

MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE

Bell Pass, McDowell Sonoran Preserve (Scottsdale). Rating B. This is an 8.4 mile out and back hike with an elevation change of 1470 ft. The hike starts on the Gateway trail and passes through a large Saguaro forest. Just past the saddle you can see the fountain at Fountain Hills (on the hour for 15 minutes). The fountain will show up between you and Weavers Needle. Distant views include Four Peaks, Weavers Needle, Fountain Hills, and Scottsdale. Restrooms and water are at the trailhead. No park fee. Driving distance is 88 miles RT.

<http://pchikingclub.smugmug.com/McDowellSonoranPreserve/Gateway-Loop-Windgate-Pass>

Directions to McDowell Sonoran Preserve - Gateway Trailhead

Take Hwy 101 north all the way around to Scottsdale.

Exit at Princess/Pima-Bell road (exit #36).

Continue straight through the light to get to Bell Road.

Turn east (left) on Bell Road and go approx. 1.4 miles.

Turn north (left) onto Thompson Peak Parkway.

Turn right into trailhead parking 0.5 mi. up the road.

Restrooms and water are at the trailhead.

Bootlegger/Coyote Canyon Trails (McDowell Sonoran Preserve, Scottsdale). Rating C.

This is a 7.6 mile in-and-out hike with an elevation gain of 630 ft. It passes through a large forest of Saguaro. There are 2 crested Saguaro cacti along the trail - one has a very rare double crest. There are excellent views of the surrounding mountains as well as numerous granite rock formations. This is one of the most scenic trails within an hour of Pebble Creek. No restrooms at the trailhead. No park fee. Driving distance is 110 miles RT.

<http://pchikingclub.smugmug.com/McDowellSonoranPreserve/Granite-Mt-North>

Directions to McDowell Sonoran Preserve - 136th St Trailhead

Take Loop 303 North to I-17.

Turn left (North) on I-17...stay right and immediately exit onto Dove Valley Road.

Follow Dove Valley Rd about 10 mi as it changes name to Sonoran Desert Dr.

Take Cave Creek Road North (left) and turn right at next light on Dynamite Blvd

Follow Dynamite (name changes to Rio Verde) and turn left on 136th Street.

For Granite Mt Loop, drive about 2 mi and park on the left under the power lines.

For Hawknest Loop, drive about 5.1 mi and park just beyond the Nat'l Forest kiosk (last mile or so can be rough so recommend high clearance).

There are no restrooms at trailhead (but you can stop off at the Brown's Ranch TH by turning left on Alma School Road and going about a mile to the end).

Bootlegger/Coyote Canyon/Granite Mountain Loop (McDowell Sonoran Preserve, Scottsdale). Rating B-/C+. This is a 9 mile lollipop loop hike with an elevation gain of 800 ft. It passes through a large forest of Saguaro. There are 2 crested Saguaro cacti along the trail - one has a very rare double crest. The hike then goes around Granite Mountain to Balanced Rock, a large pointed boulder that sits on its point. It finishes by going through a small area of yuccas and large Saguaros. There are 3 rock formations that look like camels along the final section of the trail. There are excellent views of the surrounding mountains as well as numerous granite rock formations. This is one of the most scenic trails within an hour of Pebble Creek. No restrooms at the trailhead. No park fee. Driving distance is 110 miles RT.

<http://pchikingclub.smugmug.com/McDowellSonoranPreserve/Granite-Mt-North>

Directions to McDowell Sonoran Preserve - 136th St Trailhead

Take Loop 303 North to I-17.

Turn left (North) on I-17...stay right and immediately exit onto Dove Valley Road.

Follow Dove Valley Rd about 10 mi as it changes name to Sonoran Desert Dr.
Take Cave Creek Road North (left) and turn right at next light on Dynamite Blvd
Follow Dynamite (name changes to Rio Verde) and turn left on 136th Street.
For Granite Mt Loop, drive about 2 mi and park on the left under the power lines.
For Hawknest Loop, drive about 5.1 mi and park just beyond the Nat'l Forest kiosk (last mile or so can be rough so recommend high clearance).
There are no restrooms at trailhead (but you can stop off at the Brown's Ranch TH by turning left on Alma School Road and going about a mile to the end).

