

fieldtrip



hannagan meadow and alpine

Getting there is half the fun

Text by Judy Wade • Photograph by Bill Baker

The route to Hannagan Meadow is a cross between The Viper at Six Flags and a Nature Channel documentary. It twists, turns, switches back and often requires a 10-mph speed limit. The incentive is unparalleled mountain scenery.

U.S. Highway 191, the Coronado Trail, snakes north from Morenci to Springerville in east-central Arizona, following the route taken by Spanish explorer Francisco Vásquez de Coronado in 1540 as he searched for the fabled Seven Cities of Cibola. The road winds for 100 miles along scenic high mountain passes through the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest, finally leveling out at Hannagan Meadow in the White Mountains.

At an altitude of 9,100 feet, Hannagan Meadow Lodge is settled picturesquely among aspen, spruce and pine trees on the fringes of an alpine meadow. The aspens may show their special shade of burnished gold by early September. If snowfalls are sufficient, by November the meadow is lined with trails left by cross-country skis and snowmobiles.

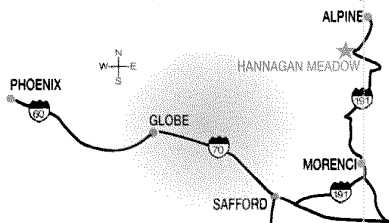
Rustic and homey, the lodge has been completely renovated since its 1926 beginnings. Rooms have private baths and are comfortably accented with antiques, many of which were brought from North Dakota by the lodge's owners, the Dauksavage family. Farther back in the woods, rustic log cabins with kitchens and fireplaces accommodate families and groups. The dining room serves three meals a day, seven days a week.

Nature provides the entertain-

ment here. Large elk often graze at the side of the road, and noisy ravens ride thermals as they hover gracefully in search of dinner. To best savor the show, take heed when altitude induces a natural slow-down mode. Become aware of sounds and smells, like raucous blue jays quibbling over pine nuts and the aroma of wood smoke. Most visitors come to hike, mountain bike and simply enjoy the surroundings.

Twenty-two miles north of Hannagan Meadow, along the last of the Coronado Trail, tiny Alpine has the look of a town that winter treats harshly. Depending on who's home, the town's permanent population is about 200, with seasonal visitors sometimes doubling its size. It offers a general store, modest motels, a couple of basic restaurants and a gas station. The Alpine Ranger District Office in Alpine is a good source for area information. It can be reached at (520) 339-4384.

From Phoenix to Hannagan Meadow is about a five-and-a-half-hour drive. Take U.S. 60 to Globe; then follow U.S. 70 east past Safford to U.S. 191, and 191 north past Morenci to Hannagan Meadow and Alpine. The trip home will take about five hours if you return to Phoenix from Alpine by going north on U.S. 191 to Springerville, then following Arizona Highway 260 to Payson and coming into Phoenix on Arizona Highway 87. For more information, contact the lodge at (520) 339-4370, or www.hannaganmeadow.com. 🌲



Writer Judy Wade and photographer Bill Baker are the talent behind The Arizona Guide.