

PHOENIX Trail Guide



Welcome

Welcome to Greater Phoenix, America's sunniest metropolis.

What sets Phoenix apart from every other big city in the United States is its Sonoran Desert scenery. Phoenix is surrounded on all sides by mountains, and the sun shines during 85 percent of daylight hours.

Phoenix has more acreage of parks and preserves than any other major metropolis in the nation, and visitors can explore all this glorious public land via hundreds of miles of trails.

If your most memorable travel experiences tend to occur outdoors, with the sun on your shoulders and dirt beneath your feet, then you're in the right place. This guide will help you choose trails that best suit you, and provide tips to help keep you prepared and safe.

One of the best things about hiking in Phoenix is that, at trail's end, you'll find yourself in the cosmopolitan heart of Arizona. Phoenix is the sixth-largest city in the United States, and it's easy to transition from the wildness of the desert to the comfort of the city.

Phoenix is a place where it's easy to migrate between high culture and low. The city is known as much for street tacos, spring-training baseball and casual patio dining as it is for high-desert golf courses, destination spas and upscale shopping.

This is Phoenix: Beautiful. Wild. Distinct. Fun.

Have a wonderful time on the trail—and off it.





Hiking Tips

STAY SAFE

Most of the mountain parks and preserves in metropolitan Phoenix are undeveloped Sonoran Desert areas. Hikers may encounter rocky terrain, rattlesnakes, bees and other hazards native to this ecosystem. These safety tips are crucial to read before embarking on a hike in the desert.

- Drink plenty of water. Bring at least 1 quart for short hikes, and 3-5 quarts for daylong hikes. When you've consumed half of your water, turn around.
- Make sure someone knows where you'll be hiking and when you expect to return.
- Hike with a friend. It's safer ... and usually more fun.
- During hot-weather months, hike in the early morning or near dusk. Full-sun temperatures can be up to 20 degrees higher than the "official" temperature.
- On the hottest summer days, consider whether it's safe to hike at all. Remember: Even if you are hydrated, you can still suffer from heat-related illness.
- Wear appropriate footwear, preferably hiking boots or closed-toe trail shoes. Leave the sandals at home.
- Wear light-colored, comfortable clothing.
- Wear a hat and sunscreen (SPF 15 minimum).
- Bring a basic first-aid kit.
- Avoid putting your hands and feet anywhere you cannot see.
- Carry a mobile phone.

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU NEED HELP

If you encounter an emergency on the trail, follow the "S.T.O.P." protocol: Stop, Think, Observe, Plan. Remember: In a crisis, your brain is your No. 1 survival tool.

- If you are lost or injured, do not panic.
- If you need help, call 9-1-1 for emergencies.
- Know your location. Look for the nearest trail marker or any noticeable landmark such as a bench, wash or tree.
- Identify the emergency situation. Be specific regarding the condition of an injured person.



TRAIL ETIQUETTE

Public lands are shared places, and many of Phoenix's trails attract heavy use. It's important to respect the environment and be mindful of fellow hikers.



- Always stay on designated trails. Phoenix city ordinances prohibit trailblazing.
- Use common sense and courtesy when sharing the trail with others. In general, bike riders yield to both hikers and horseback riders; hikers yield to horseback riders. Downhill hikers yield to uphill hikers.
- Announce your intentions and slow your pace when passing someone on the trails.
- Do not litter.
- Do not deface, destroy or remove plants, animals, rock art (petroglyphs/pictographs), historical markers or geological sites.

Source: City of Phoenix Parks and Recreation



Seasons

Mother Nature smiles on some cities more than others. Phoenix, obviously, is blessed in the sunshine department.

Phoenix basks in sunshine more than any other major metropolitan area in the U.S. — during 85 percent of its daylight hours. And the cliché that “it’s a dry heat” rings true: Humidity levels are pleasantly low, even in summer.

The bottom line: Any time is a good time to visit the Sonoran Desert.

WINTER

During the winter months Greater Phoenix enjoys blue skies and highs in the 60s and 70s. Winter nights in the desert can get chilly, though the temperature rarely dips below freezing.

SPRING

Phoenix’s weather is consistently perfect during springtime. Daytime temperatures loll around 80 degrees, while evenings are comfortably cool. Spring is when hikers hit the trails to see blooming cactuses and wildflowers, and baseball fans flock to stadiums across the metro area for Cactus League Spring Training.

