

# Wild World Education

## *Outdoor Learning Expeditions*

During the fall semester, Wild World Education is proud to offer five Outdoor Learning Expeditions to a variety of scenic and educational destinations just a short drive from Phoenix. Each adventure is specifically designed to support the experiential and nature-based curriculum of WWE, and encourages youth to connect to the natural world while learning, growing, experiencing, enjoying and protecting Arizona's most incredible natural treasures. We are also very excited about our 4-day expedition that will take students deep into the wilderness for a backpacking and camping adventure.

The Outdoor Learning Expeditions will focus on the mountains, deserts and canyons of Arizona. Because of the incredible biodiversity that exists within our state, students will intimately experience each of the unique biotic communities – from the Lower Sonoran Desert zone near Phoenix, to the Oak-Juniper Woodland of the Mogollon Rim, to the Canadian Forest near Flagstaff. These outings are more than just “field trips,” they are outdoor classrooms where learning happens naturally. In addition to geology, botany, biology and many other earth sciences, these expeditions will integrate basic archaeology and anthropology as we explore areas that people have called home for thousands of years and still live in today. Orienteering, leadership, Leave No Trace ethics, and basic outdoor skills will be integrated into each outing.

Helping individuals connect – to each other, to the people who came before us, and to nature itself – is at the core of the lessons learned while out on the trail. In the end, students will have a better sense of who they are, and how they fit into the world around them.

Each participant is provided the opportunity to explore and make the most of his or her adventure, and is presented with activities and structured lessons that maximize potential for life-long learning within an outdoor context.

Scheduled dates for Wild Fridays include:

**Friday, September 10**

**Friday, September 17**

**Friday, October 1**

**Friday, December 10**

**Friday, December 17**

Scheduled dates for the 4-day expedition include:

**Thursday, November 11 – Sunday, November 14**

Some of the destinations include:

### **Fossil Creek**

Designated as one of Arizona's wild and scenic rivers, Fossil Creek was recently set free after being diverted for hydroelectric power for nearly 100 years. Located near the town of Strawberry, Fossil Creek is among the most beloved rivers in the state. It's home to most of Arizona's native fish species, diverse bird life, and offers excellent opportunities for exploration. Easy hiking, enjoyable swimming, rich ecological lessons and abundant archaeological evidence make this a prime destination for learning.

### **Devil's Canyon**

It's been called one of Arizona's natural wonders, and everyone who visits Devil's Canyon agrees that there is no place like it in the state. This entry-level canyoneering adventure will take students down a dry desert canyon to find Olympic-size swimming holes and exotic wildlife that you have to see to believe. The Oak Flat area near Devil's Canyon is also a traditional acorn harvesting area for San Carlos Apache tribal members. The Devil's Canyon area is currently threatened by the expansion of a copper mine, so environmental lessons weighing the benefits of a necessary resource and wild spaces will be discussed.

### **Superstition Mountains Wilderness**

One of Southern Arizona's wildest mountain ranges is just a short drive from Phoenix. The Superstition Mountains offer interesting geology and unlimited hiking opportunities. Hidden springs, desert critters, ancient rock art and the most famous pinnacle in this part of the state are just a few of the wonderful features to be found within the Superstitions. It's an excellent example of a wilderness "island" near a major city.

### **Besh-Ba-Gowah Archaeological Park**

Step back in time 700 years and visit a Salado Culture pueblo near Globe, Arizona at this world-class archaeological park. Numerous artifacts of this remarkably advanced culture are also displayed in the Besh-Ba-Gowah Museum, one of the largest single site archaeological collections in the Southwest. The Park provides an amazing opportunity to see how people lived not long ago. This outdoor learning expedition will be combined with a trip through the Fort McDowell or Gila River Indian Reservation, where students can see the difference between ancient and modern life among Native Americans.

### **Picacho Peak State Park**

Located between Phoenix and Tucson, this photogenic peak rises out of the desert like a ship's mast. Picacho Peak is steeped in history, myth and adventure. Students will hike and scramble to the top of the seemingly impossible peak while learning more about Sonoran Desert species along the way. Picacho Peak is the site of the westernmost Civil War battle; it is home to a unique population of lizards; stories from Yaqui natives tell of a headless horseman that haunts the area; and the park was nearly shut down due to budget constraints but was saved by locals who care too much to see it close.

### **Red Rock-Secret Mountain Wilderness**

Sedona is known around the world for its red rock formations and spiritual energy centers. Nowhere is the beauty and power of the area more obvious than in the Red Rock-Secret Mountain Wilderness. Students will enjoy and explore the rocks, creeks, spires and desert forests of the wilderness, while participating in nature awareness activities that encourage them to absorb their surroundings with all of their senses.

### **Kachina Peaks Wilderness**

Atop the Colorado Plateau rises the remnants of an ancient super volcano that is considered sacred to the seven tribes that can see it from hundreds of miles away. Located just above Flagstaff, the Kachina Peaks (also known as the San Francisco Peaks) are among Arizona's most beloved mountains. Students will walk among the ponderosa pines and dense aspen trees while learning about Arizona's diverse ecosystems and how mountain environments give us a peak into the climate of the past, as well as bring up the inevitable questions about the climate of the future. The Kachina Peaks also represent the importance of healthy watersheds in a dry environment, and are another model for how we can balance recreation with respect for indigenous beliefs and healthy water for future generations.

### **Havasu Canyon**

If there is one place in Arizona where Heaven and Earth meet, it's in Havasu Canyon. With its towering red rock cliffs, turquoise water, thriving native population, and waterfalls over 200 feet tall, Havasu Canyon is one of the natural wonders that everyone should visit in his or her lifetime. Hidden on the far western end of the Grand Canyon, and one of the last areas within the United States to be "discovered" by non-natives, Havasu is pure paradise. Students will walk into the heart of canyon country for 8 miles to reach the village of Supai, one of only two places where the U.S. Mail is still carried on horseback. Then, two miles later, the roar of Havasu Falls beckons weary hikers. The presence of beautiful blue-green water in this dry land is breathtaking, and so is the feeling of jumping in to the deep pools of crystalline water. Farther downstream, other waterfalls beckon hikers to stay for a while in this place that the Havasupai people have called home, and fought hard to protect, for over 400 years. Most visitors to Havasu Canyon agree it is one of the most beautiful places in the world.