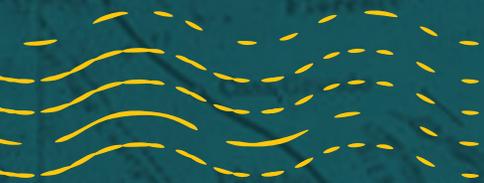


VISIT  MESA  
CITY LIMITLESS®

# ADVENTURE *Guide*

HIKING • BIKING • WATER SPORTS • CLIMBING • OFF-ROADING



# WELCOME *to* MESA!



Whether it's your first visit or a return trip, we're glad you're here. On behalf of the City of Mesa and our partners at Visit Mesa, we hope this guide helps you explore our great outdoors and enjoy all our community has to offer.

– Mark Freeman  
Mayor, City of Mesa

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# ADVENTURE BY SEASON

Adventure in Mesa is abundant and varies by season. Here's what to experience during your visit.



## SPRING

AVG. TEMPERATURE: 82°F HIGH / 60°F LOW

- WILDFLOWER VIEWING
- OFF-ROADING
- MOUNTAIN BIKING
- SCENIC LAKE CRUISING
- HIKING
- BACKCOUNTRY BACKPACKING
- SUP/KAYAKING
- FISHING

## SUMMER

WATER ACTIVITIES ONLY

AVG. TEMPERATURE: 101°F HIGH / 81°F LOW

- TUBING ON THE SALT RIVER
- SCENIC LAKE CRUISING
- SUP/KAYAKING
- SWIMMING/SURFING
- FISHING

## FALL

AVG. TEMPERATURE: 84°F HIGH / 66°F LOW

- HIKING
- SCENIC LAKE CRUISING
- MOUNTAIN BIKING
- BACKCOUNTRY BACKPACKING
- OFF-ROADING
- TUBING ON THE SALT RIVER
- FISHING

## WINTER

AVG. TEMPERATURE: 64°F HIGH / 47°F LOW

- HIKING
- SUP/KAYAKING (NO RIVER)
- MOUNTAIN BIKING
- SCENIC LAKE CRUISING
- FISHING
- OFF-ROADING

# LEAVE IT LIMITLESS

In Mesa, adventure is shaped by the water that surrounds us and the Sonoran Desert that defines us. They're not just backdrops. They're living, breathing and brilliantly alive. From Saguaro Lake to Canyon Lake, from the Supes to Usery, and with the Salt River winding in between, every bend, peak and horizon exists because this place is still beautifully and unapologetically wild.

Here, saguaros stretch toward endless blue skies, wild horses move quietly along the Salt River, and desert blooms arrive in flashes of color that feel almost miraculous. And while this incredible landscape invites us in, it asks only one thing in return: **respect**.



Respect isn't complicated. It's staying on established trails so fragile desert soil and native plants can thrive. It's packing out what we bring in and giving wildlife the space it needs to move freely. It's reaching for a reusable water bottle and remembering that in a land defined by sun and seasons, every drop counts.

Through partnerships with organizations like Natural Restorations, Visit Mesa is working to preserve open space and protect the Sonoran Desert for generations to come.

When we explore thoughtfully, we keep the stories unfolding and the spirit of Mesa limitless.

# DESERT CREATURES & CACTI



MEAGAN MASTRIANI

The Sonoran Desert is alive with fascinating wildlife. Meagan Mastriani, Senior Ranger at Lost Dutchman State Park, shares some fast facts about a few of the iconic flora and fauna:

## ROADRUNNER

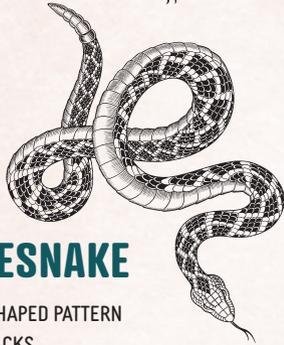


- GROWS UP TO 2 FEET LONG
- CAN RUN UP TO 20-26 MPH



## GILA WOODPECKER

- PRONOUNCED "HEE-LUH"
- BUILDS THEIR HOMES IN SAGUARO CACTI
- KNOWN FOR A LOUD, HARSH "YIP-YIP-YIP" CALL, A ROLLING "CHURRR" SOUND, AND SHARP "KEE-U" CRIES



## RATTLESNAKE

- DIAMOND-SHAPED PATTERN ON THEIR BACKS
- WILL RATTLE WHEN THEY FEEL THREATENED AND BEFORE STRIKING

## GILA MONSTER

- PRONOUNCED "HEE-LUH"
- ONE OF ONLY TWO VENOMOUS LIZARDS IN NORTH AMERICA
- THE LARGEST LIZARD IN THE U.S.
- ORANGE AND BLACK SPOTTED BACK – MAY BE SPOTTED BASKING IN THE SUN

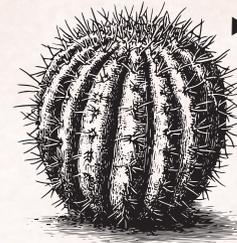


## ARIZONA BARK SCORPION

- MOST VENOMOUS SCORPION IN NORTH AMERICA
- FUN FACT: THESE NOCTURNAL CREATURES GLOW UNDER UV LIGHT

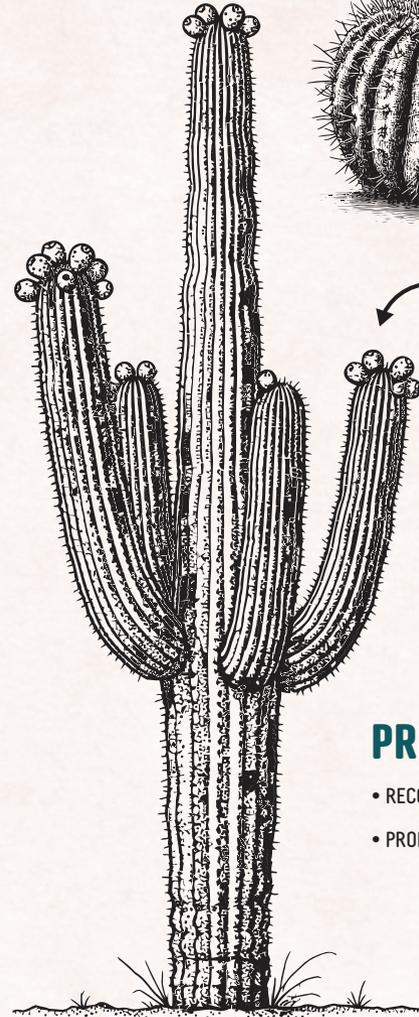


LOCAL TIP: JOIN A RANGER-LED PROGRAM AT LOST DUTCHMAN STATE PARK OR HEAD OUT AFTER DARK WITH A BLACKLIGHT TO SPOT THESE GLOWING DESERT DWELLERS.