Bootlegger/Granite Mountain/Turpentine Loop (McDowell Sonoran Preserve, Scottsdale). Rating D. This is a 4.5 mile loop hike with an elevation gain of approximately 500 ft. It passes through a large boulder field of interesting shapes. It finishes by going through a small area of turpentine bushes. There are 3 rock formations that look like camels along the final section of the trail. There are excellent views of the surrounding mountains as well as numerous granite rock formations. This is one of the most scenic trails within an hour of Pebble Creek. No restrooms at the trailhead. No park fee. Driving distance is 110 miles RT.
<http://pchikingclub.smugmug.com/McDowellSonoranPreserve/Granite-Mt-North>

Directions to McDowell Sonoran Preserve - 136th St Trailhead

Take Loop 303 North to I-17.
Turn left (North) on I-17...stay right and immediately exit onto Dove Valley Road.
Follow Dove Valley Rd about 10 mi as it changes name to Sonoran Desert Dr.
Take Cave Creek Road North (left) and turn right at next light on Dynamite Blvd
Follow Dynamite (name changes to Rio Verde) and turn left on 136th Street.
For Granite Mt Loop, drive about 2 mi and park on the left under the power lines.
For Hawknest Loop, drive about 5.1 mi and park just beyond the Nat'l Forest kiosk (last mile or so can be rough so recommend high clearance).
There are no restrooms at trailhead (but you can stop off at the Brown's Ranch TH by turning left on Alma School Road and going about a mile to the end).

Brown Mountain (McDowell Sonoran Preserve). Rating C/B. The **Brown** Saddle portion is a loop hike of about 6 miles with an elevation gain of 1000 ft. The B version adds the Cathedral Rock creating a 9.2 mile loop hike with an elevation gain of 1400 ft. There are great views of the surrounding mountains (Weaver's Needle, Four Peaks, Tom's Thumb, etc.) as well as great rock formations along the trail. There are many different cacti species here and late spring could be very colorful after good winter rains. Trail condition - very good hiking trail. There is a nice restroom at the trailhead and no park fee. Driving distance is 100 miles RT.
<http://pchikingclub.smugmug.com/McDowellSonoranPreserve/Brown-Mountain>

Directions to McDowell Sonoran Preserve - Brown's Ranch Trailhead

Take Loop 303 North and drive to I-17.
Turn left (North) on I-17.
Stay right and immediately exit onto Dove Valley Road.
Follow Dove Valley Road about 10 mi. (name changes to Sonoran Desert Drive).
Take Cave Creek Road North (left).
Turn right at first light on Dynamite Blvd (later changes to Rio Verde).
Turn left on Alma School Road.
The road dead ends at the trailhead.
There are restrooms at the trailhead.

Cathedral Rock/Balanced Rock Loop (McDowell Sonoran Preserve). Rating C/C+. This is a 6.5 to 8.4 mile loop hike with an elevation gain of 600-800 ft. There are great views of the surrounding mountains (Weaver's Needle, Four Peaks, Tom's Thumb, etc.) as well as great rock formations along the trail. There are many different cacti species here and late spring could be very colorful after good winter rains. The optional side trip is to the Balanced Rock formation to the east. There is a nice restroom at the trailhead and no park fee. Trail condition - great hiking trail. Driving distance is 100 miles RT.

<http://pchikingclub.smugmug.com/McDowellSonoranPreserve/Cathedral-Rock>

Directions to McDowell Sonoran Preserve - Brown's Ranch Trailhead

Take Loop 303 North and drive to I-17.

Turn left (North) on I-17.

Stay right and immediately exit onto Dove Valley Road.

Follow Dove Valley Road about 10 mi. (name changes to Sonoran Desert Drive).

