



## **Tucson Hike Trip Notes** **November 2-10, 2012**

It's a surprise that Tucson isn't just a city. While I've been here before and for a few days in 2009 (and I'll add that trip report at the bottom) it wasn't clear that there are truly mountains in ALL Directions. That is the name of the Timberline Adventures hike: Tucson in All Directions.

It almost didn't happen. It was originally created in February by my favorite hiking leaders to fill a hole in my schedule. Yet Hurricane Sandy came along while I was finishing up a California hiking trip the prior week and luckily I got back to NJ on maybe one of the last flights to land before the storm closed down everything – for days. That means my nail salon, hair dresser, dentist, etc., and all those good things meaning that I had to hike with the worst of gray hair and broken fingernails.

At the last hike in Point Reyes I nearly got through the entire week without a single picture of myself which is not easy doing for a LEO. This time Nola took a few iPod pictures of which we emailed around. Thanks Nola. My daughter hasn't seen me for a very long time . . . and my husband almost hasn't either.



The storm(s) also means that I'm long behind in trip reports and will be even more in arrears since there are only two days between Tucson and Peru/Machu Picchu with a lot of things to get done during those two days. What you see is what you get from an airplane seat along with daily notes written on my iPhone.

Tucson I admit had bittersweet memories. It was a trip that began some disappointments within the marathon world and a small wound that would never totally heal. Tom ended up going with me in 2009 and it was a lovely trip after all so memories should only be good.



**From [www.Timbertours.com](http://www.Timbertours.com)** yet I see there were changes made even after this.

Day 1: Pickup in Tucson. Shuttle to Chiricahua area.  
Hike Cochise Stronghold - 5 miles

Day 2: Chiricahua National Monument - 9 miles

Day 3: Kent and Bog Springs Loop - 5.4 miles

Day 4: Hugh Norris and Kings Canyon Trail - 9 miles

Day 5: Rincon Peak - 10 miles

Day 6: Blackett Ridge East Trail - 6 miles

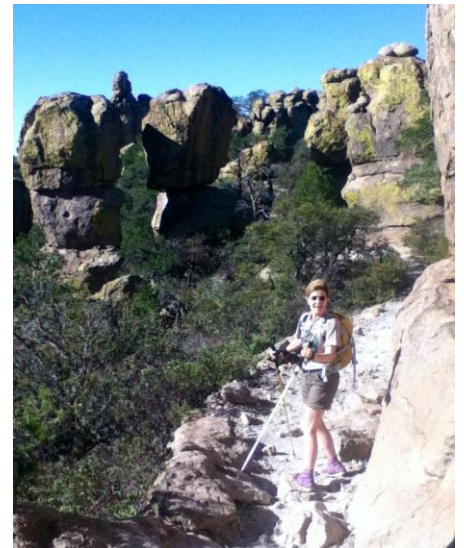
*Often on our tours as we hike in far-off or exotic locations such as the Cotswold Way or Kauai, guests will speak highly of hiking much nearer to the many places they live. Such talk often makes for interesting discussions and even a lively debate or two, but seldom goes much farther. Last February, however, as we hiked the stark lava fields of the Hawaiian Islands, two long-time Timberline hikers from southern Arizona got our attention as they raved about hiking in and around their home in Tucson. Once back to our homes in wintry Colorado, we checked out their claims and quickly discovered the remarkable wealth of trails in that area. This includes four mountain ranges that essentially ring the city; Saguaro National Park, located just outside the actual city limits; and Chiricahua National Monument, another intriguing location located several hours southeast of town.*



So, ever vigilant of opportunities to extend our season beyond the traditional summer months, we've created a new 6-day tour we're calling "Hiking Tucson from All Directions."

*Hiking Tucson will start out on Day 1 in the eastern half of Saguaro National Park on the aptly named Cactus Forest Trail. Besides the many large, mature saguaros and other species of cacti we'll see along the way, the Cactus forest trail is a good introduction to the lowlands of the Rincon Mountains east of Tucson (5 miles).*

*On day 2 we will make our only real "road trip" of the tour, heading several hours southeast of Tucson to Chiricahua National Monument. Set aside by Congress in 1924, Chiricahua is the site of a massive volcanic eruption some 27 million years ago that formed a thick layer of volcanic ash and pumice that has since eroded into many remarkable and varied rock formations. During our visit to Chiricahua, we will hike a patchwork of park trails commonly known as the Heart of Rocks Loop that passes many of these formations such as Balanced Rock, Rhyolite Canyon, and Echo Park (10 miles). We're headed west on Day 3 to the Tucson Mountains and their highest point, Wasson Peak. We'll ascend Wasson Peak via the moderately graded Hugh Norris Trail, then descend on the King Canyon trail whose terminus is conveniently located very near the famous Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum (9 miles).*



*The Santa Rita Mountains south of Tucson are our destination on Day 4, specifically, the Kent and Big Springs loop. This hike passes a series of springs that create an unusually lush riparian area with large numbers of birds and wildlife and large Arizona sycamore and walnut trees (5 miles).*

*Don't let the five-minute drive to the Day 5 trailhead fool you, on this day we plan to challenge 7,200' Mt. Kimball in the Santa Catalina Mountains. Climbing steadily (and sometimes steeply) more than 4,000 vertical feet, our ascent starts out with excellent views of Finger Rock before reaching Linda Vista Saddle slightly more than half way to Mt. Kimball (a great turnaround point for those desiring a less strenuous outing). Those electing to go all the way can rest assured the views are worth the effort, as will be a well-earned dinner that evening back at the Hacienda del Sol (10 miles). Rounding out Hiking Tucson, we'll head the short distance back to the Santa Catalina's the morning of Day 6, where we will hike the Blackett Ridge East Trail, a vista-packed*

*traverse of the ridge between Sabino and Bear Canyons (7 miles). Following this half-day climax to our Arizona adventure, we'll stop for lunch before making our way back to the Tucson airport and the close of our tour.*

**Now for my iPhone notes:**

**Sunday** – Cochise stronghold for 6 miles starting at 4900' and went up to 6000' vertical with a lot of ups and downs in between. Stunning rock formations that you wouldn't want to stand under as they look most precarious.

