the face of your wristwatch, there are entire botanical universes to be explored.

If you're one of those people who always seem to be on the go, doing close-up work is an easy way to slow down, settle in and relax. Photography like this should be kept simple — think specifically of patterns and design.

Many of the most accomplished landscape photographers will tell you that upon arriving at an unfamiliar location, they'll scan all horizons to get a sense of place. Their next order of business is to start shooting details. Not wide views or panoramas, but textures and nuances. By concentrating on small vignettes, they begin to get a rhythm of the place and their own photographic vision.

This might sound unnecessary for a working professional, but it takes time for all photographers to unwind from the responsibilities of daily life — unfinished reports, a car in the



JEFF KIDA

In the two photos above, depth of field is controlled using the aperture, or opening, of the lens. The image on the left was shot at f-5.6; the one on the right at f-32. How much to isolate your subject is a personal choice and is very easy to control.

shop or having the dog's teeth cleaned. Photographers must decompress from even these mundane distractions. Literally, you need to free up your mind in order to focus on image-making. And one of the best ways to do that photographically is by concentrating on making close-up images. Why? Because when done well, this type of photography is uncomplicated and elegant.

Start by putting together a small kit with one camera and a macro lens — or a zoom lens with a macro mode. If you don't have either one, there are close-up filters (diopters) that can be threaded onto the front of existing lenses, allowing you to get in tight with your subject. This is an affordable and surprisingly sharp option for photographing close-ups. Pack a cable release and a tripod. Add drinking water, a couple of granola bars, and you're ready to explore.

Soft light created by open shade or clouds is the best lighting condition for working in close. If it's sunny, look for subjects that are backlit, because doing so will keep your subject in soft, even light, allowing for simplicity in composition. Watch your background, use your tripod and stop down your lens in order to carry sharp focus throughout. And remember, the closer you get to a subject (to magnify), the less the depth of field will be.

Take your time, compose, simplify and be grateful — you're out of the office on a beautiful day.

— Jeff Kida, Photo Editor

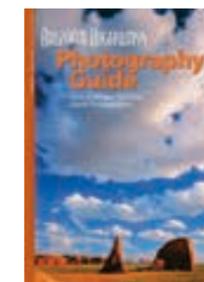


PHOTO TIP

When shooting close-ups, careful consideration should be given to the interplay of composition and depth of field. On one hand, you want the critical portions of your subject to be sharp and in focus. On the other hand, choosing the amount of detail in the

background can greatly change the feel and effectiveness of your final image. This is simply a matter of choice. Try photographing the same object using different f-stops. If you are using the “aperture priority” mode, the camera will choose the appropriate shutter

speed as you change the lens opening. With today's digital technology, you can then check the LCD on the back of the camera and choose the image you like.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Look for *Arizona Highways Photography Guide*, coming this month. For more books, visit arizonahighways.com.

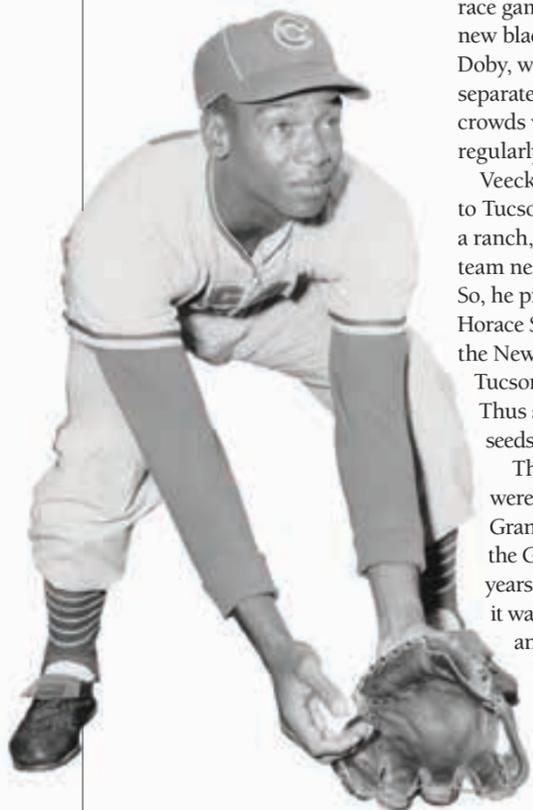
online For more photography tips and information, visit arizonahighways.com and click on “Photography.”

HISTORY

Arizona's Pastime

Spring training has been a hit in the Grand Canyon State for more than 60 years, and it all began with one of baseball's great innovators.

THE STORY OF SPRING training in Arizona begins, appropriately, with a pitch. It was 1946, and Cleveland



Indians owner Bill Veeck was frustrated with Florida's spring-training scene. Segregation laws prevented mixed-race games, and the Indians' new black player, Larry Doby, was forced to stay in a separate hotel. In addition, crowds were sparse and rain regularly canceled games.

Veeck wanted to transfer to Tucson, where he owned a ranch, but he knew his team needed competition. So, he pitched an idea to Horace Stoneham, owner of the New York Giants: "Me, Tucson, you, Phoenix?"

Thus sprouted the first seeds of the Cactus League.

The Indians and Giants were happy with the Grand Canyon State (with the Giants leaving for two years, only to return), but it wasn't until 1952 that another team from Florida's Grapefruit League would join them, and only after a fortuitous chain of events.

In 1951, the New York Yankees were co-owned by Phoenix developer Del Webb. Eager to be close to his team, Webb asked Stoneham to swap spring-training sites for one year, bringing the Yankees — including Joe DiMaggio and Mickey Mantle — to Phoenix, while the Giants shifted to Florida.

That move enticed Philip Wrigley, owner of the Chicago Cubs, to ship his team from Catalina Island in California to Phoenix for exhibition games against the Yanks. Wrigley loved — and owned — most of Catalina Island, but his team was essentially marooned from competition, so he'd been on the lookout for a mainland site.

Meanwhile, Mesa rancher and builder Dwight W. Patterson formed a group called the HoHoKams, which was determined to recruit a major league team to Mesa's Rendezvous Park. Webb and Patterson joined forces to connect the Cubs with Mesa. Upon seeing the park, Wid Matthews, the Cubs director of player personnel, declared, "This is it."

Rendezvous Park was

Hall of Famer Ernie Banks (left) played his entire career (1953-1971) with the Chicago Cubs. Photograph courtesy of Mesa Convention and Visitors Bureau

demolished in 1976 and later reborn as HoHoKam Park. Its field was eventually named for Patterson, whom many consider the Father of Cactus League Baseball.

Over the years, those original teams experienced a series of changes. The Cubs were based in Mesa for 14 years, left for a short stop in California and a long stretch in Scottsdale, and then headed back to Mesa in 1979. The New York Giants morphed into the San Francisco Giants and moved to Scottsdale Stadium. The Indians migrated to Florida in 1993 to be closer to their fan base. In addition, several other ball clubs switched between the Grapefruit and Cactus leagues and traded stadiums within Arizona.

Now boasting nine teams in Metro Phoenix and three in Tucson, the Cactus League is blooming, with attendance topping 1.2 million in 2007. And those numbers are likely to grow when Joe Torre and his Los Angeles Dodgers, as well as the Cleveland Indians, make the switch to Arizona in 2009. Let the games begin.

— Keridwen Cornelius

NATURE

They All Fall Down

Despite their sheer size and seniority, even saguaros eventually die, and when they do, another world comes to life.

LAURENCE GARVIE HAS SEEN SOMETHING even the most devoted desert rat has rarely witnessed. Several years ago, the mineralogist was caught in a storm in the South Maricopa Mountains Wilderness south of Phoenix. He thought he'd weathered the worst of it when a sudden downdraft set a nearby saguaro swaying. Garvie knew this 20-foot giant well. For months, during research forays into the desert, he'd noticed a gummy black liquid oozing from openings in the cactus' skin. He knew the plant's days were numbered. The wounds signaled that fungi and bacteria had begun to attack its moist inner tissues. Once infected, saguaros turn into bags of decaying, fetid goo.

"I heard this weird squelching, crackling sound," Garvie recalls. "The top half of the saguaro blew down, but its ribs went flying back up, flinging bits of rotten black flesh all over the desert in a 200-foot radius. The air was filled with a putrefying sweet smell. It was quite spectacular."

Garvie, a faculty research associate in the School of Earth & Space Exploration at Arizona State University, has become something of an authority on dead saguaros. Turns out, saguaros are as valuable to the desert dead as they are alive.

Composed of up to 90 percent water, the flesh of a newly downed saguaro forms what Garvie calls an "organic moist soup that's teeming with life." Scientists at the University of Arizona, for example, dissected 1 cubic foot of rotting saguaro and found 413 arthropods, larval flies, pseudo-scorpions and mites.

In addition, Garvie started noticing chunks of bone-colored material, as light and porous as pumice, heaped around the bare woodlike ribs of saguaro remains.

