

Chapter 15

Southeast Arizona

In This Chapter

- ▶ Meandering along the Santa Cruz River and dipping into Mexico
 - ▶ Discovering the grasslands and vineyards of eastern Santa Cruz
 - ▶ Exploring the Old (and New) West in southern Cochise County
 - ▶ Traveling above and below ground in northern Cochise County
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If you're looking for the Old West of Spanish missions and presidios, fierce Indian battles, go-for-broke mines, and rough 'n' tumble boomtowns, you'll be hard pressed to find a better stretch of Arizona to explore than the southeast. All that history sound like a yawn? Don't cross this region off your list yet. Nature lovers, wine connoisseurs, folk-art aficionados — even die-hard duffers — find something worthwhile here. All in all, the region fits those who prefer the simple pleasures of a handsome and, in parts, surprisingly green rural region to the glamour and glitz of the state's urban centers.

You can cover a lot of this area in day-trips from Tucson, but a single day doesn't really give southeast Arizona its due, especially because of all the terrific places to stay here. A more or less leisurely three days should be plenty, because the region isn't nearly as spread out as other areas in the state. You can settle in at a local ranch and use it as a base to tour the region, or hop from one historic hotel or colorful B&B to another as you travel. The town of Bisbee has the most varied lodging options, but where you lay your head depends largely on your interests. Stargazers may seek an aerie in an astronomy-oriented B&B near Benson, while birders may want to nest near the Patagonia or Ramsey Canyon nature preserves.



This area's higher elevation allows you to escape the southern Arizona desert heat in summer. But summer is also the season when many local business people go on vacation. Expect to find some restaurants, lodgings, and shops closed, sometimes without advance notice, especially around Patagonia and Sonoita.

Along the Santa Cruz River

Jesuit missionary Eusebio Kino and, later, conquistador Juan Bautista de Anze followed the Santa Cruz River north from Nogales, Mexico, to Tucson. Today neither traveler would recognize the developed riverbanks, now roughly paralleled by I-19, but the area is still scenic — when you venture a little bit from the freeway. In a relatively short span (only 65 miles separates Tucson from Nogales, Mexico), you get a terrific sweep of Arizona history, from its Mexican roots and earliest settlements to its most recent major industries.

Of all the areas I detail in this chapter, this stretch is the easiest to cover in a day trip from Tucson. If you're pressed for time, you can squeeze in the sights that interest you most, eat in Nogales, and drive back. But if you spend the night in one of several fine lodgings in the area, you get a leisurely, more authentic experience (remember, those padres and conquistadors only traveled on foot or horseback).



Nogales, Arizona, and Nogales, Mexico, are sister towns in two separate countries. Unless I say otherwise, when I refer to Nogales, I'm talking about the one in Mexico (its U.S. sibling has little tourist appeal).

Getting there



I-19 intersects with I-10 in Tucson. Note: I-19 is one of the few U.S. highways marked in kilometers, but the speed limit — 75 for the most part — is in miles per hour. This metric/English system mix-it-up gives the illusion that you're traveling from one place to the next really, really fast. (By the way, 1 mile equals 1.6 kilometers, so 6.2 miles is 10 kilometers.)



No rail service is available to this area, but Greyhound (☎ 800-229-9429) runs buses from Phoenix and Tucson to Nogales, Arizona. Getting to Nogales, Mexico, from the Greyhound station is a hassle, though. It's too far to walk, and buses run from the depot into Mexico only about once an hour.

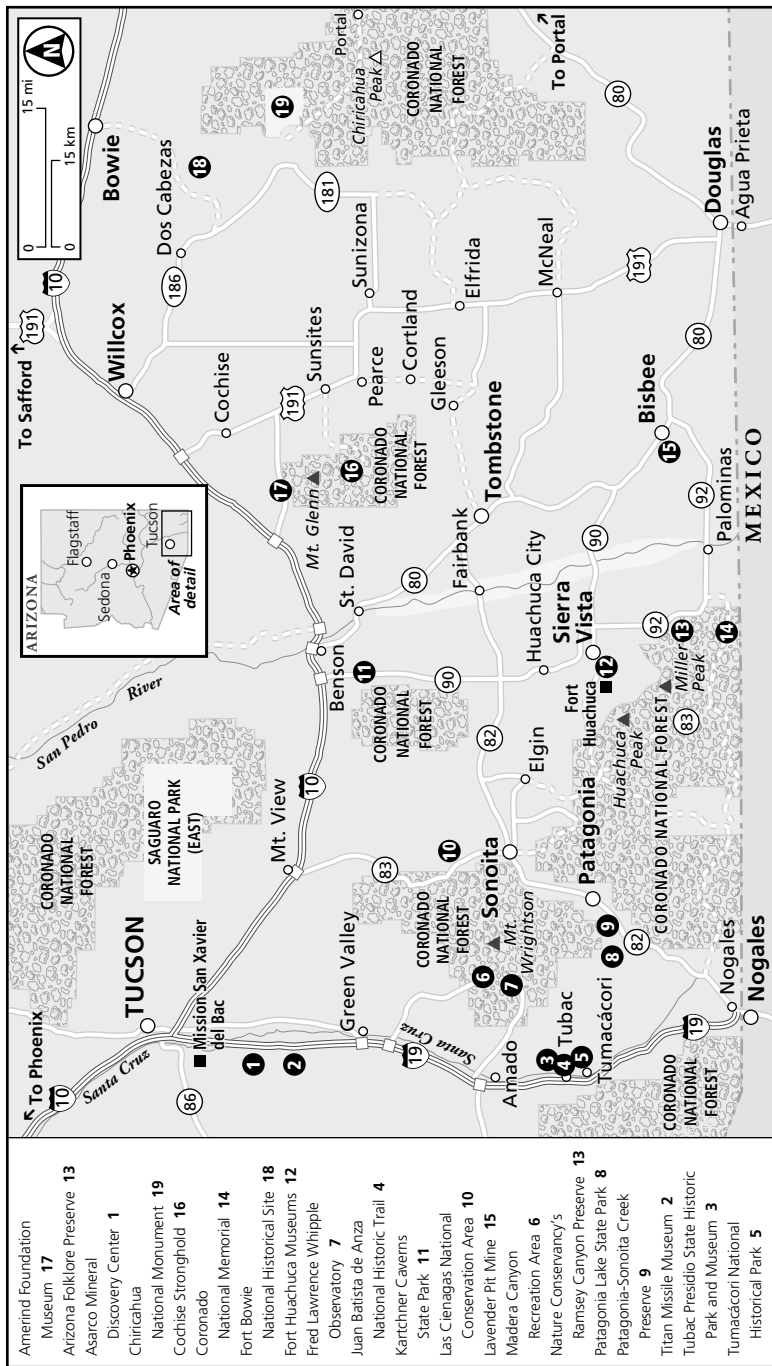
Spending the night

A few chain motels dot this route, but if you're not going to hole up in one of the more interesting places, you may as well stay in Tucson, where the pickin's are better. Nor does spending the night in Mexico

Don't discount those Tucson discounts

The **Tucson Attractions Passport** doesn't just cover attractions in the Old Pueblo; several sights in Southern Arizona — including Kartchner Caverns State Park and the Titan Missile Museum — fall under its aegis. For details, see Chapter 13.

Southeast Arizona



offer much advantage; best to soak up south-of-the-border color during the day, and then return to sleep on American soil. If spending the night at a B&B is more your style, see the “A stay in a B&B along the river” sidebar in this chapter.



Rex Ranch

\$\$ Near Amado

The journey itself is worth the price of a room. To get here, you drive across the (usually almost dry) Santa Cruz River, winding past trees that date back to the days when this area was a royal Spanish land grant. The Rex no longer functions as a guest ranch, but you can still book a horseback ride. Spa treatments and stress reduction classes are offered, too, but just lounging around this desert oasis should lower your blood pressure by several points. The grounds and the old ranch building are lovely and the rooms — fairly basic, but with such Southwest touches as beamed ceilings and tinwork mirrors — are a good value. Even if you don’t stay here, consider dining at Cantina Romantica (\$\$\$\$), a meal that lives up to the restaurant’s name.

131 Amado Montosa Rd. (Exit 48 from I-19, follow signs for the ranch). ☎ 888-REX RANCH or 520-398-2914. Fax: 520-398-8229. www.rexranch.com. Rack rates: Oct–May \$145–\$155 double, \$245 casitas; June–Sept \$105–125 double, \$205 casitas. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.

Rio Rico Resort & Country Club

\$\$ Rio Rico

Compared with the other lodgings in this area, this thoroughly modern conference-oriented resort lacks architectural character. But the indoor public areas and guest quarters have Spanish ranch-style touches such as heavy wood armoires and leather chairs. Other pluses include a terrific location in the mountains near Nogales, lots of on-premises sports, including a Robert Trent Jones–designed golf course, and reasonable rates.

1069 Camino Caralampi (Exit 29 from I-19; follow the signs). ☎ 800-288-4746 or 520-281-1901. Fax: 520-281-7132. www.rioricoresort.com. Rack rates: Jan–mid Apr: \$149 rooms, \$185 1-bedroom suites; mid-Apr–mid-June \$139/\$175; mid-June–Sept \$116/\$159. Oct–Dec \$119/\$165. Golf and tennis packages available. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.

Santa Rita Lodge

\$ Madera Canyon

Birders and hikers who want to hole up in the woods love these simple but comfortable rooms and cabins — both types have kitchens — perched at an elevation of 4,800 feet in the Coronado National Forest. Perks include guided bird walks and nature talks in Madera Canyon (see the “Exploring along the Santa Cruz River” section for more on hiking and birding).

1218 Madera Canyon Rd. (Exit 63 from I-19; call for directions). ☎ 520-625-8746. Fax: 520-648-1186. www.santaritalodge.com. Mid-Feb–May cabins \$98, rooms \$83; June–early Feb cabins \$83, rooms \$73, midweek June–Sept. and Jan cabins \$70, rooms 60. AE, MC, V.



Tubac Golf Resort

\$\$ Tubac

You don't have to be a duffer to want to stay at this golf resort, part of Arizona's first Spanish land grant (issued in 1789) and loaded with Old West charm. When nearby Tubac sends you into retail overdrive, just kick back on the deck of your red-tile-roof casita ("little house") — some have full kitchens, others separate bedrooms — splash around the pool, hit a few tennis balls around, or gaze out at the Santa Rita mountains. A \$30-million revamp, begun in 2003 and slated to be completed in 2005, is taking the resort back to the future, capitalizing on the land grant's history — for example, by having cattle graze on the golf course — while introducing up-to-date amenities such as a spa. Rates are far more reasonable than those at comparable Tucson resorts — and the serenity here is priceless.

1 Otero Rd. (Exit 40 from I-19 and drive about two miles west along the frontage road; you can't miss the arched entryway, featured in the film *Tin Cup*). ☎ 800-848-7893 or

A stay in a B&B along the river

This region has some terrific places to bed down — and breakfast. If you're up for bonding with others in the a.m., consider these inns (in order from north to south):

- ✔ **Mi Gatita** (\$\$), 14085 Avenida Haley Rd. S., about 10 miles SW of San Xavier del Bac mission (☎ 877-648-6129 or 520-648-6129; www.tucsonbirdinginn.com), offers desert digs with an artist's touch in a remote setting that's convenient both to the sights along the Santa Cruz River and to Tucson.
- ✔ **Amado Territory Inn** (\$\$), 3001 E. Frontage Rd. (Exit 48 from I-19), Amado (☎ 888-398-8684 or 520-398-8684; www.amado-territory-inn.com), a mid-1990s reconstruction of a late 1800 ranch house, gives you the best of both worlds: old Southwest color and new Southwest plumbing. The inn is part of a landscaped complex, so you don't feel as close to I-19 as you actually are.
- ✔ **Tubac Country Inn** (\$\$), 13 Burruel St., Tubac (Exit 34 from I-19) (☎ 520-398-03178; www.tubaccountryinn.com), is a great choice if you want to forgo wheels for a while. You're in the heart of historic — and retailing — Tubac, so you can easily shop till you drop (into your room) and walk to restaurants. The hacienda-style complex and tree-shaded grounds are attractive to boot.
- ✔ **CP Ranch Bed & Breakfast** (\$\$), 15 Duquesne Rd., Nogales, AZ (☎ 520-287-0073; www.cpranch.com), a colorful adobe inn a stone's throw from Mexico, is home to an appealing group of sheep-herding border collies. Bring your own dog (of any breed) for training.

520-398-2211. Fax: 520-398-9261. www.tubacgolfresort.com. Rack rates: late Sept–mid-Dec \$105–\$140 standard double, \$135–\$175 casita; mid-Dec–mid-Apr \$145–\$175 double, \$175–\$195 casita; mid-Apr–early June \$115–\$160 double, \$145–\$175 casita; June–late Sept \$95–\$130 double, \$125–\$150 casita; rates lower Mon–Thurs. AE, DISC, MC, V.

Dining locally

With a few notable exceptions, including the excellent Western-themed Stables restaurant at the Tubac Golf Resort (see the preceding section), this isn't gourmet-dining territory. It is, however, Mexican-food heaven (see the "Mexican munching on both sides of the border" sidebar). If you have a down-home American palate — and an affinity for kitsch — you'll also be satisfied at the steer-fronted Cow Palace (\$–\$\$), 28802 S. Nogales Hwy. (exit 48 off I-19) (☎ 520-398-2201), with its huge menu of hearty egg dishes, burgers, and steaks. All the restaurants in this section are on or near the I-19 frontage road or within walking distance of recommended sights. You may also want to make a (booked in advance) detour for dinner at Cantina Romantica (\$\$\$\$) at Rex Ranch (see the preceding section), a fine-dining haven in a lovely rustic setting.



Some clichés are based on fact, and here's one you should take to heart: Drinking the water in Mexico isn't a good idea. In Nogales restaurants, stick to the bottled stuff (called *agua pura*), beer, or drinks without ice. On the streets, go for bottled soft drinks rather than the tempting fresh fruiting drinks, often blended with ice.

