

# TUBAC TAKES IT OUTSIDE

Finding your spirit of adventure in Tubac can be as easy as taking a walk, hiking a trail or heading for the hills on your mountain bike. Whatever route you choose, there are wonderful surprises at every turn in this rural slice of fresh-air heaven.



By Nancy H. Fitzpatrick

If you ask people what they love about Tubac, you'll get some universally agreed-upon answers. It has wonderful weather and clean air. A relaxed, easy-going lifestyle. Fascinating history. Dynamic culture. Natural beauty in an outsized landscape.

But when you ask the locals what there is to do here, you're likely to come away with a laundry list of fun possibilities. Think adventure. Discovery.

Want to explore on foot? You'll get directions for river trails or hiking paths that lead to stunning views of the Sonoran desert and its surrounding mountains. Prefer a bicycle or bike, golf cart, ATV or auto? Plenty of options for expanding your horizons even further. But if you'd rather just kick back and relax, well that's easy!

One thing you will quickly learn is that Tubac's best attribute is its people. They love to share what they know, and they'll always point you in the right direction for a great experience – one that will help you discover that this small town is uncommonly grand.

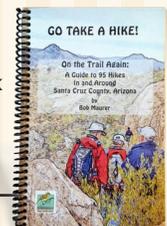
## A HIKER'S PARADISE

For Julie Kiker, who moved to Tubac from Seattle, hiking the mountains is almost a given.

With the beautiful Santa Rita, Tumacácori and San Cayetano mountains at hand, and the Tucson, Patagonia and Pajarito mountains all within a 1.5-hour drive, there are many, many options from which to choose.

"I like rigorous hikes," Julie says – the climbing type – such as the Kent Spring Loop in Madera Canyon, north of Tubac. The almost six-mile loop involves about a 2,000-foot elevation differential.

But appreciating that others might like something a bit less daunting, she recommends the four-mile hike in and around the Pena Blanca Cliffs; the Pena Blanca Lake Walkabout, a hiking loop around the lake, across a dam and back; and Sycamore Canyon off Ruby Road in the Coronado National Forest (exit 12 off I-19 south). This hike involves a relatively level walk in the canyon bottom.





Julie also recommends getting a copy of a locally written guidebook such as *Go Take a Hike!* It includes detailed advice for anyone wanting to explore this exceptional area, with map apps information, and almost step-by-step directions for 95 hikes in and around Santa Cruz County.

Dedicated “to intrepid hikers everywhere, especially those who come to southern Arizona in search of the peace and tranquility that comes from walking in the hills and canyons,” the book was written by Bob Maurer, another inveterate Tubac hiker.

Four of Bob’s all-time favorite hikes, which are described in the book, involve steep climbs and offer wonderful vistas and the opportunity for great outdoor exercise. They include: Little Elephant

Head, Montosa Ridge, Rogers Rock in Madera Canyon and Atascosa Lookout.

About his own hiking “career,” Bob says: “I’ve been hiking with the *Tubac Social Climbers* (TSC) since 2004 and have loved every minute of it.” The group has a great time on the trail but doesn’t take itself too seriously. The social part of their time together, Bob says, seems to be just as important as the hiking time.

Copies of *Go Take a Hike* are available at the Tubac Nature Center ([www.tubacnaturecenter.com](http://www.tubacnaturecenter.com)). Bob also notes that the Tubac hikers were featured in the Fall 2020 issue of *Senior Hiker Magazine* in an article by TSC’s current leader, Will Presley.

## BE SPONTANEOUS: START WALKING

The great thing about taking a walk is that it doesn’t require a lot of advance planning or gear.

Walk the town at a shopper’s pace, stroll around the golf resort or amble along the Anza Trail and enjoy its many connections with the Santa Cruz River.

The Anza Trail is most famous for one of the world’s longer walks, when in 1775 Juan de Anza set off on an expedition to establish a presidio in San Francisco. The Anza Trail is today locally enjoyed by hikers, mountain bikers, birders, photographers and horseback riders. It’s well marked and if you’re up for a good four-mile stretch, walk the trail between the Tumacácori National Historical Park and the Tubac Presidio State Historic Park.

You might also enjoy hiking along the Santa Cruz River to Santa Gertrudis Lane. To do this, take I-19 south from Tubac and get off at the Palo Parado exit. Turn left off the exit, cross over the highway and the east Frontage Road.

