

Arizona: Saguaro National Park & the Sonoran Desert

Bike Vacation Only

Desert meets artistic heritage on this unique Arizona cycling vacation. Spin through southern Arizona's high desert landscape as you pedal the Arivaca Road toward Arivaca Mercantile, a charming step back in time featuring local artisan favorites. Experience the vibrant artists' community of Tubac—and the remarkable golden light that has inspired generations of local painters. Learn about the natural history of the region as you explore the remarkable Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum—discovering the plants, land animals, and aquatic species that call this region home. Cycle sections of "The Loop" in Tucson, rated as the #1 bike path in America. As you pedal through fields of towering succulents at Saguaro National Park, you'll see why there's no other place like this on Earth.

Cultural Highlights

- Explore the walking trails and fascinating exhibits of the highly regarded Arizona Sonora Desert Museum.
- Bike and picnic among the beautiful saguaro cacti of Saguaro National Park.
- Visit the Tumacácori National Historical Park for a self-guided tour, home to three Spanish mission communities and beautiful orchards and gardens.
- Cycle on The Loop, named the number one bike path in America by USA today, through vibrant Tucson, along the Santa Cruz and the Rillito Rivers.
- Savor local cuisine infused with Native American, Spanish, Mexican, and Anglo-American influences.

What to Expect

This tour offers a combination of easy terrain mixed with moderate hills, ideal for beginning and experienced cyclists. Our VBT support vehicle is always available for those who would like assistance. This tour includes strategic shuttles on most days in order to access the best cycling routes, avoiding busy roads and repetitive scenery. Please note that temperatures are colder at night and in the morning. Desert flora generally begins blooming in late March to early April.

Tour Duration: 6 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 9-42 miles

Average Cycling Time: 2-4 hours

Group size: 14-20 max

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

March 73°/44°, April 81°/51°, October 84°/57°, November 73°/45°

Average Rainfall (in.)

March 0.7, April 0.3, October 0.9, November 0.6

DAY 1: Your VBT Vacation Begins / Warm-Up Ride / Welcome Reception and Dinner

Make your own arrangements for travel to Arizona and to our first hotel in Tubac. VBT offers a complimentary shuttle from Tucson International Airport, departing at 1:30 p.m. This shuttle operates on a “show and go” basis—no reservations are required. Travel time to Tubac Golf Resort & Spa is approximately one hour.

Upon arrival at Tubac Golf Resort & Spa, take time to change into your biking clothes if needed. At 2:30 p.m., meet your group and VBT trip leaders for a safety and bike-fitting session, followed by a short warm-up ride. At 5:30 p.m., gather with your fellow travelers for a tour orientation and welcome reception. Enjoy your welcome dinner at the resort and begin getting to know your traveling companions as you kick off your VBT vacation—one of the most highly rated Arizona bike tours.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Warm-Up Ride — 9 miles

What to Expect:

Get acquainted with your bicycle during a leisurely warm-up ride from Tubac, following a scenic route along quiet, paved roads.

Cumulative Distance Range: 9 miles

Included Meals: Dinner

DAY 2: Discover Tubac / Visit Tumacácori National Historical Park

After breakfast, enjoy a scenic cycling route through the countryside, crossing the Santa Cruz River. On your return ride, you may choose to stop at the family-owned Santa Cruz Chili & Spice Company. Next, visit Tumacácori National Historical Park, home to a 17th-century mission. Explore the mission grounds, museum, orchard, garden, and walking trails on a self-guided tour. From here, continue cycling to the town of Tubac.

After lunch on your own in Tubac, the afternoon is free for further exploration. Take time to experience Tubac's vibrant arts scene—this colorful artists' colony is home to talented sculptors, painters, potters, jewelers, and artisans who draw inspiration from the surrounding desert landscape. At 2:00 p.m., meet at the Tubac Center of the Arts for an included 45-minute docent-led tour that offers deeper insight into the town's creative spirit and cultural heritage.

Later, unwind at the resort. If you'd like to schedule a tee time or spa appointment during your stay, we recommend contacting the resort in advance.