Amado Café

\$\$ Amado SOUTHWEST/MEDITERRANEAN

The Southwest meets the Mediterranean in this cheerful light-wood dining room, where well-prepared, generously portioned dishes, such as mesquite-grilled steak and Greek chicken, always taste fresh, and the atmosphere is as warm as the regions that inspire the multicultural menu. This place tends to fill up in high season; be sure to book in advance for the weekends.

3001 E. Frontage Rd. (Exit 48 from I-19). ☎ 520-398-9211. Main courses: \$14–\$20. AE, DISC, MC, V. Open: Lunch Tues–Sun, Dinner Tues–Sat.

Melio's Trattoria

\$\$ Near Tubac ITALIAN

White tablecloths, candles in Chianti bottles, and astounding views of the Santa Rita mountains make for a romantic ambience, in spite of the restaurant's location on the I-19 frontage road, just north of Tubac; house-made pasta makes it a magnet for Italian-food lovers. As such, you should stick with the pastas — perhaps penne topped by whiskey-seasoned cream sauce, or fettucine in a spicy tomato sauce; the meat and fish entrees are overpriced and undersize.

2261 E. Frontage Rd., (Exit 40 from I-19). ☎ 520-398-8494. Pastas: \$8.50–\$12.50; main courses: \$13–\$20. AE, DISC, MC, V. Open: Lunch and dinner Wed–Sun.

Mexican munching on both sides of the border

When you're in the mood for Mexican food, you have lots of great options in this area — although, naturally, you have more choices on the Sonora side of the divide. My favorites (from north to south) are as follows:

Wisdoms' Café (\$), 1931 E. Frontage Rd., Tumacácori (☎ 520-398-2397), owned by members of the Wisdom family since 1944, has hosted everyone from John Wayne to Diane Keaton. Be sure to try the fruit-filled burritos. You can't miss this place: Just down the road from the Tumacácori mission, it's fronted by two large white fiberglass chickens.

Molina's Pete Kitchen Outpost (\$), 555 E. Frontage Rd. (exit 8 off I-19 south; go left over freeway, take the first right and drive for about 1½ miles) (☎ 520-281-1852), was built in the mid-1960s to resemble the ranch house belonging to Pete Kitchen, an early Arizona pioneer. Businesspeople from both sides of the U.S./Mexico divide come for the generous combination plates — say, top sirloin with a cheese enchilada, tortillas and beans, or Guaymas shrimp prepared in one of three traditional styles.

Elvira (\$), Av. Obregón 1, Nogales, Mexico (cross the road after you pass through the international border and walk two blocks west [right]), (☎ [52] 631-2-47-73), attracts tourist by the droves because of its airy patio, its tasty, inexpensive dishes (including an impressive variety of moles) — and the free shots of tequila that arrive as soon as you sit down.

La Roca (\$\$), Calle Elias 91 (from the border, cross the railroad tracks and walk east [left] several blocks), (☎ [52] 631-2-08-91), is no great bargain, but it's worth coming here for the cliffside setting, romantically candlelit at night, informal during the day. The small but killer margaritas go well with such dishes as *carne tampiqueña* (assorted grilled meats served with a chile relleno and enchilada). Tucsonans love this spot, so you aren't the only ones *habla*-ing Ingles here; still, you're definitely off the beaten tourist track.

Exploring along the Santa Cruz River

Two of the top attractions in this area include the artisan colony of Tubac and the city of Nogales. Both are magnets for the same activity: producing friction on your plastic (skip to the "Shopping for local treasures" section, if that's your thing). Except for golf, this area's other prime draws shouldn't have a negative impact on your wallet.

The top attractions

Asarco Mineral Discovery Center Sahuarita

Wondering about the strange, defoliated slopes you see on the west side of I-19 south of Tucson? You get the dirt (or at least see how the dirt is

moved around) on this tour, operated by the American Smelting and Refining Company. Take the PR spiels about the importance of mining and its born-again environmental friendliness for what they're worth and enjoy the rare opportunity to see copper mining, one of Arizona's formative industries, in action. The tours take about an hour, but you're likely to spend another 20 minutes or so at the gift shop and exhibits in the Discovery Center, which is also where you buy the tour tickets. Unless you find the ore-extraction process endlessly fascinating, skip the free half-hour film.

See map p. 257. 1421 W. Pima Mine Rd. (15 miles south of Tucson; take I-19 Exit 80 and go west [right] from the exit ramp; you see the copper roof buildings 100 feet away on the south side of Pima Mine Road). ☎ 520-625-7513. www.mineraldiscovery.com. Tours \$6 adults, \$5 seniors (62+), \$4 ages 5–12, children under 5 free; other facilities free. Open: Tues–Sat 9 a.m.–5 p.m. Times and days for tours vary by season; phone ahead for information.

Titan Missile Museum Sahuarita

Both hawks and doves are fascinated by this museum's Cold War relic, the only one of 54 Titan II missiles in the United States — including the 18 that ringed the city of Tucson — allowed to stay intact under the terms of the SALT II treaty with the Soviet Union. In fact, this museum offers the only such exhibition of missiles in the world. Tours, which last an hour, take you down into the control center where the ground crew lived and prepared, if necessary, to fire a 165-ton rocket that held a nuclear payload 214 times as powerful as the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima. The Arizona

A one-stop shop for Fido

Perhaps your pooch needs a tasty treat or a bathroom break. Maybe you'd like to find out how to cook nutritiously for your royal dogness. Or perhaps your home could use a touch of doggie art. Satisfy all your canine needs at **The Dog Chefs of America Kitchen Headquarters** and **Oh My Dog!**, #3 Mercado Bldg., Amado Territory Ranch (take Exit 48 off I-19; it's in the complex you see immediately on the east frontage road) (☎ 520-398-1411; www.dogchefs.com). This combination doggie diner and art gallery is the domain of Micki Voisard, author of *Becoming the Chef Your Dog Thinks You Are* and self-styled "Master Dog Chef of America"; her husband creates many of the metal sculptures sold at the gallery. A small dog park in front of the shop is a great place for Fido to frolic or go pottie after being cooped up in your coupe.

You can pick up Voisard's dog snacks at the shop (open every day except Sun), but if you want to learn how to prepare your own, you have to plan ahead. Phone by the prior Wednesday if you'd like to attend one of the cooking-for-your-dog classes that Voisard offers every Saturday from 9–11 a.m. (\$35 per human). And there's more: You and your dog can attend obedience classes in the dog park. Call **Green Valley Canine** at ☎ 520-971-6246 for details.

I left my heart in . . . Tubac?

Juan Bautista de Anza led 240 colonists across the desert from Tubac, an expedition that resulted in the founding of San Francisco in 1776. In 1859, Arizona's first newspaper was printed in Tubac, and in 1860, the town was reckoned to be the largest in Arizona.

Aerospace Foundation operates this museum, and also runs tours of the Pima Air & Space Museum (PASM) and the Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Center (AMARC); see Chapter 13 for details on both.



The four men who lived and worked in the cramped mission control area weren't claustrophobes (I hope!). If you're uncomfortable in somewhat small, enclosed spaces, you may want to pass on this tour. If you experience mobility problems, on the other hand, the facility can arrange special elevator tours; you aren't expected to tread the 55 steps that are involved.

See map p. 257. 1580 W. Duval Mine Rd. (about 25 miles south of Tucson; take I-19 Exit 69 west 1/10 mile past La Cañada to entrance). ☎ 520-625-7736. www.pimaair.org/TitanMM/titanhome.shtml. Admission \$8.50 adults; \$7.50 seniors, active military; \$5 ages 7–12; 6 and under free. Combination Pima Air and Space/Titan Missile museums \$16. Open: Nov–Apr daily 9 a.m.–5 p.m., closed Thanksgiving and Christmas; May–Oct Wed–Sun 9 a.m.–5 p.m. Tours depart every half hour; last tour at 4 p.m.; walking shoes (that is, no heels) required.

Tubac Presidio State Historic Park and Museum

Old Tubac

Little remains of the first European settlement in Arizona or of the presidio (garrison or fortress) set up to protect it — just a portion of the original 1752 fort and an 1885 schoolhouse. You need to stop at the small museum adjoining the visitor center to get an idea of this former Spanish colony's importance. A tour of the entire complex shouldn't take you more than an hour, unless you picnic in the pleasant park.



For more action, come on Sunday from 1 to 4 p.m., October through March, when living history presentations let you chat with a frontier friar, a señora preparing tortillas, or soldiers garrisoned at the fort. Kids may be bored here the rest of the week, but they definitely like this part.

See map p. 257. 1 Burruel St. (take Exit 40 or 34 off I-19 and follow Tubac Rd into the large parking lot at the back of Old Tubac). ☎ 520-398-2252. www.pr.state.az.us/Parks/parkhtml/tubac.html. Admission \$3 adults, \$1 children 7–13, 6 and under free. Open: Daily 8 a.m.–5 p.m.; closed Christmas.



Tumacácori National Historical Park

Tumacácori

Nearby San Xavier del Bac (see Chapter 13) may be Arizona's most impressive Spanish mission, but moody, ruined San Jose de Tumacácori is my favorite, both for the isolated beauty of its setting and the simplicity of the Franciscan structure. The visitor center/history museum takes no more than 45 minutes to tour. The timing of the rest of your visit depends on how contemplative you feel when you stroll around the mission grounds. On the third Wednesday of every month from October through April, van tours (10 a.m.–4 p.m.; \$17.50) explore Calabazas and Guevavi, two other ruined missions in the historical park. The van holds only 14 people, so reserve as far in advance as you can.



The courtyard of this mission was a stand-in for Tucson in the movie *Boys on the Side*. The mission isn't usually as lively as it was depicted in the film, but the Christmas festivals are pretty great. (Find more on the festivals in Chapter 2.)

See map p. 257. 1891 E. Frontage Rd. (take Exit 29 off I-19 south and turn left on the frontage road; you see the mission in about a mile). ☎ 520-398-2341. www.nps.gov/tuma. Admission: \$3 adults; 16 and under free; 62 and older with Golden Age Pass free. Open: Daily 8 a.m.–5 p.m., closed Thanksgiving and Christmas.

More cool things to see and do

If you like to hike or ride across the landscape, tee off from it, or even leave it behind for the stars, this region has more options for you.

- ✓ Reach for the stars. Full day (9 a.m.–3 p.m.) tours of the Smithsonian Institution's Fred Lawrence Whipple Observatory on Mt. Hopkins are offered for \$7 (\$2.50 ages 6–12) on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from March through November (weather and attendance permitting). You don't actually see any stars (this tour is during the daytime, remember?), but you find out about the fascinating work done here. And you don't get these great mountaintop views at night. Tour sizes are limited, so call ☎ 520-670-5707 for reservations and directions to the visitor center. See map p. 257.
- ✓ Tee off. Several golf courses in this area are open to the public. The Rio Rico Resort & Country Club, 1069 Camino Carampi (☎ 520-281-8567), was voted among the top 25 best in the state and is the site of many qualifying events for USGA and PGA tournaments (greens fees: \$68 high season; \$33 low season). The Spanish-style archways of the Tubac Golf Resort, 1 Otero Rd., Tubac (☎ 520-398-2211), starred with Kevin Costner and Rene Russo in *Tin Cup*; in fact, the lake on the 16th hole was created for the film (greens fees \$75 high season, \$32 low season). Kino Springs, 187 Kino Springs Dr., Nogales, AZ (☎ 520-287-8701), is on the site of a working cattle ranch once owned by married film stars Stewart Granger

and Jean Simmons (greens fees: \$35 high season; \$25 low season). The greens fees in all three cases include a cart but not tax, and apply to weekend mornings. Rates go down after noon, and during the week.

- ✔ Follow in the footsteps of the conquistadors. The flat 4½-mile stretch along the Santa Cruz River from Tumacácori to Tubac, popular with hikers and birders, is part of the Juan Batista de Anza National Historic Trail. Get a route map from the visitor center of the Tubac Presidio State Historic Park or Tumacácori National Historical Park (see the preceding section for both parks). Also check out the “Horsing around Santa Cruz County” sidebar for information on the “Saloon-to-Saloon” rides along this trail. See map p. 257.
- ✔ Hit the hiking or birding trail. The Coronado National Forest and the Santa Rita Mountains meet at the Madera Canyon Recreation Area, featuring about 200 miles of scenic trails and almost 250 types of birds. To get there, take Exit 63 off I-19 and go east on White House Canyon Road for 12.5 miles (it turns into Madera Canyon Rd.). Call the Nogales Ranger District ☎ 520-281-2296 in Nogales, Arizona, for information. The small, volunteer-run visitor center in Madera Canyon is only open on weekends. See map p. 257.
- ✔ Horse around. Both Rex Ranch and Rio Rico Stables offer equine adventures in this area. See the “Horsing around Santa Cruz County” sidebar in this chapter.

Shopping for local treasures



Some people — okay, me included — have been known to skip all the historical sights and just make a beeline for the shops in Tubac and Nogales. You find some similar goods in both places, especially ceramics. Prices are generally better in Mexico, but the schlep across the border is more of a hassle. In either place, avert your eyes from all those great terra-cotta planters and ceramic pots. The cost of shipping them is prohibitive, especially if you want them to arrive in one piece.

One additional shopping stop is Amado, where the Amado-Territory Ranch Inn complex hosts a few shops and galleries, including Oh My Dog! (see the “A one-stop shop for Fido” sidebar earlier in this chapter).



That's one hot tamale

The small, spice-redolent **Santa Cruz Chili & Spice Co.**, 1868 E. Frontage Rd. (just south of Tumacácori National Monument; ☎ 520-398-2591), is salsa and chili powder central. Prices are reasonable, and you can watch the staff members make many of the products on the premises, as they have been for the past half century.

