

## Palo Verde Trail



Mexican gold poppy is one of dozens of wildflowers found along the Palo Verde Trail.

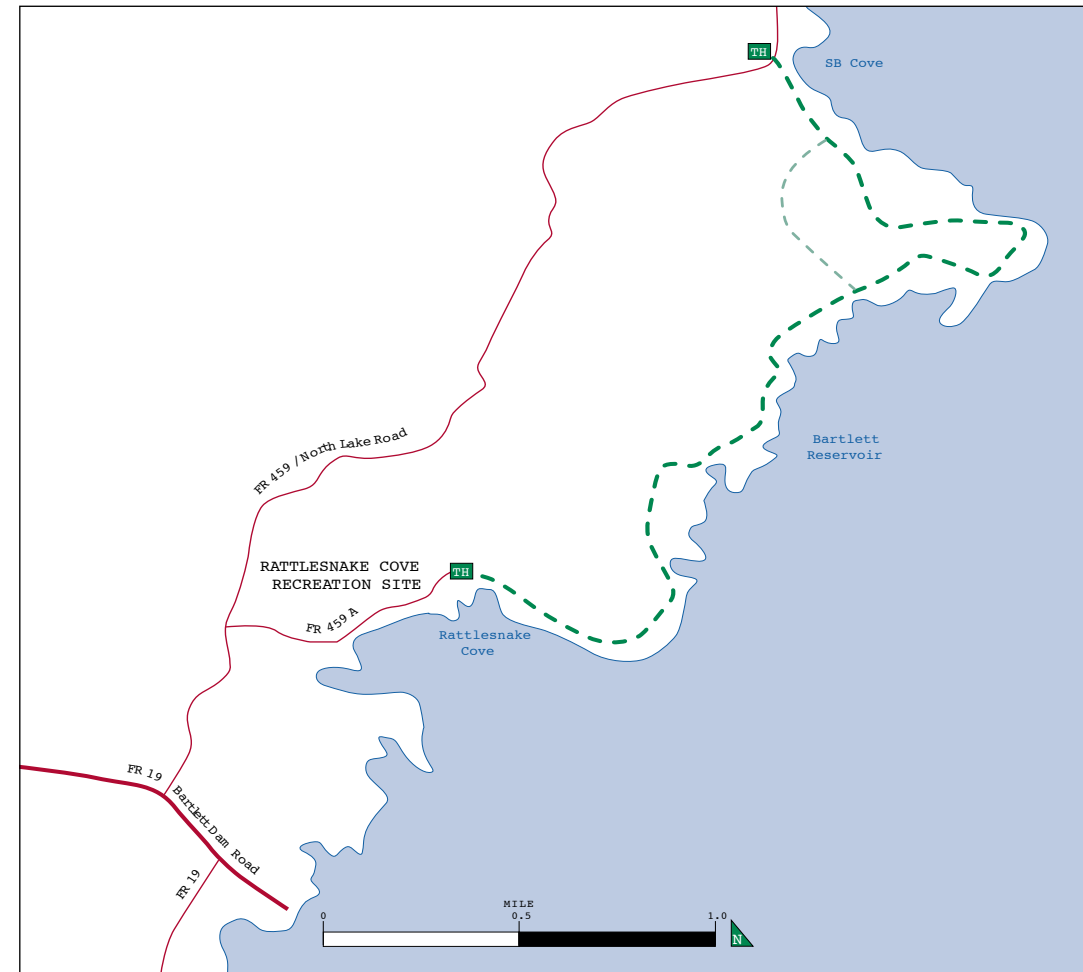
the reservoir's beach. Brittlebush glows gold, chuparosa adds a rich red, globe-mallow offers deep orange and wild buckwheat rose-colored buds and white flowers. Triangle bursage and jojoba bushes make a non-obtrusive background, displaying green flowers.

