

SKP Stops

Sharing News from the Road

SKP Stops Information

- **Deadline:** Material for each issue will be selected based on location and the migration of seasonal travel.
- **Words:** Short stories of 300 to 500 words are ideal. Submissions that are illegible, inappropriate or considered advertisements may be excluded. Due to limited space, submissions will be edited.
- **Photos:** Photos are accepted and included on a space-available basis. Include the name of anyone who may appear in a photo and also the name of the photographer.
- **Acknowledgement:** The editorial department may not acknowledge receipt of submissions. Submissions may not qualify for payment.

Corona Spy Satellite Calibration Project Markers

While hiking in Casa Grande Mountain Park, Arizona, my husband and I came across an interesting remnant from history—a Corona Spy Satellite Calibration Project marker. We saw what looked like an outline of the foundation of a building with rocks inside, so we hiked over to check it out. What was it? Luckily, one of our hiking buddies, Steve, knew what it was but didn't know the exact name of it. Steve had seen some of these markers about a mile behind Rovers Roost SKP Co-Op Park in Casa Grande, so that afternoon he took us to one of those markers. That one was made totally of cement instead of being filled in with rocks, but the shape and size of the cross was the same.

After researching online and receiving information Steve and Pam sent us, we learned that these benchmarks were used for aerial surveys by the army when they would fly their U-2 planes. This was to synchronize their cameras for accuracy on reconnaissance missions.

A Google search online under “Corona Spy Satellite Calibration project” had several links for information. I liked this site (roadtrippers.com/blog/what-the-heck-are-these-abandoned-cement-targets-in-the-arizona-desert), which wrote, “Turns out, the Arizona desert was the perfect place for the government to set up a calibration system for their then-super secret spy satellite cameras, known as Project Corona. Project Corona was a series of 144 satellites launched by the CIA between June of 1959 and May 1972. What was the purpose of these targets? To keep an eye on the Soviet Union, China and other areas across the globe as Cold War tensions mounted. In fact, the project got fast-tracked after a US U-2 spy plane was shot down over Soviet Russia. They formed a 16-mile grid (plus a few extra scattered around the edges), with 60-foot crosses serving as mile markers. In the middle of each cross is a marker that reads ‘corps of engineers—U.S. Army survey mark \$250 fine or imprisonment for disturbing this mark.’ Each arm is 25 feet long,

Guidelines and Helpful Hints

- Keep your submissions positive, upbeat and short.
- Include fun or interesting photos with a brief description.
- Share your favorite RV travel destinations, restaurants, museums, off-the-beaten-path locations or unique places to visit.
- Keep in mind that the next magazine issue will mail two months from the time of your writing. Identify time-sensitive material.

Send submissions to *Escapees Magazine*, 100 Rainbow Drive, Livingston, TX 77351, or to editor@escapees.com. Article submission guidelines are available for downloading online at: www.escapees.com/knowledge/escapees-magazine/tips-submissions.



Survey mark at Casa Grande Mountain Park.
Photo by Joyce Space #61818.

16 feet wide at the wide end and 2 feet, 8 inches wide at the narrow end.”

The marker behind Rovers Roost SKP Co-Op Park is at GPS coordinate N 32° 51.008' W 111° 50.579'. Follow the dirt road that runs east along the wall of the park. It's slightly under one mile on the right. Don't drive the road if it has been raining.

Pam told us about another marker along Gila Bend Highway (Route 84) right next to the road. As you go north on Montgomery Road from Rovers Roost, turn right (east) onto Route 84. Look for the high-rise hotel on the left. Slightly past it on the right (south) near the road is that marker. It's between MMs 173 and 172.

To find the marker in the Casa Grande Mountain Park, hike on the “Ridge Trail,” which isn't on the ridge but half way up the mountain. The coordinates for that Corona Spy



Marker one mile behind Casa Grande SKP Co-Op park.
Photo by Joyce Space #61818.

Satellite marker are **N 32° 49.213' W 111° 42.365'**. For specific directions to the park from Route 10, visit www.casagrandeaz.gov/rec/parks/cgmountain/trails-map/ or set your GPS for **N 32° 48.401' W 111° 41.822'**.

To reach Casa Grande Mountain Park from Rovers Roost, go south to Route 8 and take Exit 174. There are two places to park on that side of the park. Set your GPS for **N 32° 49.958' W 111° 43.235'** for one place to enter. Set your GPS for **32°49.877' W 111°43.063'** for the lot with toilets and picnic tables.

Joyce Space #61818

Arkansas State Parks—A Well-kept Secret

Arkansas possesses a natural beauty, uncrowded environment and Southern charm that lure visitors to return again and again.

Of the 52 Arkansas State Parks, eight are designated as mountain parks. Three of these—Petit Jean, Mount Magazine and Queen Wilhelmina State Parks—have especially spectacular settings. Unspoiled and located in west-central Arkansas, these three parks are ideal for those seeking solitude and spectacular vistas. Each park has a lodge with visitor center, restaurant, gift shop and meeting rooms, plus many more amenities. Cabins, campsites and hiking and bike trails round out the features.

Petit Jean State Park is located within two hours drive of Little Rock at an elevation of 1,180 feet on flat-topped Petit Jean Mountain. Visible to the west on a clear day is the state's highest peak, Mount Magazine, and evening brings dramatic sunsets.

Petit Jean was the first state park created in Arkansas and is named for a legendary 17th-century French woman who disguised herself as a man to follow her sweetheart to the New World. Here, from 1933 to 1938 atop Petit Jean Mountain, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps built the Adirondack-style Mather Lodge and a number of rustic cabins from native wood and stone. They also carved out miles of roads and trails.

The lodge has 24 rooms, but there are also 33 cabins (21 with kitchens) and 125 campsites open year-round, including 26 pull-throughs with water and 50-amp electricity. Hiking, ranger-led walks and programs, a pool, lighted tennis courts, a playground, picnic areas and an amphitheater keep visitors busy.

Cedar Creek Canyon's waters cascade into a 99-foot waterfall, while a stone dam forms Lake Bailey for fishing, boating, kayaking and pedal boating. The park's natural formations include Indian Cave, Bear Cave and Rock House Cave. In the Seven Hollows area are Turtle Rock, the Grotto and Petit Jean Natural Bridge.

Mount Magazine State Park sits on a bluff on the slope of 2,753-foot Mount Magazine in the Ozark-St. Francis National Forest. The park is only a two-hour drive from Little Rock and less than six hours from Dallas, Oklahoma City, Memphis and Shreveport.

Settlers first came to the area after the Civil War, and there are scattered remains of cabins along some of its trails. The park offers sweeping views of the Petit Jean River Valley and Blue Mountain Lake. Forty-three of the lodge's 60 rooms have balconies, and visitors can enjoy the Skycrest restaurant as well as a heated indoor pool, fitness center and game room.

There are 13 cabins and 18 campsites with water, electric and sewer hookups. There are also over 20 miles of hiking trails, plus scenic drives, overlooks, and activities that include bird watching and rock climbing provide visitors with lots to do.

Queen Wilhelmina State Park is located 13 miles west of Mena, Arkansas, on the 54-mile Talimena Scenic Drive, a National Scenic Byway. The park sits in the Ouachita Mountains atop the state's second-highest peak, Rich Mountain, at a 2,681-foot elevation. The Ouchitas include some of the highest mountain ranges between the Appalachians and the Rockies but run east-west rather than north-south.

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