Tubac



Forget hostile Apache Indians. The biggest obstacle to reaching the old Tubac Presidio these days is getting past scores of friendly shopkeepers. The town of Tubac is adjacent to the historic park and chock-a-block with nearly 100 shops and galleries selling arts and crafts, many staffed by the artisans who created them. No one area is better for shops than another; excellent quality and schlock know no geographical boundaries. Park where you can — things can get pretty crowded on winter weekends — and just roam around.

Check out the wonderful floral metal fountains created by the artisans at Lee Blackwell Studios, 18 Plaza Rd. (☎ 520-398-2268), everything from yuccas to irises and roses. Browse the lacquered tables and hand-carved mesquite armoires sold at Rogoway Gallery, 1 Calle Baca (☎ 520-398-2913). Take the pulse of the local art scene at the Tubac Center of the Arts, 9 Plaza Rd. (☎ 520-398-2371), which hosts high-quality juried shows. Most of the work is for sale.

Nogales

As soon as you cross the border, you start seeing rows of colorful stalls and hear vendors calling out to you, “Come take a look, everything’s on sale today.” If you’re not used to this sort of atmosphere, the sensory input may be overwhelming. Relax. Don’t stop because you’re being addressed, just smile and keep walking west (right) with the rest of the crowd. You soon reach Avenida Obregón, the main shopping street, where stores with doors line the street and you browse without being hassled (much). (See the “Nogales shopping tips” sidebar.) Although you can happily walk back and forth along Obregón, maxing out your credit card, good shops exist off the beaten path as well. In particular, Calle Elias (turn east [left] of the tracks rather than right as you cross the border) is fertile shopping ground.



Driving into Mexico is a hassle. The Customs line for cars is long and slow, and finding a place — safe or otherwise — to park your car is difficult. You’re much better off parking on the Arizona side and walking over. When you get close to the border, you see guarded lots that cost about \$4 or \$5 per day. Practically all the good shopping is within easy strolling distance of the border, anyway.

Serapes and onyx chess sets abound, but you can also find high-quality crafts from all over Mexico in Nogales. Everything from cactus-stem margarita glasses and tinwork mirrors to Spanish Colonial-style wood-and-iron chandeliers are for sale. For portability’s sake, brightly patterned rugs and wall hangings, tinwork candlesticks, and papier-mâché fruit are a good bet.

Farmacia facts

Nogales is known for its pharmacies (*farmacias*). Practically every corner has one, because Arizonans make regular forays south of the border to buy discounted drugs. You may not be arrested if you sneak back a tube of Retin-A, but you're supposed to have prescriptions for all drugs, including antibiotics, that you buy in Mexico. Don't even think about trying to smuggle back pharmaceuticals that are illegal or controlled (again, unless you have a prescription) in the United States.

The following shops all offer good selections — but no bargaining. Tearing yourself away from the endless rooms of new and antique home furnishings may be tough at El Changarro (Calle Elias 93, just next door to La Roca restaurant [see “Mexican munching on both sides of the border” sidebar]). The Lazy Frog (Calle Campillo 57; you see the place before you get to Obregón) is small but has a nice array of crafts from all over Mexico; for more choices, try the much larger Nueva Maya de Mexico (Av. Obregón 150). You can find high-quality stained-glass and wrought-iron creations at Glass Alley Curios (Av. Obregón 182). Telephone numbers are far more difficult to locate than the shops — but you probably don't want the hassle of calling them, anyway.

Fast Facts: Santa Cruz River

Area Code

The area code is **520**.

Emergencies

Call ☎ **911** in the United States and try not to get in trouble in Mexico. If you do, you can find the American Embassy on Calle San Jose in the Los Alamos district (☎ [52] 631-3-48-20).

Hospitals

In case of a medical emergency, return to Tucson (see Chapter 13).

Information

The Tubac-Santa Cruz Visitors Center, La Entrada de Tubac shopping complex, 4 Plaza Rd. (☎ 520-398-0007; www.tour.santacruz.com) can inform you about

all the region's towns and attractions and help you book rooms. The Nogales-Santa Cruz County Chamber of Commerce, 123 W. Kino Park, Nogales, AZ (☎ 520-287-3685; www.nogaleschamber.com), doesn't have much information about Nogales, Mexico, but can answer questions about the rest of the towns and attractions in the area. Nogales, Mexico, has a small tourist information office on International Street (left of the border crossing; ☎ [52] 631-2-02-03).

Post Office

Locations include 2261 E. Frontage Rd., Tubac (☎ 520-398-0164), and 1910 E. Frontage Rd., Tumacácori (☎ 520-398-2580).



Nogales shopping tips

Shopping in Nogales, Mexico, is easy enough; however, to get the best prices, keep a few points in mind:

- ✔ **You don't need to change your dollars into pesos.** The Nogales merchants are happy to have greenbacks, and you lose money on the exchange rate if you don't end up spending all your Mexican moolah.
- ✔ **You may pay a bit more for the privilege of using plastic.** Shopkeepers pass on the hefty charges they incur from the credit card companies. Cash is a good bargaining tool.
- ✔ **Know when to haggle.** If the store has a door, you may not be able to bargain over its goods. In a stall, anything goes.
- ✔ **Know how to haggle.** Price tags on an item may or may not be an indicator of a fixed price. A merchant willing to bargain may offer you a better price if you stand around looking undecided. Asking, "Is that your final price?" doesn't hurt. Don't be rude if the shop owner says, "Yes."

When bargaining, start out by offering 50% of the vendor's asking price. You've done well if you end up meeting the seller halfway between the 50% you offer and the original selling price.

Eastern Santa Cruz County

With its fields of high golden grass waving in valleys of oak-dotted mountains, this section of Arizona falls far outside the state's scenery stereotypes. (In fact, the area doubled for prairie in the film *Oklahoma*.) Eastern Santa Cruz County is nevertheless rich in Arizona history, with mining and cattle shipping key industries in its past and ranching still important to its present. The (hoped for) future, however, is a product of the unusual geography: Lots of wineries crop up in this area.

Aside from a few shops, Sonoita has little to offer; this town is primarily a place to eat and sleep. However, you may easily spend a morning or afternoon poking around Patagonia, stopping into funky boutiques, and just strolling around absorbing the small-town Western flavor. If you want to tour the area's wineries, devote at least half a day. And if you're a birder — well, you're the best judge of how long you want to hang around the Patagonia-Sonoita Creek Preserve with other avian haunts, waiting for that Elegant Trogon to put in an appearance.

Getting there

I-10 east intersects with Highway 83 east of Tucson. Take 83 south to reach Sonoita, which sits at the junction of Highway 82. If you come from

I-19, take Highway 82 east from Nogales, Arizona, to Patagonia. No rail or bus service is available to this area.

Both towns pretty much consist of main streets that are easy to spot because highways change into them. In Sonoita, the highway keeps its name, Highway 82; in Patagonia, the highway becomes Naugle Avenue, and the street that runs parallel to Naugle is McKeown Avenue. Most of what happens in Patagonia — which isn't much — happens on Naugle and McKeown between Third and Fourth avenues.

Spending the night

Fans of chain hotels are out of luck here. By staying in this area, you settle for character rather than consistency. That doesn't mean giving up creature comforts by any means, but this area is rural. Even the places that offer cable TV don't necessarily get good reception.

In addition to my suggestions, you can find places with only one or two rooms through the Patagonia and Sonoita Chamber of Commerce (see the "Fast Facts: Eastern Santa Cruz County" section in this chapter). You may also consider bedding down at the Tree of Life or Phoenix Rising, both detailed in the "Exploring" portion of this section.



Circle Z Ranch

\$\$\$ Patagonia

Sonoita Creek runs through this 5,000-acre spread in the foothills of the Santa Rita Mountains, abutting Coronado National Forest. This idyllic setting, along with cheery rooms and friendly service, explains why generations of guests come back to Arizona's oldest continuously operating dude ranch (started in 1926), year after year. No organized programs are offered for kids, but they ride and eat dinner separately (well supervised) from the adults — fun for them, even more fun for the grownups.

4 miles southwest of Patagonia (look for the ranch sign between the 14- and 15-mile markers on the west side of Highway 82). ☎ 888-854-2525 or 520-394-2525. www.circlez.com. Rack rates: \$975–\$1,000 per adult in double room per week Oct 31–Nov 22, Dec 1–20, Jan 5–Feb 7, and Apr 26–May 15; \$1,075–\$1,100 Nov 23–Nov 30, Dec 21–Jan 4, Feb 8–Apr 25. Lower rates for children. Rates higher for stays under a week; 3-night minimum. Cottages, family, weekend, and birder (no riding) rates available. Rates include all meals and rides. MC, V. Closed mid-May–Oct.

Sonoita Inn

\$\$ Sonoita

This unusual Kentucky-inspired A-frame once belonged to Secretariat's owner and housed the famed racehorse's triple crown — which explains all the photographs of horses and area ranches inside. Guest rooms, individually decorated in attractive Western-country style, contain all the mod-cons, including TVs with VCRs. The ones upstairs are worth the extra

Cozying up to horse country B&Bs

Who says B&Bs have to be frou-frou? These Sonoita-Patagonia-area lodgings were created to fit right in with this region's ranching roots.

The Dusquesne House (\$), 357 Dusquesne Ave., Patagonia (☎ 520-394-2732; e-mail: TheDusquesneHouse@hotmail.com), was built as a miner's boardinghouse at the turn of the last century. Pluses include separate entrances and proximity to all of Patagonia's shops — and a quirky charm that may not cut it if you're part of the Starbucks crowd.

La Hacienda de Sonoita (\$\$), 34 Swanson Rd., Sonoita (☎ 520-455-5308; e-mail: reservations@haciendasonoita.com), is only a few years old but pays homage to the past with its Old West-themed rooms. Unobstructed mountain views and starry skies add to the sense of being back in another time.

Rancho Milagro (\$\$), 9 miles southeast of the crossroads of Hwy. 83 and Hwy. 82, Sonoita (☎ 520-455-0381; www.ranchomilagrobb.com), is on a former ranch in the middle of nowhere — and in the heart of wine country. It doesn't get much mellower than sitting out on your patio, sipping some Callaghan cab, and watching the sun set.

charge — they're larger and offer superb views (you overlook the road if you stay in the front on either floor).

3243 Highway 82 (just east of the Highway 82/83 intersection). ☎ 520-455-5935. Fax: 520-455-5069. www.sonoitainn.com. Rack rates: \$125 double (downstairs), \$140 double (upstairs); \$99 double (both floors) June–Aug. Rates include continental breakfast; wine and cheese on weekends. AE, DISC, MC, V.

Dining locally

The good news is that this area has a few surprisingly sophisticated restaurants, offering dining quality equal to that of the big cities without big-city prices. The bad news is that eateries tend to come and go — and the ones that stick around often keep odd hours. Some places don't open every night (it's particularly tough to get fed Sunday through Tuesday nights), and many stop serving dinner at 8 p.m. In summer, all bets are off in determining when most of the restaurants decide to operate.

The dining scene also reflects the area's population mix. Rancher types get their big meat fixes at the Steak Out, 3280 Hwy. 82, Sonoita (☎ 520-455-5278) and Red's Real Pit BBQ, 436 W. Naugle Ave., Patagonia (☎ 520-394-0284). Those interested in extreme vegan eating — we're talking food that's not even cooked — dine at the Tree of Life Café (see the "Exploring eastern Santa Cruz County" section in this chapter). The restaurants listed in this section have more well-rounded menus.

Café Sonoita

\$\$ Sonoita AMERICAN

Come to these small, unassuming dining rooms for comfort food — especially if you find solace in the likes of cassoulet, beef tenderloin chile rellenos, or (for lunch) a filet mignon open-faced sandwich with Sonoita cabernet sauce. More traditional mood-soothers, such as meatloaf with mashed potatoes, are regulars on the ever-changing chalkboard menu. Sandwiches and burgers are the lunchtime staples, but smaller portions of the nightly specials may turn up, too.

3280 Hwy. 82 (1/2 mile east of the Highway 82/83 intersection). ☎ 520-455-5278. Reservations recommended for 5 or more at dinner. Main courses: \$8.50–\$18. Open: Lunch Fri–Sat, dinner Wed–Sat (5–8 p.m.); occasionally open on Sun for special dinners and brunches. MC, V.

Santos Mexican Cafe

\$–\$\$ Patagonia MEXICAN

“Santos” means “saints,” and you see several represented here. But even nonreligious fans of down-home Mexican food can find heaven in this diner-style cafe on Patagonia’s main street. You can’t go wrong with the huevos rancheros or cheese enchiladas with eggs at breakfast; at lunchtime, try the carne asada burros. In addition to Mexican fare, Santos is also known for its terrific fruit pies, strawberry rhubarb, blueberry . . . you name it.

328 W. Naugle St. ☎ 520-394-2597. Breakfast: \$3–\$5.75, lunch \$4.25–\$6.95. No credit cards. Open: breakfast and lunch Tues–Sun.

Sonoita Wine Country Caffé

\$\$–\$\$\$ Sonoita NEW AMERICAN

Great grassland vistas, cheerful, Mexican-tile dining rooms, and an appealing menu of creative egg dishes, sandwiches, pastas, and meat dishes make this restaurant worth a shot. But note that both food and service can be spotty. On a recent Sunday lunch visit, the roasted vegetables with feta on focaccia was terrific, while the Southwest chicken sandwich was dry and bland. Friends have also reported food and silverware delivery problems similar to the ones I’ve experienced.

3266 Hwy. 82 (about 1/2 mile east of the Highway 83 intersection, north side of the street). ☎ 520-455-5282. Main courses: \$10–\$18 dinner. Open: breakfast Sat and Sun; lunch Tues–Sun; dinner Thurs–Sat. AE, DISC, MC, V.

Velvet Elvis

\$–\$\$ Patagonia PIZZA

This combination art gallery/pizza place is as hip as its name, but the food doesn’t have attitude (unless you count the fact that it’s super fresh). Come here for creative, hot-from-the-oven calzones and pizzas and interesting

salads, including a dynamite antipasto. (And yes, a velvet Elvis does hang on the wall.)

