

Mt. Lemmon Nature Hikes - 2025-2026

Note: All hikes start at 9:00 a.m. at the indicated trailhead for each hike. Hike leaders will meet you at the trailhead, but those who wishing to carpool/caravan should meet no later than 7:50 a.m. at Tanque Verde and Catalina Highway, in the parking lot a few rows out from McDonald's, for a self-organized carpool/caravan. We plan to be finished and back at the trailhead by 1 pm, but return times will vary.

Date	Destination	Description
October 15	Lemmon Meadow Loop. Meet at the upper lot near the observatory at the top of Ski Hill Run Road (Turn right on Ski Hill Road at about MP 24). Bathrooms at the trailhead.	2-mile loop, with about 300 feet of elevation change. Easy, with a moderate section.
October 29	Turkey Run Road to Aspen Draw and back. Meet in Summerhaven at the Sawmill Restaurant. MP 25. Bathrooms available at the Community Center.	We will walk up Turkey Run Road, past Cold Spring, then loop back to the cars. 2 miles, 480 feet elevation gain. Easy.
November 5	Bear Wallow for fall colors. Meet at the Sunset Trailhead, MP 22.6. Bathroom across the street at the Butterfly Trailhead.	Hopefully the timing will be right to see fall colors. We will hike through the forest, under Catalina Highway and back. 2 miles out and back, 250 feet of elevation gain. Easy.
November 19	Mount Bigelow. Meet at the Bigelow Trailhead, MP 19. Bathroom at trailhead.	We will hike from the trailhead to the towers and loop back down to the cars. 2.25 miles, with a gradual 660 feet of elevation gain. Moderate.
December 3	Rose Canyon Lake. Meet at the entrance to the campground (MP 17). No bathrooms available.	We will walk through the campground (closed for the season) to the lake and back, exploring around the lake. 3.5 miles out and back, about 300-foot elevation change. Easy/moderate.
December 17	Gordon Hirabayashi — Soldier Trail and climber's route to falls. Meet at Gordon Hirabayashi Prison Camp (MP 7). Meet at the day use parking past the camp host. There is a bathroom at the trailhead.	We will hike through the campground to a rocky overlook on Soldier Trail, then to an overlook on an unnamed trail (maybe a small waterfall). Historic prison camp area. 2.5 miles out and back, with about a 200-foot elevation change. Easy.
January 7	Lower Bug Springs. Meet at Lower Bug Springs Trailhead parking (MP7.7) at 9:00am. No bathroom at trailhead, but there is one at the nearby Gordon Hirabayashi campground.	3 miles out and back, about 700 feet in elevation change. We will hike from the trailhead to a turnaround spot. Moderate.

Date	Destination	Description
January 21	Molino Basin. Meet at Molino Basin (MP 5.6) at 9:00am. Bathroom at trailhead.	We will hike the Arizona National Scenic Trail around the campground and walk back through the campground to the cars. 2-mile loop, about 180 feet of elevation change. Easy.
February 4	Gordon Hirabayashi to Shreve Saddle. Meet at the nearest parking lot (closest to the Catalina Highway entrance) at Gordon Hirabayashi (Prison Camp), MP 7. Bathroom at trailhead.	We will hike to the Shreve Saddle, then return (maybe back through the wash). 2.5 miles, and about 300 feet of elevation change. Moderate.
February 18	Molino Basin Creek. Meet at Molino Basin (MP 5.6) at 9:00am. Bathroom at trailhead.	We will hike the unnamed trail across the highway and follow Molino Creek. Expect possible mild creek crossings. 2 miles out and back, with about a 100-foot elevation change. Easy.
March 4	Gordon Hirabayashi (Prison Camp). Meet at the day use parking past the camp host. MP 7. There is a bathroom at the trailhead.	We will hike through the campground to a rocky overlook on Soldier Trail, then to an overlook on an unnamed trail (maybe a small waterfall). Historic prison camp area. 2.5 miles out and back, with about a 200-foot elevation change. Easy.
March 18	Molino Basin and Bellota Trail. Meet at Molino Basin (MP 5.6) at 9:00am. Bathroom at trailhead.	We will hike across the highway and follow the Bellota trail up to an overlook. 2 miles out and back, about 500 feet of elevation change. Moderate.
April 8	Meet at the Chihuahua Pines Picnic Area (MP 10.5). Bathroom available.	<p>We will hike the Green Mountain Trail up towards the Bear Saddle to a nice turn-around spot. On the way back, we will detour through the Hitchcock campground, under the highway, and end at the Chiricahua Picnic Area. 2-mile lollipop route, about 350-foot elevation gain. Moderate.</p> <p>Bring a picnic lunch and celebrate another great season of Mt. Lemmon Nature Hikes!</p>

About the Mt. Lemmon hikes:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Join Sabino Canyon Volunteer Naturalists as we explore different trails on Mt. Lemmon. Exercise both bodies and brains in one (or more) of the eight biomes as we discover the flora and fauna and learn the history that makes the Santa Catalina Mountains so special.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All nature hikes start at 9:00 a.m. at the indicated trailhead for each hike; hikers who do not wish to drive to the trailhead may meet no later than 7:50 am at Tanque Verde and Catalina Highway, in the parking lot a few rows out from McDonald's, for a self-organized carpool/caravan. We plan to be finished and back at the trailhead by 1 pm, but return times will vary.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• These are nature discovery hikes, not “destination” hikes. The pace will be fairly slow, but good fitness is required for hiking at higher elevations. Please read the hike descriptions and know your limits.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hikes are free and guided, with no reservations required. Forest Service parking fees apply at trailheads (\$8 day pass or an appropriate Interagency Pass).
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bring plenty of water and a snack or lunch for longer hikes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wear hiking boots or supportive shoes, and dress in layers for the unpredictable mountain weather. Bring binoculars if you have them. Hiking poles may be helpful.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No pets allowed. No smoking. Children must be accompanied by an adult.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We plan to be finished by 1 p.m., but actual return times will vary. Allow 1 hour driving time to reach some trailheads.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cell phones for emergency only.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Subject to last minute cancellation due to inclement weather or road closure. Call Catalina Highway closure information at 520-351-8844 or check the website calendar at http://www.sabinonaturalists.org on the morning of the hike for closures.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contact Cathy at cyungbluth@sabinonaturalists.org with questions.