

Arizona: Saguaro National Park & the Sonoran Desert

Bike Vacation Only

Desert meets artistic heritage on this unique Arizona cycling vacation. Spin through southern Arizona's high desert landscape as you pedal the Arivaca Road toward Buenos Aires National Wildlife Rescue Park. There, discover the *ciénega*, an unusual desert oasis with spring-fed pools, graceful willows, and rich bird life. Experience the vibrant artists' community of Tubac—and the remarkable golden light that has inspired generations of local artisans. Learn about the natural history of the region as you explore the remarkable Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum—discovering the plants, land animals, and aquatic species that call this region home. Cycle sections of "The Loop" in Tucson, rated as the #1 bike path in America. As you pedal through fields of towering succulents at Saguaro National Park, you'll see why there's no other place like this on Earth.

Cultural Highlights

- Explore the walking trails and fascinating exhibits of the highly regarded Arizona Sonora Desert Museum.
- Bike and picnic among the beautiful saguaro cacti of Saguaro National Park.
- Visit the Tumacácori National Historical Park for a self-guided tour, home to three Spanish mission communities and beautiful orchards and gardens.
- Cycle on The Loop, named the number one bike path in America by USA today, through vibrant Tucson, along the Santa Cruz and the Rillito Rivers.
- Savor local cuisine infused with Native American, Spanish, Mexican, and Anglo-American influences.

What to Expect

This tour offers a combination of easy terrain mixed with moderate hills, ideal for beginning and experienced cyclists. Our VBT support vehicle is always available for those who would like assistance. This tour includes strategic shuttles on most days in order to access the best cycling routes, avoiding busy roads and repetitive scenery. Please note that it can be windy in February, and temperatures are colder at night and in the morning. Desert flora generally begins blooming in late March to early April.

Tour Duration: 6 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 9-42 miles

Average Cycling Time: 2-4 hours

Group size: 14-20 max

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

February 68°/41°, March 73°/44°, April 81°/51°, October 84°/57°, November 73°/45°

Average Rainfall (in.)

February 0.7, March 0.7, April 0.3, October 0.9, November 0.6

DAY 1: Arrive in Tubac / VBT Bicycling Vacation begins / Warm-up ride / Welcome reception and dinner

Make your own arrangements for travel to Arizona and to our first hotel. VBT offers a shuttle that departs from Tucson International Airport at 1:30 p.m. The shuttle works on a “show and go” basis. Reservations are not required.

Upon arrival at Tubac Golf Resort & Spa, take time to change into your biking clothes if you have not already done so. At 2:30 p.m., meet your group and your VBT trip leaders for the first day of your Arizona bike tour. After a safety and bike-fitting session, enjoy a short warm-up ride. At 6:30 p.m., meet your fellow travelers during a tour orientation and welcome reception. Enjoy your welcome dinner at the resort. Get to know your traveling companions as you anticipate your vacation, highly rated among Arizona bike tours.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Warm-up — 9 miles

What to Expect:

Get acquainted with your bicycle during a leisurely warm-up ride from Tubac. The ride is on paved roads.

Cumulative Distance Range: 9 miles

Included Meals: Dinner

DAY 2: Discover Tubac / Visit Tumacácori National Historical Park

After breakfast, a scenic cycling route delivers you to the town of Tubac, crossing the Santa Cruz River for a leisurely ride in the beautiful countryside. On your way back, you may stop to visit the family-owned and -operated Santa Cruz Chili & Spice Company. Next, discover Tumacácori National Historical Park, a mission dating to the 17th century. Enjoy a self-guided visit of the mission, museum, orchard, garden, and walking trails.

After lunch on your own in Tubac, the afternoon is free for you to explore. There'll be time to experience Tubac, a colorful artists' colony where talented sculptors, painters, potters, artisans, and jewelers perfect their craft, drawing inspiration from the magnificent desert landscapes.

Relax at the resort. If you desire a tee time or spa appointment during your stay, we recommend that you contact the resort prior to traveling.

Settle into your private hacienda and enjoy the rest of the evening. Dinner is on your own tonight.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Tubac to Tumacácori — 22 miles

Afternoon: Tumacácori to Tubac Resort — 4 miles

What to Expect:

This morning, bike from the resort past Tubac and across the Santa Cruz River to the southern Arizona countryside. Visit Santa Cruz Chile Factory and Tumacácori National Historical Park. Here, enjoy a self-guided visit of the mission grounds and explore the museum and bookshop.

