



For immediate release

OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

Explore Mesa's Majestic Backyard: The Storied Sonoran Desert

www.VisitMesa.com

2009 (MESA, Ariz.) – Even though Mesa boasts a population of more than 460,000 and offers all the benefits of a large city, visitors can take advantage of being close to a recreation paradise as Mesa is neighbor to the vast **Tonto National Forest**. Tonto is the fifth largest forest in the country and one of the most-visited “urban” forests in the U.S. There are three lakes and two rivers just outside of Mesa that allow for desert boating, rafting, kayaking and water skiing.

HOT TRAILS AND COOL LAKES

The breathtaking [Superstition Mountains](#) to the east serve as both an iconic backdrop for the city and a gateway to adventure. Ghostly and volcanic, the Superstition Mountains rise some 2,000 feet into the desert sky and offer hiking and horse trails fit for every level of enthusiast. Venture down the Historic Apache Trail to find [Lost Dutchman State Park](#). Hidden in the depths of this forbidding range is the Lost Dutchman, one of the most storied “lost mines” of the West. Five hiking trails are offered here that range in distance and elevation. The U.S. Forest Service protects these beautiful mountains as one of the nation’s most popular designated wilderness areas.

Continue down the Apache Trail to find [Canyon Lake](#) and take a “Mark Twain” voyage aboard the [Dolly Steamboat](#), a replica of a sternwheeler paddleboat. Cruise the lake’s secluded inner waterways and photograph desert bighorn sheep and other wildlife. The 90-minute nature cruise or twilight dinner cruise is the perfect complement to the Apache Trail experience.

Complete your tour at [Apache Lake](#), surrounded by the Superstition Wilderness and Three Bar Wildlife Area. At 17 miles long, the lake is ideal for boating, fishing, water skiing, and all forms of outdoor recreation. The lake’s secluded coves and painted walls are home to javelina, big horn sheep, eagle, deer, and a host of desert wildlife.

With over 3,600 acres, [Usery Mountain Park](#) offers plenty of opportunities for visitors to experience the beautiful desert landscape. Everything from hiking, biking and horseback riding is available along with a year round events schedule and programs to entertain and teach visitors about the Sonoran Desert. Usery Park is also home to the Arizona Model Aviator’s flying site and the only five-star archery range in Arizona.

What others have to say: <http://www.examiner.com/x-5514-Phoenix-Travel-Industry-Examiner~y2009m3d23-Hiking-the-Superstition-Mountains-Hikers-Guide-to-the-Superstition-Mountains>
<http://www.carlsavillo.com/2009/02/hiking-lost-dutchman.html>
<http://www.accessingarizona.com/2006/11/canyon-lake.html>
<http://www.world-set.com/2009/01/water-oases-in-desert.html>
<http://www.accessingarizona.com/2009/03/usery-park-merkle-trail.html>

TAKE IT ALL IN ON A TOUR

Always popular are off-road [Apache Trail Tours](#) by Jeep or SUV. Outfitters take visitors on a journey through the scenic trails and paths that meander through Arizona’s rugged back country. Discover little known secrets about indigenous flora and fauna and how they thrive in the arid climate of this delicate desert eco-system. Early birds can catch a sunrise flight over the Sonoran via a **hot-air balloon** and capture a coveted desert view from the sky. Those that want to get up close and personal with the desert wildlife can enjoy a **horseback ride** through the Superstition Mountains at [Goldfield Ghost Town](#).

Take an exciting rafting tour down the beautiful Lower Salt and Verde Rivers with [Desert Voyagers](#). Learn about the local flora, fauna, geography, geology, and history of the area from knowledgeable guides while enjoying an entertaining and challenging river float tour. Or, partake in the ever-popular activity of “tubing”, a leisurely float along the cool waters of the [Salt River](#) via inner-tube. Just above the Lower Salt River lies [Saguaro Lake](#), offering spectacular desert beauty and natural wildlife. Take a seat on the [Desert Belle](#), which has been plowing the waters of Saguaro Lake since 1964. Relax on one of her 90 minute narrated public cruises and see exotic Arizona wildlife, towering canyon walls, and dramatic desert vistas.

