



Hiking in the Cactus Forest Rincon Mountain District

Visitor Center (520) 733-5153 www.nps.gov/sagu

To Preserve and Protect

Leave all plants, animals, rocks and other natural and historic features undisturbed.

Hiking groups are limited to a maximum of eighteen people.

Off trail hiking or horseback riding is prohibited within the Cactus Forest.

Fires are prohibited in the Cactus Forest area of the park, except for charcoal cooking fires in the Mica View and Javelina Picnic Areas.

Dispose of trash properly. Trash cans are available at both picnic areas and the visitor center. Recycling bins are also available at the visitor center.

Camping is **not permitted** in the Cactus Forest area of the park shown on this map.

Pets are not allowed on any trail in the park. Leashed pets are allowed in picnic areas, on roads and Desert Ecology trail.

Hunting is prohibited in the park.

Safety Tips

Be prepared! Carry and drink at least one gallon of water per person, per day. Sport drinks and snacks are also strongly recommended.

Dress appropriately for the weather! Long pants and long sleeved shirts are recommended. Always wear a hat and sturdy closed-toe hiking shoes. Apply sunscreen liberally and often.

Be alert while hiking. Watch for cactus and other prickly plants. To avoid negative encounters with wildlife, always maintain a safe distance and treat them with respect. Be especially alert for Africanized bees, rattlesnakes, mountain lions and black bears. Seek wildlife advice at the Visitor Center. Avoid getting lost by carrying a map and staying on established trails at all times.

Wilderness Access

The Tanque Verde Ridge and Douglas Spring Trails are the most commonly used access points into the high-country Saguaro Wilderness Area. **Camping permits are required for all overnight stays within this wilderness area.**

Permits may be purchased by fax, through the mail or in person at the visitor center. A brochure outlining the rules and regulations for the Saguaro Wilderness Area is available at the Rincon Mountain District visitor center.

Easy Trails Along the Cactus Forest Drive

Desert Ecology Trail (1/4 mile round trip on paved trail)

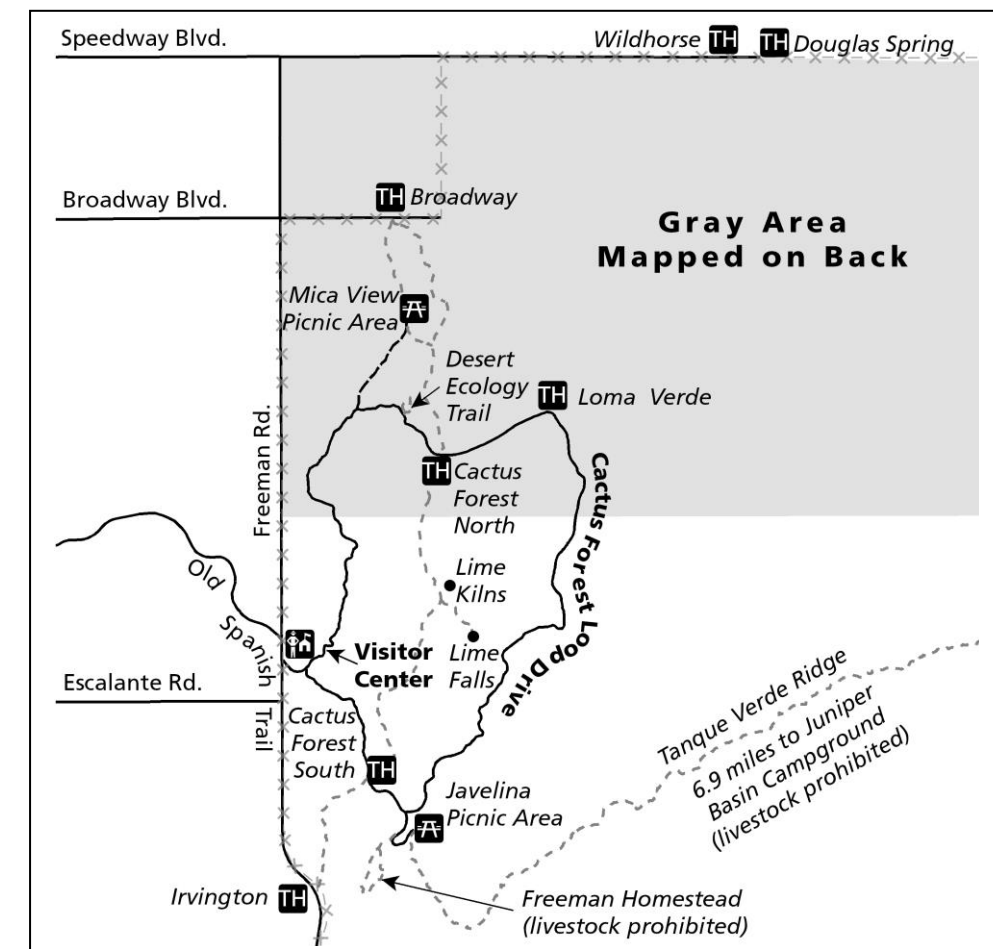
An easy stroll through the desert beside Javelina Wash. Signs along the way will introduce you to the residents of this Sonoran Desert “neighborhood.” This trail is wheelchair accessible & leashed pets are OK.