"Since I'm a mineralogist, I asked myself, 'What is this?' I remember collecting a piece ... and subjecting it to powder X-ray diffraction [a method geologists use to identify minerals]." The material was composed of an unusual form of calcium carbonate called monohydrocalcite — a mineral never before found in Arizona.

The discovery isn't likely to cause a mining stampede to the state, but that won't stop Garvie from prospecting for more scientific discoveries. "I've found that the desert is just bursting with research opportunities," he says. "Every time I go out there, I find something new." — Adleheid Fischer



RANDY PRENTICE

THIS MONTH IN HISTORY

- In March 1939, Clark Gable and Carole Lombard were married in a private ceremony in Kingman; they honeymooned at the Oatman Hotel.
- On March 15, 1878, Tombstone founder Ed Schieffelin filed a claim for his Lucky Cuss Mine. He later sold his shares for \$600,000 in what would grow to be a \$40 million operation.
- As recently as 1945, there were folks in Arizona who thought the courtroom was no place for a woman, but on March 8, 1945, the Arizona Senate passed, by a vote of 15-3, a bill allowing women to legally serve on juries.

50 years ago
in arizona highways

In a typical year, the Sonoran Desert comes alive in the spring with a wave of spectacular wildflowers. Among other things, our March 1958 issue celebrated the state's unique flora with stories and photographs of wildflowers, mesquite trees and Arizona's cotton industry.

nature factoid

SPHINX MOTHS
Throughout Arizona's deserts, adult sphinx moths pollinate deep-fluted flowers using their very long tongues, or proboscises, like straws to suck the flowers' nectar. These insects, also known as hawk moths, are sometimes called hummingbird moths because of their ability to fly very fast and hover in flight.

THINGS TO DO

Flying High

MAR 7-8

CESSNAS, PIPERS AND Swifts, as well as mono-planes, biplanes, war birds and historic World War II training aircraft will fill the skies above Casa Grande March 7-8 during the Arizona Antique Aircraft Association's 50th Annual Cactus Fly-In. Considered one of the premier aviation events of the season, the fly-in features squadrons of antique, classic, replica and homebuilt aircraft, all of which offer enthusiasts a look at aviation's history and heritage.

■ Information: 520-836-7447 or cactusflyin.org.



TERRY L. EMIG



BOB MANTUM

DREAM MACHINES

If your tastes run more to T-birds than war birds, don't miss Yuma's Midnight at the Oasis Festival March 2-4, featuring more than 900 vintage vehicles — everything from Model T's to muscle cars. Filling four baseball fields, the display gives classic-car buffs a chance to drool over their dream machines.

■ Information: 928-343-1715 or caballeros.org.

MAR 2-4

Birds of a Feather

IT'S NOT A HISTORIC mission, and the birds aren't as famous as the swallows of San Juan Capistrano, but Arizona's version of a natural mystery takes place this month at Boyce Thompson Arboretum State Park. On March 22, the annual Welcome Back Buzzards event celebrates the park's resident flock of turkey vultures as they return from their winter grounds in Mexico. Early birds will get the best views. Be there from dawn until around 9 a.m.; after that, the vultures leave their cliffside perches to soar above the desert in search of carrion.

■ Information: 520-689-2811.

MAR 22

PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOPS

If you'd like to learn from the best professional photographers in the business, sign up for one of the many photography workshops conducted by the Friends of Arizona Highways.

■ Information: 888-790-7042 or friendsofahighways.com.



VICTOR LESHYK

Bare Bones

IT'S MASSIVE, it's menacing and it's a mystery. The strangest dinosaur skeleton ever discovered in the United States comes from a 13-foot-tall, 1-ton, sickle-clawed and feathered creature that roamed the Southwest (as well as China and Mongolia) 93 million years ago. In 2000, paleontologists from Flagstaff's Museum of Northern Arizona excavated a complete therizinosaur skeleton in southern Utah, giving them clues about this prehistoric animal's life on Earth. Named for its most striking feature — three enormous claws on each front foot — the dinosaur raises more questions than it answers. The museum's exhibit, *Therizinosaur: Mystery of the Sickle-Claw Dinosaur*, allows visitors to learn about one of science's most bizarre dinosaurs by examining a freestanding skeleton cast from the animal's original bones, the genuine 93 million-year-old bones, and scientific illustrations created by artist and guest curator Victor Leshyk.

■ Information: 928-774-5213 or musnaz.org.

MAR 13-18

WESTERN EXPOSURE

Some folks think the word cowboy is more about what you do than who you are. And that's the spirit at the National Festival of the West celebration in Chandler. Join the hoedown March 13-18 as Rawhide at Wild Horse Pass presents the best of the Old West. The festival includes a Western music jamboree, a Western film festival, a chuck-wagon cook-off, a Western trade show featuring 200 vendors, cowboy poetry, square dancing and more. Kids can learn about the history of the West, including the role of Arizona's 9th Cavalry Buffalo Soldiers and Mountain Men — there will be demonstrations featuring authentic clothing from the 1800s.

■ Information: 602-996-4387 or festivalofthewest.com.



Photography Tip #71

Using contrasting colors to create excitement is an effective technique in photography. In this case, the red of the kayak jumps out of a cobalt-blue sky reflected in the water. The colors are natural opposites that act as yin and yang compositionally.

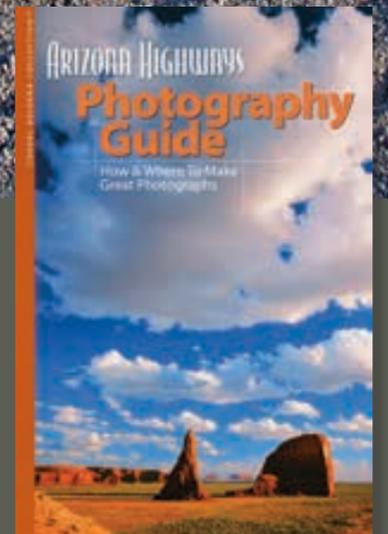


Colleen Miniuk-Sperry

Learn From the Best

Our newest book brings together 14 of our most respected photographers — seasoned veterans who share their tips, techniques and favorite Arizona locations.

Order now and save 10% off the retail price of \$24.95. (Use promo code 583) Visit arizonahighways.com or call 800-543-5432.



Offer expires March 31, 2008. Use item code #APGS7. Shipping and handling not included. You can also visit our retail location at 2039 W. Lewis Avenue in Phoenix.



PEDAL METTLE Mount Lemmon Highway presents a 6,203-foot elevation gain through seven life zones to challenge cyclists undaunted by the 30-mile endurance test from Tucson to Summerhaven. Photograph by Edward McCain/Jupiterimages

CYCLING

Lance Armstrong trained for the Tour de France in the Santa Catalina Mountains, but you don't have to be an elite athlete to hit the road in Arizona. Whether you ride a Madone 6.9 Pro by Trek or a Schwinn Stingray with a banana seat and sissy bar, there's a road-biking route in this state that's just right for you. **Ride on.**

By Christine Maxa

ARIZONA





ROBERT G. McDONALD

North Rim Parkway

The North Rim of the Grand Canyon gets a fraction of the crowds that flock to the South Rim, but that's only part of the allure. The North Rim also offers one of the state's best road-biking routes. The Kaibab Plateau-North Rim Parkway (State Route 67) is lined with aspen-fir forests, spectacular meadows, gentle hills and plenty of wildlife. Plus, the route is all downhill on the way back. No wonder Flagstaff cyclist Frank Loro calls it "one of the seven wonders of the cycling world."

Length: 45 miles, one way
Elevation Gain: 2,175 feet
Elevation Descent: 1,870 feet
Peak Season: May-October
Difficulty: Moderate/Intermediate
Nearest Town: Jacob Lake

Getting There: The cycling route begins at Jacob Lake. From there, ride south on State Route 67.

Keep in Mind: A \$20 entrance fee is required to drive into the national park; \$10 for individuals on bicycles. The road closes at the first snowfall (sometime after October 15) and reopens May 15.

Information: 928-643-7298, nps.gov/grca or fs.fed.us/r3/kai

Sunset Crater Loop

One of the San Francisco Lava Field's most infamous eruptions — the blast that created Sunset Crater — happened along this route. Riding from south to north, the route begins in a pine forest separated by meadows that fill with wildflowers in August. Within a few miles, Sunset Crater comes into view, followed by the lava flows, which blacken the landscape. Next, a descent of a few thousand feet takes you into the lap of the Painted Desert, where ancient Sinaguan people built homes in a place we call Wupatki. This route, with its incredible panoramas and cultural history, is a favorite of veteran Tucson cyclist Richard Corbett, who prefers riding the route from north to south. "It's just plain fun," he says.

