WHERE TO HIKE IN SYCAMORE CANYON [p. 28]

SYCAMORE CANYON
A Quiet Place Shrouded in Mystery, Romance and Mother Nature

plus
THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE OF OAK FLAT
BLUE RIVER RETREAT
SEDONA ART BARN
ARIZONA’S CARNEGIE LIBRARIES
PRAIRIE FALCONS
GLEN CANYON
EDITOR’S LETTER

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LETTERS

THE JOURNAL

People, places and things from around the state, including a look back at iconic photographer J.H. McGibbeny, prairie falcons, Glen Canyon National Recreation Area and the history of the Sedona Art Barn.

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 Coyote Trail: Of the 16 established trails in the Sycamore Canyon Wilderness, this is one of the most accessible. It’s one of the most beautiful, too.

By Robert Stieve

Photographs by Mark Frank

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WHERE IS THIS?

SYCAMORE CANYON

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At the time, the crash of the Douglas DC-7 and Lockheed L-1049 Super Constellation was the deadliest commercial aviation accident in history. “The planes had both taken a detour and were doing what was called ‘flight seeing’ over the Canyon,” says Wayne Ramsey, president of the Grand Canyon Historical Society. “The Grand Canyon loomed large in the American public’s consciousness back then. And those planes had just disappeared into that vast wilderness.”

As Annette Mcalpine writes in June 1956, the crash “brought to light the need for better organization of the country’s airspace. Just one year after the disaster, President Eisenhower signed into law the Airways Modernization Act, which laid the foundation for the creation of the Federal Aviation Administration and the centralized air traffic control system in use today.”

Two years ago, the crash site was designated a National Historic Landmark, and a memorial was erected at Desert View Watchtower on the South Rim. About 200 miles to the southeast, another historic site was recently designated. It happened on March 4, 2016, when the National Park Service added Oak Flat Campground to the National Register of Historic Places.

You may have heard of Oak Flat. It’s been a controversial subject for more than a decade, and it’s become even more so with the December 2014 transfer of sacred tribal land to a foreign mining corporation. “At stake in the exchange,” Kelly Vaughn writes in Coyote, Owl, and Mountain, “is Oak Flat itself — the place where coming-of-age memories for Apache girls are held, where medicinal herbs and acorns are gathered. Where, according to Wendsler Nosie, the former chairman of the San Carlos Apaches, his people received the blessings of the spirit.”

Like all controversial stories, there are at least two sides to this one, including that of the mining company, which projects the mine will create 3,700 jobs and generate $61.4 billion in economic value. Several constitutents are staking a claim. Time will tell who prevails. Meanwhile, Oak Flat remains one of the most beautiful places in Central Arizona. It’s not as renowned as the Grand Canyon, and it’s not as mysterious as Sycamore Canyon, but even at 33,000 feet, Oak Flat is captivating. All you have to do is look out the window.

ROBERT STEVE, EDITOR
Follow me on Instagram: @arizonahighways

M A R K S M I T H

Mark Smith lives in the United Kingdom and has never been to Arizona, but after illustrating Annette Mcalpine’s story on the 1956 plane crash in the Grand Canyon (see JUNE 30, 1956, page 48), he says the state is at the top of his “next places to visit” list. “The Grand Canyon is one of those places in the world that I think everyone has at least some familiarity with, even if that’s just through pictures or TV documentaries,” he says. “I think the closest thing we have in the UK is Stirling Castle, and that scale of landscape are the Scottish mountains — they always leave me awestruck.”

Smith wasn’t familiar with the 1956 accident, and he says that while he’s often asked to “solve” a story and make sure readers understand it, this assignment was more a study in subtlety. “The accident and the landscape were two very big players in this story, so picking details on which to focus was fairly simple,” he says. “The juxtaposition — the man-made set against the natural, and the agression of the incident against the huge stillness of the Canyon — stood out for me.” Smith’s other recent work includes illustrations for Stanford University and ESPN, along with the cover images for a serialized Stephen King novel.

B I L L H A T C H E R

Bill Hatcher’s history with Oak Flat began in 1990, when he established several first ascents there as a rock climber. Since then, he’s returned numerous times to photograph the rock climbing landscape, and he was excited to visit again to make photographs for Kelly Vaughn’s story on the ongoing controversy over mining in the area (see Coyote, Owl and Mountain, page 34). “I’ve followed the mining controversy, but the true implications of what might be lost forever were not clear to me until I worked on this story,” Hatcher says. “I spent days reacquainting myself with Oak Flat — exploring and photographing creeks and canyons, and discovering Indian rock art and 400-year-old oak trees that could become rubble at the bottom of a 2-mile-wide, 1,000-foot-deep hole.” He became, he says, an emotional experience. “My 25-year history with Oak Flat is short compared with those of the families I met, people who have camped and enjoyed the place for generations, and the Apaches, who have held ceremonies and social gatherings there for centuries.”

Hatcher photographs frequently for Arizona Highways and other publications, and this year he’s hoping to bicycle the entire 800-mile length of the Arizona Trail — McKAUSTIN
LETTERS
editor@arizonahighways.com

ON THE OPENING page of your story about saguaros [This Is Different, April 2016], you wrote, “In the interest of full disclosure, we aren’t sure how many saguaro photos we’ve published over the past 91 years.” The answer? Not enough!

Karl West, Walpole, Massachusetts

Thank you for the article titled Cutting It Down to Size [April 2016]. As a young woman I observed the Black Forest in Germany and thought it was gorgeous. When I moved from Quebec to British Columbia, I witnessed clear-cutting. Where was the replanting, the fauna? Then, in Colorado, I saw unkempt forests, slumping into decay. My happy moment was when I visited the Kaibab National Forest and saw actual management — pretty, lovely, happy woodlands. My heart soars when I see the horses by saving our dying trees, and the Forest Service and the BLM help remove all the horses, culled and properly burned, all the while providing sustainable employment and recycling.

Barb Foley, Cottonwood, Arizona

I was so happy to see an article about horses in your latest issue [April, April 2016], but when I saw it was about the Salt River horses, my happiness grew tenfold. My friends and I ride our horses in that area all the time, and we love to see the wild horses — yes, we call them “wild,” too. The article reminded me of the sadness I feel when finding out about the removal of all the horses, and I’ve seen the litter that writer Kelly Vaughn pointed out. There is another culprit causing more damage than the horses and the humans combined — misteets. It’s killing the trees — where will the birds go without the trees? Let the Forest Service and the BLM help the birds by saving our dying trees, and leave the horses there.

Linda McQueary, Gilbert, Arizona

I was saddened to see that Arizona Highways values feral horses over the Sonoran Desert ecosystem and the wildlife that depends upon it. Numerous research studies have shown that horses compact the soil, ultimately leading to a reduced diversity of flora and an increase in fire-promoting invasive plant species. Competition for food resources is also a concern. The plants that horses eat are no longer available for deer, rabbits and other native wildlife species. Although I owned horses for many years, I kept them confined to a small acreage and preserved the native plants and animals on the rest of my ranch. This is a choice between having feral domestic animals roam free or having native wildlife and ecosystems. I urge you to research the literature before making your decision.

Lisa Fitzer, Maricopa Audubon Society, Phoenix

I feel reading Arizona Highways for more than 60 years, I finally decided it was time to write a letter. I was born in Phoenix in 1944 and raised as a pipeline kid. I started school in Flagstaff, then attended Scottsdale, Glendale and Kingman, along with a dozen or so places in New Mexico and Texas. Although I have been to 50 countries, I always claim Arizona and New Mexico are the greatest places in the world. There are no prettier skies or more rugged mountains. And your magazine has continued to relate to us, despite all of the modernization and changes that us old folks love to hate. My best story is my earliest memory of Arizona Highways. We were living in Kermit, Texas, and I was in second grade — so I was about 8 years old. One day a neighbor knocked on my parents’ door and asked if they had a little boy. When it turned out to be me, I had to face the neighbor and my parents. She demanded that I stop going door to door selling copies of Arizona Highways. When my parents asked for a reason, she answered that I was getting the magazines from the trash (including hers) and selling them for 25 cents each, frequently to her husband. Apparently, she enjoyed the pictures so much he didn’t mind paying a quarter just to get to see them again after his wife would throw them out. I had a pretty good thing going, because there were several Arizona transplant who took the magazine, and lots of people who didn’t mind my small fee for redelivering them. But I had to cease and desist, at least until we moved on to the next pipeline town. Later in life I became a semi-professional photographer and a published author, and in both of those endeavors, I included Arizona in one way or another. So, Arizona Highways has always been important to me. I haven’t been able to live there for over 65 years, but it’s always “home.”

Jack L. Cunningham Jr., Southlake, Texas

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

In a Fog

Pillow-like clouds gather in the Grand Canyon, as viewed from the South Rim’s Yavapai Point. The phenomenon, known as an inversion, occurs when cold air in the Canyon is uncovered by a layer of warm air, causing moisture in the cold air to condense and form fog. To learn more about Grand Canyon National Park, call 928-638-7888 or visit www.nps.gov/ Grand Canons.

PHOTOGRAPH BY SUSANN RATHMA

PHOTOGRAPH BY SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION ISO 100, 28 MM LENS CANON EOS 5D MARK III, 1/80 SEC, F/16,
Glen Canyon National Recreation Area

GLEN CANYON NATIONAL Recreation Area encompasses 1.25 million acres from Lees Ferry in Northern Arizona to the western border of Canyonlands National Park in Utah. The landscape’s most popular feature is the 186-mile-long Lake Powell, which was formed in 1963 when Glen Canyon Dam was completed on the Colorado River. Colorful geologic formations—including slot canyons, buttes, hoodoos and natural bridges—are plentiful in Glen Canyon, which is known for its spectacular scenery and recreational activities.