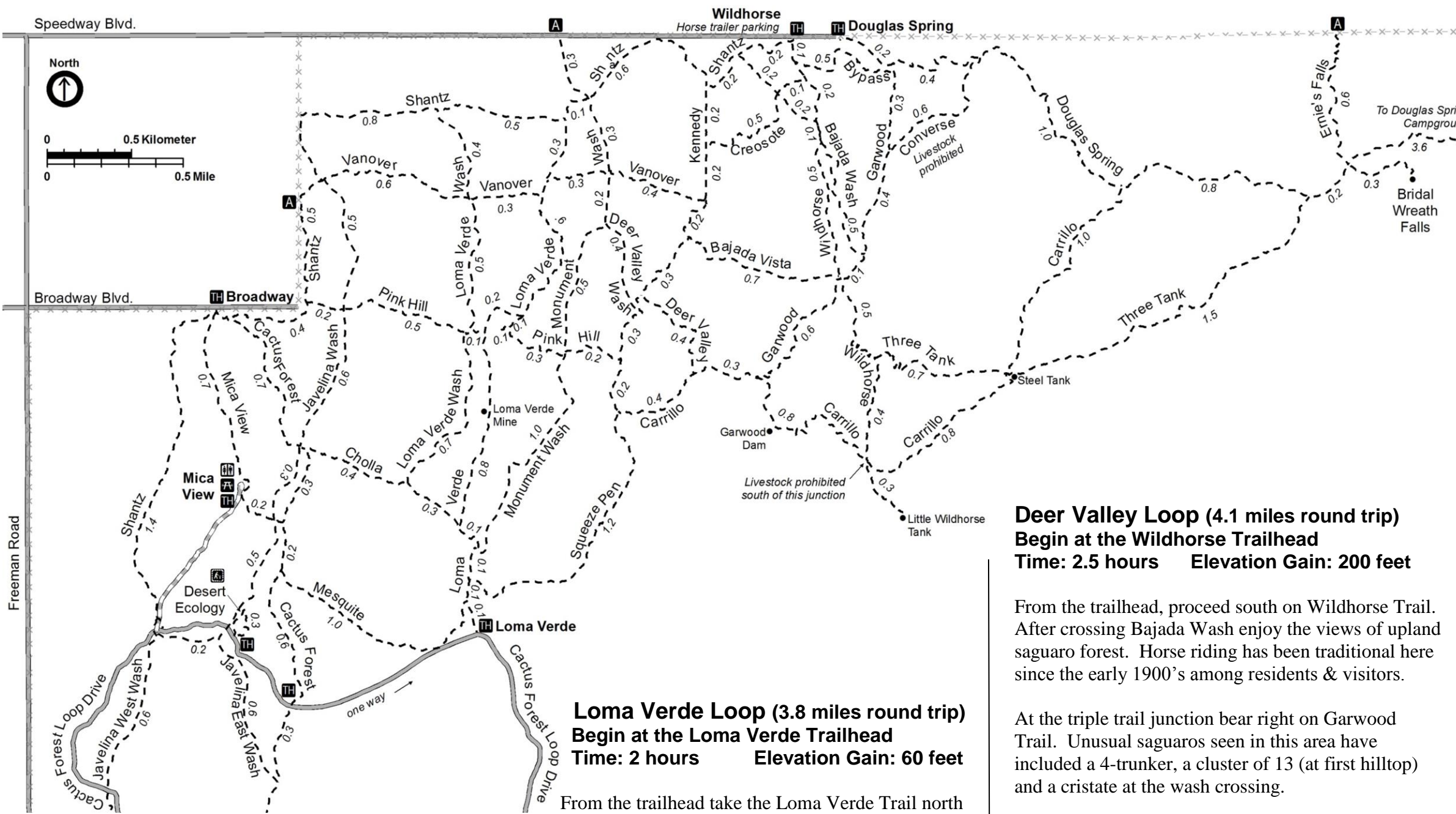
Freeman Homestead Trail (1 mile round trip)

Wander down this path to the site of an old homestead, a grove of large saguaros and a cool desert wash. Interpretive signs along the way will take you deeper into the meaning of this “home in the desert.” These signs also feature special exploration activities for youngsters.