Take Cave Creek Road North (left).

Turn right at first light on Dynamite Blvd (later changes to Rio Verde).

Turn left on Alma School Road.

The road dead ends at the trailhead.

There are restrooms at the trailhead.

Cholla Mountain From East (McDowell Sonoran Preserve, Scottsdale). Rating C+. This is an 8.8 mile in-and-out hike with an elevation gain of 870 ft. It passes through three different "forests" - Saguaro, Jumping Cholla, and Yucca. There are excellent views of the surrounding mountains as well as numerous granite rock formations. No restrooms at the trailhead. No park fee. Driving distance is 110 miles RT.

<http://pchikingclub.smugmug.com/McDowellSonoranPreserve/Cholla-Trail>

Directions to McDowell Sonoran Preserve - 136th St Trailhead

Take Loop 303 North to I-17.

Turn left (North) on I-17...stay right and immediately exit onto Dove Valley Road.

Follow Dove Valley Rd about 10 mi as it changes name to Sonoran Desert Dr.

Take Cave Creek Road North (left) and turn right at next light on Dynamite Blvd

Follow Dynamite (name changes to Rio Verde) and turn left on 136th Street.

For Granite Mt Loop, drive about 2 mi and park on the left under the power lines.

For Hawknest Loop, drive about 5.1 mi and park just beyond the Nat'l Forest kiosk (last mile or so can be rough so recommend high clearance).

There are no restrooms at trailhead (but you can stop off at the Brown's Ranch TH by turning left on Alma School Road and going about a mile to the end).

Gooseneck/Saguaro Nest/Pemberton Loop (McDowell Sonoran Preserve). Rating B.

This is a loop hike of 10.7 miles with an elevation gain of 900 ft. The route goes past a double crested Saguaro and a second crested Saguaro, around Granite Mountain, and over to Balanced Rock. It passes through a forest of very large and old Saguaros. And there are many Banana Yuccas and Crucifixion Thorn trees along the trail. No restrooms and no park fee. Driving distance is 108 miles RT.

<http://pchikingclub.smugmug.com/McDowellSonoranPreserve/Gooseneck-Meander>

Directions to McDowell Sonoran Preserve - 136th St Trailhead

Take Loop 303 North to I-17.

Turn left (North) on I-17...stay right and immediately exit onto Dove Valley Road.

Follow Dove Valley Rd about 10 mi as it changes name to Sonoran Desert Dr.

Take Cave Creek Road North (left) and turn right at next light on Dynamite Blvd

Follow Dynamite (name changes to Rio Verde) and turn left on 136th Street.

For Granite Mt Loop, drive about 2 mi and park on the left under the power lines.

For Hawknest Loop, drive about 5.1 mi and park just beyond the Nat'l Forest kiosk (last mile or so can be rough so recommend high clearance).

There are no restrooms at trailhead (but you can stop off at the Brown's Ranch TH by turning left on Alma School Road and going about a mile to the end).

Gordon Wagner Trail (McDowell Regional Park). Rating C. A 3 mile hike in a scenic area of McDowell Mountain Park. The trail is accessible off of McDowell Mountain Park Drive, which is reachable by driving through Fountain Hills. A \$7.00 park entrance fee. Driving distance is 120 miles RT.

Directions to McDowell Mountain Regional Park - Scenic Trail

I-10 east to Route 202 east exit onto Gilbert Road.

Turn left onto Gilbert Road to Route 87.

Turn right onto Route 87 to Shea Blvd.

Turn left onto Shea Blvd to Saguaro Blvd.

Turn right onto Saguaro Blvd to Fountain Hills Blvd (which McDowell Mtn. Road).

Turn right onto Fountain Hills Blvd, the road heads north away from Fountain Hills.

Turn left at the entrance to McDowell Mountain Park.

Pay \$7.00 park entrance fee.

Take the park drive past the family and group campgrounds to Shalimo Dr.

