



Arizona Rocks 32

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Here are a couple more geological sites around Flagstaff to visit, when it is 110 degrees plus in Phoenix. Cinder cones are a fun place to try to climb (Of course this depends on your definition of fun.). There are hundreds of cinder cones in the San Francisco Peaks Volcanic Field.

On one of my first trips to Arizona you could still climb to the top of Sunset Crater, but because of worries about erosion the Park Service has stopped people from climbing it. The top is very interesting as there are still fumarole deposits from the eruption around 1064 AD (This date was given for many years, but recent studies have suggested other dates around that time.). The fumarole deposits contain several unusual sulfate minerals and sulfur. The Sunset Crater visitors center and the loop trail at the base of the crater are really good for learning about Arizona's most recent volcanic eruption.

If you want the experience of a very strenuous hike in loose cinders you can try the Lenox Crater trail in the Sunset Crater National Monument. It is about a mile to the top with lots of slipping and sliding like the Sunset Crater used to be. Another cinder cone you can climb is SP Crater with the same very strenuous climb and lots of slipping. It is west of Sunset Crater and a dirt road leads to it. You should check road conditions if not using four-wheel drive. SP Crater is reported to be 70,000 years old, but this date is uncertain. SP Crater is unusual because after the cinder cone formed there was a small eruption of lava that spattered over the crater rim. This hard rim has slowed the erosion of the crater.

If you climb to the top you can see some of the twisted lava spatters, sometimes called volcanic bombs.



Sunset Crater



Sunset Crater from the rim



Fumaroles deposits on the top of Sunset Crater



Lenox Crater, via Google



SP Crater and its associated lava flow, via Google



Strawberry Crater northeast of Sunset Crater, via Google



Colton Crater just south of SP Crater with a cinder cone on its floor, via Google