



# Saguaro

NATIONAL MONUMENT

*Arizona*

# SAGUARO

## NATIONAL MONUMENT

Symbol of the entire Southwest, the graceful saguaro is found only in the Sonoran Desert, which lies in northwestern Mexico and a small part of southwestern United States. Named for its impressive stand of the giant cactus, Saguaro National Monument contains many plants and animals representative of an area that extends from northern Mexico to southern Canada.

How can you derive the most pleasure and benefit from your visit to this curious place?

Start at the visitor center, which is 16 miles east of Tucson.

At the visitor center, you will see exhibits that explain how the land acquired its profile and how the rocks and soil that make up the face of the land were formed, exhibits that relate the absorbing story of man in the region, others that describe the desert's plants and animals, and still others that tell of the peculiarities of the saguaros.

Also at the visitor center, you can sit in a comfortable chair and watch through huge floor-to-ceiling windows as creatures of the desert come to a waterhole to drink.

Next, step outside the visitor center and look about, so that you will become oriented. In the foreground, you will see a spread of the desert, sweeping away toward the mountains. Studding the desert are thousands of stately saguaros, pointing prophetic fingers at the heavens. Lesser desert plants crouch at their feet.

Beyond the desert flatlands lie the mountains: first the Tanque Verdes, with a fringe of scattered saguaros on their lower slopes, and beyond them the Rincons, thrusting their forested ridges high above the desert.

Immediately before you is a 9-mile loop road through the saguaros of the flatlands, the Cactus Forest. And along the road are pullouts, where you can leave your car while you follow marked trails leading among the desert plants, so that you may come to know them by name and sight and smell.

*Don't begin your drive or walk yet. Read on for 5 minutes. Perhaps what you read will make what you see more meaningful.*

*The National Park System, of which this park is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and enjoyment*

Here, you are in the northern part of the Sonoran Desert—named for the State of Sonora, Mexico, in which the greater part of the desert lies.

The plants and animals you will see in the Cactus Forest are representative of the Sonoran Desert. Those in the mountains are representative of very different environments.

At Cactus Forest, the elevation is about 3,100 feet; at the top of Mica Mountain in the Rincons, the elevation is nearly 8,600 feet. At Cactus Forest, the average temperature for July is 94° F., and the annual rainfall ranges from 3 to 11 inches; at the top of Mica Mountain, the average temperature for July is 68° F., and the annual rainfall ranges from 21 to 35 inches. Between these two extremes, temperature and rainfall relate directly to the altitude. (In general, temperatures throughout the hemisphere also relate to latitude, the distance northward from the equator.)

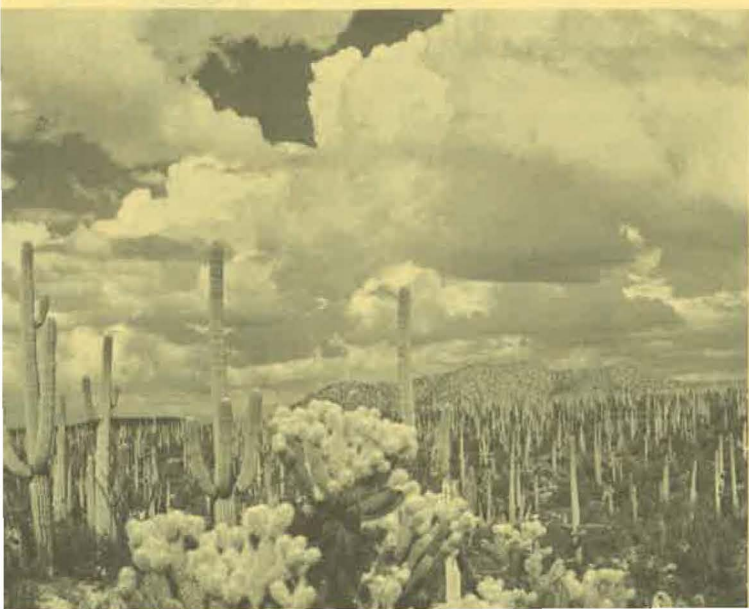
Temperatures and amounts of rainfall at the top of Mica Mountain are similar to conditions prevailing in parts of southern Canada at much lower elevations. And many of the plants at the top of the mountain (aspen, spruce, and others) are the same kinds you would see in parts of southern Canada.

Look for these plants in the different communities:

*In the lower desert* (below 3,000 feet): creosotebush, saltbush, and needle gramagrass.

*In the higher part of the desert* (3,000 to 3,500 feet): saguaro, pricklypear, cholla, paloverde, ocotillo, and mesquite. (These and other plants are labeled along a self-guiding trail,

*The Tucson Mountain section of the monument contains a younger stand of saguaros. In the foreground: Sonora jumping cholla.*



which you can reach from a pullout on the Cactus Forest Drive.)

*In the grasslands* (3,500 to 5,000 feet): curly mesquite-grass, Emory oak, gramagrass, and centuryplant agave.