## BARREL CACTUS

- ROUNDED, BARREL-LIKE SHAPE
- BLOOMS IN VIBRANT SHADES LIKE ORANGE AND MAGENTA
- SOMETIMES CALLED THE "COMPASS CACTUS" AS THEY TYPICALLY LEAN SOUTH



## SAGUARO

- PRONOUNCED "SA-WAH-RO"
- PROTECTED BY AZ STATE LAW
- CAN GROW UP TO THREE STORIES TALL
- CAN LIVE NEARLY 200 YEARS
- TAKES ABOUT 75 YEARS FOR THE FIRST ARM TO GROW



## PRICKLY PEAR

- RECOGNIZABLE BY FLAT, PADDLE-SHAPED PADS
- PRODUCES PINKISH-PURPLE FRUIT CALLED "TUNA"



## CHOLLA

- PRONOUNCED "CHOY-A"
- NICKNAMED "JUMPING CACTUS" BECAUSE ITS SPINES CLING EASILY TO SKIN AND CLOTHING
- SOFT, FUZZY LOOK BUT SHARP, BARBED SPINES

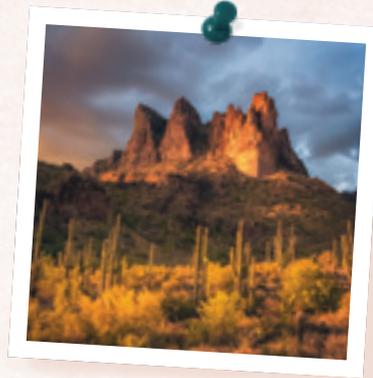
### PLAY IT SAFE:

Stick to marked trails, wear closed-toed shoes, make noise while hiking to alert creatures of your presence and never attempt to touch or handle any wildlife.

# DESERT FIELD NOTES

The Sonoran Desert invites curiosity. Whether your adventure takes you onto a hiking trail, a bike line, a climbing wall or out onto the water, every experience begins with a moment of intention.

Before you turn the page and begin exploring Mesa's outdoor playground, pause for a moment. Imagine the adventure ahead and what you hope to discover along the way.



## WHAT KIND OF ADVENTURE ARE YOU HOPING TO EXPERIENCE IN MESA?

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## WHAT ARE YOU MOST EXCITED TO EXPLORE OUTDOORS?

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## WHO ARE YOU SHARING THIS ADVENTURE WITH?

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## ONE THING YOU HOPE TO NOTICE OR APPRECIATE IN NATURE TODAY:

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## WHAT WOULD MAKE THIS TRIP UNFORGETTABLE?

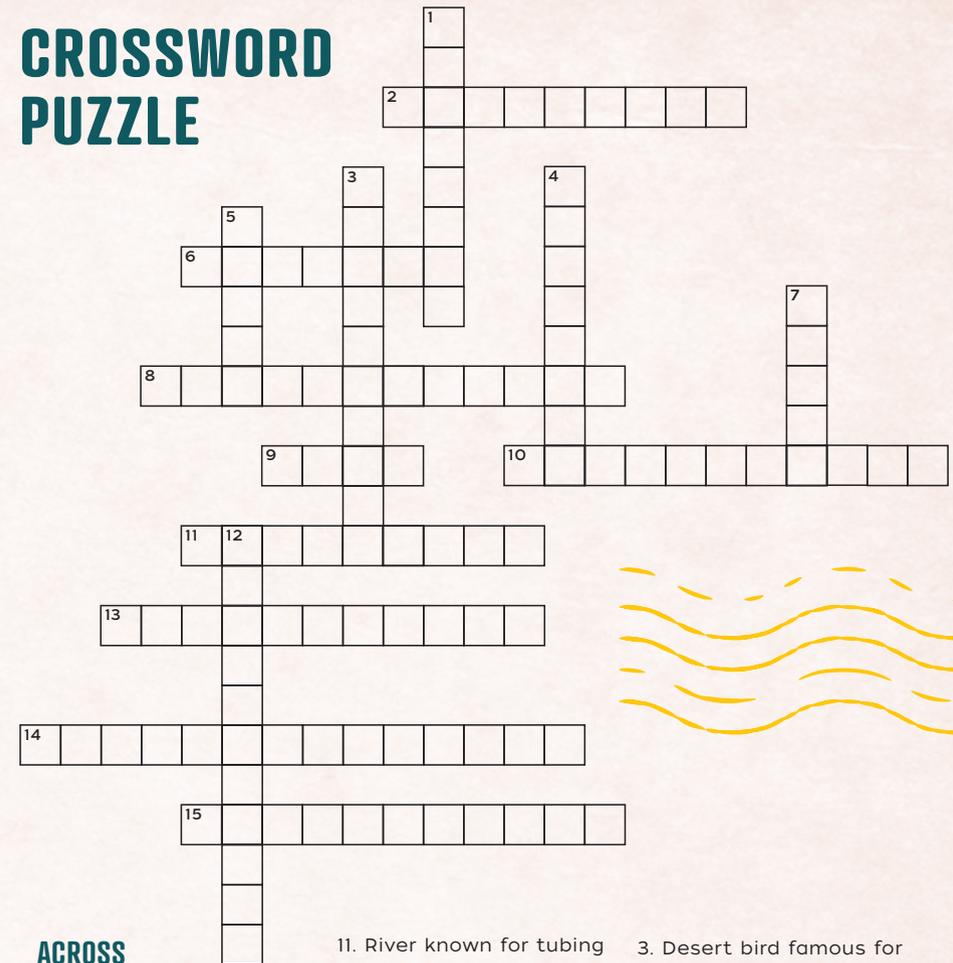
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## NOW TAKE A DEEP BREATH. YOUR DESERT ADVENTURE AWAITS.