SUMMER

Summertime temps routinely reach triple digits in summer, but a 100-degree day in the desert actually feels much more pleasant than an 85-degree day in a locale with heavy humidity. The best thing about summer in Phoenix: It’s value season. Prices at resorts, hotels and golf courses plunge as much as 30 percent.

FALL

Autumn days in Phoenix are warm, sunny and exceedingly pleasant. It’s a great time for recreational pursuits, off-season sunbathing and serious shopping. Nights can get cool, but patio dining and outdoor events are still comfortable.



Average Temperatures in Phoenix

	HIGH (° F/ °C)	LOW (° F/ °C)
January	67/19	44/7
February	71/22	48/9
March	76/24	52/11
April	85/29	58/14
May	94/34	67/19
June	104/40	76/24
July	106/41	82/28
August	104/40	81/27
September	99/37	75/24
October	88/31	63/17
November	75/24	50/10
December	67/19	44/7
Average	86/30	62/17

EXPERT PICKS

Metropolitan Phoenix is similar in size to the state of Delaware, and its landscape gives rise to nine mountain chains. To help you choose among the region's innumerable trails, we asked professional guides from some of the city's top outfitters to share a few of their favorite hikes.

EASY

Lower Salt River Nature Trail, Phon D. Sutton Recreation Area

This interpretive trail is great for families and birdwatchers. It skirts the Salt River's lush riparian zone and gives hikers plenty of opportunities to see wildlife (including wild horses).

Length: 2.3 miles (loop)

Waterfall trail, White Tank Mountain Regional Park

This well-maintained trail on Phoenix's northwest flank takes hikers past an amazing display of ancient Hohokam petroglyphs en route to a seasonal waterfall—a rare site in a desert canyon.

Length: 2 miles (out and back)



MODERATE

Hidden Valley Loop via Morman Trail, South Mountain Park

This popular hike near downtown Phoenix affords views of the city and Camelback Mountain before looping through a sand-floored "hidden" basin and a rock tunnel called "Fat Man's Pass".

Length: 4 miles (out and back)

Butcher Jones Trail, Saguaro Lake

This trail winds along the shoreline of Saguaro Lake, passing through a mesquite bosque and several fishing coves. Summer brings crowds to the lake—but is also the season for a post-hike swim.

Length: 5 miles (out and back)

CHALLENGING

Flatiron, Superstition Wilderness Area

This 4,800-foot peak is accessed via a steep, rocky ascent of Siphon Draw Trail. The rugged climb rewards hikers with one of the best 360-degree views in the region.

Length: 6 miles (out and back)

Tom's Thumb Trail, McDowell Sonoran Preserve

Tom's Thumb is an iconic landmark in the McDowell Mountains. The trail to it climbs steadily through a dramatic boulder field that's blanketed by wildflowers in spring.

Length: 4.6 miles (out and back)

Guided Tours

A great way to learn more about the human and natural history of Arizona's wild places is to take a guided hiking tour. Local outfitters offer on-trail excursions across the state, from day hikes in Phoenix to multiday trips to the bottom of the Grand Canyon.

