

TOWN OF GILA BEND WOOLSEY PEAK TRAIL

For intermediate to advanced hikers

OVERVIEW

Woolsey Peak Wilderness is a 64,000-acre property in southwestern Arizona. This is an ancient ocean bottom landscape where the mountains get their size only in relation to how low and flat the surrounding bajadas and desert floor are. Woolsey Peak itself stands 3,270 feet above sea level, about 2,500 feet higher than the Gila River that flows by only a few miles to the south.

This is prime Sonoran Desert: basalt mesas, broken ridges and ragged peaks above sloping lava flows and gravel bajadas, all speckled with paloverde, cholla, bursage, creosote bush, ironwood and giant saguaro. There aren't a lot of them but you just might come across mule deer, mountain lion, bobcat, desert bighorn sheep, owls, hawks and the usual assortment of reptiles, amphibians and desert songbirds.

Woolsey Peak Wilderness is separated from Signal Mountain Wilderness by a jeep trail.

Best time to do hike:

November through January

Average Time:

3-5 hours

How to get there:

From Gila Bend, slightly west of where state routes AZ-85 (from Phoenix) and AZ-238 (from Maricopa) meet, find Old US-80 and travel north. After about a dozen miles, pass over the historic Gillespie truss bridge spanning the Gila River at Gillespie Dam, and proceed another few miles to Agua Caliente Road on the left (west). Agua Caliente Road is graded dirt, and be sure to follow the signs as it bends in places. To get anywhere near the wilderness boundary, you will need high-clearance on a 4WD vehicle.

We recommend that you use the Eastern Face of the peak for easiest access to the summit. Cholla cacti is abundant, wear durable pants and socks. Bring plenty of water and let people know where you are going.

Low-impact primitive camping is permitted.