# CROSSWORD PUZZLE



### ACROSS

- 2. Recreation area known for off-roading
- 6. Iconic cactus that can grow three stories tall
- 8. Famous state park tied to a legendary hidden treasure
- 9. Pinkish-purple fruit produced by the prickly pear cactus
- 10. Ancient rock carvings found along a popular Mesa trail

- 11. River known for tubing and wild horses
- 13. Largest lizard in the U.S. found in the Sonoran Desert
- 14. Needle-like rock formation and climbing spot in the Superstitions
- 15. Paddle-shaped cactus that produces edible fruit

- 3. Desert bird famous for its speed and cartoon rivalry with coyotes
- 4. Instagram-famous rock formation shaped like an ocean swell
- 5. Popular mountain biking trail system
- 7. Regional park known for hiking and climbing
- 12. Historic highway winding through the Superstitions

### DOWN

- 1. Venomous desert creature that glows under UV light

# TAKE *the* HIGH ROAD

Discover breathtaking desert vistas while soaking in the Arizona sun by exploring the many hiking trails that surround Mesa. Wander through Utery Mountain Regional Park's iconic paths, explore the scenic Lost Dutchman State Park or venture into the rugged Superstition Wilderness.

From easy strolls to challenging climbs, Mesa's diverse trail system offers something for every adventurer.



LEARN MORE ABOUT  
HIKING IN MESA:

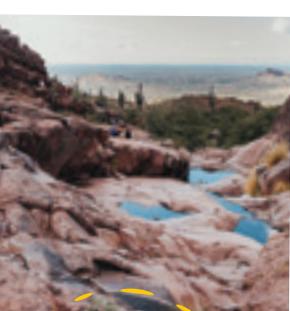
A square QR code located within a white rectangular box with a scalloped border and a small orange pushpin graphic at the top right corner.

# HIGH-FIVE HIKES

Iconic trails aren't hard to find in Mesa. The Sonoran Desert delivers unforgettable hikes for every ability level, with stunning views and photo-worthy moments at every turn. Here are our top five favorite hikes around Mesa, offering options for every skill level.



@DANIELLEOUTDOORS\_ LOCAL CONTENT CREATOR



## HIEROGLYPHIC TRAIL EASY TO MODERATE / 574 FT / 3 MILES SUPERSTITION MOUNTAINS

Step back in time on this 3-mile out-and-back hike through a scenic canyon where ancient Hohokam petroglyphs tell stories from 1,500 years ago. The trail ends at a rocky alcove with seasonal pools and fascinating rock art etched into the stone. This trail offers history and beauty in one unforgettable hike.

**Sustainability note:** Please admire the ancient petroglyphs with your eyes, not your hands, so their stories endure for years to come.



## WAVE CAVE TRAIL MODERATE / 820 FT / 3 MILES SUPERSTITION WILDERNESS

Get ready for an Instagram moment! This 3-mile journey takes hikers through steep climbs and rugged terrain to a jaw-dropping payoff: a massive rock formation that looks like a frozen ocean wave.



## WIND CAVE TRAIL MODERATE / 1,043 FT / 3.2 MILES USERY MOUNTAIN REGIONAL PARK

This scenic hike is a local favorite, offering a 3.2-mile trek to the Wind Cave that offers hikers a sweeping view of the park's flora and views of the East Valley. Switchbacks ease the climb to a peaceful cave that provides a shady retreat and stunning valley views before heading back down.

## FREMONT SADDLE VIA PERALTA TRAIL MODERATE / 1,338 FT / 4.6 MILES SUPERSTITION WILDERNESS

Ready for a desert adventure? This 4.6-mile out-and-back trek through Peralta Canyon showcases the best of the Sonoran Desert through a continuous uphill hike with plenty of switchbacks. Your reward at Fremont Saddle? Unbeatable views of the legendary Weavers Needle rising from the wilderness.

## REAVIS FALLS TRAIL HARD / 3,323 FT / 13.1 MILES SUPERSTITION WILDERNESS

This demanding 13.1-mile trek into the wild Superstitions winds near historic Reavis Ranch before dropping steeply into a rugged canyon to reach the seasonal 200-foot Reavis Falls. Remote and wildly rewarding, it's



a true backcountry backpacking escape with sweeping desert views. Gear up with lightweight pack rentals from local Mesa shop, **Near Zero**.

### LOCAL TIPS:

@DanielleOutdoors\_, local content creator, shares some of her top bucket-list trails that offer incredible scenery without the crowds:

**EJ Peak** is one of the most underrated summit hikes in the **Superstition Mountains**. You'll get sweeping views of **Weavers Needle** and the Superstition Wilderness, especially beautiful at sunrise and sunset.

**Levee Trail** in **Usery Mountain Regional Park** is one of my go-to casual sunset walks. The trail is relatively mellow, but the elevated views over the desert and city make it a favorite for locals who want something scenic without a full hike.

**Coon Bluff** above the **Lower Salt River** is an easy but uniquely Arizona experience. It's one of the best places near Mesa to spot wild horses along the Salt River, especially in the early morning or near sunset.

**One quick desert tip:** Toss a pair of tweezers in your bag just in case. Even experienced hikers end up with a cactus poke now and then.

# SPEND 48 HOURS HIKING IN MESA



## DAY 1

### MORNING

- Start your day watching the sunrise on the 2.8-mile **Cat Peaks Loop** in **Usery Mountain Regional Park**, or the **Merkle Trail**, a 1-mile wheelchair accessible route with stunning views.
- After the hike, visit the park's **Nature Center** for insights on wildlife and native plants, plus enjoy the interactive exhibits.

### AFTERNOON

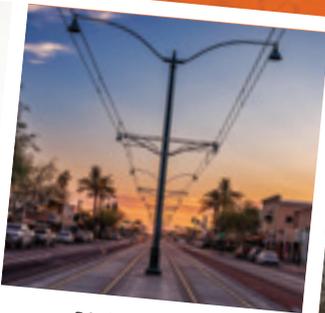
- Grab brunch at the over-the-top local favorite, **Eggstasy**. You have to try their Cinnamon Toast Crunch Pancakes and their loaded Bloody Marys.
- Take the afternoon easy by perusing the murals and shops throughout **Downtown Mesa**. We love to visit **The Boutique**, **Just Because Gift Shop** and **Blossom Boutique**.