Visitors could spend weeks in Glen Canyon and not run out of things to do. Guided boat tours and ranger-led hikes and talks are available, as are many activities visitors can do on their own, such as boating, fishing, kayaking, swimming, hiking, camping and scenic drives. One of the few maintained hiking trails in the recreation area leads to one of Arizona’s most stunning viewpoints: Horseshoe Bend, a dramatic curve in the Colorado River.

YEAR DESIGNATED: 1972
AREA: 1.25 million acres
WILDERNESS ACREAGE: None; however, 568,855 acres have been proposed as the Glen Canyon Wilderness and are managed as a wilderness area.
ANNUAL VISITATION: 2,495,093 (2015)
AVERAGE ELEVATION: 3,704 feet

Glen Canyon National Recreation Area

KAYLA FROST

in 1963, 12 years before Lake Powell was created, Tad Nichols photographed boaters camping in Glen Canyon.

Photograph by Tom Daniel

PHOTOGRAPH
NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY CLINE LIBRARY

EDITOR’S NOTE: In August, the National Park Service will celebrate its 100th anniversary. Leading up to that milestone, we’re spotlighting some of Arizona’s wonderful national parks.

The weatherworn buttes of Glen Canyon surround the calm water of Lake Powell’s Padre Bay.

The weatherworn buttes of Glen Canyon surround the calm water of Lake Powell’s Padre Bay.
Sedona Arts Center

Although the 88-year-old Art Barn is the most historic structure at the Sedona Arts Center, the property itself has a long and interesting history, one that dates back to the early 1900s.

KATHY MONTGOMERY

George and Helen Jordan weren’t the first owners of the Sedona Arts Center property. But longtime residents remember the spread as Jordan Farms, with today’s packing center, and apple and peach orchards spreading out behind it. Frank and Nancy Owenby homesteaded the property, building an irrigation ditch and a house made of hand-cut native stone in 1910. Water from nearby Oak Creek ran through the ditch and right into the house. The Jordans moved into the home in 1928, and George built the two-story wooden barn, hauling timbers from a mill near Mormon Lake. George and Helen retired in 1958, the same year Egypt-born sculptor Nassan Gobran formed Canyon Kiva, an organization to solicit support for a cultural center. In 1991, the Jordans moved into a new house and Canyon Kiva, reorganized as the Sedona Arts Center, took over the property. More than 250 people attended the “barnwarming,” which featured art exhibitions, demonstrations and a concert featuring Arizona State University’s orchestra. Later that year, the center’s board members learned the property would be sold at the end of its lease, so they exercised an option to buy the place, raising $10,000 for the down payment. The center paid off the $35,000 mortgage in 1969 and has been debt-free ever since.

The stone house came down in 1970 to make way for an addition to the barn, which housed a community theater for a time. Then, in 1994, a $1 million donation funded a new exhibition gallery with a gift shop, a classroom and studio space right on State Route 89A. George Jordan, a photographer whose work appeared in Arizona Highways, and Helen, an artist, supported the center for the rest of their lives. George died in 1984, Helen in 1991. Gobran, the center’s founder, died in 1992, but his sculpture Peace serenely watches over Poet’s Corner gatherings, held in the sculpture garden on First Fridays.

Q&A: Adriel Heisey

PHOTO EDITOR JEFF KIDA

JK: You’re an accomplished pilot and aerial photographer. How did you get started?

AH: My chosen career was as a pilot — I figured I could make a better living than as a photographer. After flight school, I put in a lot of hours on the Eastern Seaboard before moving to the South-west, where I began doing charter flights on the Navajo Nation. After three or four years there, I began to get serious about aerial photography in regard to the gear I used and the plane I was flying.

JK: The photo above is of Three Turkey Ruins just south of Canyon de Chelly. Was this site a challenge to photograph from the air? What kind of equipment did you use for these shots?

AH: I used a Nikon D3 and later upgraded to a D800, then a D810 with 24-70 mm zoom lenses and tried to replicate the way the Lindberghs’ photos looked, though we weren’t able to determine what camera model they had used. But because Charles Lindbergh was an avid photographer, he likely used his personal gear during those flights. PHOTO WORKSHOP

Autumn in the San Francisco Peaks 

October 7-9, Flagstaff

Photography in the colorful aspects and vibrant ponderosa forests surrounding the iconic peaks northwest of Flagstaff at this workshop, led by photographer and long-time Arizona resident Joel Wellman (888-700-7242 or www. ajpw.org).

PHOTOGRAPHY: SEDONA HERITAGE MUSEUM

450 YEARS AGO IN ARIZONA HIGHWAYS

SEDONA: Sedona Arts Center, 15 Art Barn Rd, 928-282-3800, www.sedonaartscenter.org

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Photo above is of Three Turkey Canyon, northwest of Flagstaff. Photograph the color-rich aspects and vibrant ponderosa forests surrounding the iconic peaks northwest of Flagstaff at this workshop, led by photographer and long-time Arizona resident Joel Wellman (888-700-7242 or www.ajpw.org).

To learn more about photography, visit www.arizonahighways.com/photography.
Joseph Howard McGibbeny rode a train to Arizona for the first time in 1912, and from that spring day, he never wanted to leave. “This enchanting land had woven a spell from which I had no slightest wish to escape,” he recalled in a 1953 Arizona Highways article. So McGibbeny stayed for as long as he could. After serving in World War I, he enrolled in agricultural engineering courses at the University of Arizona. In Flagstaff during summer school, McGibbeny was introduced to the Navajo and Hopi people. Captivated, he learned as much about their cultures as possible, built friendships and attended ceremonies such as the Navajo Enemy Way ceremony and the Hopi Snake Dance. Photography was McGibbeny’s way to record not only what he learned about these tribes, but also what he found beautiful about them. Many of his photographs were published in Arizona Highways in the 1940s and ’50s. He died in 1970.

above: J.H. McGibbeny was fascinated with kachinas and other aspects of Hopi culture. “My early impressions of a gentle, peaceful people, intensely religious, keenly intelligent and graciously hospitable, have been confirmed a hundred times,” he wrote in Arizona Highways in 1959.

right: McGibbeny’s shot of a Hopi woman appeared in Children of the Sun, a story and portfolio in our July 1947 issue.
IS THERE A BAD TIME FOR PIE? We think not. At Williams’ Pine Country Restaurant, open from 6:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. seven days a week, you can have your pie with breakfast, lunch and dinner. For that matter, you can have your pie for breakfast, lunch and dinner. And you’ll be tempted to do just that.

The aptly named restaurant is just the kind of place you’d expect to find in a mountain town along Historic Route 66. It’s pine-paneled and comfortable, with green-checkered tablecloths, a coffee bar and a large gift shop. But it could just as easily be called Pie Country.

The pie case stands front and center, stocked with confections selected from a menu of 35 mouthwatering varieties and made fresh daily. Of course, you’ll find the usual suspects. But why settle for a slice of apple when you can feast your taste buds on blueberry apple peach, pineapple coconut or raspberry cream? Often described as “mile high,” these pies are payoffs to excess. A slice of banana chocolate peanut butter could feed a family of four, with leftovers. But whatever you choose, order it with a large cup of Pine Country’s excellent coffee. If you like your coffee fancy, the Western-themed coffee bar serves whimsically named beverages such as the Doc Holliday Steamer (steamed milk and sweet syrup), the John Wayne Teardrop (layered syrup, half-and-half and espresso) and the Clint Eastwood Espresso (coffee with muscle).

Breakfast is popular at Pine Country, with classics such as country-fried steak and eggs, served with country gravy; applewood-smoked ham and eggs; and house-made biscuits and gravy. On the sweeter side are cinnamon rolls, French toast and “sweetcakes” — pancakes topped with sweetened strawberries and whipped cream.

The lunch menu is heavy on comfort foods: pot roast sandwich, patty melt, open-faced roast beef sandwich with mashed potatoes and gravy. But you’ll also find a few interesting twists on diner classics, such as the Texas Red Burger, served open-faced on cornbread and topped with house-made chili and cheddar cheese, and the Rowdy Reuben Burger, a ground-beef patty topped with corned beef, coleslaw, Swiss cheese and Thousand Island dressing and served on grilled rye.

Dinner classics include prime rib, fried chicken and pork chops, as well as T-bone steak and spaghetti with meatballs. The shepherd’s pie takes a vegetarian twist, with a veggie burger instead of ground beef, house-made mashed potatoes and cheddar cheese. There’s also a selection of salads, diet-friendly meals and even sugar-free pies, if you’re feeling virtuous. But what’s the fun in that? This is a place to indulge.

If you haven’t been to Pine Country, it’s pie time you do.
Blue River Wilderness Retreat

Located in the rugged backcountry of the Arizona-New Mexico border, Blue River Wilderness Retreat features an old cabin, three vintage aluminum trailers and one of the area’s best bets for getting off the grid.

KATHY MONTGOMERY

Late-afternoon sunlight suffuses the cottonwoods and knee-high grasses along Frieborn Creek at the entrance to Blue River Wilderness Retreat. Wearing a straw hat, Janie Hoffman pauses from her work in a large vegetable garden to greet arriving guests. Near the barn, her husband, Don, strips bark from a beam with a drawknife.

If it seems a picture of a simpler time, that’s not an accident. The Hoffmans bought this land near the Blue River nearly 40 years ago with the idea of homesteading their dozen acres on the Arizona-New Mexico border.

Occupying a small, unfinished cabin, they raised two children and an assortment of animals. They sent their kids to the old two-room school in Alpine, 13 miles north. When they built a larger home, they opened their cabin to guests. Eventually, they added three vintage aluminum trailers at the edge of an expansive lawn planted with bluegrass and fruit trees.