Length: 46-mile loop
Elevation Gain: 3,076 feet
Elevation Descent: 3,073 feet



LES DAVID MANEVITZ

Peak Season: May-October
Difficulty: Moderate/Intermediate
Nearest Town: Flagstaff

Getting There: From Flagstaff, drive north on State Route 89 for approximately 13 miles to the signed turnoff for Sunset Crater National Monument. The cycling route begins at Sunset Crater National Monument's visitors center and leads to Wupatki National Monument and back again.

Keep in Mind: There's an entrance fee of \$5, which is good for seven days at both monuments.

Information: 928-526-0502 or nps.gov/sucr

Iron Springs Road

Nicknamed the Back Road to Prescott, this scenic road-biking route starts in the ponderosa-pine area of Prescott National Forest, glides past giant boulders near Granite Mountain, then twists and turns down to the high-desert floor in scenic Skull Valley. The second half of the route winds through a series of volcanic-tuff hoodoos near Kirkland, where masons quarried the material to make the blocks used to build the state capitol in Phoenix.

Length: 26 miles, one way
Elevation Gain: 1,296 feet
Elevation Descent: 2,565 feet
Peak Season: March-May; September-November
Difficulty: Moderate/Intermediate
Nearest Town: Prescott

Getting There: From Gurley and Montezuma streets in downtown Prescott, drive north on Montezuma Street to a parking area at Milepost 215 on Iron Springs Road. The cycling route begins at Iron Springs Road, heading west.

Keep in Mind: You can return to Prescott from Kirkland, or (if you have strong climbing legs) you can turn left (east) onto Thompson Valley Road, go 4 miles to Kirkland Junction, and then turn left (north) onto State Route 89 and pedal 16 steep mountain miles to the route's high point, and then coast the last 5 miles to Prescott.

Information: 928-443-8000 or fs.fed.us/r3/prescott

Hiking is a big deal in Arizona. And rightfully so — few places offer the kind of diversity that's found in the Grand Canyon State. Turns out, cycling is something special, too. With its rolling hills and soft curves knit with steely climbs, twitching descents and breathtaking stretches of open space, Arizona is rife with the classic road-biking topography that cyclists crave. Indeed, the sight of cyclists clad in bright Lycra is increasing as word gets out that Arizona has some of the best routes in the world.

And there's something for everyone, from the mountains that provide training for cyclists competing in the Tour de France and its rival, the Paris-Brest-Paris Randonneur; to the state's high-spirited and scenic blue highways, where resident cyclists spend their weekends; to the mild-mannered bike paths where families get a chance to enjoy the outdoors and catch a glimpse of the state's grandeur.

"I guess it doesn't matter if you race and are addicted to that sound when the pack is working in perfect sync, or if you cycle alone on a Sunday morning and celebrate each peak," says Dan

Reeves, a former Phoenix racer who now leads Elderhostel bicycle tours. "Cycling gets into your soul."

What follows are 10 of the state's best places to feed your road-cycling soul. There are other great routes, of course, but this should be enough to get you rolling.

RATING THE ROUTES

Easy/Beginner: Generally flat terrain; manageable for beginners.

Moderate/Intermediate: Hill climbs, curves or moderate traffic; comfortable for cyclists with some experience.

Difficult/Experienced: Steep climbs, mountainous terrain and blind spots; for experienced cyclists looking for a challenge.



BURN'S REWARD A view of Capitol Butte rewards bikers willing to burn their quads during a brief-but-strenuous 1.25-mile uphill pedal on Sedona's Airport Road. Photograph by Nick Berezenko

SEDONA TO JEROME

Sedona to Jerome

Starting in Sedona, this scenic ride winds past the beautiful Dry Creek Canyon area in Red Rock-Secret Mountain Wilderness. As it heads west, picking up the state-designated Jerome-Clarkdale-Cottonwood Historic Road, the route traverses an impressive stretch of open space — former rangeland for the cowboys who gathered along the Verde River near Cottonwood. From there, the route joins the same route that is part of Arizona's three-day, 325-mile-long "Answer to the Challenge" endurance event. Phoenix-area cyclist Tom Baker, one of the masterminds of the Challenge event and a repeat participant in France's Paris-Brest-Paris event (750 miles in 70 hours), knows how tough this segment can get as it climbs from the Verde River in Cottonwood up to Jerome. "Besides having enough food and water, you have to plan how you're going to feel," he explains. The demanding climb eventually takes you into Jerome on a segment of road as capricious as the old ghost town itself.

Length: 29 miles, one way

Elevation Gain: 2,424 feet

Elevation Descent: 1,793 feet

Peak Season: March-June; September-November

Difficulty: Difficult/Experienced

Nearest Towns: Sedona, Jerome, Cottonwood, Clarkdale

Getting There: From the "Y" intersection at State Route 179 and State Route 89A in Sedona, the route heads west on State Route 89A.

Keep in Mind: The 4-mile stretch outside of Jerome requires experience with narrow and steep grades.

Information: 928-301-1134 or vvcc.us

Mogollon Rim

Traveling across the eastern end of Arizona's 2,000-foot-high Mogollon Rim gives an idea of just how lazy and lovely life gets in the state's high country. This route goes from Show Low to 40 high-country lakes in as many miles. It also passes through the world's largest stand of ponderosa pines near the twin towns of Pinetop-Lakeside; through pristine conifer forests with a matrix of aspens on White Mountain Apache lands; past Greer, one of Arizona's treasures, as designated by Governor Janet Napolitano; and on to Springerville, which has a history as one of the state's wildest towns. The wide shoulder, moderate hills and cool summer weather will likely be enough to entice you to hang around an extra day or two to explore the handful of shorter routes that branch off along the highway.

Length: 59 miles, one way

Elevation Gain: 3,090 feet

Elevation Descent: 2,329 feet

Peak Season: May-October

Difficulty: Moderate/Intermediate

Nearest Towns: Show Low, Springerville

Getting There: From the intersection of State Route 260 and State Route 77/U.S. Route 60 in Show Low, ride east on State 260.

Keep in Mind: Beyond McNary, you'll find countryside without services. A permit is required when off-roading on White Mountain Apache Reservation land.

Information: 928-368-5111 or fs.fed.us/r3/asnf

Bush Highway

Of all the roads that lead to the state's desert lakes, this is the most bicycle-friendly because of its designated bike lane along the first 6 miles. The desert scenery on this route includes stunning panoramas and unique peaks. A pleasing pungency wafts from the riparian forest along a segment of the Salt River, and the climb out from the Salt River drainage offers plenty of kick for cyclists. Even beginners can handle the first half. The second half — a little brash, sometimes nerve-jangling, but always beautiful — winds along the Goldfield Mountains, past Saguaro Lake, and then up to the Beeline Highway (State Route 87) for even more dramatic panoramas.

Length: 15 miles, one way

Elevation Gain: 1,068 feet

Elevation Descent: 490 feet

Peak Season: October-March

Difficulty: Moderate/Intermediate

Nearest Town: Mesa

Getting There: From Phoenix, go east on State Route 202 and turn left (north) on Higley Road. From there, go 0.2 miles, turn right (east) onto Thomas Road and continue 1 mile to Bush Highway. The route begins on Bush Highway, riding northward.

Keep in Mind: The first 6 miles have a designated bike lane.

Information: 602-225-5200 or fs.fed.us/r3/tonto



ROBERT G. MCDONALD

Mining-Country Route

"Climb. Climb. Then climb some more." That's how cyclists describe this route. The topography, as hard-bitten as the historic characters who traveled it (Doc Holliday, Wyatt Earp and Billy the Kid), draws cyclists from around the world for the Mining Country Metric Century event that crosses the stunning, but demanding, mountain terrain. The route snakes through Central Arizona's mining country with curves, swerves, dips and climbs from start to finish. With an 11-percent climb nicknamed "the end of the world," and several drops down 10-percent grades, this ride is anything but entry-level.

Length: 68 miles, round-trip





SKY ISLAND BYWAY

BRUCE GRIFFIN

Elevation Gain: 6,322 feet
Elevation Descent: 5,409 feet
Peak Season: October-April
Difficulty: Difficult/Experienced
Nearest Towns: Superior, Globe
Getting There: From Globe, drive 2 miles east on State Route 70 and turn right (south) onto State Route 77. The cycling route begins on State 77, heading south to Winkelman; at Winkelman, ride north on State Route 177 to Superior.
Keep in Mind: You can cycle a complete loop starting and ending in Globe, which adds 28 miles and 700 feet in elevation gain to the trip.
Information: 602-712-8141

Sky Island Scenic Byway

The longest climb in the state — and the most glamorous — usually lands on the list of challenging routes for hardcore road cyclists. This scenic byway travels through seven life zones, from the saguaro-studded desert up to the cool aspen-fir forests, and along the way displays the same vegetation seen on a 3,000-mile ride from Mexico to Canada. The scenery and consistent 5-percent grade lure some of the world's best cyclists, including Lance Armstrong, who used this route to train for the Tour de France.

