

DISCOVER TUCSON'S ODDITIES

"ROADSIDE ATTRACTIONS" THE GUIDE BOOKS MISS

Every city has them. Those odd things that people either drive by without noticing, or simply stop, see, shake their heads and move on. While it has attractions, foods and views that can't be found elsewhere, Tucson also sports a plethora of oddities that leave their mark on the casual observer. If for no other reason than to add one more "been there, done that, bought the T-shirt" item to your list, check out some of the Tucson oddities listed here. They're just a few more things that make the "Old Pueblo" so darn unique.

RATTLESNAKE BRIDGE

Some Tucsonans love the Rattlesnake Bridge and others don't. But all admit it's an oddity. It's a bicycle, Segway



Photos: Kimberly Schmitz, MTCVB (3)

and foot bridge that spans six lanes of traffic over Broadway near downtown Tucson. Conceived by artist Simon Donovan, the bridge has won several design awards. A motion sensor sets off an eerie rattling sound as you enter the bridge. Local lore says if you cross the bridge anywhere from one to six times, you will be protected from rattlesnake bites during December. Cross it seven to 12 times and your protection extends to the remainder of the year. Cross it the unlucky 13 times and you better just stay home since rattlesnakes will pur-



tures including a depiction of the Last Supper, Mary and Joseph, Jesus on the Cross and in his tomb, and even one of Lucero himself, have been restored and even

moved over the years. Originally constructed of wash sand and plaster, the sculptures have had trouble standing the test of time and vandals. They now rest close to where the sculptor who wasn't a sculptor lived while bringing to fruition a promise he made to the Virgin Mary.

JUNK SCULPTURE GARDEN

This amazing garden surrounds a modest home in midtown Tucson. It was created by welding together scrap metal including car and motorcycle parts, tin cans, and



Photos: Kimberly Schmitz, MTCVB (3)

posedly seek you out. So, take your chances with the wily reptiles or ward them off by crossing the bridge.

GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

This garden at 602 W Congress Street is one of several sculptures created by a man who wasn't a sculptor at all but rather a soldier fulfilling promise he made to Virgin Mary while he lay dying on the battlefield in World War I. Felix Lucero began to make good on that promise in 1939. Having fallen on hard times, he was living under the Congress Street Bridge in a little shack. The sculp-



whatever else the owner could find into the form of people, animals, and various other fun items that quaintly adorn the home. There are also "upgrades" to the round-about medians that suspiciously resemble the style of the Junk Garden Artist around the neighborhood. Water Street between Park and Campbell (north of Grant).

REDEMPTRIST RENEWAL CENTER

This is like church camp for grown-ups who are looking for a place with the benefit of more than 40 years as a harmonious sanctuary of prayer, study and practice.

Everybody is welcome to stay, pray and contemplate their spirituality. No religion or nationality is turned away from this quiet piece of parochial paradise in the Sonoran desert just west of town in the Tucson Mountains foothills. 520-744-3400, www.desertrenewal.org.

DESERT O SCULPTURE

Outside the Tucson Museum of Art, 140 N Main Avenue, this solar-powered, computer-controlled outdoor sculpture turns different colors for each night of the week. During the day it gathers solar energy and its steel skeleton may be seen inside the frosted acrylic skin. At night it glows different colors using the stored energy and high powered LEDs. Every day of the week has a different animated color scheme. This has been a very popular attrac-



Photo: Amy Haskell

tion since the City acquired it and installed it downtown. There is also a secret button—a single touch-sensitive fastener that allows nighttime visitors to the sculpture to change its color scheme. Once the nighttime visitors have gone away, the sculpture returns to the color scheme scheduled for that night.



Photo: Dave Olsen

INTERSTELLAR LIGHT COLLECTOR

The Interstellar Light Collector, a few miles southwest of Tucson, attracts curious people and ardent health-seekers who bask in beams of moonlight reflected by 84 mirrors mounted on a 50-foot-tall, 25-ton hydraulic support. The mirrors of the "moonlight collector" can rotate 360 degrees as a single unit. By adjusting each mirror individ-

ually, reflected moonbeams can be focused onto an area as big as a pickup truck or as small as a person's head. This amazing oddity was designed, built and paid for by Richard and Monica Chapin, who originally intended to create an alternative treatment/cure for a good friend with cancer. People travel to the mirrors to bask in the directed moonlight for spiritual or physical wellness. Find info, moonlight-infused products, even an interstellar moonlight therapy DVD at www.starlightuses.com.

GIANT PAUL BUNYAN (SANS HIS AX)

In the parking lot of a strip mall on North Stone Avenue and East Glenn Street, stands a giant and proud Paul Bunyan. In 2009, Paul's ax was stolen, so he now sports an American flag to keep his hands busy and his purpose noble. Mr. Bunyan was purchased by Leo Toia (owner of Leo's Auto & Home Supply) in 1964 and delivered from California. Leo purchased him so he could tell customers how to find his business, which works to this day. Leo's granddaughter owns and operates Celebrations Party Spot, and when people ask her where they are located, she asks, "do you know where Paul Bunyan is?" Leo's family still own and maintain the statue.

