



## Resources Near and Far



### Trade

The people of Aztec Ruins skillfully utilized the raw materials and resources they found in their environment to make tools, process food, fabricate clothing, create art and build their structures. They traveled long distances and maintained extensive trade networks to obtain resources that were not locally available to them. As you tour the ruins today, think about our society today and how incredibly dependent we are on trade networks. What plants and animals do you use around your house? What do you need to travel to the store to obtain? What do you have to order from far away?



### What was available locally ?

Bighorn sheep, deer, elk, bears, rodents, turkeys and various other bird species were found in this area and used for a multitude of purposes. Bones were fashioned into awls, scrapers, beads, whistles, needles and gaming pieces, while feathers and hides were used to make warm blankets, robes, and footwear. Sinew (tendon) was wrapped around the end of reed arrows and knives to prevent splitting.

Limestone, siltstone and sandstone were locally available. They quarried stones from outcrops and collected stones from river bottoms and shaped them into tools such as hammer stones, mauls, axes, manos, and metates. They used stone tools to shape rock for constructing their buildings. Prehistoric mauls and hammers were found here and at sandstone quarries three to five miles from Aztec Ruins.

Juniper, piñon pine, and cottonwood trees were used for a variety of things. For example, juniper was used as fuel and construction materials, piñon pitch was used to waterproof baskets.

Local native shrubs and plants such as yucca, greasewood, sage, four-wing saltbrush, willows and rushes were used. Yucca fibers were used as cordage while yucca leaves were woven to make sandals and paintbrushes and the ends used as needles. Rushes and willow branches were used to construct arrows.

Hematite, selenite, and crystalized gypsum were collected locally. Hematite was used to make hammers, cylindrical paint sticks, pigments and beads while flakes of selenite and gypsum were fashioned into pendants.



### What could they obtain nearby

The people of Aztec Ruins obtained obsidian (volcanic glass) from the Jemez Mountain area, about 85 miles southwest of here. They chipped the obsidian into projectile points and sharp cutting tools such as knives, scrapers and blades. The ancestral Pueblos also traveled 125 miles, to an area just south of Santa Fe, to collect turquoise. Turquoise was used to make jewelry such as pendants, ear ornaments, beads bracelets and other body ornaments. Ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, and aspen were hauled by foot more than 40 miles from the San Juan Mountains to build the site.



## What did they trade for?

The ancestral Pueblos had extensive trade networks extending to northern Mexico and the Gulf of California. Three skulls, a skeleton and one feather of a macaw from Mexico (still retaining its blue and red colors) were found. These colorful feathers were valued for their beauty and rarity and used in ceremonies. Copper objects such as bells and beads were also found here having been traded from Mexico.

Shells were traded from the Gulf of Mexico and used to make jewelry. Shells of at least nine different species were found here. Walnut shells were used as beads and charms. Walnut trees are not native to this region, but do grow in southwestern New Mexico and Arizona. Twisted and braided cotton cord as well as cotton cloth found in the site were likely obtained from southern Arizona and Utah.



Salt was highly valued for its use as a preservative. Similar to modern-day Pueblos, the people at Aztec likely made pilgrimages to gather salt at salt flats near the present-day Zuni Pueblo or western Arizona.

## What did they have to trade?

As mentioned, the Pueblos here at Aztec acquired needed or desired objects such as salt, cotton, shells, or macaw feathers. What did they trade in return for these objects?

