



Saguaro National Park News Release

For Immediate Release

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December Programs Offered at Saguaro National Park

Saguaro National Park is offering a series of special programs this fall and winter that will explore the wonderful natural and cultural history of the park. Come along on a naturalist-led evening walk in the park, or join a local expert for a presentation in one of our visitor centers. *Programs will be offered at both the east and west districts.* There is no charge for interpretive programs, but park entrance fees apply. Program schedules are subject to change – call the visitor centers for schedule updates, or to make a reservation when required.

Special Programs offered at the Rincon Mountain District (Saguaro East) include:

December 1 10:00 a.m. “Sonoran Lifestyles”
Join a park naturalist on this two hour, 1-mile walk to discover how plants and animals adapt to life in the desert. Wear comfortable walking shoes and bring some water. ***This walk will be offered every Monday and Tuesday throughout the month of December.***

December 2 9:00 a.m. Desert Morning Hike
Join a park naturalist for this three hour, 4-mile exploration of Saguaro National Park. Wear sturdy hiking shoes and bring water and a trail snack. Advanced reservations are recommended, and can be made by calling 733-5153. ***This hike will also be offered on December 9, 15, 16, 22, 23, 29 and 30.***

December 3 7:00 p.m. “The Life and Times of the Saguaro”
Saguaro National Park was established in 1933 to preserve the magnificent stand of this giant cactus at the base of the Rincon Mountains. Since then, people have worried about the survival of this cactus in the park, and biologists have tried to unlock its many mysteries. Join park biologist Don Swann in the visitor center auditorium to learn about the history of saguaros in Saguaro National Park, the park’s current saguaro census, and how this symbol of the Sonoran Desert is doing today. Advance reservations are recommended, and can be made by calling the visitor center at 733-5153. *This program is wheelchair accessible.* ♿

December 4 8:00 a.m. Desert Bird Walk
Join volunteer naturalists Vicki Powers and Ralph Terry for an easy two hour walk in search of desert birds. Wear comfortable walking shoes and bring water. Advanced reservations are recommended, and can be made by calling 733-5153. ***This walk will also be offered on December 11 and 18.***

December 4 7:00 p.m. Night Walk
Join a park naturalist for this easy two hour hike to explore and experience the Sonoran Desert at night. Dress for the weather, wear comfortable walking shoes, and bring water and a flashlight. As space is limited, advanced reservations are required, and can be made by calling 733-5153.

December 5 11:00 a.m. “Cactus Caravan”
Begin your exploration of the Cactus Forest Drive with a park ranger, and become familiar with some of the area’s common cacti. A great introduction to the park! ***This program will also be offered on December 12 and 26.*** *These programs are wheelchair accessible.* ♿

