

VISIT HARQUAHALA PEAK

Simply put, Harquahala Peak is the highest mountain in southwest Arizona. With an elevation of 5,681 feet the mountain top is over a mile above sea level and over 2,500 feet higher than Saddle Mountain.

Harquahala means 'water high above' due to the double back bone that drains the mountain to Tiger Wash on the east and Centennial Wash from its west flank.

The ascent traverses three distinct biomes each with a great variety of plants and wildlife. Plus, the mountain's huge mass makes it the region's largest piece of geologic building block within the Basin and Range Providence.

Graced with cloud-free blue skies this mountain played home to a solar observatory from 1920 to 1925. The location was chosen by the Smithsonian Institute. However, the challenges of living at the remote site proved difficult so the research project was abandoned after a five years. In the 1990's, the historic Harquahala Peak Observatory building was stabilized and educational signs were added by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Today, Central Arizona Project communication equipment shares the small peak.

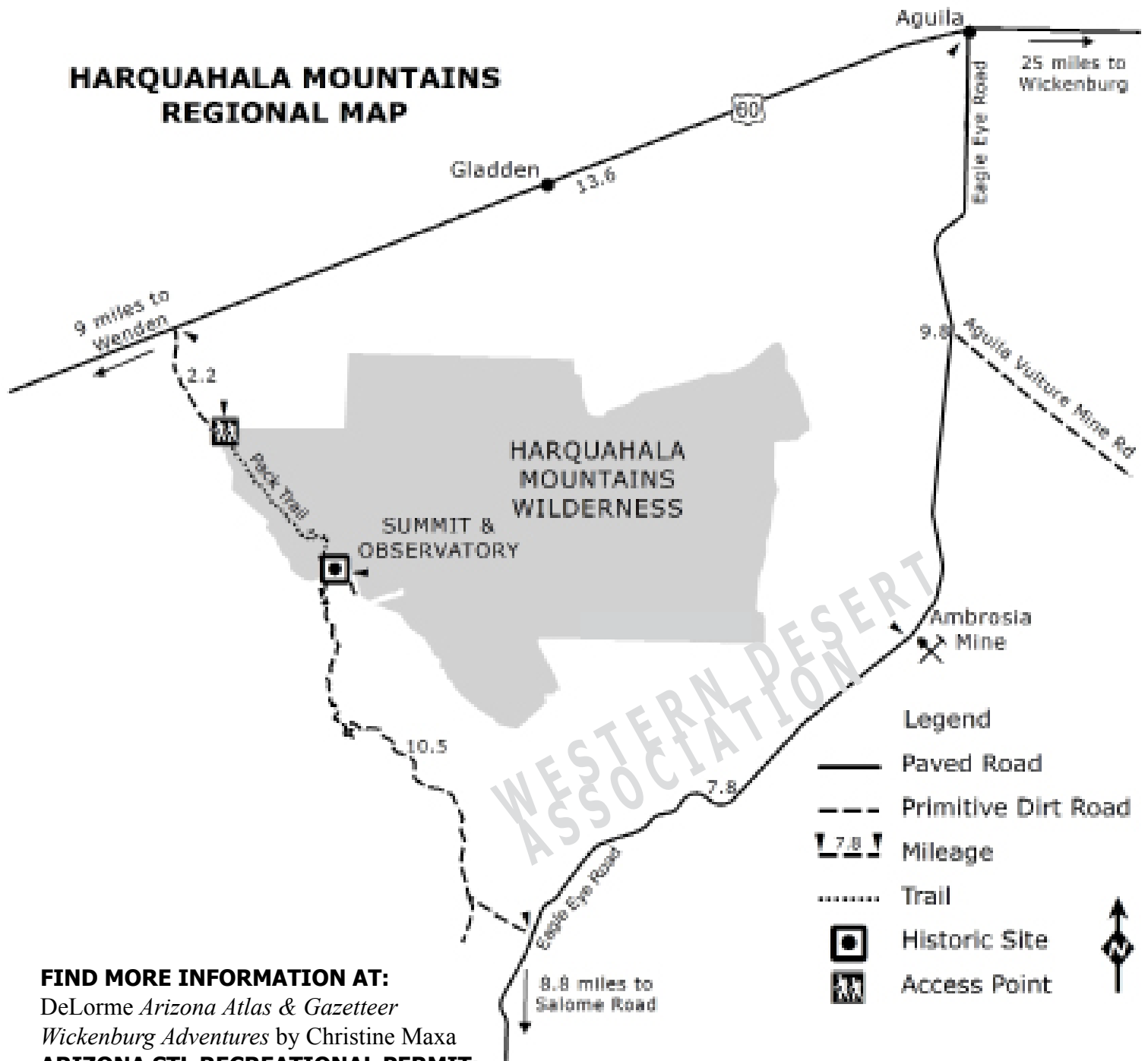
GETTING THERE: The Harquahala Mountains begin showing their scale as they looms over Eagle Eye Road 24 miles northwest of Tonopah. Travel via Interstate 10 west to Salome Road. Continue west to Eagle Eye Road, turn north for 8.5 miles and look west for BLM - Summit Road. In three hundred yards you'll reach a shaded Kiosk, picnic area, pit toilet, trailer unload site and staging area. **Kiosk** has displays on wildlife, plants, geology, prehistoric culture, mining period, and the solar observatory. **Mile 1** of the dirt road is suited for high clearance vehicle to a picnic table with wide open views of a dense Saguaro forest. The first picnic table is a nice location for short hikes. **NOTE:** Harquahala Mountain Summit Road rapidly becomes a rugged "Primitive High-Clearance Four-Wheel Drive Required" road for the remaining 9.5 miles to the mountain top. (This primitive road is rugged and requires preparation and safety measures. Join off-highway vehicle groups or friends for aid when making BLM Back Country trips).