### EVENING

- Saddle up for a golden-hour horseback ride at **Saguaro Lake Ranch Stables** or **Fort McDowell Adventures**.
- End your evening by sipping a cold one at one of Arizona's best cideries, **Cider Corps**, and grab dinner at their restaurant inside, **Myke's Pizza**.



MERKLE TRAIL



DOWNTOWN MESA



FORT MCDOWELL ADVENTURES

## DAY 2

### MORNING

- Fuel up for a morning of great views at **Jarrold's Coffee, Tea, & Gallery**. Their iced lattes and vegan banana muffins are our favorites.
- Head out to the **Superstition Wilderness** to begin the trek on the **Peralta Trail**. This hike leads you to the epic scene of **Weavers Needle**.

### AFTERNOON

- After working up an appetite, consider stopping at Arizona favorite, **Backyard Taco**, for an authentic Mexican lunch.
- Continue your journey on the historic **Highway 88**, better known as the **Apache Trail**. Stop by the **Superstition Mountain-Lost Dutchman Museum** and explore the Elvis Presley wedding chapel, the Wild West film memorabilia, and even study the treasure maps of the lost mine (maybe you can get lucky and find the missing gold!).

### EVENING

- Take a sunset drive along the winding roads and enjoy the views of the Superstition Mountains.
- When you're ready for an epic dinner spot, pull into **Goldfield Ghost Town** for dinner at the **Mammoth Steakhouse & Saloon**. Grab a table outside for the best sunset views of the Supes.

# LINES *in the* DUST

Mesa delivers a rare combination mountain bikers travel for: desert tracks close to town, with enough variety for a long weekend. Most of the time you're riding on firm, sun-baked dirt and rock, which keeps things fast when other regions are dealing with mud or snow. The only trick is traction: gravelly corners and sandy patches can sneak up on you, so staying smooth beats grabbing brakes. Expect rock ledges, desert washes and tight lines around saguaros. Start early, carry extra water and ride whatever sounds fun that day.



LEARN MORE ABOUT  
MOUNTAIN BIKING:



# FIVE RIDES THAT RIP



Mesa makes it easy to put together a great ride. Trailheads sit close to town, the desert stays fun and fast through much of the year, and the options cover everything from mellow confidence-builders to legit tech and longer loop days. Below are our five favorite trails to ride in the area, with quick notes on where to start and what to expect once your tires hit the dirt.

## DESERT TRAILS PARK

**BEGINNER**

**2955 N RECKER RD**

Desert Trails Park is Mesa's bike park for pump-track laps and short skill-building trails, located on Recker Rd and McDowell Rd, and it remains open except during rainy/muddy closures.

## HAWES LOOP

**BEGINNER - INTERMEDIATE**

**HAWES TRAIL**

Mesa's signature sampler mixes punchy climbing with quick, fun descents, and it typically starts from the Hawes Trailhead off Power Rd and Bush Hwy, near the Granite Reef Recreation Area.

## ALPE D'HUEZ

**INTERMEDIATE**

**HAWES TRAIL**

Alpe d'Huez is a popular climb in the Hawes system that sets up multiple descent options ranging from smoother flow to rockier, more technical lines, and it's commonly accessed from the Hawes trailhead via signed connectors.

### NOTE:

E-bikes are not permitted on the Hawes Trail system, on any trails in Usery Mountain Regional Park or on the trails at Desert Trails Park.

## PASS MOUNTAIN TRAIL

**INTERMEDIATE**

**USERY MOUNTAIN REGIONAL PARK**

Pass Mountain is a longer, steadier loop inside Usery Mountain Regional Park in Mesa, with common starting points at trailhead parking areas, including the Wind Cave area.

## BIG SISTER

**ADVANCED**

**HAWES TRAIL**

Big Sister is a more committed, feature-forward downhill line within the Hawes network, most easily reached by starting at the main Hawes access and linking in for a descent-focused lap.



**STEPHANIE MCMILLAN**  
LOCAL RIDER

### LOCAL TIPS:

Stephanie McMillan, local rider and Hawes Trail regular, shares a few of her top tips for making the most of a mountain biking day in Mesa:

- If you're new, start with smoother loops like **Chain Fruit**, **Lost Sheep** or **Moon Rock** at Usery, or **Scorpion** and **Bush Lite East** on the Hawes Trail.
- When I want a solid intermediate ride, I head for **Big Sister Flow**. When I want more edge, I look at **Ridge** or **Saguaro** before dropping into bigger stuff like **Red Mountain Rush** or **Boulderdash**.
- I stick to designated trails and follow etiquette. Bikes yield to all other users, and taking care of the desert keeps these lines open and riding well.
- If you want to ride with locals, I tell people to stop by **Action RideShop** or **The Shad Co**, and join the "**Hawesaholics**" Facebook group.

# SPEND 48 HOURS MOUNTAIN BIKING IN MESA

## DAY 1

### MORNING

- Take a sunrise ride on the **Hawes Trail System** off Power Rd near the Granite Reef bend, and link up a 60-90- minute loop that fits your skill level.
- Refuel with breakfast at local favorite **T.C. Eggington's** before the day warms up.

### AFTERNOON

- Pick up sandwiches from **Worth Takeaway** downtown before heading to **Phon D Sutton Recreation Area** for a riverside lunch. Enjoy the easy water access and prime odds of spotting the Salt River wild horses.

### EVENING

- Return to the Hawes Trail for a short golden-hour ride along the **Jumping Jacks Cut** intermediate trail, a connector off the **Wild Horse Trail**.
- End the evening with a leisurely pub crawl along Main Street in Downtown Mesa. Favorite spots include **Pedal Haus Biergarten** (perfect for bike lovers), **Phantom Fox Beer Co.** and **12 West Brewing Company**.



