

BACKCOUNTRY TRAVELER'S INFORMATION SITES



In many locations throughout the state, National Forest System Land is adjacent to land managed by other agencies or private individuals. Many private landowners and all public land

agencies have travel regulations specific to the area and require travel permission or a vehicle use permit/tag. It is the vehicle operator's responsibility to know what land ownership is in place, follow rules, respect property, and preserve nature.

To obtain additional information on current riding opportunities, regulations, and seasonal restrictions, contact the following local land managing agencies, partners or private cooperators:

- USDA, Coronado National Forest, (520) 670-4552, www.fs.fed.us/r3/coronado
 - Santa Catalina Ranger District (520) 749-8700,
 - Nogales Ranger District (520) 281-2296,
- Bureau of Land Management State Office, (602) 417-9200, www.az.blm.gov
- Arizona State Parks, (602) 542-4147, www.azstateparks.com
- Arizona States Lands Department Offices, (602) 542-4631, www.land.state.az.us
- Arizona Game and Fish Department, (602) 942-3000, www.gf.state.az.us
- Public Lands Information Center, (602) 417-9300, www.publiclands.usa.org
- National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council, (800) 348-6487, www.nohvcc.org
- ATV Safety Institute, (800) 887-2887, www.atvsafety.org
- Arizona Department of Transportation, Motor Vehicle Division, (ADOT-MVD)

(800) 251-5866,
mvdinfo@dot.state.az.us

- Treadlightly!, Office in Ogden, Utah, 1-800-966-9900, www.treadlightly.org



BACKCOUNTRY TOURING TIPS

Traveling on backcountry routes requires careful trip planning and preparation for an enjoyable and safe experience. Planning requires the following:

- Take the time to prepare yourself and your vehicle. Attend a rider safety course. Research backcountry driving and survival literature is suggested for beginning backcountry vehicle operators.
- Obtain an accurate or most current map of the area.
- Research the local area's current conditions and travel restrictions with the land managing agencies or landowners.
- Travel on designated routes you feel comfortable on and your vehicle is capable of navigating. When traveling on ATV/motorcycle routes, required four-wheel drive dirt roads, or any publicly open road, stay on the designated routes displayed on the map or follow posted route makers. Please, never travel cross-country.
- Check the weather forecast.
- Let someone know your travel routes, destinations, and your return date and time.
- Invite a partner rather than travel alone.





MOTOR VEHICLE OPERATOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Motor vehicle operator's responsibility means reducing impacts on natural habitats, land features, travel routes, and outdoor structures located near travel corridors. The following are necessary to reduce impacts along travel routes and avoid conflicts with other area users:

- Travel conditions change due to elevation, terrain, and weather. A vehicle operator must adapt to changing travel route conditions, because resource damage along a travel route corridor is expensive to repair, damages habitat, and is unsightly.
 - When wet conditions make a road very muddy, continued use of this travel route will cause destruction. Please stop and wait for a drier day to tour the backcountry before irreparable road damage takes place.
 - To prevent gouging out dirt roads and ATV/motorcycle routes, avoid wheel spin while traveling uphill, and hard braking when descending steep grades or turning sharply. Negotiating rugged routes can be done with added safety by shifting body weight and smooth use of the throttle, gears, and brakes.
 - Help reduce the spread of noxious weeds. Seeds are caught in the mud caked to tires, wheel wells, fenders, etc. Please thoroughly wash your vehicle after every trip, especially when coming from another geographical area.
- A spark arrester is required on motor vehicles used on all public lands. These prevent sparks from a vehicle's exhaust system and help reduce the risk of starting a wild land fire.
 - Dust and noise are the most frequent complaints by many non-motorized recreationists. Always keep motor vehicles tuned up to run smoothly and quietly as possible. Have motor vehicle exhaust systems tested for excessive noise. The local land agency office or a motor vehicle repair shop should have a decibel meter, or should be able to provide advice on noise reduction. A 96(d) decibels or lower readout is acceptable in most areas.
 - Practice defensive and safe motor vehicle operations. Wear and use personal safety equipment. Avoid excessive speeds and unnecessary throttling, because the next curve or hilltop along a travel route may present other recreationists or unexpected hazards.
 - When encountering other non-motorized recreationists in the field, slow down or pause, and signal or announce your intentions before passing. In general, downhill traffic yields to uphill traffic, and motorized traffic yields to non-motorized traffic. Courtesy will help prevent hard feelings between user groups.
 - It is important to adhere to travel regulations, practice common courtesy, and behave responsibly while operating a motor vehicle on lands open for public use. Irresponsible behavior could lead to travel route closures. Both agency officials and private individuals base their opinions of operators and their vehicles from actions observed in the field.
 - Vehicle operators that show respect for the backcountry characteristics and facilities leave a good impression with other recreationists, agency personnel, and private landowners. When a public agency must rehabilitate a damaged area, not only can it be costly, but also a poor impression of a specific recreational activity can develop. Operating a vehicle appropriately will ensure the continued use of most private property travel routes and continue to keep open designated public travel routes.

