

BEST SPRING HIKES

BACKPACKER

GET OUT MORE

Solitude Near You

23 WAYS TO MAKE YOUR GREAT ESCAPE

**NEVER
GET LOST**

LEARN TO
NAVIGATE IN
ANY TERRAIN

**LIGHTEN
YOUR LOAD**

RIG A TARP FOR
ANY WEATHER

TESTED

DAYPACKS,
WINDSHELLS,
CAMERA GEAR




+

**DISCOVER
AMERICA'S
OLDEST
TRAIL**



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MAY/JUNE 2019



The **WILD,** Wild West

We talk about solitude like its last bastions are disappearing. But there's a place where isolation still rules and evidence of the last travelers is erased before the next ones arrive. You just have to head west to the vast wilds held by the Bureau of Land Management. There are few permits, fewer fees, and next to no people. It's all the solitude you can handle—and sometimes just a little more. **BY RYAN WICHELNS**

Additional research by Morgan Sjogren



The only things bigger than the solitude in Arizona's Tortilla Mountains are the saguaros.

Desert Symphony

TORTILLA MOUNTAINS, ARIZONA TRAIL PINAL COUNTY, AZ

For 800 miles, the Arizona Trail charges across its namesake, serving up equal parts desert glory and mountain grandeur. Within that, the BLM manages 45 lonely, dust-caked miles just east of Phoenix that pack in all the splendor but none of the crowds. And, according to the trailhead register, there's an average of just five visitors a day. *Echo-o-o-o-o-o-o!*

This segment is invariably dry, so save yourself the hassle of caching water and tick off an 18.6-mile out-and-back from the Florence-Kelvin trailhead, spending a night in the Tortillas. Start at the Gila River and speed south past brittlebushes and saguaros—some as tall as 40 feet—into the 4,000-foot range. The going is easy, but slow down to see the Spring Mountains rise out of the heat waves like a mirage to the north and the Sonoran Desert spread out to the south. Make camp above a wash near mile 9.3 and keep an eye out for desert A-listers like Gila monsters, desert tortoises, and javelinas.

Distance 18.6 miles (out and back) **Time** 2 days
Elevation change +2,600 feet, -1,600 feet
 (one way) **Trailhead** Florence-Kelvin (33.1023,
 -110.9749) **Season** September to May **Permit** None
Contact bit.do/blm-gila