292 Naugle Ave. ☎ 520-394-2102. Reservations not accepted. Calzones \$6.50–\$8.25; pizzas \$11–\$19. MC, V. Open: lunch and dinner Thur–Sun.

Exploring eastern Santa Cruz County

I'm almost tempted to say about eastern Santa Cruz County that there is no there, there. Except for Patagonia, this region doesn't really have a tourist center; you have to spend much of your time here roaming about.

The top attraction: Patagonia

A one-time shipping center for cattle and silver, Patagonia has managed to maintain its Western flavor. I've seen ranch hands on horseback trotting alongside traffic on the town's main drag (which flanks Highway 82). The town also attracts a variety of artsy types. You'll enjoy strolling around, looking at the old railroad depot — now the town hall — and browsing the crafts stores (see the "Shopping in eastern Santa Cruz County" section). Or check out these other nearby options.

- ✓ Go birding and hiking. The 850-acre Nature Conservancy's Patagonia-Sonoita Creek Preserve (☎ 520-394-2400; <http://nature.org>) protects a rare waterside habitat. Watchers have spotted nearly 300 types of birds here, along with plenty of less flighty creatures — everything from desert tortoises to deer. To get there, make a right on Fourth Avenue, which comes to a dead end,

Cafe country

You may be in the boonies, but you won't have to forgo such urban pleasures as good coffee and its accompaniments in this region. In fact, these are some of the most pleasant spots in the state to enjoy a light morning or midday meal.

Crossroads Café, 3172 Hwy. 83, Sonoita (☎ 520-455-5189), serves nice breakfasts, but really shines at lunchtime with its chile- and onion-laden grilled sandwiches as well as burgers, soups, and salads. Besides coffee, liquid refreshments include smoothies, chai (tea), and Mexican hot chocolate.

Gathering Grounds, 319 McKeown, Patagonia (☎ 520-394-2097), offers evidence of this town's nouveau artsy status by serving java made with organic shade-grown beans (it may be PC but it still has a kick). The sandwiches, baked goods, and ice cream concoctions also satisfy.

The Grasslands, 3119 S. Hwy. 83 (½ mile south of Highway 82 intersection), Sonoita (☎ 520-455-4770), is country pretty, and the food here tastes as good as it looks. The quiches, pastas, and sandwiches use organic ingredients whenever possible, and the cinnamon rolls are out of this world.

Great grapes! Southern Arizona's surprising wineries

Who wudda thunk it? Vinifera grapes seem to like the high-elevation (4,100 feet plus) valleys in Santa Cruz County. The area has lots of warm, sunny days and lush topsoil that has been compared to the (pay) dirt in Burgundy, France. Although grape growing and fermenting in this region date back centuries, scientifically based winemaking is a much more recent phenomenon.

True, Sonoma doesn't have to start sweating just yet; most of the winemakers in the area aren't quite ready for prime time. The exception is Kent Callaghan, whose **Callaghan Vineyards** (336 Elgin Rd., Elgin, call for directions, ☎ 520-455-5322; www.callaghanvineyards.com) produces top-notch bottles (open Fri–Sun 11 a.m.–3 p.m.). But tooling around this beautiful area, stopping and sipping along the way is still fun. You find some decent wines — or at least good souvenir labels — at reasonable prices.

In addition to Callaghan, the best bets in the immediate area are **Sonoita Vineyards** (3 miles southeast of Elgin on Elgin-Canelo Rd.; ☎ 520-455-5893; www.sonoitavineyards.com), whose founder, Dr. Gordon Dutt, reintroduced winemaking to the area (open daily 10 a.m.–4 p.m.); and **The Village of Elgin Winery** (in Elgin; ☎ 520-455-9309; www.elginwines.com), which occupies a former (1895) bordello building and sells bottles with names such as Tombstone Red (open daily 10 a.m.–5 p.m.).

and then make a left. The paved road soon becomes dirt; take the road $\frac{3}{4}$ mile to the preserve. Admission: \$5 for nonmembers. Open: Wed–Sun 7:30 a.m.–4 p.m. (an hour earlier in Apr–Sept). Guided walks: Sat at 9 a.m. (call ahead to check). See map p. 257.

- ✓ Check more birds off your list — and soak in some history. The 42,000-acre Las Cienegas National Conservation Area (best entrance: 7 miles north of Sonoita on the east side of Highway 83, around mile marker 40), (www.az.blm.gov/nca/lascienegas/lascieneg.htm) is an avian haven; you may get lucky and see a grey hawk here. No interest in winged things? Come out to see the restored 1860s Empire Ranch House (www.empireranchfoundation.org); some rooms are locked but the main entrance always stays open. For additional information about the conservation area, and for directions to the ranch house, phone the Tucson Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management (☎ 520-258-7200). See map p. 257 for both.

More cool things to see and do

If you have a bit more time in Patagonia, you may want to consider one of the attractions listed in this section. If you're a horse fan, check out the "Horsing around Santa Cruz County" sidebar.



- ✓ Hit the water. A large reservoir formed by the damming of Sonoita Creek, and subsequently stocked with fish, is the centerpiece of Patagonia Lake State Park (☎ 520-287-6965). Rowboats, paddleboats, canoes, and fishing supplies and licenses are available at the marina store (☎ 520-287-5545). You can water-ski and Jet-Ski on the western part of the lake (daily off-season, weekdays May–Sept) and swim at a sandy beach year-round. This lake isn't very tranquil on weekends or in the summertime, but it's fun.

From October through April, more eco-oriented activities are offered by the personnel at the 5,284-acre Sonoita Creek State Natural Area (☎ 520-287-2791), a sub-unit of Patagonia Lake State Park. The natural area is closed to the public as trails and wildlife viewing areas are being developed, but it should be open by 2005. In the meantime, call ahead for information on the birding hikes, bat programs, and lake discovery tours via pontoon boat. Many are free, excluding the \$1 entry fee to the natural area; the pontoon tours cost \$3 per person.

To get to the state park, take Highway 82 7 miles south from Patagonia, and then make a right at Lake Patagonia Road and drive 4 miles. Ask at the entry booth for directions to the visitor center for the Sonoita Creek State Natural Area. For locations, see map p. 257.

- ✓ Heal thyself. The serene landscape around Patagonia makes it a natural setting for spiritual health and healing centers. The Tree of Life, 771 Harshaw Rd. (☎ 520-394-2520, ext. 201; www.treeoflife.nu), has the most comprehensive programs, all with a healthful



Horsing around Santa Cruz County

What's ranching country without equines? **The Santa Cruz County Fair and Rodeo Association** in Sonoita (☎ 520-455-5553; www.sonoitafairgrounds.com) hosts several horsey events, including the Grass Ridge Horse Trials in mid-October, the Santa Cruz County Horse Races on the last weekend in April/first weekend in May, and the Sonoita Quarter Horse show — billed as the oldest quarter horse show in the nation — during the third weekend of May. In addition, the fairgrounds hosts the Sonoita Rodeo on Labor Day weekend, and in mid-September, the Santa Cruz County County Fair, featuring a ranch rodeo and a 4-H horse show.

Want to do your own horse-y thing? You can mount a steed at **Rex Ranch** (☎ 520-398-2914; see the "Spending the night" portion of the "Along the Santa Cruz River" section in this chapter) or **Arizona Trail Tours/Rio Rico Stables** (☎ 800-477-0615 or 520-281-4122; www.aztrailtours.com). Options range from \$25 for an hour-long ride to \$1,250 for a four-day pack trip. If you like your outings accompanied by a cold one, consider the two-hour "Saloon-to-Saloon" ride along the historic Anza trail offered by Rio Rico Stables every Friday afternoon. The \$50 price includes a beer at the Old Tumacácori Bar, the starting point, and another at Tubac Jack's, where the ride ends.

eating and meditation emphasis. Longer stays are encouraged, but you can just come by for a single day — or a single meal. Call ahead for reservations and information about times and prices of the surprisingly tasty vegan “live food” fare offered at the cafe.

- Go on a wine-tasting tour. See the “Great grapes! Southern Arizona’s surprising wineries” sidebar for more information.

Shopping for local treasures

Sonoita has a few good shops on the strip along Highway 82. You find a nice selection of Native American jewelry at Many Horses Trading Co., 3266 Highway 82 (☎ 520-455-5545), next door to the Sonoita Wine Country Caffé (see “Dining locally,” earlier in this section).

But Patagonia is definitely the place for serious retail patrols — just walk up and down the two main streets, McKeown and Naugle, which flank Highway 82 between Third and Fourth avenues. My favorites for local crafts are Mesquite Grove Gallery, 371 McKeown Ave. (☎ 520-394-2358), and Global Arts Gallery, 315 McKeown Ave. (☎ 520-394-0077), where I bought a pair of great horse earrings and a Carmen Miranda cookie jar. Fans of patchwork swoon over Quilted Creations, 317 McKeown Ave. (☎ 520-394-9000), which sells supplies as well as finished quilts and sometimes offers classes.

Living it up after dark

La Mision de San Miguel, 335 McKeown Ave. (☎ 520-394-0123), is easily mistaken for a chapel from the outside; as soon as you enter the wildly colorful, faux-rustic structure, you know it’s a shrine to live music and good times (it’s smoke-free too). More in keeping with the region’s traditions are the Steak Out, 3280 Hwy. 82, Sonoita (☎ 520-455-5278), where good Country and Western bands play on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights; and the Wagon Wheel Saloon, 400 W. Naugle Ave. (☎ 520-394-2433), a local watering hole that stays open until 1 a.m. on weekends. Seeking something more uplifting? Patagonia’s small Tin Shed Theater, 304 Naugle Ave. (☎ 520-394-9369), puts on an eclectic array of plays and concerts.

Fast Facts: Eastern Santa Cruz County

Area Code

The area code is **520**.

Emergencies

Call ☎ 911. The volunteer fire department and EMTs in the Sonoita-Patagonia area can be reached at ☎ **520-455-5854**.

Hospitals

The only medical facility in Sonoita is a pharmacy: Old Pueblo United Drugs, 3272 Highway 82; ☎ **520-455-0058**. Patagonia doesn’t have a pharmacy, but it does have a medical center: Family Health Center, 101 Taylor St. (just off Highway 82; ☎ **520-394-2262**; open: Mon–Fri 9 a.m.–5 p.m.). In the

event of a medical emergency, head for Tucson or Sierra Vista (see the “Fast Facts: Southern Cochise County” section later in this chapter).

Information

Sonoita-Elgin Chamber of Commerce, 3123 Highway 83, unit C (in Carnevale Travel) (☎ 520-455-5498; www.sonoitaaz.com). Patagonia Visitors Center,

436 Naugle St. (☎ 888-794-0060 or 520-394-0060; www.patagoniaaz.com).

Post Office

Locations include 3466 Highway 83, Sonoita, at the intersection with Highway 82 (☎ 520-455-5500), and 100 N. Taylor Ln., Patagonia, just off Highway 82 (☎ 520-394-2950).

Southern Cochise County

The lower portion of Cochise County has the greatest concentration of attractions in southeastern Arizona, largely of the historical sort but also of the green variety. This area also has the widest range of places to stay, and makes a good base for side trips to the rest of the region.

In a time crunch, plan to devote at least half a day to Tombstone and another half to Bisbee. (Tombstone gets all the press, but Bisbee is equally interesting and far more scenic.) If you're not in a rush, spend a full day in each of these two towns. If you're a military history buff, allot a few hours to Fort Huachuca in Sierra Vista; if you're a nature lover, schedule some time for Ramsey Canyon and Coronado Monument, both near Sierra Vista.

Getting there

To reach Sierra Vista from Tucson, take I-10 east to Highway 90 and drive south some 35 miles to the junction with Highway 92 Business Route (also named Fry Boulevard, and Sierra Vista's main street). Tombstone is 28 miles northeast of Sierra Vista via Highway 90 or 24 miles south of Benson via Highway 80. Bisbee is 24 miles south of Tombstone on Highway 80.

Spending the night

Except for Sierra Vista and, to a lesser degree, Tombstone, this area doesn't have many chain hotels, which can make your stay difficult if you're traveling with kids. On the other hand, if you're looking for something entirely different — everything from a bordello-style B&B to a place where you can rent a vintage RV — you'll be very satisfied.

Sierra Vista's chain hotels include Best Western, Budget Inn, Comfort Inn, Marriott's Fairfield Inn, Motel 6, and Super 8. Tombstone offers a Best Western and a Holiday Inn Express, both located near the Boot Hill Cemetery, which is not in the heart of town. See the Appendix for all toll-free numbers. In addition, the Windemere Hotel & Conference Center in Sierra Vista (☎ 800-825-4656 or 520-459-5900; www.windemerehotel.com)

offers chain-style, family-friendly accommodations with amenities such as a pool and in-room refrigerators. Sierra Vista's more distinctive lodgings, in nearby Hereford, are listed below.

My Bisbee picks just skim the surface, while rooms in Tombstone are in more limited supply. In both towns, you can check with the local chambers of commerce if you need more options (see the "Fast Facts: Southern Cochise County" section later in this chapter for contact information).



Canyon Rose Suites

\$\$ Old Bisbee

These high-ceiling, spacious rooms in a converted historic building are not only attractive but offer lots of family-friendly conveniences, including fully-equipped kitchens and TVs with VCRs; a laundry room is on the premises, too. Other pluses: a location on a quiet street near all the town's historic sights, shops, and restaurants, as well as reasonable rates.

27 Subway St. (at the corner of Shearer St.). ☎ 866-296-7673 or 520-432-5098. www.canyonrose.com. Rack rates: \$85–\$95 doubles, \$120–\$130 suites that sleep 3 people, \$180–\$200 for a duplex suite that sleeps six. DISC, MC, V.

