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## Part of Saguaro West road to become trail



### [Did you know](#)

Some of the saguaro cacti along the road have been growing for 150 years or longer.

### [If you go](#)

One way to reach Golden Gate Road is to take Ina Road west of Interstate 10 to Wade Road. Drive south on Wade Road, which turns into Picture Rocks Road. Watch for a Saguaro National Park entrance sign and proceed 2.3 miles past the sign to a left turnoff for Golden Gate Road. A sign at the turnoff says "Road closed to vehicles sunset to 6 a.m." The road is bumpy in places, but a passenger car can make the trip. A park entrance fee of \$10 per vehicle is payable at the Red Hills Visitor Center....

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People who love driving on a scenic stretch of Golden Gate Road in Saguaro National Park West might want to get out there for a farewell spin.

Park officials plan to close a 2.6-mile segment of the road next year and convert it to a trail for hikers, bicyclists and horseback riders.

That's a plus for trail users - but others, such as artist Jill Carver, say they're unhappy about losing vehicle access to the area.

Darla Sidles, superintendent of Saguaro Park, said the segment of unpaved Golden Gate Road slated for closure extends south from Picture Rocks Road to the Sendero Esperanza Trailhead.

Plans call for closing the road by late next year, Sidles said.

She said the reason for the change is that park users want more multiple-use trails.

"We've gotten input from equestrians and bikers that they would like to have that area as a trail," Sidles said. "It's increasing the opportunity for additional trails in the park."

"I'm sure there will be those who are disappointed to see the road access go," she said. "But there are numerous opportunities for road access and very few multiple-use trails in the park."

Carver, who set up an easel along the road last week and worked on a landscape painting, exclaimed "No way!" when a reporter told her of plans to close the road.

"This is the only way I can get off the main roads" and find scenic settings, said Carver, whose work is on display at galleries in Sedona and elsewhere. "I can paint right from the truck without having to hike in with all the painting supplies."

Sidles noted that another segment of Golden Gate Road - west of the Ez-Kim-In-Zin Picnic Area - will remain open to vehicles.

"And drivers will still be able to use the Bajada Loop Drive," northwest of the park's Red Hills Visitor Center, she said.

The cost and duration of the road-to-trail project aren't certain.

"Fully eradicating a road can be as lengthy and expensive as building a new road," Sidles said. "It may be something that would take a little over a year to do."

A "top-notch" job could cost \$900,000 or more, she said.

"That would be for the best-case scenario, but we might find ways of doing it cheaper than that - something closer to the \$200,000 range," Sidles said. "It depends on how perfect it is. If you regrade and re-slope and re-contour, it would cost more than if you just revegetate" along the existing roadbed.

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