After your visit of Tumacácori, cycle back to the center of Tubac to discover the town and explore the galleries or return to the resort.

Cumulative Distance Range: 4 – 26 miles

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 3: Shuttle to Arivaca / Cycle to Amado / Shuttle to Tucson

Today, shuttle from Tubac to South Ruby Road near Arivaca Lake for a ride experience in the southern Arizona Sonoran high desert. Pause at Arivaca's Mercantile, open since the early 1900s. The ride offers some of the best and most varied desert scenery in the southern part of Arizona. You can imagine being a settler trying to tame this rugged land when cycling here. Enjoy lunch at a local landmark. From there, board a shuttle to your Tucson hotel, a warm and authentic hacienda. Gather at the Terraza for al fresco dining, gazing out at the Santa Catalina mountains, and perhaps live music entertainment.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Arivaca and Creek Trailhead to Amado — 33 miles

What to Expect:

Start this morning with a 55-minute shuttle from Tubac Resort to Arivaca Lake area. From here, cycle to the Arivaca Creek trailhead for an optional walk. Later, pause at the Arivaca Mercantile, open since the early 1900s. Continue cycling on paved roads, descending to Amado with some rolling hills and open range. The ride on Arivaca Road is ranked one of Arizona's favorite road bike rides. This narrow, windy, curvy road offers views of desert cactus, ranches, and mountains off in the distance. Border patrol and local ranchers will constitute the majority of the traffic. At the end of your ride, enjoy a hearty lunch, including homemade desserts, at a local restaurant, before shuttling (one hour) to Tucson to your hotel. Settle in and regroup for dinner on the terrace.

Cumulative Distance Range: 33 miles

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 4: Shuttle to Saguaro National Park West / Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum / The Tucson Loop

This morning, shuttle from Hacienda del Sol to Saguaro National Park West, home to the remarkable Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum. This unusual museum boasts more than 300 animal species and 1,200 varieties of plants in a beautiful natural setting. There'll be ample time to observe wild animals and desert plants, attend lectures, visit an art show, and take a self-guided tour along the two miles of walking trails. Enjoy lunch on your own in either of the museum's two restaurants. After your explorations, you can start pedaling directly from the museum past the saguaro, the distinctive giant cacti that grow here and nowhere else on Earth. It is pure pleasure to cycle this classic Arizona landscape that has come to

epitomize the Southwest. Take in spectacular views of the surrounding mountains.

Your ride continues to the stunning Gates Pass in the dramatic Tucson Mountains. Then, an exhilarating descent returns you to Tucson and onto "The Loop," a shared-use path rated the #1 bike path in America. The breathtaking Tucson Loop winds through vibrant Tucson back to your hotel. Dinner is on your own this evening.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Sonora Desert Museum to Hacienda del Sol – 33 miles

What to Expect:

Shuttle (45 minutes) this morning to the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum for a morning of exploration and lunch on your own. After lunch, start your ride from the museum in the Saguaro National Park West, with its endless views of large saguaro cacti. Ride a challenging climb on Gates Pass Road, a winding, hilly ride. This climb follows a road with no shoulder and blind corners for 2.4 miles so it is only for more comfortable riders. An optional shuttle in the VBT van will be available for those who prefer to shuttle up the pass. Descend into Tucson to join The Loop, a multi-use path along Tucson riverbeds. You will ride 15 miles on The Loop along the Santa Cruz and the Rillito Rivers, with views of the other three mountain ranges surrounding the city – the Santa Catalina Mountains to the northeast, the Rincon Mountains to the east, and the Santa Rita Mountains to the south.

Please note: The rules in Saguaro National Park are strictly enforced. You must wear a helmet at all times when cycling in the park, and you must obey the speed limit and any traffic signs. Park rangers will issue tickets to offenders, including those speeding on downhill slopes.

