

SUMMER'S HERE →

Summer doesn't officially begin until June 21, but the timing of things is a little different in Arizona, especially for desert dwellers who start thinking about summer trips to the mountains about the time Spring Training comes to an end.

Either way, here's your itinerary.
Hit the road, and please drive carefully.

BY KATHY MONTGOMERY
ILLUSTRATIONS BY ERIC HANSON

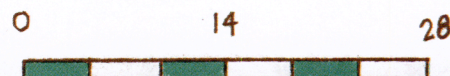
Editor's Note: About this time last year, Arizonans (and concerned citizens around the world) were transfixed by news of the Wallow Fire as it spread through the White Mountains to become the largest fire in the state's recorded history. For a while, it seemed as if all would be lost. But in the end, much more was spared, including the communities of Pinetop-Lake-side, Show Low, Snowflake, Greer, Alpine, Eagar, Springerville and much of the Fort Apache Reservation. In affected areas, the fire hopscotched through the forest, skipping over many of the area's treasures. A year later, nature's resilience is on display, with new growth greening up even the burned areas. The point is: Plan a trip to the White Mountains this summer. There's still plenty of beauty and plenty of things to do. What follows are 50 of our favorites.



Cibecue Canyon



White Mountains





1

Order a slice of pie at Bear Wallow Café

Alpine

All of the food gets rave reviews at this friendly restaurant, which is run by four generations of Vada Davis' family. But the pies alone are worth the drive. Co-owner "Taani" Harper, also known as "the pie lady," bakes about 70 pies a week, all from scratch. With a dozen varieties, choosing just one is almost too much to bear. *Information:* 42650 U.S. Route 180, 928-339-4310 or www.bearwallowcafe.com

2

Hike the White Mountains Trail System

Vernon to Clay Springs

These nationally recognized, volunteer-built trails include a series of 25 interconnecting loops and connectors that incorporate urban paths, as well as surrounding forest. Pick up a WMTS booklet for \$2 at the Lakeside Ranger Station. Soon, you'll be happily walking around in circles. *Information:* www.tracks-pinetop-lakeside.org; Lakeside Ranger Station, 2022 W. White Mountain Boulevard, 928-368-2100

3

Look for pronghorns at Sipe White Mountain Wildlife Area

Near Eagar

Fortunately for wildlife lovers, much of this former ranch in the shadow of Escudilla Mountain was spared by the Wallow Fire. Its varied habitats, including grasslands, woods, irrigated fields and wetlands, make it attractive to a wide variety of wildlife, including elk and pronghorns, as well as birds as diverse as osprey, eagles, peregrine falcons and hummingbirds. *Information:* Arizona Game and Fish Department, 928-367-4281 or www.azgfd.gov

4

Plan a picnic in a wildflower meadow

Various locations

Mountain meadows blossom in an abundance of summer wildflowers that look as lovely as their names suggest: Indian paintbrush, wild iris, showy goldeneye, deer's ears. So bypass the cut flowers at the supermarket. Fill your basket with breads and cheeses, and set your "table" among them. *Information:* Alpine Ranger District, 928-339-5000 or www.fs.usda.gov/asnf



EDWARD MCCAIN

A lone harebell graces Hannagan Meadow south of Alpine.

5

Eat the meatloaf at Rendezvous Diner

Greer

Mom's meatloaf may have been good, but Pauline Merrill's is better. Merrill, the chef-owner of Greer's Rendezvous Diner, makes it from scratch each day. Whether you eat it as a sandwich or pair it with biscuits and chase it with a slice of berry cobbler, you won't regret the indulgence. *Information:* 117 N. Main Street, 928-735-7483

6

Tour the Butterfly Lodge Museum

Greer

What sounds like a lepidopterist's dream is really the historic hunting lodge of author James Willard Schultz and his son, artist Lone Wolf. Married to a Blackfoot Indian, Schultz called the place "butterfly lodge," perhaps for the butterflies in the surrounding meadows. The beautifully restored cabin makes it easy to see how his imagination took flight. *Information:* 928-735-7514

