

TUCSON & SOUTHERN ARIZONA OUTDOOR ADVENTURE

Tucson's mild climate and ample sunshine make the Old Pueblo an ideal location for year-round outdoor adventures. A wide range of activities await locals and visitors alike, from hiking and mountain biking in the five mountain ranges surrounding the city, to scaling rock walls in a spectacular cactus-studded canyon. Travelers can take in the unique Sonoran Desert landscape from atop a trusty steed, or safely buckled into a rock-crawling Hummer. Not surprisingly Tucson was recently named one of the United States' top "Bicycle Friendly" communities, boasting miles and miles of bike lanes and paths in and around the city. Whether you can cram it all in to one weekend, or you have to keep coming back for more, Tucson and the surrounding Sonoran Desert landscape is a beautiful host for anybody seeking a little outdoor adventure.

HIKING

Tucson is surrounded by five mountain ranges—the Santa Catalinas and Tortolitas to the north; the Rincons to the east; the Santa Ritas to the south; and the Tucson Mountains to the west. All feature a wide variety of hiking trails for a variety of skill levels. Ranging in intensity from nearly flat strolls through the cacti, to steep scrambles up forest trails, Tucson's hiking opportunities have something for just about everyone. Take a day-long hike or a quick meander on one of the hundreds of trails in and around the Old Pueblo. Sabino Canyon—cutting into the Santa Catalinas north of the city is a very popular hiking spot. Take on the rugged Seven Falls trail, a three-hour trek that crisscrosses over Sabino Creek and ends near natural pools of water (most months of the year). Less avid trekkers can take a relaxing stroll along the paved Sabino Canyon Trail, or take a tram along the wide, scenic path for a small fee.

BIKING

Boasting more than more than 500 miles of metro bikeways, Tucson was recently named the third-best cycling city in the country by *Bicycling* magazine. For mountain biking enthusiasts, the surrounding mountain ranges provide a near-endless assortment of challenges in both desert and mountain climates. The Rincon Mountains to the east feature a range of trails for bikers of differing skills. Intermediate riders can hit the fun, fast Chiva Falls trail, with

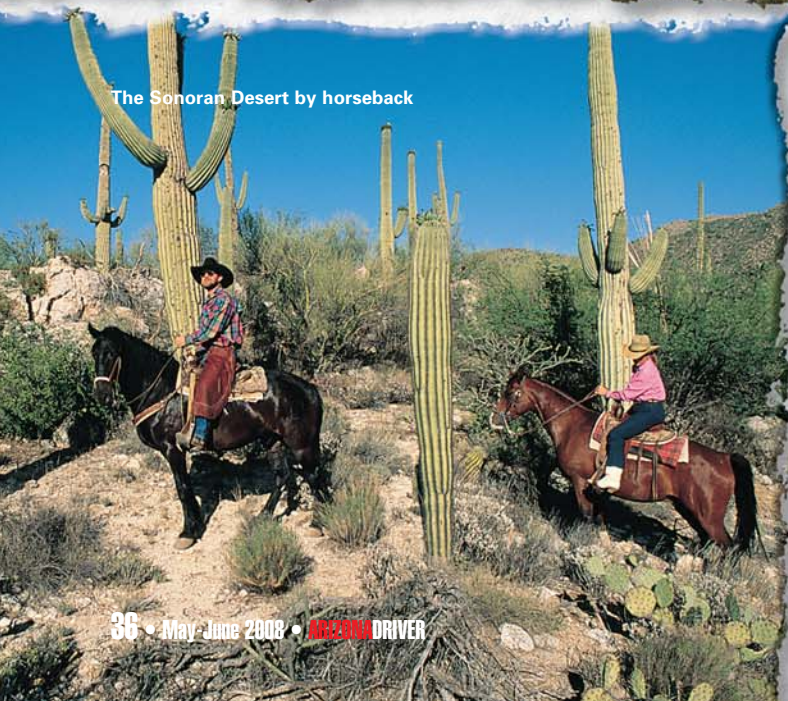
KEEP RIGHT >>



Biking down Mt. Lemmon Highway



The Pools at Sabino Canyon



The Sonoran Desert by horseback

short, steep climbs and descents through rolling hills. Seasoned bikers can enjoy the challenging 14.6-mile La Mesa del Oso (Bear Mesa) trail, which takes visitors on a steep, open-desert excursion with loose, rocky climbs and downhill. Competitive road biking aficionados can also come to Tucson to watch or take part in El Tour de Tucson, a 110-mile road bike race that attracts more than 5,500 participants each year. The largest “perimeter” cycling event in the country, El Tour de Tucson has events for all riding levels, with courses ranging from 31 miles to the 110-miler.

ROCK CLIMBING

Tucson’s sunny, dry climate – combined with its easy access to thousands of both traditional and sport climbs – makes this Southern Arizona city a climber’s paradise! The steep, craggy canyon walls from bottom to top of Mt. Lemmon have something for every climber, from beginners to seasoned, wall-crawling veterans. Climbers can also head west of Tucson to scenic Gates Pass in the Tucson Mountains for some gravity-defying thrills at the end of a climbing rope. The experts at local indoor rock gym Rocks & Ropes teach climbing skills and venture outside the walls of the gym on guided outdoor climbing trips. For a daily fee that includes transportation to and from climbing areas in the Coronado National Forest, Rocks and Ropes’ certified instructors take adventurers on a variety of climbing experiences on Mt. Lemmon, including bouldering, top-roping, lead climbing, and multi-pitch routes.

HORSEBACK RIDING

The Sonoran desert scenery around Tucson reminds visitors of the sights that must have greeted the cowboys of the Old West. From the majestic, unspoiled fields of saguaro cactus to the dense, cool pines of the mountain ranges circling the Old Pueblo, Tucson truly is pioneer country. Just north of downtown, visitors can saddle up at Pusch Ridge Stables in the beautiful Catalina State Park for an early breakfast trail ride, an overnight ride into the mountains, or a sunset dinner ride through rolling foothills. Or, for would-be cowboys and –girls on a shorter timetable, head out on “Tenderfoot,” “Saddle Bum,” or “Westward Ho Sunset” rides, which last between one and two hours.

JEEP, HUMMER AND ATV TOURS

Travelers who wish to experience the natural beauty of Tucson’s mountainous deserts without breaking much of a sweat can rest easy on a fun, relaxing vehicular tour via Jeep, Hummer or ATV. Black Diamond HUMMER Tours of Tucson boasts quiet, off-road, luxurious HUMMER H2s that let passengers see the splendors of the desert in comfortable style. Guests can tour the beauty of the Sonoran Desert in fully enclosed, air-conditioned comfort, with each vehicle limited to just five passengers. Enjoy the smooth ride of the HUMMER H2 on a scenic tour over easy dirt roads through unique saguaro cacti, or the experience the excitement of being in a Black Diamond HUMMER H2 up on three wheels crawling over rocks.

For more information on Tucson and Southern Arizona outdoor adventures, please visit the Metropolitan Tucson Convention & Visitors Bureau online at www.VisitTucson.org (click on “Things To Do” and “Outdoor Adventure”), or call the Tucson Visitor Information line at 1-800-638-8350. ■