HAWES TRAIL SYSTEM



WORTH TAKEAWAY



PEDAL HAUS BIERGARTEN



ORGANIC BEAN CAFE



USERY MOUNTAIN REGIONAL PARK



UTV TOUR WITH STELLAR ADVENTURES

## DAY 2

### MORNING

- Start the morning with a fresh pastry and coffee from **Organic Bean Cafe**, tucked away in Downtown Mesa's Greenbelt.
- Spin a few laps at the **Desert Trails Park** to dial in cornering and flow.

### AFTERNOON

- Head to **Usery Mountain Regional Park** for a longer loop day with steady climbing and wide-open views.
- Settle in at **Goldwater Brewing Co.** for a cold one and some downtime, and bring in food from wherever you're craving.

### EVENING

- Swap your pedals out for an engine and book a thrilling UTV tour around the Arizona desert with **Stellar Adventures**.
- Wind down by catching a comedy show at **Bridge Improv Theater** or keep it casual with live music and drinks on the patio at **Las Sendas Golf Club**.



PHOENIX SKY HARBOR  
INT'L AIRPORT

FORT MCDOWELL  
YAVAPAI NATION  
INDIAN RESERVATION

FORT MCDOWELL  
ADVENTURES

FOUR PEAKS  
RECREATION  
AREA

TONTO  
NATIONAL  
FOREST

ROOSEVELT  
LAKE

VERDE  
RIVER

DESERT  
BELLE CRUISES

SALT RIVER PIMA-MARICOPA  
INDIAN COMMUNITY

SAGUARO LAKE  
GUEST RANCH

SALT RIVER

APACHE LAKE

USERY MOUNTAIN  
REGIONAL PARK

CANYON  
LAKE

APACHE TRAIL

88

HAWES  
TRAIL

DOLLY  
STEAMBOAT

TONTO  
NATIONAL  
FOREST

DESERT TRAILS  
PARK

88

LOST DUTCHMAN  
STATE PARK

SUPERSTITION  
WILDERNESS

ASIAN  
DISTRICT

DOWNTOWN

MESA

APACHE  
JUNCTION

GOLD  
CANYON

SUPERIOR AND  
QUEEN CREEK CANYON

PERALTA  
REGIONAL PARK

GILBERT

MESA GATEWAY  
AIRPORT

24

60

CHANDLER

QUEEN CREEK

# FIND *your* FLOW

Mesa and water might sound like a mismatch until you realize how quickly the desert shifts to blue. In a short drive, the Sonoran Desert gives way to the **Lower Salt River**, where you can float, kayak or paddleboard. Keep going and you'll hit **Saguaro Lake** and **Canyon Lake** for calm coves, cliffy views and easy days on the water. If you're extending the trip, soak in even more water play at **Apache Lake**, **Roosevelt Lake** or along the **Verde River**.

LEARN MORE ABOUT  
WATER RECREATION:





# WHERE THE BLUE BREAKS THROUGH

Mesa tends to surprise people with its water access. In less time than it takes to finish your coffee, the landscape shifts from desert streets to canyon walls anchored by blue water and quiet shorelines. From laid-back floats to full paddle days, these five spots are our go-to starting points.



## LOWER SALT RIVER BLUE POINT

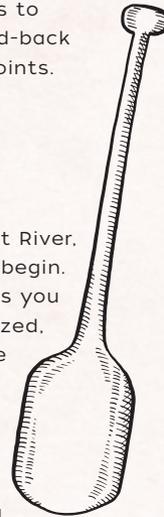
If you're floating the Lower Salt River, Blue Point is an easy place to begin. The wide, sandy shoreline gives you room to unload and get organized, and shaded picnic tables make it simple to gather your group before heading out.

## COON BLUFF

For a chill hang-out spot along the river, Coon Bluff is the place to be. Wide banks make picnicking easy, and the slower edges are perfect for wading and cooling off while you keep an eye out for wild horses along the corridor.

## SHEEP CROSSING

Sheep Crossing is a popular day-use stop along the Lower Salt River, known for shady ramadas and easy river access that make it great for relaxed afternoons by the water. Picnic tables and restrooms are right on site, so it's simple to settle in for a while.



## SAGUARO LAKE BUTCHER JONES

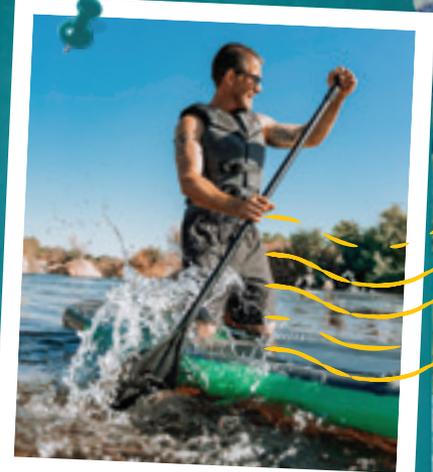
Butcher Jones is a classic hangout on Saguaro Lake, especially on summer weekends when the shoreline fills up fast. Set up for the day, then swim and paddle the shoreline when the water is calm. You might even spot crawdads in the shallows.

## CANYON LAKE LA BARGE COVE / TORTILLA CREEK

Tucked along Canyon Lake's winding shoreline, La Barge Cove and Tortilla Creek reward paddlers who push past the main channel. Plan to launch a kayak or paddleboard and make a day of it.

### RENT. RIDE. REPEAT.

Boat rentals are available at both **Canyon Lake** and **Saguaro Lake** marinas, with Jet Ski rentals offered at Saguaro Lake. Bring your crew and spend the day wakeboarding, waterskiing or tubing on open water.



**JEREMY SCHRODER**  
YAK N SUP, REDLINE RENTALS

## LOCAL TIPS:

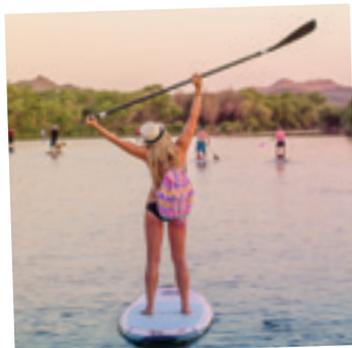
Jeremy Schroder of **Yak N Sup** and **Redline Rentals** shares his favorite ways to spend a day on the water:

**AFTER A RAIN:** I always head to **La Barge Cove** on **Canyon Lake**. A creek runs straight into the lake and it's one of my favorite things to see from the water.