Turn right and follow road to the Pemberton Trailhead

Granite Mountain North (McDowell Sonoran Preserve, Scottsdale). Rating D. This is a 4.2 mile in-and-out hike with an elevation gain of 300 ft. There are lots of interesting Saguaro cacti, granite rock formations, and distant views of the surrounding mountains. This is one of the best trail surfaces of any hike we do - Scottsdale has done an excellent job with their McDowell Sonoran Preserve trails. No restrooms at this trailhead. No park fee. Driving distance is 110 miles RT. <http://pchikingclub.smugmug.com/McDowellSonoranPreserve/Granite-Mt-North>

Directions to McDowell Sonoran Preserve - 136th St Trailhead

Take Loop 303 North to I-17.

Turn left (North) on I-17...stay right and immediately exit onto Dove Valley Road.

Follow Dove Valley Rd about 10 mi as it changes name to Sonoran Desert Dr.

Take Cave Creek Road North (left) and turn right at next light on Dynamite Blvd

Follow Dynamite (name changes to Rio Verde) and turn left on 136th Street.

For Granite Mt Loop, drive about 2 mi and park on the left under the power lines.

For Hawknest Loop, drive about 5.1 mi and park just beyond the Nat'l Forest kiosk (last mile or so can be rough so recommend high clearance).

There are no restrooms at trailhead (but you can stop off at the Brown's Ranch TH by turning left on Alma School Road and going about a mile to the end).

Granite Mountain Loop (McDowell Sonoran Preserve, Scottsdale). Rating C. This is a 7.3 mile loop hike with an elevation gain of 500 ft. It passes through three different "forests" - Saguaro, Jumping Cholla, and two types of Yucca. There are excellent views of the surrounding mountains as well as numerous granite rock formations. You get nice views from the Balanced Rock formation on the second half of the hike. Balanced Rock is a gigantic granite boulder balancing on its pointy end. This is one of the most scenic trails within an hour of Pebble Creek. Trail condition - Great hiking trail. No restrooms at the trailhead. No park fee. Driving distance is 110 miles RT.

<http://pchikingclub.smugmug.com/McDowellSonoranPreserve/Granite-Mt-North>

Directions to McDowell Sonoran Preserve - 136th St Trailhead

Take Loop 303 North to I-17.

Turn left (North) on I-17...stay right and immediately exit onto Dove Valley Road.

Follow Dove Valley Rd about 10 mi as it changes name to Sonoran Desert Dr.

Take Cave Creek Road North (left) and turn right at next light on Dynamite Blvd

Follow Dynamite (name changes to Rio Verde) and turn left on 136th Street.

For Granite Mt Loop, drive about 2 mi and park on the left under the power lines.

For Hawknest Loop, drive about 5.1 mi and park just beyond the Nat'l Forest kiosk (last mile or so can be rough so recommend high clearance).

There are no restrooms at trailhead (but you can stop off at the Brown's Ranch TH by turning left on Alma School Road and going about a mile to the end).

Hawknest/Divide/Branding Iron/Coyote Canyon/Soapberry/Dove/Barb/136th Express (McDowell Sonoran Preserve) Rating B. This is an 11.7 mile hike with an elevation gain of 700 ft. The highlights of this hike include a double Crested Saguaro, Michelin Man II Saguaro, many rock formations, and distant views of Four Peaks, the Superstitions and other mountains. Trail condition - a very good hiking trail. No restrooms at the trailhead. No parking fee. Driving distance is 130 miles RT. <https://pchikingclub.smugmug.com/McDowellSonoranPreserve/Northwest-Loop-Trails>

Directions to McDowell Sonoran Preserve - Tonto NF Trailhead

Take Loop 303 North and drive to I-17.

Turn left (North) on I-17.

But stay right and immediately exit onto Dove Valley Road.

Follow Dove Valley Road about 10 miles as it changes name to Sonoran Desert Drive.

Take Cave Creek Road North (left).

Turn right on Dynamite Blvd (changes name to Rio Verde).

