

Guide to Hikes
in the
Fountain Hills Preserve

DJ Willard

Purpose

This Guide was created to provide a brief, but informative summary of the hikes available in the Fountain Hills Preserve and the immediate surrounding area. My hope is that it serves that purpose and is informative enough for you to choose the hikes that result in the best positive experience for your abilities and time constraints.

The focus of the Guide is on hiking routes (versus trail information). I hope this provides enough (but not too much) information so that you can choose a hike that best fits your abilities and available time frame.

I encourage you to enjoy the Preserve on multiple visits, and add hikes based on length and elevation gain. The Preserve has some fantastic hikes to help you enjoy the outdoors, get some healthy exercise, and see some spectacular views.

Enjoy!

Table of Contents

<u>Page</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1	Terminology
2	Rating hikes
3	Overview map area trails
4	Overview map of FH Preserve trails
6	Hikes from Adero Canyon trailhead <ul style="list-style-type: none">* Ridgeline and Overlook hikes* Sonoran Trail hikes* Andrews-Kinsey Trail hikes
13	Western loop
14	Bicycle bypass
16	Hikes from Golden Eagle (Dixie Mine) trailhead
19	Crossover hikes

Appendix

List of hikes

Terminology used in this Guide

ACT – Adero Canyon Trailhead

FHP = Fountain Hills Preserve

GET – Golden Eagle Trailhead (also referred to as the Dixie Mine Trailhead)

MMRP – McDowell Mountain Regional Park

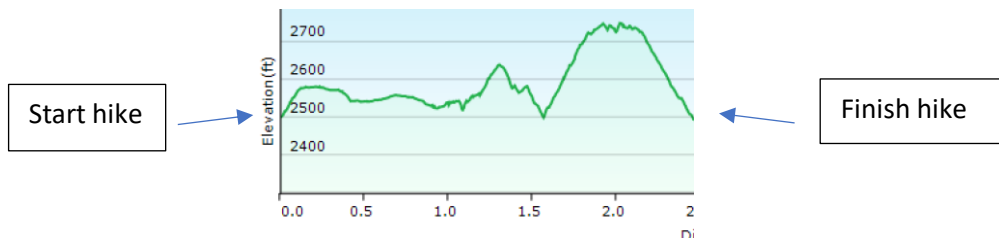
MSP – McDowell Sonoran Preserve (this is the Scottsdale Preserve)

RT = round trip length of hike back to starting point. All hike distances in this Guide are round trip distance starting and ending at the trailhead.

Elev. Gain = Cumulative Elevation Gain for the hike

A word about Cumulative Elevation Gain: The “Cumulative” means all the uphill elevation gain is counted, not just the beginning and ending elevations.

For example, a one-way hike on a hilly terrain has significant Cumulative Elevation Gain, even though the hike starts and ends at the same elevation:



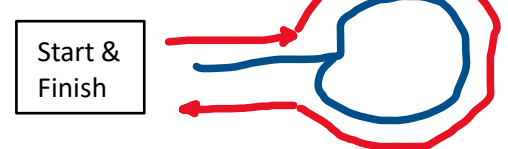
Types of hike by shape

Hikes can have a number of different shapes:

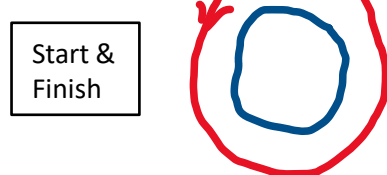
An “out and back” hike:



A “lollipop” hike:



A “loop” hike:



A “crossover” hike:



Hiking Speed

Often a significant part of the decision of what hike to take involves how long it will take. A good rule of thumb is to plan on hiking 1.5 miles per hour. This represents a moderate pace and includes time for periodic breaks during the hike for rest, snacks, water and enjoying the views. Of course, some will go faster than this and some slower.

Hikes vs Trails

It is important to differentiate between a hike and a trail. Many trails, e.g., the Sonoran, Ridgeline, and Andrews-Kinsey trails, do not start at a trailhead, but connect to a trail that does. The hiking maps provide information on the length of the trail, not the length of a hike. This Guide has its emphasis on the specific hike details.

Rating hikes

Rating hikes is not an easy, or straight forward (or uncontroversial) endeavor. One person's easy hike is another's difficult one. Think of hikes as putting stress on your heart, your lungs, your legs, and your feet. For some, the length of the hike is the overriding factor, for others, the elevation gain has a larger impact. A rocky trail adds more difficulty for some hikers than others. Blisters can occur if your feet are not in hiking shape.

Note that ratings on the trail map refer to the trail, and do not necessarily align with a specific hike. Also, the ratings are relative to other hikes in the FH Preserve and so are not comparable to hike ratings outside the Preserve.

This Guide emphasizes the Length and the Cumulative Elevation Gain as the primary factors in determining hike difficulty. For most experienced hikers, regardless of level, these two metrics provide a good measure of answering the questions:

“Would this hike be an enjoyable hike for me?”

“Is this hike a good fit for my fitness level?”

“Does this fit comfortably with the time I have available?”