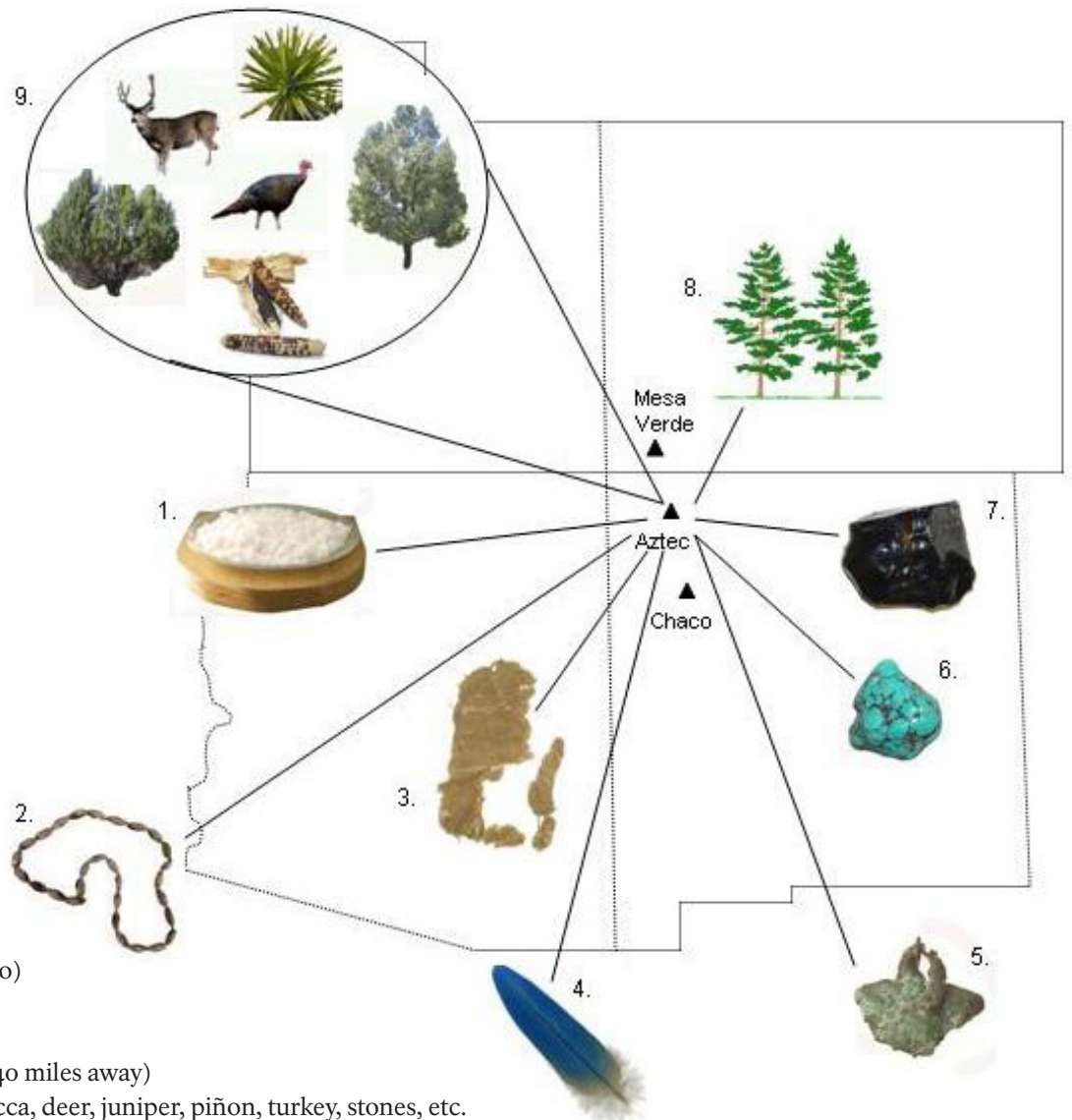
Aztec Ruins lies within a stones throw of the Animas River and close to the confluence of three rivers, enabling access to numerous water sources and relatively fertile land. With the addition of hand-dug irrigation canals, it became an excellent area for farming. Corn, squash, and beans were grown and traded to others for goods not available locally.

Clay was also more readily available in this area. Consequently, elaborately decorated pottery was manufactured here and traded to outsiders.



## Extensive trade networks

Just as our modern society maintains extensive trade networks within our own country and around the world, the ancestral Pueblos here at Aztec utilized resources near and far. The diagram to the left shows areas where they obtained certain goods illustrating the extent to which the Pueblos interacted and traded with people within the Four Corners area and



1. Salt (approx. 300 miles away)
2. Shells (approx. 500 miles away)
3. Cotton (approx. 250 miles away)
4. Macaws (from northern Mexico)
5. Copper bells (from northern Mexico)
6. Turquoise (approx. 125 miles away)
7. Obsidian (approx. 85 miles away)
8. Lumber for construction (approx. 40 miles away)
9. Materials locally available: corn, yucca, deer, juniper, piñon, turkey, stones, etc.