Turn left on 136th Street.

Drive about 5 miles to entrance to Tonto National Forest - the last 2 miles are on a well maintained dirt road.

There are no restrooms at trailhead (but you can stop off at the Brown's Ranch Trailhead by turning left on Alma School Road and going about a mile to the end).

Hawknest/Divide/High Desert/Renegade/Soapberry/Desperado/Coyote Canyon/Dove/Barb/136th Express (McDowell Sonoran Preserve) Rating C. This is an 8 mile hike with an elevation gain of 500 ft. The highlights of this hike include a double Crested Saguaro, Michelin Man II Saguaro, many rock formations, and distant views of Four Peaks, the Superstitions and other mountains. Trail condition - a very good hiking trail. No restrooms at the trailhead. No parking fee. Driving distance is 130 miles RT. <https://pchikingclub.smugmug.com/McDowellSonoranPreserve/Northwest-Loop-Trails>

Directions to McDowell Sonoran Preserve - Tonto NF Trailhead

Take Loop 303 North and drive to I-17.

Turn left (North) on I-17.

But stay right and immediately exit onto Dove Valley Road.

Follow Dove Valley Road about 10 miles as it changes name to Sonoran Desert Drive.

Take Cave Creek Road North (left).

Turn right on Dynamite Blvd (changes name to Rio Verde).

Turn left on 136th Street.

Drive about 5 miles to entrance to Tonto National Forest - the last 2 miles are on a well maintained dirt road.

There are no restrooms at trailhead (but you can stop off at the Brown's Ranch Trailhead by turning left on Alma School Road and going about a mile to the end).

Marcus Landslide/East End/Tom's Thumb Loop (McDowell Sonoran Preserve) Rating

B. This hike combines multiple trails into a "B" level loop of approximately 10.6 miles with 2,100 ft. elevation gain. It first climbs from the north to Tom's Thumb on a short but steep trail and then proceeds south on East End (very steep)-Windmill-Coachwhip-Pemberton-Boulder-Marcus Landslide in a CCW loop, eventually passing in front of the Marcus Landslide area. There are great views to the east and north including the Superstitions and Four Peaks areas, plus views of impressive granite boulders. No park fee. Restrooms are at the trailhead (no water). Driving distance is 108 miles RT. <https://pchikingclub.smugmug.com/McDowellSonoranPreserve/Marcus-LandslideRock-Knob-Loop>

Directions to McDowell Sonoran Preserve - Tom's Thumb Trailhead (108 mi. RT)

Take Loop 303 North to I-17.

Turn left (North) on I-17.

But stay right and immediately exit onto Dove Valley Road.

Follow Dove Valley Road about 10 miles (becomes Sonoran Desert Dr.)

Take Cave Creek Road North (left).

Turn right on Dynamite Blvd (becomes Rio Verde).

Turn right on Alma School Road.

Turn left on Jomax Road.

Turn right on 118th St.

Turn left on Ranch Gate Road.

Turn right on 128th St.

Stay left as the road runs into the new trailhead.

There are restrooms but no water at trailhead.

Marcus Landslide/Rock Knob Loop (McDowell Sonoran Preserve) Rating C & D. The C

version is a 7.5 mile loop hike with an elevation gain of 740 ft. The D version is an in-and-out hike to the Marcus Landslide area of 4 miles with an elevation gain of 300 ft. There are lots of great views to the east and north including the Superstitions and Four Peaks areas. Plus there are views of great granite boulders. Trail condition - very good hiking trail. No park fee.

Restrooms are at the trailhead. Driving distance is 108 miles RT. <http://pchikingclub.smugmug.com/McDowellSonoranPreserve/Marcus-LandslideRock-Knob-Loop>

Directions to McDowell Sonoran Preserve - Tom's Thumb Trailhead (108 mi. RT)

Take Loop 303 North to I-17.

Turn left (North) on I-17.

But stay right and immediately exit onto Dove Valley Road.