360 Adventures

(888) 722-0360

www.360-adventures.com

Arizona Outback Adventures

(866) 455-1601

www.aoa-adventures.com

Hike In Phoenix, LLC

(877) HIKE-PHX

www.hikeinphoenix.com

Hike In Tucson

(877) HIKE-TUC

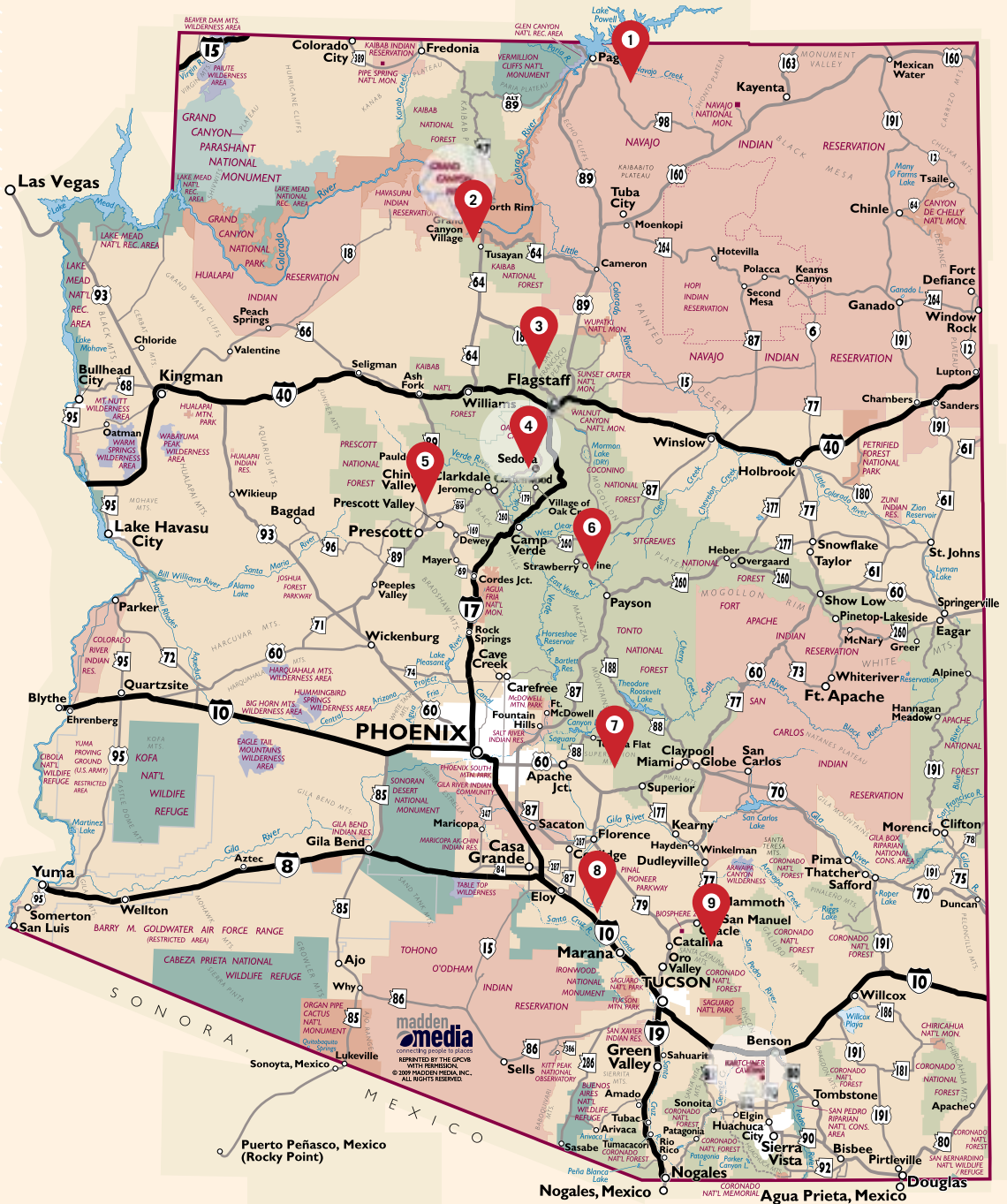
www.hikeintucson.com

Take A Hike Arizona

(480) 540-0360

www.takeahikearizona.com

ARIZONA



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Must-See AZ

Phoenix is the jumping-off point to several hiking and sightseeing destinations in the Grand Canyon State.



1

Antelope Canyon, Page
www.antelopecanyon.com



2

Grand Canyon National Park
www.nps.gov/grca



3

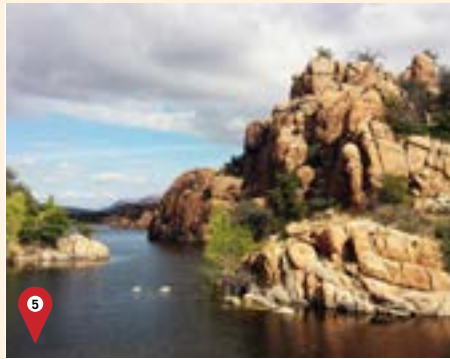
Mount Humphreys Flagstaff
www.fs.usda.gov/coconino

© USDA Forest Service, Coconino



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Sedona/Oak Creek Canyon
www.fs.usda.gov/coconino



