



MarkHitsTheRoad

Great Places. Cool Sights. Across America. Around the World.™

Phoenix and Southeast Arizona (P20A-1)

In early 2019 I had planned a road trip to see Phoenix, southeastern Arizona and southern New Mexico. For time reasons, I dropped Phoenix from that itinerary. Then car trouble hit early in the trip while I was exploring southeastern Arizona, so I headed home, skipping a few sites in that part of Arizona and my New Mexico plans entirely.

For my first trip of 2020, I decided to focus on my old Phoenix plans and the stops in southeastern Arizona that I missed last year.

I headed south on a Sunday, making only one stop along the way, so this trip's sightseeing started in earnest in Phoenix the next morning.



A variety of cacti on display at the Desert Botanical Garden in Papago Park in southeast Phoenix. The Garden was my first sightseeing stop, and I took four short trails there.



A flower on a Baja Fairy Duster at the Desert Botanical Garden. I added one of these shrubs to my yard this past fall.



A “crested” saguaro cactus occurs when the cells of a stem start growing outward rather than in the normal circle-like pattern more typical of saguaro, resulting in this mutation. A pair of birds stand atop the crest. The mutation looks unusual, but it’s harmless to the cactus.

My next stop was at Pueblo Grande Museum and Archaeological Park, home to an impressive Hohokam platform mound ruins site. The Hohokam culture was found in southern Arizona and northern Mexico from about 300AD to 1500AD. It was one of the most advanced Native American cultures in what is now the US during that time, as indicated by its construction techniques, extensive irrigation works and agriculture.



Ruins atop a large platform mound



Stabilized ruins of an ancient Hohokam ballcourt



FIGURINES
Sacaton Red-on-buff
possibly dog effigies

Depictions of canids (dog-like animals such as dogs, coyotes or wolves) are common in Hohokam art. Dogs were probably companion animals; in Hohokam sites, dogs are sometimes found carefully buried.

Hohokam artifacts on display at the Pueblo Grande museum



Ancient Hohokam metates and mortars used to grind corn, seeds and other grains, on display at the museum



Hole-In-The-Rock, a natural arch in this Papago Park outcropping. There is archaeological evidence near the arch that the Hohokam used the angle of the sun's light through the arch to track the seasons.



At the south end of Phoenix, I hiked Southern Mountain Park's Telegraph Pass Trail down to a site featuring Hohokam petroglyphs. There are about 5000 known petroglyphs scattered around the park.



Return view up towards Telegraph Pass, where I parked the car.



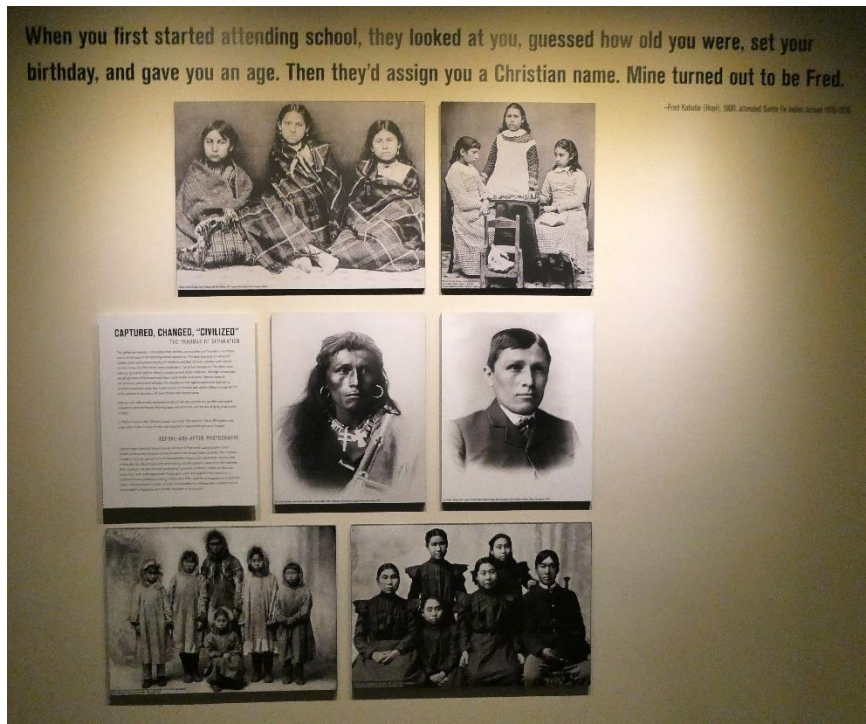
View north towards downtown Phoenix from South Mountain Park. South Mountain Park is the largest municipal park in the United States.

