

Benson, Arizona

The City of Benson, Arizona serves as the Gateway to Cochise County where visitors can enjoy the town's Old West atmosphere, and unique natural features. Benson was founded in 1880 just before Arizona's mining boom, and developed as a stopping point for the Butterfield Overland Stage mail delivery route. Soon thereafter, the Southern Pacific Railroad came into Benson and continued to serve the area until 1997, when the line was purchased by Union Pacific Railroad. The Visitor Center is a beautiful replica railroad depot that uses many of the same architectural features as the original depot that was built over a century ago. The Visitor Center is surrounded by Benson's historic downtown area. The City's culture is still heavily influenced by the Old West.

One of Benson's highlights is Kartchner Caverns State Park. Located on 550 acres at the foothills of the Whetstone Mountains just south of the city, Kartchner Caverns State Park has magnificent still-living caverns. The park offers picnicking, camping, and hiking. Nature-lovers are also attracted to The San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area, which has protected nearly 57,000 acres of public land in Cochise County since 1988. The Conservation Area was designated by congress to conserve and enhance the desert ecosystem, a rare remnant of what was once an extensive network of similar systems throughout the American Southwest. The San Pedro River and the desert ecosystems serve as home to 84 species of mammals, 14 species of fish, 41 species of reptiles and amphibians, and 100 species of breeding birds. It also provides vital habitat for 250 species of migrant and wintering birds and contains archaeological sites representing the remains of human occupation from 13,000 years ago.

So stop by this quiet old west town of 5000 people and enjoy the natural wonders nearby!

Source(s):

www.bensonvisitorcenter.com

<http://azstateparks.com/Parks/KACA/>

http://www.blm.gov/az/st/en/prog/blm_special_areas/ncarea/sprnca.html

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