

THRU-HIKER SECRETS BACKPACKER

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play list

14 Take the scenic route. ARIZONA TRAIL, SONO NATIONAL MONUMENT, AZ

"Take your own hike" is fine advice, but there are still a few other secrets among the thru-hiker tribe worth following. Here's one: Don't miss ancient ruins. Just as it's understood that Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument is a must-see off the CDT, so it is with the Salado Cliff Dwellings at Sono National Monument off the 800-mile Arizona Trail. It's just a 2.5-mile spur to the Visitor Center from Thompson Spring (including a short road walk on AZ 188). When you arrive, visit the 13th- and 15th-century Utepe Cliff Dwellings on a one-way 3-mile out-and-back (call ahead; you must be accompanied by park staff). The 700-year-old ruins feature 40 preserved rooms, 20, and the view: "You can see regular features dotting the hillsides, the gleam of Roosevelt Lake shimmering back at you, and the desert stretching into the horizon," says photographer Larry Lindell. Contact nps.gov/son