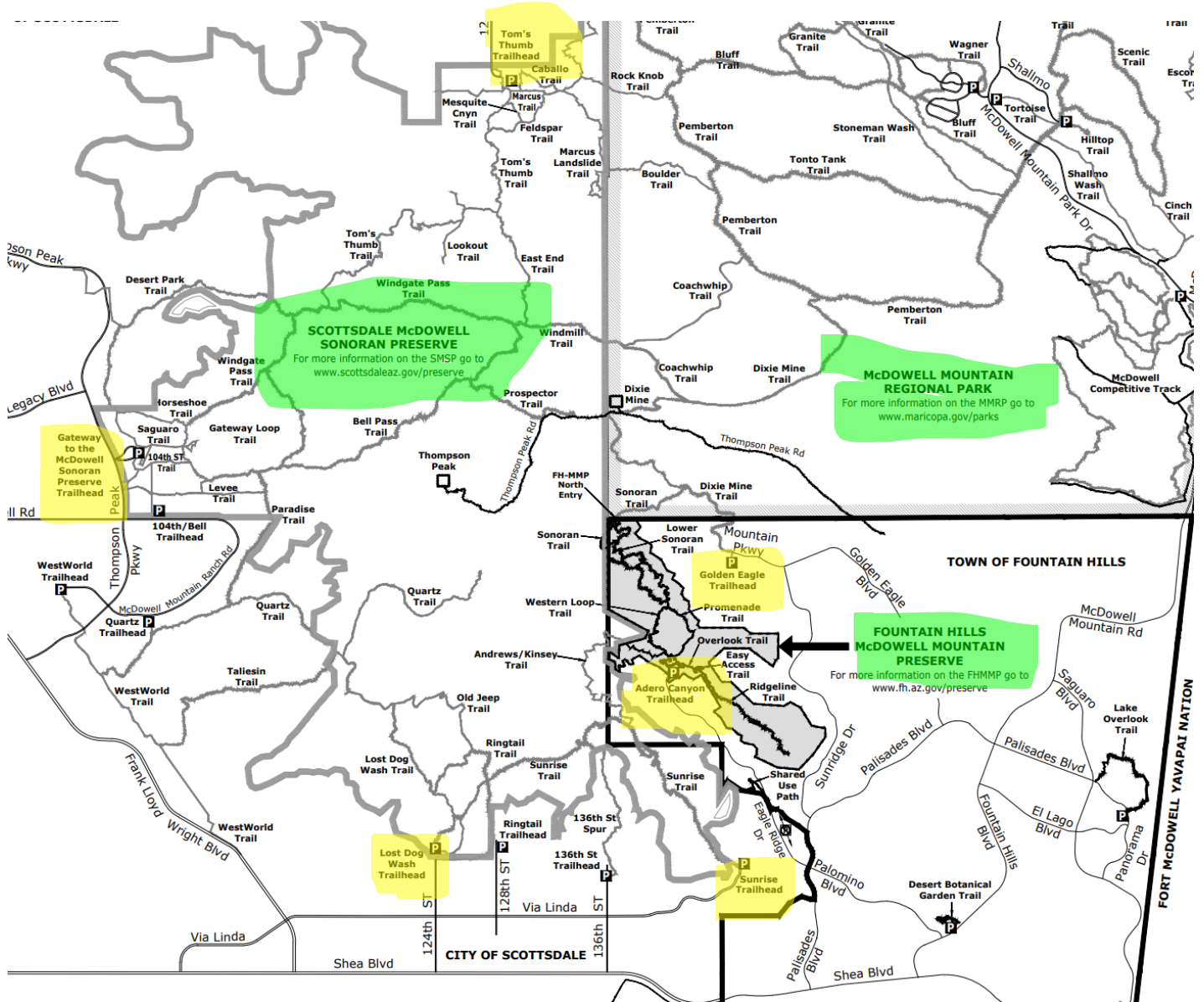
As you go on various hikes, both in the Fountain Hills Preserve and elsewhere, pay attention to these two metrics. Get yourself calibrated as to what specific length and elevation gains are comfortable for you.

An important point about hiking in this area, and not to be underestimated, is that any hike will be significantly more difficult in the heat of the day versus in the early morning or a cooler time of year.

Overview of Area hiking trails

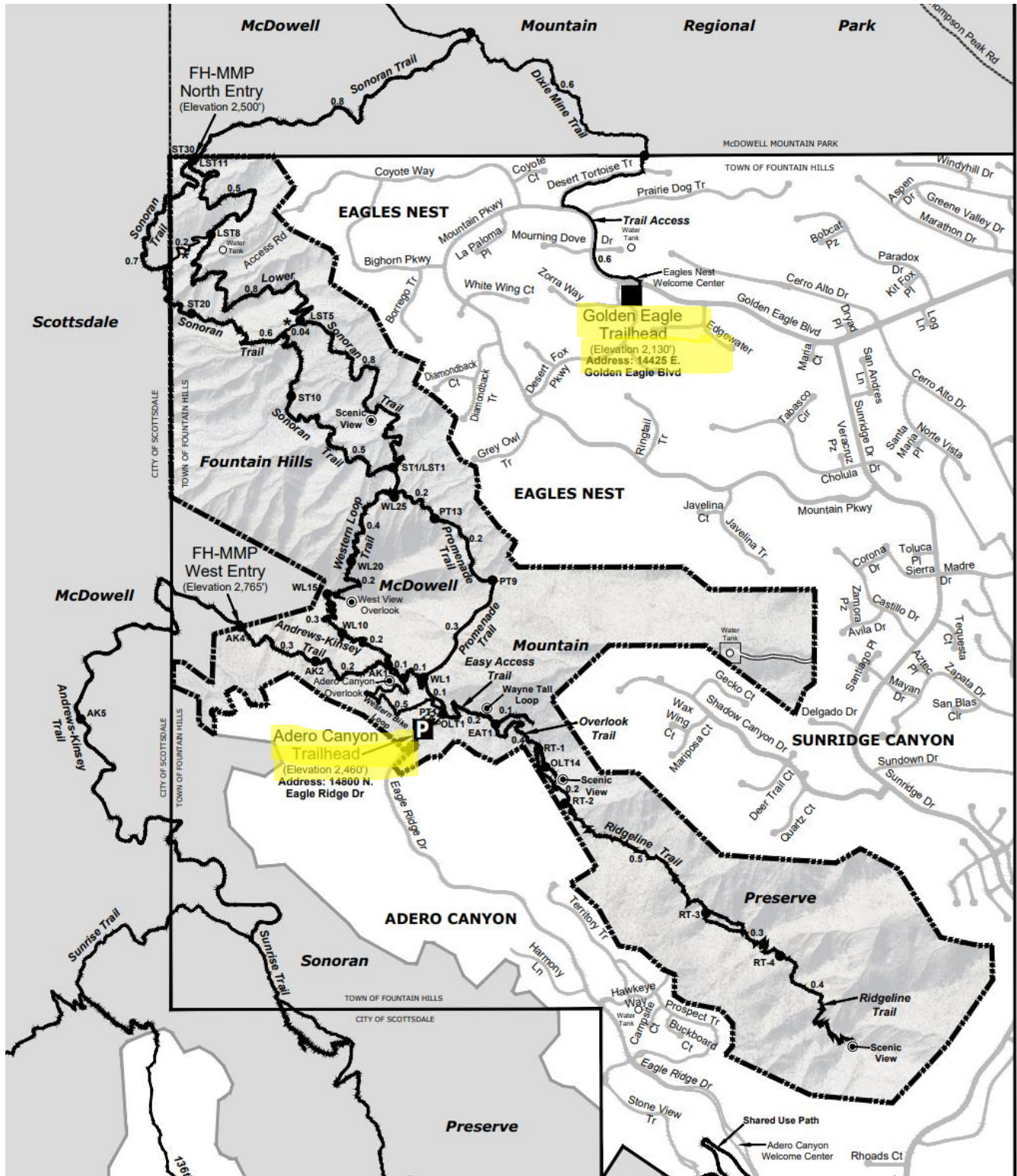
The Fountain Hills Preserve (FHP) is bordered by the Scottsdale McDowell Sonoran Preserve (MSMP) and the McDowell Mountain Regional Park (MMRP). Many hikes include parts of all three of these areas.