7

See the mountains from the back of a horse

Sunrise Park Resort

Beginning in June and stretching into fall, Snowy Mountain Stables offers horseback-riding at the base of the sprawling Sunrise Park Resort where elk, deer and turkeys often cross paths. Choose from half-hour to full-day rides and finish up with traditional Apache songs and storytelling by special arrangement. *Information:* 928-735-7454 or www.sunriseskiparkaz.com/summer/horseback-rides

8

Explore Pole Knoll Recreation Area

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, near Greer

Pole Knoll's name reflects the area's origins as a cross-country ski area. In summer, its Nordic ski symbols (ranging from a green circle for the easiest trails to black diamond) work equally well to guide the mix of hikers, bikers, horseback-riders and drivers over its diverse, moderate trails. *Information:* Springerville Ranger District, 928-333-6200 or www.fs.usda.gov/asnf





9

Go casting for trout at Hawley Lake

Fort Apache Reservation

Hawley Lake is one of the prettiest on the reservation, and that's saying a lot. Thick stands of pines, aspens and spruce surround nearly 10 miles of accessible shoreline. For anglers, brook, brown and rainbow trout are the lure. But beware, it's easy to get hooked. *Information: White Mountain Apache Tribe Game and Fish, 928-338-4385*

10

Pitch a tent at Los Burros Campground

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, near McNary

This small campground on a meadow's edge makes a peaceful alternative to the popular lakeside campgrounds. Originally home to a fire spotter, Los Burros retains the former ranger station's historic barn and corral. A nearby trail leads along a cool, shaded route to the fire tower at Lake Mountain Lookout. *Information: Lakeside Ranger District, 928-368-2100 or www.fs.usda.gov/asnf*

11

Have a slice of pizza at Red Devil Pizza

Pinetop

Co-owner Mike Digeno says the secret to his sinfully good pizza is the dough, prepared the way his father made it when he opened the family's metro-Phoenix chain 50 years ago. The three-day process allows the yeast to ferment like wine. Order two and say the Devil made you do it. *Information: 1774 E. White Mountain Boulevard, 928-367-5570*

12

Hike the Railroad Grade Trail (No. 601)

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests

The Railroad Grade Trail extends along a historic railroad route from State Route 260 to Big Lake. If your engine loses steam at the idea of hiking the entire 19 miles, jump in at one of three other trailheads down the line. Just don't miss the 80-foot trestle bridge north of Sheep's Crossing. *Information: Springerville Ranger District, 928-333-6200 or www.fs.usda.gov/asnf*

13

Frolic in a cienega

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, near Hannagan Meadow

Cienega is Spanish for meadow, and the White Mountains are full of them. You'll find one of the loveliest at the K.P. Cienega Campground near the Blue Range Primitive Area. Incredibly, the fire skirted this remote, high-mountain spot. And with only five single-unit sites and no hookups, you'll likely have this lovely little playground almost all to yourself. *Information: Alpine Ranger District, 928-339-5000 or www.fs.usda.gov/asnf*

14

Listen for wolves in Bear Wallow

Bear Wallow Wilderness, Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests

Now famous as the place the Wallow Fire originated, Bear Wallow Wilderness is still home to a breeding pair of Mexican gray wolves. New aspen growth attracts deer and

Mexican gray wolves can be found in Eastern Arizona's Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests.



GEORGE ANDREJKO



elk, and, by extension, wolves. The wolves should begin quietly denning in late spring or early summer, but will grow more vocal as summer turns to fall. *Information: Arizona Game and Fish Department, 928-367-4281 or www.azgfd.gov*

15

Catch a flick at the El Rio Springerville

When this tiny adobe theater opened around 1915, it showed silent films made by flicking cards before a camera. Since then, it's survived fire, recession and the advent of the multiplex. True, there's just one movie — shown at 7 p.m. Friday, Saturday and Sunday — but it's the reel deal. *Information: 14 W. Main Street, 928-333-4590*

