

The Course Less Traveled- Arizona Horseback Rides

Written by Nichole Brophy

Often times, golfers vacationing in the Southwest see little of the region aside from what can be viewed from the golf course. While searching for an out-of-bounds shot can be an interesting (and thorough) way to get up close and personal with the desert, exploration via horseback is much more efficient and relaxing.



"A trail ride gives you a chance to get out, enjoy the desert, and let the horses watch where they step," says Deb Bitton, co-owner of Cave Creek Trail Rides.

Located in Cave Creek, Ariz., Cave Creek Trail Rides has been guiding locals and visitors through the Sonoran Desert for more than a decade. The company operates everyday of the week with 25 ride-ready horses and many local scenic horseback trails to choose from.

As spring brightens up the desert landscape with blooming cacti and green groundcover, of particular abundance are Arizona's wildflowers. A horseback ride through the desert is the ideal way to enjoy the springtime hues and views from a unique vantage point.

"You can really enjoy the wildflowers this way," Bitton says. While wildflowers tend to steal the show beginning in early- to mid-March, other desert ornaments like the mighty Saguaro cactus cannot be overlooked. "You'll get up close and personal with the saguaro cactus," Bitton says. "We talk about how they grow, when they get their first arms, their life spans, what makes them unique and what makes some have the deformities they have."

During the spring time frame, Cave Creek Trail Rides offers what they call Wildflower Rides in either 60- or 90-minute increments. The hour-and-a-half option affords riders the ability to explore elevations in excess of 2,000-2,500 feet. From that altitude, riders will enjoy sweeping Valley views as far as the eye can see. "People from other places may think the desert is just a dry, colorless place. Here, they can realize that the desert is really alive," Bitton says. "This is their chance to see it in vibrant color? golds, yellows and fuschias."

Jeff and Deb Bitton co-operate the trail rides and have more than 40 years of experience leading rides on their well-trained horses. Riders ages six and up can saddle up and experience all the desert has to offer during this most colorful time of year.

To Learn More

Cave Creek Trail Rides, 623.742.6700, www.cavecreektrailrides.com.