Introduction

The United States Congress designated the Superstition Wilderness in 1964 and it now has a total of 160,236 acres. All of the wilderness is in Arizona and is managed by the Forest Service.

Description

Although there is no guarantee that you'll find buried treasure, you are sure to discover miles and miles of desolate and barren mountains, seemingly endless and haunting canyons, raging summer temperatures that can surpass 115 degrees Fahrenheit, and a general dearth of water. Even the area's earliest known inhabitants, the hardy Hohokam and Salados peoples, established only very small villages and cliff dwellings in this harsh and fabulous country between 800 and 1400 a.d. The Wilderness value of the Superstitions has long been recognized. Established as a Primitive Area in 1939, it was named a pre-Wilderness Act "wilderness" in 1940, and became an official Wilderness in 1964. Elevations range from approximately 2,000 feet on the western boundary to 6,265 feet on Mound Mountain. In the western portion rolling land is surrounded by steep, even vertical terrain. Weaver's Needle, a dramatic volcanic plug, rises to 4,553 feet. The central and eastern portions are less topographically severe. Vegetation is primarily that of the Sonoran Desert, with semidesert grassland and chaparral higher up. Dense brushland covers hundreds of acres. A few isolated pockets of ponderosa pine may be found at the highest elevations. Despite the harsh setting, much of Superstition Wilderness, especially the Peralta and First Water Trails, is overused by humans. These two trailheads receive about 80 percent of the annual human traffic, and the U.S. Forest Service calls the 6.3-mile Peralta one of the most heavily used trails in Arizona. Other trails within the Wilderness are virtually untrodden. There are about 180 miles of trails, ranging from excellent to poor, as well as other unmaintained tracks. Group size is limited to 15 people and 15 head of livestock. Length of stay is limited to 14 days.

Leave No Trace

How to follow the seven standard Leave No Trace principles differs in different parts of the country (desert vs. Rocky Mountains). Click on any of the principles listed below to learn more about how they apply in the Superstition Wilderness.

1. Plan Ahead and Prepare
2. Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces
3. Dispose of Waste Properly
4. Leave What You Find
5. Minimize Campfire Impacts
6. Respect Wildlife
7. Be Considerate of Other Visitors
Area Management

The Superstition Wilderness is part of the 110 million acre National Wilderness Preservation System. This System of lands provides clean air, water, and habitat critical for rare and endangered plants and animals. In wilderness, you can enjoy challenging recreational activities like hiking, backpacking, climbing, kayaking, canoeing, rafting, horse packing, bird watching, stargazing, and extraordinary opportunities for solitude. You play an important role in helping to "secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness" as called for by the Congress of the United States through the Wilderness Act of 1964. Please follow the requirements outlined below and use Leave No Trace techniques when visiting the Superstition Wilderness to ensure protection of this unique area.

General Wilderness Prohibitions

Motorized equipment and equipment used for mechanical transport is generally prohibited on all federal lands designated as wilderness. This includes the use of motor vehicles, motorboats, motorized equipment, bicycles, hang gliders, wagons, carts, portage wheels, and the landing of aircraft including helicopters, unless provided for in specific legislation.

In a few areas some exceptions allowing the use of motorized equipment or mechanical transport are described in the special regulations in effect for a specific area. Contact the Forest Service office or visit the websites listed below for more specific information.

These general prohibitions have been implemented for all national forest wildernesses in order to implement the provisions of the Wilderness Act of 1964. The Wilderness Act requires management of human-caused impacts and protection of the area's wilderness character to insure that it is "unimpaired for the future use and enjoyment as wilderness." Use of the equipment listed as prohibited in wilderness is inconsistent with the provision in the Wilderness Act which mandates opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation and that wilderness is a place that is in contrast with areas where people and their works are dominant.

Fees

The following user fee system(s) have been implemented for this wilderness: TRAILHEAD PARKING. Fees are most often used to offset the operating costs of a permit system or to help fund management activities such as trail maintenance. Contact the national forest office or visit the websites listed below for more specific information on this fee system.

Contacts

Mesa Ranger District
5140 E INGRAM ST
MESA, AZ 85205
Phone: 480-610-3300
# Tonto National Forest

2324 E MCDOWELL  
PHOENIX, AZ 85006

## Links to Other Websites

[Tonto National Forest, Superstition Wilderness](#)

## Links on Wilderness.net

- **National, Regional and Local Wilderness Organizations (NGOs)**  
  A listing of societies, organizations, coalitions and other wilderness-related advocacy and stewardship groups.

- **Career and Volunteer Opportunities**  
  A listing of sites providing information about wilderness- and environmentally-related career and volunteer opportunities.

## Applicable Wilderness Law(s)

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<tr>
<th>Law</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Acreage Change (in acres)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Public Law 88-577</strong></td>
<td>September 3, 1964</td>
<td>124,140</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Wilderness Act - Public law 88-577 (9/3/1964) To establish a National Wilderness Preservation System for the permanent good of the whole people, and for other purposes</td>
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[download 88-577](#)

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<tr>
<th><strong>Public Law 98-406</strong></th>
<th>August 28, 1984</th>
<th>35,640</th>
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[download 98-406](#)