The main trailheads are highlighted in yellow:



Overview of Fountain Hills Preserve hikes

The main Fountain Hills trailheads are highlighted in yellow.



Trailheads

As noted on the map, there are two main trailheads to the FHP hikes:

Adero Canyon Trailhead

The main trailhead to the Fountain Hills Preserve is the Adero Canyon Trailhead, accessed via Eagle Ridge drive. Parking, water, and restrooms are available at the trailhead. The trailhead is open from sunrise to sunset.

Golden Eagle Trailhead (Dixie Mine Trailhead)

The Golden Eagle Trailhead, accessed via Golden Eagle Blvd, also allows access to the Preserve (North Entry) via a half-mile walk through a sub-division, then an additional 1.5-mile hike through trails in the McDowell Mountain Regional Park. Because the main route from this trailhead is to the Dixie Mine it is often referred to as the Dixie Mine trailhead.

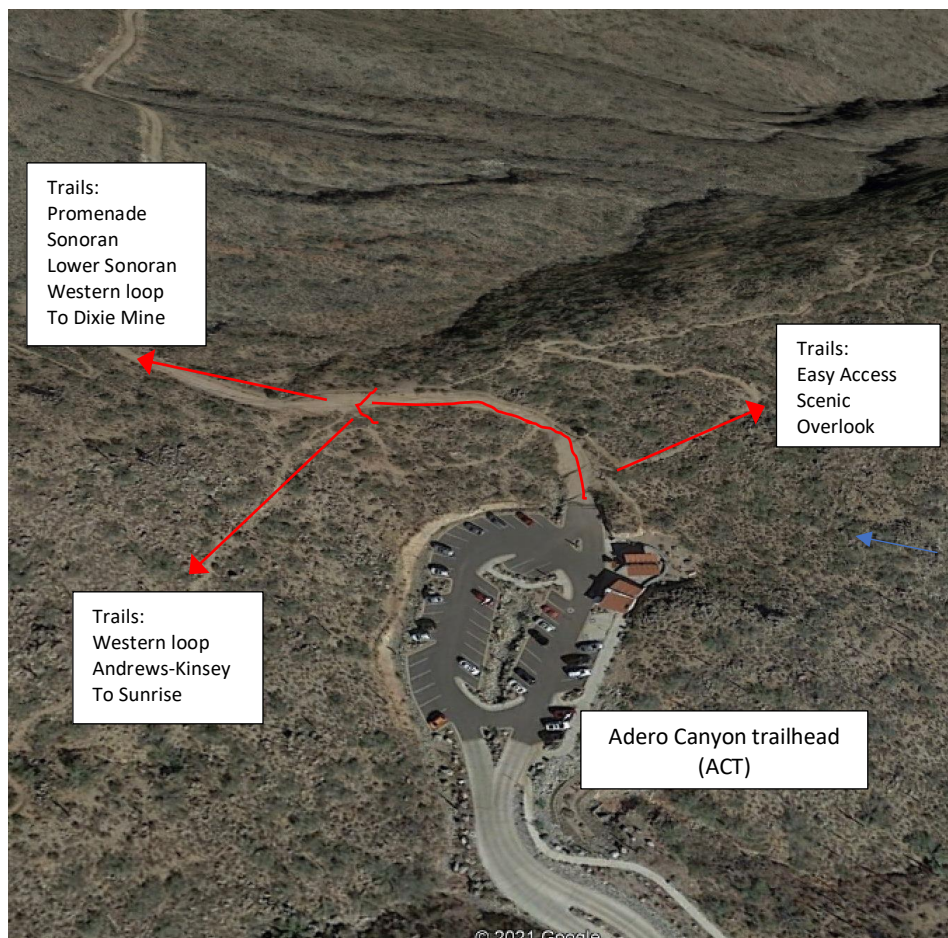
Access to the Preserve (West Entry) can also be gained via the Sunrise Peak and Andrews-Kinsey trails in the Scottsdale Sonoran Preserve.

Hikes from Adero Canyon trailhead

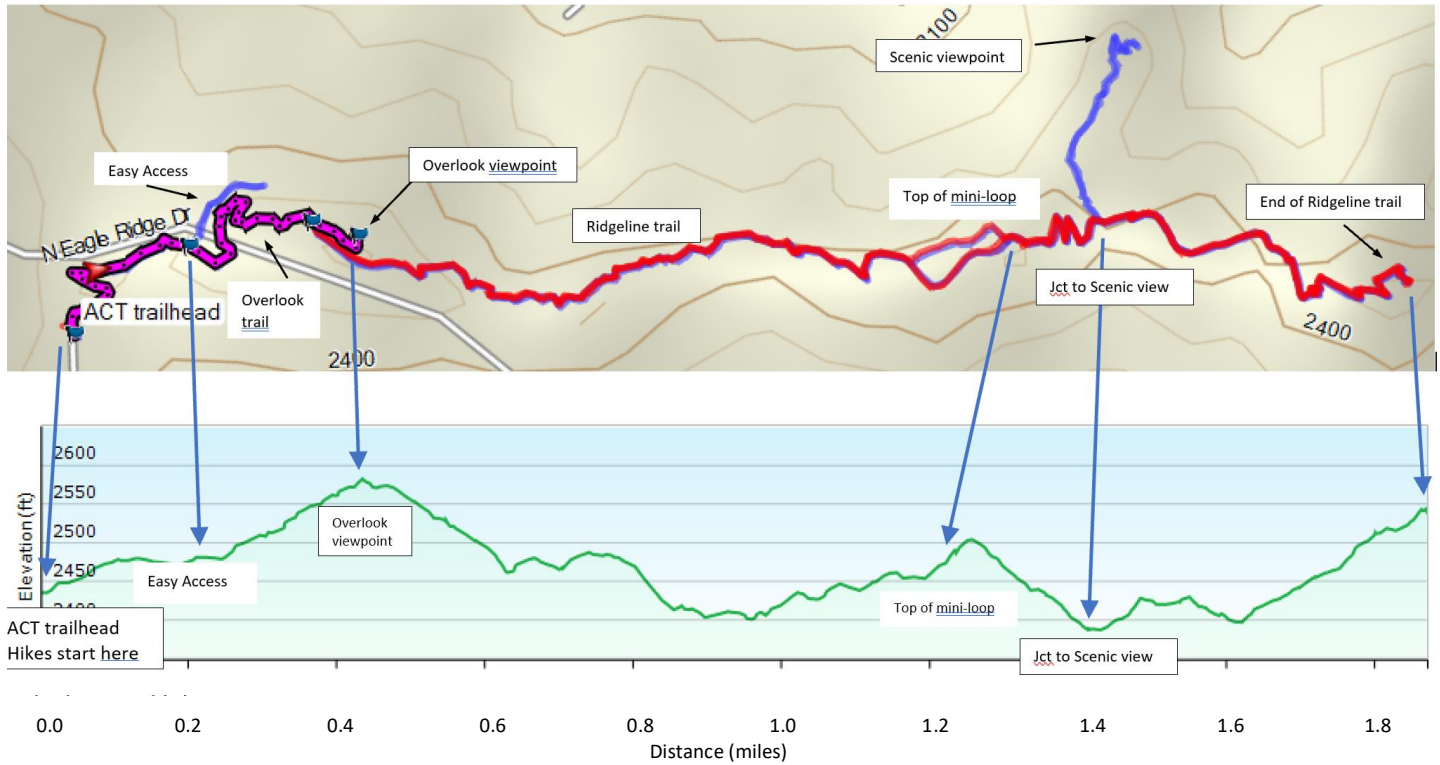
Hikes go off in three directions from the trailhead:

1. Towards the Ridgeline trail (to the right)
2. Towards the Sonoran trail (straight)
3. Towards Andrews-Kinsey trail (to the left)

Adero Canyon Trail Orientation



Ridgeline trail map



Ridgeline Trail hikes

	Round trip distance (miles)	Cum. Elevation gain (feet)	Time (hours)	
Easy Access	0.7	148	30 min.	Easy, relaxing trail
Overlook viewpoint	1.0	182	45 min.	Short trail with nice scenic
Ridgeline to mini-loop	2.6	630	2 hours	Intermediate hike
Ridgeline to Scenic view	3.5	768	2.5 hours	Scenic view, less elev. than to end
Ridgeline to end	4.0	900	3 hours	Great overlook and views at end
Ridgeline to end & Scenic view	4.5	1,000	3+ hours	

Ridgeline Trail hikes

There are a number of hiking choices in this direction:

The Easy Access hike is the easiest hike in the Preserve. It is short (0.7 miles RT) and has a modest Elev. Gain (70 feet). This is a good hike for kids.

The Overlook hike is a short hike (1.0 miles RT) but with enough Elev. Gain (180 feet) that it feels like a real hike. There is a very nice scenic view at the end of this hike, and a plaque identifying the major peaks and points of interest.

When hiking the Ridgeline hikes, be aware that the hike starts out on the Overlook Trail. Signage at the beginning of the Overlook Trail does indicate the Ridgeline Trail is in the same direction, but there are no reminder signs on the way.

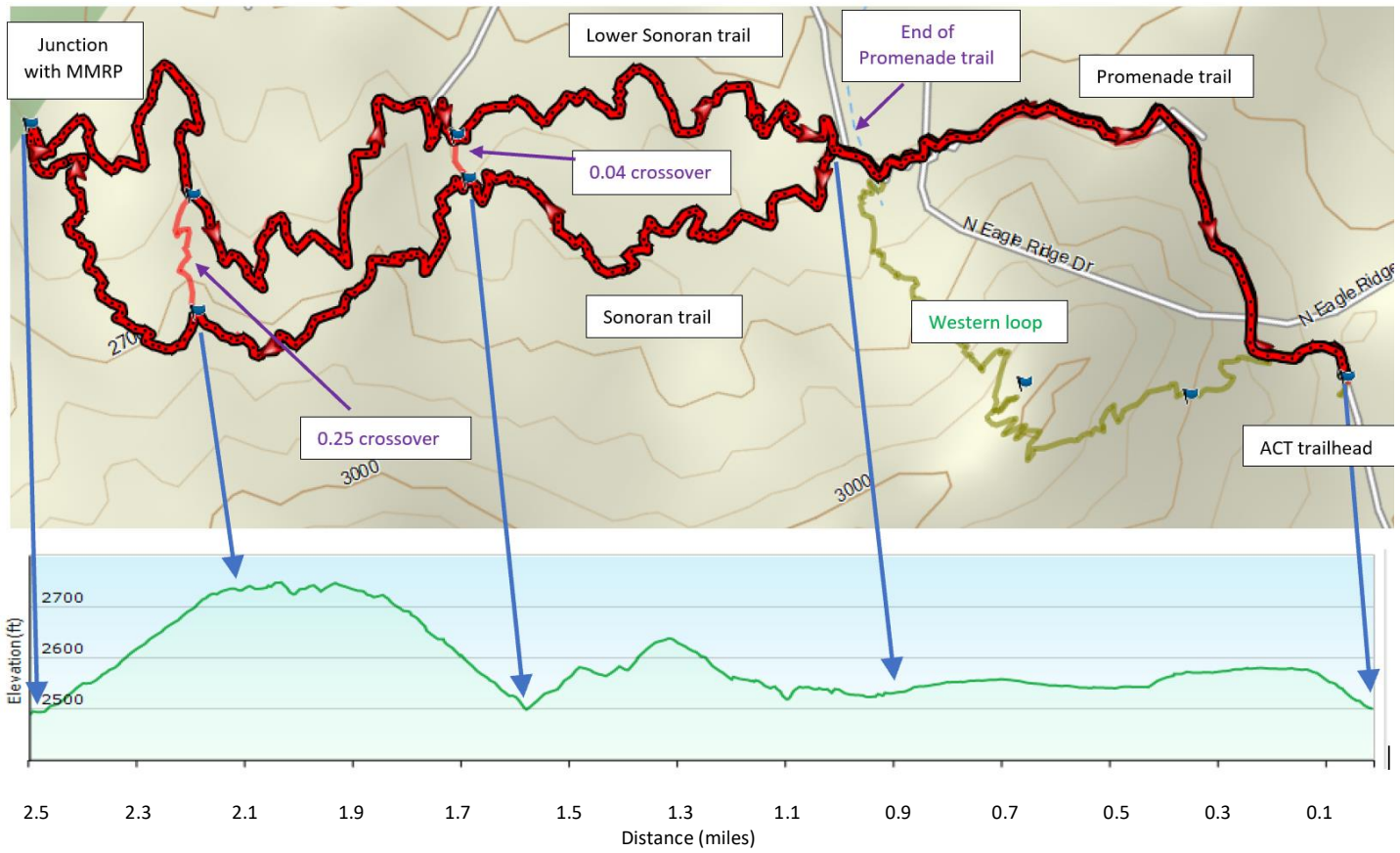
There are a number of possible turnaround points when doing the Ridgeline hike, as listed below. The trail map designates the full hike as difficult. Note that the trail map ratings are relative to other hikes in the FH Preserve. I believe a better yardstick to use is the Distance, Cum. Elevation Gain, and time metrics when choosing a suitable hike.

