

Hundreds of people once lived in the pueblos here at Aztec. Then the walls stood intact, and flat adobe roofs covered the top rooms of these three- and four-story buildings.



Rediscovery and Excavation

In the year 1776, when our country declared its independence, New Mexico was still part of the Spanish Empire. The governor of New Mexico authorized an expedition from Santa Fe in the hope of finding an overland route to the Pacific Coast. Father Escalante, the priest who proposed this undertaking, was in charge. On a map produced by the expedition's cartographer, the ruins near the confluence of the Animas and San Juan Rivers are mentioned. This is the first known reference to ruins in this area, but we do not know definitely if Father Escalante actually saw what we call the Aztec Ruins.

Prof. J. S. Newberry, a geologist working with a Geological Survey expedition, saw the ruins in 1859. Then in 1878, Lewis Henry Morgan, often considered to be the father of American anthropology, visited here and 9 years later he published a description and ground plan of the ruins.

Settlers began moving into the Animas Valley in the 1870s and became interested in the ruins, constantly speculating about them. As noted, they incorrectly guessed that the Aztecs of Mexico had built the ruins—hence the name. During the 1880s, the long-sealed rooms were entered and explored, and whatever artifacts could be found were avidly collected. Unfortunately, much valuable information was lost in this manner.

In 1916, the American Museum of Natural History began to excavate the ruins under the direction of Earl H. Morris, a young archeologist who had grown up in nearby Farmington. By 1923, most of the work was completed; however, Morris returned to Aztec in 1933 and 1934 to supervise the stabilization and reconstruction of the great kiva. The small house that Morris had built nearby is a part of the visitor center today.

The Museum of Natural History purchased the ruins and surrounding land and donated these to the U.S. Government. On January 24, 1923, President Harding issued a proclamation creating Aztec Ruins National Monument.

About Your Visit

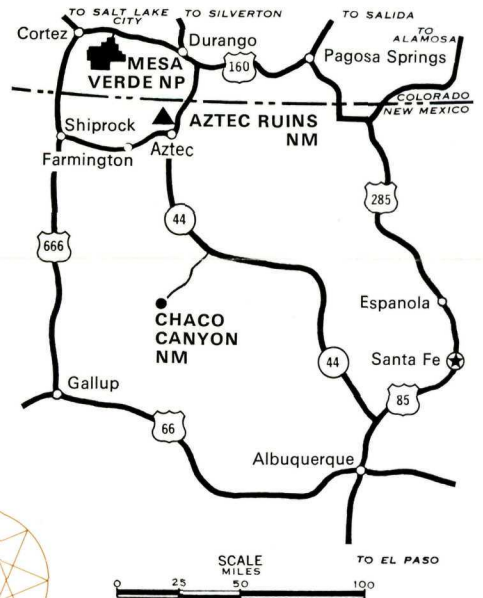
Aztec Ruins National Monument is located northwest of the city of Aztec, near the junction of U.S. 550 and N.M. 44. The park is open daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., with longer hours during the summer months; it is closed Dec. 25 and Jan. 1.

We suggest that you stop first at the *visitor center*, where you may see pottery, baskets, and other items made by the Indians who lived here, as well as exhibits explaining their way of life. National Park Service personnel are here to answer questions and to help make your visit more enjoyable.

A self-guiding trail leads through the west pueblo, its great kiva, and the nearby Hubbard ruin, a tri-walled structure.

There is a small picnic ground here, but no camping facilities are provided. Food and lodging are available in nearby towns.

Aztec Ruins National Monument is a Designated Federal Entrance Fee Area. An entrance fee of \$1 per car is charged. Golden Age and Golden Eagle Passports are honored.



Please Be Careful

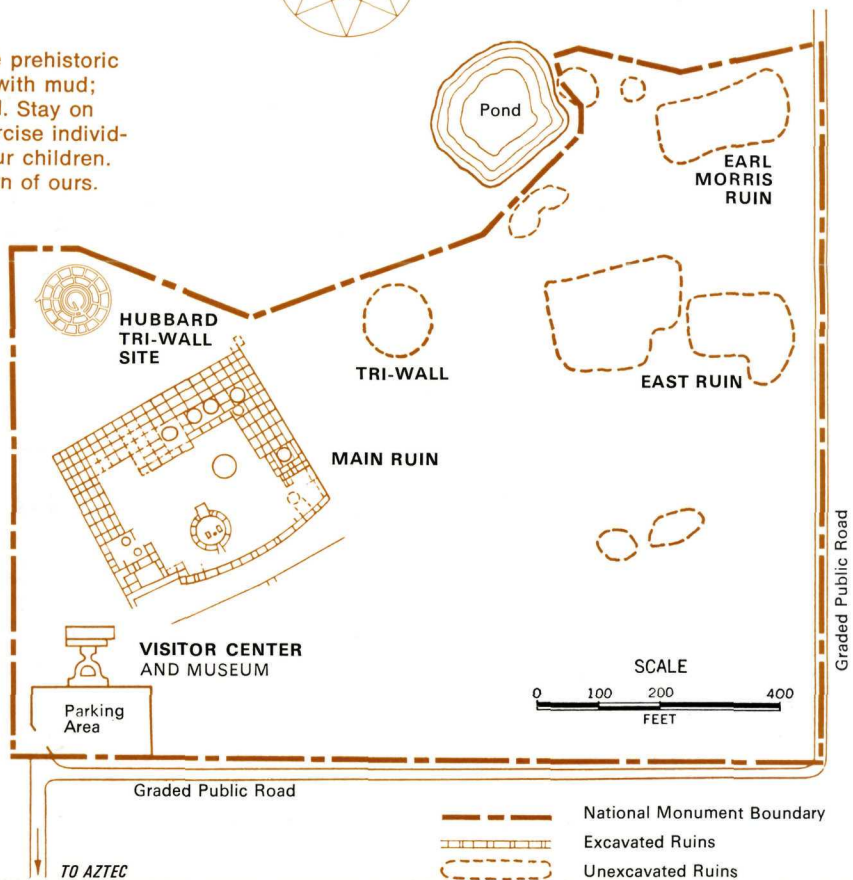
The 800-year-old walls of these prehistoric Indian ruins are held together with mud; they crumble easily if disturbed. Stay on the trails and remain alert. Exercise individual caution for yourself and your children. Your safety is a primary concern of ours.

Administration

Aztec Ruins National Monument is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is P.O. Box U, Aztec, NM 87410, is in immediate charge.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

GPO: 1976-211-308/178



National Park Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

aztec ruins