VALLEY OF THE MOON

Valley of the Moon is 2.7 acres of wonderland built from cement and river rocks by George Phar Legler in the 1920s. Mr. Legler envisioned creating a fantasyland that would encourage everyone (especially children) to believe in magic. He aimed to feed the imagination of children and of bringing mental and spiritual relaxation to all visitors of the site. Mineralized rock cliffs, caves, pools and garden miniatures have blended with tropic and desert flora to create what Mr. Legler called the "Fantasy Touch of Three" (Lewis Carroll, Edgar Allen Poe, and Robert Louis Stevenson). 2544 E. Allen Road, 520-323-1331.

MIRA VISTA RESORT

Guests at this Tucson resort are encouraged to bring sunscreen—lots of it—when venturing outdoors. A "clothing optional" property, Mira Vista offers nudists a Southwestern-style vacation, with all the amenities. Dating back to the 1850s, the property is on 30 acres northwest of Tucson, with 14 guest rooms, a restaurant, wellness center, pool and spa, tennis courts, and the façade of a 1880s Old West town. Known for years as La Tierra Linda Guest Ranch Resort, it most recently was home to the Coyote Moon Health Resort. For more information, visit the resort's website, www.miravistaresort.com.

BATS UNDER THE BRIDGE

Tucsonans and visitors gather in spring, summer and early fall evenings to watch thousands of Mexican Free Tail bats take flight at sunset from under a street bridge at Campbell and River Roads. Local Bat Conversation groups take full advantage of the fluttering exodus with free educational programs scheduled around the event twice a year. Arrive at the bridge about a half hour before sunset and be quiet. Bats tend to come out downstream. Also try the bridge at Pantano and Broadway, or really any bridge over a wash in Tucson. Safety tips: Don't pick up downed bats, and watch out for our more slithery desert friends while on bat viewing expeditions. ■



MERCEDES-BENZ MBRACE™ TELEMATICS

Mercedes-Benz USA (MBUSA) and Hughes Telematics, Inc. (HTI) have introduced mbrace™, a new telematics offering now available on all new Mercedes-Benz vehicles sold in the US. The mbrace system replaces the previous Tele Aid system MBUSA, offered for the past 10 years. (Most current Mercedes-Benz owners with Tele Aid will be eligible to upgrade to the mbrace system.)

The mbrace offers "connected services"—the first time drivers can connect with their vehicles via an iPhone™ or BlackBerry™, allowing them to do such things as remotely lock or unlock their vehicles or locate their vehicles in crowded parking lots or on city streets through a map representation on their smart phones. The flexibility of combining HTI's platform with today's leading smartphone offerings allows for continual updates throughout a vehicle's ownership.

The mbrace system offers 18 features (five of which are part of a premium package) aggregated in the categories of safety & security, navigation & destination planning and convenience. The services can be accessed quickly and easily from within the vehicle or from any computer through a personalized web portal.

Standard mbrace safety and security features include: Automatic Collision Notification; SOS/Emergency Calling; Safe Ride; Roadside Assistance Connection (in-vehicle and mobile application); Stolen Vehicle Location Assistance; Automatic Alarm Notification; Vehicle Information and Crisis Assist. Navigation services include a Search & Send feature. Standard convenience features include: Remote Door Unlock and Lock (remote application), Vehicle Finder (via mobile application), and Dealer Connect (mobile application). A premium service—mbrace PLUS—adds such features as Location-Based Weather, Location-Based Traffic, agent-assisted Route Assistance, Point-of-Interest Destination Download (through agent), and "Mercedes-Benz Concierge," which functions much as a hotel concierge—making restaurant reservations, locating stores and services, cash wire assistance and more. ■



BARRETT-JACKSON IPHONE APP

The Barrett-Jackson Auction Company has released a new free app which brings the auction experience to the Apple iPhone, iPad and iPod Touch. The app provides up-to-date information about Barrett-Jackson, photos and details about vehicles available at the events, notifications on a favorite vehicle, location maps, event and SPEED TV schedules, ticket purchasing options, contact information and access to the Barrett-Jackson social media networks.

"With the popularity of the iPhone and iPad, developing an app was the next step in enriching the overall Barrett-Jackson experience," said Craig Jackson, Chairman/CEO of Barrett-Jackson. After the successful launch of the app for the Palm Beach Auction in April and Orange County in June, Jackson says, "collectors and enthusiasts attending our shows now have access to the most current news and information about Barrett-Jackson, their favorite automobiles and other event details right at their fingertips. This empowers them to 'be in the know' at all times."

The app gives quick access to personalized notifications and event news. The home screen contains the latest Barrett-Jackson Twitter updates and easy access to the website. The Car List feature allows you to browse autos available at the auction, smartly sorted by day. In conjunction with your Car List, the My Garage feature saves the Lot numbers you've chosen to "watch" by checking them off in your Car List. You can then be alerted when your selected Lot numbers are scheduled to go across the auction block.

The Next On Block feature provides a list of Lot numbers coming up on the auction block and is updated every 15 minutes so that you're prepared to make your way to the bidder's section. Included maps ensure that you'll find your way in time. Additional links are available providing schedules, ticketing information, social networking and Barrett-Jackson contact information. To access the app from iTunes, and for more information, visit: www.barrett-jackson.com/iPhone. ■