

Best Phoenix Mountain Hikes

Written by Written by Veronica Jones

Monday, 15 March 2010 01:00 - Last Updated Saturday, 06 March 2010 21:56

Arizona may be known for its beautiful hikes through the Grand Canyon, but driving a couple hours south can give visitors and locals a chance to check out some lesser-known trails. With mountains in every direction, the Valley has desert trails for hikers of any experience level.



Piestewa Peak Summit Trail

If you think you're only going on a leisurely 1.2-mile hike, think again. This fairly difficult trek to the top takes you up 1,190 feet. Upon reaching the summit, hikers can catch their breaths while admiring the views of Downtown Phoenix and Glendale's University of Phoenix Stadium. The slopes are very steep and be sure to watch your footing on the uneven trail. Formerly known as Squaw Peak, the mountain was renamed after Lori Piestewa became the first Native American woman to die in combat on foreign soil in Iraq. phoenix.gov/PARKS/hikephx.html

Wind Cave Trail at Utery Mountain Regional Park

This 1.5-mile hike on the eastern side of the Valley will take you to a cave that can be seen from miles away. Commonly known as a good hike for beginners, the trail is popular among families and even dogs—as long as they're kept on a leash. Hikers can also cross from the trail into Tonto National Forest. Feel like relaxing after a hike? The park offers outdoor yoga classes several times per week. www.maricopa.gov/parks/utery

Hayden Butte

This mountain may be small but it is a Tempe landmark. Surrounded by historic sites like the old flour mill, hikers will get a great view of Downtown Tempe and the Arizona State University main campus. The little peak is also commonly known as 'A' Mountain for its ties to ASU. Sitting just beside Sun Devil Stadium, the easy trail leads you up a partly paved path, followed by slightly rockier terrain to the big gold 'A' that can be seen from the south end of the campus. Each year, rival schools attempt to outsmart the student guards and paint it in other team's colors. www.tempe.gov/Parks/parks/hayden%20butte.htm

Camelback Mountain

The red cliffs of one of the Valley's biggest mountains have become a popular spot for experienced hikers. The two grueling summit trails take you up 1,200 feet. Beginning hikers beware: it is difficult to find your footing on the trails and the slopes are extremely steep. Those who have not had experience on difficult mountain hikes may encounter some problems. phoenix.gov/PARKS/hikecmlb.html

Judith Tunell Accessible Trail – South Mountain

Even though most hikes are for hikers who can easily climb over unstable trails, there are some outdoorsy people who enjoy their adventures on wheels. For those nature lovers that are in wheelchairs, this one-mile trail includes stabilized granite pathways to make it easy for everyone to get some exercise. phoenix.gov/PARKS/hikeacce.html

Arizona Hiking Tips:

- Always bring lots of water to avoid dehydration in the hot desert sun.
- If you see a rattlesnake on the trails, stand back and give it time to move along.
- Always tell a responsible person where you're going before you leave.
- Know your own hiking abilities. Don't try to climb the biggest mountain on your first try.