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HIKING IN COCHISE COUNTY, LAND OF LEGENDS

COCHISE COUNTY, ARIZ.—Staying fit while on vacation can be an adventure into the beautiful scenery of Cochise County’s wide open spaces and echoes of the past’s legendary characters. Discover the wonder of southeastern Arizona along its many hiking mountain trails or next to its scenic waterways. And there’s no need to be an elite athlete. Trails offer enough versatility for novice to advanced hikers.

Chiricahua National Monument—Known as the “wonderland of rocks,” the Chiricahua National Monument’s terrain inspires legends. Big Balanced Rock and other soaring geologic formations are the monument’s most noticeable natural features. These rock pinnacles, many of which are balanced on small bases, can rise hundreds of feet into the air. Visitors can choose from 14 easy to strenuous trails.

Cochise Stronghold in the Dragoon Mountains—This rugged natural fortress was the home and base of operations for Cochise, the famed Chiricahua Apache leader. Among its many hiking paths, which range from easy to strenuous, is the popular Stronghold Nature Trail. At just under half a mile, the easy trail is an adventure of the senses. Cochise Stronghold is located in the Coronado National Forest; day-use or camping fees may apply.

Coronado National Memorial—Visitors can choose from a number of trails in the Coronado National Memorial. The Coronado Peak Trail is an easy hike of less than half a mile. Joe's Canyon Trail is a more moderate three-mile hike, and the Crest Trail, at more than five miles, is more strenuous. Not far from the Memorial is Parker Canyon Lake’s popular five-mile lakeside trail. The lake can be reached from most areas on the path and is frequented by the majestic bald eagle.

Carr Canyon Nature Trail in the Huachuca Mountains

Visitors who venture to this popular canyon on weekends can stop by the Carr House Information Center for great suggestions on area hikes. A popular nature trail takes hikers past historic points of interest including an old dude ranch. Known as a popular family hiking destination, Carr Canyon Trail is less than two miles in length with numerous benches for hikers who want to rest or view area wildlife.

San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area—This nationally known birding destination is also a hiking hotspot. Trails include the San Pedro House Interpretive Loop, an easy 1.5-mile route taking hikers past ponds, historical attractions and an animal habitat. Pick up the interpretive trail guide at the trailhead; numbered markers are along the trail to coincide with the guide, explaining the area and the historical interest. The San Pedro River Trail Complex, a long-distance trail of nearly 30 miles, includes its own easy, moderate and strenuous trails through river passes and animal habitats. Trail information is available at the San Pedro House.

Fort Bowie National Historic Site—Hiking an easy 1.5 miles into Fort Bowie National Historic Site, visitors can view interpretive exhibits about the Apache Wars of the late 1800s. This former military outpost can be reached by a trail that meanders past the ruins of the Butterfield Stage Station, the old Chiricahua Apache agency, a cemetery and Apache Springs before arriving at the old adobe fort. Benches and rest areas make the three-mile round trip easy for novice hikers.

Located in southeastern Arizona, Cochise County is one of the most culturally, historically and geographically diverse areas in the American Southwest. Its legendary communities—Benson, Bisbee, Douglas, Tombstone, Sierra Vista and Willcox—were strategically located less than a day’s journey by stagecoach and are now just a short drive from one another. For more information about Cochise County, contact the Cochise County Tourism Council at 1-800-862-5273 or visit their website at www.explorecochise.com.

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