Continue on Palo Parado Road until you cross over the river. Find a place to park and start your hike north. In about three miles you’ll come to Santa Gertrudis Lane. Take a break, have a snack or lunch and head back. This relatively easy hike runs along the river, provides good shade and is considered a prime birding spot.

For more ideas on local hikes, you might wish to check out the Facebook page

for The Anza Trail Coalition of Arizona, which does a good job maintaining 22 miles of the trail between Ruby Road in Nogales and Amado Montosa Road. You can also call them for current information, at (520) 841-6944.

Other groups dedicated to protecting the Santa Cruz River, Anza Trail and nurturing all of the natural life within these realms, include the Tubac Nature Center (TNB) located in the Community Center at 50 Bridge Road.

The Nature Center is temporarily closed and their weekly outings and nature walks put on hold due to Covid-19 restrictions. But TNC president, Jim Karp, continues his blog on the organization’s website, and here you’ll find a fund of information about hikes in Madera Canyon, around Pena Blanca Lake, along Santa Gertrudis Lane, and the Canoa Ranch Conservation Park, just to name a few. Go to: [www.tubacnaturecenter.com](http://www.tubacnaturecenter.com) and click on the Blog link.

Guaranteed you’ll be inspired to get up and go.

Additional sources for ideas on walks all around Tubac

Friends of the Santa Cruz River:  
[www.foscriver.org](http://www.foscriver.org)

Tubac Presidio State Historic Park:  
[www.tubacpresidio.org](http://www.tubacpresidio.org)

Tumacácori National Historical Park:  
[www.nps.gov/tumacacori.org](http://www.nps.gov/tumacacori.org)

Tubac River Valley on Facebook also showcases the beauty and serenity of the Santa Cruz River Valley and its surrounding mountains.

## PICKING UP THE BALL

Three million and counting. That’s the number of estimated pickleball players in the U.S. alone, and the sport continues to grow at a remarkable pace.

Pickleball includes elements of badminton, tennis and table tennis, or ping-pong – with singles, doubles and mixed doubles play – all of which contributes to making it a fun way to get some good exercise.

Tubac has four pickleball courts open for play daily, and anyone who drops by to watch a match will enjoy the amiable competitiveness. If you’re new to the game or to town, you’ll find a friendly welcome, and lots of good advice from the regular players.

The courts are located behind the Tubac Community Center at 50 Bridge Road. Five dollars is the requested donation per play. Alternatively, one can make a \$100 donation for the year. The donations are used to maintain the courts.

To join the fun, or for more information, contact Lucie Desmond (602) 684-1771, or Julie Kiker (206) 790-0156. For those new to the game, check out [www.playpickleball.com](http://www.playpickleball.com) for some starting pointers and videos that explain what staying out of the kitchen really means!

## IF IT’S TUESDAY, IT’S TIME TO RIDE

Green Valley resident John Pilger, or J.P. to his friends, is a seasoned cyclist and asking him for ideas on cycling routes in and around Tubac is the beginning of a great conversation. As president of the Santa Cruz Valley Bicycle Advocacy Committee, J.P. is also an advocate for promoting safe bicycling on all roads as well as appropriate desert and mountain trails.



To start, there's "Tubac Tuesday," the day that he and his group of cycling friends pedal from Green Valley to Tubac and back – a 38-mile round trip level ride that uses the frontage roads adjacent to I-19, with some route variations. The trip includes the Tubac Deli for a food break and catch-up on local news before setting out for the return run.

Easy rides starting from Tubac might include runs to River Road in Rio Rico, to Nickel's Diner for breakfast, along the east Frontage Road to Carmen and the mission in Tumacácori.

Another might be to start at the Golf Resort, cycle to Chavez Siding, going north through the Border Patrol checkpoint to Aqua Linda Road and continuing on to the Mt. Hopkins Visitors Center.

Cycling is so prevalent, J.P. says, that it's creating places as destinations. This can take the form of short-form touring, he notes, or an epic undertaking. "But what I love about it," he says, "is being out in the fresh air. It's great exercise, there's a camaraderie with other riders and there are the fabulous views."



The Santa Cruz Valley Bicycle Advocacy Committee has a website with suggested cycling routes for our area as well as maps. Visit them at [www.scvbca.org](http://www.scvbca.org).

## HIGH-ENERGY ADVENTURE ON SINGLE TRACK TRAILS

Mountain bikers have always been attracted to this area for its rugged scenery and challenging hills. Now, thanks to a handful of local mountain bike enthusiasts led by SCVBCA's Chuck Hill, there's a new 25-mile stretch of single-track trails in Tubac just waiting for those who are ready to take on a serious ride: The Tom Hausam Single Track Sopori Trails.