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- December 6** **11:00 a.m.** **“People and Places of Saguaro’s Past”**
Explore the 75+ years of history at Saguaro National Park through a look at some of the structures built here over the years. Join park ranger Arlo Ogden in the visitor center auditorium for this 30-minute presentation. ***This program will also be offered on December 27.*** *These programs are wheelchair accessible.* ♿
- December 9** **3:00 p.m.** **“Buffelgrass, Intense Fire and the Sonoran Desert”**
Chris McDonald, PhD, recently completed a study of buffelgrass growth and the fire behavior that it can produce. His research highlights the fact that buffelgrass can change large areas of the Sonoran Desert into fire-prone grasslands. Buffelgrass can fuel intense fires that will severely damage desert plants, threaten our safety and our property, and imperil wildlife. Join Dr. McDonald in the visitor center auditorium to learn more about this invasive plant and its effects on the Sonoran Desert. *Program is wheelchair accessible.* ♿
- December 10** **10:00 a.m.** **“Desert Discovery”**
Join park naturalists on this two hour, 2-mile walk to discover the secrets of the Sonoran Desert. Wear comfortable walking shoes and bring water. ***This program will also be offered on December 17 and 31.***
- December 10** **7:00 p.m.** **Star Party**
Join park naturalists for an introduction to astronomy and a look at the desert night sky. Telescopes and binoculars will be available. *Advanced reservations are required*, and can be made by calling 733-5153. *This program is wheelchair accessible.* ♿
- December 12** **8:00 a.m.** **Buffelgrass Weed Pull (Rincon Mountain District)**
Volunteers will work with park staff to remove a patch of buffelgrass, an invasive non-native plant which threatens the Sonoran Desert. We will meet at the Rincon Mountain Visitors Center and then carpool to a work site near Javelina Picnic Area. Please park in the Administration Parking Lot (first right after entering the park, follow road to the parking lot just south of the visitor center parking area). Wear sturdy hiking shoes, long pants and a hat. Bring plenty of water and gloves (if you have them); tools and gloves will be provided. Following the event we will relax over snacks and beverages. *Advanced reservations are recommended*, so we can get a general participant count. Call 733-5187, or sign up at the visitor center.
- December 12** **2:00 p.m.** **“Gathering the Desert”**
Join a park ranger in the Cactus Garden to learn how desert plants have been used for food, shelter, and clothing. ***This program is also offered on December 19.*** *Programs are wheelchair accessible.* ♿
- December 13** **11:00 a.m.** **“1933 to Today”**
Join park ranger Arlo Ogden on a historic hike down the Shantz Trail. Learn who Homer Shantz was, as well as how he helped make Saguaro National Park the great attraction it is today. Dress for the weather, wear comfortable hiking shoes and bring water. The group will meet at the visitor center, then carpool to a nearby trailhead.
- December 13** **2:00 p.m.** **“Yesterday, Today and ... Saguaro?”**
Change is coming to the Cactus Forest and we can’t do anything about it! But don’t worry – change has been happening here for thousands of years. Come explore the life cycles of the saguaro cactus and the changing face of its Sonoran Desert home on this ¼ mile, 90-minute walk. *This program is wheelchair accessible.* ♿
- December 20** **11:00 a.m.** **“Park History 101”**
A hike down memory lane! Join park ranger Arlo Ogden on a 2-mile, two hour hike to discover some of the unique history of Saguaro National Park.
- December 30** **5:00 p.m.** **Holiday Car Caravan**
Explore the natural lore of the solstice holiday on a unique nighttime drive through the park’s loop drive. Auto tours will be offered at 5:00, 5:30, 6:00, 6:30, 7:00, 7:30 and 8:00 p.m., and will feature several stops along the 8-mile Cactus Forest Drive. Each tour lasts approximately 1½ hours. Cookies and cider will be offered at the visitor center all evening. As space is limited, *advanced reservations are required*, and can be made by calling 733-5153. *These programs are wheelchair accessible.* ♿


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EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA


The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.


Special Programs offered at the Tucson Mountain District (Saguaro West) include:


December 2 **2:15 p.m.** **“Those Who Came Before”**
Learn about the Hohokam, who inhabited this area from A.D. 300 to A.D. 1450. ***This program will also be offered on December 9, 16, and 23.*** *These programs are wheelchair accessible.* 


December 3 **2:15 p.m.** **“Geology of the Tucson Mountains”**
How the Tucson Mountains came to be where they are now, their composition and the forces that built and continue to shape them. ***This program will also be offered December 10, 17, and 24.*** *Programs are wheelchair accessible.* 


December 3 **3:15 p.m.** **“Signs of Life in the Desert”**
Enjoy an easy ½ mile walk around the Red Hills Visitor Center to look for evidence of animal life. ***This program will also be offered December 10, 17, and 24.*** *These programs are wheelchair accessible.* 


December 4 **10:15 a.m.** **“Homesteading Adventures in the Desert”**
Join a park ranger as she presents the oral history surrounding Mexican American Homesteaders' adventures around the Saguaro National Park communities. ***This program will also be offered on December 5, 6, 11, 12, 13, 18, 19, and 20.*** *These programs are wheelchair accessible.* 


December 4 **11:15 a.m.** **“The CCC and its impact on Saguaro National Park”**
The Civilian Conservation Corps was a Depression-era work program that had a great influence on National, State, and County parks throughout the Nation. Saguaro's trails, picnic areas, and scenic drives were established during this program. A brief history of the CCC in this area will be illustrated with old photo images and movie clips. ***This program will also be offered on December 5, 11, 12, 18, 19, and 26.*** *These programs are wheelchair accessible.* 

December 4 **2:15 p.m.** **“Critter of the Week”**
Meet one of the live animals found in the Sonoran Desert. What will it be? A snake? Scorpion? Tarantula? Tortoise? Come and find out. ***This program will also be offered on December 5, 11, 12, 18, 19, and 26.*** *These programs are wheelchair accessible.* 


December 4 **3:15 p.m.** **“Snakes!”**
Learn about the communication skills, special adaptations, and defense systems of these often misunderstood creatures. A bit of folk lore is also shared. ***This program will also be offered on December 6, 11, 12, 13, 18, 20, and 26.*** *These programs are wheelchair accessible.* 