Over the years, the property has seen many uses, and people have come back to share old pictures and stories with the Hoffmans. The grandson of a woman who lived on the property with her husband in the 1940s brought copies of his grandmother’s diaries. Her husband built their cabin on the site of a former sawmill. In the 1960s, the Arrowhead Lodge occupied the property, its owners digging out three stocked fishing ponds. The earlier structures all burned in fires, and the Hoffmans bought the property from the family of a man who was building a hunting cabin when he died. They completed the dwelling, filled in all but one spring-fed pond (which no longer is stocked) and once again made it a special place to visit.

Blue River Wilderness Retreat began as an artists getaway. Janie weaves tapestries from natural-fiber yarn, which she dyes using hollyhocks, bronze fennel and goldenrods from her garden, and saw the retreat as an opportunity to meet other artists.

But word spread, and during summer months, guests now include artists, families and individuals who enjoy walking, hiking, birding and fishing. Pricing is calculated by the week, and many guests who return year after year stay for a month.

“It’s been a wonderful venture for us,” Janie says. “It’s provided a social life, and we’ve met so many remarkable people.”

NEAR ALPINE  Blue River Wilderness Retreat, 928-339-4426, www.blueriverwildernessretreat.com
Arizona’s second-biggest canyon has been described as enigmatic, inaccessible and rife with legends of buried treasures, man-eating grizzlies, marauding Apaches, gunmen and thieves. It’s a place shrouded in mystery, romance and Mother Nature. Although it’s one of the oldest wilderness areas in the state, and there’s so much to explore, very few venture in.

EDITED BY ROBERT STIEVE
Before there were wilderness areas, there were primitive areas, which, in the words of Aldo Leopold, were defined as “a continuous stretch of country preserved in its natural state ... big enough to absorb a two weeks’ pack trip.” In 1935, Sycamore Canyon was given that protection and designated a primitive area, the state’s first. In 1972, it was designated a wilderness area, and in 1984, it was expanded by 9,000 acres. Today, the Sycamore Canyon Wilderness protects 55,937 acres in and around the canyon, from its forested rim near Williams to its riparian mouth in the Verde Valley. In all, it winds for more than 20 miles along Sycamore Creek, and at its widest point, it extends 7 miles from rim to rim. In addition to its namesake trees, the wilderness is home to cottonwoods, willows, hackberries, pinyon pines, junipers, manzanitas, Gambel oaks, ponderosa pines and Douglas firs. And there’s wildlife, too, including black bears, badgers, mountain lions, bobcats, mule deer, ringtails, javelinas, ravens, golden eagles and more. As you’ll see, there’s a lot to look at in this scenic canyon.
Jagged red cliffs contrast with the greenery of Sycamore Canyon, which is fed by the meandering Sycamore Creek.

Aleksandra Kolosowsky

MAP BY KEVIN KIBSEY
Sycamore Creek feeds a lush riparian area amid the canyon’s steep walls. Guy Schmickle
Mature trees on the rim of Sycamore Canyon frame a view into the gorge, which remains one of Arizona's least-explored landscapes. Aleksandrina Kolosovskaia
The calm water of Sycamore Creek reflects the green hues of surrounding vegetation.

Derek von Briesen
This one of the best riparian hikes in Arizona.

LENGTH: 7.4 miles round-trip
DIFFICULTY: Easy
ELEVATION: 3,775 to 3,871 feet
TRAILHEAD GPS: N 34° 15.837’, W 112° 03.445’
DIRECTIONS: From Flagstaff, go northwest on Main Street (State Route 261) and follow the signs toward the turnoff for Tuzigoot National Monument. Turn right onto Tuzigoot Road, continue across the Verde River bridge and turn left onto Forest Road 131 (Sycamore Canyon Road). From there, it’s 15 miles to the trailhead.

VEHICLE REQUIREMENTS: A high-clearance vehicle is required.
DOGS ALLOWED: Yes (on a leash)
USE MAPS: Sycamore Basin, Clarenville

INFORMATION: Red Rock Ranger District, 928-282-4119 or www.fs.usda.gov/coconino

SYCAMORE RIM TRAIL
Kalbab National Forest

Although it isn’t identified as such, this trail is a loop. It begins as a dirt path that crosses a small meadow before entering the forest. Moving clockwise, you’ll quickly come to Dow Spring and an old sawmill site. The remains of the mill serve as a reminder that you’re in timber country. Just beyond the mill, you’ll get some terrific views of the San Francisco Peaks to the northeast. Then, after about 45 minutes, you’ll see the first of many small pools. Reminiscent of something you might come across in Maine or Minnesota, the pools are crowded with lily pads and cattails and surrounded by lush green grass. After about an hour, the trail intersects an old logging road. It’s a little confusing, but you’ll want to stay right and look for a giant cairn. Eventually, the trail goes left and reaches the rim of Sycamore Canyon and the border of the Sycamore Canyon Wilderness. Technically, the trail never enters the wilderness, but the views for the next hour or so, about 3 miles in, are nothing but wilderness. It’s a beautiful canyon, one that grows from a small ditch to a big wall. It gets bigger and better all the way to Vista Point, which is the halfway mark of the trail. From there, the trail heads back into the woods, past the normally dry Sycamore Falls, and makes a 500-foot ascent of KA Hill, which sits at an elevation of 7,287 feet. From the top, which includes views of Garland Prairie, the trail winds for another 20 minutes back to the trailhead.

LENGTH: 11-mile loop
DIFFICULTY: Easy
ELEVATION: 7,375 to 7,387 feet
TRAILHEAD GPS: N 35° 09.623’, W 112° 01.034’
DIRECTIONS: From Flagstaff, go west on Interstate 40 for approximately 25 miles to Garland Prairie Road (Exit 167). Turn left onto Garland Prairie Road (Forest Road 141) and continue 12 miles to Forest Road 556. Turn right onto FR 159 and continue 1.5 miles to the trailhead parking area on the left.

VEHICLE REQUIREMENTS: None
DOGS ALLOWED: Yes (on a leash)

SYCAMORE RIM TRAIL
Kelsey-Dorsey Loop

There are several trails on the north end of Sycamore Canyon. This loop combines two of them. It kicks off deep in the woods at the end of several dirt roads, where it immediately crosses into the wilderness and begins a steep descent, past some impressive alligator junipers, to a set of switchbacks. You’ll see distant mountains to the south and a thick forest all around as you make your way downhill to Kelsey Spring. To this point, the canyon hasn’t made an appearance, but it’s getting closer. Continuing the loop, the trail crosses a side canyon, one of many in the area. If you love trees — hardwoods and softwoods — this might be the highlight of your visit. It crosses several creek crossings, all of which are marked with cairns, but some can be hard to find. After a couple more creek crossings and about 15 minutes of hiking, the largest pool of the hike will come into view. To get there, you’ll have to detour off the trail about 100 feet. Compared with every other water hole along the way, this one is Lake Superior. It’s gorgeous. What makes it even more impressive is the wall of rock that surrounds it. Beyond this point, the trail climbs away from the creek and skirts a canyon wall for about 20 minutes. Then, it’s back and forth across the creek until you come to Parsons Spring, which turns an otherwise dry streambed into a perennial creek and makes it one of the best riparian hikes in Arizona.

LENGTH: 7.3-mile loop
DIFFICULTY: Moderate
ELEVATION: 6,631 to 6,120 feet
TRAILHEAD GPS: N 35° 04.405’, W 112° 58.769’
DIRECTIONS: From the intersection of Milton Road and Historic Route 66 in Flagstaff, go west on Route 66 for 2 miles to Forest Road 231 (Woody Mountain Road). Turn left onto FR 231 and continue 13.9 miles to Forest Road 556. Turn right onto FR 538 and continue 5.4 miles to Forest Road 538G. Veer right onto FR 538G and continue 1.5 miles to an intersection with Forest Road 523/5. Stay left on FR 538G and continue 0.3 miles to the trailhead.

VEHICLE REQUIREMENTS: A high-clearance vehicle is recommended.
DOGS ALLOWED: Yes (on a leash)

SYCAMORE RIM TRAIL
Kelsey Springs Loop

There are several trails on the north end of Sycamore Canyon. This loop combines two of them. It kicks off deep in the woods at the end of several dirt roads, where it immediately crosses into the wilderness and begins a steep descent, past some impressive alligator junipers, to a set of switchbacks. You’ll see distant mountains to the south and a thick forest all around as you make your way downhill to Kelsey Spring. To this point, the canyon hasn’t made an appearance, but it’s getting closer. Continuing the loop, the trail crosses a side canyon, one of many in the area. If you love trees — hardwoods and softwoods — this might be the highlight of your visit. It crosses several creek crossings, all of which are marked with cairns, but some can be hard to find. After a couple more creek crossings and about 15 minutes of hiking, the largest pool of the hike will come into view. To get there, you’ll have to detour off the trail about 100 feet. Compared with every other water hole along the way, this one is Lake Superior. It’s gorgeous. What makes it even more impressive is the wall of rock that surrounds it. Beyond this point, the trail climbs away from the creek and skirts a canyon wall for about 20 minutes. Then, it’s back and forth across the creek until you come to Parsons Spring, which turns an otherwise dry streambed into a perennial creek and makes it one of the best riparian hikes in Arizona.

LENGTH: 7.4 miles round-trip
DIFFICULTY: Easy
ELEVATION: 3,775 to 3,871 feet
TRAILHEAD GPS: N 34° 15.837’, W 112° 03.445’
DIRECTIONS: From Flagstaff, go northwest on Main Street (State Route 261) and follow the signs toward the turnoff for Tuzigoot National Monument. Turn right onto Tuzigoot Road, continue across the Verde River bridge and turn left onto Forest Road 131 (Sycamore Canyon Road). From there, it’s 15 miles to the trailhead.

