

Get Outside at McDowell Sonoran Preserve

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With the temperature finally cooling off, now is a perfect time to bring the kids and dogs to explore the Gateway at the McDowell Sonoran Preserve in Scottsdale.



The unique 14,000-acre area has diverse wildlife, lush cacti forests and brilliant geography. With the opening of new trails and amenities in the preserve, residents and visitors will have a great experience hiking the desert landscape.

The Gateway Access Area, which was just recently dedicated in May of this year, is the largest and most significant entrance point to the Preserve, making it the best and simplest entrance point. The Gateway is easily accessible, located east of Thompson Peak Parkway, one-half mile north of Bell Road. It has 200 parking spaces, restrooms, water fountains, shade ramadas, a dog comfort station and an equestrian staging area, with 16 trailer parking spaces, water troughs, hitching rails and another shade ramada for riders and their horses.

The Gateway is also eco-friendly and designed to have little-to-no impact on the fragile desert environment. Some of the many green features include solar power generation, rainwater harvesting, solar water heating, rammed earth walls constructed of native soil from on-site excavation, structural steel made of high recycled content, highly efficient mechanical equipment and native landscaping. Even the parking lot and path surfaces are made of stabilized decomposed granite.

Visitors will enjoy seeing the variety of desert wildlife living in the preserve. This includes desert tortoises, coyotes, mountain lions, Great Horned Owls, Mule Deer, Gila Monsters, javelinas and more. The preserve also has various types of rare cacti that can only be found in Arizona.

If you decide to go, preserve officials urge visitors to bring a map, have water, wear appropriate clothes and use sun block. For more information about the Gateway at the McDowell Sonoran Preserve visit www.scottsdaleaz.gov/preserve/access.asp.