The hike to the top of the mini loop is a good decision point as to whether to turn here, or continue on. Continuing on and taking the junction to the Scenic view provides a nice pay-off end point.

Going all the way to the end of the Ridgeline provides another great view, overlooking Sunridge Golf Club and the surrounding area. This is a bit more strenuous than the trail to the Scenic viewpoint. If doing this one, and still feeling energetic, take the side trail to the scenic viewpoint on your way back.

Again, it is good to start with a plan, but know it can be lengthened or shortened based on how everyone is feeling.

Sonoran Trail map



Sonoran Trail hikes

	Round trip distance (miles)	Cum. Elevation gain (feet)	Time (hours)
Promenade only	1.7	148	1
Sonoran short	3.3	577	2+
Sonoran medium	4.7	840	3
Full Sonoran	5.7	1,060	4
Sonoran plus Western loop	6.2	1,590	4+

Note that the elevation plot only shows the Sonoran trail, not the Lower Sonoran profile. The Lower Sonoran is less steep than the Sonoran trail.

Sonoran Trail hikes

The Sonoran trail system (Promenade, Sonoran, Lower Sonoran) provides a variety of hiking choices.

The Promenade hike is a scenic hike with great views of Fountain Hills and the surrounding area. It starts directly from the Trailhead. It is 1.7 miles RT with a modest 150 feet elevation gain. One caution – it is initially uphill from the trailhead and the beginning of the hike can seem somewhat strenuous when just getting started. Rest assured, just get up the hill at your own pace and enjoy the rest of the hike.

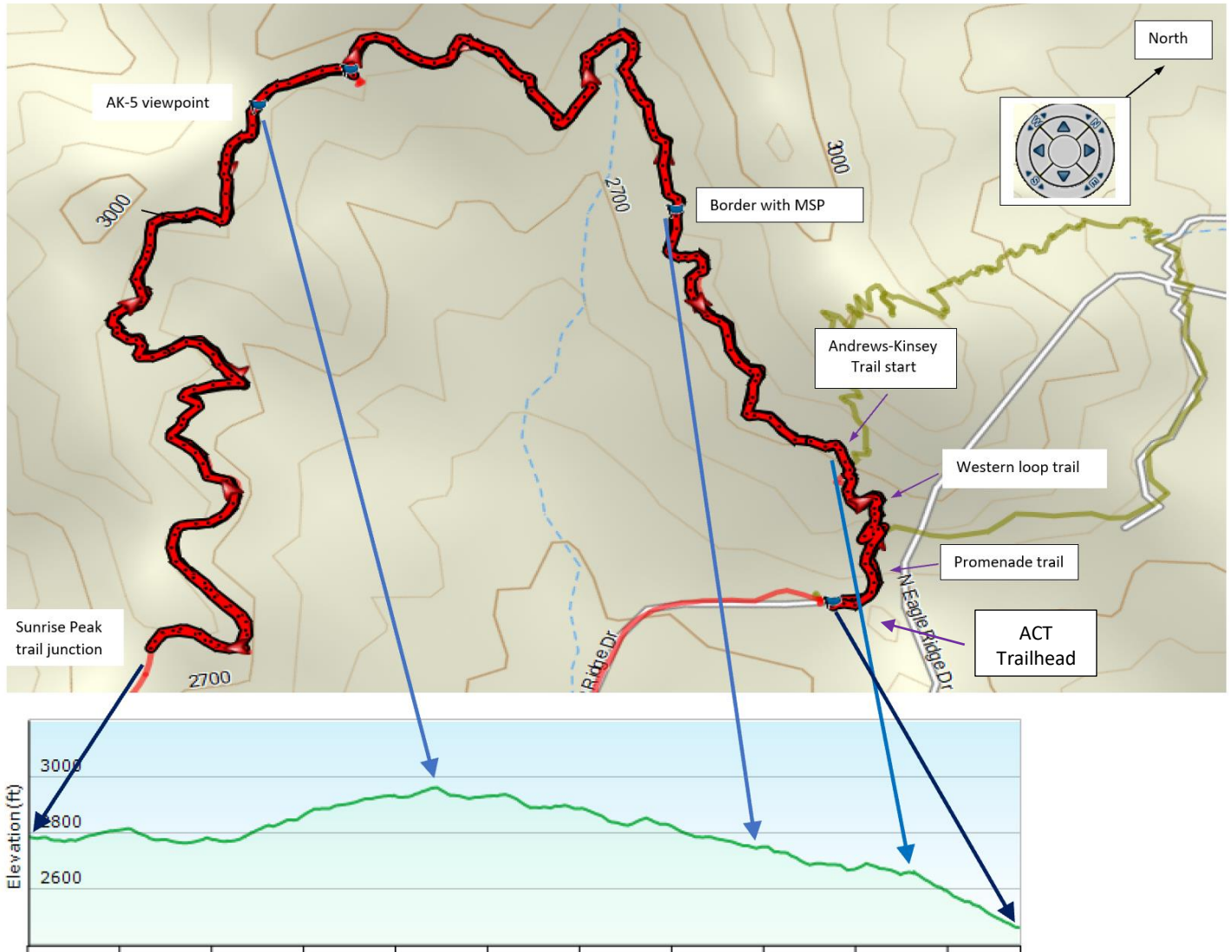
The Sonoran trail system consists of the Sonoran, and the Lower Sonoran trails. It provides many options depending on your hiking shape and timeframe.

There are two crossover points between the Sonoran and Lower Sonoran trails that allow hikes of different lengths. In this Guide these are referred to as the 0.04 crossover and the 0.25 crossover, representing the length of the crossover trail. This avoids needing to know whether it is the east or west crossover, or the 1st or 2nd crossover you come to. The crossover trails are signed with the crossover length.

The full Sonoran loop plus the Western loop provides one of the most challenging hikes that is completely within the Fountain Hills Preserve. See the separate section for the Western loop details.

If you have the opportunity to hike this more than once, it is interesting to vary the route. Go clockwise one time, counter clockwise the next. If doing the medium or full-length routes one can take every crossover you come to and make a figure eight or a double figure eight.