Sunglow Ranch was our hotel outside of ghost town Pearce not far from the town of Tombstone. Nearly 500 acres of lakes, mountains, deer and geese. Every room is different. Just to see L'Occitane French products and big white fluffy robes convinced me it was lots of luxury. Known as Arizona's Boutique Guest Ranch in the Chiricahua Mountains and you can see more at [www.sunglowranch.com](http://www.sunglowranch.com). The web site is a fun tour. I was in a redecorated "Mountain Lion" two room casita and coincidentally redecorated with a lot of Asian furnishings. There was a spa, swimming pool, mountain bikes, a lake with ducks, and a three mile trail around the lake. Not a single one of us needed an additional three miles.

Dinner: Roasted butternut squash on spinach with goat cheese salad; Fresh yeast bread; Fettuccini bolognese. Thought about the filet or the salmon. Meals were all inclusive with the room, as were the cookies and lemonade in the afternoon and the evening's entertainment.



Gourmet menu moved to a bonfire for marshmallows and s'mores later. Under the clear sky so we used my iPhone "Sky Walk" app to see the stars. It was darned cold which is amazing considering how hot it is during the day.

The downsides? No cell coverage for most of us but fortunately I could use iCall free through their WiFi connection. It was remote which most liked but in some ways spooked me. I expected scorpions to crawl up my bedroom wall at any moment or be found in my shoes like I'd heard happened to an acquaintance in the Ritz.

Gotta run to bed since someone thinks we should breakfast as early as 7am. Everyone knows I hate mornings.



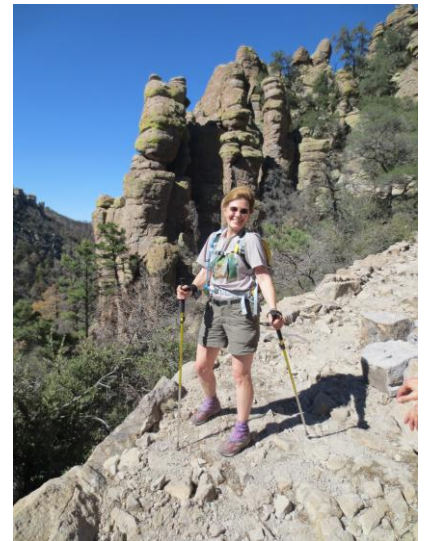


**Monday** - 6 hours hiking Chiricahua National Monument. 6700 feet high with a low of 5900 and high of 7100 feet. Big strong hike through grottos, canyons and these amazing hoo doos like Bryce but larger and not pink. Lots of up and down and a big full day of hiking.



Dinner: Fajitas and enchiladas after same salad as Sunday; Fruit plate.

Cowboys! The hotel offers entertainment and tonight it was cowboy songs and poems by a real live cowboy.



But really, imagine being away from home so long and then hiking a couple days among all these allegedly hoo-doo's! Smile.





### **Tuesday** - Election Day

I didn't sleep at this lovely but remote resort. Why? Maybe it being remote. Maybe my hang up with bugs and we had a lot plus a worry about scorpions. Snakes are fine. Bugs aren't. Serious non-sleeping.

Breakfasts are multi course events. I take my egg and toast with Canadian bacon as a mid-morning snack.

It was a very long drive to this Pearce area and the last six miles to the hotel are over dirt and gravel washboards but the hoo doos were worth it. 2 1/2 hours minimum took us to our next hike. A very long ride.

For the natural springs walk, it was not good footing going up with loose rock and gravel and we seemed to climb forever. 1200' elevation with no interesting spot to even take a picture.

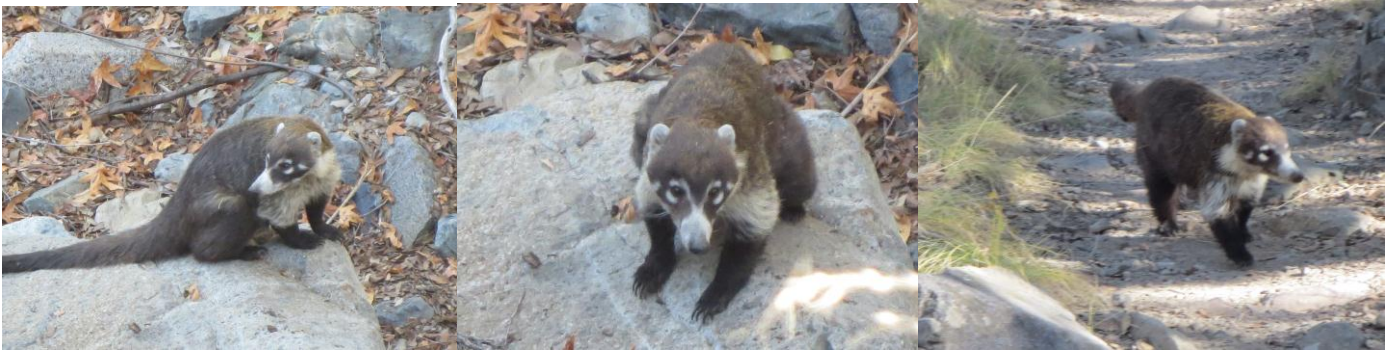
Up on top there were three different springs but they were uneventful in my book, but others seemed a bit impressed. Finally came a couple miles of single track edge of cliff overview and the reason for coming. Was it worth it? I'm not so sure. It was dramatic. Those couple miles were good and interesting and surprising and the walk down was





okay. However even the downhill was loose gravel and sometimes extra steep but at least it was switchback and not straight up. I suspect the spring offering of this hike could be full of new greenery and flowers plus rushing springs. We had none of that.

On the way down we came very close to a weird animal that seemed a cross between a raccoon and an ant eater. I got loads of pics. Coatimundi (known as Coati – that’s with three syllables) are new to me and I learned they are scavengers and far too friendly. I think this one might have been looking for a handout and I later learned that they can become pests with their begging and can be a problem with their sharp teeth and claws. We hurried away when this nocturnal animal started coming our way.



This was the day to move hotels. The Tucson city “Lodge on the Desert” was an unusually good choice. Timberline is not noted for especially good hotels and they lean more towards the Best Western type of accommodations. Both of these hotels were uniquely good.

Yet for dinners Timberline is noted for giving us unlimited and the best of available food at the best of restaurants. They didn't disappoint.

Dinner: Pesto infused spaghetti squash; Salmon with spinach and multiple bits of vegetables; Desserts were irresistible for everyone but me who choose alcohol instead.



I always pay up to a single room supplement though if you happen to be odd gal out you get a private room without cost. I readily admit that I wouldn't want to room with me.

