Arizona is a world-class natural laboratory for studying geology and environmental science. It is also one of America’s most scenic states with beautiful desert, mountain and plateau landscapes containing many famous national parks and monuments. On this 12-day field excursion, we will visit many of the state’s natural wonders including Grand Canyon, Sedona, Meteor Crater, Sunset Crater, Petrified Forest, Saguaro National Park and the Santa Catalina Mountains. We will also visit an active copper mine and learn about 21st century mining and ore processing methods and the financial benefits that mining brings to the state and national economy. In addition, our focus will go beyond geology to include study of environmental change and sustainability in traditional Native American societies with visits to Wupatki and Montezuma’s Castle national monuments. At the unique Biosphere 2 project, we will see the world’s most advanced experiment in sustainable living for future societies on Earth and beyond. Finally, we will also visit the Sonora Desert Museum and learn about desert ecology and wildlife conservation.

The trip will take place in late May, 2014 and the cost per student is likely to be in the ballpark of $1300.00. This sum will cover all travel, accommodation (motels) and food costs, and park entrance fees. We will travel in vans and there will be space for a maximum of 20 students and 2 faculty. The trip will be part of a new 3-credit course. Students who have completed EES104 or EES110, and EES130 are eligible to attend. The course will include pre-trip meetings and required reading assignments during the spring semester. During the trip, students will be engaged in active learning and there will be some small exercises to complete. In addition, each student will choose a special topic related to a location we will visit. The student will research the topic beforehand and then present what they have learned on the day we visit that site.

This will be an exciting trip offering a wide variety of enjoyable learning opportunities in some of America’s most spectacular and diverse landscapes. At some locations, we will take short hikes and students should be prepared for strong sun and heat conditions. On average, we will be driving 2 hours/day and there may be some long (but fun!) days.