



Saguaro National Park News Release

For Immediate Release

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Holiday Night Drive in the Cactus Forest Rincon Mountain District Wednesday December 30, 2009

Once again this year, Saguaro National Park's Rincon Mountain District (Saguaro East) will open the Cactus Forest Loop Drive for special starlight driving tours on the evening of Wednesday, December 30th. Park rangers will lead a series of 90-minute tours beginning at 5:30 pm and continuing every 30 minutes after that, with the last tour at 8:00 p.m. Visitors will drive their own cars on the tour, which includes a short walk on a fully accessible trail. Space is limited on all programs and ***advance reservations are required***. Reservations are accepted by telephone at 733-5153, or in person at the visitor center at 3693 South Old Spanish Trail (approximately 3 miles east of Houghton Road).

These tours are a perfect way to connect family and friends to the natural world of the desert at this festive time of year. This year's "Holiday Cactus Caravan" will focus on the natural history and human lore of the winter solstice. "Visitors appreciate this one opportunity each year to enjoy the Cactus Forest Drive at night," says Park Ranger Melanie Florez. "At overlooks along the way, tour leaders will explore the holiday significance of dark, star-filled skies over the park's wilderness, the symbolism of evergreen plants in the winter season, and the importance of park wildlife in celebrating the world of the saguaro cactus."

Participants should carry their own water and snacks in the car, bring a flashlight for use at stops, and dress for the night's weather, as the program will run rain or star-shine. Programs are suited to all age levels and physical abilities. There is no charge for the program, but regular park entrance fees of \$10 per vehicle apply. The Saguaro and Interagency Annual and Lifetime (Senior or Access) passes will be honored for entrance. Further information and reservations for these and many other park programs is available by calling the visitor center at 733-5153, on-line at www.nps.gov/sagu, or by writing to Saguaro National Park, 3693 South Old Spanish Trail, Tucson, AZ 85730.