Andrews-Kinsey map



Andrews-Kinsey hikes

	Round trip distance (miles)	Cum. Elevation gain (feet)	Time (hours)	
To MSP border	1.5	377	1	Easy, relaxing trail
To AK-5 viewpoint	3.2	696	2	Short trail with nice scenic
To junction with Sunrise Peak	5.6	1,047	3	Intermediate hike

Andrews-Kinsey hikes

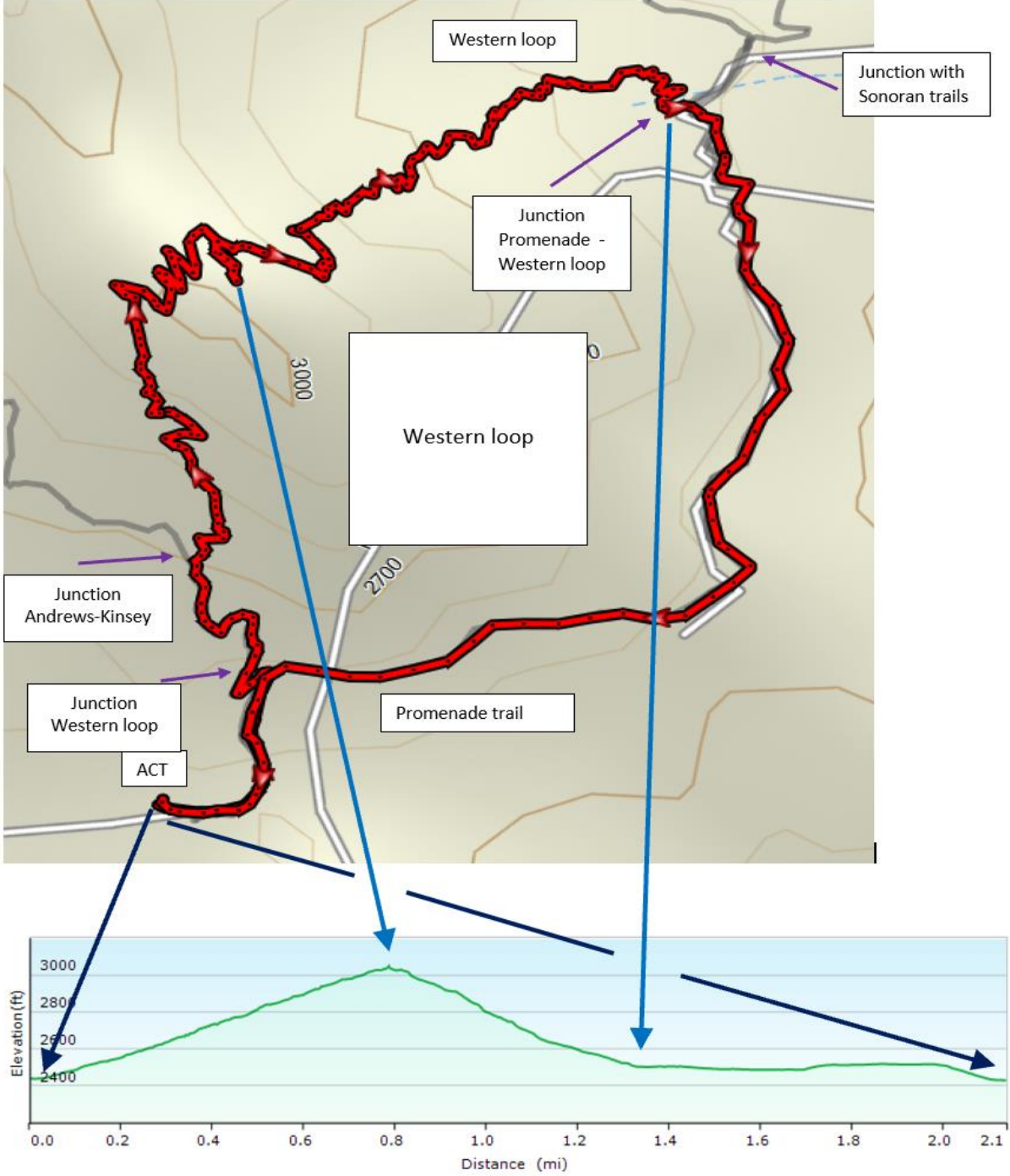
The Andrews-Kinsey hikes start by going up the Promenade to the Western Loop trail. The Andrews-Kinsey trail then soon splits from the Western Loop trail. The distances shown are via up the Promenade to a left turn at the top of the hill. An alternate route is to hike up the bicycle path. This adds 0.25 miles to the hike but is a more gradual incline (see page 14 for the route map).

A short un-named hike to a nice overlook with a bench is the easiest hike on this route. It is 0.9 miles RT if taking the bike route in one direction and the hiker route in the other direction.

The Andrews-Kinsey trail provides a number of natural turn-around options. Going to the AK5 marker brings you to a saddle with a view of Scottsdale and the surrounding area, including Camelback Mountain.

Going further to the junction with the Sunrise Peak trail provides entry to the Scottsdale trail system.

Western Loop map



Western Loop hike

This is a 2.1 mile loop hike with an elevation gain of 650 feet.

Western Loop hike

The Western loop can be hiked in either direction. Going down the Promenade to the junction with the Western loop takes you in a counterclockwise direction. Going up to the left on the marked Western loop trail takes you in clockwise direction. The hike shown is in a clockwise direction. Whichever way, this is a short but steep hike with great views at the top.

It is quite rocky, so for those rock-averse, be warned. As can be seen from the map, virtually all of the elevation gain occurs in about eight tenths of a mile.

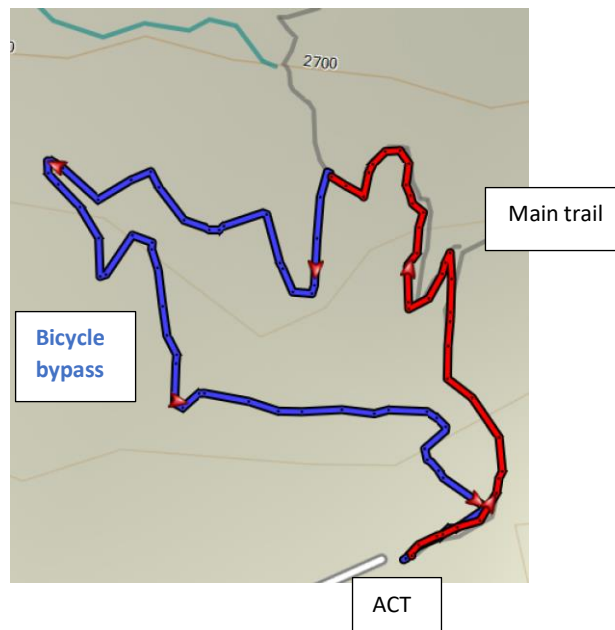
This hike can easily be combined with hikes from any of the other ACT legs as a good cardio booster.