5

Watson Lake, Prescott
www.prescott-az.gov



6

Tonto National Bridge State Park, Payson
www.azstateparks.com/Parks/TONA



7

Lost Dutchman State Park/Superstition Wilderness
www.azstateparks.com/Parks/LODU

© Andrea L. King



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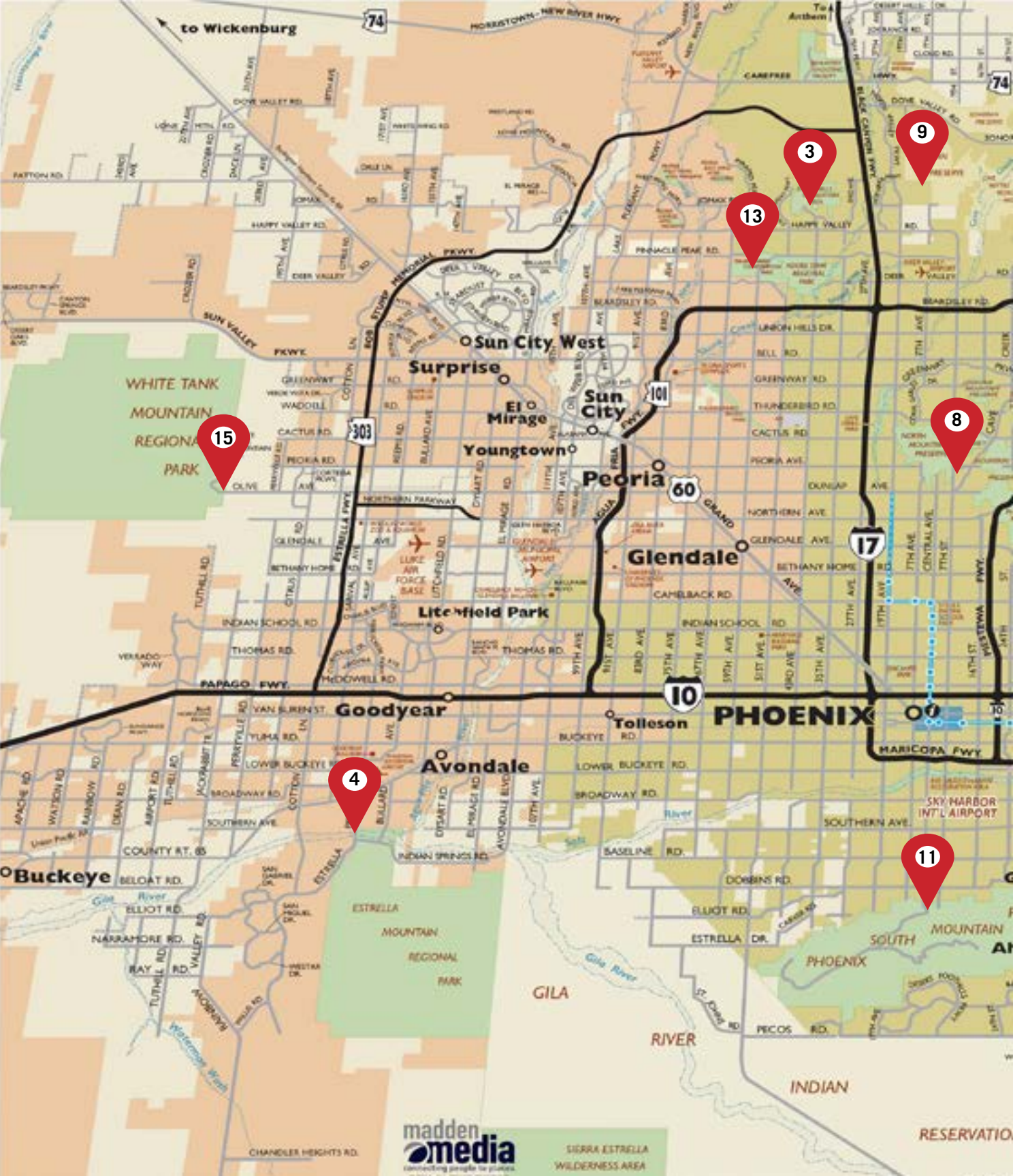
Picacho Peak, Tucson
www.azstateparks.com/Parks/PIPE