What others have to say: <http://www.igotrailriding.com/2008/12/28/ride-apache-junction.html>
<http://media.www.scccampusnews.com/media/storage/paper1165/news/2009/03/04/Entertainment/Spring.Break.Ushers.In.Salt.River.Fun-3656225.shtml>

EXPLORE ANCIENT HISTORY

At [Park of the Canals](#) visitors can see evidence of a canal system developed 2,000 years ago by the ancient Hohokam Native American Civilization, and study hundreds of varieties of cacti at the Brinton Desert Botanical Garden, which also features vegetation from four desert regions.

Walk through a 700-year-old Salado Culture pueblo at [Besh-Ba-Gowah](#) Archaeological Park in Globe, east of Mesa. Besh-Ba-Gowah has one of the largest single site archaeological collections in the southwest and is considered one of the most significant finds of Southwest archaeology.

What others have to say: <http://www.mesa-goodlife.com/ParkoftheCanals.html>
<http://campingandtravels.blogspot.com/2009/01/besh-ba-gowah-archaeological-park-globe.html>

MESA BENEATH THE STARS

Arizona boasts two observatories, is the place where Pluto was discovered, and the desert skies continue to be some of the finest in the world for astronomical observations. Here in Mesa, the setting sun offers visitors a whole new spectacular view to take in. Don't go to bed early because you won't want to miss the exciting star-studded events that Mesa has to offer under Arizona's bright night sky.

At Utery Pass and Lost Dutchman Park visitors can take in the magnificence of the night sky while participating in a **ranger-guided full moon** hike during certain months. Set sail on the **Dolly Steamboat** at **Canyon Lake** and watch Arizona's night stars twinkle on the water. Take in either a Twilight Dinner Cruise or the popular Twilight Astronomy Cruises hosted monthly by astronomy expert Dr. Sky. Visitors can also view the night sky and explore the universe and solar system in the [planetarium](#) and rooftop observation deck at **Mesa Community College**.

What others have to say: <http://northvalleymagazine.com/editorial/2008/10/01/romantic-dates-that-leave-lasting-impressions/>
<http://iheartmesa.blogspot.com/2008/10/mcc-planetarium.html>

PULSE POUNDING ADVENTURE

For those with a taste for out-of-this-world adventure, test your fighter pilot skills at [Fighter Combat International](#) where one can go on an air combat mission and experience a high-flying aerobatic thrill ride. At [Trapeze U](#), visitors as young as four-years-old can take swinging lessons on a full-size flying trapeze - the first program of its kind in Arizona.

Rock climbers can test their skills on the challenging cliffs and spires of volcanic rock in the Superstition Mountain area. The vertical-walled canyons and steep technicolor cliffs offer climbers adrenaline pumping fun. Beginners may want to learn the ropes first on an indoor wall at [Amazing Jakes](#).

[Arizona Outback Adventures](#) offers single and multi-day hike and bike tours. Guides lead groups through the lush desert while educating them on the unique Sonoran Desert. The invigorating trails and jagged ranges throughout the Superstition Mountain region are sure to provide an unforgettable experience to mountain bikers and hikers alike.

What others have to say: <http://www.affluentusa.com/adventure/in-air-adventure-turns-regular-people-into-real-fighter-pilots/>
<http://sevenkidsandahusband.blogspot.com/2008/03/look-at-this.html>
<http://bicycleworld.tv/wordpress/great-test-video-post>

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About the Mesa Convention & Visitors Bureau:

The Mesa Convention & Visitors Bureau is responsible for marketing Mesa, Arizona as a leading vacation, small meeting and sports travel destination to regional and national target audiences, including travel agents and group tour operators, meeting planners, leisure visitors and media.

Editor's Note: Readers can request a complimentary 2009 Official Mesa Arizona Visitors Guide at VisitMesa.com or by calling 800-283-6372.

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