

Tucson's Outdoor Adventures

Written by Written by Amy Strand

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Our desert state is known to have utterly sweltering summer months—but while the rest of the country continues to face frigid temperatures, here in Tucson the weather is near perfect this time of year. Combined with a beautiful backdrop of Arizona mountains, the great outdoors is just begging to be discovered. Whether you prefer hiking, biking or exploring natural wildlife, Tucson's beloved outdoor destinations are top notch during these irresistible spring months—check out our picks for some active and educational al fresco options.

Arizona Horseback Experience



What better way to explore the Wild West than in the saddle? With 13 horses available for riding, the Arizona Horseback Experience company takes their riders on treks throughout Sonoita, AZ—where they are based—just a 45 minute drive out of Tucson. Arizona Horseback offers numerous equestrian experiences including full day rides, wine tasting rides, three-hour rides, overnight pack trips, campouts, classes, or even four-day custom trips to Canyon De Chelly in Northern Arizona. 520.455.5696, www.horsebackexperience.com

Sabino Canyon



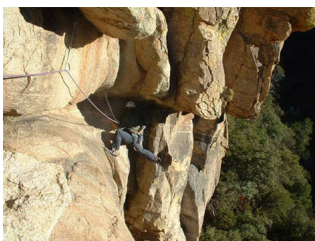
As a part of the Coronado National Forest, Sabino Canyon is a favorite outdoor oasis for those looking to get some exercise—whether vigorous or light. Located in the Santa Catalina mountain range, Sabino Canyon offers numerous paved and un-paved trails for hiking, biking, walking and running. If it's a scenic tour you're looking for, the Sabino Canyon trail provides a narrated tram ride into the mountain range with nine stops, while the Bear Canyon trail offers a non-narrated tram tour with three stops along the way. Rather work up a sweat? Stop into the convenient information center for a trail map and hiking suggestions. The options are endless! 520.749.2681, www.sabinocanyon.com

TrailDust Adventures



If you've never experience the Southwest in an open air jeep, this is one rugged adventure you don't want to miss. TrailDust Adventures is one of Tucson's most popular jeep tour companies, and the only one in Southern Arizona with their own private jeep trail. Along with a rough and tumble ride, you'll enjoy an educational experience as you learn all about the various plants and animals, as well as the history of the Sonoran Desert region. TrailDust Adventures caters to small groups with 2-14 guests, or even large groups with 16-120-plus guests! 520.747.0323, www.traildustadventures.com

Southwest Trekking



Southwest Trekking is a professional guide service that offers an endless array of journeys for the true adventure-seeker. Think camping, trail running, hiking/trekking, pictography, adventure travel and so much more—but if you're in the mood to truly test your thrill-seeking limits, try the rock climbing. Southwest Trekking's rock climbing offerings throughout the crevices and crags of the Santa Catalina Mountains are appropriate for both beginners and the more experienced crew. Plus, you're always in good hands with Southwest Trekking's highly experienced and trained guides. 520.296.9661, www.swtrekking.com

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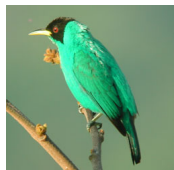
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Arizona Sonora Desert Museum



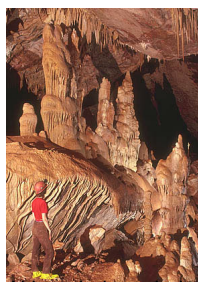
Boasting more than 300 types of animals and 1,300 plant species on 21 acres of desert land is the gorgeous Arizona Sonora Desert Museum. The perfect way to spend the afternoon in a natural but controlled outdoor setting, the desert museum will wow you with its wide range of educational tidbits and wildlife sights to be seen! A great place to take the kids as well, you'll find a plethora of plantlife in between setting your sights on desert animals like prairie dogs, Gila monsters and mountain lions. 520.883.7202, www.desertmuseum.org

Tucson Audubon Society



If you love spotting exotic desert birds in their natural habitat, the Tucson Audubon Society is a group that can provide an endless array of bird-watching activities for your entertainment and education. Although venues like Madera Canyon trails in the Santa Rita Mountains, Cave Creek canyons and Willcox are known to be fantastic birding sites to explore on your own in the spring months, the Tucson Audubon Society offers extensive activities including a lecture series from September through April, educational opportunities for individuals and families, volunteer opportunities, and, of course, birding field trips and events. Membership: 520.629.0757, Educational Program: 520.622.2230, www.tucsonaudubon.org

Kartchner Caverns



Although these beloved limestone caves are not technically outdoors, they are plenty full of adventure. Discovered in 1974 and approved as an Arizona State Park in 1988, the jaw-dropping formations in Benson's Kartchner Caverns have been growing for tens of thousands of years. The park offers two different tours, both of which are a half mile and an hour and a half long—both tours spend 50-60 minutes underground and offer up plenty of informational tidbits. Once you've made your way through the caves, be sure to pay a visit to The Discovery Center as well as the campgrounds, hiking trails, picnic areas and hummingbird garden. 520.586.2283, www.azstateparks.com/Parks/KACA

Arizona ATV Adventures



If you're up for some high-energy action, an ATV tour might be the perfect way to explore the rugged outdoors this spring. The Tucson tour takes place out of Florence, AZ—although it's an hour's drive from Tucson, it's well worth it. The tour will take you on a 40-mile trail, lasting about three hours. On the tour you'll traverse through tough, historic terrain where you'll eventually come to Box Canyon, where you will stay for approximately six miles. With 30 years of business under their belts, Arizona ATV Adventures is the largest and most experienced ATV tour company in the state and will ensure that you are not only safe but having a great time. 520.577.1824, www.arizonaoutdooradventures.com