Onto elections after returning to the room and I couldn't cease watching and listening until there were concession speeches. I was shocked. Not that I cared a lot as I have varied from one to the other and didn't really think it made a big hill of beans who got elected. There are too many governmental

problems for a president to make a lot of headway. So by saying I was shocked I don't mean to say that I was necessarily disappointed either.

**Wednesday** - Thank heaven the elections are over but maybe now the real troubles begin now. Stock market falling isn't good but many expected it.

Breakfast off the menu with gourmet but odd offerings like egg tacos.

Rush to get out on top of too many email needs and phone calls. How in heavens name can one answer someone asking if we made it through Hurricane Sandy okay without a full explanation and apology for being in the 88 degree Arizona desert while they are still without power and living with blue tarps for a roof? The Jersey Shore will never be the same.

But some calls and emails were heartwarming: Hairdresser coming in special for me on a day off because I only have two days home before Peru. Then I was given the same kind of concession by nail salon owner. I had to cop out on my weight trainer only to learn that many others had also: they couldn't get gasoline to come into the health club. Then the second storm gave him a lot of damage. And there I was in warm Arizona. Something like Hurricane Irene when I got 'stuck' in Seattle for five days . . . .

So can I really complain about it being horribly hot? It was even up to 92 degrees; but no complaints since its horrible cold on east coast on top of awful damage and no power and even a nor'easter coming in on top of the Hurricane Sandy damage.

Hiked to Wasson Peak from 9am to 2pm up a very hot series of hills or 1700' elevation thru saguaro forests. See why I call this doing a marathon a day? But I don't have to hurry; I can eat my way through the day, and not worry about the finish line closing down.

Up on top was a 360 degree view and it just might have hit the predicted 92 degrees. Three of us ran out of water – a first. Some of us used up all our 70 ounces of water plus a can of soda. Our sweet and thoughtful guides Steve and Nola had cold drinks for us back at the van.





Steve and Nola generally hike with Ziggy and William. Here is William surely getting a butt full of cactus stickers. He wouldn't be the only one. I used duct tape to remove many a couple nights, and here is Nola helping find cactus stickers on Karen's backside.



After the hike there was time for the Sonora Desert Museum. The Hummingbird house was a big hit and I managed a large number of close-up pictures. Then there were mountain goats, beaver, otters, cougars, foxes and finally the javelinas being fed. I'd missed them when there before as they are far out on the grounds and a good distance for walking.



My hits were the caves with rocks and minerals and if I remember to add pictures from my last trip to this Sonora Desert Museum you'll know that. Later – of dozens of mineral specimens I noticed that I chose some of the same rocks to photograph this time.



Onto Sonora Desert Museum which is worth a day but we had 2 1/2 hours.

Dinner: A potato hash with spinach as first course though offered as a side dish; then an appetizer of three chicken spicy tacos as a main course. No need for deserts. I eat huge amounts plus chocolate at lunch time.

Tired! Lots of laundry since I sweated out 70 ounce of liquid with no need for a pit stop all day. I generally survive with only hand carry luggage and yet I have enough clothing that I wouldn't need to do laundry but really – who can bear to put such filthy clothes into a suitcase and then wear anything out of it?



**Thursday** - Lunch set up earlier than usual at 6:45 then a far too long breakfast. Glitzy menu. Example: oatmeal was baked in a personal skillet then sugar and pecans were flash fired like crème brûlée. Yesterday's yogurt and granola was in a mason jar and was piquant. Reminds me of stacked food as a way to charge more. Whatever happened to just real food?

Breakfast for all three days was at our hotel which I was very happy with. Unusually good.

Next to last day and next to or maybe best hike. The hoo doos might have been best. This 10-12 mile hike to Tanque Verde next to Rincon Mountain was along crest and in Saguaro National Park. Good path for most of it then got to bushwhacking for the last mile or two. We steadily and comfortably climbed nearly 3000 feet up to almost 6000 taking most of the day from 9 to 4:30 and fortunately not as hot as yesterday at maybe 83. Weather has been hotter than usual but clouds and sprinkles fortunately came in mid-afternoon.



I get tired of restaurants. Yes I'm spoiled. So I skipped Thursday night dinner happily meaning I didn't have to rush to clean up nor sit in a noisy restaurant. Can catch up on emails and TV especially since I want to know what's going on in the east. Gads but two storms hit them!

**Friday** - last hiking day

Packing out. I try to avoid trips that change hotels too often. Such a waste of time to say nothing of having to get used to new beds.

Same breakfast menu that was nearly humorous as was our fellow hikers who might order "Eggs Benedict but hold the ham and hold the bread." Guess any diet can work if one just watches what they eat. As proven by some weird eating habits I've seen but amazingly they keep going. Yet it's like those Five Finger Vibram shoes: everyone talks about how great they are but no one admits to having to give them up in due course. Only the podiatrist, coaches and sports medicine doctors admit the truth. I'm currently convinced that these dieters will return to complex carbs as an addition to their diet eventually.

Off in van and fortunately a lesser drive of only 30 minutes because I've been quite ill from most of the morning drives with a lot of trouble keeping breakfast down.

Today is last hike and I am fairly saturated. It's a treat that Melissa from this year's Hawaii trip is joining us. She lives at base of Rincon Mountain and she and husband Beaver joined a retirement community here. One that is full of hikers and marathoners and Ironmen so not the usual retirees.

Sabine Canyon's Bleckett Ridge is an out and back with extreme elevation but with views allegedly worth it. I wouldn't know. I hiked from 8:30 to about 10am all UP UP UP and then thought how I don't like the down stuff and least of all not in the threatening rain. So I turned around and went down on



my own and visited the Visitor's Center at 11:00 until the rest of my fellow hikers got down around 12:15.

Returned to the airport Hampton Inn Hotel and spent hours trying to catch up on emails and some calls. Laughingly I worked to calendar what hikes I could do in 2013. I'll have seven hikes for 2012.

For a great resource and more pictures: <http://www.summitpost.org/tucson-mountain-ranges/177796>



These are the Santa Catalina Mountains – just one direction!



Sunrises and sunsets in the desert really are dramatic and they are often very changeable moment to moment. To that, good night!

