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What is the Arizona Trail?

The Arizona Trail is an 800+ mile recreation trail from Mexico to Utah that connects mountain ranges, canyons, deserts, forests, wilderness areas, historic sites, trail systems, points of interest, communities, and people. It serves dayhikers, backpackers, equestrians, mountain bicyclists, trail runners, nature enthusiasts, cross-country skiers, snowshoers, and mule and llama packers. The trail can also be described in two other ways; for its features, and for the experience it provides.

Features

The many different features on and near the Arizona Trail allow it to showcase many of the state's greatest attributes, and contributed to its congressional and presidential designation as a National Scenic Trail. The features of the Arizona Trail are diverse including historic sites, diverse natural features and geologic wonders, quaint communities, and large remote wilderness areas. Prehistoric and historic sites dot the entire trail. These sites include the mining history at Kentucky Camp, the cliff dwellings at Tonto and Walnut Canyon National Monuments, the historic Roosevelt Dam, 1900 tourism era structures and trails of Grand Canyon National Park, the former railroad town of Patagonia, the former logging railroads near Mormon Lake, and the early U. S. Forest Service history of General Springs Cabin.

Notable natural features also include the diverse life zones and elevation changes throughout the state allowing a diversity of vegetation and wildlife. Some describe these various life zones as similar from going from Mexico to Canada, and are especially evident in southern Arizona's sky islands. These features include geologic wonders such as Grand Canyon National Park, Colossal Cave, and the White Canyon area.

These features include small quaint communities along the trail such as Patagonia, Summerhaven, Oracle, Pine, and Mormon Lake Village, where time seems to stand still. And away from the communities are the large designated wilderness areas set aside for future generations, such as Miller Peak, Mt Wrightson, Rincon Mountain, Pusch Ridge, Superstition, Four Peaks, and Mazatzal Wildernesses.





The Experience

The experience for the user of the Arizona Trail is quite diverse as well. Many people have now completed the entire Arizona Trail, either on foot, horse/mule, or bike. These adventurous individuals have completed it all at once, or passage-by-passage, and describe it as an experience of a lifetime. Some complete the trail from south to north, and others from north to south, all typically choosing spring or fall as the best time. Desert heat makes the summers too dangerous, and winter snow pack makes many areas almost impassable. All who complete portions or the entire trail do their homework; researching passages and access points, caching food and water, researching maps, guidebooks, and GPS coordinates, researching water sources and communities along the trail, honing their route finding abilities, following itineraries, and many keep journals and photographic records of their journeys to share their once-in-a-lifetime-experience. The trail challenges individuals, yet the sense of accomplishment is unmatched.

Even for the day user, the Arizona Trail provides an opportunity to experience a sampling of a trail that captures everything that Arizona is about . . . history, nature exploration, a place void of development and the fast-paced lifestyle, socialization with other trail users, and fitness. Since the Arizona Trail is mostly located on large tracts of federal public lands far from urbanized areas, and areas that are unchanged from when Arizona became a territory in 1863, its remoteness will always be evident.

We hope you enjoy your experience along the Arizona Trail.



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