16

Take to the highways

State Route 260 and U.S. Route 191

Heading to the White Mountains, half the pleasure is the journey. State Route 260 and U.S. Route 191, the major east-west and north-south routes, both carry scenic byway designations, and each is its own reward. State 260 offers panoramic views along the Mogollon Rim. U.S. 191 takes in everything from desert to alpine forest. Why choose? Head eastbound and down, and take the long way home. *Information: Alpine Ranger District, 928-339-5000 or www.fs.usda.gov/asnf*

17

Eat prime rib at Charlie Clark's Steakhouse

Pinetop

The origins of Charlie Clark's date back to Prohibition, when folks came in search of a certain illegal corn-based product. These days, they come for a different corn-fed commodity: beef. Roast prime rib is the specialty: mesquite spiced, slow roasted and so good it ought to be against the law. *Information: 1701 E. White Mountain Boulevard, 888-333-0259 or www.charlieclarks.com*





18

Singe your taste buds at the original Los Dos Molinos

Springerville

Worshippers of the fiery New Mexico-style chile served at this longtime Phoenix institution should make the pilgrimage to the Springerville location. It's the original, where the two chile grinders (molinos) that gave the restaurant its name are on display. Red or green, the chile here can bring you to your knees. *Information: 900 E. Main Street, 928-333-4846*

19

Watch the sun rise over Hannagan Meadow

Hannagan Meadow

The flames from the Wallow Fire spared this idyllic spot, which emerges from the damage along U.S. Route 191 like a fairy-tale oasis. The feeling of enchantment is, perhaps, strongest in the early morning as the sun rises over the tree line. Deer, elk, even a bobcat might materialize in the clearing to hold you spellbound. *Information: 928-339-4370 or www.hannaganmeadow.com*

20

Watch the sun go down from Blue Vista Lookout

Milepost 225, U.S. Route 191

This panoramic overlook at the edge of the Mogollon Rim marks the halfway point on the Coronado Trail Scenic Byway. The view is expansive, taking in Southeastern Arizona and western New Mexico. It's dramatic at sunset, when the Pinaleno and Gila mountains become layered cutouts against a rose and lavender sky. *Information: Alpine Ranger District, 928-339-5000 or www.fs.usda.gov/asnf*

21

Catch and release an Apache trout

Christmas Tree Lake, Fort Apache Reservation

Outdoorsman Lee Wulff famously said, "Game fish are too valuable to be caught only once." Certainly, that's true of Arizona's state fish. The White Mountain Apaches were 20 years ahead of the government in preserving this rare species, and Christmas Tree Lake is the premier fishing spot. The tribe permits only 20 fishermen each day on the catch-and-release lake. *Information: Hon-Dah Ski & Outdoor Sports, 928-369-7669*

22

Feed your inner child at Celebrations of Generations

Snowflake

A tea party is cause for celebration at any age. Here, kids can enjoy strawberry milk "tea" and pb&j finger sandwiches while moms play dress-up with Celebrations' hats, gloves and feather boas, sip grownup teas and indulge in specialty scones with flavors like piña colada. It's seriously enjoyable. *Information: 123 N. Main Street, 928-457-0198 or www.celebrationsofgenerations.com*



23

Grab breakfast at Darbi's Café

Pinetop

Darbi's serves old-fashioned comfort food at breakfast, lunch and dinner. But breakfast alone can carry you through the day, with lumberjack-sized portions of homemade biscuits and gravy, steak and eggs, and fluffy omelets or waffles loaded with fruit toppings. *Information: 237 E. White Mountain Boulevard, 928-367-6556*

24

Row, row, row your boat at Big Lake

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, near Springerville

This stunning lake and five surrounding campgrounds were dramatically spared from the Wallow Fire by what could only be divine intervention, says Rick Law, a third-generation owner of Big Lake Tackle and Supply. Rent a rowboat at his store and spend the day on the graceful waters. You, too, will be singing hallelujah. *Information: 928-521-1387 or www.biglakeaz.com*

25

Get a jump on Christmas at High Country Art Gallery & Gift Shop

Pinetop

Get a jump on your holiday shopping at this volunteer, nonprofit gallery and gift shop operated by the Northeastern Arizona Fine Arts Association. Gifts of handcrafted jewelry and one-of-a-kind works by local artists will earn you a reputation for the art of giving well. *Information: 592 W. White Mountain Boulevard, 928-367-3916 or www.highcountryartgallery.com*



LARRY LINDAHL

Hannagan Meadow is one of the White Mountains' most popular places.