Cumulative Distance Range: 33 miles

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 5: Saguaro National Park East / Farewell dinner

For the final ride of your Arizona bike tour, cycle from the hotel. Today's ride is a scenic route first on The Loop for 10 miles along the Rillito River and Pantano Wash and then along the Old Spanish Trail into Saguaro National Park East. Stop in at the Visitor Center to learn more about the park. Once in the park,

follow the one-way Loop Drive for a thrilling cycle through the park. Your morning ride ends at the Javelina picnic area for a picnic lunch in a spectacular setting, gazing upon a desert terrain dotted with stunning saguaro cacti. Saguaro National Park, spread over 92,000 acres on the edge of the modern city of Tucson, protects some of the most impressive forests of these giant subtropical plants.

After lunch, continue cycling out of the park to Broadway Bicycles. Be sure to leave time to stop and purchase an Arizona cycling jersey! Then hop a ride to Hacienda del Sol.

Tonight, celebrate with the group during a farewell dinner at Hacienda del Sol's renowned restaurant, The Grill.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Hacienda del Sol to Saguaro National Park East — 26 miles | Saguaro National Park East loop — 8 miles

Afternoon: Saguaro National Park East to Broadway Bicycles — 8 miles

What to Expect:

This morning cycle from Hacienda del Sol to The Loop for 10 miles through in Tucson. Continue on the Old Spanish Trail toward Saguaro National Park East. In the park, follow the one-way Loop Drive. Pause at the Visitor Center to learn more about the park. Eager cyclists sometimes ride the eight-mile in-park loop a second time before lunch. Stop for a picnic lunch prepared by your trip leaders. After, you may ride or shuttle to Broadway Bicycles. Visit the bicycle shop, a great place to purchase cycling gear. Everyone will shuttle from here to the hotel.

Please note: The rules in Saguaro National Park are strictly enforced. You must wear a helmet at all times when cycling in the park, and you must obey the speed limit and any traffic signs. Park rangers will issue tickets to offenders. BEWARE of the first downhill after the ranger tollbooth on the left.

Cumulative Distance Range: 8 – 42 miles

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 6: Sabino Canyon / VBT Bicycling Vacation ends / Departure

After an early breakfast at your hotel, shuttle to Sabino Canyon for a one-hour ride, roundtrip, aboard an electric tram in one of the premier natural areas in southern Arizona. Your Arizona bike tour concludes after this experience. VBT's complimentary shuttle is available to take departing guests from Sabino Canyon to the Tucson International Airport at 10:15 a.m., arriving approximately 35 minutes later. If you are flying out of Tucson, we suggest a flight no earlier than 12:30 p.m. Guests who need to get to the airport earlier or later must make their own arrangements.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

Tubac Golf Resort & Spa (Days 1-2)

With historical roots dating back to 1789 when the property was a working 500-acre cattle ranch on the first Spanish land grant in the Southwest, the Tubac Golf Resort & Spa enjoys beautiful landscapes of the property situated between the stunning backdrop of the Tumacacori and Santa Rita mountain ranges. Unwind in spacious accommodations featuring Southwest-inspired décor, comfortable furnishings, and individual patios with verdant surroundings. Savor delicious creations at Stables Bar & Grille showcasing flavors of the region. Take a saddle seat at the Stables Bar to have your photo taken. Or enjoy the 3,000 square-foot hacienda-themed spa. Golf enthusiasts are sure to appreciate the three nine-hole courses designed by renowned architect Red Lawrence, and don't miss the opportunity to take a peek at the hole made famous by the movie *Tin Cup* filmed here in 1996.

Hacienda del Sol Guest Ranch (Days 3-5)

Designed in a Spanish Colonial style, Hacienda del Sol was inspired by the Moorish architecture of the 18th and 19th centuries. Through the gated mission-style entrance, you are greeted by tranquil gardens, a backdrop of unspoiled desert landscape, and a dramatic view of the majestic Santa Catalina Mountains. Each air-conditioned room has its own personality, adorned with unique surprises, from hand-forged iron and copper headboards to original artwork and custom-designed furniture. The resort's courtyard and porches offer a quiet place to relax. With large terraces for al fresco dining, its restaurant, The Grill, is one of Tucson's best and is AAA Four Diamond Award-winning. Legendary patrons such as Katharine Hepburn, Spencer Tracy, John Wayne, and Howard Hughes enjoyed the comforts here. A magical setting has been, and remains, the very cornerstone of Hacienda del Sol.