Length: 27 miles, one way
Elevation Gain: 6,203 feet
Elevation Descent: 1,125 feet
Peak Season: May-October
Difficulty: Difficult/Experienced
Nearest Town: Tucson

Getting There: From Tucson, drive east on Tanque Verde Road, and turn left (north) onto the Catalina Highway. The biking route begins here, heading north on the Catalina Highway to the national forest boundary, where the road becomes General Hitchcock Highway.

Keep in Mind: Temperatures can be up to 30 degrees cooler in the upper reaches of the route. Take rain gear from mid-July through mid-September.

Information: fs.fed.us/r3/coronado or 520-749-8700

Arivaca Road

Located in the middle of Southern Arizona's nowhere, where jaguars skulk through watered canyons and pronghorn antelopes browse in seductive rolling grasslands, this route has the kinds of rollers and curves that cyclists dream about. Rows of cottonwoods along streams, oak groves on hillsides, and misty mountains in the distance evoke poetry. Even the three-block-long town of Arivaca answers cyclists' prayers with a coffeehouse that roasts its own coffee every week, a bakery with fresh-baked sweets, and street vendors doling out homemade Mexican fare.

Length: 22 miles, one way
Elevation Gain: 966 feet
Elevation Descent: 410 feet
Peak Season: October-April

LES DAVID MANEVITZ

Difficulty: Moderate/Intermediate
Nearest Towns: Arivaca, Tucson
Getting There: From Tucson, drive 31 miles south on Interstate 19 to Exit 48. The cycling route begins here, on Arivaca Road, heading west.
Keep in Mind: The road's dips and curves present blind spots that require caution.
Information: 520-393-7433 or gvbikehike.com

Cactus Forest Drive

Saguaro National Park, because of its namesake cactus, is one of the most beautiful places in Arizona. It's also noted for its unique road-biking route. The route — short, sweet and scenic — draws beginners and seasoned cyclists year-round. Generally level, except for the sudden plummet to the desert floor during mile No. 1 and a mile-long climb midway through the route, this ride offers plenty of opportunities to gawk at the gorgeous outlay of cactuses. Keep an eye on the road, though. All of these cactuses have prickly dispositions — a spill will stick with you, in more ways than one.

Length: 8-mile loop
Elevation Gain: 430 feet
Elevation Descent: 427 feet
Peak Season: October-April
Difficulty: Easy/Beginner
Nearest Town: Tucson

Getting There: From East Broadway Boulevard in Tucson, go southeast on Old Spanish Trail for 4 miles to the national park entrance, where the route begins. At the signed Cactus Forest Drive, turn left and head north on the loop.

Keep in Mind: The park is open from 7 a.m. until sunset daily. There's a \$3 charge for cyclists to enter.

Information: 520-733-5153 or nps.gov/sagu

Christine Maxa is a longtime contributor to Arizona Highways. Her latest book, Cycling Arizona: The Statewide Road Biking Guide, is available at bookstores or amazon.com.



CACTUS FOREST DRIVE



In LIVING Color

IN MICHIGAN AND MASSACHUSETTS, APRIL SHOWERS
BRING MAY FLOWERS. IN THE DESERT, THERE ARE NO GUARANTEES.
RAIN IS RARE, AND WITHOUT IT, WILDFLOWERS ARE UNLIKELY.
THAT'S WHERE WE COME IN. REGARDLESS OF THE WEATHER,
OUR PAGES COME ALIVE WITH POPPIES, CLOVER AND
VERBENA — AS YOU'LL SEE, WE'VE GOT MORE
COLOR THAN MOTHER NATURE.





A

Although it has seven letters, drought is a four-letter word in Arizona. It exacerbates the fire season, it dries up the reservoirs and it wreaks havoc on wildflowers. Without winter rain, an explosion of flowers in the spring is a long shot. At press time, we had no idea how much rain we'd get — if any. Therefore, we weren't in a position to tell you about the best places to go looking for Arizona's version of the aurora borealis. By the time you read this, though, we'll have a much better idea. If you'll visit arizonahighways.com, we'll give you the latest on this year's wildflower season. For additional information, call the Desert Botanical Garden at 480-941-1225, or visit dbg.org.



BLOOMS WITH A VIEW

The claretcup hedgehog cactus (preceding panel), so-called for its Bordeaux-tinted blossoms and prickly pudginess, has edible fruits that Indians make into sweets. Photograph by George Raymond

■ To order a print of this photograph, see page 1.

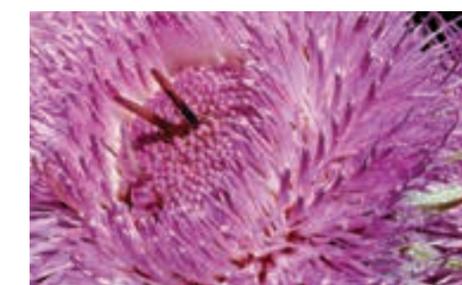
STRAWBERRY FIELDS

Strawberry hedgehog, buckwheat and beavertail prickly pear blooms (left) — peaking around late-March to mid-April — punctuate the foothills northwest of Kingman. Photograph by Robert McDonald

■ To order a print of this photograph, see page 1.

PRICKLY IN PINK

A thistle blooming in the Tucson Mountains looks frilly and feminine (below), but it's spiked with spines from stem to leaf. Photograph by Gill C. Kenny





OVER THE RAINBOW

The rainbow cactus flower (above) brightens the grasslands and mountains of Southern Arizona from June to August. Photograph by Gill C. Kenny

TECHNICOLOR TWOSOME

Yellow brittlebush flowers complement purple owl clover (below), whose modified spiky purple leaves, called bracts, intermingle with magenta-and-purple blooms dabbled with yellow-colored spots. Photograph by George Stocking

LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE

Desert globemallow (right), which flowers year-round in lower elevations, adds rays of orange to a haze of spring-blooming purple verbena in the Four Peaks area. Photograph by Paul Gill

■ To order a print of this photograph, see page 1.





HEADS UP
Purple owl clover and yellow brittlebushes — both
prolific in March and April — reach for the
sky in Alamo Lake State Park.
Photograph by Kirk Owens





POPPY CHROMATIC

In the foothills near Cave Creek, a stand of yellow and pink Mexican goldpoppies (left) furl when a cloud conceals the sun. Photograph by Jerry Sieve
■ To order a print of this photograph, see page 1.

ORANGE CRUSH

One of the most anticipated spring wildflowers, the Mexican goldpoppy (right) works its alchemy in the Sonoran Desert beginning in mid-February. Photograph by Chuck Lawsen

SONORA FLORA

Floral textures and colors are juxtaposed in the Kofa National Wildlife Refuge (below): a spiny barrel cactus, delicate indigo lupines, champagne-tinted chollas and canary-colored brittlebushes. Photograph by Jack Dykinga
■ To order a print of this photograph, see page 1.





SPRING TO LIFE

Sometime between February and May, the stark Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge (left) luxuriates in a blanket of dune evening primroses and fuchsia sand verbena.

Photograph by Jeff Snyder

■ To order a print of this photograph, see page 1.

LITTLE WHITE LIE

It looks like a different species, but these pearl-colored flowers (right) are actually Mexican goldpoppies. Photograph by Gill C. Kenny

ALONG CAME A SPIDER

After a rain shower, a small spider (below) clings to a Mexican goldpoppy with a single strand of web connected to an adjacent bloom. Photograph by Greg Binon



UNDER FIRE

In the aftermath of Rodeo-Chediski, the largest wildfire in Arizona history, silver linings were inconceivable. A few years later, things are different. As it turns out, in the process of scorching the landscape, the blaze unearthed the ruins of a 12th century ceremonial center — a place that includes one of the largest known kivas in the Southwest.

BY CRAIG CHILDS

PHOTOGRAPHS BY NICK BEREZENKO



In the powdery remains of the Rodeo-Chediski Fire, eight people walked up a trail carrying survey equipment and digging gear. Gray dust from the largest wildfire in Arizona history puffed up from every step, drifting knee-high like mist, coating pant legs.

The fire had come through the summer before, in 2002, the result of two simultaneous wildfires converging and racing northward over the crest of the Mogollon Rim. One was started by a firefighter looking for work; the other by a woman lost in the woods who touched off a signal fire in the ponderosas. In their wake was a landscape of soft ash and glittering black trees.

The trail topped out on a hill looking north toward dry Navajo and Hopi country, and south to the charred infinity of the Mogollon highlands. There, everyone set down his load and went to work. The blaze had cleared oak and manzanita underbrush, revealing the ruins of a 12th century ceremonial center.

The site, which was being excavated by a team from the University of Arizona, turned out to be one of the largest known kivas in the Southwest — a great circular building with a cluster of smaller rooms gathered on one side.