**ALL-DAY HANG:** If I'm planning to grill and hang for the afternoon, I launch from **Boulder Recreation Site** on **Canyon Lake** and make it my home base.

**OVERNIGHT CAMP:** Paddle or 4x4 into **Party Cove** on **Saguaro Lake**, or claim a first-come site at **The Point Campground** on **Canyon Lake**, known locally as **Beer Can Point**.

**CLIFF JUMPING:** For cliff jumping on Saguaro Lake, I like the areas near **Butcher Jones**. Paddle in from the shoreline or look for the **Del Norte** parking lot if you're coming by foot.



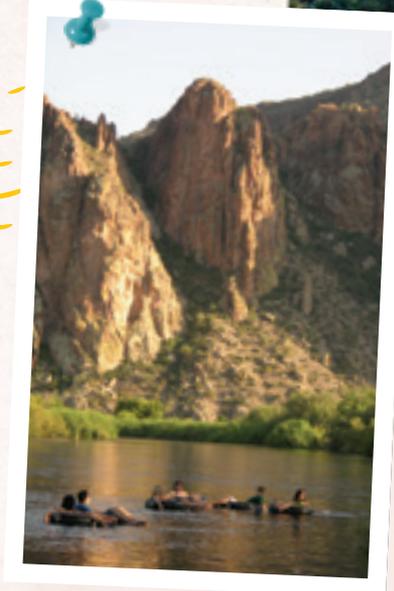
# HOW TO FLOAT THE SALT RIVER

Floating the Lower Salt River is an Arizona summer classic. Cool water, cactus-lined banks and the chance to spot wild horses make it equal parts relaxing and entertaining. Here's what to know before you go.



## WHAT TO BRING

- ✓ Inner tubes and rope to tie your group together  
**Local tip:** bring an extra tube for a cooler
- ✓ Dry bag for keys, phone and wallet
- ✓ Towel or sheet to lay over your tube so you're not sitting on hot vinyl
- ✓ Water shoes for rocky entries and exits
- ✓ Sunscreen, hat and plenty of drinking water
- ✓ Tonto Pass for each vehicle, sold at nearby gas stations and retailers



## TUBE RENTALS

- Lower Salt Rentals  
[lowersaltrentals.com](http://lowersaltrentals.com)
- Riverbound Sports  
[riverboundsports.com](http://riverboundsports.com)

## HOW IT WORKS

Going the DIY route? It's best to bring two vehicles. Park one at your desired pull-out, then drive the second to launch from the **Water Users Recreation Site**. When you finish your float, use the car at the take-out location to retrieve the other vehicle. Just be sure to keep both keys secured in your dry bag!

## BEST FLOAT OPTIONS

### 2 TO 2.5 HOURS:

Water Users Recreation Site  
to Phon D Sutton Recreation Site

### ABOUT 4 HOURS:

Water Users Recreation Site  
to Granite Reef Recreation Site

Only have one car or want the easiest option? Keep logistics simple and book a shuttle service through **Salt River Tubing**.

## FLOAT WITH CARE: TIPS FROM NATURAL RESTORATIONS

Floating the Lower Salt River comes with shared responsibility and these habits help keep it wild and clean for everyone.

### PACK IT IN, PACK IT OUT.

Bring a trash bag and carry out everything you bring, even broken gear. If you spot litter along the way, grab it.

### SECURE YOUR GEAR.

Clip bottles to your board, use dry bags for valuables and tie items down so nothing drifts to the river bottom.

### RESPECT WILDLIFE.

Stay at least 50 feet from the Salt River wild horses and give all animals space to move freely.

### FOLLOW LEAVE NO TRACE PRINCIPLES.

Plan ahead, dispose of waste properly and be mindful of other river users.



## CAST A LINE

Mesa offers more than one way to spend a day fishing. Venture out to the **Lower Salt River**, **Saguaro Lake** or **Canyon Lake** for classic Arizona angling with desert backdrops and wide-open water. Try urban fishing at parks like **Red Mountain**, **Riverview**, **Eastmark** and **Greenfield** where it's easy to cast a line without leaving the city.

Whether you're wading in the current, fishing from a boat or setting up along the shore, each spot has its own pace, access points and species to target.

## LOWER SALT RIVER

The Lower Salt River offers moving water in the heart of the desert. It is one of the most accessible places to fish near Mesa and is especially popular in cooler months when trout are stocked.

**WHAT YOU'LL CATCH:** Rainbow trout in late fall through early spring, plus largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, catfish, carp and sunfish year-round.

**WHEN TO GO:** Late fall through spring is best for trout. In summer, fish early mornings before tubers and kayakers fill the river.

**WHERE TO TRY:**

- Sheep Crossing Recreation Site
- Phon D Sutton Recreation Site
- Water Users Recreation Site
- Granite Reef Recreation Site



## CANYON LAKE

Canyon Lake is smaller and framed by canyon walls, creating excellent structure for fish to hold. It rewards patience and offers a slower presentation in cooler temps.

**WHAT YOU'LL CATCH:** Largemouth bass, yellow bass, walleye and bluegill.

**BEST APPROACH:** For bass, try a drop shot technique along rocky points and deeper structure.

## SAGUARO LAKE

Saguaro Lake is broad, deep and best explored by boat or kayak. Steep shorelines can limit bank access, but the lake offers consistent action for bass and catfish.

**WHAT YOU'LL CATCH:** Largemouth bass, yellow bass, channel catfish, flathead catfish and bluegill.

**BEST APPROACH:** Focus on deeper structure, rocky points and submerged brush. Early morning and evening hours are most productive.