Casa de San Pedro

\$\$ Hereford

This B&B is for the birds — and for their human fans, who can hike out the back door to the nearby San Pedro Riparian Conservation Area. When you return to your nest, you can check any sightings on the software installed on the common room computer. A hacienda-style complex with colorful Southwest-style rooms, this B&B was custom-designed in the mid-1990s for travelers who like creatures but also enjoy creature comforts. The B&B offers birding tours and courses (for an extra fee) on many weekends. New to the inn in 2004: a lap-size pool, bat houses, and a butterfly garden.

8933 S. Yell Ln. (from the Highway 90/92 intersection in Sierra Vista, go south on 92 [1 1/2 miles], north on Palominas Rd. [2 miles], and east on Waters Rd. [1 mile]). ☎ 520-366-1300. Fax: 520-366-0701. www.bedandbirds.com. Rack rates: Sun–Thurs \$135 double, Fri–Sat \$149 double; multiple nights \$129. Rates include full breakfast and afternoon snacks. AE, DISC, MC, V.



Copper Queen

\$\$–\$\$\$ Old Bisbee

Host to the likes of John Wayne and Teddy Roosevelt for decades after opening in 1902, Bisbee's only full-service (three-meal restaurant, bar) hotel isn't posh enough to be a celebrity magnet anymore, but the hotel is great for local color. Although the rooms lost some Victorian charm with the addition of such amenities as private baths, phones, and color TVs, the public areas are so Old West authentic that you feel as if you should pull up in a horse-drawn carriage.

11 Howell Ave. ☎ 520-432-2216. Fax: 520-432-4298. www.copperqueen.com. Rack rates: \$83–\$190 double. AE, DISC, MC, V.



Larian Motel

\$ Tombstone

Of the several low-key, inexpensive motels in Tombstone's central historic district, this one stands out for its cleanliness and spacious rooms, as well as for its character. Built in 1957, it has such appealing retro touches as a stylish neon sign and rooms individually named for famous Tombstone figures like Wyatt Earp and Big Nose Kate. You get all the family-friendly basics — cable TV, foldout couches — for less than you'd pay at the chains, and you're in walking distance of most local attractions.

410 Fremont St. (Highway 80). ☎ and fax 520-457-2272. www.tombstonemotels.com. Rates: \$49–\$65 double. MC, V.

Rail Oaks Ranch

\$\$ Hereford

This hidden gem near Sierra Vista has it all. You've got nature — you're likely to see deer, javelina, and birds frolicking among the oaks and mesquites of this gorgeous ranch spread. You've got history: The property originally belonged to Frank Weber, the inventor of the #2 pencil. You've got luxury, comfort, and privacy: The two beautifully appointed, self-contained guest houses offer full kitchens stocked with breakfast fixin's. And if hiking the area's many trails doesn't provide enough exercise, you've also have access to a small fitness room on the property.

3248 White Lily Lane (10 miles south of Sierra Vista). ☎ 520-378-0461. www.railoaksranch.com. Rates: \$110–\$150 double; lower weekly and monthly rates available. No credit cards accepted.

Stay in the ultimate of '50s style

You may expect to see Wally and the Beaver emerging from one of the old trailers at **Shady Dell**, 1 Douglas Rd. (near the Highway 80 traffic circle; ☎ 520-432-3567; www.theshadydell.com). If you're a nostalgia buff who doesn't mind close quarters — and a cemetery across the road — the period-furnished 1940s and 1950s Airstreams and Spartenettes are a kick. A 1938 Chris Craft yacht recently joined the roster of vintage accommodations. Rates range from \$35 to \$75, double occupancy for the trailers, \$125 for the boat. The owner also operates the adjacent **Dot's Diner**, equally retro and equally fun.

Ramsey Canyon Inn Bed & Breakfast

\$\$ Hereford

Hummingbirds, a nature preserve, a historic home with antiques-filled rooms, and fresh-baked pies: Now that's a winning lodging combination. This native-wood-and-stone inn is adjacent to the Nature Conservancy's Ramsey Canyon Preserve. Even if you're not a birder, the hummingbirds will charm you as they feed outside the window of the breakfast nook. B&B guests do some heavy-duty feeding of their own on copious morning meals — and on the fruit pies that have become a tradition. Three creekside housekeeping suites equipped with kitchens may appeal to the more privacy oriented.

29 Ramsey Canyon Rd. (from Sierra Vista, take Highway 92 south to Ramsey Canyon Rd., turn right [west] and drive 4 miles). ☎ 520-378-3010. Fax: 520-378-0487. www.ramseycanyoninn.com. Rack rates: \$130–\$140 inn doubles; \$150–\$200 for 2 people in the self-contained suites, which sleep up to 4 (two of the suites require a 2-night minimum stay; one requires a 3-night minimum stay). Inn rates include full breakfast, suite rates don't. MC, V.

**San Pedro River Inn**

\$\$ Hereford

This inn is the stuff of escapist fantasies, doing little more than fishing on the pond of an old dairy farm, sitting out on a front porch — just staring at a blue, cloudless sky — and barbecuing some burgers to fortify yourself for another day of doing exactly the same. The four fully equipped cottages on this lush spread next to the San Pedro Riparian Conservation Area aren't fancy, but if you want a laid-back place to bring the kids (and dog and horse), you've found the perfect getaway. One of the owners is a birding guide, and guests are welcomed to accompany him on walks to the San Pedro River (he also runs van tours of the area for an extra charge).

8326 S. Hereford Rd. (from Sierra Vista, take Highway 92 south about 20 miles past Palominas Road to Hereford Road). ☎ and fax: 520-366-5532. www.sanpedroriverinn.com. Rack rates: \$105–\$115 for two guests in a cottage, but three of the cottages are large enough for four to six people, which lowers rates. Rates include continental breakfast. For an extra fee, pets are boarded in an outdoor pen, and horses in corals. Two-night minimum stay. No credit cards.

Tombstone Boarding House

\$–\$\$ Tombstone

Plenty of character plus a private bath in every antiques-filled room make these two joined-at-the-hip 1880s adobes my top Tombstone B&B pick. All the rooms have private entrances, so you have less of a sense that you're intruding on someone else's space. Another perk: Next door's Lamplight Room, where breakfast is served, doubles as a Continental and Mexican restaurant later in the day (see the following "Dining locally" section). Dine on margaritas and Mexican specialties on the patio or opt for sturdy New York sirloin or roasted pork loin inside.

Bisbee's colorful B&Bs

It's tough to choose from among the many colorful B&Bs in Bisbee, but, hey, it's my job. Here, then, are my favorites:

The Bisbee Grand (\$\$), 61 Main St., Old Bisbee (☎ 800-421-1909 or phone/fax 520-432-5900; www.bisbeegrandhotel.com) is a bit over the top, what with the high-bordello-style red wallpaper in the halls and eclectic array of rooms. You may find anything from a stuffed bird to a full-size cutout of John Wayne sleeping with you. Most guest quarters are on the second floor above a historic saloon, so serenity isn't one of this B&B's strong points.

Calumet & Arizona Guest House (\$), 608 Powell St. (☎ 520-432-4815; www.calumetaz.com), located in the quiet Bisbee suburb of Warren, was built in 1906 by Henry Trost, one of the West's famed architects. The grounds and the rooms are as lovely as the house, and breakfasts are elaborate.

Hotel La More (\$-\$\$), 45 OK St. (☎ 888-432-5131 or 520-432-5131; <http://hotellamore.com>), is a good pick for those who aren't put out when a 1917 hotel has creaky plumbing. It's not your typical B&B — among other things, it sits above a saloon, and accepts “well-behaved” children and pets — but the rooms are Victorian in style and a full breakfast is included in the rate, so it more or less fits into that lodging category.

The Inn at Castle Rock (\$-\$\$), 112 Tombstone Canyon Rd. (☎ 800-566-4449 or 520-432-7868; www.theinn.org), started its life as a miners' boardinghouse in the 1890s. Guests like its funkiness — the flooded mine shaft in the dining room, for example, and lush, overgrown gardens — as well as its hillside location, convenient to the heart of town but away from the hubbub.

The Schoolhouse Inn (\$-\$\$), 818 Tombstone Canyon Rd. (☎ 800-537-4333 or phone/fax 520-432-2996), was built, as its name suggests, as a school in 1918. The oak-shaded grounds are perched above Old Bisbee, and the subject-themed rooms — for example, arithmetic and writing — are amusing.

108 N. Fourth St. (between Safford and Bruce, two blocks from Allen). ☎ 877-225-1319 or 520-457-3716 (☎ and fax). www.tombstoneboardinghouse.com. Rack rates: \$69–\$89 double. Rates include full breakfast. AE, DISC, MC, V.

Dining locally

Southern Cochise County has good places to sleep, but — with the exception of Bisbee — not such great eats. And even in Bisbee, full-service restaurants are rare: Several prime spots are open limited days and hours. That's the case with Café Cornucopia (14 Main St. ☎ 520-432-4820), which serves great quiches, smoothies, and other made-from-scratch fare from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thursday through Monday. In contrast, Winchester's (in the Copper Queen hotel; see the preceding

“Spending the night” section) is open for three meals a day, every day, but it’s been erratic over the years. Still, it’s worth a try, if only to dine on its mellow deck.

Sierra Vista is the best place to get a fast food fix — as well as an Asian food hit; my favorite in the latter category is the Peacock (80 S. Carmichael St. ☎ 520-459-0095), offering authentic, well-priced Vietnamese fare. Also in Sierra Vista, Bobke’s Bread Basket (355 W. Wilcox Dr., ☎ 520-458-8580) serves up terrific German pastries and overstuffed deli sandwiches. The Mesquite Tree (corner of S. Hwy 92, and Carr Canyon Road, ☎ 520-378-2758) isn’t especially exciting, but it has a cozy atmosphere and a location convenient to Ramsey Canyon; the seafood is a safe bet.

In Tombstone, both Vogan’s Alley Bar (487 E. Allen St., ☎ 520-457-3101) and the restaurant in Six Gun City (509 E. Allen, ☎ 520-457-3827) have decent burgers and the like. For more yuppified fare, try Gitt Wired Internet Café (505 E. Fremont St., ☎ 520-457-3250), offering espresso and deli sandwiches.

Big Sky Café

\$ Old Bisbee CAFE

Whether you kick back on the patio, gazing out at the historic Art Deco courthouse, or dine inside in the airy, art-filled room, you’ll enjoy the fresh baked goods, egg dishes, grilled panini sandwiches, and salads that emerge from this cafe’s open kitchen. Organic ingredients are used whenever possible, and everything’s fresh and tasty.

203 Tombstone Canyon. ☎ 520-432-5025. Egg dishes, sandwiches, salads: \$3.50–\$6.50. MC, V. Open Tues–Sun 7:30 a.m.–2 p.m.

The Bisbee Grill

\$\$ Old Bisbee AMERICAN

For comfort food in a comfort setting, you can’t go wrong with this upgraded coffee shop in the Copper Queen Plaza building. Caesar salads, grilled chicken sandwiches, pastas . . . everything’s nice and reliable. The historic photos of Bisbee on the walls add a touch of character.

2 Copper Queen Plaza. ☎ 520-432-6788. Main courses \$7–\$12 lunch, \$13–\$19 dinner. AE, DISC, MC, V. Open daily lunch and dinner.

Café Roka

\$\$-\$\$\$ Old Bisbee ITALIAN/NEW AMERICAN

Totally out of character for hippie-ish Bisbee when it opened in the mid-1990s, Cafe Roka proved that Cochise County was ready for a sorbet palate freshener between courses. An open dining room with exposed brick walls and the original tinwork ceiling is the retro-chic setting for the food, such as artichoke and portobello mushroom lasagne, langostino and blue crab

cakes, or roasted half duck, served with a small salad, cup of fresh soup — and the aforementioned sorbet.

35 Main St. ☎ **520-432-5153**. *Reservations essential; this restaurant is the region's foodie magnet. Main courses: \$14–\$24 (including soup, salad, sorbet). AE, MC, V. Open: Dinner Wed–Sun winter; Fri and Sat mid-June–mid-Oct (call ahead to make sure of days open).*

Lamplight Room

\$–\$\$ Tombstone CONTINENTAL/MEXICAN

Yes, it's a tad odd for a restaurant to offer entrees like Parmesan-crusted salmon and also (on a separate menu) Mexican combination plates, but, given the dearth of good dining in Tombstone, be grateful for all the choices. You also to choose theatmosphere: Decide between a formal, antiques-filled dining room or a casual patio. If you're not sure the live flamenco guitar offered on weekend evenings goes with chicken cordon bleu, just order a few of the strong margaritas. You'll soon stop quibbling.

108 N. Fourth St., ☎ **520-457-3716**. *Reservations recommended for the fine-dining section. Main courses: \$5–\$8 Mexican, \$12–\$17 Continental. Open lunch and dinner daily. AE, DISC, MC, V.*

Exploring southern Cochise County



This area offers some of the state's best tourist stompin' grounds, with loads of stuff to do and relatively short driving distances between attractions. Enjoy, but don't try to fit too much in. Running from attraction to attraction only makes you ornery.

The top attractions

Bisbee

More of a success story than Tombstone in many ways, Bisbee is much less well known, in part because its outlaws were of the corporate sort: Phelps, Dodge & Co. was the main beneficiary of the multibillion-dollar copper lode that gave rise to this thriving mountainside town. The last mining operation didn't shut down until 1975, and if the price of copper ever goes up, Bisbee's mine may reopen. In the meantime, this one-time hippie enclave is being prospected by an increasing number of tourism-savvy entrepreneurs.



When you drive into town, take the Old Bisbee exit off Highway 80 and park your car into the first (legal, I hope) spot you find. West of Main Street is a large parking lot that fills up fast. From here, you can walk to the town's major attractions — although the town is literally uphill from here.



Bisbee sits at a mile-high elevation in the Mule Mountains, so you may find yourself especially short of breath when you walk uphill. If you have a respiratory problem, you may want to seek assistance getting around.

