

Chillin' at 5000 feet

BY TYSON HUGIE

I had left town every weekend for six weeks. Exhausted didn't begin to describe how I felt. But when it comes to making the most out of my summer, I live by a motto my mom emphasizes: carpe diem! For that late August weekend's excursion, I ventured to the Sitgreaves National Forest in the mountain ranges about 2.5 hours northeast of Phoenix, a round trip of 250 miles, a spot where summer temperatures typically range about 20 or more degrees cooler than the Valley.

Four friends and I found a great campsite just off Young Road, a couple of miles down a narrow dirt road that overlooked the Mogollon Rim and offered fantastic views to the south. We set up camp and stoked the fire, then cooked burgers and brats over the flames. Nobody had any particularly good ghost stories to tell as dusk fell, but we spent a good chunk of time proposing potential names for Adam's soon-to-be new dog.

We managed to avoid any run-ins with local wildlife, and the overnight low dipped to a pleasant 60 degrees. Woody whipped up some delicious breakfast burritos with ham, bacon and green salsa for breakfast the following morning. All too soon, it was time to pack up the site and head back down to civilization. My 2013 Acura ILX fared well on the dirt road, though high grass in the median occasionally tickled the undercarriage (others had driven up in pickups and Jeeps). ■

The view from the Ponderosa forests, south across the Mogollon Rim. // Breakfast is served! // Sunset on the Rim, camp set up and tales around the fire. // One more look on a relaxed Saturday morning.