*In the chaparral belt* (5,000 to 7,000 feet): juniper, pinyon, scrub oak, mountain-mahogany, sumac, and manzanita.

*In the forest belt* (above 7,000 feet): Gambel oak and ponderosa pine, with Douglas-fir, spruce, white fir, and aspen at the highest elevations within the monument.

Although most animals are free to move from one plant community to another, many have adapted themselves to life among the plants of certain environments.

Where, then, are you most likely to find the mammals and reptiles that you would like to see—or perhaps avoid?

The desert mule deer, in winter, subsist on cactus fruits, annual herbs, and other vegetation of the Cactus Forest. In summer, they climb the mountains and browse on shrubs among the pinyons, junipers, and oaks.

The smaller Arizona white-tailed deer stay mostly in the pinyon-juniper woodlands in winter. In summer, they browse on aspen, buckbrush, and other shrubs and small trees along the crest of the Rincons.

Peccaries are usually found in the Cactus Forest; but in summer, they sometimes move up into the chaparral belt, where they may remain to harvest acorns from the scrub oaks before returning to the desert for the winter.

*Four thousand feet above the Cactus Forest, in the Rincon Mountains, are ponderosa pines, Gambel oaks, and spruces, all typical of more northern latitudes.*



*Long-nosed bats aid in pollination of the saguaro and the centuryplant agave. This bat is sipping the nectar of the blossoms of a centuryplant agave.*



*This mule deer is feeding on the fruit of the barrel cactus. Other plants, left to right, are prickly-pear, young saguaro, wolfberry (behind deer), and cholla.*



If you are the rugged, well-conditioned type and plan a climb on the mountain trails, be sure to confer with a park ranger before starting and check in with him when you return. This is for your own safety, and may prevent an unnecessary search.

After visiting the eastern section of the monument, you may want to see the western, or Tucson Mountain section, which is 16 miles west of Tucson. The map in this folder shows the route.

On your way to the Tucson Mountain section, you will come to the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, an outstanding presentation and explanation of the natural history of the Sonoran Desert.

The Tucson Mountain section was added to Saguaro National Monument in 1961. Although a park ranger is on duty there, no interpretive facilities have yet been installed. At present, roads in this section are of graded dirt. There are four picnic areas, with tables, shelters, and restrooms, but no water is available. This new addition to the monument contains a magnificent stand of vigorous saguaros. There are more young saguaros in this section than in the eastern section.

### *About Your Visit*

There are no facilities for camping, lodging, food, or gasoline in either of the two sections of the monument.

Here are a few reminders about the regulations:

Refrain from disturbing any plant, animal, or rock.

Observe the posted speed limits.

Keep your pet on a leash; it must remain outside the buildings.

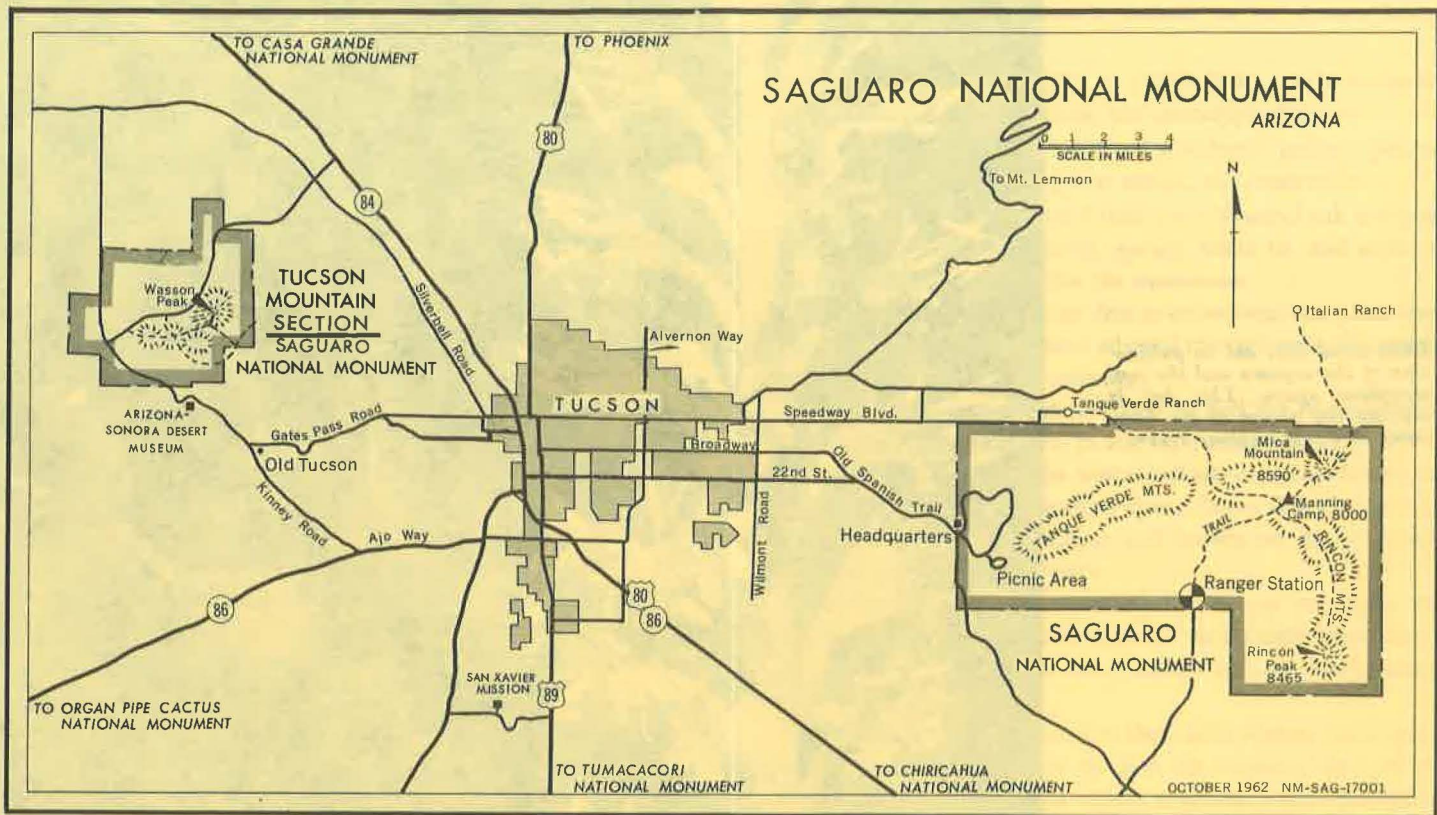
If you have a firearm, leave it in its case.

