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# TRAIL TIPS

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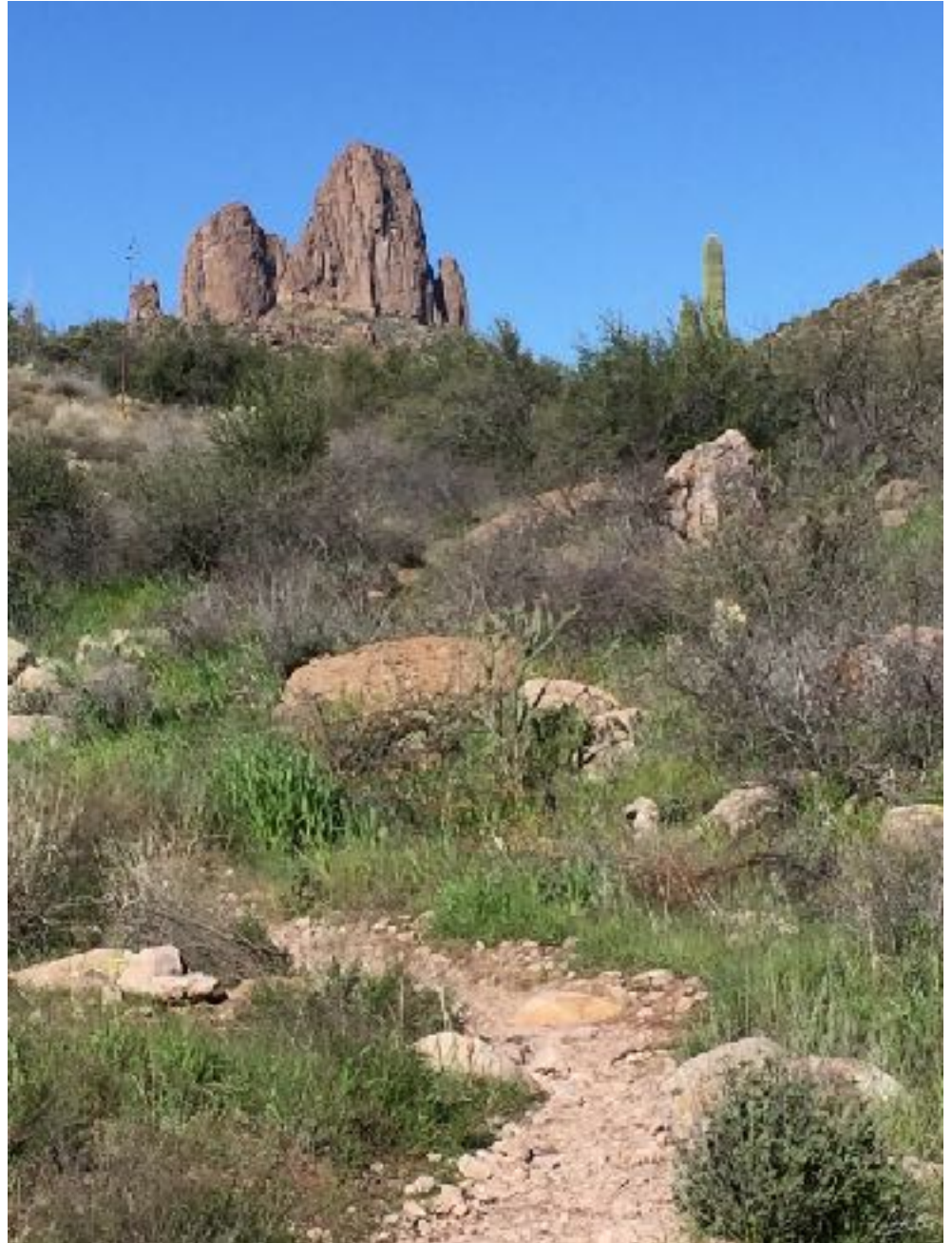
## Helpful Hints for Hiking

### Making A Difference

As we hike and explore the wonderful desert that we all call home here in Arizona, we have the opportunity to see and experience sights and sounds that many others never get the chance to experience. To ensure that these irreplaceable treasures remain as pristine as possible, our Club stresses one of the credos of the National Park Service, "Take Nothing But Pictures, Leave Nothing But Footprints".

