

## Photo Essay: My XPLOR Experience

Ethan Bradfield, 2018-19 NBA XPLOR Resident in Tucson-Marana/Arizona

Our first week of living in Tucson, the pastors of Saguaro Christian Church took us to the top of Mt. Lemmon, the tallest peak in Tucson. I was surprised at how beautiful the surrounding area was. Tucson is surrounded by four different beautiful mountain ranges.



The view from Mt. Lemmon at night, overlooking the city.



In September we went to Tucson's Pride event, where Saguaro had a booth to show that as Christians we should love all our neighbors.



These are from one of my favorite places in Tucson: Lower Tanque Verde falls. It's a short hike into a desert canyon, at the bottom is the runoff where the waterfall meets the riverbed.



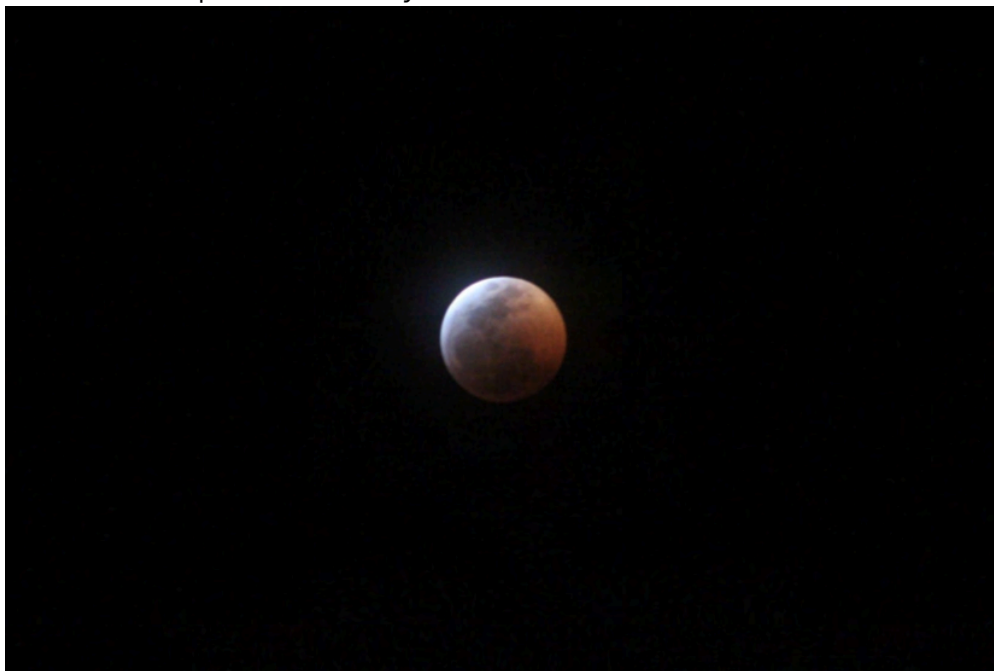
The first weekend of November, Tucson hosted its annual All Souls Procession and Festival. A large altar is set up and everyone is invited to put images of their loved ones who are no longer with them. There were booths, live music, and food. At the end, there was a music concert and a large ball containing notes to departed loved ones which was lit on fire.



Outside of town in one of the national parks is the perfect place for stargazing. This is a picture of the park right before sunset. After 7 whole months here, I still get surprised by how beautiful the desert can be.



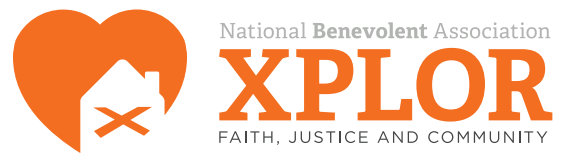
A picture of the lunar eclipse on January 20th, 2019



In early March, the city of Tucson had snowfall. Snow in the desert is not something people usually think about, but it happens. We drove a bit outside the city to this spot to take pictures and make some snowmen.



Tucson was not the first place I wanted to go when I signed up for XPLOR. What is appealing about a town that isn't really known for anything, in the middle of the desert? It took a while, mostly because of the hot weather, but I eventually fell in love with Tucson. It is not too different from my home, Long Beach, California. There's half a million people, but it feels like everyone knows everyone. Tucson and Long Beach are both very public transportation and biker friendly. They both have a downtown, as well as a street with small businesses selling unique items where street fairs happen. Where Long Beach has oceans and beaches, Tucson has mountain and desert trails. And instead of an aquarium, Tucson has a desert



museum and zoo. Another big difference is that Tucson is technically a border city. Even though it is 90 minutes to the border, Tucson is the closest major city. Not only do the two countries of Mexico and America meet here, but the Tohono O'odham Native Americans live here as well. In fact, the border cuts right through their land. There is influence from both these cultures in the art and food all over Tucson. Overall, Tucson is a fairly spread out city, full of friendly people and an interesting mix of cultures. I am glad I was given the opportunity to be here, and I am looking forward to what the next ten weeks will bring.

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***NBA XPLOR*** is a 10-month service residency opportunity for young adults ages 21-30, with the purpose of empowering young adults to discern and develop a "heart for care" as they live together in simple community, engage in direct service and justice work, engage in leadership development, and discern their vocational calls to honor the various communities they are called to serve. **Learn more and apply at [nbacares.org/xplor](https://nbacares.org/xplor).**