

# Wild on Arizona

Globe, Safford, Morenci, Dripping Springs

Arizona is legendary for its deserts and Wild West heritage. But it's not all cactus and cowboys in the Grand Canyon State. Arizona's wide open spaces provide opportunity for wildlife, wildflowers, and wild adventures and vistas from all elevations. And the people - from Native Americans to miners - make for some wild stories to tell. When visiting Arizona's wild side, bring your camera and your appetite because you'll eat some of the best hometown Mexican food and collect the best salsa recipes, made at mom-and-pop shops that have been making and serving it for decades. Plus, discover the Salsa Trail - great for groups!

**DAY ONE** Pack a snack or a lunch and begin your trip on the Gila – Pinal Scenic Road at the Boyce Thompson Arboretum (BTA), one hour east of Phoenix. Spend a few hours enjoying a moving experience of the beauty, majesty, and mystery of arid land plants and creatures. BTA offers tours, art exhibits, and educational programs to help you better understand the desert and how inhabitants have lived in it for centuries. Then it's off to Globe (:30) where silver and copper mining rules the day. Between Globe and Miami, off AZ 60 and AZ 188, you'll view Sleeping Beauty, the famed mountain that resembles a giant sleeping woman. It is now the site of a large open-pit turquoise mine. Globe claims to have some of the best Mexican food around. So tonight, indulge in some spicy local fare. Overnight in Globe.

**DAY TWO** Today, pack a lunch and take the scenic drive up the Salt River Canyon along AZ 60 towards the Fort Apache Indian Reservation (1:30). Near Whiteriver, tour Fort Apache National Historic Park, which recalls a period of both conflict and cooperation between soldiers, scouts and the various rebel bands of the Western Apaches led by such Wild West legends as Geronimo and Cochise. See prehistoric ruins and petroglyphs and visit the Apache Culture Center. Just up the road, visit the Alchisay Fish Hatchery (:15) which supplies our lakes and streams with various trout species. You'll picnic among ponderosa pines in this secluded. Then take a tour of the hatchery which will show you the "life cycle" of the trout in nearly every stage. Overnight in Globe.

**DAY THREE** Today, visit Besh-ba-Gowah Archeological Park, an ancient ruin and a beautiful restoration of a salado pueblo, inhabited in the 12th- and 13th-centuries. Walk through the rooms of this 700-year-old pueblo, climb ladders into the upper stories, and see the utensils and furnishings that were part of life in pre-Columbian times. A few miles south of Globe on AZ 77 don't miss the spectacular view of El Capitan Pass. In 1846 Kit Carson led Kearny's army through this difficult pass on their march to California to fight in the Mexican War. After lunch head to Safford on US 70, also known as The Old West Highway where you'll spend the next three nights. Tonight, dine at the Manor House and Rock'n Horse Saloon. Overnight in Safford.

**DAY FOUR** Your stellar activity today is a tour of Mt. Graham International Observatory (MGIO), the largest binocular telescope in the world which views planets outside our solar system. The tour features a 40-mile trip (from an elevation of 2,500 feet to an elevation of over 10,000 feet!) to the MGIO site near the summit of scenic Mt. Graham and focuses on the mountain's rich history, geology, and diversity (limited tours, call for reservations). This evening visit Discovery Park. Take a trip through the interactive museum and learn of the

formation of the universe. View the 1608 Astrolabe and Merz telescope constructed in 1790. Then blast off on a virtual ride through the solar system on the Polaris Shuttlecraft. View the heavens through the 20" research grade telescope at the Gov Aker Observatory. Safford is home to many Mexican restaurants located along the Salsa Trail. Tonight have dinner at any of these to determine which one is your personal favorite. Overnight in Safford.

**DAY FIVE** This morning, drive north on US 191 towards Morenci and Clifton (:45), known for the copper mines which supply much of the world's copper. On your way, you'll cross the Gila River where you may catch the Sandhill cranes flying over head (although morning or dusk is the best time for birding). Once in Morenci, take the Morenci Mine Tour (call for schedule). This tour will not only tell you how the mining process works, but will also show you the world's largest open-pit mines, a spectacular view in a beautiful setting. Lunch in Clifton at P.J.s and say "hello" to Nona and Esther who have served folks for over 20 years. On your way back to Safford, stop by the Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area. You can easily spend hours at Bonita Creek experiencing nature you probably didn't even know existed here. Home to many tree species, this area also offers a haven for 140 types of birds, so binoculars are a must! And keep your eyes peeled for frogs, javelina and black bears! Other options include interpreters, float trips, horseback riding and hiking. The picnic area should be reserved for groups. Tonight enjoy another stop on the Salsa Trail. If you dine at enough of these great restaurants, consider buying the official Salsa Trail t-shirt to commemorate your Wild West culinary adventure! Overnight in Safford.

**DAY SIX** Head south of Safford on US 191. Next stop on the Salsa Trail is the San Simon Chile Company (seasonal hours). They have been growing red and green chiles for many years and offer fresh roasted green chiles in season as well as frozen and sun dried red chili pods. You're lucky if the roaster is out! Sauces, relishes, and jellies are available too. Next you will visit the Amerind Foundation (:30), a private anthropological and archaeological museum and research center dedicated to the preservation and interpretation of Native American cultures and their histories. Located in spectacular Texas Canyon in the Little Dragoon Mountains of southeastern Arizona, the Amerind beautifully houses one of the finest private collections of Native American art and artifacts in the country. Visitors may find artists demonstrating their skills or they come just to find solitude among the birds and plants of the desert. A picnic area is also available. Lunch or dinner will be at the beautiful Triangle T Ranch nearby. Triangle T offers horseback riding, hiking, jeep tours and old-fashioned campfires just to name a few activities. But this is no typical ranch; this beautiful setting also once hosted the Rockefellers, Vanderbilts and Kennedys, so you can bet on a first-class experience. From Dragoon, you may head west towards Tucson (1:00) to experience more of beautiful Southern Arizona.