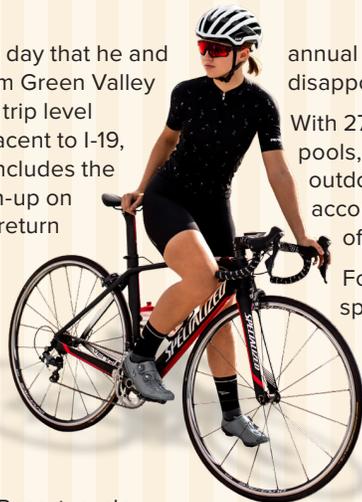
To access the trails from Tubac, go north on the West Frontage Road. About a half mile beyond the Chavez Siding exit of I-19, you'll see an unmarked road on the left. This is the Hunters Access Road. Going west, you'll ride over a cattle guard and in about 100 yards you'll notice a clearing to the left. The trail begins at this point to the south.

But before you go, you may want to check in for any additional information at [www.bikeaz.org/bikegreenvalley](http://www.bikeaz.org/bikegreenvalley) where you'll find route suggestions for some other great rides, too.

## GOLF IS A GIVEN

The award-winning Tubac Golf Resort & Spa is, without doubt, a Tubac gem. Set on 500 acres of the historic Otero Ranch, the resort offers vacationers and locals a full complement of options for both high action activity and total veg-out luxury.

It was the Resort and the tranquil surroundings that first attracted this writer to Tubac during the town's



annual Festival of the Arts a number of years ago. It has not disappointed.

With 27 holes of golf, a full-service spa, multiple heated pools, the popular Stables Restaurant (with indoor and outdoor dining options), banquet space and luxurious accommodations from which to choose, there's a little bit of Tubac here for everyone.

For the resort's current golf, spa and accommodations specials, go to: [www.tubacgolfresort.com](http://www.tubacgolfresort.com).

## AT EASE

Relax. Breathe. Rebalance. It's time to re-energize, and the opportunity to do so is right around the corner in Old Tubac at the Soulistic Healing Center.

This tranquil refuge at 20 Calle Iglesia offers stress-reducing modalities designed to balance the body, mind and spirit. Among these are three copper-ionized therapeutic jacuzzi tubs; a luxurious heated lap pool; infrared sauna; detoxifying ionic foot cleanse treatment, and something brand-new: a Pythagorean Monochord Chair, which produces a healing "sound vibrational massage."

For more about all of these therapies, or to make an appointment, call (520) 398-3970 or visit [www.soulistichealingcenter.org](http://www.soulistichealingcenter.org).

Signing up for yoga at the Tubac Healing Arts Center is a great way to further unwind. Classes are fully described on the Center's website: [www.tubachealingartscenter.com](http://www.tubachealingartscenter.com). All classes are momentarily being conducted via Zoom. The Center also offers acupuncture. Call (520) 481-0014 for more details.



## CELEBRATING TUBAC AT A SLOW-FOOD PACE

Tubac has a reputation for one-of-a-kind treasures – from fine arts galleries to artisan shops featuring handcrafted furniture, jewelry, metal works, pottery, designer fashions and so much more. Among these appealing draws are more than a dozen restaurants dedicated to another kind of fine art: delicious food.

Featuring Southwest and other regional American and international specialties, Tubac's restaurants also celebrate the Slow Food movement. As inveterate foodies know, the Slow Food movement embraces a farm-to-table approach to cuisine that promotes locally grown foods and traditional gastronomy.

Tumacookery and its teaching kitchen, Cooking A-Z, both located in the La Entrada de Tubac plaza, are also proponents of the Slow Food movement.

As co-owners Randy Wade and Karin Rosenquist note, "There's a lot of satisfaction derived from taking your time to prepare and enjoy a really great meal."

Cooking A-Z classes are, in Karin's words, designed to be fun and informative. "They are interactive participation sessions ending with a meal of the food prepared in the class."

From its beginnings, Cooking A-Z has been offering weekly group classes and private cooking lessons for foodies at



every skill level. Covid-19 restrictions have disrupted the kitchen's regular schedule, but Randy and Karin report that in late 2020 the teaching kitchen was again able to hold a private class, with more planned as county safety guidelines permit. Private groups can be arranged by contacting [cookingclassesaz@gmail.com](mailto:cookingclassesaz@gmail.com).