At the end of the walkway, turn left to start the trail, which climbs up a lake-side bluff. Fairy duster and deep blue wild heliotrope immediately appear. The round, five-petaled wild heliotrope, a species of phacelia, creates striking

The Bartlett Reservoir, part of the Verde River pooled between New River and Mazatzal Mountains by Bartlett Dam, makes an unusual backdrop for this desert hike. The trail parallels the reservoir, as it runs up and down the rumped terrain of the New River Mountains, dips into coves and climbs up hilltops to see stunning panoramas.

After a wet winter, the lakeside's decomposed granite slopes, usually prickly with cactus, come alive with wildflowers. Chuparosa takes to the decomposed granite ground. The predominant brittlebush makes a pretentious show of gold into which several dozen other wildflowers weave a colorful matrix.

The color starts just before the trailhead with blooming bushes that follow the concrete walkway along



patches of blue whenever it appears along the trail, which is often.

As the trail curls around a cove, watch how chia clusters in narrow runoff paths. Watch, too, for desert lavender bushes growing in gullies. Mustard evening primrose, camissonia and whispering bells follow the trail with a variety of yellow-hued blooms as it nears the end of the cove.

The trail rises and falls with the terrain into the next three coves. In the first, woolly daisy scatters under chuparosa and Coulter's lupine snuggles in shallow drainages. As the trail rounds the crook of the next cove, watch for blue Dicks and desert wishbone. Fiddleneck gathers at the mouth of the cove.

Distance One Way	3.8 to 4.7 miles
Trail Rating	Moderate
Location	Bartlett Reservoir, Phoenix
Elevation	1,840 – 1,940 feet
Contact	Tonto National Forest Cave Creek Ranger District, 480-595-3300
Maps	USGS Bartlett Dam; Maverick Mountain
Bloom Season	Late February through March
Peak Bloom	March
Wildflower Alert	In a banner year you can find over 60 different species of wildflowers.
Special Considerations	Permit required; \$6 per vehicle. Purchase from Cave Creek Ranger District, Circle K stores in Cave Creek and other outlets (call district or log onto <a href="http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/tonto">www.fs.fed.us/r3/tonto</a> ). Hikers, only, allowed on this trail.
Directions	From Phoenix, take Cave Creek Road north and drive 33 miles; turn right (east) onto Bartlett Dam Road (FR 19) and drive approximately 14.2 miles to North Lake Road (FR 459) and turn left; drive 0.5 miles to Rattlesnake Cove and turn right; drive 0.8 miles to the trailhead. Follow the paved path at the north end of the facility to the fishing dock. The trailhead starts to the left where the path meets the dock. To arrange a shuttle at SB Cove, drive about 3 miles further on North Lake Road. At a three-way stop at the Yellow Cliffs Boat Ramp, go straight, through the parking lot, to a short dirt road. Follow the dirt road to the beach parking areas. High clearance vehicles recommended, though not a necessity.

Mexican goldpoppy appears in the next cove, brightening up a colony of scruffy triangle bursage. You may see small clusters of cream cups and red maids huddled together in a colony of pepperweed.

As the trail climbs out of the cove, a congregation of Mexican goldpoppy engulfs smaller clusters of yellow throat gilia, popcorn flower and whispering bells. These flowers, as well as a better show of cream cups, follow the trail up the hill until it reaches the peak. When the hill tops out, watch for globemallow and the silvery yellow flowers of desert rock nettle. Though the flower looks delicate, the plant has fine, barbed hairs that sting like a nettle when touched.

At about mile 0.5, the trail starts to parallel the lake. The dichotomy of cool lake water and sear desert creates an unusual twist. Popcorn flower, Mexican

goldpoppy and brittlebush make a constant show with heavy accents from deep red chuparosa and indigo Coulter's lupine.

At mile 0.75, colonies of yellow throat gilia push aside the poppies, and desert wishbone gets caught up in rocks and jojoba bushes that support its weak stems. Owl clover, looking like its Spanish name escobita or little broom, and wild buckwheat make occasional appearances. Woolly daisy weaves a thick network around Coulter's lupine and chia.

## Mustard Evening Primrose

*Camissonia californica*

Standing up to three feet tall with a reedy stem and slender lance-shaped leaves, mustard evening primrose makes a common sight in the desert at spring. Its small four-petaled flowers may have tiny red spots at the base of each petal to guide pollinators to its nectar.