LOOP ROADS: For all vehicles, the scenic drive continues north on Eagle Eye Road past the remnants of the Ambrosia Mine, one of many in the region. Here vertical shafts are common so be cautious when near all mines. Near Aguila is the 'Eagle Eye' worn through the rocky bluff. Southeast the Aguila/Vulture Mine Road provides hill top vistas within an ocotillo forest surrounding Black Butte. This maintained dirt road returns to 355th Ave. near Tonopah. **Driving and Hiking Option:** Another access point is on the west side of Harquahala Mountains. Nine miles north of Wenden (off SR60) is a BLM trailhead for great hikes or horseback riding. A one mile dirt road leads you to a BLM Kiosk and trailhead. The hike follows the original Pack Trail used to haul supplies during construction and operation of the solar observatory. This trail quickly leads hikers up into dense layers of rapidly changing plants, past the rock corral, and enters the pristine Harquahala Wilderness during the 5.5 mile ascent of 3,360 feet. The zigzag trail reaches the observatory, where on a clear day, the mountain top provides a scenic panorama that reaches across the Sonoran desert for over 60 miles in all directions!



Historic solar observatory on top of Harquahala Peak. Built in the 1920's the site is accessible by east side OHV road or west side hiking trail - the original route for researchers, supplies via burros.

HARQUAHALA MOUNTAINS REGIONAL MAP



FIND MORE INFORMATION AT:

DeLorme Arizona Atlas & Gazetteer

Wickenburg Adventures by Christine Maxa

ARIZONA STL RECREATIONAL PERMIT:

http://www.land.state.az.us/programs/natural/recreation_permit.html

BUREAU of LAND MANAGEMENT:

http://www.blm.gov/az/st/en/prog/blm_special_areas/wildareas/harquahala

<http://www.blm.gov/az/st/en/prog/recreation/hiking/harq-eagle-eye.html>

<http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/prog/wilderness/leavenotrace.html>

Trips into the western desert of Arizona will introduce you to beautiful and unique areas.

This part of the Sonoran Desert is fragile and staying on established roads and trails is required to protect the regions scenic beauty and wildlife.

Plan your trip, tell friends where you are going and when to expect your return - or travel in groups. Prepare vehicle with fuel plus extra food and lots of water. Dehydration can be a problem even in the winter. Do not rely on cell telephones in remote areas - they may not work. Respect private and Arizona State Trust land, maintain gates and obtain a recreational permit when planning trips that visit trust land.