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Mount Lemmon, Tucson
www.fs.usda.gov/coronado

© David McCray, USDA Forest Service, Coronado



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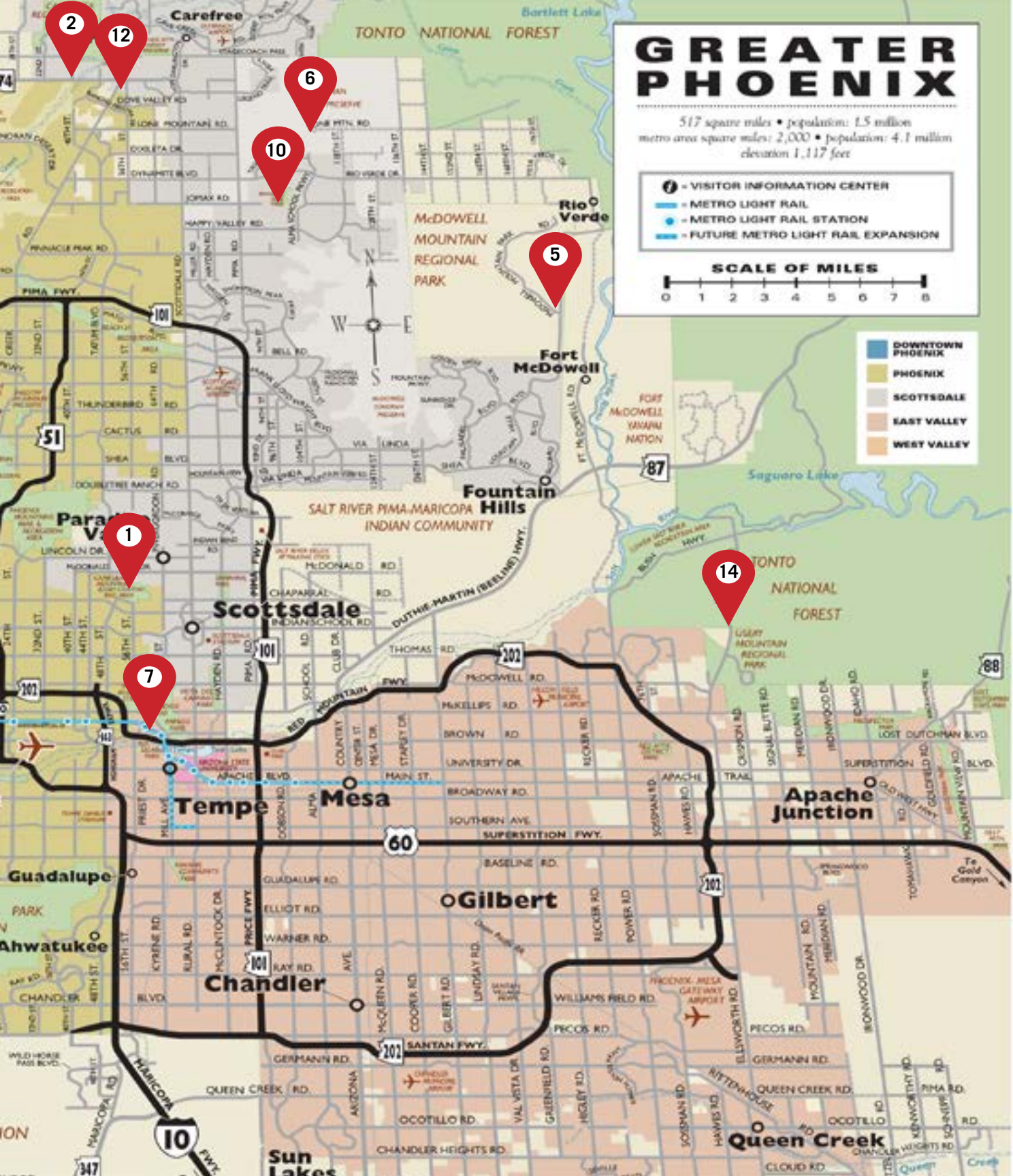
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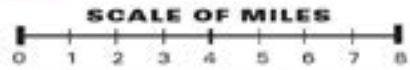
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GREATER PHOENIX