Stroll around Main Street, with its well-preserved Victorian buildings and interesting boutiques (see the “Shopping for local treasures” section later in this chapter). Check out the copper-trimmed Bank of America at the foot of the street (you don’t have to go in). Other historic attractions include the Copper Queen hotel (see the “Spending the night” section earlier in this chapter) and the nearby Muheim Heritage House, 207 Youngblood Hill (☎ 520-432-7071), an unusual Swiss-built structure with period furnishings. Heritage House is at the top of Brewery Gulch, which was once lined with saloons and literally flowed with beer. In addition, you can find more diversions, above and below ground. For information on specific spots to ogle, pick up a copy of the Bisbee Historic Walking Tours pamphlet at the Bisbee Visitor Center (see the “Fast Facts: Southern Cochise County” section later in this section).



- ✔ Take a journey underground. Actually, the Copper Queen Mine Tour, 478 N. Dart Rd. (☎ 520-432-2071), takes you up a 30-degree grade into the mine’s shaft; you just feel as if you’re descending. These fascinating inter-earth journeys, which depart daily at 9 a.m., 10:30 a.m., noon, 2 p.m., and 3:30 p.m., are led by miners who once worked the Copper Queen. This tour is Bisbee’s most fun attraction: In addition to everything else, you get to put on a yellow slicker and a hard hat. If you’re claustrophobic, consider taking the surface tour around Old Bisbee and to the perimeter of the Lavender Pit Mine. This tour operates at the same times as the other tours (except for the 9 a.m. tour). Admission: Mine tour, \$12 adults, \$5 ages 4–15, under 4 free; surface tour, \$7 all ages, under 4 free.
- ✔ Mine more of the town’s history. The nation’s first rural museum to be affiliated with the Smithsonian Institution, the small Bisbee Mining and Historical Museum, No. 5 Copper Queen Plaza (☎ 520-432-7071), gives a great overview of the town’s early years. Be sure to check out the dazzling gem and mineral exhibit. Admission: \$4 adults, \$3.50 seniors, \$1 children 16 and under. Open: Daily 10 a.m.–4 p.m.

You can’t miss the Lavender Pit Mine — it’s that huge, multicolored hole off Highway 80 en route into town from the west. Something that produced 94 million tons of copper is worth more than a drive-by. Go beyond town to the intersection of highways 80 and 92 for an overlook that has a typewritten history of the mine (hey, they’re not really formal in Bisbee).
- ✔ Tootle around town. Prefer to get your bearings while seated? Every day except Wednesday in high season and from Friday through Monday in summer, the Bisbee Trolley Company (☎ 520-432-7020) ferries passengers along the route of the electric rail line that linked Old Bisbee to the wealthy Warren District from 1908 to 1928. The hour-long historic tour, which departs from the Copper Queen Plaza, south of the mining museum, at 9:30 a.m., 11 a.m., 1 p.m., 2:30 p.m., and 4 p.m., is as easy on the attention span as it is on the feet. Admission: \$10 adults, \$7 for ages 10 and under.

Fort Huachuca Museums

Sierra Vista

Still an active military base, Fort Huachuca is the last of the famous western forts to remain operational. Many of the barracks from the 1800s are currently used as offices, and three have been turned into museums. The Fort Huachuca Historical Museum is the most interesting of the trio; among its highlights are the exhibits detailing the role that African-Americans played in the U.S. military (see the “Buffalo braves” sidebar). The historical museum’s annex and Army Intelligence Museum are also worth a visit. Seeing all three museums takes about an hour or so; you need a little longer to check out the sculptures in the surrounding complex (in case you’re wondering, the gold sphinx is the emblem of military intelligence — pretty apt!). Other options for activities on the base include a scenic overlook at Reservoir Hill and the hiking trails at Garden Canyon, a magnet for butterflies; the Sierra Vista Convention and Visitors Bureau (see the “Fast Facts: Southern Cochise County” section) can give you details.

See map p. 257. The main gate to Fort Huachuca is southwest of the intersection of Highways 90 and 92 (call ahead for directions). ☎ 520-458-4716 or 520-533-5736 (recorded museum information). <http://huachuca-www.army.mil/HISTORY/museum.htm>. Museum admission: Free. Open: Mon–Fri 9 a.m.–4 p.m., weekends 1–4 p.m.

Ramsey Canyon Preserve

Hereford

You can find out all about the unusual biodiversity of Ramsey Canyon, part of the Upper San Pedro River ecosystem in Hereford, at the Nature Conservancy visitor center. Or you can just grab a trail map and stroll around this remarkably pretty, tranquil preserve. Fourteen species of hummingbirds — more than anywhere else in the United States — stop off here. When the hummers aren’t flitting around, you still see plenty of other creatures to ooh and aah over. The Miller Peak Wilderness Area in the Huachuca Mountains is honeycombed with trails, so if you’re a serious hiker, consider spending all day in this area. The easy 1-mile walk from the preserve headquarters to a scenic overlook makes a good goal for a couch potato.

Buffalo braves

The 9th Cavalry, 10th Cavalry, 24th Infantry, and 25th Infantry — all four of America’s black regiments — trained at Fort Huachuca. These regiments were given the respectful name Buffalo Soldiers by the Chiricahua Apaches, who were among the groups the 9th Cavalry was commissioned to fight in 1877. The Fort Huachuca Museum details the outstanding record of these African-American units. A special section devoted to the black military experience in the American West includes a rare description of Estevanico de Dorante, the African-slave-turned-conquistador who took part in the earliest European exploration of Arizona.

See map p. 257. 27 Ramsey Canyon Rd. (about 6 miles from Sierra Vista; go south on Highway 92 and take a right on Ramsey Canyon Rd). ☎ 520-378-2785. Admission \$3 for members of the Nature Conservancy, \$5 nonmembers. Open: Mar–Oct daily 8 a.m.–5 p.m., Nov–Feb daily 9 a.m.–4 p.m.

Tombstone

Don't blame Tombstone for being touristy. Hollywood glamorized the "Town Too Tough to Die" so much that many visitors are disappointed if they don't get a little showmanship. Don't worry; crass commercialism (silver speculating, tourism: what's the difference?) is an old Tombstone tradition. Just relax and enjoy the Old West costume dramas.

Besides, plenty of genuine history was made here. The town's main drag and most of the town's attractions are either on or within walking distance of Allen Street. Tacky tourist shops may line the thoroughfare, but if you look closely, you can still see bullet holes in some of the buildings. The available activities are a mix of the truth and a past that has been, shall we say, embellished.

✔ Get corralled. Yes, it's touristy as all get out, but you can't leave town without visiting the OK Corral, on Allen Street between Third and Fourth streets (☎ 520-457-3456). Tombstone's most famous attraction consists of two main sections: the Historama, which screens a short background film (the fact that the late Vincent Price narrates it is an, er, dead giveaway of its vintage and historical subtlety); and the corral where you-know-what occurred. Among the historical displays in the corral, the best by far is C.S. Fly's photo gallery; Fly's famed photos of Geronimo are worth the price of admission alone. But, unless Tombstone is really quiet, don't try to schedule your day around the overpacked 2 p.m. reenactment of the shootout (an additional \$2). Admission: \$5.50 adults, under 6 free. Open daily 9 a.m.–5 p.m. (Historama shows run every 30 minutes from 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.)



✔ Get the lowdown. Only a few places in town give you history that's unadulterated by hype. Among the many fascinating displays at the Tombstone Courthouse State Historic Park, Toughnut and Third streets (☎ 520-457-3311), are two diagrammed scenarios of what actually may have happened at the famous shootout between the Earps and Clantons at the OK Corral. Make this stop your first if you want some perspective on the other, more duded-up attractions. Admission: \$4 per adult, \$1 ages 7–13, 6 and under free. Open: Daily 8 a.m.–5 p.m. except Christmas.

Opened in late 2003, the Tombstone Western Heritage Museum, 519 E. Fremont St. at Sixth Street (☎ 520-457-3800), is chock-a-block with well-displayed historic treasures — everything from the craps table that originally sat in the Crystal Palace and a \$4 license to practice the business of "ill fame" to Doc Holliday's business card and rare editions of the Tombstone Epitaph. Like the state park, it's a must-see

for Western-history buffs. Admission: \$5 adults, \$3 ages 12–18, 11 and under free (check this). Open: Mon–Sat 9 a.m., Sun. 12:30 p.m., closing when the last person leaves (generally from 5 to 6 p.m.).

- ✔ Read some old news. The Tombstone Epitaph Museum, 9 S. 5th St. (☎ 520-457-3456) is small, but so was the newsroom that put out the paper that created an American legend when it reported on the gunfight at the OK Corral. Come here to see the original printing presses and read 1880 news reports, including a description of the surrender of Geronimo. Admission: Free. Open daily 9:30 a.m.–5 p.m.
- ✔ See the world’s largest rose tree. The Rose Tree Inn Museum, Toughnut and Fourth street (☎ 520-457-3326), holds the Guinness World Record for having the largest rose tree in the world (it’s 8,600 square feet, give or take a few thorns). The 1880s period rooms also give a window on a much more genteel Tombstone than the one generally seen on the silver screen. Admission: \$3 for adults, free 14 and under. Open: Daily 9 a.m.–5 p.m., closed Christmas and Thanksgiving.
- ✔ Witness a shootout. Although the reenactment of the gunfight at the OK Corral is the best known, it’s not the only showdown in town. The Six-Gun City Wild West Show (☎ 520-457-3827), held at Fifth and Toughnut streets, uses professional stuntmen for the shoot ‘em ups. Admission: \$4 adults, free ages 12 and under. Shows are offered throughout the day Wednesday through Sunday. The Tombstone Cowboys, another group of professional stuntmen and actors, present the Gunfight at the Helldorado (☎ 520-457-9153) in an arena at Fourth and Toughnut streets. Admission: \$4 adults, \$3 seniors, \$1 ages 6 to 12. Shows: Mon through Fri at 12:30 and 3 p.m., Sat, Sun, and holidays, 11:30 a.m., 1 p.m., and 3 p.m. The shows are pretty similar; go for the Six-Gun City one if you’re hungry, because decent food is sold on the premises. Note: Whichever you choose, don’t sit near the front if you’re shy; these shows are big on audience participation.
- ✔ Take to the stage. The horse-drawn stagecoach excursions run by Old Tombstone Historical Tours, Allen Street (next to Big Nose Kate’s; ☎ 520-457-3018), are a fun way to pick up some information (to be swallowed with a grain of salt). Admission: \$5 adults, \$4 seniors, \$3 ages 4–13. Tour time: Daily 9 a.m.–5 p.m.; tours last about 20 minutes.
- ✔ See treasures from the Old West. The Bird Cage Theatre, Sixth and Allen streets (☎ 520-457-3421), looks as if it hasn’t been dusted since it was abandoned in 1889. Amid the debris, however, are treasures, such as the gold-trimmed Black Moriah hearse that transported the losing team at the OK Corral shootout to Boot Hill cemetery, as well as the velvet-draped “cages” where the ladies of the night plied their trade above the dance hall and casino. This is also the site of the longest poker game on record (eight years, five months, and three days). Admission: \$6 adults, \$5.50 seniors, \$5 ages 8–18, under 8 free; \$17 family rate (2 adults, 2 kids age 8–18). Open: Daily 8 a.m.–6 p.m. except Christmas.



The truth about Tombstone

Tombstone earned its name after prospector Ed Schieffelin ignored all the people who warned him that if he ventured into what was then dangerous Apache territory, all he would find was his tombstone. Instead, in 1877, he struck one of the West's richest silver veins.

Tombstone earned its "Town Too Tough to Die" nickname by surviving two major fires, an earthquake, and the rising of its water table — which caused the silver mine to literally go under.

In its silver-mining heyday, Tombstone was larger than San Francisco. But the town wasn't all bar brawls; Tombstone was also a major cultural center. Enrico Caruso, Sarah Bernhardt, and Lillian Russell were among the famous entertainers who trod the boards at the Bird Cage Theatre.

- ✓ Drink in a little history. Although the ornate mahogany bar at the Crystal Palace, corner of Fifth and Allen streets (☎ 520-457-3611), was moved from its original location, it's still the genuine item. This place is great for sipping a few beers and, on most weekends, listening to the live Country and Western sounds of pre-Shania/Dixie Chicks vintage.



- ✓ See where the bodies are buried. You must walk through a huge souvenir shop to enter the Boot Hill Graveyard, on Highway 80 (just northwest of town; ☎ 800-457-9344 or 520-457-9344), and most of the grave markers are reproductions. Nonetheless, you can't leave without visiting the town's famed 19th-century boneyard. Get the "Essential Guide" tour pamphlet for \$2 to find out who's buried where and why (James Hickey, for example, was "shot in the left temple by Wm. Clayborne for his over-insistence that they drink together"). Admission: Free. Open: Mon–Fri 7:30 a.m.–6 p.m., Sat and Sun until 6:30 p.m. spring through autumn, closing one hour earlier in winter.

More cool things to see and do

This region offers more interesting ways to take in the local scenery and culture, in addition to some sunshine (don't forget the sunscreen!).



- ✓ Pretend you're a conquistador. You can see for miles and miles — all the way to Mexico — at the Coronado National Memorial, 4101 E. Montezuma Canyon Rd., Hereford (☎ 520-366-5515, ext. 23; www.nps.gov/coro), a 4,750-acre preserve dedicated to Spanish conquistador Francisco Vasquez de Coronado, who passed through the area in 1540. For the best views, drive the 3-mile dirt road from the visitor center to Montezuma Pass, and then walk up another ½ mile to the top of Coronado Peak (almost 7,000 feet high). This is a great place for a family visit. Kids can try on helmets and chain-link

vests similar to those that the conquistadors wore, and explore a small cave (bring your own flashlight, or buy one at the visitor center, where you need to get a free permit to visit). And this is one of the prettiest places in the state to enjoy a picnic. You see a sign for the memorial 16 miles south of Sierra Vista on Highway 92. The visitor center, open daily from 9 a.m.–5 p.m., is 5 miles from the turnoff. The grounds are open from dawn to dusk. Admission: Free. See map p. 257.