Cactus Forest Trail (2.5 mile one way inside loop drive)

For an easy walk, head out on this multi-use trail (hikers, livestock and bicycles) to the lime kilns historic site. Starting from the north trailhead, it is a 2 mile round trip walk; from the south trailhead 3 miles round trip. This 2.5 mile section of trail is the only path within the Cactus Forest designated for bicycle use. Be courteous and share the trail with others.





Legend

- Picnic area
- Trailhead
- Access point
- Hiking Trail
- Park Boundary
- Road, paved
- Road, unpaved

Numbers represent trail distance in miles

Emergency:
911
Visitor Center
(520) 733 - 5153

Mica View Loop (2 miles round trip)
Begin at the Mica View Picnic Area
Time: 1 hour Elevation Gain: None

From the Picnic Area, go north on the Mica View Trail. Look carefully to see many young saguaros under their palo verde “nurse trees”. This is also a good place to look for Gila Woodpeckers and Gilded Flickers and their nest holes in saguaros.

At Broadway trailhead turn right on Shantz Trail then a quick right onto the Cactus Forest Trail heading south. This area offers good views of Tanque Verde Peak and Mica Mountain. Return to your starting point, by turning right on the Mica View Trail.

Loma Verde Loop (3.8 miles round trip)
Begin at the Loma Verde Trailhead
Time: 2 hours Elevation Gain: 60 feet

From the trailhead take the Loma Verde Trail north through a grove of mature mesquite trees. Beyond a large, sandy wash you’ll climb a bluff onto the *bajada*, the Spanish word for a gravel plain at the base of a mountain.

Pink Hill Trail joins from the left. At the next junction bear right to follow Pink Hill. A short spur trail leads to a fine overlook of the cactus forest and the rugged Tanque Verde Ridge.

Return to Pink Hill Trail, turn right to Squeeze Pen Trail and head south (right.) The name of this trail recalls the days when cowboys herded cattle into holding pens for branding in this area.

At the junction with the Loma Verde Trail turn left to return to the Loma Verde Trailhead.

Deer Valley Loop (4.1 miles round trip)
Begin at the Wildhorse Trailhead
Time: 2.5 hours Elevation Gain: 200 feet

From the trailhead, proceed south on Wildhorse Trail. After crossing Bajada Wash enjoy the views of upland saguaro forest. Horse riding has been traditional here since the early 1900’s among residents & visitors.

At the triple trail junction bear right on Garwood Trail. Unusual saguaros seen in this area have included a 4-trunker, a cluster of 13 (at first hilltop) and a cristate at the wash crossing.

Turn right onto the Carrillo Trail. Here is a splendid view of cactus forest where, in season, you might hear water running in the nearby wash. The Rincon Mountains provided a rich water source for ranching and homesteaders. This valley was the location of a weekend “ranch” owned by the Garwood family.

Proceed downhill and turn right onto the Deer Valley Trail with views west. At Squeeze Pen Trail turn left then immediately right down Deer Valley Wash. Notice the deep-rooted mesquite trees along the banks of the wash.

Stay in the wash (go past Vanover Trail) then turn right on Shantz Trail. Pass through a stand of scattered large saguaros with the sights and sounds of civilization on this last mile back to the trailhead.

Garwood Loop (5.8 miles round trip)
Begin at the Douglas Spring Trailhead
Time: 4 hours Elevation Gain: 730 feet

Take the Douglas Spring Trail to the Garwood Trail and turn right. You’ll enter the kind of cactus forest that inspired the creation of the parkland here in 1933. Stay on the Garwood Trail all the way south to the Carrillo Trail, taking care at the junctions with Bajada Vista and Wildhorse Trails as it can be confusing for those new to the trail system.

At the intersection with the Carrillo Trail, turn left and head toward the location of the old Garwood Ranch. On the slope below the trail, Nelson Garwood built a home in the late 1950’s. Be sure to visit the nearby dam which provided a reliable water supply throughout the year. (Walking on dam is unsafe and prohibited.)

From here, the path bears left and goes into the foothills of the Rincon Mountains. Although this area has a long history of cattle grazing, and many trail and place names reflect this history, the last grazing lease in the park expired in 1979.

Remain on the Carrillo Trail to the steel tank, once supplied by Rock Spring. Drought in the early 21st century dried up this water source. Emilio Carrillo was the original owner of today’s Tanque Verde Guest Ranch.

Find the trail sign in the wash below and remain on the Carrillo Trail heading north in picturesque hills with splendid views of the Catalina Mountains and Tanque Verde Valley. After descending from the ridge, turn left on the Douglas Spring Trail and descend 1.6 miles to the trailhead.