

Mt. Lemmon Nature Hikes - 2026-2027

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 14	Turkey Run Road and Lower Aspen Draw Trail. Meet in Summerhaven outside the Community Center (MP 25). Bathrooms available at the Community Center.	We will walk up Turkey Run Road to where it meets the Aspen Draw Trail and explore as far as the base of Ski Valley. 2 miles out and back, 450 feet elevation gain. Easy.
October 28	Mt. Lemmon and Meadow Loop Trails. Meet at the lot near the observatory at the top of Ski Valley Road (turn right at MP 24.5 and continue to the uppermost summit trailhead). Bathrooms at the trailhead.	2-mile loop, with about 300 feet of elevation change. Easy/moderate.
November 11	Bear Wallow Fall Colors. Meet at the Sunset trailhead (MP 22.6). No bathroom at the trailhead, but there is one at the nearby Butterfly trailhead.	We will walk through Bear Wallow and hopefully the timing will be great to see beautiful fall colors. 2 miles out and back, 260 feet of elevation gain. Easy.
November 25	Bigelow Trail to the summit of Mt. Bigelow. Meet at the Mt. Bigelow trailhead (MP 19). Bathroom at trailhead.	Starting at the Bigelow trailhead, we will hike to Mt. Bigelow and around the towers before heading back down to the parking area. 2 miles, with about 550 feet of elevation gain. Moderate.
December 9	Rose Canyon Lake. Meet at the parking area just past the campground entrance (MP 17). No bathrooms available.	We will walk 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 23	Lower Bug Springs. Meet at Lower Bug Springs trailhead parking (MP 7.7) 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 13	Gordon Hirabayashi. 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 27	Molino Basin Trail and campground. 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 10	Gordon Hirabayashi (Prison Camp). Meet at Gordon Hirabayashi (Prison Camp, MP7), 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.
February 24	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-feet elevation change. Easy.
March 10	TBD	
March 24	TBD	
April 8	Green Mountain Trail. Meet at the Chihuahua Pines Picnic Area (MP 10.5). Bathroom available.	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. Bring a picnic lunch and celebrate another great season of Mt. Lemmon Nature Hikes!

About the Mt. Lemmon hikes:

• 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.
• 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.
• 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.
• Hikes are free and guided, with no reservations required. Forest Service parking fees apply at trailheads (\$8 day pass or an appropriate Interagency Pass).
• Bring plenty of water and a snack or lunch for longer hikes.
• 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.
• No pets allowed. No smoking. Children must be accompanied by an adult.
• We plan to be finished by 1 p.m., but actual return times will vary. Allow 1 hour driving time to reach some trailheads.
• Cell phones for emergency only.
• 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.
• Contact Cathy at cyungbluth@sabinonaturalists.org with questions.