The most recent class was taught by Tubac resident Jeri Hoyle and featured fresh ricotta gnocchi with prosciutto, asparagus and shrimp. Randy says, "The class also made a tri-color salad and double vanilla ice cream served with espresso, chocolate and chopped pistachios, affogato style. The meal was served with prosecco."

Randy says that "food with a little bit of spice or an exotic nature is always popular" in these classes. "Some of our favorites have been Indonesian, Indian and, of course, Mexican cuisine. Frida Kahlo's Chocolate Mole has been a favorite for private and open classes. We've also had a wild game class with venison, moose and antelope that was outstanding, very informative, and featured several different cooking methods.

"We always emphasize proper technique and the importance of quality kitchen tools. We don't hide the fact that we want our students to become better and happier cooks with great gear from Tumacookery," he says.

That gear includes all kinds of kitchen gadgets, cookware, cutlery, cookbooks and other items for at-home food preparation. For backpack, road trip or picnic-basket aficionados, there are artisanal treats from which to choose, including prickly pear jelly, pecans from Green Valley and Arizona honey along with locally sourced ancient seeds, Tucson-roasted coffee, buttermilk scones, and gourmet chocolates. The store is open daily from 9 to 5. For more information, go to: [www.tumacookery.com](http://www.tumacookery.com) or call 520-398-9497.

Many of Tubac's other food establishments also offer on-the-go options perfect for your next road trip – be it by bicycle or car. Here are two, among many, that you'll want to check out:



The Tubac Deli & Coffee Company is a popular in-town meeting place located in front of Tumacookery at 6 Plaza Road. Open daily from 6:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., its specialties include hand-crafted pastries, artisan breads, freshly roasted coffee and a wide variety of hot and cold sandwiches and salads.

Socially-distanced tables are located inside and out. Curbside pickup and drive-up orders are also available.

For more information, call 520-398-3330, or visit [www.tubacdeli.com](http://www.tubacdeli.com).

The Tubac Market at 10 Avenida Goya, just off the I-19 East Frontage Road, is a community grocery store that also offers indoor and outdoor dining, a wine shop, catering service and deli bar where you can get made-to-order sandwiches and a wide variety of salads. Stock up on all those ingredients you



need for your own Slow Food preparations or let the capable staff put together everything you need for your next outing. The market is open daily from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. For more info: Call 520-398-1010 or visit: [www.tubacmarketaz.com](http://www.tubacmarketaz.com).

More food-to-go and outdoor dining options can be found in your Guide's Dining section.

## FOR THOSE WHO LOVE TO FISH

While the desert is not known for its abundance of water, angler aficionados can take solace at some manmade area lakes stocked for sport fish. These include Arivaca, Patagonia, Pena Blanca and Sahuarita Lakes.

The Arivaca Lake, for example, comprises a 90-acre reservoir lake that's surrounded by grasslands and outcroppings. While it's a primitive site, with only a single lane boat ramp, if you're seeking a tranquil fishing spot, this is a good choice. Aside from fishing, the lake is great for canoeing and small sail boating.

For all the information you need to start you off, go to: [www.azgfd.gov](http://www.azgfd.gov). Another good site to check is: [www.fishandboataz.azgfd.com](http://www.fishandboataz.azgfd.com).

## IN THE GARDEN

When you're out-and-about, don't forget to stop by the Community Garden of Tubac for a look at our local Slow Food growers. The garden is located behind the Community Center at 50 Bridge Road.

The volunteer-maintained gardens at the Tubac Presidio Historic Park and Museum will also give you an appreciation of the many varieties of herbs, vegetables and flowers that have been grown here throughout the town's history. And for a slightly different and highly original take on gardening, be sure to visit the park's outdoor exhibit, The Exuberance, which runs through the end of April (2021). Many of the creative pieces included in the exhibit address environmental issues and the use of native plants. If you'd like to go on a Garden Crawl, a free, one-hour guided tours of The Exuberance, visit: [www.tubacpresidio.org](http://www.tubacpresidio.org).

## COME BACK FOR MORE

One of Tubac's true delights is that just when you think you've seen it all, you'll turn a corner and find something more. So, keep walking, or running, biking or hiking. It's a healthy way to go, and along the way be sure to talk to the locals. They may have one more secret to share!

Nancy Fitzpatrick is an award-winning journalist who began exploring the Southwest's beauty when she moved to Arizona three years ago. She quickly realized there was no better place from which to start than Tubac.