VEHICLE REQUIREMENTS: A high-clearance vehicle is required.
DOGS ALLOWED: Yes (on a leash)
USE MAPS: Sycamore Basin, Clarenville

INFORMATION: Red Rock Ranger District, 928-282-4119 or www.fs.usda.gov/coconino

SYCAMORE RIM TRAIL
Parsons Spring Loop

There are several trails on the north end of Sycamore Canyon. This loop combines two of them. It kicks off deep in the woods at the end of several dirt roads, where it immediately crosses into the wilderness and begins a steep descent, past some impressive alligator junipers, to a set of switchbacks. You’ll see distant mountains to the south and a thick forest all around as you make your way downhill to Kelsey Spring. To this point, the canyon hasn’t made an appearance, but it’s getting closer. Continuing the loop, the trail crosses a side canyon, one of many in the area. If you love trees — hardwoods and softwoods — this might be the highlight of your visit. It crosses several creek crossings, all of which are marked with cairns, but some can be hard to find. After a couple more creek crossings and about 15 minutes of hiking, the largest pool of the hike will come into view. To get there, you’ll have to detour off the trail about 100 feet. Compared with every other water hole along the way, this one is Lake Superior. It’s gorgeous. What makes it even more impressive is the wall of rock that surrounds it. Beyond this point, the trail climbs away from the creek and skirts a canyon wall for about 20 minutes. Then, it’s back and forth across the creek until you come to Parsons Spring, which turns an otherwise dry streambed into a perennial creek and makes it one of the best riparian hikes in Arizona.

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VEHICLE REQUIREMENTS: A high-clearance vehicle is required.
DOGS ALLOWED: Yes (on a leash)
USE MAPS: Sycamore Basin, Clarenville

INFORMATION: Red Rock Ranger District, 928-282-4119 or www.fs.usda.gov/coconino

SYCAMORE RIM TRAIL
Kelsey-Dorsey Loop

THERE ARE SEVERAL TRAILS ON THE NORTH END OF SYCAMORE CANYON. THIS LOOP COMBINES TWO OF THEM. IT KICKS OFF DEEP IN THE WOODS AT THE END OF SEVERAL DIRT ROADS, WHERE IT IMMEDIATELY Crosses INTO THE WILDERNESS AND BEGINS A STEEP DESCENT, PAST SOME IMPRESSIVE ALLIGATOR JUNIPERS, TO A SET OF SWITCHBACKS. YOU’LL SEE DISTANT MOUNTAINS TO THE SOUTH AND A THICK FOREST ALL AROUND AS YOU MAKE YOUR WAY DOWNHILL TO KELSEY SPRING. TO THIS POINT, THE CANYON HASN’T MADE AN APPEARANCE, BUT IT’S GETTING CLOSER. CONTINUING THE LOOP, THE TRAIL CrossES A SIDE CANYON, ONE OF MANY IN THE AREA. IF YOU LOVE TREES — HARDWOODS AND SOFTWOODS — THIS MIGHT BE THE HIGHLIGHT OF YOUR VISIT. IT CrossES SEVERAL CREEK CROSSINGS, ALL OF WHICH ARE MARKED WITH CAIRNS, BUT SOME CAN BE HARD TO FIND. AFTER A COUPLE MORE CREEK CROSSINGS AND ABOUT 15 MINUTES OF HIKING, THE LARGEST POOL OF THE Hike WILL COME INTO VIEW. TO GET THERE, YOU’LL HAVE TO DetoUR OFF THE TRAIL ABOUT 100 FEET. COMPARED WITH EVERY OTHER WATER HOLE ALONG THE WAY, THIS ONE IS LAKE SUPERIOR. IT’S GORGEOUS. WHAT MAKES IT EVEN MORE IMPRESSIVE IS THE WALL OF ROCK THAT SURROUNDS IT. BEYOND THIS POINT, THE TRAIL CLIMBS AWAY FROM THE CREEK AND SKIRTS A CANYON WALL FOR ABOUT 20 MINUTES. THEN, IT’S BACK AND FORTH ACROSS THE CREEK UNTIL YOU COME TO PARSONS SPRING, WHICH TURNS AN OTHERWISE DRY STREAMBED INTO A PERENNIAL CREEK AND MAKES IT ONE OF THE BEST RIPARIAN HIKES IN ARIZONA.
Deep in the Heart of Sycamore Canyon

BY ED ELLINGER

T

here are only a few places on the Arizona map marked “Wilderness Area.” Sycamore Canyon, for good reason, is one of them. Sycamore, far off the beaten path, is relatively unknown compared to Grand Canyon, Oak Creek and Sabino. There are no roads there, no motels, no place to park your trailer or plug in your electric razor.

Sycamore Canyon lies thirty miles south of Williams, Arizona, slashed deep into the heart of the tall pine Mogollon Rim country. Sheer rock walls tower 2,000 feet above the canyon floor, eroded down through the soft sandstone by the receding waters of the Ice Age plus untold centuries of violent torrential floods.

There is a lookout point high on a bluff overlooking the north boundary of the canyon. It may be reached by driving south from Williams on twenty miles of paved road to the turn-off for Whitehorse Lake, then an additional ten miles on dirt and gravel through heavily-wooded pine. From this height one may look down into Sycamore as it winds, twists and turns into the purple grey distance.

Sycamore meanders south from the foot of the rim to a length of twenty miles. It fans out in spots to a width of six miles, fed by many lesser canyons emptying into Sycamore Basin from east and west. Heading south, the flora of the canyon changes from Ponderosa pine to cedar, juniper and scrub oak. Sycamore Creek lies along the canyon floor, a roaring giant during the spring thaws and summer rains, but a docile dry bed of bleached river boulders the remainder of the year. The creek bed is skirted by tall sycamores from which the canyon is named. The final four miles of Sycamore Creek is fed from springs pouring from the depths of the canyon walls. This clear stream flows year ‘round, emptying into the Verde River north of Clarkdale.

To many of us who live in Sedona, at the entrance to Oak Creek Canyon, the name Sycamore Canyon has always been an enigma. What did Sycamore have that other canyons didn’t have? We knew it was inaccessible and possessed a fabulous beauty, but perhaps its greatest magnetism was the legends we continually heard about its past; a past shrouded in romance and mystery; a past deeply immersed in Arizona history. We often heard about buried treasure and the “Lost Padre Mine,” established by the Spanish Founders, then quickly abandoned. There was the legend of how Casner Mountain was named for old Mose Casner who made a fortune in cattle and horses; then hid his gold in brimming Dutch ovens which he buried, somewhere in the Canyon. There were stories about the marauding Apaches; how they ambushed and massacred General Crook’s men at Battle Ridge, near Deadman’s Pocket, named in memory of a prospector torn to shreds by a grizzly bear.

Sycamore was noted as a hideout for gunmen and thieves — the perfect outlaw rendezvous for horse rustlers and men on the dodge from the relentless long fingers of justice.

In the broad boundaries of these canyon walls man has played out his wary game of hide-and-seek. He has shared this remote refuge with the wild animals of the Southwest — deer, elk, antelope, turkey and small game; all seeking food and shelter from the predacious mountain lion and bear. Sycamore has borne silent witness to a cross-section of life’s drama but is now almost deserted by man, relegated to a grazing area for hundreds of years ago, indigenous people made their home in this Sycamore Canyon cliff dwelling. It was a tough life, but it’s hard to beat the view.

Guy Schmickle
They subsequently built a snug Indian cave and kept ample feed and water. Verde Valley and had made it likely be sufficient water to take care of the stock. The timing seemed perfect. The next day we loaded his jeep with ten mules; then bid us “good-bye and good luck” as our little group started our climb up out of the canyon along the Packard Trail to the plateau above. Our first day’s objective was camp headquarters located on a broad mesa over-looking Sycamore. The trail was rough and narrow for the first few miles as we proceeded in single file. Then it opened up into broad rambling country, giving us our first glimpse of the terrain on either side of the canyon — broad, peaceful and brilliantly green under the spring rains. A chronicle of our camping activities would perhaps not describe the camp from any other. Of course we will always remember the smell of burning cedar, cowboy coffee and those wonderful mugs of thick country-baked bread that tasted so good with the flap-jacks and maple syrup. We will remember the close ties of warm friendship as well as the many humorous incidents and the satisfying feeling of bedding down on the ground under clear Arizona skies. But in spite of everything there was also a subtle difference which stemmed from an air of profound stillness and expectancy. A compelling sensation as if Apache warriors, in full regalia, had stepped from every rock and concealed themselves. We would have been surprised to have seen a heavily-armed posse [sic] of determined law-abiding citizens ride hell-for-leather into the canyon, hot on the trail of horse rustlers returning from a raid on innocent homesteaders. One could almost hear the clear staccato volleys of gunfire reverberating against the high surrounding walls. Our trip into Sycamore was over in the short space of four days, but somehow it was a segment of our lives apart from the rest. We lived in an encircling panorama of beauty changing with each turn in the trail, revealing new colorful statuette forms of red sandstone carved by centuries of wind and rain. The forms and shapes were reminiscent of Monument Valley, on a somewhat smaller scale, but considerably more intimate and coherent. One day we rode north from our base camp past Cow Flat into the Lookout Ridge area, then along a narrow trail along the edge of the creek and finally along the creek bottom, up into a hidden canyon where we camped for the winter. Temporary camp was pitched on the dry sun-warmed sand of the creek bed. One side was bordered by solid rock, cut deep and jagged. Swallows had built their clay nests in caves under the ledges of the rock. It was fun to watch them swirl in and out of their precariously perched dwelings. Up creek aways, were several deep holes filled with enough precocious water to dangle the horses. Quantities of driftwood were lying about and it wasn’t long before the campfire was blazing. That night its quiet crackle lulled us to sleep as we bedded-down close together on the sand, relaxed in the snug warmth of our blankets. A tiny rock house is located a short distance from the water holes. It is used by the Perkins family on periodic overnight visits when they ride into the canyon to check on their live-stock. Appropriately it is named “Taylor Cabin,” in memory of Zeke’s folks who spent so many winters in Sycamore seeking shelter and comfort for their horses. The interior of the cabin is cool and functional. It utilizes the canyon wall for its own roof support. Even the chimney doesn’t stand erect, as you might expect, but reclines gently against the wall of the canyon on which it rests. Another interesting day was spent exploring Indian ruins, almost hidden from view under the edge of the Canyon wall. The easiest access was to come down from above, holding on to shrub and rocks. The ruins were dustless from the Pueblo III period, placed at 1200 A.D. That was the beginning of the multi-room masonry [sic] pueblos indicated by the construction of the walls made of the soft sandstone hauled up from near the canyon floor. The Indians had set heavy logs across the tops of the walls, using them as a base for the thatched roof covered by a solid foot of clay. Several of us found arrowheads and bits of broken pottery, charred black by Indian fires, pikes of corn and even pieces broken from mantas [sic] — used for grinding the corn. Best of all we could look out from our towers vantage point and survey a vast area of magnificence and beauty. For here, stretching into the distance, was Sycamore Canyon, a “Wilderness Area,” clearly entitled to the name. Here was calm serenity, rare and sweet. Here was a glimpse into a way of life known to those who have no written history. Their struggle for survival was just as great as it is today — perhaps more so. Living in Sycamore in those days may have had its drawbacks, but to us this “Wilderness Area” was a complete world all its own into which we could escape if even for a brief moment. It was an experience we will not soon forget. Our plans call for an annual trip into Sycamore. There is lots more to see and much more to explore. In fact, one could spend a month in the confines of this Canyon and find something new and exciting every day. We found out why Sycamore was different. We have a return trip to look forward to and it won’t come too soon for any of us.
COYOTE, OWL AND MOUNTAIN

