



U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Arizona

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# Sonoran Desert National Monument

Lower Sonoran Field Office

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**NATIONAL  
CONSERVATION  
LANDS**

# Desert Heartland

The Sonoran Desert National Monument represents the heartland of the Sonoran Desert – a landscape where Arizona’s signature saguaro cactus stands tall. Spanning over 486,000 acres of impressive Sonoran Desert landscape, the Monument presents a spectacular array of plant and animal species and scientific, cultural and historical resources. The Congressionally designated North Maricopa Mountains Wilderness, South Maricopa Mountains Wilderness and Table Top Wilderness areas are all within the Monument’s boundaries.

The Monument is part of the Bureau of Land Management’s (BLM) National Landscape Conservation System, created to recognize and protect spectacular landscapes of public lands in the west. This system includes the BLM’s national monuments, national conservation areas, wild and scenic rivers, wilderness areas, and national historic and scenic trails.



# Monumental Resources

**Sonoran Desert Landscape:** The most striking aspect of the plant communities within the Monument are the abundant saguaro cactus - the signature plant of the Sonoran Desert. A forest of saguaros, together with the wide variety of trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants that make up the forest community are a national treasure.

**Wildlife:** A wide variety of wildlife are supported by the diverse habitat of the Sonoran Desert. Mammals such as desert bighorn sheep, mule deer, javelina, mountain lion, and others are present. Many small mammals, birds, and reptiles thrive here year-round, including bats, owls, rattlesnakes, and the Sonoran Desert tortoise. Observe wildlife from a distance for your safety and their protection.

**Archaeological and Historical Sites, Historic Trail Corridor:** The Monument has a long history of use, including early Native Americans, Spanish explorers, homesteaders, miners, and others. An important trail corridor crosses through the central part of the Monument. Juan Bautista de Anza, the Mormon Battalion, and the Butterfield Overland Stagecoach among others traveled this trail, providing a rich and important legacy of the history of Arizona. Congress designated the trail in 1990 as the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail.

**Wilderness:** The North Maricopa Mountains, South Maricopa Mountains and Table Top Wilderness areas receive special protection under the Arizona Desert Wilderness Act of 1990. Long ridges, isolated peaks and canyons, extensive saguaro-studded bajadas and wide desert washes offer visitors a unique opportunity to enjoy wildness, solitude and primitive recreation.

## RECREATION

**Hiking and Equestrian:** Visitors may hike or ride horseback almost anywhere in the Monument. Four designated wilderness trails totaling 26 miles offer a unique opportunity to explore the backcountry. See map for access to these trails: Margies Cove and Brittlebush trails (North Maricopa Mountains Wilderness), Lava Flow and Table Top trails (Table Top Wilderness). Due to steep trail conditions on Table Top Trail equestrian use is not recommended.



**Mountain Biking:** Many miles of roads are available for mountain biking. Mountain bikes must stay on roads posted with a BLM Route Number sign. Mountain bikes are prohibited in wilderness areas or on wilderness trails.

**Travel by Vehicle:** (SUV's, Trucks, ATV's, Dirt Bikes, etc.) BLM roads open to motorized travel are posted with a BLM Route Number sign. Travel on roads or washes not posted with this sign and travel off-road or cross-country is prohibited. Motorized travel is also prohibited in wilderness areas or on wilderness area trails.

**Camping and Picnicking:** Dispersed camping and picnicking is allowed throughout the Monument, unless otherwise posted. Two small campgrounds at West Margies Cove and Table Top Trailheads offer a restroom and three small campsites with a picnic table and BBQ grill. No water or hookups are available. Reservations are not required; sites are on a first-come first-serve basis. Pack out all trash.

#### **Camping Basics:**

- Choose a campsite that has been previously used and no more than 100 feet from the road.
- Camping is limited to 14 days within a 28-consecutive-day period.
- Small campfires are allowed unless otherwise posted. Do not leave any fire unattended. Put all fires out cold before you leave. For current fire restriction information, see contact information on back panel, of this brochure.
- Wood is scarce in the Monument. Please bring your own wood for fuel while camping or use only dead, down, and detached wood.
- Trash pick-up services are not available. Please pack out all trash.