In these ruins, workers found evidence of a fire that had burned through this compound 800 years ago. Old flecks of plaster and wall-stones were brightly discolored red and yellow where they'd been oxidized by intense heat. On the floor of a trench was a nest of charcoal and burned timbers where a ceiling had collapsed in a shower of sparks and flame. The remains of the fire and the remains of the people who lived here were so closely intermingled that it appeared the residents were present for the blaze.

At the time that Neolithic Pueblo cultures dominated the Southwest, Central Arizona was a burgeoning population core. I often wonder if these ancient people saw elemental forces the same way we do now. Has yelling FIRE! always sent panic straight into the blood?

As I explored the remains of the long-ago fire, I pictured flames sputtering through dry ceiling wood, smoke billowing into rooms. Were people running, shouting for each other, parents racing out doorways with babies tucked to their chests? Did they all stand outside, their faces sweating in yellow light the way we might now gather around a house burning hopelessly to the ground?

The dirt was now cool where I crawled along a trench looking for charcoal. I lifted my head as dust devils spun across the hilltop, creaking the surrounding dead trees.

There's a good chance this ancient fire was arson, and that people were not caught unaware. Similarly burned sites have been found all across the Southwest; sites where buildings were set ablaze, stores of corn melted into black masses, pottery scorched. Experiments have proved that it's difficult to touch off a pueblo. Only the ceilings are made of wood, and fires are easy to contain within rooms, so it must have taken some premeditation to get things burning.

This possibility is a point of much debate among archaeologists. Some believe fires were a result of warfare or household accidents — sparks getting out of kitchen hearths, invaders running through rooms with torches, or even conflagrations set by residents themselves at the approach of raiders, the same way Russians once burned their own villages as Napoleon's army drew near.

A growing number of researchers believe these fires were more than accidents or violence. They say the fires were a kind of cultural signature — a way in which the ancient people closed their doors behind them. They believe it might have been a sacred act to burn your house as you left.

The ancient Southwest was a land of mobility. People frequently abandoned entire pueblos and towns to build elsewhere. Responding to sharp climatic fluctuations, pre-Columbian farmers regularly moved in search of better growing weather. Rarely did they stay in one place for more than 50 years. After a thousand years of living in this fashion, no doubt a culture as regimented and religious as the Pueblo culture came up with a way to sanctify their departures. Many archaeologists believe they did this with fire.

It's hard to find a large archaeological site in the Southwest that was not burned at some point — usually at the end of its

FIERY FURY Flames race through the forest near Show Low (above).

LEFT BEHIND A burned-out tree (right) frames the devastation caused by the 2002 Rodeo-Chediski Fire, which charred more than 460,000 acres of forested land and killed millions of trees.





FROM THE ASHES The view southwest from Cline Point shows a forest of dead trees and regenerating vegetation.

Bits of artifacts showed through the devastation. Floor plans of ancient buildings showed through the ash — small households that once surrounded the hilltop.

smoldered trunks. Others had burned out completely, leaving only cadaverous holes, relief images in the ground where the fire had worked through the roots. Boulders were onion-skinned by the heat of the blaze — their flaked fragments lying about.

Bits of artifacts showed through the devastation. Pieces of pottery were finely dusted in ash between dark, barren stumps. Floor plans of ancient buildings showed through the ash — small households that once surrounded the hilltop.

Certainly people living here 800 years ago saw wildfires in their day. Arizona has always been susceptible with its summer lightning and dry pines. When the cinder-cone volcano we now call Sunset Crater erupted in Northern Arizona during the 11th century, ash and lava buried numerous Pueblo villages and houses within a 5-mile radius, and probably sent fires in all directions. Hard, black basalt has been found from the eruption with impressions of corn kernels in its surface. Residents might have approached semimolten lava and pushed corn into it — perhaps an act of reverence or sheer intrigue.

Maybe they walked in this same way through vacuous, burned forests, slowly setting their footsteps, listening to the clatter of charred branches in the wind as if the place were haunted. I came upon the remains of someone's cabin that had been almost entirely incinerated. Only outlines and a few items remained — a coffee can full of nails, a metal bucket draped over itself like candle wax. Sheet metal had been flung from the roof like unwanted clothing, now half-melted among black trees.

In a sense, the cabin seemed purified. The presence of its owner had been reduced to dust, leaving a place that belonged more to the fire than to anyone. The whole forest felt this way.

I remembered an archaeologist explaining to me that for cultures around the world, there are three ways to deal with something special you're leaving behind, be it a person who has died, a retired religious object or a special building: You bury it, you let it sink in water or you burn it. He said that in the Southwest, where the ground is often too hard for burial and where water is scarce, the best option is burning. It takes a place out of circulation, renews it, prepares it for the future by cleansing it of its past.

I walked beyond the cabin through a forest of obsidian shapes. The trees were dazzling in naked sunlight. At the base of one gruesome stump, a fresh bouquet of oak leaves had emerged from the ash. Seeds had waited deep in the soil, buried in former seasons by squirrels or jays. I knelt and ran my fingers through the leaves, a first sign of life. Now I understood why people once burned their homes in this country. There is perhaps no stronger way to say goodbye. And hello. ■■■

Craig Childs grew up enjoying campfires all across Arizona. He now lives in Colorado. He's a commentator for National Public Radio and the author of several highly acclaimed books, including House of Rain: Tracking a Vanished Civilization Across the American Southwest.

Nick Berezenko earned an anthropology degree from Arizona State University, but switched to freelance photography and writing instead of archaeology. He still digs occasionally in the basement of his home in Pine — but only "to keep it from flooding."



KIVA CONCEPTIONS A shallow depression (top) marks the spot of the great kiva at Cline Point. After excavation in 2003, archaeologists filled in all structures at the site. A photo-illustration (center) reconstructs what the ruins of the Cline Point kiva might have looked like. Archaeologist Sam Duwe's theoretical site plan of the kiva overlays a photo-illustrated reconstruction of the site (above).

occupation. Dr. William Walker of New Mexico State University says that up to 70 percent of all early pit-houses were burned to the ground. "Once I saw that," he explains, "I began to look at other contexts later in time [than pit-houses], and I saw the tradition was carried on. Sometimes you see entire pueblos burned. I think they treated these burnings like burials for a pueblo — a funeral, in a sense."

I've heard from several prominent archaeologists around the Southwest who share this notion. One showed me the burned remains of a kiva floor in the Four Corners area. Buried beneath ash and charcoal lay a large ceramic bowl turned upside-down. When the archaeologist lifted the burned bowl, she found small baskets containing piles of ground corn.

Some argue that this is evidence of people fleeing suddenly, leaving their goods in place as an unexpected blaze took their pueblo. The woman who showed me the piles of cornmeal, however, saw more than just goods in place. She saw offerings. Everything about the kiva floor seemed carefully arranged, as if people had set out jars and ladles in a special way — contributions to the fire they were about to set before migrating out of the area.

Sometimes the fires seem related to the nature of the particular use of the structures that are burned. One glaring example is Point of Pines Sites, a series of ancient pueblos located north of what is now Safford. During the 13th century, Point of Pines was a site of mixed ethnicities with a group of northern migrants — whom some now call Anasazi — living in their own compounds within a pueblo that belonged primarily to Mogollon people.

The migrants stayed for 30 years, keeping their own customs, their own pottery, even their own strains of corn and beans. Then a fire struck Point of Pines and the only rooms burned

were those that belonged to the migrants. The rest of the pueblo remained intact and was occupied for another hundred years, with the addition of an impressive new wall enclosing the site. The northern migrants never returned.

Why? Theories include the speculation that perhaps after 30 years, the Mogollon people had had enough of the northerners, burned them out, and then built a wall to keep any more of them from showing up. Or maybe the northern migrants decided to keep moving and set their rooms ablaze as they left, as might have been their tradition for countless generations. Whatever happened, it wasn't an accident — a kitchen fire left unattended.

Alexander Lindsay, a retired professor of archaeology, was at the Point of Pines excavation in the 1950s. He told me he wished they'd brought in an arson investigator. Even without an outsider's opinion, he was certain Point of Pines had been burned on purpose, and that the arsonists knew exactly what rooms they wanted to burn.

Now arson investigators are studying prehistoric structure fires at key sites in the Southwest. They've been able to find points of ignition, putting together sequences of rooms catching fire, discovering that some fires began in rooms without hearths, places where a fire would probably not have started by accident. Fire was no doubt a powerful tool in the hands of these people. They might have used it to fit the occasion — burning their enemies' structures or stockpiles in times of war, and burning their own homes in times of migration.

I climbed out of the hilltop trench and walked away from the dig to explore the surrounding burn. Some trees stood as if in circus acts, balanced on what very little remained of their



Judge of Character

Even in the days of Dobson Ranch, Mesa was never confused with Bedford Falls. Still, there's at least one man in town — Judge Hamblen — who's a character straight out of a Frank Capra movie. Homespun, no-nonsense, unorthodox ... that's how you'd describe this throwback to the old school.



