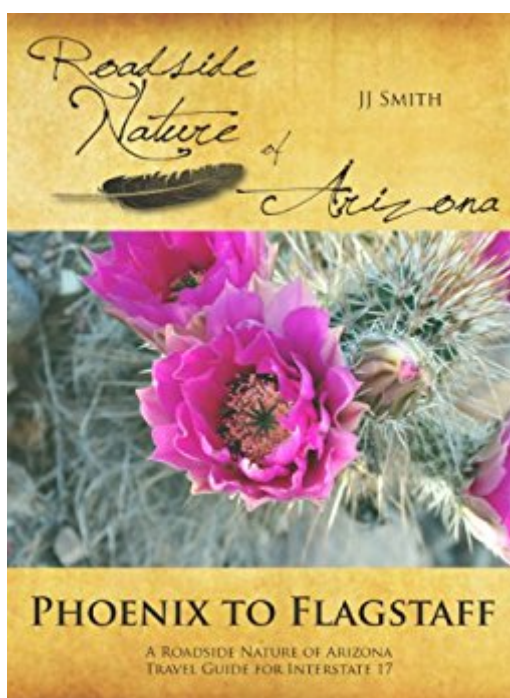


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# Phoenix To Flagstaff: A Roadside Nature Of Arizona Travel Guide For Interstate 17



## Synopsis

Along this route you will see evidence of plant and animal adaptations to the extreme difference in elevation between Phoenix and Flagstaff. You will pass through a variety of ecosystems including the Sonoran Desert—arguably the most spectacularly weird desert on the planet. You will also see grasslands, open woodlands (savannas), and in the northern portion of the route, a majestic high-elevation conifer forest. Each of these ecosystems corresponds to a specific elevation range called a life zone. Interstate 17 traverses millions of acres of public lands suitable for tent camping, hiking, and exploring. National monuments along this drive include the recently designated Agua Fria and the ecologically fascinating sinkhole called Montezuma Well. Montezuma castle, a spectacular prehistoric cliff dwelling is just a few minutes from the interstate, as are several other archaeological sites. Some of the natural history topics discussed in detail include: the Arizona monsoon phenomenon, saguaro cactus restoration, mastodon and camel fossils, Montezuma Well ecology, and tree parasites.

**About the Author** JJ Smith, M.S., holds degrees in Physical Geography and Forestry and has over 20 years of experience as a field naturalist, park ranger, biological technician, forester, research station manager, and university instructor. He has lived in and explored Arizona for the past decade.

**About Roadside Nature Travel Guides** Roadside Nature is a new, different style of natural history travel guide that aims to cover the most spectacular scenic drives on the planet as well as some less popular routes that offer wilder, more intimate outdoor experiences for independent-minded travelers. Most nature guides cover identification of birds, reptiles, plants, rocks, and so on, or they focus on a particular environment, like the Sonoran Desert or the Everglades. Travel guides tend to concentrate on eating, sleeping, shopping, and city-based cultural and natural attractions. Roadside Nature approaches nature-based travel a little differently; they describe the most prominent and fascinating natural features (whether they are geologic, avian, meteorological, or furry) along a specific travel path. Like other travel guides, Roadside Nature Travel Guides also cover the topics of eating and sleeping, but with the independent, outdoor-oriented traveler in mind, focusing mostly on quiet picnic spots and out of the way places to camp on public lands. The biggest difference between a Roadside Nature Travel Guide and other guides is that they are written by local naturalists who are intimately familiar with their environments and passionate about sharing their knowledge with others. This hand-crafted approach lets you bring along the experience and knowledge of a local guide without cramping the independence or discovery that should be a part of every good trip.

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