Bicycle bypass

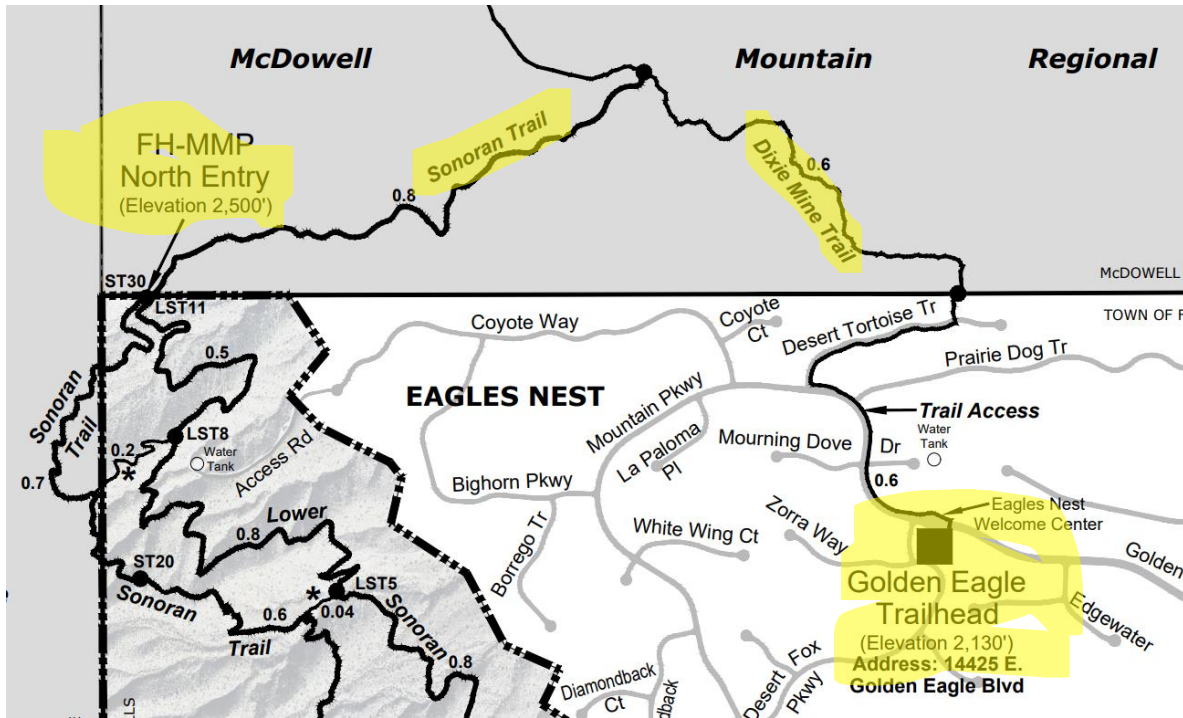
When starting up the Promenade trail from ACT, there is a bypass to the Western Loop and Andrews-Kinsey trails that is more biker friendly than the main trail. This provides hikers with an alternate as well. The bypass is a bit longer, but less steep:

Bypass: 0.5 miles

Main hiker trail: 0.25 miles



Entrance to Fountain Hills Preserve



As seen from the Orientation map above, all hikes from Golden Eagle trailhead start with a walk through Eagle's Nest sub-division, then on the Dixie Mine trail and the portion of the Sonoran trail that is in McDowell Mountain Regional Park. Note that there is a \$2 per person entry fee for entering the Regional Park.

Although not included in this Guide, there are many good hikes through the Regional Park and connecting to the Scottsdale McDowell Sonoran Preserve. These can be seen by referring back to the Area Hiking trail map.

Golden Eagle (Dixie Mine) trailhead Orientation map

The trailhead is at the north end of Golden Eagle Blvd just before reaching the guarded gate to Eagle's Nest subdivision.

