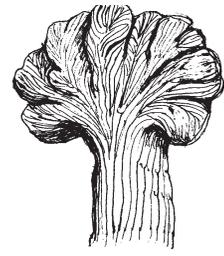


# The Cristate(Crested) Saguaro



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## What is a cristate saguaro?



The saguaro cactus is *Carnegiea gigantea*, an iconic plant of the Sonoran Desert and to Saguaro National Park. Within the park boundaries our dense cactus forest is populated with about two million saguaros. Most saguaros normally

grow in a columnar fashion, producing arms with viable fruit. However, some cacti grow in an unique fan-like pattern which is referred to as cristate or crested. Though these saguaros are somewhat rare, about 75 live within the park boundaries.

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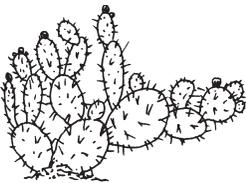
## What is the mystery behind the cristate saguaro?

Biologists disagree as to why some saguaros grow in this unusual form. Some speculate that it is a genetic mutation. Others say it is the result of a lightning strike or freeze damage. At this point we simply do not know what causes this rare, crested form. Even if the saguaro has a cristate pattern, the saguaro will still

produce viable flowers, fruit, and possibly arms. Like all columnar saguaros, no two cristate saguaros are the same. Many mysterious growth formations can happen in a cristate. For example, a columnar arm can grow from the crest and arms can be crested.

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## Does cristation only occur in saguaros?



Cristation can happen in other cactus as well. Within the park, biologists have found crested barrel, cholla, prickly pear, and pincushion cacti. The fan like formation will occur the

same way in these other cacti. Cristation occurs more often in barrel cactus; it is rarer to witness other cacti with the cristate formation.

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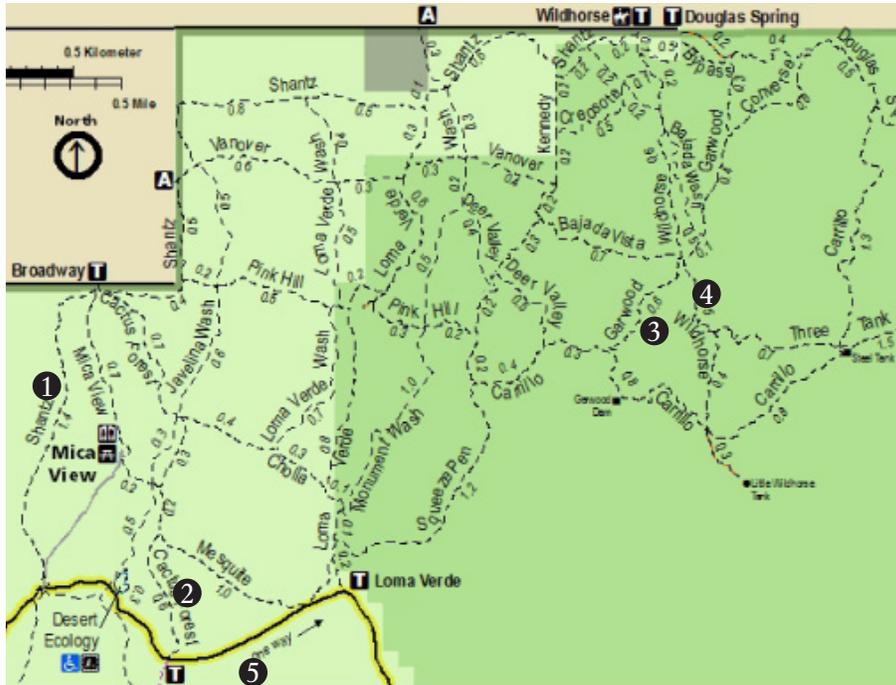
## See a cristate saguaro? Let us know!



On the back of this brochure is a map of a few crested saguaros that can be found in the park. However, since the park is vast with a very dense cactus forest, sometimes we miss crested saguaros. If you see one that is not on these maps, please notify the visitor center of the location and if possible provide a picture. You can also post it on

one of the social media outlets and tag Saguaro National Park in the picture. Remember, the desert is a special and fragile environment. If you see a cristate that is off trail, look at it through binoculars or use the zoom lens on your camera. By staying on the trail, you will help protect and preserve the desert.

# Rincon Mountain District (North)



1. From Broadway trail head, hike 0.8 miles along Shantz trail, a crested saguaro is 60 feet right of trail.
2. From Cactus Forest North, hike 0.35 miles on the Cactus Forest trail. Looking to your right, a crested saguaro will be in the distance, about 300 feet away.
3. From Douglas Spring trailhead (east end of Speedway Blvd.), head onto Douglas Springs trail and turn right at the first intersection to hike on the Garwood trail for 1.2 miles. A crested saguaro will be on the left side of the trail.
4. From Douglas Springs trailhead, head onto Douglas Springs trail and turn right at the first intersection to hike onto Garwood trail and then continue onto Wildhorse trail. Before heading up on the hill towards the Three tank trail intersection, a crested saguaro will be 250 feet left of the trail.
5. From Cactus Forest North parking lot, turn right and hike on Cactus Forest trail. In 0.10 miles, look to the left of the trail. A crested saguaro will be in the distance on the south aspect of the closest hillside.



# Rincon Mountain District (South)



6. Beginning at Cactus Forest South trail head, hike northeast 0.7 miles to Javelina wash. Turn right and follow the wash for 0.4 miles, a crested saguaro will be on the east side of the wash.
7. Driving towards the Javelina Picnic area, a crested saguaro will be on the right side of the road. Park at Javelina Picnic area or Freeman Homestead parking areas and walk on the road for a better view.
8. Hiking along Tanque Verde ridge trail, roughly at the 3 mile mark, a crested saguaro will be 30 feet right of the trail.
9. From Loma Alta trailhead, hike along Hope Camp trail 1.3 miles to Coyote Wash trail and turn right. One mile in, a crested saguaro will be 80 feet left of the trail.
10. From Loma Alta trailhead, hike along Hope Camp trail for about 2 miles. Turn onto the Quilter trail. At the 2.5 mile mark, a crested saguaro will be in the distance, left of the trail.