- ✓ Listen to cowboy poets. I can't think of a more interesting way to spend the day than strolling around Ramsey Canyon in the morning and seeing a performance at the nearby Arizona Folklore Preserve in the afternoon. See the "Pick a peck of pickers and poets" sidebar for details. See map p. 257.
- ✓ Take a side trip to Douglas. Bordering Mexico to the east of Bisbee, Douglas was a ranching center and smelter for many of the area's most successful mines. A typical border town now, Douglas still has a few lures. You may recognize the Gadsden Hotel, 1046 G. Ave. (on the town's main street; ☎ 520-364-4481), from the Paul Newman movie *The Life and Times of Judge Roy Bean*; the stained-glass window of a Southwest landscape, and a Western saloon decked with rancher's brands are highlights.

The Slaughter Ranch Museum (☎ 520-558-2474), a National Historic Landmark in Douglas, re-creates the area's ranching heyday in a remote, rural setting (bring a picnic lunch). Take 15th Street east to Geronimo Trail and follow the signs; the museum is 20 miles down a dirt road. Admission: \$5 adults, children under 15 free. Open: Wed–Sun 10 a.m.–3 p.m.



- ✓ Get wet. With its computer-generated tsunamis, 150-foot indoor-outdoor tube slide, and a variety of pools for all ages and abilities, the Sierra Vista Aquatic Center, 2900 M.L. King Jr. Pkwy. (☎ 520-417-4800; www.ci.sierra-vista.az.us/thecove), may be the splashiest municipal pool complex in the state. It's a huge

Pick a peck of pickers and poets

Just before you come to Ramsey Canyon, you see a sign for the **Arizona Folklore Preserve**, 44 Ramsey Canyon Rd. (☎ 520-378-6165; www.arizonafolklore.com). Dolan Ellis, an original member of the 1960s folk group the New Christy Minstrels, founded this unique performance space, research center, and bookstore. Ellis is also Arizona's official state balladeer (bet you didn't know Arizona had one). Jury-selected folk artists — from cowboy poets to storytellers, fiddlers, and bluegrass guitarists — perform each Saturday and Sunday at 2 p.m. in a small space that's part beatnik coffeehouse, part *Little House on the Prairie*. Phone ahead for reservations; schedules often shift and tickets (\$10) can sell out quickly.



Birding excursions

Birders flock to Southeast Arizona — for good reason. Almost 500 migrating species use several ecologically diverse “sky islands” for migrational rest stops, and the area is considered one of this country’s top five bird-watching spots. The best source of avian information is the **Sierra Vista Convention & Visitors Bureau** (see the “Fast Facts: Southern Cochise County” section), which can direct you to the nearby **San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area** and **Environmental Operations Park**; the **Willcox Playa**, near Willcox; and **Cave Creek Canyon**, near Chiricahua National Monument, as well as to the various birding sites already mentioned in this chapter. The Sierra Vista CVB can also supply the Arizona Department of Tourism Southeastern Arizona Birding Trail map.

Want more guidance? The not-for-profit **Southeastern Arizona Bird Observatory**, based in Bisbee (☎ 520-432-1388; www.sabo.org), is the top birding resource. In addition to providing a wealth of information about the best times and places for birders to visit Southern Arizona on its Web site, the organization offers year-round walks and workshops as well as seasonal hummingbird banding programs. SABO also highlights tour operators that offer more extended birding excursions, and occasionally runs its own overnight trips. Other birding associations in the area include the **Huachuca Audubon Society** (☎ 520-378-4937; <http://has.hypermart.net>) and **Friends of the San Pedro River** (☎ 520-459-2555; www.theriver.com/public/fspr/fspr.htm), both of which offer guided walks.

bargain, too, as such things as safety vests, water toys, and lockers are included in the admission price. Classes galore and entertainment (such as live bands and dive-in movies) round out the fun in summer. Admission: \$5 ages 18–54, \$4 ages 5–17, \$3 55 up, additional fees for nighttime events. Open daily 1:30–5:30 p.m. weekdays, noon–5:30 p.m. weekends early June through Aug; open weekends only the rest of the year except spring break, Christmas week, Labor Day, and Memorial Day when summer hours apply.

Shopping for local treasures

Most of the shops in Tombstone are on Allen Street, the touristy main drag. Retail here tends toward the tacky T-shirt and souvenir shot-glass variety, but Arlene’s, 404 Allen St. (☎ 520-457-3833), sells good Native American crafts and Western art. William Brown Holster Co., 302 E. Fremont St., behind the OK Corral (☎ 520-457-9208), specializes in hand-tooled reproductions of 19th-century holsters and also designs belts, saddlebags, and chaps. For Western antiques, try the Silver Lady, 515 E. Fremont St. (☎ 520-457-3800), adjoining the Tombstone Western Heritage Museum and owned by its very knowledgeable proprietors.

In Bisbee, many of the best shops are on Main Street. Tom Selleck and Faye Dunaway had themselves custom-fitted for Panama hats at Optimo, 47 Main St. (☎ 520-432-4544). Going ceramics crazy is easy at Poco Loco, 81 Main St. (☎ 520-432-7020), purveyors of wonderfully colorful

dishes and other covetable housewares. My favorite of Main Street's many antiques shops, the sprawling, two-level Pentimento, 69 Main St (☎ 520-432-2752), also carries contemporary local crafts. On any given day, a flawless Czech Art Deco tea set may share floor space with kitschy Frida Kahlo shrines.

Living it up after dark

If you're seeking wine flights and other sophisticated sips, better head back to Tucson. If you like local, often historic, watering holes, however, you'll be happy in Tombstone and Bisbee.

In Tombstone, the Crystal Palace (see the "Exploring southern Cochise County" section of this chapter) gets lots of tourist traffic, but it's also where all the town's fake outlaws and real residents go to wet their whistles. Big Nose Kate's Saloon, Allen Street, between Fourth and Fifth streets (☎ 520-457-3107), which started life as the Grand Hotel in 1881, gets a similar mix of day-trippers and folks whose livelihoods depend on re-creating the characters who used to frequent the Grand.

Bisbee's past is less well known, but its bars are no less notorious: Brewery Gulch didn't get its name because the town had an abundance of tea houses. St. Elmo's, 36 Brewery Ave. (☎ 520-432-5578), is the oldest continuously operating bar in the state, and some of its patrons seem to have been imbibing there since it opened in 1902. Also in historic structures but attracting a somewhat less rowdy crowd are the Stock Exchange Bar, 15 Brewery Gulch (☎ 520-432-3317); the bar at the Hotel La More, 45 O.K. St (☎ 520-432-5131); and the saloon at the Bisbee Grand Hotel, 61 Main St. (☎ 520-432-5900). All pour Dave's Electric Ale, brewed in Bisbee.

Fast Facts: Southern Cochise County

Area Code

The area code is ☎ 520.

Emergencies

Phone ☎ 911 for fire and police emergencies.

Hospitals

Sierra Vista Regional Health Center, 300 El Camino Real (☎ 800-880-0088; 520-458-2300) and the Copper Queen Community Hospital in Bisbee, 101 Cole Ave. (☎ 520-432-5383), offer 24-hour emergency service. Tombstone doesn't have any medical facilities.

Information

Sierra Vista Convention & Visitors Bureau is at 3020 E. Tacoma Dr. (☎ 800-288-3861, 520-417-6960, or 520-459-EVNT [special events hotline]); www.visitsierravista.com; open: Mon–Fri 8 a.m.–5 p.m., Sat 9 a.m.–4 p.m.). The Tombstone Chamber of Commerce is at Fourth and Allen streets (☎ 888-457-3929 or 520-457-9317; www.tombstone.org); open: Mon–Fri 9 a.m.–5 p.m.). Tombstone's city-operated visitor Information Center is next door at 105 S. 4th St. (☎ 520-457-3929; www.cityoftombstone.com); open: daily 10 a.m.–4 p.m.). The Bisbee Visitor

Center is in the Copper Queen Plaza and Convention Center (☎ 866-2-BISBEE or 520-432-3554; www.discoverbisbee.com); open: Mon–Fri 9 a.m.–5 p.m., Sat 10 a.m.–4 p.m and Sun 11 a.m.–4 p.m.).

Internet Access

In Tombstone, the Gitt Wired Internet Café, 505 E. Fremont (☎ 520-457-3250), helps

you do just what the name says. Open Mon–Fri 7 a.m.–3 p.m., Sat 8 a.m.–3 p.m.

Post Office

Locations include 2300 E. Fry Blvd., Sierra Vista (☎ 520-458-2540); 100 N. Haskell St., Tombstone (☎ 520-457-3479); and 6 Main St., Bisbee (☎ 520-432-2052).

Northern Cochise County

The long-awaited debut of Kartchner Caverns State Park in late 1999 continues to change the face of an area that time — and tourists — forgot. Among other things, chain motels and fast-food restaurants are cropping up in this region, which spreads south of I-10 to the east of Tucson. Benson, the town closest to the caverns, probably hasn't had this much press since the late 1880s, when three rail lines crossed here.

Benson may eventually become as convenient a base as Sierra Vista for forays into southern Cochise County, but at the moment, you won't find much reason to spend the night (with one notable exception, which I tell you about in the "Spending the night" section). Willcox, the other small town along I-10, has more Old West flavor but offers no good reason to bed down. Several lodgings outside these two main towns are great for travelers who want to bond with nature and relax in a remote setting. If you're not in this group, you can cover northern Cochise County's main attractions in a very full day trip from Tucson.

Getting there

Benson is 45 miles southeast of Tucson via I-10; continue another 38 miles on the freeway to reach Willcox. Amtrak (☎ 800-872-7245) runs trains from Tucson to Benson three times a week. Greyhound (☎ 800-231-2222) has twice daily service to both Benson and Willcox from Tucson, but you need a car to get around either town.

Spending the night

In addition to the lodgings I suggest, Benson has a Days Inn, Holiday Inn Express, Motel 6, and Super 8. In Willcox, you find links in the Best Western, Days Inn, Motel 6, and Super 8 chains. (See the Appendix for toll-free numbers.)

The two towns also offer a few low-key, nonchain motels. Choose your favorite neon sign and ask to look at a room if you want to take a chance.

Cochise Stronghold Bed and Breakfast

\$\$ Pearce

Its eco-conscious construction (straw bale, passive solar energy) and its spectacular setting in the Chiracahua Mountains make this B&B ideal for nature lovers of all sorts. You can enjoy vigorous hikes in the area or just sit out on one of two patios with binoculars and watch the birds flitting by during the day and the stars sparkling at night. The two lovely Western-flavored rooms are spacious enough for families but — what a treat! — you can shuttle the kids off to sleep in a well-insulated tepee and enjoy a little privacy.

2126 W. Windancer Trail, off Forest Service Road 84 (call for more detailed directions). ☎ 877-426-4141 or tel/fax 520-826-4141; www.cochisestrongholdbb.com. Rack rates: \$159–\$189 double weekends, 10% lower on weekdays, 15% discount without breakfast. Tepee (with room rental) \$79. Rates include 5-course breakfast. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.

**Grapevine Canyon Ranch**

\$\$\$ Pearce

This guest ranch in a Western-purty setting with a working cattle ranch next door is the real deal. Cowgirl and cowboy wannabes can ride to their hearts' content and take part in round-ups and other ranching activities (May, July, Oct, and Jan only). Tenderfoots can choose to hike, swim, or soak in a hot tub. The cabins are fairly ordinary, the casitas more Southwest chic, and both types of rooms have kick-back porches or decks along with city slicker amenities, such as refrigerators, coffeemakers, and hairdryers. Casitas can sleep up to five people, depending on the unit, while cabins sleep only two people.

Highland Rd. (beyond Sunsites, off Highway 191; call for directions). ☎ 800-245-9202 or 520-826-3185. Fax: 520-826-3636. www.gcranch.com. Rack rates: All per person based on double occupancy, June, July, Dec 1–15, Jan 15–30 \$148 casitas nightly, \$908 casitas weekly, \$128/\$788 cabins nightly/weekly; Feb, Aug–Sept \$168/\$1,038 casitas nightly/ weekly, \$148/\$918 cabins; Mar–May, Oct–Nov, Dec 16–Jan 14 \$188/\$1,158 casitas nightly/weekly, \$168/\$1,038 cabins. Rates include three meals, riding, and most ranch activities. Three-night minimum. Ages 12 and over only. AE, DISC, MC, V.

Muleshoe Ranch

\$–\$\$ Muleshoe Ranch Cooperative Management Area

How does holing up in a cabin near a natural hot spring in a nature preserve in the middle of nowhere sound to you? Clawfoot tubs, Mexican tile, and woodstoves are among the appealing details of these Nature Conservancy-run casitas, some of which date back to the late 1800s. All the units have kitchens or kitchenettes — crucial in this fast-food-barren wilderness. The surrounding land is owned and jointly managed by the Nature Conservancy, the Bureau of Land Management, and Coronado National Forest.

30 miles northwest of Willcox (call for directions). ☎ 520-507-5229. www.mule shoelodging.org. Rack rates: \$95–\$158 double. AE, MC, V. Closed June–Aug.



Skywatcher's Inn

\$\$ Benson

The Skywatcher's Inn is stellar. What other B&B do you know that has a private observatory and a rent-an-astronomer service? This place abounds in techno-gismos, including a classroom with mineral displays and science videos. Rooms are by no means geeky, however, and lovely rural vistas can be seen from the wraparound porch. This place is great for a family vacation, whether you're seeking earthly comforts or have your head in the clouds.

Astronomers Road (2 miles southeast of I-10 at Exit 306; call for directions). ☎ 520-586-7906; fax 520-586-1123. www.skywatchersinn.com. Rack rates: \$85–\$119 double, \$175 suite. Rates include full breakfast. Supervised observation programs from \$59–\$130 for up to 5 people; telescope rental available. MC, V.