BY KATHY MONTGOMERY

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DON B. & RYAN B. STEVENSON

ONE MORNING IN SEPTEMBER, A MAN named Robert arrived early at the West Mesa Justice Court to pay a traffic ticket. As he waited for the court to open, another man pulled up to the building, got out of his truck and started banging on the door, asking where everybody was. The man looked disheveled, and the back of his truck was full of used tires. Although the weather promised to be hot, he wore a pair of brown corduroy pants that looked too big and were folded up at the bottom.

Robert thought the judge was going to have his hands full with this guy, so he was more than a little surprised to find the man in brown corduroy sitting behind the bench in the courtroom. A nameplate identified him as Judge Clayton R. Hamblen, who had “immediately transformed into this very kind-hearted guy.”

Robert was charmed.

“He's compassionate, but he's firm,” Robert says. “In five minutes, with a smile on his face, he was able to coerce the most hard-looking guy I ever saw in

my life to admit that the story he was telling the judge was baloney. He did it by looking him in the eye and kind of chiding him.”

It was like a Capra movie. Robert felt as if he were watching the whole thing in black and white. He half-expected the courtroom to erupt into song.

“I went to pay a traffic ticket,” Robert says. “When I left, I felt like I'd been treated to something wonderful.”

Only one thing bothered him. Robert overheard that Judge Hamblen's court is scheduled to be absorbed into a Maricopa County regional complex in 2010. He worried that the move would drain Hamblen's courtroom of its character and, in the process, destroy what might be the last of a dying breed.

JUDGE HAMBLEN'S COURTROOM IS INFORMAL, and he runs it himself with the help of a computer, a copier and a scanner that

works only intermittently. He speaks quickly but in plain language. He's made rules for himself: No words with more than seven letters or more than two vowels touching each other.

“All-righty then,” he might begin, “what's this about?”

The people who parade before Hamblen's bench wear T-shirts and work shirts, ball caps and do-rags. Some sport piercings and tattoos. They argue traffic tickets and certain misdemeanors, and plead to DUIs. They face evictions or pursue small claims. Hamblen treats them all with respect. He jokes with them. He lectures like a concerned father.

On a recent Tuesday afternoon, a college student named Stephanie stands before the bench with her father. She has a smooth complexion and large blue eyes. She's 21, but looks about 16.

Stephanie is pleading guilty to driving under the influence. Her blood-alcohol content tested at .20, well above the .15 required to classify the DUI as extreme.

“Did I give you a hard time the other day?” Hamblen asks.

ECLECTIC COLLECTION Judge Clayton R. “Bud” Hamblen's office (left) reflects his varied interests as an avid collector of military memorabilia and all things Americana. From his bench, Judge Hamblen (above) maintains a just, yet compassionate courtroom.



PARNELLI HAMBLEN
An auto enthusiast since his earliest driving days, Bud Hamblen cleans his helmet in preparation for a figure-8 race at the Arizona State Fair. Department of Public Safety Officer John W. Anthony chats with Hamblen in his courtroom (opposite page).

“No,” she says with a shy smile.

“Darn, I meant to. You do this again and I’ll come hunt you down, OK?”

After sentencing, as Stephanie turns to leave, Hamblen calls after her, “I hope I never see you again.”

“BUD” HAMBLEN LOOKS A LITTLE LIKE William H. Macy. He’s got the same broad forehead, thin lips and fine, ginger-colored hair. He admits to having mostly Scottish and Welsh ancestry, but he’s also part German, Cherokee, Cheyenne and North Kaibab Paiute. He’ll tell you none of it means anything to him. He doesn’t believe in racial discrimination. That comes partly from the way his parents raised him, and partly from growing up in rural South Phoenix.

“I grew up in the melting pot,” he says. “It’s hard for me to be a bigot. I never had the room.”

But if he’s not a bigot, he is a great patriot. His courtroom is hung with a collection of American flags, black-and-white photos of soldiers, and World War I- and World War II-era military service flags. He wanted to be a fighter pilot — his father served in the U.S. Army Air Corps — but Bud’s eyes went bad. At age 19, he got a permanent deferment after a train hit his car while he was driving to a Veteran’s Day parade. The accident blew out his knee. So now he collects military artifacts.

“I can do this because I never served,” he says, referring to his collections, which include every issue of *Life* magazine published during World War II, military uniforms, and patriotic postcards of children clutching flags and flowers. But he admits he’ll collect almost anything: old currency, clocks, cars. He still has the first car he ever owned — a ’32 Ford Cabriolet — and the cars that belonged to his parents. “I never sell anything,” he says. “It’s been a lifelong problem.”

HAMBLEN PLEADED HIS FIRST CASE AT

age 16. It was his own. He had gotten a ticket for having more than three people in the front seat of his car. To prepare his defense, he looked up the statute, which was written in 1919. Then he found a 1920 Ford Model A touring car and measured the front seat, calculating how many inches per person the statute allowed. In court, he argued that those allowances, when applied to his own car, left plenty of room for four.

He lost. But he appealed the decision and won by default when no one showed up on behalf of the state.

“I guess I do have a strong feeling about what’s right and what’s wrong,” he says. “That was wrong. Shoot-fire, there was plenty of room in that seat.”

Now, as a judge, he’s heard a million traffic stories.

“A woman gets a ticket coming down from Payson,” he begins his favorite story. “She can’t figure out how she’s going 92 mph. And when she got home after getting a ticket, and got undressed and took off her boots, she realized that all day she’d been wearing her steel-toed boots, and coming home they’d been dragging her foot down on the pedal.”

Hamblen pauses and smiles. “Now that’s good, huh? That’s good. I like that.

“My worst one is a guy who told me his Ferrari wouldn’t go 97 mph. A 200-mph car. I was thinking about putting him in jail for failing to maintain a prime car. Abuse of a vehicle.”

Hamblen’s early experience in traffic court gave him a taste for the law, but he admits, after 19 years on the bench, that his career choice wasn’t a shoo-in. After high school, he narrowed down his choices to doctor, orthodontist and lawyer, but he didn’t like blood, and once he got braces, he found them painful.

“So, I became a lawyer by default,” he explains.

Hamblen attended college and law school at Arizona State University, be-

coming the first in his extended family to graduate from college. He was admitted to the State Bar of Arizona in 1972, and worked as a criminal defense attorney. But it wasn’t long before he realized that that career wasn’t right for him.

“I wanted to change the world,” Hamblen says. “By the fifth year, I realized I wasn’t going to.”

He felt guilty about defending people he’d just as soon stuff in a closet. He couldn’t sleep through the night.

“The truth is, I slept with Pepto-Bismol,” Hamblen says. “I drank it before I went to sleep. It was my kick in the morning.”

So, in 1988, he quit.

About that time he convinced his boyhood friend, Michael Orcutt, to run for justice of the peace in Phoenix. Orcutt won, and suggested Hamblen give the bench a try. “He thought I’d like it, and he was right.”

Hamblen worked pro tem for two years, filling in for judges on leave. He ran for JP as a Republican in 1990, and hasn’t looked back since.

A MAN WEARING A BROWN T-SHIRT WITH sand-colored hair and a salt-and-pepper beard hobbles into Hamblen’s courtroom. He bends over a cane, wincing with each step. The man tells the judge his name is William. He’s in court pleading to an extreme DUI.

“Have a seat anywhere,” Hamblen hails him from the bench. “You own the place.”

“I don’t own it,” William says, “the taxpayers do.”

“It’s a fractional ownership,” Hamblen fires back.

“Do you mind if I stand?” William asks the judge.

“Stand, sit, whatever you need to do.”

“I can do anything, just not very long.”

“You’re ahead of me,” Hamblen says. “I can’t do anything, but I can do it for a long time.”

Laws govern the minimum and maximum penalties for DUIs, but Hamblen exercises discretion where he can. If defendants work or attend college, he authorizes work releases. If their incomes are puny, he waives the incarceration fee. In this case, the judge wonders if William is up to the physical demands of jail, and sets in motion a process that might allow him to serve his time at home.

“The key thing about being a judge is we drive people into such deep holes that

they can never crawl out, and they give up,” he says. “You get a guy who comes in on a hundred thousand a year and he gets fined \$455. Big whoop. You get a guy comes in and he’s making 12 grand a year and you’ve probably just ruined his chances of making the mortgage payment for the next three months — if he’s able to afford a house. Everyone is unique and different. You have to take it case by case.”

Hamblen is proud of the fact that he’s never held anyone in contempt of court, but he has little patience with people who are rude or self-important.

To one plaintiff who complained that a business owner didn’t remember his name, Hamblen said: “Are you really that important that he needs to remember

will screw someone up.”