The wildflower develops fruit in the form of long, narrow seedpods as if it belonged to the Mustard Family. But this wildflower belongs to the Evening Primrose Family. In keeping with typical evening primrose characteristics, its flowers turn color when they are on the wane. The bright yellow petals turn a mellow orange. Because bees are attracted to yellow flowers, this signals the pollinator that the flower has nothing to offer, and it should move on to another blossom.

When the trail enters another cove, at about mile 1.25, a colony of cream cups and Mexican goldpoppy, both from the Poppy Family, spread across the slopes. Blue Dicks and fairy duster line the path on its way out of the cove and into the next one at mile 1.5. As the trail climbs out of this cove and heads to a stretch of high ground, wild buckwheat and Mexican goldpoppy join the floral palette.

The trail moves away from the lake at the next cove to investigate the cove's inner folds. Keeping to high ground as it follows the cove's contour, the trail gets to enjoy panoramas of the tumultuous ridgelines of the Mazatzal Mountains across the lake. Trailside, the path strings together colonies of chia, Mexican goldpoppy and yellow throat gilia like colored gems on a bracelet. On the downhill, watch for desert chicory, filaree and a rare showing of wild delphinium.

By mile 2.5, the trail crosses the cove's wash and heads for high ground again. When the trail

tops out, it becomes sketchy in places where you need to involve your route-finding skills by paying attention to cairns.

The next few coves the trail enters on its way to its end at SB Cove have unusual rock formations carved by erosion. Signposts will guide you across each of the coves' washes. When you cross them, watch for unusual white Mexican goldpoppy to appear in the species' typically golden carpets.

At mile 3, signposts in a wash indicate the trail heads straight or left. If you take the left fork, a 1.2-mile loop will veer you away from the lake and then back to the trail. To continue on this hike, go straight to SB Cove.

The trail meanders in and out of washes on its way to SB Cove that have smooth granite boulders stacked curiously on top of one another. Because this part of the trail gets little use, the brittlebush, chuparosa and globemallow bushes paint fiery colors that flare into the path. If you have not arranged a shuttle when you reach SB Cove, return the way you came.



Bartlett Reservoir adds a unique backdrop to the desert landscape of chuparosa (front left) and brittlebush (background).

## Barnhardt Trail

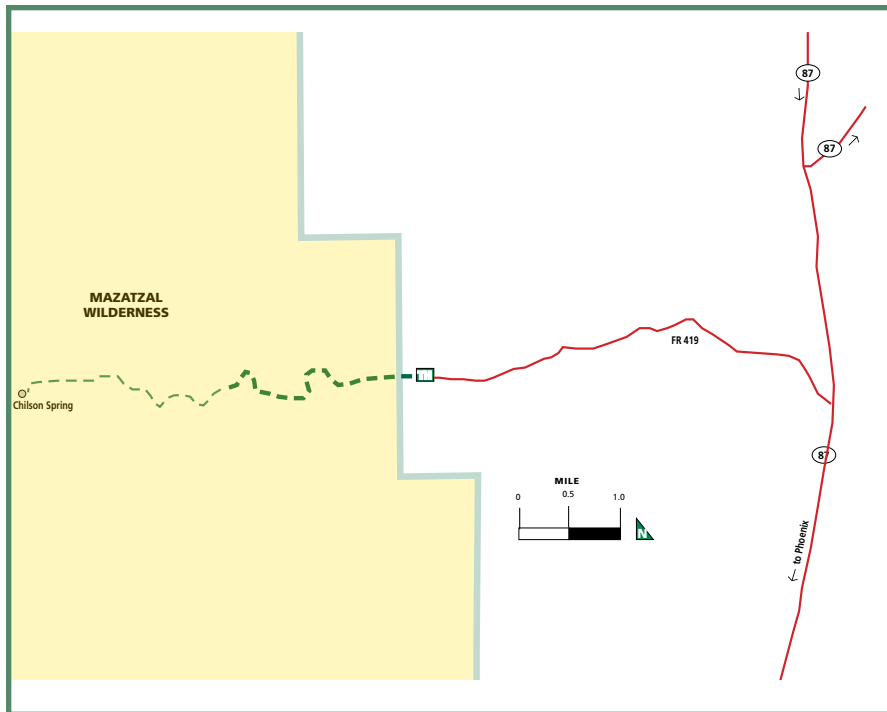


Claret cactus on the edge of an outcropping overlooking Barnhardt Canyon.