### BEFORE YOU GO

- An Arizona fishing license is required for anglers **10 and older**
- A Tonto National Forest Pass may be required at certain river and lake access points
- Check the Arizona Game and Fish Department website for current regulations and trout stocking schedules
- Bring plenty of water and sun protection

# SPEND 48 HOURS ON THE WATER IN MESA

## DAY 1

### MORNING

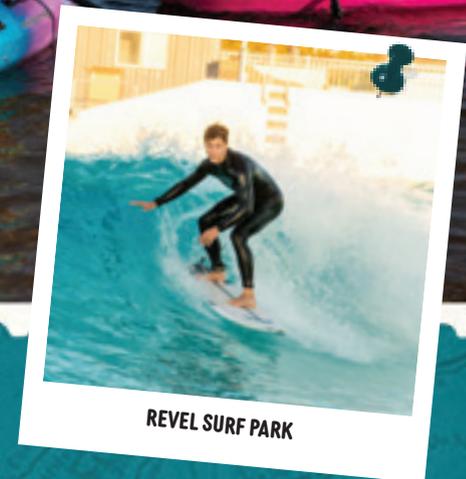
- Start with coffee and pastries from **Lost Dutchman Coffee Roasters** before heading out.
- Book a guided kayak tour on the Lower Salt River with **Saguaro Lake Guest Ranch** for an easy, scenic paddle through desert waterways.

### AFTERNOON

- Refuel with brunch at nearby **What's Crackin Cafe** after your time on the river.
- Take a stroll along the banks of the Lower Salt River at **Phon D Sutton Recreation Site**, a prime spot for birding and catching glimpses of wild horses from a respectful distance.

### EVENING

- Drive the winding **Apache Trail** toward Canyon Lake, stopping at viewpoints as the light begins to shift.
- Hop aboard the **Dolly Steamboat** for a sunset cruise on Canyon Lake and watch the canyon walls glow.
- Have dinner at **Tortilla Flat Saloon** before heading back to Mesa. Save room for prickly pear ice cream while you're there!



## DAY 2

### MORNING

- Grab an all-American breakfast at **Steadfast Diner**—their pancakes are a local fave!
- Stop by **Knuckle Sandwiches** to pick up a sack lunch before heading to Saguaro Lake.

### AFTERNOON

- Spend the day at **Butcher Jones Recreation Site** on Saguaro Lake, paddleboarding, swimming and relaxing on the beach between dips.

### EVENING

- After a full day in the sun, head to **Revel Surf Park** to catch the sunset from Arizona's most unexpected beach while watching surfers and enjoying a few bites and cocktails near the water.



LOWER SALT RIVER



SALT RIVER WILD HORSES



DOLLY STEAMBOAT



# On the ROCKS

In Mesa, adventure doesn't stay grounded. It rises.

Warm rock, wide skies and rugged desert horizons create an ideal setting to try climbing for the first time or push your limits on new terrain. From approachable sport routes at **Usery Mountain Regional Park** to bigger projects in the **Superstition Mountains**, the Sonoran Desert offers something for every skill level. Routes are graded on the Yosemite Decimal System, where climbs typically range from 5.6 for newer outdoor climbers to 5.13 for advanced technical routes.

LEARN MORE ABOUT  
ROCK CLIMBING HERE:

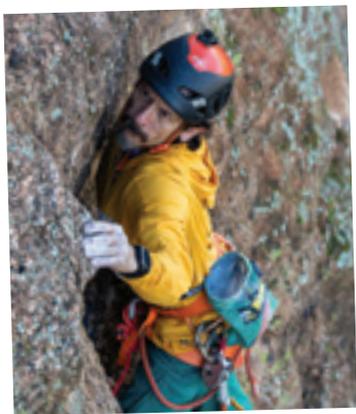


# TOP CLIMBING SPOTS



## USERY MOUNTAIN REGIONAL PARK

Usery Mountain Regional Park is one of the most accessible places to climb near Mesa. Short approaches, solid volcanic rock and wide desert views make it a welcoming introduction to outdoor climbing. Most routes are single pitch sport climbs in the **5.6 to 5.10 range**, ideal for beginners or climbers transitioning from the gym. Cooler mornings and late afternoons offer the best conditions, especially in warmer months.



## SUPERSTITION MOUNTAINS

The Superstition Mountains offer a bigger, more committing experience. Expect longer approaches, route finding and a true backcountry feel. Routes range from moderate traditional classics in the **5.6 to 5.9 range** to more advanced multi-pitch objectives. Towering spires and canyon walls provide dramatic exposure and sweeping views. This terrain is best suited for climbers comfortable with self-sufficiency and desert navigation.

## BULLDOG CLIFFS

Near the Salt River, Bulldog Cliffs delivers convenient sport climbing routes from **5.8 to 5.12**. Its compact layout makes it easy to fit in a focused half-day session or spend time projecting. Straightforward access and scenic surroundings make it a reliable choice for climbers looking to maximize time on the wall.



## QUEEN CREEK CANYON

Just east of Mesa near Superior, Queen Creek Canyon is one of central Arizona's premier sport climbing destinations. Hundreds of bolted routes span **5.6 through 5.13** on pocketed volcanic tuff that rewards precise footwork and balance. Areas such as Atlantis, The Pond and Lower Devil's Canyon offer a full range of options from moderate warmups to steep technical routes. Its density and variety make it ideal for full-day sessions or extended trips.



**AARON COLLINS**  
OWNER, AZ MOUNTAIN GUIDES

## LOCAL TIPS:

Aaron Collins, owner of **AZ Mountain Guides**, shares a few lesser-known ways to explore beyond the usual routes:

**GO BEYOND THE RIVER:** Most people stop at the Salt River, but just past it, **Bulldog Canyon** opens up to hiking, climbing and canyoneering that many visitors overlook.

**CLIMB GREEVERS NEEDLE:** Greeters Needle features roughly 20 established bolted routes for climbers ready for a little adventure and exposure.

**DO YOUR HOMEWORK:** Check **Mountain Project** for route beta on Greeters Needle and **Ropewiki** for canyoneering details in Bulldog Canyon.

**PLAN AHEAD:** All recreation off Bush Highway requires a parking permit; available at most nearby gas stations.

# SPEND 48 HOURS CLIMBING IN MESA

## DAY 1

### MORNING

- Grab breakfast beforehand at **Henhouse Cafe** for something hearty before you head out.
- Start at **Usery Mountain Regional Park** with approachable single-pitch sport routes in the 5.6 to 5.9 range. Short approaches and open desert views make it an ideal warm-up.

### AFTERNOON

- Make your way toward the **Salt River** for sport routes at **Bulldog Cliffs**, where 5.8 to 5.12 lines offer solid variety for a half or full session.
- If time allows, explore nearby **Bulldog Canyon** for a short hike or scenic overlook.