517 square miles • population: 1.5 million
 metro area square miles: 2,000 • population: 4.1 million
 elevation 1,117 feet

- = VISITOR INFORMATION CENTER
- = METRO LIGHT RAIL
- = METRO LIGHT RAIL STATION
- = FUTURE METRO LIGHT RAIL EXPANSION



- DOWNTOWN PHOENIX
- PHOENIX
- SCOTTSDALE
- EAST VALLEY
- WEST VALLEY

2
12

6
10

5

1

7

14

Greater Phoenix Trails



Hike



Bike



Dog Friendly



Horse Friendly










ADA Compliant








Level of Difficulty*: E= Easy, M= Moderate/Intermediate, D= Difficult, S= Strenuous

Park/Preserve	Level of Difficulty						Length (miles)
1 Camelback Mountain (Invergordon Rd. & Chaparral Rd.) Trail map and descriptions							
Bobby's Rock Loop	E	✓					.18
Cholla	D/S	✓					1.5
Echo Canyon Trail	D/S	✓					1.2
2 Cave Creek Regional Park (32nd St. & Carefree Hwy.) Trail map and descriptions							
Flume	M	✓	✓	✓	✓		2.3
Go John (permit required)	M/D	✓	✓	✓	✓		5.8
Overton	M	✓	✓	✓	✓		2.1
Quartz	M	✓	✓	✓	✓		1.4
Slate	E	✓	✓	✓	✓		1.6
3 Deem Hills Recreation Area (51st Ave. & Deem Hills Pkwy.) Trail map and descriptions							
Deem Hills Circumference		✓	✓	✓	✓		5.73
Palisades Trail/Water Tank Road		✓	✓	✓	✓		1.53
Basalt Trail		✓	✓	✓	✓		.64
Deem Hills Ridgeline Trail		✓	✓	✓	✓		1.45
4 Estrella Mountain Regional Park (Estrella Pkwy. & Vineyard Ave.) Trail map and descriptions							
Baseline	M	✓		✓			2.6
Butterfield (Front)	E	✓	✓	✓	✓		.8
Butterfield (Back)	M	✓	✓	✓	✓		1.3
Coldwater	M	✓	✓	✓	✓		2.9
Crossover	E	✓	✓	✓	✓		.9
Dysart	E	✓	✓	✓	✓		1.9
Horseshoe	E	✓	✓	✓	✓		1.0
Quail	D	✓	✓	✓	✓		1.0
Toothaker	M	✓	✓	✓	✓		3.9
5 McDowell Mountain Regional Park (McDowell Mountain Rd. & McDowell Mountain Park Dr.) Trail map and descriptions							
Bluff	M	✓	✓	✓	✓		2.2
Chuparosa	E	✓	✓	✓			.5
Cinch	M	✓	✓	✓	✓		.6
Delsie	E	✓	✓	✓	✓		2.5
Escondido	M	✓	✓	✓	✓		6.2









Level of Difficulty*: E= Easy, M= Moderate/Intermediate, D= Difficult, S= Strenuous