**Next?** Tomorrow really does come and my tomorrow comes sooner than later. Two days home then I'm off bright and early to hike Machu Picchu where I have two weeks and a day total in Peru. I'll acclimate an extra two days in Cusco's 11,500 feet of elevation before joining the tour group who also stay for some acclimation before heading to the higher terrain. I'll end with four nights in Lima before returning home for what will feel like an extended stay.

Life is good!





## ***Itinerary***

### **Fri Nov 2**

5:21pm Depart Newark EWR via UA#1712  
8:10pm Arrive Houston IAH for plane change  
9:00pm Depart Houston IAH via UA#5184  
9:29pm Arrive Tucson TUS

Hotel Hampton Inn – 2 nights  
6971 South Tucson Boulevard, Tucson, AZ 95756 Tele: 520 918 9000

### **Sat Nov 3**

11:00am See Adrienne for massage, maybe a hike, then lunch with Adrienne and Jenna who had just moved here from NJ.  
Maybe a meal Dick and Jacqui Sasser?

Summary from leaders on 10/18/12 but could change:

*Day 1: Pickup Tucson airport or nearby hotel. Drive south and east of town and hike Cochise Stronghold (5-6 miles); overnight at Sun Glow Ranch near Pearce, AZ ([www.sunglowranch.com](http://www.sunglowranch.com))*

*Day 2: Hike Chiricahua National Monument (9 miles); overnight again at Sun Glow Ranch*

*Day 3: Hike Bog/Kent Springs loop (5 miles) in Santa Rita Mountains; overnight at Lodge on the Desert ([www.lodgeonthedesert.com](http://www.lodgeonthedesert.com)) in midtown Tucson*

*Day 4: Hike Wasson Peak (9 miles) in Tucson Mountains; visit Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum; overnight Lodge on the Desert*

*Day 5: Hike Tanque Verdi Ridge (12 miles) in Rincon Mountains; overnight Lodge on the Desert*

*Day 6: Hike Blackett Ridge East Trail (7 miles) in Santa Catalina Mountains; lunch "out" then return shuttle to Tucson airport.*

### **Sun Nov 4 – Day 1 – Daylight savings time ends**

9:00am Start of hike and pick up by Steve and Nola from host hotel  
Shuttle to Chiricahua area and hike Cochise Stronghold  
5 miles

Hotel Sunglow Ranch – 2 nights  
14066 South Sunglow Road, Pearce, AZ 85625 Tele: 520 824 3334  
Coffee in room plus refig and microwave; yes Wi Fi free tho limited areas

### **Mon Nov 5 – Day 2**

Chiricahua National Monument  
9 miles

### **Tue Nov 6 – Day 3**

Kent and Bog Springs Loop  
5.4 miles



Hotel           Lodge on the Desert – 3 nights  
306 North Alvernon Way, Tucson, AZ 85711 Tele: 520 320 2000  
Coffee service in room as well as refrig; Wi-Fi in new wing where I'm booked

**Wed Nov 7 – Day 4**

Hugh Norris and Kings Canyon Trail  
9 miles

**Thu Nov 8 – Day 5**

Tanque Verdi Ridge (not Rincon Peak)  
12 miles

**Fri Nov 9 – Day 6**

Blakett Ridge East Trail  
6 miles

Hotel           Hampton Inn – as above

**Sat Nov 10**

11:32am    Depart Tucson TUS via UA#6402  
12:56pm    Arrive San Francisco SFO for plane change  
1:30pm     Depart San Francisco SFO via UA#593  
10:04pm    Arrive Newark EWR

Note: Depart for Peru on Tues Nov 13

## Notes from Tucson AZ Trip and Marathon December 10 – 15, 2009

### **Highlights**

- This was a trip originally booked for the marathon then later focused on touring.
- Tom accompanied me.
- The marathon was NOT the highlight.
- The mountains were.



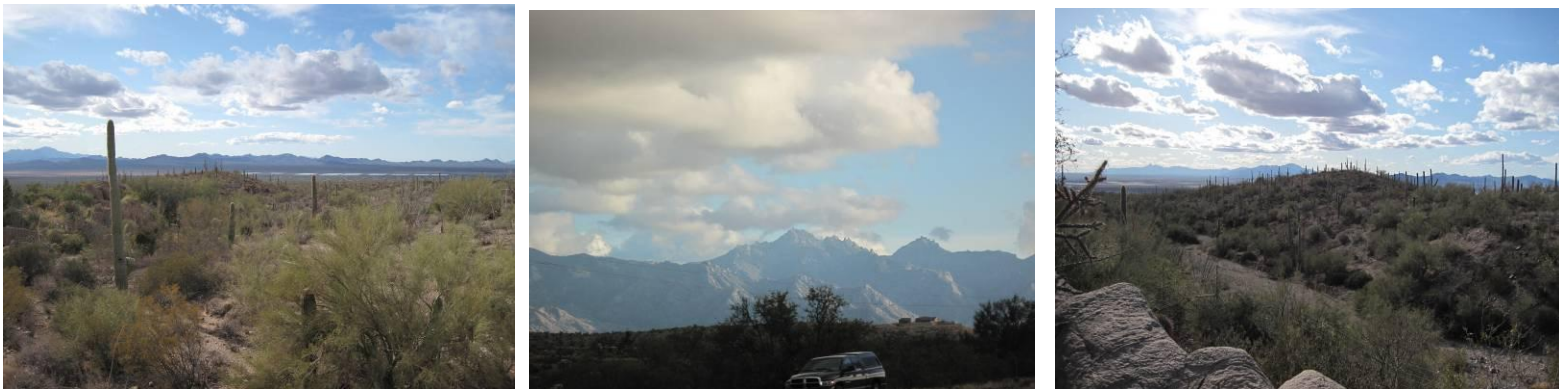
### ***Tucson is the land of extremes***

So were my trip plans, from a marathon with a group of friends which turned into five days of touring with Tom. I didn't exactly mean to visit but I'm glad I did as much to see the surprisingly different area but also to see a long-time friend from our days in Belgium. Had it not been for visiting Dick and Jacqui however I might not have known that there's a rich and lovely side to Tucson.

The marathon's host hotel is out in the boonies and the course runs through either desolation and/or a lot of ultra-simple living areas, whereas Dick and Jacqui moved from high-dollar Washington D.C. area and acquired a gorgeous flowing house high up on a hill in Oro Valley with at least a 180 degree view.

### ***Distances are great and driving is on the agenda for any activity***

Big wide open spaces with gorgeous skies most of the time. Though desolate, it can be lovely. Particularly the skies.