**Hunting:** Hunting opportunities are allowed under Arizona Game and Fish Department regulations. Use firearms responsibly; shooting natural features, including cactus or other plants, is prohibited. It is also illegal to knowingly shoot upon, from, across, or into any road or trail.



# How To *Get There*

The Monument is located about 60 miles southwest of Phoenix. With over 500 miles of primitive roads to explore, visitors have a unique opportunity to view the scenic Sonoran desert landscape. Three paved roads provide access to the Monument:

**State Highway 85:** (Between Interstate 10 and Gila Bend) Provides access to the western part of the Monument, including the North Maricopa Mountains Wilderness.

**State Route 238:** (Between Maricopa and Gila Bend) Provides access to the north central part of the Monument, including South Maricopa Mountains and North Maricopa Mountains Wilderness areas, and the Historic Trail Corridor.

To access to Historic Trail corridor, turn north between milepost 14 and 15 or between milepost 20 and 21. USE CAUTION WHEN TURNING ONTO THE ACCESS ROUTES.

**Interstate 8:** (Between Gila Bend and Stanfield) Provides access to the southern part of the Monument, including South Maricopa Mountains and Table Top Wilderness areas, Vekol Valley, and Area A in Sand Tank Mountains. A permit is required for Area A, please see additional information under Know the Rules.



# Contact *Info*

## **Maps, Public Lands Information:**

Bureau of Land Management - Phoenix District  
Office - 21605 North 7th Avenue; Phoenix, Arizona 85027  
623-580-5500 - [www.blm.gov/arizona](http://www.blm.gov/arizona)

Bureau of Land Management - Arizona State Office  
One North Central Avenue, Suite 800  
Phoenix, Arizona 85004  
602-417-9200 - [www.blm.gov/arizona](http://www.blm.gov/arizona)

## **Permits for Sand Tank Mountains-Area A:**

Available online: <https://luke.isportsman.net/>

## **State Trust Land Recreation Permits:**

Available online: <https://land.az.gov>  
Phone – 602-542-4631

## **State Hunting Permits, Regulations, Poaching:**

Arizona Game & Fish Dept. – 602-942-3000  
Operation Game Thief – 1-800-352-0700

## **Report Resources Crimes: Resource Destruction, Archaeological Looting, Vandalism, Dumping, etc.**

BLM - Federal Law Enforcement Communications Center  
623-434-4580 or 1-800-637-9152

## **Report Illegal Smuggling Activities:**

U.S. Border Patrol – 1-877-872-7435

## **Emergencies: Dial 911**

Pinal County Sheriff's Office – 1-800-420-8689  
Maricopa County Sheriff's Office – 602-876-1000

## **Report Wildfires: Dial 911**

## **Fire Restriction Information:**

Public Lands, National Forests, State Land in Arizona  
<https://firerestrictions.us/az>

## **Arizona Road Info (Traffic Alerts, Road Closures, etc.)**

Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) – Dial 511  
or 1-888-411-ROAD or visit [www.az511.gov](http://www.az511.gov)

# Desert Safety

**Border Related Activity:** Visitors should be aware that drug and human smuggling activities have occurred within the Monument south of Interstate 8. If you see any activity that looks illegal, suspicious, or out of place, please do not intervene. Refer to back panel for BLM Federal Law Enforcement Communications Center, County Sheriff or Border Patrol. Call 911 to report emergencies.

**Services:** Water is not available. Carry and drink plenty of water, one gallon minimum per person per day is recommended. Cell phone service is not available in many areas.

**Vehicle Travel:** High clearance or 4-wheel-drive vehicles are recommended in some areas. Roads are primitive and not maintained. Have a full tank of gas, at least one spare tire, a vehicle tool kit, and first aid kit.

**Summer Heat:** Summer temperatures may often reach up 115 degrees. Wear a hat, long sleeve shirt, sunglasses, and sunscreen. Drink plenty of water!

