



DAY TRIP TO KENTUCKY CAMP

From Sonoita · Pima County, Arizona



GOLD MINING



Photo: The Old Pueblo, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0

OPEN YEAR-ROUND

Forest Service historic site. Free day use; cabin and headquarters bookable on Recreation.gov.

Kentucky Camp is an easy half day from Sonoita. The last five miles are dirt forest road, and you walk the last 3/8 mile from the parking area. The camp has drinking water, toilets and picnic tables but no food, so bring lunch. Add a walk on the Arizona Trail, which runs through camp, and you have a full day.

A SAMPLE DAY

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| ☐ 9 a.m. | Leave Sonoita. Take AZ 83 north, then Gardner Canyon Road and FR 163, about 50 minutes in all. |
| ☐ 10 a.m. | Park at the gate and walk in. Start at the headquarters building, with its porch, exhibits and restored kitchen. |
| ☐ 10:45 a.m. | Walk the lane past the assay office, the house believed to have been Stetson's and the barn ruins with the old car. |
| ☐ 11:30 a.m. | Walk part of the Arizona Trail south of camp, where mining relics and a few interpretive signs line the route. Gardner Canyon is about 4 miles on, so turn around whenever you like. |
| ☐ 1 p.m. | Picnic at the tables beside the headquarters. |
| ☐ 2 p.m. | Walk back to the car and drive out to AZ 83. |
| ☐ Dinner | Back in Sonoita, Copper Brothel Brewery on AZ 83 serves food Wednesday to Saturday until 8 p.m. and Sunday until 6 p.m. It's closed Monday and Tuesday. |

Coming from Tucson? Allow about 1 hour 40 minutes and leave by 8:15 a.m. to reach the gate at 10.

WHAT TO PHOTOGRAPH

- **The camp lane.** From near the barn ruins, the barn, the headquarters in the trees and an adobe house fit in one frame, as in the photo at the top of this page.
- **The headquarters.** Shoot the long porch from a corner of the yard so the roofline sits against the sky.
- **Adobe walls.** Low sun early or late in the day brings out the texture of the assay office and the houses.
- **Inside.** The front room has period furniture and historic photos on the wall. The windows are bright, so expose for the room.
- **The old car.** The remains of an early automobile lie beside the barn ruins. A low angle sets them against the adobe.
- **The Arizona Trail.** Mining relics line the trail south of camp. Photograph them and leave them where they are.
- **Drones.** The Coronado National Forest bars drones near picnic areas, campgrounds and trailheads, and Kentucky Camp has picnic tables. Elsewhere on the forest, flights must be recreational, in daylight and within sight.



USGS topographic map, 1904 (public domain). The ring and pin mark the town.

DAY TRIP ESSENTIALS

DRIVE	10 mi, about 51 min each way from Sonoita. From Tucson: 50 mi, about 1 h 42 min.
OPEN	Year-round. There's no fee for a day visit.
ROAD	About five miles of dirt forest road off AZ 83. Recreation.gov calls it passable by passenger car but recommends high clearance. The Forest Service warns of heavy off-highway-vehicle traffic on the forest roads outside camp.
ON FOOT	The parking area is 3/8 mile from the buildings. If you need to drive in because of a disability, the Forest Service brochure asks you to call (520) 281-2296.
RESTROOMS	Vault toilets.
FOOD AND WATER	Drinking water comes from four hose bibs on site. Nothing is for sale, so pack a lunch. There are picnic tables and a propane grill.
INSIDE	The restored headquarters has exhibits, and its old kitchen opened to the public in 2026. A volunteer caretaker is usually there to answer questions, but not always.
PETS	Allowed on a leash. Pick up after them.
RULES	No camping and no off-highway vehicles inside the Kentucky Camp boundary. OHVs aren't allowed on the Arizona Trail either.
SEASON	Open all year. In summer the Forest Service warns of extreme heat, venomous wildlife and monsoon storms.
CELL SIGNAL	Recreation.gov says coverage is usually available in the area but may be unreliable at the cabin.
WEBSITE	fs.usda.gov/ro3/coronado/recreation/kentucky-camp

BEFORE YOU GO

- Check the status with the land manager before you go; conditions change.
- Stay out of mine shafts, tunnels and unstable buildings.
- Leave artifacts where they lie. Removing them can be a crime.
- Carry water, a paper map and a charged phone; signal is often poor.

Coordinates 31.74460, -110.74210 · 31°44'41"N
110°44'32"W

Full guide abandonedtowns.com/arizona/kentucky-camp/

Directions [Google Maps](#)

Details checked October 2026. Hours, prices and access change: confirm before you go.