The Battle for Oak Flat

In a state where the landmarks have majestic names such as Grand Canyon and Monument Valley, a place like Oak Flat might seem insignificant, but the rocky ribbon of land east of Phoenix is anything but. It’s a remarkable place that’s sacred to the San Carlos Apaches, picture-perfect to rock climbers and worth billions to the federal government. They’re all staking a claim. Time will tell who prevails.

By Kelly Vaughn
Photographs by Bill Hatcher
WHEN THE WORLD WAS NEW

Part of one creation story of the Apache people goes like this:

The old world was covered by water — a flood so great it left only the top of one white-ringed mountain uncovered. Nothing survived, with the exception of a rooster that floated to the top of the mountain. Life Giver, the legend says, brought great rains to the Earth to clean it. After, Child-of-the-Water and White-Painted Woman made children from the mud. The Earth was new, and so were the people. They received the blessings of the spirit.

Another legend — the story of how daylight became daylight — is specific to the San Carlos Apaches:

It was dark everywhere because Owl wanted it so. Bear agreed. And so it was. But the people couldn’t see. “Why should it always be night?” they asked. “We shall never be able to see anything. We will make a dance against those who are stingy of darkness.”


Coyote danced around, singing his song. Owl grew sleepy and went to sleep. Bear, too, went to sleep. The people who objected to daylight went to sleep. Then Coyote won the daylight.

The people who lived on the Earth said, “Thanks, my cousin.” Owl said he would live under the rocks in the deep canyons and flew into one. Bear said he would go to a large and distant mountain and live in a hollow Douglas spruce where it is dark.

Coyote won the daylight, and now we have it. The people were happy.

IN THEIR OWN LANGUAGE, the San Carlos Apaches are the Ndeh Nation. The tribe’s motto: “One People, One Nation.”

And in early February 2015, the people began a two-day, 44-mile journey from the tribal seat at San Carlos to Oak Flat Campground, near Superior, in protest of what former San Carlos Chairman Wendsler Nosie calls “the greatest sin of the world” — the December 2014 transfer of sacred tribal land to a foreign mining corporation.

At stake in the exchange is Oak Flat itself — the place where coming-of-age ceremonies for Apache girls are held, where medicinal herbs and acorns are gathered. Where, according to Nosie, his people received the blessings of the spirit.

I first visited Oak Flat years ago, drawn by the shadows of boulders — eroded faces of time and wind and sunlight. I pulled over, touched cool rock and watched...
Although the move is symbolic and won’t affect the land transfer from the agreement.

Without a moment’s hesitation, the fleeing Apaches threw themselves over the towering cliffs in the faint hope of escape.

And for the people, it’s more than just a protest. “It’s returning home,” Nosie says.

“We’re finding the place we originated from and where all these holy gifts were given. When is it going to end? In the white perspective, they have the rules and regulations, and we don’t know when they’re going to enforce what they believe is right in terms of keeping the first people out. But for us, it’s home, and we intend to stay there forever and ever.”

AN ART THAT ROCKED THE WORLD


In 10 pages, the government of the United States of America transfers a 2,400-acre parcel of Oak Flat to Resolution Copper, a subsidiary of Rio Tinto, a multinational mining corporation headquartered in London.

The company’s plan, according to its website, is to pull ore from the deep veins of copper that run below Oak Flat’s surface as part of an extension of its existing mining operations in the region. “The project,” the site reads, “will generate sustainable benefits for Arizona, creating 2,700 jobs and $61.4 billion in economic value over the life of the mine.”

In exchange, Resolution Copper will convey 5,300 acres of conservation lands — lands considered highly valuable for their biodiversity, recreational opportunities and cultural significance — back to the United States. The biggest of those parcels is a 3,070-acre, 7-mile run of the San Pedro River where leopard frogs, turtles, and migratory and native songbirds thrive.

For the government and for the company, the exchange was balanced. But for the San Carlos Apaches, an array of environmental organizations and the rock climbers who consider Oak Flat one of the best recreational areas in Central Arizona, the legislation was a political maneuver fueled by financial promises and disregard for history, culture and the planet.

Indeed, Oak Flat’s history — the one outside of its centuries-old significance to the Apaches — is somewhat charming. In 1953, President Dwight Eisenhower’s administration closed Oak Flat to mining under Public Land Order 1229. The story told locally is that Eisenhower and his wife, Mamie, pickednicked under one of the area’s namesake oak trees, and Mamie, the story goes, was so moved by the beauty of the area that she pushed for its protection.

President Richard Nixon’s administration renewed the ban in 1971, and it lasted for decades. But in the early 2000s, lobbyists began pushing for land exchange legislation in both houses of Congress. Since, several bills have been introduced in either the House or the Senate that would have transferred Oak Flat to Resolution Copper. None gained much traction — that is, until the entry in the NDAA.

OPPONENTS OF THE EXCHANGE were quick to target Arizona Senators John McCain and Jeff Flake as the men behind the move. A May 20, 2015, op-ed in The New York Times noted that “Rio Tinto affiliates have been McCain campaign contributors, and that Mr. Flake, before he made it to Congress, was a paid lobbyist for Rio Tinto Rössing Uranium (a huge uranium mine in Namibia).” Mr. McCain and others assert that the mining project will be a boost to the local economy, though it’s unclear how many of the 1,400 promised jobs would be local; a Superior-area miners’ group, in fact, opposes the swap on the
basis that it won't help the local people or economy. Rio Tinto, incidentally, has been called out in the past for environmental devastation.

Despite three months of requests to his office, Senator McCain wouldn't comment for this story. His press representative, however, did provide links to two items that state the senator's official position on the issue. One, a post made to his Facebook page on August 27, 2015, states that the new mining efforts will create more than $61 billion in economic activity over the next 60 years, the equivalent, the post reads, "of Arizona hosting two Super Bowls every year for more than half a century." The same post also rejects the commonly asserted argument that the exchange will affect tribal land or sacred sites. "There is no 'Executive Order' protecting Oak Flat," the post adds.

While Senator McCain was silent on the issue, Arizona Representative Ann Kirkpatrick, who's trying to take Senator McCain's seat in this year's election and who also supports the exchange, did agree to an interview. "I grew up in a small timber town in the White Mountains, and I've seen Arizona go through too many boom-and-bust cycles," she says. "So my vision and my work are dedicated to creating a strong, diversified, stable economy. The Copper Corridor is part of that. It's a century's legacy of copper mining in that area. Generations of Arizona families have worked these mines, and they've been through some hard times. This is a spark plug for the local economy."

While Representative Kirkpatrick acknowledges that not all of the jobs would be local, she says she believes small business will spring up in support of the new operation. "All along, I've said this is just a spark plug," she reiterates. "It's up to the local people to build on that and diversify ... There has to be small businesses that come in for the long term."

As for the San Carlos Apaches' claim that Oak Flat is sacred land? "I get that," the congresswoman says. "I grew up with the Apaches, and I really understand that and have been very sensitive." Apache Leap, she notes, has been removed from the exchange and is now protected by the Forest Service. "That will be permanent protection for their sacred site," she says. But it isn't enough, according to Arizona Representative Raúl Grijalva.

I meet him in his Tucson office on a sunny November Monday. Somewhere, smoke curls toward the sky and smells like campfire — a little bit of wild tucked inside the city. As Representative Grijalva and I talk, he takes notes on a legal pad, sketching nonsensical shapes and patterns, reflections of the light pushing its way through the window, casting shadows into the corners of the room. His drawings are whimsical, but his policy is clear.

In the first session of the 106th Congress, the congressman introduced a bill that would repeal Section 805 of the NDAA. It quickly became known as the Save Oak Flat Act and has since garnered bipartisan support, including co-sponsorship from Republican Representatives Tom Cole, Markwayne Mullin and Walter B. Jones. What's more, presidential candidate and Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders introduced a companion bill in the Senate.

"What strikes me as particularly important is that there's a lot of lip service paid to sovereignty and self-determination," Representative Grijalva says. "That's bipartisan lip service, so we have kind of a patronizing attitude about how we deal with [Native Americans]. ... We need to recognize as a nation that this site carries not only spiritual significance to the Native people, but also a very important legacy for this country."