BACKCOUNTRY TRAVELER'S RULES AND VEHICLE REGULATIONS

There are many regulations regarding public lands. The following are regulations most pertinent to vehicular travel and use. Please review these common travel regulations:

- No one is permitted to damage natural features such as plants, rocks, soil, water, etc., or damage public or private properties and facilities such as restrooms, signs, ranching and mining equipment, buildings, gates, fences, livestock, windmills, corrals, wells, etc.
- Wheeled vehicles are not permitted to travel cross-country. Use and stay on designated trails, roads or ATV/motorcycle routes. Designated routes are shown on this brochure's map as well as other public agency maps. The posted field route markers or road number signs correspond to a maps' route numbers, so please look for and follow the posted route markers or road number signs.
- Motorized vehicles are not permitted on hiking trails. All wheeled vehicles are prohibited in closed areas or on closed routes. Wheeled vehicles and mechanized equipment are prohibited in designated wilderness areas. (Wheeled Disability Equipment is permissible.)
- For safety reasons, camping is not allowed within designated parking areas. The speed limit at trailheads, staging areas, any campsites or concentrations of people, and 150 feet from entrances to ATV/motorcycle routes and roads is 15 mph.
- To legally operate a motor vehicle on horizontal numbered (Primary) designated National Forest System and many other land management agencies' roads or county and state roads, a motor vehicle must display a valid state license plate. The motor vehicle operator is required to carry proof of insurance, a valid state driver's license and vehicle registration or title.
- To legally operate a motor vehicle on vertical numbered (Secondary) designated National Forest System and many other land management agencies' motorized routes or roads, a motor vehicle without a state license plate, at a minimum, must be state registered and display an RV plate or user sticker (if

applicable). The motor vehicle operator must provide proof of vehicle registration, but is not required to possess a state driver's license.

- All motor vehicles must be equipped with a factory-approved spark arrester, and an operable breaking system, lights, and required ADOT-MVD (Arizona Department of Transportation-Motor Vehicle Division) safety equipment. Working headlights and taillights must be activated from a half-hour after sunset to a half-hour before sunrise. All vehicles must be equipped with factory-issue noise and emission protectors. All vehicles must adhere to ADOT-MVD or local agencies' regulations.
- No one may create excessive or unusual smoke or dust, or drive carelessly or recklessly or in a manner that damages facilities, staging areas, travel routes or roads, or endangers or is likely to endanger any person or animal.
- All vehicle operators are restricted from driving while intoxicated or under the influence of drugs.
- No one may hunt or discharge any weapons from a vehicle.
- No one may operate a vehicle in the commission of a crime or in violation of established state or federal laws.
- Before entering private land, obtain permission from the landowner whenever necessary.



UNDERSTANDING BACKCOUNTRY ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS AND LOCAL TOURING AREA CONDITIONS

Local travel restrictions are required to protect outdoor facilities, private and public properties, natural resources and habitat, livestock and wildlife, and provide non-motorized and/or non-vehicular recreation opportunities.

Many backcountry travel routes in Southern Arizona require more than a factory equipped four-wheel drive vehicle (4WD) or ATV/motorcycle. Technical operation of a 4WD and/or expert riding experience are needed to navigate these rugged routes.

Riding through wet spots, getting stuck, rolling over and bouncing on rocky or rutted sections of ATV/motorcycle routes and 4WD roads are all part of the challenge of backcountry travel.

Shortcutting the main route and driving around wet spots creates unnecessary new tracks.

Unauthorized (illegal) shortcuts and multiple wheeled tracks adversely impact the natural terrain and increase the cost to maintain designated (legal) travel routes.

Some of the disturbed areas or routes recently closed to vehicle travel may still have the appearance of a travel route. These closed areas or routes may be gated or fenced to prohibit vehicle entry. Please respect the closures, for it requires time for new vegetation to grow back. Do not assume a route is open because there are tracks from a recent vehicle intrusion. These illegal vehicle tracks were probably created by an uninformed vehicle operator's careless or deliberate actions.

When traveling on public lands within the southern Arizona backcountry, expect to encounter mining and ranching facilities such as mineshafts, outbuildings, windmills, tanks, etc. Small mining sites are common on public lands. These mining sites can contain hidden hazards to humans. Please use caution when passing through or near mining claims, and do not disturb any private equipment, materials, or outbuildings.

Ranching is a primary use of natural grasslands. However, the cattle permitted to graze on public lands are private property. Please respect the livelihood of the cattle rancher by not disturbing the cattle, damaging water sources, windmills, corrals, fences, gates, and other facilities. Many animals depend on natural riparian areas or man-made water sources and facilities to stay alive.

A riparian area is defined as an area where lush vegetation is located along natural streams or man-made bodies of water. The lush vegetation stabilizes the banks, filters sediment to protect water quality, and provides forage and shelter for wildlife. Because, fragile riparian areas are traditionally favorite gathering locations for recreationists, there may be restrictions on wheeled vehicle access or special land management consideration and regulations in place to minimize impacts. In places fences have been erected to protect riparian areas or fragile sites from vehicle traffic.

Gates encountered along travel routes should be left as they are found. If a gate is open, please leave it open. If a gate is closed, please leave it closed. Locally, most gates encountered are closed, but unlocked. Some gates have been installed to control livestock by keeping them in the appropriate grazing pastures. A few gates remain locked to protect private properties, natural habitat areas, or man-made improvements for livestock and wildlife purposes. Please respect these locked gates and the areas behind them. If entry is required into public lands behind locked gates or fenced areas, foot travel is permitted in most situations.

UNDERSTANDING ARIZONA STATE PARK'S MOTORIZED VEHICLE PROGRAM

The mission of the Arizona State Park's Off-Highway Vehicle Program is to develop vehicular recreational opportunities and

educational programs that promote natural resource protection, social responsibility, and interagency cooperation.

The Arizona Legislature created the OHV Program in



1991. The Legislature set the funding mechanism at 0.55 percent of the annual state motor-fuel tax revenues, which translates into an average of \$1,600,000 annually for the program. This is a direct user fee/user benefit program. The creation of the fund did not create additional taxes, but redirected a small proportion of the existing state license fuel tax at the pump. Brochures, backcountry travel routes, signage, and recreational facilities on the Coronado National Forest have been maintained, created and/or constructed in part by the Arizona Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Fund.

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To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice or TTY). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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