Follow Dove Valley Road about 10 miles (becomes Sonoran Desert Dr.)

Take Cave Creek Road North (left).

Turn right on Dynamite Blvd (becomes Rio Verde).

Turn right on Alma School Road.

Turn left on Jomax Road.

Turn right on 118th St.

Turn left on Ranch Gate Road.

Turn right on 128th St.

Stay left as the road runs into the new trailhead.

There are restrooms but no water at trailhead.

Quartz Trail (McDowell Sonoran Preserve). Rating C/B. This is a 7-8.5 mile out and back hike with an elevation gain of 1100-500 ft. You start out hiking through a neighborhood of nice

houses, before starting to climb the mountain. The C version goes up to a quartz outcropping while the B version continues further up the mountain. There are lots of great views of Scottsdale and Phoenix. Trail condition - overall an average hiking trail, but steady uphill going and downhill coming back. No restrooms at the trailhead. There is no park entrance fee. Driving distance is 101 miles RT. <https://pchikingclub.smugmug.com/McDowellSonoranPreserve/Quartz-Trail>

Directions to McDowell Sonoran Preserve - Quartz Trailhead

Take Hwy 101 north all the way around to Scottsdale
Exit at Princess/Pima-Bell road (exit #36)
Continue straight through the light to get to Bell Road
Turn east (left) on Bell Road and go approx. 1.4 miles
Turn south (right) onto Thompson Peak Parkway.
Turn left on McDowell Ranch Road.
Turn right into Quartz Trailhead parking.

Sunrise Trail (McDowell Sonoran Preserve). Rating C+. This is a 7 mile out and back hike with an elevation gain of 1400 ft in South Eastern Scottsdale. You start at the Lost Dog Wash trailhead. The first 2.75 miles of the trail go up gradually but very steadily about 800 ft to a saddle through typical desert flora. There is an optional peak that goes up .25 and another 100+ feet. If your timing is right, you get great views of the Fountain Hills fountain from the saddle and top. You get 360 degree views from the top including Camelback Mountain to the West, and Four Peaks and Weavers Needle to the East. Restrooms and water are at the trailhead. Trail condition - overall an average hiking trail, but steady uphill going and downhill coming back. There is no park entrance fee. Driving distance is 102 miles RT. [SCG=6.0/2000/3.8].

<http://pchikingclub.smugmug.com/McDowellSonoranPreserve/Sunrise-Trail>

Directions to McDowell Sonoran Preserve - Lost Dog Wash Trailhead

Take Hwy 101 north
Exit onto Shea Blvd east (turn left)
Turn north (left) onto 124th St.
Trailhead parking is at the end of 124th St (about 1 mile)

Directions to McDowell Sonoran Preserve - Lost Dog Wash Trailhead - Alternate

Take I-10 east
Exit onto 202 east
Exit onto 101 north
Exit onto Shea Blvd east (turn right)
Turn north (left) onto 124th st.
Trailhead parking is at the end of 124th st (about 1 mile)

Taliesin Overlook (McDowell Sonoran Preserve). Rating D. This is a 4 mile out and back hike with an elevation gain of 300 ft in South Eastern Scottsdale. You start at the Lost Dog Wash trailhead. There is a Crested Saguaro on the left about 100 yards from the trailhead. The trail goes up very steadily but gradually about 400 ft to a saddle through typical desert flora. From there you can see the top of the Frank Lloyd Wright house in Scottsdale. Restrooms and water are at the trailhead. There is no park entrance fee. Driving distance is 102 miles RT.