He adds: "Desecration of one of these sites needs to carry the kind of offense that desecration to any other religious site — be it Christian, Muslim, Jewish — would carry."

— Arizona Representative Raúl Grijalva

"Desecration of one of these sites needs to carry the kind of offense that desecration to any other religious site — be it Christian, Muslim, Jewish — would carry."

— Arizona Representative Raúl Grijalva

The problem, according to EarthWorks, a national non-profit that works to provide communities with sustainable alternatives to mining, is the void that remains when all the ore is pulled from an area. It can't be backfilled. The earth above the void collapses. A crater forms. And anything sacred or historic or beautiful is pulled into it.

Then there's the issue of water. With an average annual rainfall of just 20 inches, the Superior area, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor, is in the midst of a "moderate drought." Resolution Copper estimates that its panel caving technique will require 17,000 to 20,000 acre-feet of water each year, a projection that, so far, has prompted the company to begin purchasing Central Arizona Project water from two irrigation districts. One acre-foot of water is equivalent to 325,851 gallons.

The mining equipment is quiet the day a handful of climbers drive me out to Magna Mine Road and walk me into Euro Dog Valley, a segment of Oak Flat known for its rock walls. It is late September, warm. The way it is when the season isn't ready to change, but the people beg for it. Two mutts and a Portuguese water dog lead the way, scrambling up the trail and past thick clusters of agaves as though they've gone this way before. As the climbers drop their gear, I look up to meet Titanic Wall, the subject of this Sunday morning's adventure.

The wall features routes rated between 5.7 and 5.11, meaningful among the people who speak that language — the rock climbers and boulder hoppers who flock to Oak Flat because of its ease of access from Phoenix.

For me, Titanic is appropriately named. For the athletes who

OF MEMORY, FEAR AND GRAVITY

In his autobiography, Colonel W.F. Cody — better known to you and me as Buffalo Bill — wrote, "The West of the old times, with its strong characters, its stern battles and its tremendous stretches of loneliness, can never be blotted from my mind. Nor can it, I hope, be blotted from the memory of the American people, to whom it has become a priceless possession."

The autobiography was published in 1920 — half a century after the Pinal Apaches jumped from Apache Leap, but long before Rio Tinto and other large mining companies took over the small copper claims of Western settlers. Prescott, present, however, the quote is a reflection of what's happening at Oak Flat today.

Rock climbers and environmentalists fight to protect long stretches of loneliness, while the Apaches, politicians and company executives engage in a battle of philosophy and economics. As it works to expand its operations, Resolution Copper plans to use a mining system known as panel caving. "The process begins with an initial round of explosives at the bottom of the ore body to break up the rock," the company explains on its website. "Then rock is fanned downward and removed. The void created in the removal process allows gravity to continue forcing the ore body downward."

But the problem, according to EarthWorks, a national non-profit that works to provide communities with sustainable alternatives to mining, is the void that remains when all the
brought me here, it is an everyday, easy jaunt up slick-rock. Ropes and harnesses. The dull, cool smell of chalk. I trade my Merrell boots for a pair of purple climbing shoes my sister gave me in exchange for something else — an old purse, maybe, or cowboy boots. Then I watch.

The climbers are up the wall in what feels like seconds, the arachnid extension of their legs so easy, the curl of their fingers into the creases of rock as natural as playing on piano keys. After an hour of watching, petting the dogs and swallowing my anxiety, I maneuver slowly and uncertainly up the wall, using a route I watched another climber master just minutes earlier, those muscles in both arms tense and freeze and relax again. My body shakes. Fear and gravity and fatigue, that extended flex-ion of the flexor carpi radialis muscles a new thing to me. Some superficial muscles comprise the anterior forearm, but the one that runs from the elbow to the base of the index finger is known as the flexor carpi radialis. It pulls blood from the radial artery and works to flex the hand. As I maneuver slowly and uncertainly up the wall, using a route I watched another climber master just minutes earlier, those muscles in both arms tense and freeze and relax again. My body shakes. Fear and gravity and fatigue, that extended flex-ion of the flexor carpi radialis muscles a new thing to me.

The thing about climbing — the thing I hadn’t considered before — is that, in addition to being a way to explore Arizona from a new perspective, it’s a way to empty your brain of clutter, to focus. Up. Survival. Down. Survival. It is problem-solving in its rawest form. And when you’re that close to the Earth itself, tied quite literally to the great rocks that rose from long ago tectonic shifts, from the heating and cooling and passing of time, you begin to understand why places like Oak Flat are important, why it means something to protect them for future generations of climbers.

And while neither Shannon nor Representative Grijalva is overwhelmingly optimistic about the current legislation, they share a hope that by the time the mine completes the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review process, there will be enough support on both sides of the congressional aisle to protect the land once and for all.

“We took a big hit when the land exchange bill was put into the [NDAA],” Shannon says. “Looking at the positive side, we’ll try to keep [the Save Oak Flat legislation] snowballing and gaining momentum, even though the bills might not pass in this Congress because of the current makeup of Congress. … The goal is to think a little bit more long term and to try to get it to pass before the land at Oak Flat is actually transferred to the mining company. We have several years to get that done, because of the NEPA process.”

In the meantime, the Access Fund will continue to educate the public about the environmental impact of the mine and what losing Oak Flat would mean to the climbing community.

“It’s an absolutely beautiful place, and it’s within an hour’s drive of Phoenix, which I think is one of the things that really makes it special,” Shannon says. “To say that the area could be replaced, which is what the mine says, is a little bit crazy. Sure, there are other beautiful places where people can climb — they exist already — but they’re not nearly as convenient to a lot of people. That will make them less used. There are people who would drive an hour to go out to Oak Flat for an afternoon, then drive back, but those same people wouldn’t drive two or three hours, then drive back.”

AFTER SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING my first route up Titanic Wall, I try another. This time, though, I give up, unable to will my muscles to flex my hands anymore. I awkwardly scraped my legs against the rock during that first, slow climb, and blood runs like a snake from my shin into my shoe. Months later, the scars from that wound and the deep scrapes on the insides of my knees have turned the same color as the rocks were that day at Titanic Wall, pink-brown and textured. And climbers are still traveling to Oak Flat as they await the NEPA report and the results of their efforts to repeal Section 3003 — at press time, more than 300 people had RSVP’d to the Queen Creek Boulder Comp, a climbing competition scheduled to take place at Oak Flat the first weekend in April. But for the Apaches and the people who care about Oak Flat, the wound left by the NDAA is still wide open.

“We’re trying to undo a wrong,” Representative Grijalva says. “And that’s much harder than stopping a wrong.”
In 1901, the Arizona Daily Star announced the triumphant opening of a building of great consequence — the culmination of decades of work on the part of Tucson’s leading citizens. “The occasion should call out a large assemblage of people,” the paper predicted, “as the event will be one which will mark an important epoch in the growth of Tucson from a small hamlet to what promises to be a city of large importance...a milestone in the history of the development and growth of the intelligence of the citizens of Tucson and the material progress of the city.”

It wasn’t the university, the railroad or the new City Hall. Rather, the event marked the opening of the city’s Carnegie library, the first freestanding public library to open in Tucson and likely in all of Territorial Arizona. Today, public libraries are common even in small communities, so it’s hard to imagine the achievement they represented in Arizona’s early days. Back then, libraries stood as symbols of sophistication, proof that dusty frontier towns had achieved stability, prosperity and class. Over the next two decades, three other Arizona cities would celebrate this milestone with the help of businessman and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie.
Prescott women had tried to organize a lending library almost since the establishment of the Territorial capital there, but they had failed to gain a foothold through the economic ups and downs. In 1895, a group of prominent women founded the Women's Club, though they soon changed the name to the Monday Club, lest people think they were suffragettes. Members included Julia Goldwater and the wife of former Governor Frederick Tittle.

The Monday Club organized a library board of directors in 1897, advertised for book donations and opened a subscription library. Two years later, Goldwater wrote to Carnegie asking for $8,000 to $10,000 to fund “the last half of $8,000” as a kind of matching grant.

Monday Club members hosted teas and dances, sometimes charging book donations for admission. Their husbands canvassed Whiskey Row for donations. By 1900, the club had raised the needed money. Then the fire of July 14 devasted the town.

By the time Tucson applied for its grant, Carnegie had imposed other conditions. He offered Tucson $25,000, but he required that the city provide a location and guarantee $2,000 a year to maintain the library. The council donated land on Military Plaza, the former site of Fort Lowell. It set up a library fund and hired renowned architect Henry Trost. In 1900, while Prescott was struggling to recover from the fire, Tucson broke ground on its library, which opened the following year.

About that time, Phoenix also was eying a grant. The city was bursting at the seams thanks to the National Reclamation Act of 1902, which made the Salt River Project one of its first undertakings. That was in large part the work of a couple of wealthy, well-connected speculators — Benjamin A. Fowler and Dwight B. Heard — who came to Arizona for their health and used their considerable influence to make Phoenix a major city.

Ironically, both Fowler and the male president of the Phoenix Library Association failed to interest Carnegie in their cause. Then the Woman’s Club of Phoenix, led by Dorothy McClintock, formed a library committee, took up the matter and began a lengthy correspondence with Carnegie’s secretary. In 1902, Carnegie promised $10,000. The women believed the city’s mudroom population entitled it to a grant as large as Tucson’s, but their appeals went nowhere.

With the grant stalled, Colonel James McClintock, Fowler and Heard swung into action. They collected post office, school census, assessed valuation and any other statistics they could think of to prove a larger population, and they called on their friends for help. The census director and the director of the U.S. Geological Survey, who also served as secretary of the Carnegie Institution, wrote letters of support, pretending the land rush inspired by the Salt River Project. Fowler traveled to New York to see Carnegie’s representatives.