## ***The Hilton Tucson El Conquistador Golf & Tennis Resort***

This was the host hotel in Oro Valley and as a golf haven one could have stayed here the entire time and been happy. Traveling with Tom generally means an upgrade to accommodations so thanks to my hotel friend Loudean and to Tom we had a huge hospitality suite complete with two bathrooms, fireplace, wet bar/kitchen, giant living and dining room, plus patio.



## ***Tucson friends***

Dick and Jacqui Sasser showed us a very nice side of living in Tucson. They are high up on a hill in a gated community in a lovely home of their own design. We'd known Dick from our days at SHAPE/NATO headquarters in Belgium and it was good to visit him again and see how



well he's doing and with a lovely bride Jacqui. (Well, a bride of a long time. They act like newlyweds and we knew Dick as



a bachelor.) Both have retired but both remain very busy with their lives and traveling and each other. To top it off, Dick cooked a glorious meal for us and shared some Black Wine of Cahors too (a wine from our French travels and shared Belgian history.) I remember when Dick was learning to cook using the book "Cooking Bold and Fearless" for bachelors.

## ***Glorious sunsets***



With weather that was likely unique for Tucson and had the locals bundled up. There had been a national news story about their 3-feet of snow up in the adjoining mountains and I'm sure the local marathoners who wore sweats, long sleeve shirts jackets and hats during the marathon were still cold. But we easterners had no complaints except maybe for the strong winds and light rain – with only the former gracing the marathon.

### ***The marathon - I'm working hard to find some good things to say about this marathon.***

- The famous Pam Reed (ultra-runner and author) is the race director.
- It's a new state for me – my 49<sup>th</sup> completed marathon and my 35<sup>th</sup> state.
- The Expo on Friday was plenty acceptable. I learned that more vendors came in on Saturday when I might have gotten samples and a pace band.
- Busing to the start was in new luxury buses with toilet facilities (though there were a few school buses too.)
- Mountain ranges surround Tucson and are gorgeous with a new 3' of snowfall on one range.
- While waiting for the start, I climbed far up a hill to see the sunrise and watch the confusion down below. The sunrise was lovely. The confusion was novel – to drop your bag, find the school bus window with your bib number and toss it in.
- The course is said to have a total of 4500 feet of downhill. Careful with those statistics: That's a misnomer because looking at the altitude charts shows more like 2500 feet thus exposing the heavy hills between miles 5 and 9 and again at 25.
- The spectators were kind but there were very few and far between.
- The medal was a cute little cactus in a bronze finish.



### ***The pitfalls keep returning to my mind.***

All of which makes me feel guilty to point out in view of the number of volunteers and efforts it takes to put on a marathon, and yet, this one could never be on my top ten list of anything. Well, maybe if there were a classification of 'mountain views.'



- The host hotel is in the boonies about 45-60 minutes from the airport or from town. A rental car is required.
- The t-shirt is white, short sleeve and cotton (how 1980s) and there was not a single shirt even to purchase any smaller than men's small – which was huge.
- The course is an out-and-back requiring a bus to the start about 25 miles north.
- The course doesn't finish near to anything and busing is required to return to any of the hotels. At the finish there's a sign "shuttle bus at the school entrance" but what was that? I found a lot of runners waiting at what appeared to be the school entrance but was not.
- Busing is exceptionally confusing. There's a different bus for half (a different start location) than for the full marathon and of course some boarded incorrectly since there were no signs. No one at the info desk knew the arrangement and the hotel concierge had it wrong. Thus we had some half marathoners on the marathon course and nothing to do but run it all.
- Busing required a 5:15am departure for a 7:30am start.
- All those buses had to return via a portion of our course. We were gasping for air in the continual line up of bus fumes.
- Looking for sights while you run? There are mountain ranges far in the distance but in between is nothing but scrub other than a very few lone and pathetic businesses and some housing, if you can call it that. Much of this housing should never have a certificate of occupancy.
- The majority of the course was on a major highway with cars going in both directions and rather close. More fumes. We were reminded of the danger by the many memorials along the highway.
- Along the main route were hunters with bow-and-arrows. Were there guns too?
- The sports drink was vile. It was a throw-up pink color and left grunge in the bottom of the cup. Fortunately I had my own Gatorade at the start but shortly after consuming this official sports drink I felt rather ill (confession – GU products do that to me too.) I presume that was the reason for the four (yes – four!) bathroom stops though the Mexican food the day before could be implicated.
- There was no food on the course – no bananas, no oranges, and no candies. Well, once there was a piece of hard candy. There was some odd branded GUs.
- Had it been a very hot day, there would have been too few fluid stations.
- The port-a-potties were far-far apart and there were only low and sparse shrubs for many miles.
- Pacers are only provided to 5 hours.
- Not the marathon's fault but the brutal headwinds were through most of the course and strong enough to limit running and enough to pick a lightweight off their feet. At 4am the downtown (protected area) winds were at 20mph and this picked up strongly especially being in the open desert. When the southerly winds switched to southeasterly I expected my bib would tear off. Runners were hunkered over like old folks.

- No one on the bus knew what the name “Holualoa” for Tucson Marathon meant and I thought what a stupid name if we couldn’t pronounce it let alone know what it is but I realized later that it’s a sponsor company name so I’d use it too.
- A woman at the finish line who has run 102 marathons and is being featured in “Runners World” this February said this was the worse marathon she’d ever encountered. I might agree.

**Cheaters** -- We’ve noticed this before and still surprised and I am wondering if cheating is becoming more rampant. When I yelled to some runners that they were missing the course (skipping the turnaround when they heard there was no mat at the end) they just shrugged. When I saw some runners picked up by a car I hoped they were relay runners or DNFs but in at least one case I saw them at the finish line and that was unfortunately not the case.

**Race Results** – We all love to come up with excuses. It’s a disease of the runner so let me preface this by saying that I should be very happy with my 5:39. Yet I know that my legs do very well on down-hills (my lungs are my short-fall probably due to never having exercised until late life). Excuses abound: (1) this is the desert with very dry conditions, (2) we started at a high altitude whereas I’m used to sea level, (3) there were extremely strong winds and a surprising amount of high hills (think Constitution Road), and (4) I was probably a bit dehydrated with chills and goose bumps despite high 60s/low 70s temperatures. (5) Towards the end I went off course by about a block. (But that wasn’t necessarily the race management’s fault. I came out of a port-a-potty, saw cones continuing along the main road that I thought took us to the finish, and missed that the course turned. When I couldn’t see another runner I realized there were two directions with coned road.) (6) Certainly I’d had the wrong food and too much drink the day before -- not unusual for someone who makes touring a priority. (7) Then with four potty stops, and (8) the soft and deep sand at last stretch, there you have it. Enough excuses?