For my second full day in Phoenix I visited a couple of the city's museums.



The Heard Museum is regarded as one of the top museums focused on American Indian art, especially art from southwest Native American cultures. There are a number of tribe-specific displays that often include a mix of pre-Columbian, historic and contemporary artifacts.





The Heard also had an exhibit on the Indian Boarding School program that was established in the late 1800s to “Americanize” Indian children, many of whom had been forcibly removed from their homes and sent to these schools. Americanization began on arrival, with haircuts and replacing traditional clothing with western clothes. The above photos show “before & after” transformations.



This picture shows the extent of Native American tribal lands before the arrival of Europeans (light grey) and tribal lands today (black).

Because I had been able to fit South Mountain Park into my first day of sightseeing, I had some time for something else after touring the Heard and getting lunch. So, I walked to the nearby Phoenix Art Museum, a more traditional (and somewhat underwhelming) art museum.



From the “modern art” section...

“Big Big Mac”



The work “Placed Just Below Above The Horizon”, a gift to mark the museum’s 50th anniversary.



I’m not sure what this is. It could just be a blank wall, but with modern art it can be hard to tell sometimes.



“You’re Getting Obliterated in the Dancing Swarm of Fireflies”. This is actually a dark room with mirrors on every surface, with small, color-changing lightbulbs hanging from the ceiling.



A decorated room on display. But this is no ordinary decorated room. It’s only about a foot tall.



Here's another one, with its display case and sign to give you some size perspective. A collection of these rooms in miniature were on display.



After finishing up at the art museum I walked to MacAlpine's Diner for an early dinner. MacAlpine's is a historic soda fountain that dates back to the 1920s. With all the day's walking (never touched my car), I was able to treat myself to a classic soda with my dinner.

At the north end of Phoenix is the Deer Valley Petroglyph Preserve, a volcanic rock outcropping that features over 1500 petroglyphs representing three cultures.



The Archaic Culture petroglyphs tend to depict abstract and geometric shapes. Some date back as much as 3000 years.



Hohokam Culture petroglyphs tend to depict animals and other features of that culture's world.



The stick figures with large hands and feet are some of the few Patayan Culture petroglyphs found at the site. The Patayan Culture generally was found in what is now southwestern Arizona and southeastern California along the lower Colorado River valley from about 700AD to 1550AD.



This smallish dinosaur was a “Coyote Tyrannosaur”, a bridge species between early Asian tyrannosaurs and North America’s one-time dominant T-Rex species. On display at Mesa, Arizona’s Arizona Natural History Museum, it’s part of a large display focused on dinosaurs and early life on earth.



The museum also features a small but interesting collection of pre-Columbian artifacts from South American, Central American and southwest North American Indian cultures.



I spent some time in jail while I was in Arizona. This particular jail cell was on display at the Arizona Natural History Museum.

I headed out to Bowie, Arizona and back to visit some southeastern Arizona sites that I ended up skipping on last year's trip to the area.



I took a short hike at Cienega Creek Natural Preserve, just southeast of Tucson.



While I was in the neighborhood, I made a short photo stop at Colossal Cave Mountain Park to pick up some information on the cave. While there I took this picture of a grove of saguaro cacti. The park is located just to the south of the east unit of Saguaro National Park.



South of Bowie I took a hike at Indian Bread Rocks Recreation Area/Dos Cabezas Mountains Wilderness Area.



View of Mount Graham from the Swift Trail Parkway, an Arizona scenic byway. Unlike last year's trip, I didn't encounter any snow on the ground until I got up onto the Colorado Plateau as I approached Flagstaff on the drive home.



View of the lake at Roper Lake State Park



Along I-17 on the way back to Las Vegas, I stopped at Badger Springs Wash in Agua Fria National Monument to hike the wash trail, an easy 1.5-mile round trip hike down to the confluence of the wash and the Agua Fria River. There are a few petroglyphs at the site. I've already taken this hike a couple times in the past, but it was a nice way to take a break from the driving to stretch my legs a bit.



My last stop on my drive home was for a late lunch at the Road Kill Café, a diner along Historic Route 66 in Seligman, Arizona that I had eaten at back in 2016 when I spent a night in town. I recalled the good food last time, and the "Too Slow Doe" I had for lunch this time didn't disappoint.