December 6 **11:15 a.m.** **“Road Kill! Why Did the Chicken Cross the Road?”**
National Parks and others work to put a stop sign on road kill. Find out the extent of the problem and how you can help. ***This program will also be offered on December 7, 13, 14, 20, 21, 27, and 28.*** *These programs are wheelchair accessible.* 

December 6 **2:15 p.m.** **“Romance in the Desert”**
Romance is alive and well in the desert. Come hear about the suitor with the Stradivarius, the jousting suitor and other romances in the desert. ***This program will also be offered on December 20.*** *These programs are wheelchair accessible.* 

December 7 **10:15 a.m.** **“Rattlers!”**
Explore the life and lore, myths and misunderstandings tied to one of the desert southwest's most intriguing icons. ***This program will also be offered on December 15 and 19 at 11:15 a.m.*** *Programs wheelchair accessible.* 

December 7 **2:15 p.m.** **“Neighborhood Characters”**
See if you recognize plant versions of your friends and relatives as you take a 30-minute nature walk in the Red Hills Visitor Center neighborhood. ***This program will also be offered on December 14 and 21.***

December 10 **11:15 a.m.** **“Gods Dog & Desert Pigs”**
An introduction to two of our most common desert mammals – the coyote and the javelina. ***This program will also be offered on December 22 and 31.*** *These programs are wheelchair accessible.* 

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EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

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December 12 3:00 p.m. Twilight Hike

Enjoy the desert as the sun goes down! This 2-mile, two hour hike begins approximately two hours before sunset. The hike travels up a sandy wash. A couple of rock outcroppings are encountered along the way, but are easily traversed. We will return to the parking area in the fading light after sunset along a rocky old mining road. As space is limited, advanced reservations are required, and can be made by calling the visitor center at 733-5158.

December 19 3:00 p.m. “Wildlife Rehabilitation”

Janet and Lewis Miller have operated Wildlife Rehabilitation of Northwest Tucson for 16 years. Their goal is to care for orphaned and injured wildlife. Join us in the visitor center to hear about the natural history of some of these animals and why some cannot be released back into the wild. Meet an Elf Owl, Great Horned Owl, and a Harris’ Hawk up close. *This program is wheelchair accessible.* ♿

December 27 4:00 p.m. “Twilight Glow to Moon Shadows”

This hike is an easy 2½ -mile, three and a half hour stroll that affords an opportunity to experience the desert in the twilight glow and then discover the mystic moon shadows which will accompany us to the end of the hike. Advanced reservations are required, and can be made by calling 733-5158.

December 28 3:15 p.m. Sunset Hike

The Sunset Hike is a three and a half to four hour, 3½-mile round trip that climbs 700 feet to a beautiful ridgeline for the sunset. The descent of the trail is solely under the light of the moon. As space is limited, advanced reservations are required, and can be made by calling 733-5158.

December 29 4:00 p.m. “Moon Take Night Make Day” Hike

This gentle, relatively flat, 2½ mile hike travels up a desert wash during the transition from day to night. The hike takes approximately three hours. Enjoy the sunset and stroll in the moonlit desert. As space is limited, advanced reservations are required, and can be made by calling 733-5158.

December 31 6:00 p.m. “Moonrise Over the Mountains” Patio Talk

This campfire talk on the patio of the Red Hills Visitor Center provides a relaxing view of the full moon as it rises above the cactus forest. The program is approximately 45 minutes long. Bring a lawn chair and warm clothing. No reservations are required for this program - everyone is welcome. *This program is wheelchair accessible.* ♿

Daily Programs

The park’s two districts offer additional daily interpretive programs not listed here. Contact either of our visitor centers for updated schedules, or visit our website online at <http://www.nps.gov/sagu/planyourvisit/things2do.htm>.

Visitor Center Locations/Phone Numbers

Both visitor centers are open daily from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, except Christmas Day.

Red Hills Visitor Center (Saguaro WEST)
2700 North Kinney Road
Tucson, AZ 85743

(520) 733-5158

Rincon Mountain Visitor Center (Saguaro EAST)
3693 South Old Spanish Trail
Tucson, AZ 85730

(520) 733-5153

For more information about Saguaro National Park and some of its partners, Friends of Saguaro National Park, Western National Parks Association, and the Rincon Institute, visit these websites:

www.nps.gov/sagu
www.friendsofsaguaro.org
www.wnpa.org
www.rinconinstitute.org