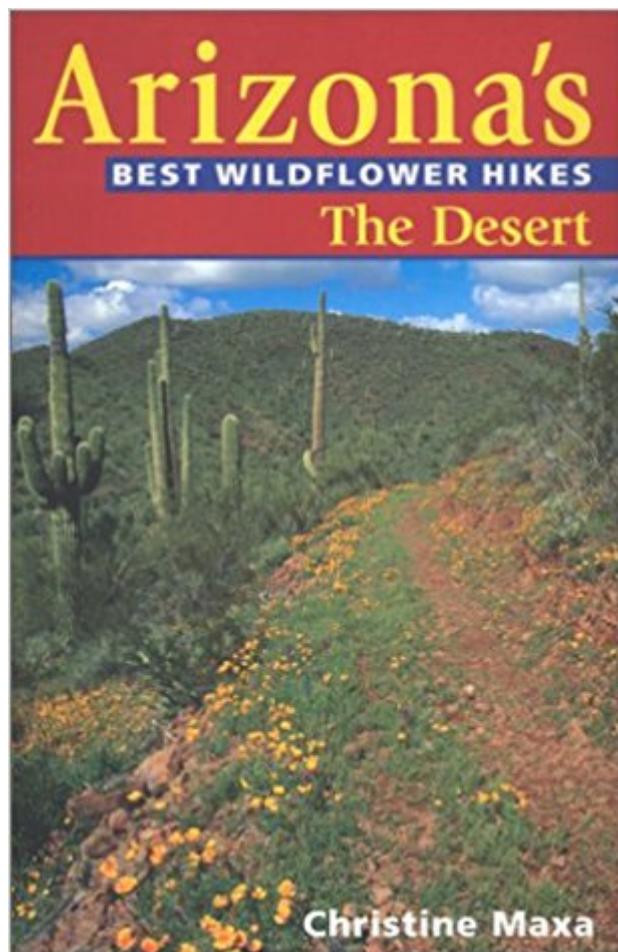


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Arizona's Best Wildflower Hikes: The Desert



Synopsis

Explore the beauty of the Sonoran Desert with these 50 hikes. Exciting on their own, the trails come alive when the charismatic wildflowers appear on the scene. Each trail has an accompanying map, color photo, detailed information, and a lively narrative. Plus, the book has individual profiles for 50 different wildflowers a picture and description full of facts, folklore, and interesting information. Don't let another Banner Year go by without witnessing Arizona's spectacular wildflowers in bloom. Get your copy of Arizona's Best Wildflower Hikes: The Desert today.

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Customer Reviews

Explore the beauty of the Sonoran Desert with these 50 hikes. Exciting on their own, the trails come alive when the charismatic wildflowers appear on the scene. Each trail has an accompanying map, color photo, detailed information, and a lively narrative. Plus, the book has individual profiles for 50 different wildflowers a picture and description full of facts, folklore, and interesting information. Don't let another Banner Year go by without witnessing Arizona's spectacular wildflowers in bloom. Get your copy of Arizona's Best Wildflower Hikes: The Desert today.

For starters, this book is based on the concept that if the author describes exactly where she found certain wildflowers, you will find them too. The vicissitudes of desert rainfall, dates of bloom, and plant reproduction make this a dicey bet. The hike descriptions are merely names of wildflowers linked by phrases like "the trail drops. To the north look for ____ -flowers" or "____ flowers follow the path." You must wade through the flower names to find clues to important questions such as: is this

a scenic spot? Does the gain or loss in elevation occur once or several times? Does the uphill work come at the beginning or end of the trail? Does the trail have other attractions than flowers? What is the trail surface, sand, soil, gravel or boulders? Is it well constructed or a scratch? The maps have no topographic information, so you often can't get a feel for the hike's terrain or why it is difficult or easy. The disclaimer "after a wet winter" is buried in almost every hike's first or second paragraph -- be sure to call for local rainfall info before visiting from out of state, as you would for any desert wildflower hike. The book seems to be intended for hikers with limited interest in plants. Hazy in botany, the author calls certain plants "cousins," declares Sleepy Catchfly to be in the "silene" family, (called the Pink or Caryophyllaceae family in most books), and states "the Ocotillo does not belong in the cactus genre". Is she familiar with the word genus? The problem with avoiding all scientific terminology and conventions is that one can easily mislead. There is no "dudleya" family as she states, but there is a Crassulaceae or Stonecrop family. Paragraphs accurately describing the trail and terrain, followed by the flower names would be easier to use. Botanical names should have been included in the index, and the list of common and botanical names should have included page numbers of the sidebars describing plants. A list of favorite or most spectacular hikes would have been welcome. Look to "California Hiking" by Sinestra and Brown and the Wilderness Press hike books for superior solutions to the problems this author encountered. Finally, we were disappointed to find the hikes mostly limited to areas close to the cities of Phoenix and Tucson, where solitude is rare.

I am into wildflowers and deserts and this appears to be an excellent book that accomplishes both informative tasks. Easy to read and descriptions are complete and detailed.

For those who wonder what they are seeing on a casual walk in the desert, this book is very welcome. It profiles 50 wildflowers and makes mention of the locale of dozens more in the course of the text on the 50 hikes. In this way, one can make flower identification moving from the book to the trail or the other way around. The photos, over 100 in all, are of very high quality. The author, Christine Maxa, is well-informed and concise. By the time you've read through a few of the hikes and profiles, you realize she's every bit as at ease with wildlife as her portrait with an elephant would imply. She shows not only a familiarity with the flowers, but also a wide knowledge of the pollinators and predators and parasites that dwell among them: the cochineal insect, source of the rich red dye prized for centuries by aboriginal Americans and Europeans alike; hummingbirds, which carry pollen on their heads; bees, which carry it on every part of their bodies; forest rangers, which

carry the full force of the federal government when charging the spectacular parking fees described in the "Special Considerations" section of the hiking guides. One of the nice things about learning about desert flowers is that there are relatively few of them, so that one can become well-versed and appear authoritative in a relatively short time. Even so, surprises abound. American carrot, which appears on many of the hikes, is a real carrot of the genus *Daucus*, though Maxa does not say whether the root is edible. Scorpion weed and rattlesnake weed, despite their ominous names, are benign and pretty, while larkspur, a beautiful type of *delphinium*, is highly poisonous. This guide's greatest strength, fittingly enough, is its information. I had wondered in the past whether teddy bear cholla and jumping cholla were one and the same plant. A quick trip to the handy 2-page index of common and scientific names confirmed that it was. This sort of detail may seem simple, but it's often surprisingly hard to come by, given the widespread fear among Americans of Latin binomial nomenclature. And despite the title's reference to Arizona desert, the flowers discussed are by no means restricted to that state. Eleven years ago in the California part of Death Valley I noticed a widespread infestation of a parasite that resembled a tangle of orange string. Thanks to this book I finally know what it was: Dodder (p.134), a plant related to morning glory that lacks leaves and roots and chlorophyll. Of further interest in the profile are two common names for dodder that at first glance seem to describe mutually exclusive traits: love vine and strangleweed.

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