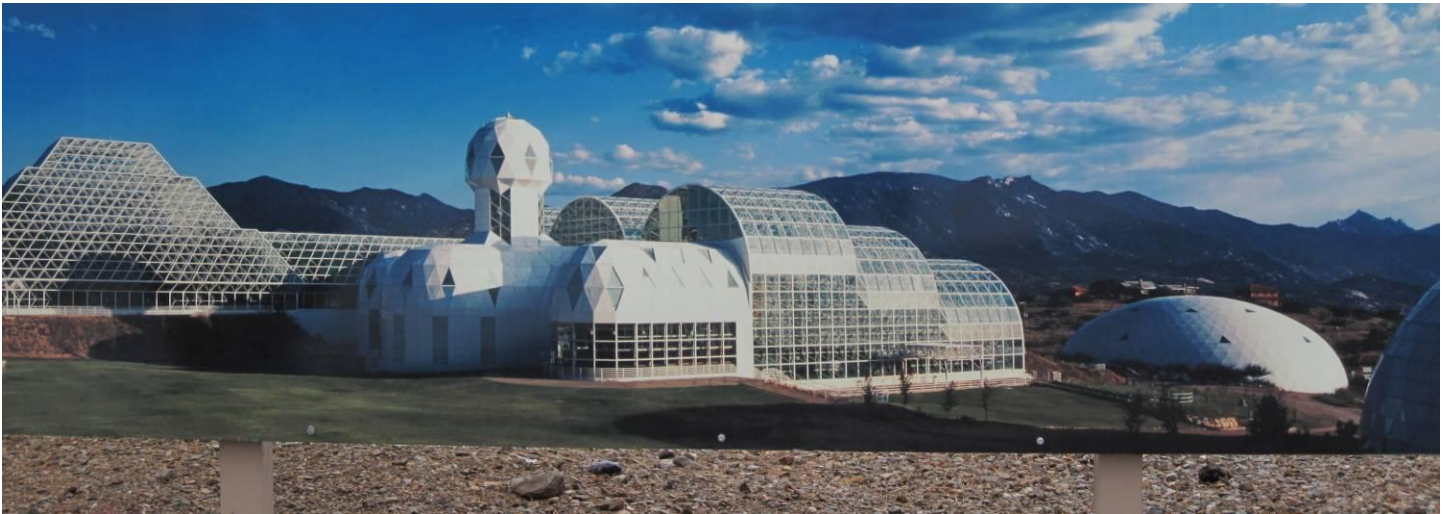
**Saved by the touring and good company . . . .**

- Tom came along. He’s great company.
- We upgraded the Hilton El Conquistador room to a hospitality suite with a huge living and dining area plus two bathrooms. It’s a lush and lovely golf and resort complex. Too bad it’s so remote.
- Our friend Dick and his “bride” live in the area and graced us with a visit to their home/complex and cooked a glorious meal for us to include an old favorite wine. They were uniquely special hosts and that was likely the highlight of Tucson.
- There were some great museums and in particular the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum. These are unfortunately about an hour’s drive away.
- There’s an Old Town (movie production complex) where over 350 movies have been filmed such as “Tombstone” but it’s about an hour away.
- Tucson has a famous Mission – also about an hour’s drive. (Are you getting the idea that this is big open spaces like Texas is famous for?)
- There’s a downtown area that’s in restoration and with a self-guided walking tour but it too is about 45-60 minutes away.
- We love Mexican food and had one very good meal and one very bad meal (which might have followed me to the marathon if that gross sports drink wasn’t the cause.)

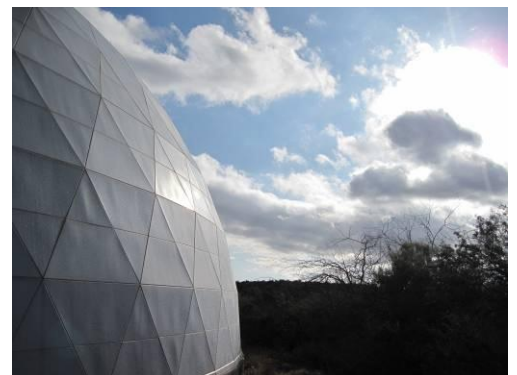


- I don't know why we didn't see Lance. He was in town and I can see why he likes the hills for training.

**Biosphere 2** (Biosphere 1 is Earth) is at the base of the stunning Santa Catalina Mountains. This one-of-a-kind facility sits on a ridge at a cool elevation of nearly 4000 feet and is surrounded by a magnificent natural desert preserve. *Time Life Books* recently named this one of the 50 must see "Wonders of the World". I can see why visitors from around the world visit this unique specially designed mini-world. Remember one of the Bass brothers put about \$400 million into this design and scientists lived entirely in this created world for about 2 years on the first experiment.



From their website [www.b2science.org](http://www.b2science.org) : "The visitor center houses numerous exhibits and multi-media displays along with a Bookstore and Cafe. You won't want to miss our new feature movie showing in the main theater which describes the past, present and future of the project. Your entry into the Biosphere is led by a tour guide who takes you inside and under the glass. The beautiful trail system takes you on a once in a lifetime tour that lets you smell our ocean and see a tropical Rainforest up close. In addition to escorting you through the upper Biomes, your interpretive tour guide takes you through the basement "technosphere" and into the amazing lungs that help the Biosphere system breathe. Your tour will conclude in the custom-built underwater ocean viewing gallery where you can explore the million-gallon ocean and its real coral reef. Before or after your tour, take time to enjoy the many different programs or events that are offered throughout the season. Your experience will be like no other!" That's an understatement! See additional facts at the end.





