

Kid-Friendly Hikes in the Superstitions

By Melissa Hinch-Ownby

Gold Canyon residents know the beauty of the Superstition Mountains. The wilderness isn't a playground reserved for adults however; several of the trails are kid-friendly and can help children gain an understanding of the habitat and history of the region. Plan a family outing and explore one of these kid-friendly trails.

HIEROGLYPHIC TRAIL

One of the most kid-friendly trails in the Superstition Mountains is Hieroglyphic trail. With a length of 1.1 miles from the forest line, or just under two miles from the trailhead, hikers are greeted by prehistoric Hohokam Indian petroglyphs at the end of the trail. With the recent rainfall, Hieroglyphic Springs is likely running and the area should have several tinajas which add to the natural beauty of the hike. A camera is a must for hikers; the trail is quite popular this time of year so it will be easy to find someone to take a picture of your entire family flanked by the prehistoric petroglyphs.

LOST GOLDMINE TRAIL

The Lost Goldmine Trail is one of the newer trails in the Superstition Wilderness area. This popular route is perfect for even the youngest trailblazers. Along the length of the six mile Lost Goldmine Trail, hikers might run into several species of native wildlife. It is not unusual to come across a desert tortoise; depending on the time of day, hikers may also be able to see deer, javelina, and even the great horned owl. Make this a learning opportunity and read up on the wildlife in the area prior to heading out on the hike. Challenge your children to find these animals while you enjoy your trek along the southern edge of the Superstition Mountains.

GARDEN VALLEY LOOP

Garden Valley Loop is another kid-friendly trail in the Superstition Wilderness area. The hike is about a 7.5 mile round trip excursion and provides a look at the backside of the Superstitions. As with the Hieroglyphic trail, expect to find a bit of water on the hike including several creek crossings. Deep into the loop you're greeted by an old water tank and a windmill. Definitely not what you would expect this far into the trail.

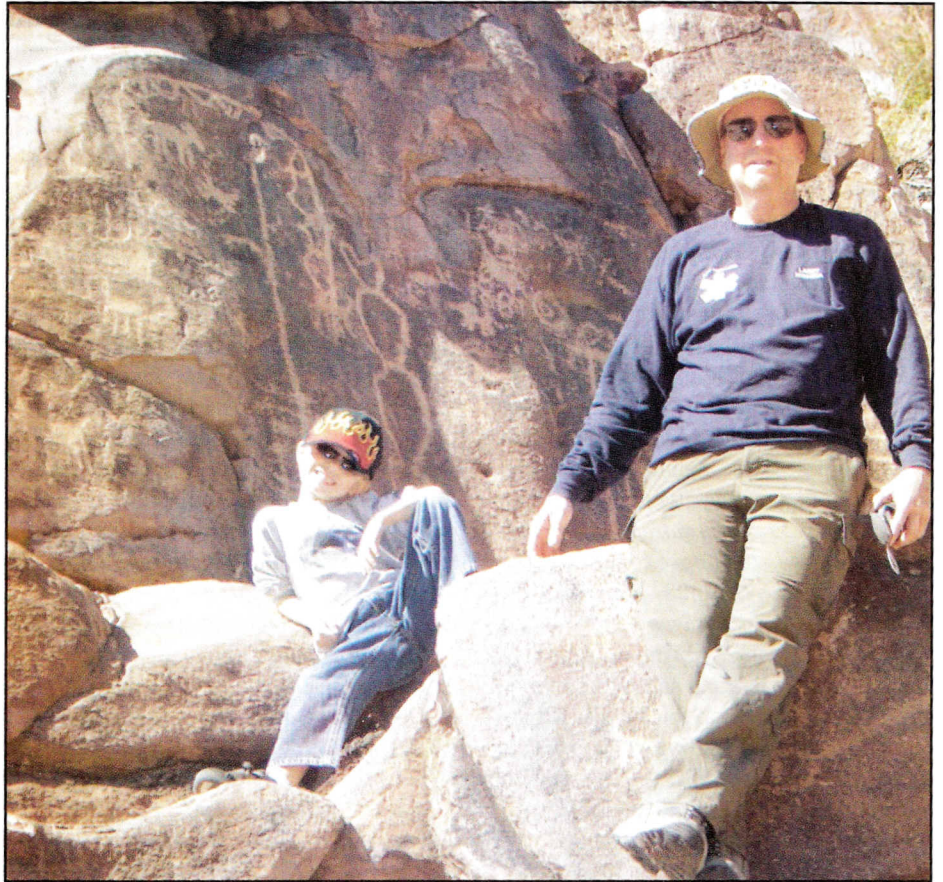


Photo by Amber Testa

Larry Hinch of the Superstition Search and Rescue, poses with this grandson Alexander Ownby next to the famous Hieroglyphics found at the top of the kid-friendly Hieroglyphic Trail.

HIKING SAFETY

While these three trails are kid-friendly, it is important to be adequately equipped prior to your hike. In addition to bringing along plenty of the basics – water, sunscreen, and snacks, it is also wise to leave your destination and estimated time of return with someone who will not be joining you on the hike. For more information on hike preparation, view the 10 Hiking Essentials that are listed

on the Superstition Search and Rescue website (<http://www.superstition-sar.org/hiking.htm>).

The Hieroglyphic, Lost Goldmine and Garden Valley Loop trails are three of many kid-friendly hiking trails in the Superstition Mountains. For directions and more trail-specific information, contact the Mesa Ranger District office of the Tonto National Forest at (480) 610-3300.

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