The Mazatzal Mountains, one of the more rugged mountain ranges in the state, have trails that take you to spots where you may not encounter another person for days and, depending on the trail, for weeks. The Barnhardt Trail, the most popular in the mountain wilderness, is well-trodden.

The range's unusual name, derived from a native peoples' word for land of the deer, provokes some interesting pronunciations. The correct pronunciation is Mah-zaht-zal. Arizona's state historian, Marshall Trimble, says many Arizona place names have been mangled by local deviations. The locals say Mat-eh-zel because the name rolls off the tongue easier. Trimble pronounces the name like his father, who punched cattle in the area, said it: Mah-tah-sail. Nevertheless, Trimble advises to "go with the locals, or it may double the price of your drinks."

The mountains may be the land of the deer, but they are also home to the rattlesnake, especially in the less-traveled spots. You may also spot a mountain lion print or catch a glance at the hindquarters of a bear lumbering out of sight. If you wander off trail, keep your eyes open and watch where you put your hands and feet.



Distance One Way	2.6 miles
Trail Rating	Strenuous
Location	Mazatzal Mountains, Phoenix
Elevation	4,200 – 5,600 feet
Contact	Tonto National Forest, Mesa Ranger District, 480-595-3300
Maps	USGS Mazatzal Peak
Bloom Season	Late March - June
Peak Bloom	April
Wildflower Alert	Doubting mariposa lily blankets the roadsides to the trailhead on Barnhardt Mesa.
Special Considerations	Watch for poison ivy around seeps and streams. Part of the trail is located in the Mazatzal Wilderness where no mechanized vehicles, including mountain bikes, are permitted.
Directions	From Shea Boulevard in Phoenix, go north on AZ 87 47.2 miles to the Barnhardt Trail turnoff; turn left (west) on FR 417 and drive 5 miles to the trailhead. High clearance vehicle required.



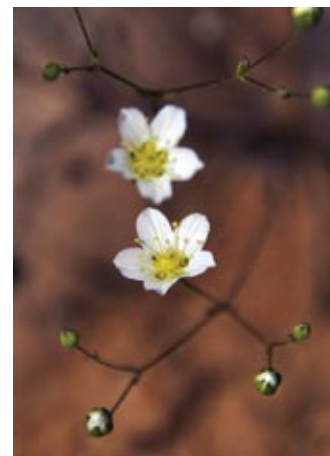
Doubting mariposa lily



Crow poison

For all the difficulties the mountains pose in terrain and name, one of the nicest high desert shows of wildflowers happens when spring hits the Barnhardt Trail. The show starts right along the roadsides on the way to the trailhead where doubting mariposa lily populates the mesa. The first word of its scientific name *Calochortus ambiguus* means beautiful grass—a fitting name for the showy flower with grass-like leaves. The flower is sometimes confused with the trailing mariposa lily or incorrectly identified as sego lily; you can tell the difference by the usually bowed, weak stem and white anthers of the former.

You may also find common lower desert dwellers, owl clover, goldfields, red maids and blue Dicks in the lily mix. Then look for some interesting high desert dwellers like lomatium, also called Nevada biscuit root; the lily-like crow poison, also called false garlic; and Douglas' sandwort.



Douglas' sandwort

At the trailhead, the Barnhardt Trail is the middle of the three signed trails. The route starts out with a rocky surface, so watch your step as you watch the trailsides for flowers. Crow poison appears often in this early part of the trail. After a wet winter and/or spring, watch closely for lewisia, especially in its favorite shadowed habitat among rocky patches of ground under juniper trees. Also watch for winecup clarkia. Its striking purple flowers with the four opposing petals so common in the Onagraceae Family, bloom from red stems.

