DAY TRIP TO YARNELL

From Wickenburg · Yavapai County, Arizona

GOLD MINING

Photo: Matt Kieffer from London, United Kingdom, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 2.0

LIVING TOWN

Unincorporated town of about 570 people (2020 census). The memorial state park is open daily, sunrise to sunset.

Yarnell is a paved 40-minute drive from Wickenburg. Two miles south of town, Granite Mountain Hotshots Memorial State Park has a trail to the site where 19 firefighters died in 2013. The full walk takes four hours or more, so start in the morning and save the town for the afternoon.

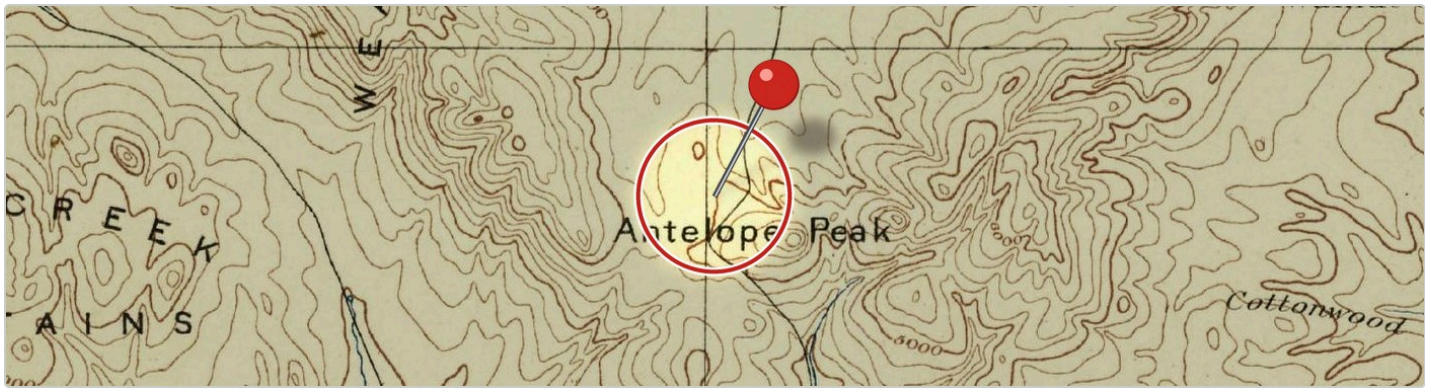
A SAMPLE DAY

☐ 7 a.m.	Leave Wickenburg on US 93, then AZ 89 north through Congress and up the grade, about 40 minutes.
☐ **7:45 a.m.**	Start up the Hotshots Trail. Granite plaques set every 600 feet each tell the story of one of the 19 men.
☐ 9:30 a.m.	Reach the observation deck and the Tribute Wall. The Fatality Site lies 400 feet below.
☐ **10 a.m.**	Walk down the Journey Trail to the Fatality Site, then turn back. The climb out and the walk to the trailhead take about two hours.
☐ 12:45 p.m.	Lunch in Yarnell.
☐ 2 p.m.	See the Shrine of St. Joseph of the Mountains on Shrine Road and the Yarnell Hill Fire Memorial Park in town.
☐ 3 p.m.	Drive back to Wickenburg, about 40 minutes. In Congress, Ghost Town Road leads to the cemeteries of old Congress if you have time.

From Phoenix the drive is about two hours by Grand Avenue and Wickenburg. Leave by 6 a.m. to start the trail around 8.

WHAT TO PHOTOGRAPH

- **The plaques.** Nineteen granite plaques set in the rocks along the trail each carry a photo and a story. Shoot them straight on to keep the text readable.
- **The observation deck.** The Fatality Site and its 19 chained gabions lie 400 feet below the deck. A longer lens isolates them against the slope.
- **The Tribute Wall.** Visitors leave stickers, patches and other mementos. Close-ups of single objects say more than a wide shot.
- **The shrine.** Life-size figures stand among granite boulders, as in the 1991 photos on this page. The shade under the boulders is deep, so expose for the figures.
- **Old Yarnell.** The old Texaco station on AZ 89 has a tall sign, vintage pumps and an old Ford, as in the photos at the top and in the gallery. Shoot from the street.
- **The view off the hill.** Near the top of the grade the desert opens to the southwest. Stop only where you can pull fully off the highway.



USGS topographic map, 1887 (public domain). The ring and pin mark the town.

DAY TRIP ESSENTIALS

DRIVE	25 mi, about 40 min each way from downtown Wickenburg. From Phoenix: 78 mi, about 1 h 58 min.
MEMORIAL PARK	Open sunrise to sunset. Free. The parking area is on the southbound side of AZ 89, 2 miles south of Yarnell, with only 12 car spaces and 4 for motorcycles.
THE TRAIL	About 7 miles round trip, with 1,200 feet of climbing and more than 200 rock stairs. The Hotshots Trail runs 2.85 miles to an observation deck, and the Journey Trail drops three-quarters of a mile to the Fatality Site. Allow four hours or more, and start before noon.
RESTROOMS	Temporary portable restrooms at the trailhead. There are no trash cans, so pack out what you bring.
FOOD AND WATER	No drinking water on the trail. Bring water and food. Yarnell has several restaurants.
DOGS	Leashed dogs are welcome on the trail.
AT THE FATALITY SITE	Stay outside the ring of gabions, out of respect for the crew and their families.
DRONES	Arizona State Parks prohibits all recreational drone use in state parks.
ROAD	Paved AZ 89 all the way. The Yarnell Hill grade is steep and curved.

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 34.22170, −112.74740 · 34°13′18″N 112°44′51″W

Directions Google Maps

Full guide abandonedtowns.com/arizona/yarnell/

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