Golden Eagle trailhead

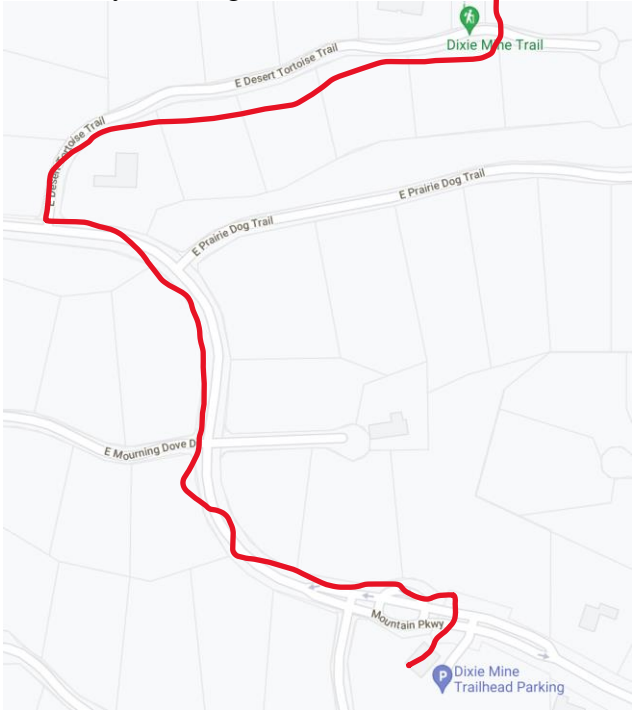


Guard gate

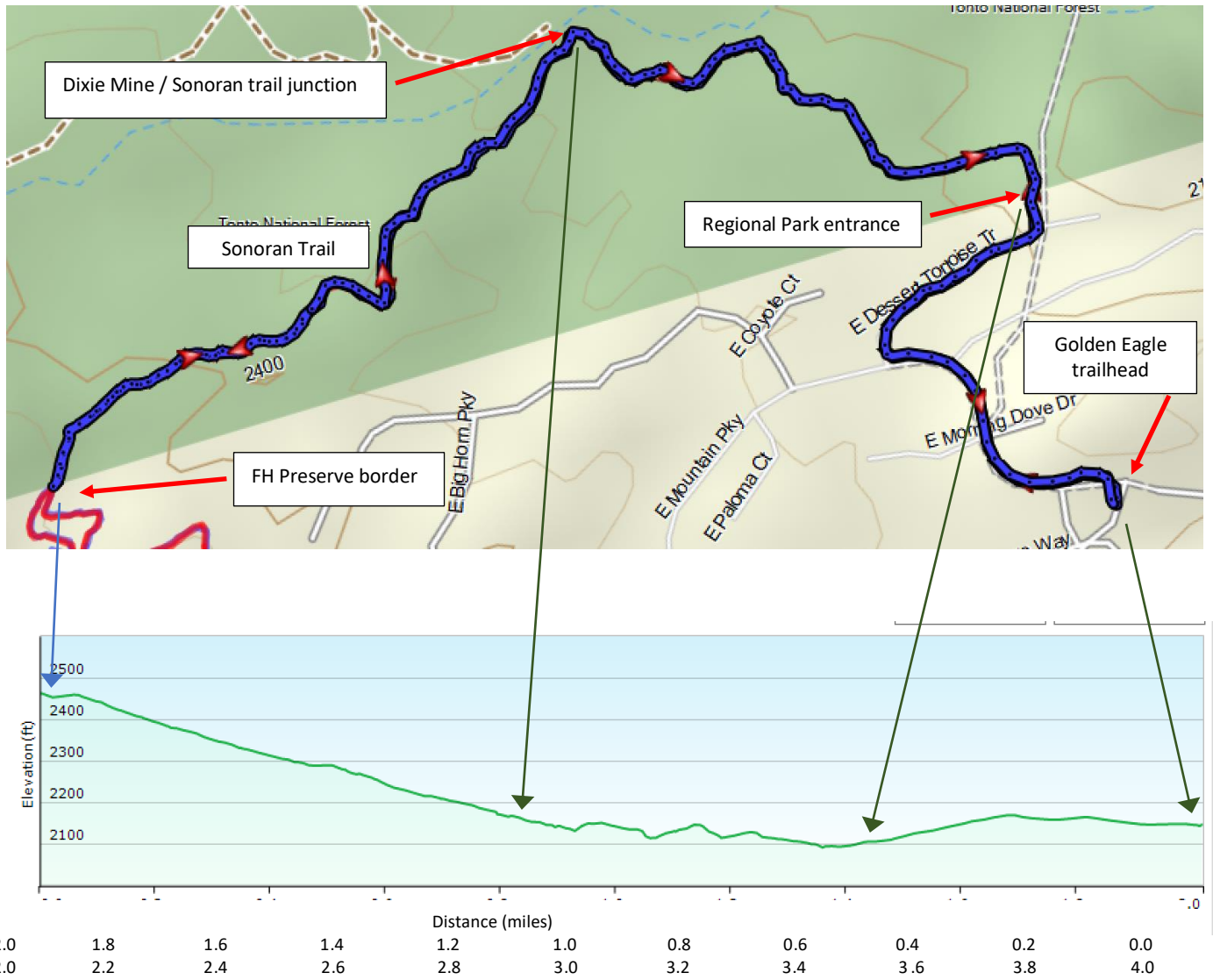
Parking lot

Fountain Hills Blvd

Walk through Eagle's Nest subdivision:
(Only on designated streets)



Golden Eagle Trailhead to FH Preserve map

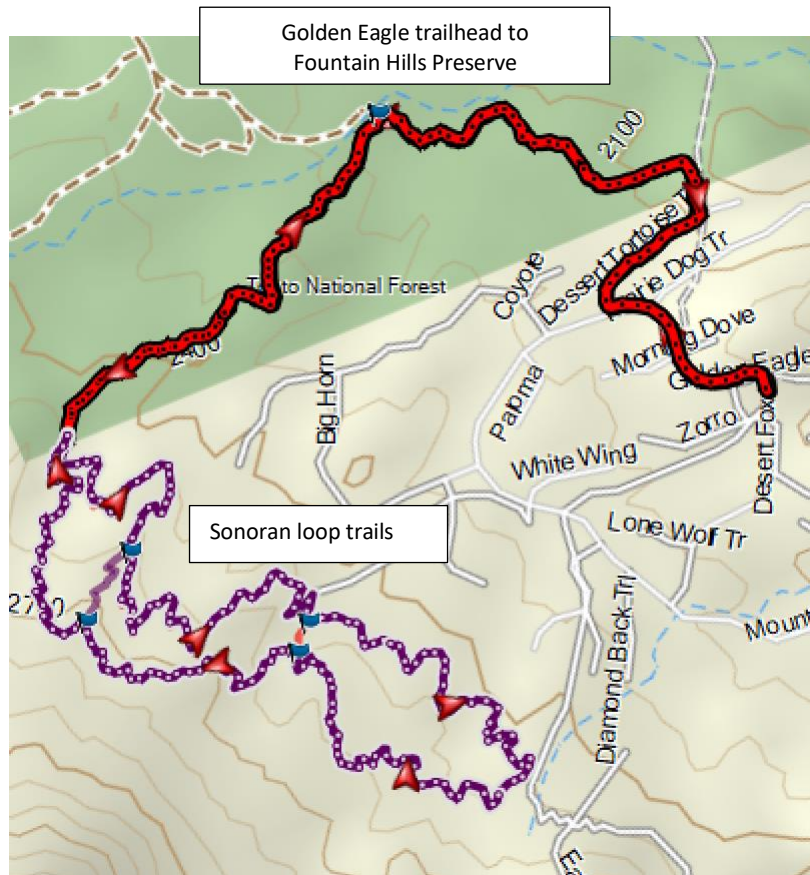


The hike to the border of Fountain Hills Preserve is entirely within the McDowell Mountain Regional Park. This is a 4.1 mile hike with an elevation gain of 610 feet. Note that 0.5 miles each way is the walk through Eagle’s Nest sub-division.

At the entrance to the Regional Park, the hike follows the Dixie Mine trail for 0.5 miles to the junction of the Sonoran trail. The Sonoran trail is a steady but gradual up hill climb to the border with the Preserve.

Hikes from Golden Eagle (Dixie Mine) trailhead

Fountain Hills hikes from the Golden Eagle trailhead through MMRP connect to the Sonoran loop trails. For details on the Sonoran loop trails, refer to the Sonoran trail section in the ACT trail writeup.



Sonoran Loop hikes from Golden Eagle trailhead

Hike statistics include the leg from the Golden Eagle trailhead to the border, representing the total round trip from the trailhead.

	<u>Round trip distance (miles)</u>	<u>Cum. Elevation gain (feet)</u>	<u>Time (hours)</u>
To FH Preserve border	4.1	610	2.5
Sonoran short	5.3	930	3.5
Sonoran medium	6.5	1,270	4.5
Full Sonoran loop	7.9	1,550	5

Cross-over hikes

There are also a number of cross-over hike possibilities in the Preserve. This requires either a car drop prior to doing the hike or a “key exchange”, if you organize two groups to do a cross-over hike in opposite directions.

The driving distances for car drops are fairly convenient, and shorter than many non-Fountain Hills crossovers:

	Driving Distance <u>(miles)</u>	Hiking Distance <u>(miles)</u>
Adero Canyon Trailhead to Golden Eagle Trailhead	6.1	5.1
Adero Canyon Trailhead to Sunrise Peak Trailhead (MSP)	7.2	6.3
Adero Canyon Trailhead to Lost Dog Trailhead (MSP)	7.8	5.4

Appendix

List of hikes in the Fountain Hills Preserve