Park/Preserve	Level of Difficulty						Length (miles)
McDowell Mountain Regional Park (continued)							
Granite	E	✓	✓	✓	✓		3.5
Hilltop	E	✓		✓			.5 (RT)
Lariat	E	✓	✓	✓	✓		1.5
Lousley Hill	M	✓		✓			1.2 (RT)
North	E	✓	✓	✓			2.9 (RT)
Pemberton	D	✓	✓	✓	✓		15.3
Scenic	M	✓	✓	✓	✓		3.5
Shallmo Wash	D	✓	✓	✓	✓		1.7
Stoneman Wash	D	✓	✓	✓	✓		4.3
Tonto Tank	E	✓	✓	✓	✓		2.7
Verde	E	✓	✓	✓			1.2
Wagner	E	✓	✓	✓			1.1
6  McDowell Sonoran Preserve (multiple trailheads see below) Trail map and descriptions below							
Brown's Ranch Trailhead (N. Alma School Rd. & Dynamite Blvd.)	E-D	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	see website for trails
Fraesfield Trailhead (E Rio Verde Dr. & 132 nd St.)	E-D	✓	✓	✓	✓		see website for trails
Gateway Trailhead (N Thompson Peak Pkwy. & E Bell Rd.)	E-S	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	see website for trails
Granite Mountain Trailhead (E Lone Mountain Rd. & N 136th St.)	E-D	✓	✓	✓	✓		see website for trails
Lost Dog Wash Trailhead (N 124 St. & E Via Linda)	E-M	✓	✓	✓	✓		see website for trails
Quartz Trailhead (N Thompson Peak Pkwy. & N Frank Llyod Wright Blvd.)	E	✓	✓	✓	✓		see website for trails
Ringtail Trailhead (N 128th St. & E Cactus Rd.)	E-M	✓	✓	✓	✓		see website for trails
Sunrise Trailhead (N 145th Way & E Wethersfield Rd.)	D	✓	✓	✓	✓		see website for trails
Tom's Thumb Trailhead <i>(Expert Pick)</i> (N 128th St. & E Pinnacle Peak Rd.)	E-S	✓	✓	✓	✓		see website for trails
104th St./Bell Rd. Trailhead	E	✓	✓	✓	✓		see website for trails
7  Papago Park (Mill Ave. & Van Buren St.) Trail map and descriptions							
Hole-in-the-Rock	E	✓		✓			.17
Elliot Ramada Loop	E	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	2.7






Level of Difficulty*: E= Easy, M= Moderate/Intermediate, D= Difficult, S= Strenuous

Park/Preserve	Level of Difficulty						Length (miles)
Little Butte Loop	E	√	√	√	√		.5
Double Butte Loop	E	√	√	√	√		2.3
Galvin Bikeway	E	√	√	√	√		1.4
Ranger Office Loop	E	√	√	√	√		.6
Crosscut	E	√	√	√	√	√	1.4
Nature Trail	E	√	√	√	√		.5
 8 Phoenix Mountain Preserve (multiple entrances, North Mountain Visitor Center 7th St. & E Thunderbird Ave.) Trail map and descriptions							
Perl Charles Memorial	M/D	√	√	√	√		4.8
L.V. Yates Trail	E/M	√	√	√	√		2.5
Quartz Ridge	M	√	√	√	√		1.7
North Mountain National	M/D	√		√			1.6
Maxine Lakin Nature	E/M	√	√	√	√		1.2
Charles M. Christiansen Memorial	E/M	√	√	√	√		10.7
Lookout Mountain Summit	M/D	√		√			.6
Mohave	E/M	√	√	√	√		.4
Mohave Connector	E/M	√	√	√	√		1.5
Dreamy Draw Nature	E/M	√	√	√	√		1.5
Summit (Piestewa Peak)	M/D	√					1.2
Freedom	M/D	√	√	√	√		3.7
Nature	E/M	√	√	√	√		1.5
Shaw Butte	M/D	√	√	√	√		4.0
Lookout Mountain Circumference	M/D	√	√	√	√		2.6
Shadow Mountain Big Loop	M/D	√	√	√	√		1.6
 9 Phoenix Sonoran Preserve (W Jomax Rd. & N North Valley Pkwy.) Trail map and descriptions							
Ocotillo Trail (Northern Area)	E	√	√	√	√		6.25
Ridgeback Trail (Northern Area)	M	√	√	√	√		1.53
Sidewinder Trail (Northern Area)	M/D	√	√	√	√		6.98
Sonoran Paseo (Northern Area)	E	√	√	√	√	√	5.0
Bobcat Trail (Southern Area)	E	√	√	√	√		1.01
Desert Tortoise Trail (Southern Area)	M	√	√	√	√		1.1
Dixie Mountain Loop (Southern Area)	M	√	√	√	√		3.82
Dixie Summit Trail (Southern Area)	D	√	√	√	√		.22
Hawk's Nest Trail (Southern Area)	M	√	√	√	√		.39
Union Peak Trail (Southern Area)	M/D	√	√	√	√		.45

Level of Difficulty*: E= Easy, M= Moderate/Intermediate, D= Difficult, S= Strenuous