34

Visit the White Mountain Apache Cultural Center

Fort Apache Historic Park

Located in a structure reminiscent of a traditional Apache holy home, Nohwike' Bágowa (House of Our Footprints) serves as an interpretive center for Fort Apache Historic Park, with exhibits that explore Apache culture and history. Basketry, beadwork, books and music are sold in the gift shop, and admission includes access to the Kinishba Ruins 5 miles west of the fort. *Information: 127 Scout Road, Fort Apache, 928-338-4625 or www.wmat.nsn.us/fortapachepark.htm*

35

Mail a letter from the Blue Post Office

Blue

Collectors send self-addressed, stamped envelopes to this tiny post office, prized as one of the last to hand-cancel every letter. Postal workers still do so upon request. But this transformed camp trailer — with its wire-mesh customer-service window — deserves a visit in person. Just don't wait too long. It's targeted for possible closure. *Information: 928-339-4945*

36

Ride off into the sunset with Porter Mountain Stables

Lakeside

The Peterson family, which owns and operates the stables, homesteaded the property at Flag Hollow Ranch, Porter Mountain's new home. The two-hour sunset tour takes riders across Porter Creek, popping out of the tree line behind Scott Reservoir just as the sun dips behind the lake. If that doesn't knock your socks off, the equestrian center's Friday-night bull-riding probably will. *Information: 9031 Jacks Road, 928-368-5306 or www.flaghollowranch.com*

37

Eat the enchiladas at Booga Red's

Springerville

The name of this restaurant sounds a little like Booger Ed's. But don't let that deter you. Booga Red was the nickname of its former owner, a big redheaded guy, and the restaurant is still in the family. Try Booga Red's specialty: a sausage and cheese enchilada, covered with red or green sauce, topped with two eggs and served with hash browns. A dish by any other name would taste as sweet. *Information: 521 E. Main Street, 928-333-2640*

38

Drive the scenic road to Greens Peak

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests

Forest Road 117 winds north from State Route 260 past wildflower-dotted meadows and forests of pine, spruce and aspen for 6 miles to Greens Peak, a cinder cone that rises from the surrounding grasslands like a great, overturned bowl. A steep road leads to communications towers at the top, where sweeping views take in distant Sunrise Lake. *Information: Springerville Ranger District, 928-333-6200 or www.fs.usda.gov/asnf*

39

Tour the Springerville Volcanic Field

Beginning in Springerville

The sheer size alone of the Springerville volcanic field is enough to blow your mind, with 400 vents covering an area larger than Rhode Island. A Springerville-Eagar Cham-



ber of Commerce pamphlet covers the high points, with a self-guided driving tour from Springerville to Greens Peak. *Information: Springerville-Eagar Chamber of Commerce, 418 E. Main Street, 928-333-2123*

40

Attend the inaugural High Pines Bluegrass Festival

Hon-Dah Resort

The Grammy-nominated group The Grascals headlines this new music festival, which replaces the White Mountains Bluegrass Festival. The two-day event, August 18 and 19, offers camping, food and "Fiddlemania" for the kids, plus a chance to end the summer on a high note. *Information: 928-369-7576 or www.hon-dah.com*

41

Do time at one of the state's oldest jails

Pinetop-Lakeside

The WPA built the historic jail on the corner of Burke Lane and White Mountain Boulevard in 1935. Originally located on Clare Lane in Pinetop, it was moved in 1988 to make way for First Interstate Bank, now Wells Fargo. You can't actually get locked up here, but it just might capture your imagination. *Information: 800-573-4031 or www.pinetoplakesidechamber.com*

42

Get cultural at Pow Wow in the Pines

Hon-Dah Resort

Drums vibrating, bells tinkling, costumed dancers swirling ... Pow Wow in the Pines is a moving, multisensory experience. Held the first week in June, the gathering of about 25 tribes from all over the United States and Canada features competitions, shopping and foods like roast mutton and steamed-corn stew. *Information: 928-369-7576 or www.hon-dah.com*