In January 1904, Carnegie relented. Despite protests that the site was farthest from those who needed it most, the city chose McClintock’s house. The library opened to great fanfare on February 14, 1905, with a design similar to Tucson’s library, with stacks arranged like spokes on a wheel and men’s and women’s reading rooms on either side of an ornate skylight.

The Carnegie library in Yuma opened in 1921 but has been extensively remodeled since then.

A zinc-lined closet permitted fumigation of returned books. In an era of segregation, it likely was the only integrated public building in the city.

Yuma also prospered from the Reclamation Act, and the future took bright. When the Yuma City Council deputized the husband of one of its members to apply for a Carnegie grant. A 1913 letter to Carnegie boasted that Yuma was “assured of one of the great-est futures that will not be found in any part of the country.”

Until a library could be built, City Club members set up a free reading room in the former home of Colorado River steamboat pilot Isaac Polhamus. Furnishing it with donations and soliciting subscriptions from area businesses.

The reading room’s annual maintenance requirement proved a sticking point with the City Council, however. Then, the flood of 1911 devastated the town, destroying 50 buildings and leaving thousands of Yuma’s citizens without shelter. The Polhamus library was spared and, for a time, served as flood-relief headquarters.

Amid a fever of rebuilding, the City Club petitioned the City Council to apply for a $20,000 Carnegie grant. This time the council agreed to Carnegie’s terms, including $600 toward the required $1,000 annual maintenance. The City Club committed to raising the rest. The last of Arizona’s Carnegie libraries opened in 1919.

In 1920, the City Club organized a library board of directors in 1924 under the leadership of Elsa Hedges. The club bought property near Pima Street and Avenue K and hired architect John C. Purcell to design a Carnegie library. The club raised $1,500 toward the $3,000 purchase price. In 1924, the library opened to much fanfare.


The Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records now manages Phoenix’s Carnegie library as a multipurpose center. Both are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Tucson Children’s Museum moved into that city’s Carnegie library. Only Yuma’s Carnegie building still operates as a library. It also houses the Arizona Historical Society archives for the area. Called the Heritage Branch, it’s been expanded and remodeled beyond recognition.

“One of the basement areas is part of the original,” says Laurie Boone, special-collections librarian. “I like to think it’s the part where the Arizona Historical Society is now.”

EDITOR’S NOTE: We are grateful to the Sharlot Hall Museum Library and Archives; the Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records; and Laurie Boone, special-collections librarian for the Yuma County Library District, for their help researching this story.
JUNE 30, 1956

JUST DAYS BEFORE AMERICA’S 180TH BIRTHDAY, TWO PASSENGER JETS, A DOUGLAS DC-7 OPERATED BY UNITED AND A LOCKHEED L-1049 SUPER CONSTELLATION OPERATED BY TWA, COLLIDED OVER GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK. AT THE TIME, IT WAS THE DEADLIEST COMMERCIAL AVIATION ACCIDENT IN HISTORY. THIS MONTH MARKS THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THAT DISASTER, AND RECENTLY, THE CRASH SITE WAS DESIGNATED A NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK.

BY ANNETTE McGIVNEY ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARK SMITH

S RAY COOK HEADED HOME ON SATURDAY EVENING, JUNE 30, 1956, after playing baseball with a friend, he thought the only thing he had to worry about was explaining to his father how he’d gotten a large knot on his head. He had attempted to hit a basketball with a baseball bat, and the bat had rebounded against his forehead. His father was due home from a business trip that day, and Cook mulled what he would say to him. But as Cook, then 12, arrived at his house in suburban Detroit, he found it crowded with people, and members of the media had begun to convene on his front lawn.

“They told me Dad’s plane was missing,” he recalls nearly 60 years later. “And they told me not to touch the phone, because there was an open line to United Airlines representatives who were keeping us informed of any news.” United Flight 718 had left Los Angeles for Chicago, with a final destination of Newark, New Jersey, at 9:04 that morning, carrying Cook’s father — Leon David Cook Jr., a chemical engineer — and 57 other passengers and crew. While the Cook family received no news about the United flight that night, they did get word that the wreckage of a second missing plane had been discovered at the bottom of the Grand Canyon. It was Trans World Airlines Flight 2, carrying 70 passengers.
and crew, and it had also taken off from Los Angeles that day, at 9:01 a.m., en route to Kansas City, Missouri. “When my Dad had perished,” Cook says, as his voice quivers. “But I had a dream that night, and I would have it for many years. Dad would appear on the rim of the Grand Canyon, dirty and unshaven, after bailing out because the rescuers didn’t find him. He would exclaim: ‘I’m here! I’m alive!’”

The same day, in New Jersey, Ray Lasby’s family was making preparations to greet him after he had been away on a week-long business trip in California. Ray, who was 18, was an engineer, and the family had just purchased its first house. “I was only 4,” Kathy Lasby Natale recalls in an oral history recorded in 2014. “We sat ecstatically dressed, and crew, and it had also taken off from Los Angeles that day, and I would have it for many years. Dad would appear on the park, and crew died, and despite a monumental recovery effort, the crash site remains one of the most dangerous and extensive disaster recovery operations in National Park Service history.

Meanwhile, Cook’s mother, Dorothy, was falling apart. “Two men from the park came to the house and told my mother that my father’s body could not be identified and any attempt to locate him was pointless.” Cook recalls. “And my mother just utterly collapsed. It was horrific to see somebody that devastated. She cursed my father for leaving her with three children to raise by herself.”

Cook’s mother asked him to go to boarding school to ease her parenting load, and he reluctantly agreed. Nothing was the same after that. “At age 12, I didn’t just lose my father, I lost my whole family,” he says. An out-of-court settlement with United brought some money to the family but didn’t come close to replacing the lost salary of the family breadwinner. After the accident, Cook’s mother started drinking heavily and would continue drinking until her death in 1971, when she was intoxicated. She had been a woman despondent, and had been a decade before. But the federal aviation system was ill-equipped to monitor the rapid increase in air traffic. While radio controllers at airports guided pilots during takeoff and landing, the airspace over much of the U.S. was unmonitored, and pilots simply navigated by sight to avoid other aircraft. The two planes had collided and broke apart as they fell to the ground. While debris was scattered over some 1,000 acres in Grand Canyon National Park, the plane impact sites were both just below the confluence of the Colorado and Little Colorado rivers, in one of the most inaccessible areas of the park.

In one bizarre twist, 148 airmail letters from the TWA cargo department arrived at the Lasbys’ house. “They said to my brother, who was 9, ‘Did you hear the flight?’” Cook later recalled. “He said they had heard the impact that a disaster, especially a national disaster like this, would have on the community.”

The next day, the wreckage from the United plane also was found, and drivers and crew died, and despite a monumental recovery effort, the crash site remains one of the most dangerous and extensive disaster recovery operations in National Park Service history.

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After a period of weeks, in temperatures that reached 120 degrees in the canyon’s inner gorge, Grand Canyon ranger and U.S. Air Force members embarked on a massive recovery effort to retrieve human remains, possessions and plane wreckage that would help investigators deduce how the disaster happened. Grand Canyon Village became a media circus as journalists from across the country waited to report news of the crash. Natale recalls. “I think that’s what made her survive. … That baby was what pulled her together.” A newly single mother of three, she supported the family with a flight-insurance payout and a modest out-of-court settlement from United. When the money ran out, she went back to work in her mid-30s and continued to work until she was 72.

“[Dad] was the only one for her,” Natale says. “Taking care of us, she was strong, but there were countless, countless nights when I would hear her sobbing from her loneliness and her heartbreak.”

Cook met Natale and the son of Gandy, the TWA pilot. The latter “apologized to me for his father’s decision to go to that higher altitude,” Cook says. “That dream helped me get through all those years growing up when I was a mess. It was like I was able to talk to my dad, and that gave me comfort. It helped me to believe there is more to this world than we know.”

EDITOR’S NOTE: This month, Grand Canyon National Park is commemorating the 60th anniversary of the crash; but details had not been finalized at press time. For more information, call the park at 928-638-8888 or visit www.nps.gov/grca.

Hough and others give a personal account to nominate the site as a National Historic Landmark. Hough and others spent eight years completing the application process, and the proposal was approved in 2014. The landmark, which Hough describes as a “mass grave,” encompasses a remote area on both sides of the Colorado River and includes both plane impact sites and the surrounding debris fields. The artifacts in the landmark are protected under federal law and park regulations, and to prevent pillaging and preserve the site, the boundaries are not disclosed to the general public.

Along with the designation, an interpretive display and a monument were installed near the Canyon’s Desert View Watchtower. The display, on the lip of the South Rim, encourages visitors to reflect on the accident and look out over the airspace where the collision occurred. A map points to the impact sites near Chuar Butte and Butler Butte, and photos of personal items retrieved, including a key and lock, remind visitors of the lives affected by the disaster.

On June 30, 2014, the 58th anniversary of the accident, the Park Foundation and National Park Service hosted a ceremony and allowed victims’ families to meet each other, share stories and lay a wreath at the common grave. About 50 children of the victims and their extended family members attended. “It was a big moment for the Grand Canyon’s entire lives,” Ranney says. “But even if they didn’t realize it before, when they got to the event, they discovered they had been longing for closure. And after 58 years, many of them finally got it.”

The Crash Site Historic Landmark. Hough and others give a personal account to nominate the site as a National Historic Landmark. Hough and others spent eight years completing the application process, and the proposal was approved in 2014. The landmark, which Hough describes as a “mass grave,” encompasses a remote area on both sides of the Colorado River and includes both plane impact sites and the surrounding debris fields. The artifacts in the landmark are protected under federal law and park regulations, and to prevent pillaging and preserve the site, the boundaries are not disclosed to the general public.