Park/Preserve	Level of Difficulty						Length (miles)
Valle Vista Trail (Southern Area)	M	√	√	√	√		1.2
 Pinnacle Peak Park (E Jomax Rd. & N Alma School Rd.) Trail map and description							
Pinnacle Peak Trail	M/D	√					1.75
 South Mountain (multiple entrances, Main: W Dobbins Rd. & S Central Ave.) Trail map and descriptions							
Alta	M/D	√	√	√	√		4.8
Bajada	M	√	√	√	√		3.2
Beverly Canyon	M	√	√	√	√		1.5
Bursera	M/D	√	√	√	√		2.9
Desert Classic	M	√	√	√	√		9.0
Geronimo	M	√	√	√	√		2.5
Hidden Valley <i>(Expert Pick)</i>	E/M	√	√	√	√		.5
Holbert	M/D	√	√	√	√		2.9
Javelina Canyon	M/D	√	√	√	√		1.7
Judith Tunell Accessible	E	√		√		√	.5
Judith Tunell Challenge	E	√		√		√	.5
Las Lomitas	E	√	√	√	√		1.2
Ma Ha Tauk	M/D	√	√	√	√		1.5
Max Delta	M	√	√	√	√		2.7
Mormon	M/D	√	√	√	√		1.1
National	M/D	√	√	√	√		14.3
Pima East Loop	M	√	√	√	√		1.5
Pima West Loop	M	√	√	√	√		2.2
Pyramid	M/D	√	√	√	√		3.0
Ranger	M/D	√	√	√	√		1.6
Telegraph Pass	M/D	√	√	√	√		1.5
 Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area (Cave Creek Rd. & Spur Cross Rd.) Trail map and descriptions							
Dragonfly	M	√		√			2.6
Elephant Mountain	D/S	√		√	√		2.0
Metate	E	√		√			.8
Spur Cross	M	√	√	√	√		5.2
Tortuga	M	√		√	√		1.2

Level of Difficulty*: E= Easy, M= Moderate/Intermediate, D= Difficult, S= Strenuous

Park/Preserve	Level of Difficulty						Length (miles)
Towhee	E	✓		✓			.2
13 Thunderbird Conservation Park (59th Ave. & W Pinnacle Peak Rd.) Trail map and descriptions							
Coach Whip	M	✓	✓	✓	✓		5.0
Arrowhead Point	M/D	✓	✓	✓	✓		1.5
Cholla Loop	M/D	✓	✓	✓	✓		3.0
Sunrise	M/D	✓	✓	✓	✓		2.0
Desert Iguana	E	✓	✓	✓	✓		.75
14 Usey Mountain Regional Park (Ellsworth Rd. & McDowell Rd.) Trail map and descriptions							
Amigos Wash	M	✓	✓	✓	✓		1.2
Blevins	E	✓	✓	✓	✓		3.0 (RT)
Cat Peaks	M	✓	✓	✓	✓		1.1
Cat Peaks Pass	M/D	✓	✓	✓	✓		.3
County Line	E	✓	✓	✓	✓		1.0
Crismon Wash	M	✓	✓	✓	✓		.9
Desert Hawk	E	✓		✓			.5 (RT)
Merkle	E	✓	✓	✓	✓		.9 (RT)
Nighthawk	M	✓	✓	✓	✓		.5
Noso	M	✓	✓	✓	✓		1.0
Pass Mountain	D	✓	✓	✓	✓		7.5 (RT)
Ruidoso	E	✓	✓	✓	✓		1.3
Spillway	E	✓	✓	✓	✓		1.2
Vista	M	✓		✓			.5
Wind Cave	D	✓		✓			1.5
15 White Tank Mountain Regional Park (Olive Ave. & Citrus Rd.) Trail map and descriptions							
Bajada	M	✓	✓	✓	✓		1.1
Ford Canyon	D/S	✓	✓	✓	✓		7.4
Goat Camp	D/S	✓	✓	✓	✓		6.3
Ironwood	M	✓	✓	✓	✓		.9
Mesquite Canyon	D	✓	✓	✓	✓		5.0
Mule Deer (Maricopa Trail)	M	✓	✓	✓	✓		3.4
Waddell	E	✓	✓	✓	✓		1.0
Waterfall <i>(Expert Pick)</i>	E	✓		✓			.9
Wildlife	E	✓	✓	✓	✓		.2

* The difficulty level listed for each trail is a subjective guideline based on the average hiker's skill and stamina. Not all trails are listed. Please see park websites for full listings.





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