### EVENING

- Refuel at **Boulders on Southern**, a local restaurant co-owned by climbers and known for hearty pub fare and craft beer. It's a relaxed place to unwind after a full day on the rock.



USERY MOUNTAIN  
REGIONAL PARK



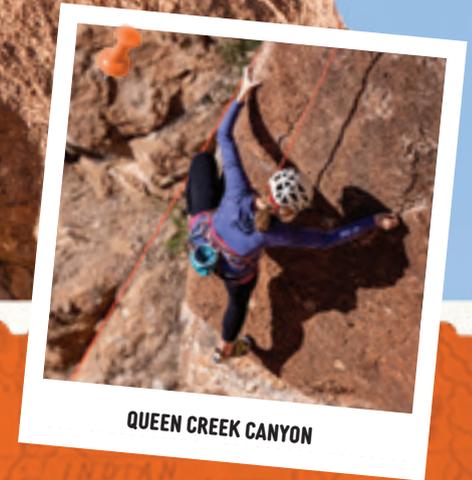
BULLDOG CLIFFS



BOULDERS ON SOUTHERN



GREEVERS NEEDLE



QUEEN CREEK CANYON

## DAY 2

### MORNING

- Grab breakfast burritos and coffee at **Renegade Coffee**, then step it up with a traditional or multi-pitch objective in the Superstition Mountains, or clip bolts at **Greevers Needle** for exposed desert routes and expansive views.

### AFTERNOON

- Close out the weekend at **Queen Creek Canyon**, one of Arizona's premier sport climbing areas. Routes from 5.6 through 5.13 offer everything from moderate warm-ups to steep technical challenges.

### EVENING

- Clean up and head to **Red, White & Brew** for classic comfort dishes and a well-earned glass of wine. It's a welcoming spot to refuel and relive the weekend's routes.



# OFF THE GRID

Mesa's wide-open desert was built for UTV, ATV and Jeep exploration. Miles of rugged trails and mountain backdrops make it easy to leave the pavement behind. One moment you're weaving through towering saguaros, the next you're climbing toward panoramic overlooks with nothing but desert stretching in every direction.



## WHO TO RIDE WITH

- **Stellar Adventures** offers guided tours beneath Four Peaks, pairing high-energy riding with local insight.
- **360 Adventures** features Military Grade Blazer tours for riders looking for serious power on the trail.
- **Arizona Outdoor Fun & Adventures** provides ATV and UTV rentals if you prefer to explore on your own schedule.

## SAFETY FIRST

- Avoid riding during rainy weather and stay alert for flash flood conditions.
- Secure your **Tonto National Forest Permit** before heading out.
- Bring plenty of water, wear protective gear and respect the desert environment.



## TOP PLACES TO GO

- **Four Peaks Recreation Area** for elevation changes and sweeping desert views.
- **Bulldog Canyon** near the Salt River for classic Sonoran terrain and varied routes.
- **Butcher Jones Recreation Site** near Saguaro Lake for rides that combine water views with open desert.

# SPEND 24 HOURS RIDING IN MESA



### MORNING

- Start early above the clouds with a sunrise hot air balloon ride with **Rainbow Ryders** or **Hot Air Expeditions** with panoramic views of the valley.
- Keep the adrenaline pumping with a guided tour through **Stellar Adventures**, **360 Adventures**, **Fort McDowell Adventures** or **Arizona Outdoor Fun & Adventures** near the Four Peaks Recreation Area. Navigate sandy washes, rolling elevation and wide-open desert views. Cooler morning temperatures make this the ideal riding window.

### MIDDAY

- Return toward Mesa for lunch at **Worth Takeaway** in Downtown Mesa for sandwiches that pack well for the trail, or sit down at **The Hub Grill and Bar** for a relaxed break before heading back out.

### AFTERNOON

- Spend the afternoon exploring **Bulldog Canyon** near the Salt River. Expect varied terrain, steady climbs and classic Sonoran scenery.
- If time allows, ride toward **Butcher Jones Recreation Site** near Saguaro Lake for desert-meets-water views before looping back.

### EVENING

- Time your final stretch for golden hour as the desert begins to cool.
- Finish the day at **República Empanada** in Downtown Mesa for a flavorful, casual dinner after hours on the throttle.



HOT AIR BALLOON RIDE



ARIZONA OUTDOOR FUN



BUTCHER JONES

# MUST-DO EVENTS

## JANUARY

- COPPER STATE BEER FEST
- ASIAN FESTIVAL

## FEBRUARY

- ARIZONA RENAISSANCE FESTIVAL
- MESA MARATHON
- SPRING TRAINING

## MARCH

- ARIZONA RENAISSANCE FESTIVAL
- ALT FEST
- MEW-SEUM CAT FEST
- SPRING TRAINING

## APRIL

- CYCLOMESA

## MAY

- DESERT CHALLENGE GAMES
- WAC BASEBALL TOURNAMENT
- MOUNTAIN WEST BASEBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS
- MESA AMPLIFIED MUSIC FESTIVAL

## JULY

- ARIZONA CELEBRATION OF FREEDOM

## OCTOBER

- FALL FESTIVAL AT VERTUCCIO FARMS
- SCHNEPF FARMS PUMPKIN & CHILI PARTY
- DIA DE LOS MUERTOS

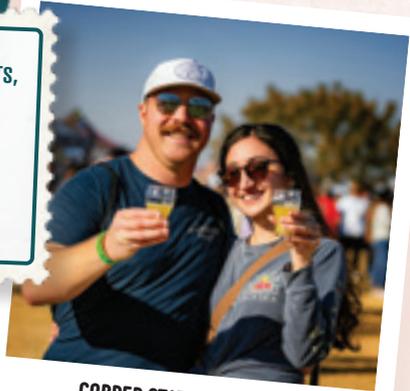
## NOVEMBER

- VETERAN'S DAY PARADE

## DECEMBER

- MERRY MAIN STREET

FOR MORE EVENTS,  
SCAN HERE:



COPPER STATE BEER FEST



SPRING TRAINING



ARIZONA CELEBRATION OF FREEDOM

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