

BUTLER WASH INDIAN RUINS

Trail Guide

Welcome to the Butler Wash Indian Ruins. Although you cannot actually reach the ruins by way of this one-half mile trail, a spectacular panoramic view of the entire ruin area awaits you at the canyon's rim. The viewpoint is approximately 100 feet above the canyon floor and there are no guard rails. Please use extreme caution, especially with children and pets. The trail rises approximately 150 feet, is unimproved and can be considered easy to strenuous, depending on ability and physical condition. Your walk will take you past pinyon and juniper, the predominate trees in the area, as well as a variety of shrubs and perennial and annual vegetation. In warmer months, watch for lizards and other signs of wildlife. On areas of "slickrock" or bare sandstone, the trail is marked by cairns or piles of rocks.

Between approximately 500 AD 1300 AD the caves and the mesa tops surrounding Butler Wash were inhabited by the Anasazi or "Ancient Ones". The Basketmaker culture, the earliest of the sedintary inhabitants, lived primarily on the mesa tops, utilizing the caves for temporary shelter or burial areas.

As time passed, the Basketmakers were gradually influenced by cultures from the south. This "blending" of cultures developed into the Pueblo civilization and was characterized by the manufacture of fine pottery, cultivation of cotton and a high degree of stone masonry as seen in the caves across the canyon. They also developed irrigation of their crops by building checkdams and diversion canals. The kiva, a round ceremonial structure is still in use by the Hopi and New Mexico Pueblo Indians, modern day descendants of the Anasazi. Three round kivas and one square kiva are located in the largest site. A total of 20 rooms or structures are located in this site, with several other storage rooms or "granaries" found in small niches or protective alcoves around the canyon.

Severe erosion of irrigable land, drought, depletion of natural resources as well as pressure from nomadic Indians from the north are thought to be some possible reasons for the abandonment of this region. By the late 1200's, the Anasazi moved south into Arizona and southeast into the Rio Grande Valley of New Mexico.

There is presently no trail to the ruins by way of the canyon bottom. Should you decide to visit the ruins by this route, please use extreme care when ascending and descending the sandstone slopes at the head of the canyon. Although some of the ruins have been stabilized or "site-hardened" in 1974 to reduce the ravages of nature and time, the structures will not withstand careless acts by man without substantial detrimental results. Please do not climb, walk, or lean on the walls. We hope you enjoy your walk.

Mule Canyon Indian Ruins, an excellent example of a restored Anasazi surface ruin can be seen 9 miles west on highway U95. If you have any questions or comments, you may address them to: Bureau of Land Management, San Juan Resource Area, P.O. Box 7, Monticello, Utah 84535, phone (801) 5872201.