Dispose of litter in the containers provided.

Be considerate of your fellow visitor.

*In May and early June, creamy-white blossoms appear in clusters on the ends of the saguaro's branches.*





Coyotes range throughout the monument; however, in winter they generally remain below 6,000 feet, where rodents remain longer out of hibernation and the hunting is easier.

Hog-nosed skunks, distinguished by their solid-white backs, are desert dwellers. Spotted skunks and striped skunks are found at all elevations in the monument.

Badgers are occasionally seen in the desert, but they also hunt rodents at higher elevations.

Jackrabbits are a common sight among the cactuses. Cottontails live in all parts of the monument.

Snakes are not abundant; but gopher snakes, red racers, and western diamondback rattlesnakes occur at all altitudes within the monument. The very rare Sonora coral snake (poisonous, as is the rattler) lives in the desert flatlands.

Desert tortoises thrive in the low desert area.

Insects and spiders play an important part in the desert ecology, aiding in plant pollination and providing food for birds and other animals. You may notice the tarantula hawk, a large, blue-black, red-winged wasp that preys on spiders.

Several species of scorpions live in the desert and up the slopes. Be wary of them, for their stings can be serious.

## SAGUARO NATIONAL MONUMENT ARIZONA

Gambel's quail, roadrunner, Gila woodpecker, gilded flicker, pyrrhuloxia, house finch, and loggerhead shrike. All are year-round residents. The white-winged dove is here in summer.

*In the foothills:* the rare harlequin quail, Mexican jay, Bewick's wren, and black-tailed gnatcatcher—all residents.

*In the mountains:* band-tailed pigeon (summer), broad-tailed hummingbird (summer), red-shafted flicker (resident), hairy woodpecker (resident), Steller's jay (resident).

For you, the foregoing plants and animals may be the frosting on the cake. You probably came to see the saguaros, the giant cactuses that attain a height of 50 feet and a probable age of 200 years, and whose blossoms are the State flower of Arizona. They are interesting not only for their great size, beauty, and adaptation to desert conditions, but also because they are so important to animal life. Saguaros provide nesting sites, food, and protection for many species of birds, mammals, and reptiles; and they are useful to man in a number of ways.

To learn more about this fascinating desert giant, read the Saguaro National Monument Natural History Handbook, on sale at monument headquarters, or obtainable from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, 25, D.C. for 30 cents.



*A tiny elf owl occupies an abandoned woodpecker nesting hole in a saguaro stem.*

### *Administration*

Saguaro National Monument is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Route 8, Box 350, Tucson, Ariz., is in immediate charge.

Created in 1849, the Department of the Interior—America's Department of Natural Resources—is concerned with the management, conservation, and development of the Nation's water, wildlife, mineral, forest, and park and recreational resources. It also has major responsibilities for Indian and Territorial affairs.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department works to assure that nonrenewable resources are developed and used wisely, that park and recreational resources are conserved for the future, and that renewable resources make their full contribution to the progress, prosperity, and security of the United States—now and in the future.

### *Mission 66*

Mission 66 is a program designed to be completed in 1966, the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the National Park Service. Its aim is to assure the maximum protection of the scenic, scientific, wilderness, and historic resources of the National Park System in such ways as will make them available for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.



UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