## ***Sonora Desert Museum***

From their website at [www.desertmuseum.org](http://www.desertmuseum.org): For a half-century the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum has enchanted millions of visitors with its exhibits of live animals in astonishingly natural settings, while intriguing and instructing them with fascinating educational programs. At the same time, the Museum has gained a worldwide repute in the scientific community as an institution committed to researching and protecting the land, plants, and the animals of the Sonoran Desert region. The mission of the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum is to inspire people to live in harmony with the natural world by fostering love, appreciation, and understanding of the Sonoran Desert. In a nutshell -- The Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum is a world-renowned zoo, natural history museum and botanical garden, all in one place! Exhibits re-create the natural landscape of the Sonoran Desert Region so realistically you find yourself eye-to-eye with mountain lions, prairie dogs, Gila monsters, and more. Within the Museum grounds, you will see more than 300 animal species and 1,200 kinds of plants. There are almost 2 miles of paths traversing 21 acres of beautiful desert. Founded in 1952 by William Carr and Arthur Pack, the Desert Museum is a private, nonprofit organization dedicated to the conservation of the Sonoran Desert.

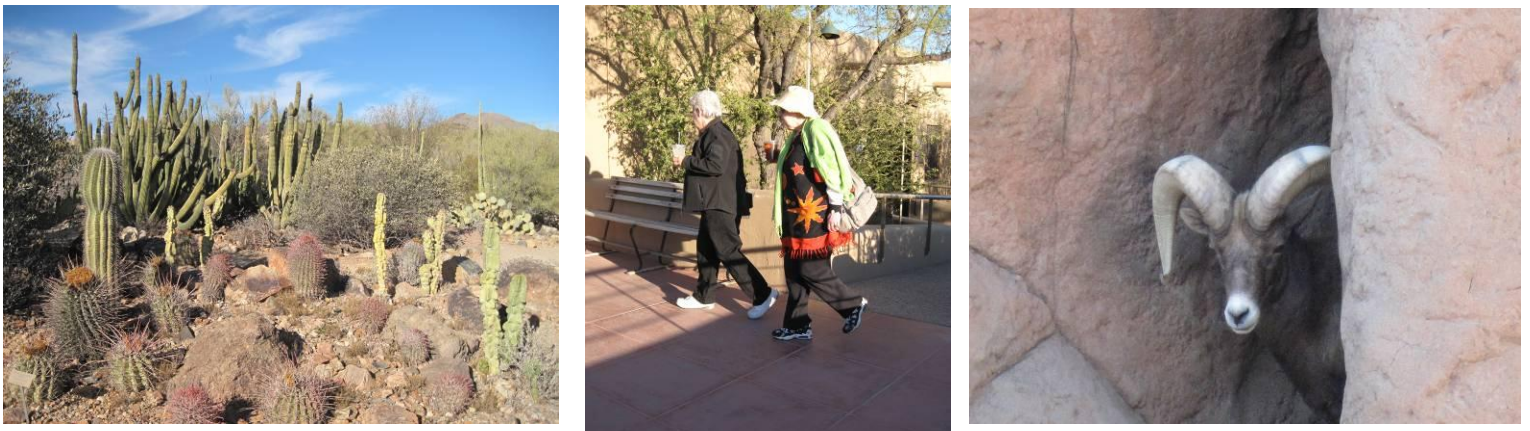




From caves to native animals to the desert plants, one could spend a day. The minerals in the cave were treasures.



Hummingbird forests where they hummed around you (but moved too fast for a good picture), desert gardens, weird people, and more.



**There was Old Presidio** in downtown where we took a walking tour, not to be confused with Old Town far outside of downtown where over 300 movies (Tombstone) have been filmed.



***Back to marathons: I am overall happy with the marathon as much because this brings to a conclusion a Maniacal 2009.***

- The crazy idea of doing 9+9=18 in '09 was met – this was my 18<sup>th</sup> marathon of the year. I went to Mobile, Miami, Greenbelt, Little Rock, got snowed out of Olathe, Illinois, Kentucky Derby, Capon Valley, Buffalo, Lake Placid, San Francisco, Turkey Swamp, Albuquerque, Omaha, Kansas City, New York, Indianapolis, Philadelphia and finally Tucson.
- Included my first two 50K trail runs.
- Reasonably consistent finishing times of 5:26, 5:33, 5:36, 5:24, 5:33, 5:50, 8:38/50k, 5:46, 5:49, 5:40, 7:40/50k, 5:51, 5:57, 5:39, 5:47, 5:29, 5:28 and 5:39. (Though these are a long shot from my 4:25 Boston qualifier its safely training runs.)
- Qualified for Marathon Maniacs 6-star (out of 10) Osmium level with 16 states, up from last year's 13 states and Ruthenium level. Any star category qualifies as Maniac in my mind! I would later qualify for the next to top star level. Damn – gotta watch this compulsive disorder.
- Now I'm looking forward to a rest until Mississippi Blues early January.

***Want to see more of the tourist pictures?*** Check out Tom's Tucson Photo Show at

<http://www.photoshow.com/watch/BR6lj5Av>

or see any of this trip shows at [www.TomsKoi.com](http://www.TomsKoi.com)



From original itinerary – likely changed

[www.Timbertours.com](http://www.Timbertours.com) \$2195 all in for six days, five nights includes all lodging, all meals, park entrance fees, van shuttles, leaders, trail maps & narratives. From their website:

### Daily Itinerary

Day 1	Group assembles in Tucson. We will hike the Cactus Forest Trail. Besides many large, mature saguaros this is a good introduction to the lowlands of the Rincon Mountains east of Tucson	5 miles
Day 2	Hike in Chiricahua National Monument area. We will hike the patchwork of park trails known as the Heart of Rocks Loop.	10 miles
Day 3	Hike the highest point of the Tucson Mountains, Wasson Peak.	9 miles
Day 4	Hike the Santa Rita Mountains south of Tucson on the Kent and Big Springs loop. The hike passes a series of springs.	5 miles
Day 5	Hike 7,200' Mt Kimball in the Santa Catalina Mountains.	10 miles
Day 6	Hike the Blackett Ridge East trail, a vista packed traverse of the ridge between Sabino and Bear Canyon. Following this half day climax, we'll stop for lunch before making our way back to the Tucson airport and the close of our tour.	7 miles