Judge Michael Orcutt has known Hamblen since they were Cub Scouts. And while he’s never seen him in action, he believes Hamblen is an excellent judge.

“I know he cares about people, and I wouldn’t say he has a soft side, but he does have compassion appropriately,” Orcutt says. “There are times to be tough and there are times to have a little compassion. The art of judging is knowing when people need to have a firm hand and when a softer hand is more effective.”

Orcutt calls his friend competitive and funny, but says Hamblen’s defining characteristic is a big heart.

“He tends to want to show a little bit of a gruff side, but I think he does that to hide the big heart part of it,” Orcutt

The first race Hamblen entered was a demolition derby. He was 17 and had gotten a Texaco sponsorship.

“In the main event, there were two of us left. The other guy was crippled, and I was headed over there to destroy him,” Hamblen says. “I ran out of gas.”

He chuckles. “I got second because I ran out of gas.”

Hamblen’s term expires in 2010, shortly after his 65th birthday. He hasn’t yet decided whether he’ll run again, but not because the court is scheduled to move into a regional complex. He’s not worried about being forced to change.

“I’d quit before I let that happen,” he says. “You can follow the law, you just don’t have to be mean. I believe in my heart that I handle my court the way

“I slept with Pepto-Bismol.
I drank it before I went to sleep.
It was my kick in the morning.”



your name? Sheesh!”

As William turns to leave, Hamblen asks if he goes by William or Bill.

“I usually go by Bradford,” William says.

“Bradford?” Hamblen repeats, sounding surprised. “Well, good luck, Bradford. Do whatever you need to do to feel well.”

IF HAMBLEN FEELS COMPASSION FOR THE people who come before him, it might be because he’s led what he calls “a gloriously imperfect life.”

“I’ve screwed up as much as anyone I know,” he says. And some of those struggles have played out publicly. In 1995, the state bar censured him for violating the rules of professional conduct for his work as an attorney on a personal injury suit in the 1980s. The court found that he failed to file timely discovery responses, resulting in the client’s action being dismissed. The client was able to get the case reinstated with new counsel.

“I screwed up,” Hamblen admits. “I always said that. It was my fault and I deserved it. Did I learn from that? Oh yeah. But I will say it makes me a better judge. I’m very slow to do anything that

says. “He’s helped a lot of people, but he’s usually pretty quiet about it. Back when he was an attorney, he would do a lot of pro bono work, and most people wouldn’t find out about it.”

Orcutt notes the work Hamblen has done with kids, coaching volleyball, soccer and baseball teams. But the best evidence, he says, is the number of kids he’s adopted.

“He has a lot of patience dealing with each of them,” Orcutt says. “It’s very challenging, and I’m sure very rewarding when they turn out well.”

IF ROBERT HAD GONE TO COURT ON another day, he might have seen a beat-up-looking yellow ’75 Camaro with a blue No. 4 painted on the side hitched to the back of Hamblen’s truck. If he had, he might have understood the tires in the back of the truck. Hamblen races on weekends, but sometimes drags his car to court when he plans a weeknight practice. He’s been hooked on racing since 1951, when he was in first grade. That was when he watched his cousin race at Manzanita Speedway on opening day.

court should be handled.”

Instead, he thinks of all the things he’d like to do. He’d like to establish a charitable organization that would help impoverished kids improve their appearance by providing things like braces and eye care. He’d like to have a political talk show and run a political campaign. He has an idea for a line of salsa and a fast-food restaurant that would serve a healthful version of fish and chips — his favorite food. He’d like to travel the world, but he’d like to see the United States first. Above all, he’d like to spend more time with his children. Including those he’s adopted, he counts 14. On the other hand, there’s the law, which he loves as much as his job.

“I love coming to work,” he says. “You don’t get luckier than that.” ■

Kathy Montgomery is a Mesa-based journalist who teaches magazine writing at Arizona State University. This is her first story for Arizona Highways.

If they ever do have to appear in court, photographers Don B. and Ryan B. Stevenson hope it’s in front of Judge Hamblen. They were impressed by the judge’s blending of humor, compassion and respect for the law.



Ajo Mountain Drive

Saguaros get most of the attention in Arizona, but organ pipe cactuses are nothing to scoff at, and this loop drive offers a great introduction.

CHOLLAS ARE SNEAKY. The fuzzy, stringy cactuses wait for an obliging passerby, then latch onto clothes, skin, fur. They travel by cow flank or pant leg to a desired destination, and then jump off to get a new plant started. And they plan their movements well in

advance to take advantage of any blunder, and I swear they can see me coming from miles away.

That's what I'm thinking as I sit on a bank of sun-warmed rocks alongside the loop road that winds through the eastern portion of Organ Pipe Cactus

National Monument, disconsolately picking at a clump of cholla that's "bitten down" on my left sock. I know all about chollas through hard experience, and I keep a pair of extra-long tweezers in my backpack to pluck out the attackers efficiently and painlessly.

That backpack, of course, is sitting at home. No matter. As they say in the NBA, when you're a pro, you play hurt. And so, having extricated myself from most of the cholla stalk with an obliging piece of saguaro rib, I hobble back to the truck and drive

onward, glad the spines haven't found a tire — yet.

Fringed by mountains and spreading out like a fan southward toward Mexico, the rocky plain that makes up much of Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument is a meeting place for the comparatively lush Sonoran Desert upland environment, so favored by those chollas, and the hotter, drier, lower coastal plain of Sonora, Mexico, and the Colorado River delta. This is desert that tends toward extremes

CACTUS SEA For as far as the eye can see, teddy bear chollas and organ pipe cactuses mingle with creosote bushes, mesquite trees and ocotillos, carpeting the desert floor at Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument (left). Photograph by Jack Dykinga

■ To order a print of this photograph, see page 1.

of heat during the summer, but that's blessedly mild in the winter and fall. It's a range that seems to please the imposing organ pipe cactus.

The gateway to the 21-mile-long mostly gravel Ajo Mountain Drive loop road stands just opposite the monument headquarters on State Route 85, a few miles north of the U.S.-Mexico border. The road is good, as maintained dirt and gravel roads go. However, as always in the des-

ert, it pays to keep a close eye on the weather, because the heat can be hard on a person and a vehicle, and the desert plain is subject to flooding after a hard rain.

Organ Pipe regulars have their favorite times of year. Sue Rutman, the monument's resident naturalist, tells me she has a soft spot for summer, when the desert is an anvil for the sun. Since I'm fairly sensible, mine is early spring, when, if the winter rains have been generous, the loop road passes through sunny fields of Mexican goldpoppies and other wildflowers worthy of *The Wizard of Oz*.

So it is on this early spring morning, the broad Sonoyta Valley carpeted with a profusion of newly bloomed

flowers. The valley and the beginning of the loop road lie in what ecologists call a "mixed scrub community," marked by low brittlebushes and bursage that sway in the soft breeze, as well as larger paloverdes and ocotillos. The road soon climbs to the rocky, sun-drenched foothills country, where saguaros and organ pipe cactuses thrive. At the 5.2-mile mark from the entrance stands a particularly fine specimen of the latter, its candelabra arms reaching into the sky. Take the time to get out of your car to admire

ROYAL ROCK A natural rock arch (below) viewed from Ajo Mountain Drive reigns over prickly pear cactuses and bright yellow brittlebushes.

Photograph by Randy Prentice
■ To order a print of this photograph, see page 1.





STANDING OVATION A colorful combination of Mexican goldpoppies, blue lupines and purple owl clover (left) commands center stage in a Sonoran Desert spring. Photograph by Jerry Sieve

■ To order a print of this photograph, see page 1.

this great piece of creation, but keep an eye out for those chollas — there’s a particularly dense patch of them nearby, and the old-timers didn’t call it “jumping cholla” for nothing.

The road climbs gently, drops into the gulch called Diablo Wash, then climbs again to give a fine view of the steep canyon from which the wash descends. The rocks here are covered with what appears to be moss, an unusual sight in the dry desert — this primitive plant turns a vivid green after a good rainfall, which occasions another old-time name, “resurrection plant.” In the springtime, the moss’ emerald trail follows the road around a narrow pass in the foothills of the sheer Ajo Mountains. The pass opens up to a view of the highest point in the range,

> travel tips

Vehicle Requirements:

Passenger cars, no motorhomes longer than 23 feet; high-clearance recommended during rainy weather.

Travel Advisory: Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument admission is \$8 per vehicle.

Warning: Due to its proximity to the international boundary with Mexico, some parts of the monument are closed for construction and visitor safety concerns. Several roads are closed to vehicle traffic, and all backcountry areas are closed to overnight use until further notice. Back-road travel can be hazardous. Be aware of weather and road conditions. Don’t travel alone, and let someone know where you’re going and when you plan to return. There are no water sources or phones available, so carry plenty of water, snacks and a cell phone.

Additional Information: 520-387-6849 or nps.gov/orpi.

