

Hike Responsibly at Arizona's State Parks

Written by Michelle Thompson
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If you're like many Arizonans, you're looking for safe, healthy ways that you can get out of the house during this national crisis. One great way to escape cabin fever is to head to Arizona's state parks, which remain open for hiking and outdoor recreation.

To get started, check out the list of parks online and pick one that looks intriguing. There are 23 parks where you can get a breath of fresh air and explore the trails. No matter what part of the state you set your sights on, there will be a park for you. There are maps and descriptions of each park available at [AZStateParks.com](https://www.azstateparks.com).

Plan Ahead

Before you head out, go Google Maps and type in the name of the park. Drop your navigator onto a trail and take a virtual hike. See what the terrain is like, the views, and the difficulty. Make sure you are ready for the hike. Pack plenty of water, and don't share your water bottle with others. Don't count on using water fountains at the park and be prepared for some facility closures. Pack some hand sanitizer and wash your hands before you head out. Wear the right shoes, take some sunscreen, and choose an alternate trail if the first one is busy.

Be Responsible

Park a safe distance from other cars when you arrive. If the trailhead is crowded or busy, leave and pick a different trail. Park rangers are doing their best to follow distancing guidelines, but it's everyone's responsibility. As you pass other hikers on the trail, give them six feet of space and announce yourself to allow them to give you room. Be courteous. Pack out all your trash. Don't take risks or push your limits. Emergency response personnel may be restricted at this time.

Choose a Trail Less Traveled

Have you ever been to Sonoita Creek State Natural Area? It's a beautiful area in southern Arizona, with trails, birds, and sprawling views. Located next to Patagonia Lake State Park, this choice of park will likely give you plenty of space for social distancing. Oracle State Park is a 4,000-acre wildlife preserve and has more than 15 miles of trails, and it's only 30 to 45 minutes northeast of Catalina State Park near Tucson. You can connect to the 800-mile-long Arizona Trail here at the park, and trails are available for walking, biking, or horseback riding. Try a new park and explore Arizona; well-known parks will be more crowded.

Plan Now, Hike Later

If travelling to a different part of the state isn't in the books right now, or if you don't feel well or don't want to go outside, plan your trip today to hike the trail later. Taking virtual tours of the trails and reading (or looking at pictures) about the parks is a great way to plan your next vacation. Follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram @AZStateParks to see inspirational views, learn quick camping and hiking tips, and of course get the latest information about COVID-19. We also offer a [podcast](#) (available on Google Play and iTunes) and have a special page set up to teach and entertain while we stay home. Visit [AZStateParks.com/play](https://www.azstateparks.com/play) for fun ideas. Arizona State Parks and Trails is happy to be open now, but will continue to welcome visitors in the future too.

Michelle Thompson is the chief of communications at Arizona State Parks and Trails, which has more than 30 parks across the state. She has more than 20 years of experience in marketing and communications for various industries. Visit [azstateparks.com](https://www.azstateparks.com) for locations and things to do.