**Flash Floods:** Monsoon season (July-Sept.) can bring intense thunderstorms with lightning and flash flooding. Do not cross flooding streams or washes!

**Venomous Creatures:** Rattlesnakes and scorpions may be encountered. Do not put your hands or feet in brush or under rocks and boulders.



**Abandoned Mine Shafts:** Many of these mine shafts dot the landscape in Arizona and are very dangerous. Many shafts are deep vertical holes with no way out. Do not get close to or enter any mine shaft.

## ***National Monuments***

*Areas designated to protect objects of scientific and historic interest  
by public proclamation by the president (under the Antiquities Act of 1906)  
or by Congress for objects of historic or scientific interest situated upon  
the public lands, and to provide for the management of those features.*





# Know *The Rules*

**Closed Areas:** Some roads in the Monument may be posted with “Closed Area” signs, prohibiting motorized travel. These closures protect natural resources in sensitive areas from vehicle impacts. Entering a closed area by motorized vehicle is prohibited.

**Travel on Roads/Washes:** Motorized and mechanized vehicles are allowed only on roads and washes posted with a BLM Route Number Sign. Travel on roads or washes without Route Numbers or cross-country/off road is prohibited.

**Target Shooting:** A portion of the Monument is closed to target shooting: see map. Where target shooting is allowed, a safe backdrop is required. Use firearms responsibly; shooting natural features, including cactus and other plants, is prohibited. It is also illegal to knowingly shoot on, from, across, or into any road or trail.

**Arizona Off-Highway Decal (Residents and Non-residents):** Residents and non-residents are required to purchase an OHV decal. All OHV's designed by the manufacturer primarily for use over unimproved terrain that weigh 2,500 pounds or less, are required by law to display a valid OHV decal to operate on public and state lands in Arizona. For more information of OHV Decal Requirements and OHV Rules and Regulations, go to [azgfd.com/ohv/](https://azgfd.com/ohv/)

**Resource Protection:** Removal or damage of natural and cultural resources, artifacts, plants (live and dead), wood, etc., is prohibited. Federal laws protect archaeological and historical sites. It is illegal to dig, damage, deface, or remove any part of a site.

**Stay Limit:** Camping is allowed for up to 14 days in any 28-day period. You then must move at least 25 miles before choosing a new campsite.

**Permits for Area-A Sand Tank Mountains:** Permits are available at <https://luke.isportsman.net/> There is no fee.

**Special Recreation Permits (SRP):** For organized, commercial or competitive events, an SRP may be required. For information, call the Phoenix BLM office.

**Wilderness Areas:** Motorized equipment/mechanical transport (ATV's, dirt bikes, vehicles, mountain bikes, etc. are prohibited in wilderness areas and on wilderness trails.

## OTHER LANDS

Portions of these lands are within or adjacent to the Monument.

**Private Lands:** Several parcels of private property lie within the Monument's boundaries. Do not trespass private property when posted.

**State Trust Lands:** A recreation permit is required by the Arizona State Land Dept. when recreating on State Trust Lands in Arizona. See info on back panel.

**Tribal Lands:** Tribal lands or Indian Reservations have their own rules and regulations regarding travel and visitor use. The Ak-Chin Indian Community, Tohono O'odham Nation, and the Gila River Indian Community have lands adjacent to the Monument boundary. For information, contact Tribes directly.

## OUTDOOR ETHICS

Help us maintain the special nature of the Sonoran Desert National Monument by practicing good outdoor ethics, including the following principles of Tread Lightly! and Leave No Trace.

### Tread Lightly!

**T**ravel and recreate with minimum impact.

**R**espect the environment and the rights of others.

**E**ducate yourself-plan and prepare before you go.

**A**llow for future use of the outdoors, leaving it better than you found it.

**D**iscover the rewards of responsible recreation.

### Leave No Trace

- Plan ahead and prepare.
- Travel and camp on durable surfaces.
- Dispose of waste properly.
- Leave what you find.
- Minimize the impact and use of campfires.
- Respect wildlife.
- Be considerate of other visitors.