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

Mount Ajo, which, though only 4,808 feet high, makes a challenging climb for even the most experienced hiker. The tough volcanic mountains look as if they’d been piped out by a mad pastry chef with a blender full of lava, and for all their scenic quality, there’s nothing gentle about them.

My favorite section of the loop road, no matter what the season, begins at mile 9.4, where a sight that’s rare in the Sonoran Desert awaits — a rock arch 720 feet overhead, stretching out to a length of more than 90 feet. Arch Canyon offers an inviting hike, climbing from the road’s 2,500-foot vantage to elevations that sustain shady oak and juniper trees.

Another hike winds out from the parking lot at Estes Canyon, about 1.5 miles farther down the loop road. The trailhead is at the spacious parking area, and the trail makes its way up a rugged 2-mile-long climb to the surprisingly wet and green Bull Pasture. The round-trip takes a couple of hours, with a wonderful payoff of sweeping views of the low-desert plain far south into Mexico.

Descending from the flank of the Ajos, the loop road passes through dense growths of jojoba, a Sonoran Desert plant valued for its oil, and the curious and uncommon thing called the Mexican jumping bean, a dark-green shrub whose seeds harbor moth larvae that move around, less jumping than twitching.

At about mile 18, the road leaves the hills and returns to the desert floor, traversing stands of saguaros, organ pipes, Christmas cactuses, and, seemingly everywhere, patches of cholla in its many magnificent and troublesome varieties — pencil chollas, teddybear chollas, chain-fruit chollas ... hunters all, looking for a juicy calf to sink into.



Organ Pipe is a place of demands and extremes, but also subtle and spectacular beauties alike. The loop road is the best way I know to introduce yourself to this unique place and its wealth of wildlife — 277 bird species, 70 kinds of mammals, 46 reptile species, 76 butterfly varieties and counting, and more. Not bad for a desert, a place

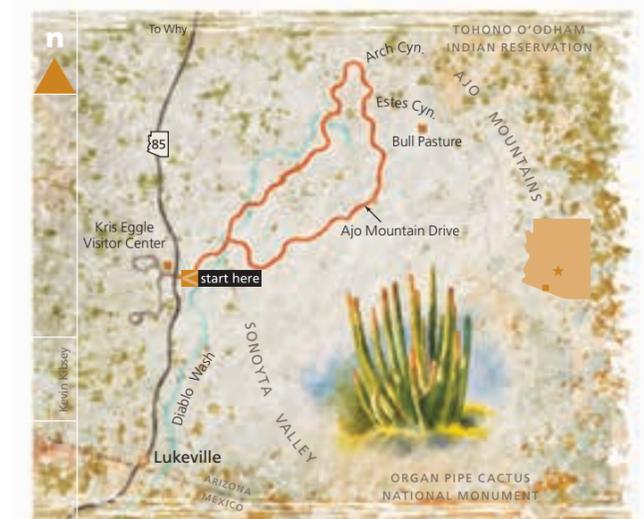
THE TEMPEST Storm clouds loom over the Diablo Mountains (above) in Southern Arizona, bringing welcome rain to the parched desert landscape. Photograph by Laurence Parent

whose Latin original, *desertus*, means “abandoned.” Even though you’re likely to have the road to yourself, Organ Pipe is well-populated, and it’s an ideal place to experience desert life. ■■■

> route finder

Note: Mileages are approximate.

- > **From Tucson**, take Interstate 19 south for 1 mile to State Route 86.
- > **Drive west** on State 86 114 miles to State Route 85 at Why.
- > **Turn left (south)** onto State 85 and drive 22 miles to Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument.



Hot Springs Loop

Coatimundis, running water and a healthy dose of history are just some of the reasons to explore this Nature Conservancy property in Southern Arizona.

THE TRANQUILITY OF Southern Arizona's Bass Canyon belies its brutal history. Nestled between the remote Galiuro Mountains and the San Pedro River, the canyon harbors one of seven year-round streams in the 49,200-acre Muleshoe Ranch Cooperative Management Area, home to abundant plant and wildlife. Coatimundi tracks zigzag along the sandy stream banks this peaceful winter morning. It's hard to picture Melvin Jones stepping out from the brush and gunning down physician Glendy King for this property in 1884, yet I can understand why Jones and others formed such a dangerous attachment to Muleshoe.

Our hike begins just downstream from the aluminum-lined hot tubs at Muleshoe Ranch headquarters. Heading northwest we climb up unpaved Jackson Cabin Road. As we crest our first hill, we're already shedding layers of clothing and stashing it in our bags. Bass Canyon is just a mile away, and we can see its distinctive formations in the distance — dimpled rock that looks like carved soap. Two million years ago, volcanoes coated the landscape with ash and rock, likely wiping out all of the plants and animals in the area. But this tuff erodes easily, and over time, has formed the undulating cliffs and spires that loom over the streambed.

Along Bass Creek's edge, we poke at globs of algae and hunt for lowland leopard frogs, which have just begun

laying their eggs for the season. Suddenly, there's a rustle upstream and a mule deer leaps 10 feet across the water before vanishing into the brush.

We continue downstream and pass the only trail marker on this undeveloped rocky streambed route, which follows a path created by thousands of years of running water. Geologists say the existing mountains in the area are too small to collect the kind of rain needed for such a task, and believe the water that originally blazed the trail dates to the last ice age.

As we approach the confluence with Hot Springs Creek — which we will follow another mile for the last leg of our hike — we spot more paw prints. This time, it's a mountain lion. The tracks follow the stream for 30 feet before they disappear. Did it leap across the water? Or clamber across this log to that gully? The cats around here must know how to be sneaky; Hot Springs ranchers used to pay \$25 for every scalp. Twenty-two were killed in one year alone, and Johnny Jones, Melvin's brother, once devised a scheme to exterminate them entirely. He failed.

Melvin, the killer, didn't get Bass Canyon, either. Instead, Dr. King's property went on the auction block, after his brother failed to produce proper documentation. Colonel Henry Clay Hooker bought the land, adding it to his famous Sierra

Bonita holdings. The next year, Geronimo and his band of Chiricahua Apaches went on a yearlong rampage in the area, hiding in its many canyons, staging attacks and rustling cattle.

By the 1890s, however, wealthy guests were traveling by stagecoach from Willcox to bathe in these legendary springs, among the hottest in the state. Back at ranch headquarters, we did the same — climbing in, sinking up to our chins and listening for the sound of spurs and the click of a trigger. But everything we heard was peaceful — a whimsical bird and the rustle of the cottonwood trees towering above us. **AH**

trail guide

Getting There: From Tucson, drive east on Interstate 10 to Willcox (Exit 340). Go south to Bisbee Avenue and turn right. Continue past the high school and turn right (north) onto Airport Road. After 15 miles, bear right onto Muleshoe Ranch Road. Follow this road for another 14 miles. The Muleshoe Ranch CMA Headquarters is at the end of this road on the left.

Length: 3 miles round-trip.

Elevation Gain: Negligible.

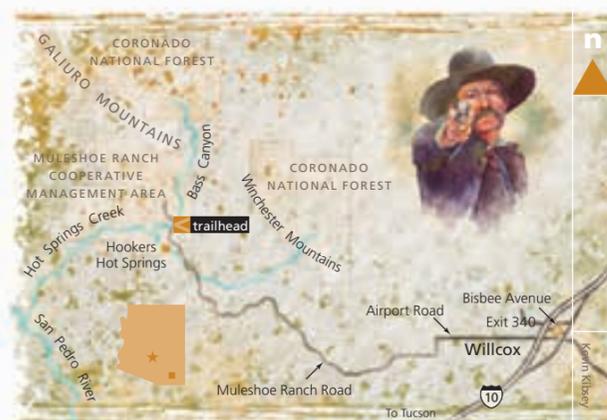
Difficulty: Moderate to difficult.

Payoff: Year-round streams, hot springs (for overnight guests only), abundant birds and plant life, and opportunities to see coatimundi troops in the canyons.

Travel Advisory: Two-thirds of this hike is in rocky creek beds requiring hikers to walk in the water. Wear sturdy boots and long pants; carry a walking stick and a change of socks. Casita lodging is available by reservation from late September through May.

Warning: The 26 miles of dirt roads from Willcox to Muleshoe Ranch might require a four-wheel-drive vehicle after heavy rains.

Additional Information: 520-507-5229 or nature.org.



HANGING ON A white-nosed coatimundi (above) — a member of the raccoon family — clings to coarse tree bark. The agile tree-climber munches on beetles, ants, termites and scorpions when hungry.

WILDLIFE WONDERLAND The jagged peaks of the Galiuro Mountains (right) tower over the Muleshoe Ranch Cooperative Area, which is home to many animal species, including coatimundis, black bears, javelinas, white-tailed and mule deer, mountain lions and desert bighorn sheep.

