

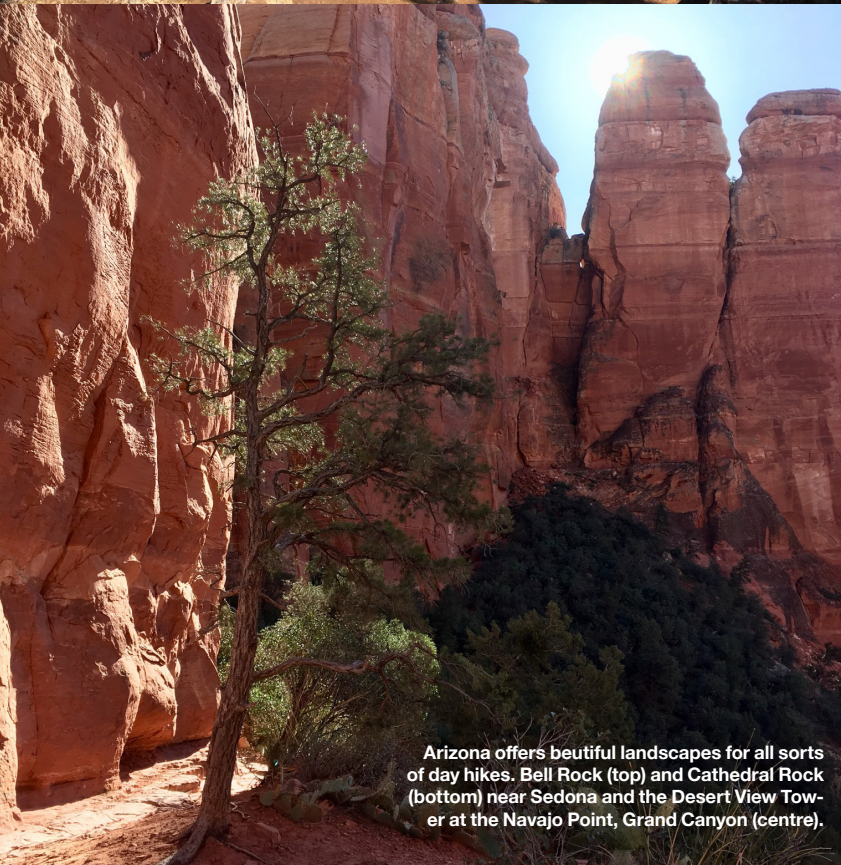
# Conference travelling

BY MARCO SMOLLA

Sometimes a scientific conference gives us the opportunity to travel to countries and areas we have never been to before. What a great privilege it is if you can stay a couple of extra days. After this year's conference of the Cultural Evolution Society in Tempe, Arizona, I was fortunate to spend some extra days to explore Arizona's spectacular landscape.

Together with Rohan Kapitany, Sabine Nöbel, and Hanna Schleihau, I rented a car in Tempe and spent a day in Sedona's Red Rocks and a day at the Grand Canyon. A left turn from the I17 takes you along the scenic I179. The curvy road meanders through the pointy but smooth surfaced, red-orange rocks that lend this area its name. We went for a short hike around Bell Rock (top). It is adjacent to the much bigger Courthouse Rock. This landscape was completely alien to me both the interestingly shaped mountains as well as the desert flora that have never seen before. We stopped many times to take photos as every new angle looked more impressive than the previous. We continued our hiking day at the nearby Cathedral Rock (bottom). The trail is steep and in the smooth surface is in parts almost slippery. However, we were rewarded with a stunning view over the red desert land.

The next day, we drove further North to see the Grand Canyon. We started our tour at Desert View (centre) with our very first look at the gigantic canyon and the Colorado River far down in the valley. It took me some time to grasp the scale of what I was seeing. After a while, my brain started to comprehend the dimensions. We had great weather that allowed us to observe how the colours of the scenery changed as the sun started to set. We walked back to our car after sunset and were, once more, rewarded with a beautiful starry night sky. □



Arizona offers beautiful landscapes for all sorts of day hikes. Bell Rock (top) and Cathedral Rock (bottom) near Sedona and the Desert View Tower at the Navajo Point, Grand Canyon (centre).