The message here is that in order to preserve the wilderness for future generations, one should not blunder through it, trampling everything underfoot, carving your name in rock formations, gathering up chunks of petrified wood for your rock garden at home, and treating the side of the trail as your personal landfill.

I know from personal experience hiking with all of



you that we do a pretty good job of minimizing our impact on the wilderness. But we can do better. Everyone can. We often unknowingly do a little damage everywhere we go, just by being there. This is unavoidable. Those footprints we leave cause a little erosion with every step. Multiply those steps by thousands and thousands of feet, and over time, trails get worn down to the point where they can be trenches in softer areas of terrain.

Which is fine. At least we are limiting our damage to a confined area. But when humans go off-trail, it spreads the damage to virgin areas that don't need to be trampled. This is especially true in more sensitive areas found in locations like Sedona and Moab. The rich red sandstone terrain is susceptible to the winds blowing through the valleys, and nature has developed a method to keep that sand in place.

### DON'T BUST THE CRUST!

If you look closely at undisturbed soil along the trails in places like Sedona and Moab, you will notice a dark, clumpy looking coating on the surface. This is a Cryptobiotic Crust. It's a living organism that binds the surface of the loose sand, making it resistant to the wind. Without this symbiotic organism, most of that red soil would now reside in places like Colorado and Kansas.

The NPS has popularized the above saying, to help hikers stay aware of the fragile nature of the areas off-trail in these unique locales. If one ventures ten feet off to the side, just to get that "perfect shot" of yon butte or hoodoo, those footprints do damage that can take up to fifty years to grow back. And in the meantime, that now exposed loose soil is subject to being blown into Dorothy's back yard, never to grace the slopes of those butte's again.

Here is a link to more info on the Cryptobiotic Crust:

<https://www.nps.gov/cany/learn/nature/soils.htm>



Even here in Arizona, where the terrain is rockier and more robust, wear and tear occur when hiking off-trail. Much of the desert flora is delicate, and can be damaged when trod upon. Granted, it will recover in far less than fifty years, but even so, why do any more damage than needed? We see trails worn deep and wide, and bear in mind, many of these trails have only been heavily used over the last 30 or 40 years. What will these same trails look like in another 30 years, when your grandchildren want to experience the same joys we encounter? Sure, they may be a bit deeper or

wider, but at least they won't be scattered all over the hillside, which is very likely if hikers don't stick to one trail.

Let's do our best to be the guardians of this amazing landscape we call home. Sacrifice that perfect angle that may or not be attained by moving over ten feet to the side to capture that spire of rock on your phone. Leave that pretty piece of white quartz right where it is for someone else to enjoy. Honestly, isn't it more beautiful right where it is than next to your driveway? Let's take steps to preserve our glorious back country. (See what I did there? Steps? Stick around, folks, I'm here every month!)

#### PACK IT IN, PACK IT OUT

Wow, check out that view of Lake Pleasant! Too bad those orange peels are lurking in the bottom of the picture.

We've all seen this. Somebody had lunch, and left some biodegradable components behind. No big deal, may even be good for the environment. Right?

Wrong. Orange peels can take up to six months to a year to degrade in an arid climate. And those peels are toxic to many mammals, including dogs and cats. The NPS cautions us that unless an organic material is native to an area, it should not be discarded there. And really, nobody wants to look at your discarded apple core, banana peel, etc.

Take it back out with you. It certainly weighs less than it did when you brought it in, so what's the big deal? It'll do more good in the landfill than in the desert. And if you do see someone else's carelessness, lend a hand to Mother Nature, toss it in that empty baggie your lunch was in, and take it back to civilization with you where it belongs.

Every little bit makes a difference. Just think if everyone would do the same.

Now, let's get out there and take a hike! See ya on the trail.

Burton