<http://pchikingclub.smugmug.com/McDowellSonoranPreserve/Taliesin-West-Overlook>

Directions to McDowell Sonoran Preserve - Lost Dog Wash Trailhead

Take Hwy 101 north

Exit onto Shea Blvd east (turn left)
Turn north (left) onto 124th St.
Trailhead parking is at the end of 124th St (about 1 mile)

Directions to McDowell Sonoran Preserve - Lost Dog Wash Trailhead - Alternate

Take I-10 east
Exit onto 202 east
Exit onto 101 north
Exit onto Shea Blvd east (turn right)
Turn north (left) onto 124th st.
Trailhead parking is at the end of 124th st (about 1 mile)

Tom's Thumb trail from the North trailhead (McDowell Sonoran Preserve Scottsdale).
Rating C+. This is a 6.5 mile hike with an elevation gain of 1100 ft. The uphill portion of the trail is decomposed granite, making for a somewhat slippery surface to hike upon so the hike will go at a slower than normal pace. Tom's Thumb is a 140 ft high granite rock sticking up on the top of the mountain. The top of the mountain has a small valley with many interesting boulder formations. A side trail takes us up to a viewpoint with 360 degree views. There are excellent views of Scottsdale and areas to the West as well as Fountain Hills and the Superstition Mountains to the East. Trail condition - overall a good hiking trail, but fairly steep going up the initial climb. Restrooms are at the trailhead. No park fee. Driving distance is 108 miles RT. [SCG=5.7/2300/4.4].

<http://pchikingclub.smugmug.com/McDowellSonoranPreserve/Toms-Thumb>

Directions to McDowell Sonoran Preserve - Tom's Thumb Trailhead (108 mi. RT)

Take Loop 303 North to I-17.
Turn left (North) on I-17.
But stay right and immediately exit onto Dove Valley Road.
Follow Dove Valley Road about 10 miles (becomes Sonoran Desert Dr.)
Take Cave Creek Road North (left).
Turn right on Dynamite Blvd (becomes Rio Verde).
Turn right on Alma School Road.
Turn left on Jomax Road.
Turn right on 118th St.
Turn left on Ranch Gate Road.
Turn right on 128th St.
Stay left as the road runs into the new trailhead.
There are restrooms but no water at trailhead.

Tom's Thumb Peak via Windgate Pass & Gateway trails (McDowell Sonoran Preserve - Scottsdale). **Rating B+.** This is a 12 mile hike with an elevation change of 2100 ft. The hike starts at the Gateway trailhead area and passes through a typical Saguaro forest. The Gateway trail is fairly flat, the Windgate trail is moderate, and the Tom's Thumb trail is rather steep. At the top you get nearly 360 degree views of the Phoenix area (on a clear day you can see University of Phoenix stadium to the West and Bartlett Reservoir to the East). Restrooms and water are at the trailhead. No park fee. Driving distance is 88 miles RT.

<http://pchikingclub.smugmug.com/McDowellSonoranPreserve/Toms-Thumb>

Directions to McDowell Sonoran Preserve - Gateway Trailhead

Take Hwy 101 north all the way around to Scottsdale.
Exit at Princess/Pima-Bell road (exit #36).
Continue straight through the light to get to Bell Road.

Turn east (left) on Bell Road and go approx. 1.4 miles.
Turn north (left) onto Thompson Peak Parkway.
Turn right into trailhead parking 0.5 mi. up the road.
Restrooms and water are at the trailhead.

Tom's Thumb Trail via Windgate Pass & Gateway trails (McDowell Sonoran Preserve - Scottsdale). Rating C+. This is a 7.4 mile hike with an elevation change of 1000 ft. The hike starts at the Gateway trailhead area and pass through a typical Saguaro forest. The hike goes from the Gateway trail, to the Windgate trail, and then onto the Tom's Thumb trail for about .7 miles. There is an outcropping of quartz a short distance into the Tom's Thumb trail. Once we pass that, we will stop at a small waterfall and another rock outcropping. Restrooms and water are at the trailhead. No park fee. Driving distance is 88 miles RT.

<http://pchikingclub.smugmug.com/McDowellSonoranPreserve/Windgate-Pass>

Directions to McDowell Sonoran Preserve - Gateway Trailhead

Take Hwy 101 north all the way around to Scottsdale.
Exit at Princess/Pima-Bell road (exit #36).
Continue straight through the light to get to Bell Road.
Turn east (left) on Bell Road and go approx. 1.4 miles.
Turn north (left) onto Thompson Peak Parkway.
Turn right into trailhead parking 0.5 mi. up the road.
Restrooms and water are at the trailhead.