Settle into your private hacienda and enjoy a relaxing evening. Dinner is on your own tonight.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Tubac to Tumacácori — 22 miles

Afternoon: Tumacácori to Tubac Resort — 4 miles

What to Expect:

This morning, bike from the resort past Tubac and across the Santa Cruz River into the scenic southern Arizona countryside. Along the way, visit the Santa Cruz Chili & Spice Company and Tumacácori National Historical Park, where you'll enjoy a self-guided tour of the mission grounds and have time to explore the museum and bookshop. After your visit, cycle back to the center of Tubac to discover the town and explore its galleries—or return to the resort to relax.

Cumulative Distance Range: 4 – 26 miles

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 3: Shuttle to Arivaca / Cycle to Amado / Shuttle to Tucson

Today, shuttle from Tubac to South Ruby Road near Arivaca Lake for a memorable cycling experience through the high desert landscape of southern Arizona's Sonoran region. Along the way, pause at the historic Arivaca Mercantile, serving the community since the early 1900s. This ride showcases some of the most stunning and diverse desert scenery in southern Arizona—evoking the spirit of early settlers as you pedal through this rugged terrain.

At the end of your ride, enjoy a hearty lunch, including homemade desserts, at a well-known local landmark. Afterward, board a shuttle to your hotel in Tucson, a warm and authentic hacienda-style retreat. This evening, gather on the *terrazza* for al fresco dining, with views of the Santa Catalina Mountains and, perhaps, live music to enhance the ambiance.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Arivaca and Creek Trailhead to Amado — 33 miles

What to Expect:

Start your day with a 55-minute shuttle from Tubac Resort to the Arivaca Lake area, then cycle to the Arivaca Creek trailhead for an optional walk. Continue riding past the historic Arivaca Mercantile and along scenic Arivaca Road—ranked among Arizona's top cycling routes—for a descent into Amado with rolling hills, open range, and sweeping views of cacti, ranches, and distant mountains. Expect light traffic, mostly from border patrol and local ranchers. After your ride, enjoy lunch at a local restaurant before a one-hour shuttle to your Tucson hotel.

Cumulative Distance Range: 33 miles

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 4: Shuttle to Saguaro National Park West / Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum / The Tucson Loop

This morning, shuttle from Hacienda del Sol to Saguaro National Park West, home to the remarkable Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum. This unique museum features more than 300 animal species and 1,200 plant varieties in a stunning natural desert setting. You'll have ample time to observe wildlife and native plants, attend lectures, explore art exhibits, and enjoy a self-guided tour along two miles of walking trails.

Lunch is on your own at one of the museum's two on-site restaurants.

After your visit, begin cycling directly from the museum, riding past iconic saguaro cacti—giant sentinels found only in this region. It's a joy to pedal through this classic Arizona landscape, which so vividly captures the essence of the American Southwest. Take in sweeping views of the surrounding mountains as you ride.

Your journey continues through the dramatic Tucson Mountains to the stunning Gates Pass. After an exhilarating descent, follow "The Loop"—Tucson's award-winning shared-use path, ranked the #1 bike path in America. This scenic route winds through vibrant neighborhoods and landscapes, eventually bringing you back to your hotel. Dinner is on your own this evening.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Sonora Desert Museum to Hacienda del Sol — 33 miles

What to Expect:

This morning, take a 45-minute shuttle to the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum for a morning of exploration and lunch on your own. Afterward, begin your ride through Saguaro National Park West, surrounded by towering saguaro cacti. Tackle a challenging 2.4-mile climb on winding Gates Pass Road, which has no shoulder and several blind curves—recommended only for confident riders. An optional shuttle is available for those who prefer to skip the climb. From the summit, enjoy a thrilling descent into Tucson and join The Loop, a scenic 15-mile multi-use path along the Santa Cruz and Rillito Rivers. Take in sweeping views of Tucson's surrounding mountain ranges: the Santa Catalina to the northeast, the Rincon to the east, and the Santa Rita to the south.

