

Petrified Forest

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



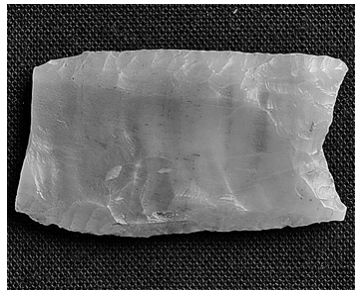
Petrified Forest National Park
Arizona

Archeology



Visitors to Petrified Forest often wonder how people lived in this seemingly harsh land. People, however, have made this region home for over 13,000 years. The climate has changed over this long period, from cold steppe to semi-arid shortgrass prairie. Imagine making a living off the land of Petrified Forest. What would you hunt? How would you farm? In what sort of home would you live?

Paleo-Indian 13,500 to 8000 BCE



At the end of the last Ice Age, hunter-gatherers roamed the Southwest. During this time, the region was cooler with a grassland environment. People gathered wild plants for food and hunted extinct forms of bison and other large herd animals. The nomads used a device called an atlatl to throw their spears and darts.

With their distinctive elegant fluting, the projectile points of these ancient people help define the Clovis and Folsom Cultures. Folsom and Clovis camps have been found within Petrified Forest National Park as well as fluted projectile points made of petrified wood.

Archaic Culture 8000 to 500 BCE



By 4000 BCE (Before Common Era), the climate had become similar to that of the present. The area became warmer and the monsoon pattern of precipitation evolved. The megafauna of the past were extinct. People had to broaden their source of food, including many different species of plants and animals. Farming and sedentism began

during this period, particularly as corn was brought into the region from the south in the Late Archaic Period. Indicative of this period were one-handed manos, basin metates, flaked tools, and no pottery.

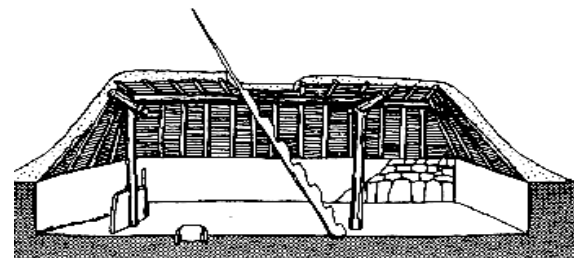
Basketmaker II and III 500 BCE to 650 CE

Basketmakers were increasingly sedentary, living in stone-lined pithouses. As the Basketmaker period progressed, settlements moved down from the mesa and dune tops to the slopes closer to farm land. They grew corn, squash, and, eventually, beans. They made beautiful baskets and Adamana Brown pottery. Their

tool kit changed and broadened. The bow and arrow were introduced about 500 CE. Petroglyphs throughout the area were created by these people, including images of humans and animals.

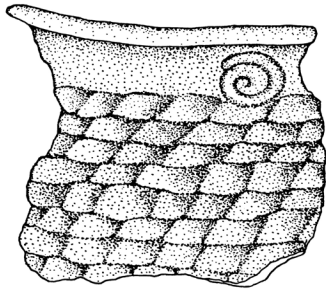
Basketmaker III–Pueblo I 500 to 950 CE

During this period, settlements ranged from a handful to many deep pithouses with wall niches, floor pits, and entry ramps. Use of above ground architecture began to change from storage to habitation. It appeared to have been a stressful period, with a major drought from 850 to 900 CE. Artisans began to decorate their pottery with black on white painted designs.



Cross-section of a pithouse

**Ancestral Pueblo People:
Pueblo II-III
950-1300 CE**



While most of this period was similar in climate to the present, there was a prolonged widespread drought from 1271 to 1296 CE (based on tree-ring data from nearby El Malpais National Monument). Although a few people still lived in pithouses, above ground rooms were becoming prominent. Subterranean ceremonial rooms called kivas were introduced. Sites expanded across the landscape. Homes evolved into above-ground pueblos, some with multiple stories. People began to make corrugated, Black-on-Red, and polychrome pottery. Tools included manos and slab metates, petrified

wood and obsidian points and scrapers, and pottery that was both locally made and trade items. Artifacts link park sites to Homol'ovi, Flagstaff, the Hopi Mesas, Gallup, Zuni, and the White Mountains sites. Many petroglyphs were made throughout the Little Colorado and Puerco River Valleys, including solar markers. A large percentage of the recorded sites at Petrified Forest National Park belong to Pueblo II-III.

**Ancestral Pueblo People:
Pueblo IV
1300 – 1450 CE**



After the drought extending into the early 14th Century, there was a period of environmental change, the return of long winters and shorter growing seasons. These conditions extended well into the 19th Century. By 1300 CE, archeologists believe that the idea of Katsinam (sometimes spelled Kachinas) became widespread, marked by images of Katsinam in petroglyphs, pictographs, and kiva murals. Polychrome pottery became more elaborate and Glaze-on-Red was added. Piki stones (for making piki bread) became evident. Their tool kit included

small triangular projectile points. The population began to aggregate into larger communities, with over a hundred rooms, kivas, and frequently a plaza, located along major drainages or near springs. By the end of Pueblo IV, most of the Petrified Forest area appears to have been depopulated, but people still used the region for a travel corridor and for resources.

Sites to visit in Petrified Forest National Park



Puerco Pueblo

Probably constructed over several generations, 100 to 125 rooms, one-story high, were built around a rectangular plaza near the Puerco River. Within the plaza were three rectangular kivas, their unusual shape indicating influence from the many different people. When Puerco Pueblo was closed around 1400 CE, the people may have migrated to even larger communities nearby. There was a trend throughout the region at this time to aggregate into larger communities. Puerco Pueblo is one of the few Western Pueblo IV sites managed by the National Park Service.

Agate House

This rare gem is the only excavated Pueblo III site in the park. Archeologists believed the eight room pueblo may have been constructed entirely of petrified wood. The building that stands today is a reconstruction made during the 1930s. Although there were no traditional kivas found, one of the rooms is thought to have been used for ceremonial purposes due to its large size. Agate House may have been occupied for only a short time.

Where did they go?



In the past, the ancestral Puebloans were said to have mysteriously disappeared. Writers, researchers, and others speculated on everything from drought to aliens as the cause. Today, researchers have learned much from the living Puebloans of the region. The Hopi, Zuni, and other Puebloan people have always recognized the ancestral Puebloans as their predecessors, and consider the archeological sites still part of their living culture. Visiting places such as Zuni, Hopi Mesas, and Acoma, it is easy to

connect them to the silent spaces of Puerco Pueblo and other archeological sites. The effort to bring the past to life continues. More than 1,000 archeological sites have been identified in Petrified Forest. Less than half of the park has been surveyed. What will the future bring to light?

Care for the Past

Remember that archeological sites are fragile. Every little artifact tells part of the story. Please don't climb on the walls, touch the petroglyphs, or remove anything. Stay on the designated trails. Leave these fascinating sites for future generations to enjoy and explore. They are part of our American legacy.