



How to Have Safe Off-Road Fun



As the weather cools down and we head into those glorious days between September and May, many people enjoy exploring the beautiful scenery of Arizona in an off-road vehicle. Thousands of drivable “off-road” miles crisscross Arizona, offering an up-close view of everything from wetlands to spectacular canyons. Enjoying life off the beaten path—even for a few hours—can be relaxing and rejuvenating, although it requires some advance planning and care.

Whether your off-roading is done in a 4x4 vehicle or a smaller, personal ATV, here are some important rules of the off-road:

- **Before heading into the wild, take an off-road safety course.** The ATV Rider Course developed by the ATV Safety Institute provides hands-on training in the basic techniques for riding an all-terrain vehicle. Call (800) 887-2887 or check out atvsafety.org.
- **Keep others informed.** Never ride alone. Always tell others where you are going and when you expect to return.
- **Scout the area you are exploring.** Make sure you have a good map and consider investing in a sturdy GPS device or take a compass.
- **Be prepared.** Pack basic supplies like a cell phone, flashlight, gloves, shovel, spare tire and jack, and a first aid kit.

- **Water, water, water!** Even when it cools down, make sure to take along at least 5 gallons in each vehicle, plus a minimum of 1 gallon per person per day.

- **Watch your speed.** Experts say to drive as slowly as possible and only as fast as necessary. You can get into trouble quickly. Slow down, enjoy the scenery, and understand that there is very little room for error off-road.

- **Be safe.** If you are driving a personal ATV, always wear a helmet and make sure your vehicle is in good working order. Check the

lights, tire pressure and brakes before going out. If you have room, take a spare tire, or at least a tire repair kit.



- **Don't mix alcohol or drugs and off-roading.** The penalties for DUI are the same whether you are on a paved road or a dirt one, and so are the dangers.

- **Understand your skill level.** And respect the limits of your vehicle.

- **Aim for minimum impact.** Respect the environment and the rights of others by staying on designated routes and areas open to off-road vehicles.

Keep these tips in mind, use common sense and respect the land you are enjoying. The experience will be one you will treasure. Have fun!

— Dev Sethi

LINKS

Arizona State Parks – www.pr.state.az.us

Arizona Backcountry – azbackcountry.com

Public Lands Information Center – publiclands.org

Tread Lightly! – treadlightly.org