Cumulative Distance Range: 33 miles

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 5: Saguaro National Park East / Farewell Dinner

For the final ride of your Arizona bike tour, cycle directly from the hotel. Today's scenic route begins with 10 miles along The Loop, following the Rillito River and Pantano Wash, before continuing on the Old Spanish Trail into Saguaro National Park East. Stop at the Visitor Center to learn more about the park's

unique ecosystem. Once inside the park, follow the one-way Loop Drive for a thrilling ride through a landscape filled with towering saguaro cacti. Your morning ride ends at the Javelina picnic area, where you'll enjoy lunch in a spectacular setting surrounded by iconic desert scenery. Spanning more than 92,000 acres on the edge of Tucson, Saguaro National Park protects one of the most impressive forests of these giant subtropical plants.

After lunch, continue riding out of the park to Broadway Bicycles—be sure to stop and pick up an Arizona cycling jersey as a souvenir! From there, shuttle back to Hacienda del Sol.

This evening, celebrate the journey with your fellow travelers during a farewell dinner at The Grill, Hacienda del Sol's acclaimed restaurant.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Hacienda del Sol to Saguaro National Park East — 26 miles | Saguaro National Park East Loop — 9 miles

Afternoon: Saguaro National Park East to Broadway Bicycles — 8 miles

What to Expect:

This morning, cycle from Hacienda del Sol to The Loop for a 10-mile ride through Tucson, then continue along the Old Spanish Trail toward Saguaro National Park East. Stop at the Visitor Center to learn more about the park before riding the one-way Loop Drive. Eager cyclists may choose to complete the scenic nine-mile loop a second time before enjoying a picnic lunch prepared by your trip leaders. After lunch, ride or shuttle to Broadway Bicycles—a great spot to browse or pick up cycling gear. From there, everyone will shuttle back to the hotel.

Cumulative Distance Range: 8 – 43 miles

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 6: Sabino Canyon / Travel to Tucson / Your VBT Vacation Ends

After an early to-go breakfast from your hotel, shuttle to Sabino Canyon for a one-hour round-trip ride aboard an electric tram—or enjoy a hike in one of southern Arizona's premier natural areas. Your Arizona

bike tour concludes following this final experience. VBT's complimentary shuttle will depart Sabino Canyon at 10:15 a.m., arriving at Tucson International Airport approximately 35 minutes later. If you are flying out of Tucson, we recommend booking a flight no earlier than 12:30 p.m. Guests needing to reach the airport earlier or later will need to make their own transportation arrangements.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

Tubac Golf Resort & Spa (Days 1-2)

With historical roots dating back to 1789 when the property was a working 500-acre cattle ranch on the first Spanish land grant in the Southwest, the Tubac Golf Resort & Spa enjoys beautiful landscapes of the property situated between the stunning backdrop of the Tumacacori and Santa Rita mountain ranges. Unwind in spacious accommodations featuring Southwest-inspired décor, comfortable furnishings, and individual patios with verdant surroundings. Savor delicious creations at Stales Bar & Grille showcasing flavors of the region. Take a saddle seat at the Stables Bar to have your photo taken. Or enjoy the 3,000 square-foot hacienda-themed spa. Golf enthusiasts are sure to appreciate the three nine-hole courses designed by renowned architect Red Lawrence, and don't miss the opportunity to take a peek at the hole made famous by the movie *Tin Cup* filmed here in 1996.

Hacienda del Sol Guest Ranch (Days 3-5)

Designed in a Spanish Colonial style, Hacienda del Sol was inspired by the Moorish architecture of the 18th and 19th centuries. Through the gated mission-style entrance, you are greeted by tranquil gardens, a backdrop of unspoiled desert landscape, and a dramatic view of the majestic Santa Catalina Mountains. Each air-conditioned room has its own personality, adorned with unique surprises, from hand-forged iron and copper headboards to original artwork and custom-designed furniture. The resort's courtyard and porches offer a quiet place to relax. With large terraces for al fresco dining, its restaurant, The Grill, is one of Tucson's best and is AAA Four Diamond Award-winning. Legendary patrons such as Katharine Hepburn, Spencer Tracy, John Wayne, and Howard Hughes enjoyed the comforts here. A magical setting has been, and remains, the very cornerstone of Hacienda del Sol.