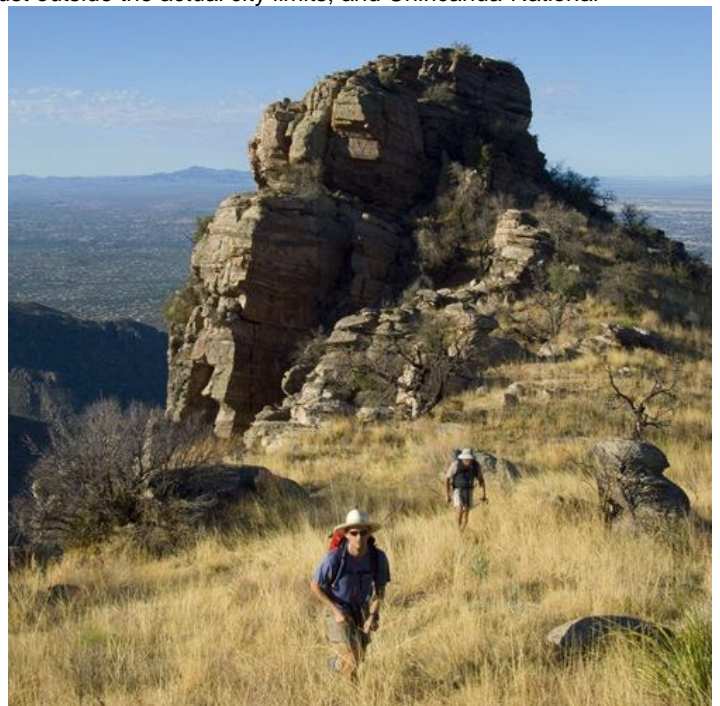
**Total Hiking Mileage - 46 miles**

Often on our tours as we hike in far-off or exotic locations such as the Cotswold Way or Kauai, guests will speak highly of hiking much nearer to the many places they live. Such talk often makes for interesting discussions and even a lively debate or two, but seldom goes much farther. Last February, however, as we hiked the stark lava fields of the Hawaiian Islands, two long-time Timberline hikers from southern Arizona got our attention as they raved about hiking in and around their home in Tucson. Once back to our homes in wintry Colorado, we checked out their claims and quickly discovered the remarkable wealth of trails in that area. This includes four mountain ranges that essentially ring the city; Saguaro National Park, located just outside the actual city limits; and Chiricahua National Monument, another intriguing location located several hours southeast of town.

So, ever vigilant of opportunities to extend our season beyond the traditional summer months, we've created a new 6-day tour we're calling "Hiking Tucson From All Directions."

Hiking Tucson will start out on Day 1 in the eastern half of Saguaro National Park on the aptly named Cactus Forest Trail. Besides the many large, mature saguaros and other species of cacti we'll see along the way, the Cactus forest trail is a good introduction to the lowlands of the Rincon Mountains east of Tucson (5 miles). From Saguaro National Park.

On day 2 we will make our only real "road trip" of the tour, heading several hours southeast of Tucson to Chiricahua National Monument. Set aside by Congress in 1924, Chiricahua is the site of a massive volcanic eruption some 27 million years ago that formed a thick layer of volcanic ash and pumice that has since eroded into many remarkable and varied rock formations. During our visit to Chiricahua, we will hike a patchwork of park trails commonly known as the Heart of Rocks Loop that passes many of these formations such as Balanced Rock, Rhyolite Canyon, and Echo Park (10 miles). We're headed west on Day 3 to the Tucson Mountains and their highest point, Wasson Peak. We'll ascend Wasson Peak via



the moderately graded Hugh Norris Trail, then descend on the King Canyon trail whose terminus is conveniently located very near the famous Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum (9 miles).

The Santa Rita Mountains south of Tucson are our destination on Day 4, specifically, the Kent and Big Springs loop. This hike passes a series of springs that create an unusually lush riparian area with large numbers of birds and wildlife and large Arizona sycamore and walnut trees (5 miles).

Don't let the five-minute drive to the Day 5 trailhead fool you, on this day we plan to challenge 7,200' Mt. Kimball in the Santa Catalina Mountains. Climbing steadily (and sometimes steeply) more than 4,000 vertical feet, our ascent starts out with excellent views of Finger Rock before reaching Linda Vista Saddle slightly more than half way to Mt. Kimball (a great turnaround point for those desiring a less strenuous outing). Those electing to go all the way can rest assured the views are worth the effort, as will be a well-earned dinner that evening back at the Hacienda del Sol (10 miles). Rounding out Hiking Tucson, we'll head the short distance back to the Santa Catalinas the morning of Day 6, where we will hike the Blackett Ridge East Trail, a vista-packed traverse of the ridge between Sabino and Bear Canyons (7 miles). Following this half-day climax to our Arizona adventure, we'll stop for lunch before making our way back to the Tucson airport and the close of our tour.

Pickup/Dropoff: Tucson Arizona

Lodging: Lodge on the Desert (mid-town Tucson)

### **First Proposed Itinerary**

#### **Nov 4 - Day One**

**Hike: Cactus Forest Trail:** 5 miles, 200' vertical gain. This fairly level hike traverses a portion of the lowlands of the Rincon Mountains in Saguaro National Park (East) through many varieties of cacti. It finishes at the National Park Visitor Center.

#### **Nov 5 - Day Two**

**Hike: Heart of Rocks Loop:** 9 miles, 1,300' vertical gain. This hike visits the most spectacular rock formations in the Chiricahua National Monument, two hours southeast of Tucson.

#### **Nov 6 - Day Three**

**Hike: Hugh Norris and King Canyon Trail to/from Wasson Peak:** 9 miles, 1,700' vertical gain. This hike climbs gradually on the Hugh Norris trail to Wasson Peak, the highest in the Tucson Mountains, and descends via the King Canyon trail, which ends very near the famous Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum. A visit to the museum after the hike is also planned.

#### **Nov 7 - Day Four**

**Hike: Kent and Bog Springs Loop:** 5 miles, 1,400' vertical gain. The Santa Rita Mountains south of Tucson are our location for this hike past several springs that create an unusually lush riparian area with large numbers of birds and wildlife

#### **Nov 8 - Day Five**

**Hike: Finger Rock/ Mt. Kimball Trail:** 10 miles, 4,100' vertical gain. The difficult hike climbs into and through Finger Rock Canyon, past the impressive vistas of Linda Vista Saddle (a good turnaround for those wanting a shorter hike), to the summit of Mt. Kimball (7,200'--the highest point of the tour).

#### **Nov 9 - Day Six**

**Hike: Blackett Ridge East Trail:** 6 miles, 1,700' vertical gain. This trail climbs to a scenic ridge between Sabino and Bear Canyons in Tucson's Santa Catalina Mountains, offering views back down to Tucson itself along the way.