The woody-stemmed plant with a cluster of light pink flowers is bristlehead. The



Bristlehead



Winecup clarkia



Diamondleaf saxifrage



Spring beauty



Pursh's wallflower

four spoon-shaped petals. Its shiny, dark green leaves, a favorite of deer, have three prominent sunken veins. The Navajo use the leaves in a smoking mixture. Ceanothus, with a candy-sweet fragrance that earned it the alternate common name of wild lilac, is also browsed by deer. Just below the trail on the downslope, you may notice stunning bursts of yellow-orange flowers from the flannel bush.

In March, you may catch the tail end of the sugar sumac bush's bloom season and find white clusters colored by pink-tinged buds. Its leaves sometimes have a maroon blush. At the same time, you may see the unobtrusive flowers of the quinine bush or its clusters of green fruit.



Cliff fendlerbush

At about mile 1.5, rocky ledges and outcroppings have scarlet colored flowers on the claret cup cactus. Also look for rock echeveria nestled in the outcroppings. Where piñon pine and oaks provide enough shade, especially in moist crevices, western waterleaf appears. The light purple ball of blossoms and distinctive hairy leaves help you identify this plant. If there's been a wet winter, you'll have to sidestep seeps along the trail. Miner's lettuce, yellow mon-

brushy plant likes to congregate along the trailsides in wooded areas. Palmer's lupine appears in the sunny spots when the trail starts to drop into a drainage at about mile 0.25. Ceanothus and deer vetch like the shade-speckled spot. The climb out of the shallow drainage is lined with bajada lupine, Palmer's lupine, and littleleaf globemallow.

The trail enters a burn area from the 2004 Willow Fire. Now, with the pine-oak forest floor receiving more sunlight, you are apt to see a nice collection of flowers. Look for deep orange Pursh's wallflower, the blue and white maiden blue-eyed Mary, littleleaf globemallow, linanthus and more moments of Palmer's lupine.

Just past the wilderness boundary, about mile 1, you may catch glimpses of Barnhardt Creek several hundred feet below the trail through the line of bushes that start appearing along the path. The white blossoms of the cliff fendlerbush have

**Lewisia**  
Lewisia brachycalyx

You often find Portulaca Family flowers among rocky ground, and lewisia is no different. The succulent plant with the light pink petals is a cousin to the moss rose, cultivated for rock gardens. Lewisia got its name for Merriwether Lewis, of Lewis and Clark fame. The roots are edible and nutritious. But beware: lewisia's other common name is shortsepal bitterroot.

key flowers and cleavers like the wet environment.

The geology of the canyon grows tumultuous by about mile 2. Barnhardt Canyon's north wall shows pressured strata and jagged lifts of maroon cliffs. Golden-flower agave appears abundantly on it. Trailside, desert paintbrush and New Mexico groundsel show bold coral and gold colors. You might catch sight of rock cress, its long spindly stem bobbing in the breeze. The Mustard Family's purple-pink flowers are small with cross-shaped petals. At about mile 2.25, watch for tall New Mexico raspberry bushes showing half-dollar sized white flowers with floppy petals and more western waterleaf.

In just over another quarter-mile, the trail climbs to a maroon-colored chasm. During wet weather, a stream of water pours down to Barnhardt Creek just below and often pools around and across the trail. During snowmelts, a spectacular waterfall cascades down a chute in the back of the chasm.

This wet environment supports a variety of moisture-loving flowers normally found in higher country. Look for loose clusters of tiny pink flowers on alumroot nestled in the ledges on the boulders and rock walls, along with diamondleaf saxifrage. The latter has basal rosette leaves that live up to its common name. Spring beauty grows on the moist floor. Also watch for poison ivy here.

This hike returns to the trailhead, but you may continue another 3.2 miles up the Barnhardt Trail to the Mazatzal Divide Trail. If you do travel onward, be prepared for rough hiking conditions from the Willow Fire, especially on the Mazatzal Divide Trail, which will slow your progress.



Western waterleaf