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JACK DYKINGA

Waterfall at Cibecue Creek

43

Surrender to the canyon at Cibecue Creek

Salt River Canyon

Cibecue means "surrounded by red cliffs," which is what you'll be on this dramatic trek along a tributary of the Salt River. Alternately hiking, boulder-hopping and splashing through a narrowing canyon to a 50-foot waterfall, you'll gladly give in to the adventure. But get a permit from the White Mountain Apaches first. Hiking beyond Lower Falls requires a guide. At press time, the tribe did not employ one. *Information:* 928-338-4385 or www.wmat.nsn.us

44

Ride the slopes at Sunrise

Sunrise Park Resort,
Fort Apache Reservation

Who says you can't ride the slopes just because it's summer? Weekend scenic lift rides from Memorial Day to Labor Day feature specially equipped chairs to carry your bike to the top, too. Slalomming down is as much fun as you can have on two wheels. *Information:* 928-735-7669 or www.sunriseskipark.com

45

Play Frisbee golf in Show Low

Show Low

The 18-hole wooded course at Show Low City Park offers technical challenges for seasoned players, but is short enough to be enjoyable for beginners, too. Forgot a Frisbee? No problem. The aquatic center sells discs. There are no greens fees and you don't need a cart, so there's no reason not to give it a whirl. *Information:* Corner of U.S. Route 60 and State Route 260, 888-746-9569 or www.showlowchamberofcommerce.com

46

Search for the stump of the 2009 U.S. Capitol Christmas tree

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests

One hundred years after conservationist Aldo Leopold reported for work on the Apache National Forest, the superintendent of the U.S. Capitol Grounds selected an 85-foot spruce as the nation's Christmas tree. The Aldo Leopold Centennial Tree was the first for Arizona. The Wallow Fire passed through the site on Forest Road 88B, about a quarter-mile north of Forest Road 249. Though slightly charred, the stump still stands as a testament to nature's resilience.

47

Relive your childhood at Hidden Meadow Ranch

Near Greer

If you never got to experience summer camp, head to Hidden Meadow for daily planned activities like archery and canoeing. If you did, do it again. Lucky for you, the cabins and dining hall bear no resemblance to the camps of your youth. Here, they contain custom furnishings and stone fireplaces, and serve dishes like elk tenderloin. Better yet, it's open year-round for an endless summer. *Information:* 928-333-1000 or www.hiddenmeadow.com

48

Step back in time at Fort Apache

Fort Apache Historic Park

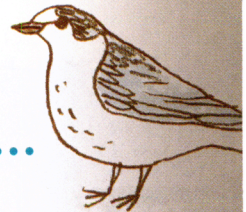
The 27 buildings in this 288-acre National Register Historic District may be the best surviving example of an Apache Wars-era military post. Interpretive signs along the self-guided walking tour explain the structures, which date from the 1870s through the 1940s. *Information:* 127 Scout Road, Fort Apache, 928-338-4625 or www.wmat.nsn.us/fortapachepark

49

Go bird-watching along the Blue

Blue River

Peregrine falcons, white-throated swifts, common nighthawks and Townsend's solitaires are among the winged creatures you'll find nesting near the Blue River. The river is also a major draw for sparrows, jays, titmouses, tanagers and turkeys. One of the best places to spot them is along Blue River Drive, a 48-mile loop suitable for high-clearance vehicles. *Information:* Alpine Ranger District, 928-339-5000 or www.fs.usda.gov/asnf



50

Sleep in a yurt

Lyman Lake State Park

Lyman Lake State Park is scheduled to re-open this summer, meaning that you'll have the opportunity to sleep in a yurt. The park is home to several of the domed structures — traditionally used by Turkic nomads — each of which features a canvas shell, two futons, electricity and a skylight. The yurts rent for \$35 a night and sleep up to four people, but they hold up to six — plenty of space for your band of nomads. *Information:* 928-337-4441 or www.azstateparks.com **AH**



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