Whiskey Bottle/Turpentine/Black Hill Loop (McDowell Sonoran Preserve). Rating C.

Is is an easy loop hike of 7.4 miles with an elevation gain of 500 ft. It goes through a typical Scottsdale desert with nice views of the distant mountains. A highlight is a pair of Saguaros, one a perfect specimen and one with lots of curved arms - A Felix & Oscar pair. Trail Condition – good hiking trail. No restrooms at the trailhead. No park fee. Driving distance is 105 miles RT.

<https://pchikingclub.smugmug.com/McDowellSonoranPreserve/Fraesfield-Trailhead-Loop>

Directions to McDowell Sonoran Preserve - Fraesfield Trailhead

Take Loop 303 North and drive to I-17.
Turn left (North) on I-17.
But stay right and immediately exit onto Dove Valley Road.
Follow Dove Valley Rd about 10 mi. (name changes to Sonoran Desert Drive).
Take Cave Creek Road North (left).
Turn right on Dynamite Blvd (name changes to Rio Verde).
Trailhead is on the left just before 136th Street.
There are no restrooms at trailhead (but you can stop off at the Brown's Ranch Trailhead by turning left on Alma School Road and going about a mile to the end).

Whiskey Bottle/Turpentine/Black Hill Loop (McDowell Sonoran Preserve- Fraesfield Trailhead). Rating D. It is an easy loop hike of 4.7 miles with an elevation gain of 500 ft. It goes through typical Scottsdale desert with nice views of the distant mountains. A highlight is a pair of Saguaros, one a perfect specimen and one with lots of curved arms - A Felix & Oscar pair. No restrooms at the trailhead. No park fee. Driving distance is 105 miles RT. <https://pchikingclub.smugmug.com/McDowellSonoranPreserve/Fraesfield-Trailhead-Loop>

Directions to McDowell Sonoran Preserve - Fraesfield Trailhead

Take Loop 303 North and drive to I-17.
Turn left (North) on I-17.
But stay right and immediately exit onto Dove Valley Road.

Follow Dove Valley Rd about 10 mi. (name changes to Sonoran Desert Drive).

Take Cave Creek Road North (left).

Turn right on Dynamite Blvd (name changes to Rio Verde).

Trailhead is on the left just before 136th Street.

There are no restrooms at trailhead (but you can stop off at the Brown's Ranch Trailhead by turning left on Alma School Road and going about a mile to the end).

Windgate Pass/Gateway trails McDowell Sonoran Preserve (Scottsdale). Rating C+/B.

This is a 7 to 8+ mile hike with an elevation gain of 1300-1600 ft. The C version of the hike goes to Inspiration Viewpoint, which gives nice views of the desert valley, Tom Thumb Peak and Scottsdale. The B version goes to the saddle at Windgate Pass giving views of Four Peaks and Weavers Needle. Both versions start at the Gateway trailhead area and pass through a typical Saguaro forest. This part of the McDowell Sonoran Preserve has many crested barrel cacti. Trail condition - trail surface is typical desert but it is basically a steady uphill hike to the viewpoint or saddle. Restrooms and water are at the trailhead. No park fee. Driving distance is 88 miles RT.

<http://pchikingclub.smugmug.com/McDowellSonoranPreserve/Windgate-Pass>

Directions to McDowell Sonoran Preserve - Gateway Trailhead

Take Hwy 101 north all the way around to Scottsdale.

Exit at Princess/Pima-Bell road (exit #36).

Continue straight through the light to get to Bell Road.

Turn east (left) on Bell Road and go approx. 1.4 miles.

Turn north (left) onto Thompson Peak Parkway.

Turn right into trailhead parking 0.5 mi. up the road.

Restrooms and water are at the trailhead.

