



ARIZONA-SONORA
**DESERT
MUSEUM**



PIMA COUNTY
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

USA Today Nominates the Desert Museum's Desert Loop Trail For Top 10 Zoo Exhibits in the Country

Tucson, AZ (April 3, 2015)—The Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum is included among 20 of the top zoos in the country whose exhibits were nominated for the USA Today/10Best Zoo Exhibits-Readers Choice Awards announced on Monday, March 30th. According to USA Today, nominations were made by experts from the Zoo Association of America and the International Zoo Education Association. Experts were asked to select those exhibits providing the best animal habitats—those that engage visitors while keeping the welfare of the animal residents paramount.

The Desert Museum's nominated exhibit is the Desert Loop Trail which opened in 1997. It was designed to create a natural desert experience for guests, replicating a hike in the untouched desert landscape. The exhibit naturally flows along a ½ mile trail and showcases two of the desert's most iconic animals, coyote and javelina. The animals are viewed in expansive, almost invisible-to-the-eye enclosures, while weaving through stands of Saguaro cacti and Palo Verde trees. Other naturally-occurring desert residents like lizards, spiders, snakes, and insects may also be seen along the way.

“It's an honor to be nominated in a category that emphasizes the animal's environment and care. We are pleased to be in the company of the most renowned zoos in the country,” said Craig Ivanyi, Executive Director of the Desert Museum.

(more)

Pima County Economic Development and Tourism Director Tom Moulton said every county resident who loves ASDM should vote in the USA Today contest to ensure the Desert Museum receives the national recognition it so richly deserves, especially when it is competing against zoos in metropolitan areas that are much larger than Tucson.

“As the Desert Museum’s lease holder, Pima County is a partner in the Museum’s success. We’re thrilled that the Museum and the Desert Loop Trail are being considered in the same contest with some of the best zoos in the country,” Moulton said. “This kind of national recognition not only helps the Desert Museum, but it also helps Pima County by bringing visitors to our community.”

With twenty zoos across the nation receiving nominations, the Desert Museum is competing with prominent zoos in larger markets. As the top ten slots are determined by popular vote, the Museum is relying on hometown support and its national fan base in its bid to garner a slot in the 10Best Zoo Exhibits in the country.

Voting is online only at USA Today’s website. Desert Museum supporters can vote every day throughout the 10Best contest. To vote for the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, visit <http://www.10best.com/awards/travel/best-zoo-exhibit/>. Online voting ends Monday, April 27th, 2015 at 11:59am EDT. (10Best is a division of USA Today’s Travel Media Group).

The Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum is one of the nation’s leading outdoor, living museums, featuring more than 230 animals and 1,200 varieties of desert plants. Its purpose is to inspire people to live in harmony with the natural world by fostering love, appreciation, and understanding of the bi-national, Sonoran Desert region. The museum is located at 2021 N. Kinney Road, in Tucson Mountain Park adjacent to Saguaro National Park (West). It is open daily year round with operating hours varying by season. Call (520) 883-2702 or visit www.desertmuseum.org for more information.

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