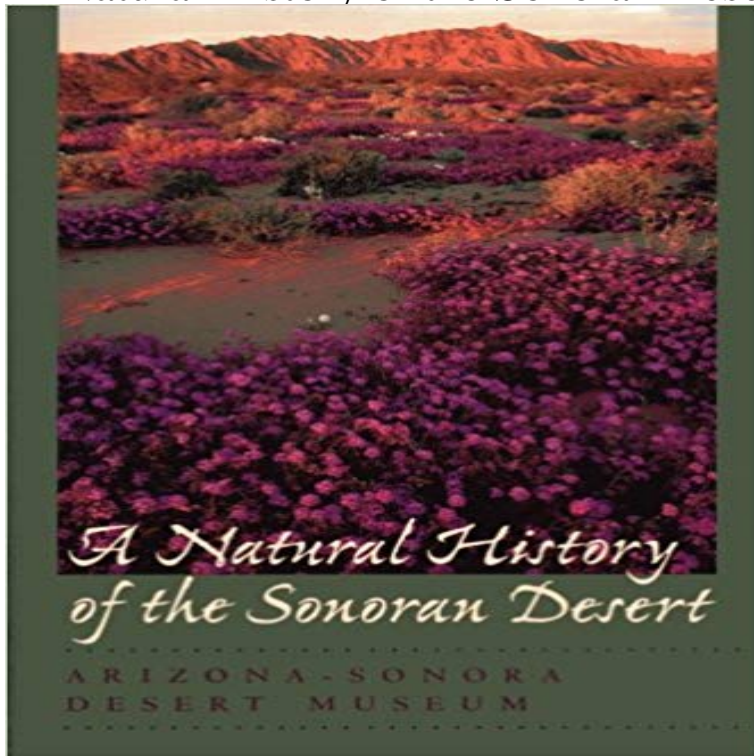


A Natural History of the Sonoran Desert



Imagine crossing a threshold not into someone's home but into another world. Imagine that world to be inhabited by creatures with names as wild as Gila monster, chuckwalla, vinagaroon, boojum and devil's claw. Close your eyes, and smell a world filled with the fragrances of night-blooming cactus flowers, sacred datura, and the aromatic oils of creosotebush released into the air after the first summer rains. Listen hard, and hear the distant calls of Cactus Wrens, cicadas, Scaled Quail, Curve-billed Thrashers and spadefoot toads. Then open your eyes again, and see that the world you've entered into is swarming with leafcutter ants, carpenter bees, hummingbirds, and kangaroo rats. You have not entered into someone else's home, but one which for a day, a year, or an entire lifetime, may be your own: the Sonoran Desert. It is a homeland that rambles over some 120,000 square miles (320,000 km²) in two countries and five states.

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