Dining locally

Northern Cochise County is no gourmet stompin' grounds; chain restaurants and modest cafes are pretty much all the area has to offer when chow time comes. I've driven out of my way for an apple pie from Stout's Cider Mill in Willcox (see the "Exploring northern Cochise County" section), but I haven't detoured for any other eats.



If you need to eat in Benson, I like two places on the town's main drag. The Old West diner atmosphere makes the Horseshoe Café (\$–\$\$), 154 E. Fourth St. (☎ 520-586-3303), my favorite Benson chow down spot. The cafe duded up its menu a bit for tourists, but the green-chile burgers and fries are as good as ever, and they can never take the neon horseshoe off the ceiling — at least not if they don't want to change the restaurant's name. Ruiz Restaurant (\$), 687 W. Fourth St. (☎ 520-586-2707), is fine for a down-home Mexican meal in an unpretentious setting.

In Willcox, the Desert Rose Café (\$–\$\$), 706 S Haskell Ave. (☎ 520-384-0514), has a surprisingly sophisticated menu, including the likes of coconut shrimp and beef teriyaki. I can only personally attest to the high quality of the burgers and steak sandwich, though. Near the Rex Allen Museum, Rodney's a.k.a. "The Spot" (\$–\$\$), 118 N. Railroad Ave. — such a hole in the wall that it doesn't have a phone — serves great barbecued pork sandwiches, with daily specials that may include ribs, shrimp, and catfish plates.

Exploring northern Cochise County

Life existed in northern Cochise County before Kartchner Caverns, but you'd never know it these days; most of the tourist action seems to have gone underground. The area's more remote natural attractions, particularly Chiricahua National Monument, are equally striking — not to mention less pricey — and Willcox hides some Western color behind its I-10 sprawl.

The top attractions**Amerind Foundation Museum**

Dragoon

A stark Texas Canyon setting, a lovely Spanish colonial-style building, and a wide-ranging collection of American Indian (thus the name) artifacts make a visit to this middle-of-nowhere museum in Dragoon a unique experience. The historical materials contributed by founder William Fulton, an amateur archaeologist, are complemented by contemporary work in the same tradition. The museum is small, but allow 45 minutes to do the collection justice. If pressed for time, you can zip through the nice, but fairly traditional, Southwest art gallery next door.

See map p. 257. Dragoon Rd., 1 mile southeast of I-10 (Exit 318). ☎ 520-586-3666. www.amerind.org. Admission \$5 adults, \$4 seniors, \$3 ages 12–18, 11 and under free. Open: Sept–May daily 10 a.m.–4 p.m., June–Aug Wed–Sun 10 a.m.–4 p.m.

**Chiricahua National Monument**

Dos Cabezas Route

This natural monument is one of my favorites in Arizona — or anywhere. The volcanic rock outcroppings impossibly balanced against each other define the term “rugged western terrain.” The Chiricahua Apaches, who spent a lot of time trying to keep white settlers out of the area, called this site the Land of the Standing-Up Rocks. But eroded boulders aren’t the whole story. A huge variety of plant and animal species, many of which are more typically found in Mexico’s Sierra Madres, make this area a great place to hike and bird-watch. A free 8:30 a.m. shuttle goes to a trailhead where you have a choice of descending via a 4-mile or 7½-mile route. Call ahead to check about the ranger-led tours of the Faraway Historic District, which includes a homestead turned guest ranch; they’re subject to staff availability. The park has no services. Gas up and stock up on picnic supplies in Willcox.

See map p. 257. Take I-10 to the first Willcox exit and drive through town to Highway 186, where signs will direct you to the visitor center. ☎ 520-824-3560. www.nps.gov/chir. Admission: \$5 per person, ages 16 and under free. Visitor center open daily 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m., closed Christmas.

**Kartchner Caverns State Park**

Near Benson

A quarter of a century, secrecy to match the CIA’s (on its good days), and about as much effort as was devoted to preserving Egypt’s pyramids led to the public opening of this state park. The fascinating story of how the caverns were discovered by two Tucson cavers in 1974 is detailed in the visitor center. Despite the hype, don’t get your expectations up too high if you’re visiting between mid-April and mid-October. The Rotunda-Throne Room sections of Kartchner that are open to tours year ‘round aren’t nearly

as large as those areas in other cave systems and — call me a cynic — I find the sound-and-light show at the end of the tour tacky (others tell me the display has moved them to tears). In contrast, the Big Room, which opened up to the public in late 2003, won't disappoint: This part of the caverns hosts many of the system's strangest and most colorful rock formations. Unfortunately, the bats like visiting this area, too; in order not to disturb them, visitors can't enter during the months when they're hanging around here.



TIP

The Rotunda-Throne tours lasts a little more than an hour; the Big Room tour about an hour and a half. You may want to spend another half hour or so in the visitor center; the 20-minute introductory film is definitely worth viewing. And the grounds are a great place to picnic. Pack a picnic



Ghost riding in southeast Arizona

Southeast Arizona's roads are scattered with the remains of once-bustling mining towns — some far more moribund than others — but the 35-mile back road from Pearce to Tombstone has been officially labeled the "Ghost Town Trail." A sign for the route can be seen on Highway 191 about 5 miles west of its junction with Highway 181, just beyond the town of Sunsites.

Of the three towns straddling the trail, **Pearce** is the liveliest, comparatively speaking. Grown rich on gold in the 1890s but largely abandoned in the 1930s, the town still has several intact buildings, including the stifflingly small adobe jailhouse. You also find a few functioning shops, including the old general store, a pottery shop, and **Udder Delight**, 1547 E. Old Pearce Rd. (☎ 520-826-1118; closed Sun and Mon), which sells handcrafted goat milk soaps — and even has a soap museum!

If you're concentrating on avoiding the many ruts in the road, missing **Courtland**, some 12 miles south, is easy. The town consists of the upright shells of two buildings — one of them a jail — and a few other, less intact ruins. You can also glimpse remains of the copper mine that operated here from 1909 to 1920, when more than 2,000 people were in residence.

Gleeson, originally called Turquoise, was never as large as Courtland — the population topped out at about 500 — but it has held up a bit better. You can identify the town by its cemetery, the ruins of another lockup, and several ramshackle houses, a few of them occupied (they're easily recognizable by the "No TRESPASSING" signs). If you'd rather add to your collection of weird souvenirs than poke around the past, follow the signs on Gleeson Road to **John & Sandy's Rattlesnake Crafts** (☎ 520-642-9207), where purses, belts, eyeglass cases, coasters . . . about 150 rattlesnake skin items, total, are sold.

Although the packed dirt Ghost Town Trail — the signs for which disappear not far beyond Pearce — is usually maintained by Cochise County, driving a high-clearance vehicle here is best; definitely don't follow this trail in the rain otherwise. And don't come here expecting Hollywood-style ghost towns replete with rickety sidewalks — or even historical markers. You need a good imagination to appreciate the Old West aspect of this route, though not its solitude and desert scenery.

basket (only vending machines are on the grounds), and plan to spend another leisurely hour gazing at the surrounding mountains and desert, perhaps taking a short hike.



As a result of big publicity for relatively small-capacity cave tours, Kartchner Caverns books up well in advance. If you don't want to be disappointed, make reservations (yes, I'm shouting at you, but it's for your own good). Call Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., but be prepared to be patient; the line is often busy. The cavern staff sets aside 100 tickets for the Rotunda-Throne Room tours each day for people who haven't reserved, and the tickets go on sale at 7:30 a.m. and are usually sold out within 45 minutes. Because these tickets are for staggered tour times, you may have to wait around or come back much later for your assigned tour.

See map p. 257. Highway 90, 9 miles south of I-10, Exit 302. ☎ 520-586-CAVE (reservations). www.pr.state.az.us/Parks/parkhtml/kartchner.html. Admission for access to park grounds and Discovery Center (cave exhibits and visitor center): Rotunda-Throne tour (year-round) \$18.95 adults, \$9.95 ages 7–13, 6 and under free. Big Room tour (Oct 15–Apr 15): \$22.95 adults, \$12.95 ages 7–13, 6 and under not permitted to enter. Open: Daily 7:30 a.m.–6 p.m.; cave tours run approximately every 20 minutes from 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m. Closed Christmas.

Willcox

These days, more trucks than trains stop at Willcox, formerly one of the country's major cattle shippers. The town still has some Old West kick left, however, especially in the Railroad Historic District, where you can see the restored Southern Pacific Willcox Historical Depot and the Willcox Commercial, Arizona's oldest department store. In addition to ducking into those two Railroad Avenue icons, you have a few other options.



Sunday isn't a good time to visit. Many of the town's attractions — including the depot and the Commercial — take this as day of rest.



- ✓ Improve your knowledge of movie cowboys. The Rex Allen Arizona Cowboy Museum and Theater, 155 N. Railroad Ave. (☎ 520-384-4583), displays the spangly costumes and other memorabilia from the many films that Willcox's favorite son made in the 1940s and 1950s. The Willcox Cowboy Hall of Fame, in the museum's back room, pays tribute to the area's less melodic ranchers and rodeo stars. Admission: \$2 per person, \$3 per couple, and \$5 per family (talk about family values!). Open: Daily 10 a.m.–4 p.m., except Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day.

The ashes of the “last of the silver screen cowboys” were scattered in Railroad Park, just across the Rex Allen Museum. And Allen's mount, Koko (1940–1967), is buried in this park next to a bronze statue of his loyal human companion. (Allen thus spared Koko the fate of his fellow equestrian thespian, Trigger, who was stuffed and displayed in the Roy Rogers Museum.)



Whoop-de-do, Western style

Rex Allen Days, held the first weekend of October, continue despite the fact that Rex Allen, Sr., isn't around any longer to attend the festival that bears his name. (He died in Tucson in 1999.) For details about these four days of Western-style celebrations, including everything from turtle races and all-you-can-eat pancake breakfasts to a rip-roarin' rodeo, call the Willcox Chamber of Commerce (see the "Fast Facts: Northern Cochise County" section at the end of this chapter).

- ✔ Buy a big apple pie. Strange, but true: At an elevation of nearly 4,200 feet, Willcox is Arizona's apple center. And of the many local places to apple polish your trip, Stout's Cider Mill (☎ 520-384-3696) rules. The mill is across the parking lot from the Chamber of Commerce (see the "Fast Facts: Northern Cochise County" section later in this chapter). Don't try to pretend you're there for anything else but the famous pie, with a crust about 5 inches high and — the baker boasts — more apple-packed than any other.
- ✔ Trace the region's roots. Housed in a 1920s hardware store, the Chiricahua Regional Museum, 127 E. Maley, off Railroad Ave. (☎ 520-384-3971), focuses on the area's early ranching, railroad-ing, and mining history. Especially noteworthy are the Apache Indian artifacts, including some belonging to Geronimo and Cochise. Admission by suggested donation: \$2 singles, \$3 couples, and \$4 family. Open: Mon–Sat 10 a.m.–4 p.m., except holidays.

More cool things to see and do

From ancient rock art to 19th-century battlegrounds and current Arizona literature, you can find out about the state's past and present in this region.

- ✔ Find a hideaway. At Cochise Stronghold (☎ 520-364-3468; www.cochisestronghold.com) you see why it took so long for the U.S. Cavalry to capture Cochise and Geronimo. This natural granite fortress south of Dragoon is in a remote, rugged rock region that's great for hiking. To get here, take Exit 331 from I-10 to Highway 191; look for the sign for Cochise Stronghold at Ironwood Drive, near Sunsites. You have to drive nearly 9.1 miles on a fairly rough dirt road (Forest Rte. 84), which includes five stream crossings (don't try this in wet weather). You know you're there when you see some picnic tables, campsites, and restrooms. Admission: \$3 day-use fee per vehicle. See map p. 257.
- ✔ Get fortified. You drive down a graded dirt road and trek 1½ miles to reach Fort Bowie National Historical Site (☎ 520-847-2500; www.nps.gov/fobo). Little is left of the 1862 fort or of the Butterfield Stage Station it guarded, and no evidence remains of the many

skirmishes between the Chiricahua Apaches and the U.S. Cavalry that took place here, but markers along the route and a serene setting render this site a good way to combine a little exercise — the hike's easy — with some history. To get here, take any of the I-10 Willcox exits to Highway 186. Drive 22 miles south; signs point you to the site. Admission: Free. Open: Grounds, daily dawn to dusk; visitor center and bookstore, daily 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m., closed Christmas. See map p. 257.



- ✓ Get bookish. A top-rate selection of books about Arizona plus a unique ranch setting make the Singing Wind Bookshop, Singing Wind Road (☎ 520-586-2425), worth the search. From Tucson, take I-10 Exit 304, just beyond Benson, and turn left. In about 2¼ miles, you see a red signpost at the bookstore turnoff. Prepare to stop and open the large green gate. Open: daily 9 a.m.–5 p.m.

Fast Facts: Northern Cochise County

Emergencies

Head to Benson Hospital, 450 S. Ocotillo (☎ 520-586-2261), or Northern Cochise Community Hospital in Willcox, 901 W. Rex Allen Drive (☎ 800-696-3541 or 520-384-3541). For police or fire emergencies, call ☎ 911.

Information

Benson Visitors Center, 249 E. Fourth St. (☎ 520-586-4293; www.bensonchamberaz.com; open: Mon–Sat 9 a.m.–5 p.m.); Willcox Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture, 1500 N. Circle I Rd. (☎ 800-200-2272 or 520-384-2272; www.willcoxchamber.com; open: Mon–Sat 9 a.m.–5 p.m., Sun 10 a.m.–2 p.m.).

Internet Access

In Willcox, Motherlands Antiques/Postman Espresso, 116 S. Railroad Ave. (☎ 520-384-2875), offers Internet access on its one computer from Mon–Sat 7:30 a.m.–8 p.m., Sun 10 a.m.–6 p.m.

Post Office

Locations include 250 S. Ocotillo Rd., Benson (☎ 520-586-3422), and 200 S. Curtis Ave., Willcox (☎ 520-384-2689).