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JUNE 2006 WAS the 50th anniversary of the collision, and Cook, who now lives in Phoenix, and his wife, Christa, decided to go to the cemetery at Grand Canyon National Park. They stumbled upon a Grand Canyon Association presentation at Shrine of the Ages, next door to the cemetery, that was commemorating the tragedy. For the first time in his life, Cook talked to park staff, as well as the children of other victims, about how the accident had impacted his family. “It was cathartic,” he says. “I learned that other people had a similar story to mine.”

Park staff also realized at the 2006 event that the crash site could be doing to protect the crash site, better educate the public about the significance of the tragedy and facilitate closure for the families who were still grieving, even after five decades. “We asked, ‘What can we do to give the accident sites proper recognition, and also to honor the victims’ families?’” says Ian Hough, a Park Service archaeologist.

In 2006, the park considered designating the site as a National Historic Landmark. The proposal was approved in 2014. The landmark, which Hough describes as a “mass grave,” encompasses a remote area on both sides of the Colorado River and includes both plane impact sites and the surrounding debris fields. The artifacts in the landmark are protected under federal law and park regulations, and to prevent pillaging and preserve the site, the boundaries are not disclosed to the general public.
ASH FORK TO WILLIAMS  Although Historic Route 66 gets most of the nostalgic affection, an even older route — the National Old Trails Road — once made its way across Arizona. Today, Forest Road 124 is reminiscent of that old dirt trail.  BY ANNETTE MCGIVNEY / PHOTOGRAPHS BY NICK BEREZENKO

Before there was the smooth, straight blacktop of Interstate 40 to ferry auto travelers across Northern Arizona, there was Route 66. And before Route 66, there was a little-known route called the National Old Trails Road. This coast-to-coast highway was established in 1912 to encourage auto touring, and it stretched for some 3,000 miles, from the East Coast to California. The expanse across the West generally followed the route of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway, which was managed by the Ash Fork Historical Society and includes various exhibits on frontier life, as well as plenty of early 20th century road trip memorabilia. From Ash Fork, head north on Double A Ranch Road — you’ll pass Settlers Cemetery on the right. Then turn right onto County Road 124, which becomes Forest Road 124. Sooner, the pavement ends and the real experience begins.

The graded red-dirt road winds north and then east through juniper scrubland and in between hillsides stacked with large, salmon-colored sandstone slabs. Several commercial quarries along FR 124 supply Ash Fork’s thriving flagstone business. After several miles, you’ll top out on a 6,000-foot plateau called Paradise Ridge, where undulating grassland sprawls in every direction and a spectacular view of Bill Williams Mountain and the San Francisco Peaks fills the horizon. On the right, look for the perfect picnic spot: a pullout and two sandstone benches, strategically placed to enjoy the view, under a large juniper. As FR 124 descends off the ridge, railroad tracks parallel the road on the left, and the ruins of an old mining town at Cacamonga Junction are on the right. Eventually, the junipers, prickly pears and sandstone bluffs give way to broad high-country meadows that are filled with wildflowers in late summer. On your right is a marsh, called Mud Ketch Tank, where deer can often be spotted. FR 124 (also signed CR 124) becomes a bumpy washboard on the climb out of the marsh and into the pine forest just outside of Williams.

A National Old Trails Road travel guide published in the early 1920s by the Albuquerque Auto Trades Association describes Williams this way: “Here, the healthseeker or the sportsman finds his goal. The hills abound with deer and wild turkey, [and] numerous small lakes are stocked with bass. Lion, bear and wolves, while a menace to the stock industry, offer thrills for the big game hunter.”

Eventually, you’re back on pavement, and as you drive past the manicured greens of Williams’ Elephant Rocks Golf Course, it’s highly unlikely you’ll see a wolf or a bear. But you can enjoy the satisfaction of having experienced a vintage 1920 American road trip.

In between hillsides stacked with wildflowers in late summer. On your right is a marsh, called Mud Ketch Tank, where deer can often be spotted. FR 124 (also signed CR 124) becomes a bumpy washboard on the climb out of the marsh and into the pine forest just outside of Williams.

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HIKE of the month

**DOGIE TRAIL** Of the 16 established trails in the Sycamore Canyon Wilderness, this is one of the most accessible. It’s one of the most beautiful, too.

**By Robert Steve / Photographs by Mark Frank**

It’s not important for planning purposes, but the name of this trail is pronounced “d–o–g–ie” (rhymes with hoagie). It’s a word that defines a motherless calf in a range herd. A lot of trails in Arizona get their names from ranchers or cowboys. In this case, the name comes from a demo- graphic of cows. You probably won’t see any dogies on the trail, but you might see badgers, bobcats and mule deer. You might see hikers, too. Of the 16 established trails in the Sycamore Canyon Wilderness, this one is the most accessible. Still, there’s a good chance you’ll be out there alone. So, pack a thinking cap, hike early and take plenty of water.

The trailhead is located at the end of a scenic road — lots of red rock and blue sky. Although a high-clearance vehicle is required, there aren’t any white-knuckle drop-offs or deadly curves. The drive is a bonus. And the hike is even better. It begins with a quick climb to a high ridge that offers expansive views in all four directions, with virtually no signs of human existence. “Welcome to Sycamore Canyon,” Mother Nature whispers. After passing through a gate, you’ll enter the wilderness and begin a gradual descent. Pithon pines and junipers dominate the landscape early on, along with several small washes on either side.

The first ponderosa shows up about 20 minutes later. Shortly thereafter, the trail passes under (yes, under) a barbed-wire fence. To the right you’ll see Sycamore Pass Tank, more rusty fences and an old corral. As the trail continues its descent, the ground cover gets thicker. Don’t be surprised if you startle deer or kick up some grouse. The birds are a common sight in this wilderness, which provides safe haven from hunters.

Just beyond the tank, if you look to the southwest, you’ll notice a narrow passage in the canyon. At its widest point, Sycamore Canyon stretches 7 miles from rim to rim. The passage to the left, however, is measured in meters, and the rocks are measured in millions of years. Overall, the canyon’s steep sides provide a cross-section look at about 250 million years of sandstone and limestone deposits, capped by a volcanic layer of basalt.

Because this trail is well marked and easy to follow, it allows your eyes to wander and study the rock formations that have formed over time. One of them is a large mesa to the north. It’s visible from the outset, and after an hour of hiking, you’ll wind around it and see that it features a long vertical “window.” From that point, the trail gets steeper and dips into and out of a deep wash. It’s a change of pace from the rolling terrain on the upper end.

Continuing along the eastern slope, you’ll wind through a spectacular primitive campsite — it’s the only tricky spot, in terms of route-finding, but look for the cairns and you’ll be fine. From there, the ponderosas get taller and the washes get deeper. Be mindful of flash floods, especially this time of year, when monsoons can be deadly. Otherwise, look outward at the increasingly beautiful views.

Then, after almost two hours of hiking, you’ll come to a ridge that marks the final descent. The rest of the route winds through tall grasses and thorny brambles before arriving at Sycamore Creek, which is normally dry. The only perennial water is at the southern end of the canyon, where Parsons Spring feeds a 4-mile stretch (see page 20). At this crossing, the creek is lined with the canyon’s signature trees. And the bed is mostly rocks, ranging in size from cue balls to bowling balls to bigger than a brood truck.

Although the creek makes an obvious turnaround point, the Dogie Trail continues up the opposite bank for another 10 minutes to an intersection with the Sycamore Basin Trail. It’s a worthy extension. The panorama rolls across the northern skyline, and a look to the east shows the magnificent depth of the canyon. You have a hoagie and enjoy the views. Chances are, you’ll have them all to yourself. No off-road vehicles, no range herds, no little dogies.

**BELOW AND OPPOSITE PAGE:** A spot near the high point of the Dogie Trail offers spectacular views of the sandstone formations of the Sycamore Canyon Wilderness.

**MAP BY KEVIN KIBSEY**

**ADDITIONAL READING:** For more hikes, pick up a copy of Arizona Highways Hiking Guide, which features 52 of the state’s best trails — one for each weekend of the year, sorted by seasons. To order a copy visit www.shoparizonahighways.com/books.

**TRAIL GUIDE**

**LENGTH:** 10.8 miles round-trip

**DIFFICULTY:** Strenuous

**ELEVATION:** 4,942 to 4,358 feet

**TRAILHEAD GPS:** N 34° 15.399’, W 111° 54.157’

**DIRECTIONS:** From the roundabout intersection of state routes 179 and 89A in Sedona, go southwest on SR 89A for 4.7 miles to Forest Road 52 (Red Canyon Road). Turn right onto FR 525 and continue 2.7 miles to Forest Road 52C (Sycamore Pass Road). Turn left onto FR 525C and continue 6 miles to the trailhead.

**VEHICLES REQUIREMENTS:** A high-clearance vehicle is required.

**DOGS ALLOWED:** Yes

**HORSES ALLOWED:** Yes

**LODGES:** Sycamore Basin, Loy Butte

**INFORMATION:** Red Rock Ranger District, 928-203-2900 or www.fs.usda.gov/coconino

**LEAVE-NO-TRACE PRINCIPLES:**

• Plan ahead and be prepared.
• Travel and camp on durable surfaces.
• Dispose of waste properly and pack out all of your trash.
• Leave what you find.
• Respect wildlife.
• Minimize campfire impact.
• Be considerate of others.
Vat Is This?

Our editor will be the first to tell you they make good beer in Belgium. And in the 1930s, this beer kettle was in service there. Now it's stateside, where it welcomes visitors to a facility that celebrates Arizona's history with a certain mineral. And if you can't tell which mineral by looking at this photo, you've had one Belgian beer too many.

WHERE IS THIS?

PHOTOGRAPHS: TOP JEFF KIDA
ABOVE, LEFT TOM STORY

April 2016
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