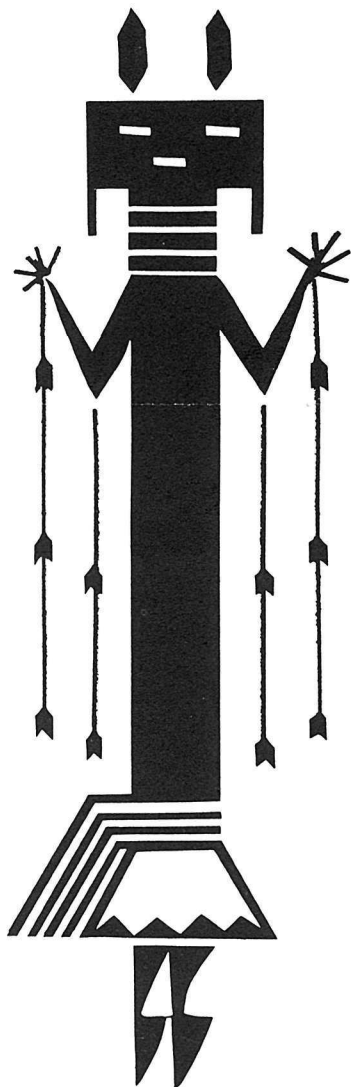


Traveling Among The Navajos

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Welcome to the Navajo Reservation. The reservation offers a variety of recreation and cultural opportunities. Here you can experience the natural wonders of Monument Valley Tribal Park, reflect upon the lives of the

Anasazi people who left the ruins in Canyon de Chelly and Navajo National Monuments, or visit Hubbell Trading Post National Historic Site where customers have come since 1878.

THE LAND

The Navajo Reservation encompasses about 25,000 square miles (65,000 square kilometers), about the size of West Virginia. Located primarily in Arizona, the reservation also extends into Utah and New Mexico. In addition there is much Navajo country in New Mexico which is outside the reservation. Spectacular canyons, rugged mountains, forests, lakes, and deserts combine to create a landscape not easily forgotten.

THE LANGUAGE

Listen closely as you travel here. The Navajo language is frequently used. For some people Navajo is their only language. Most Navajos also speak English, but with varying degrees of skill. The language, of the Athabaskan family, is complex and difficult for outsiders to learn. It is capable of amazingly fine distinctions, especially in describing this land.

THE PEOPLE

The Navajos call themselves "Dine" – "The People." They have been living here for more than four hundred years. When the Spaniards explored this area in the 1600s they used the name "Apache de Navajo," meaning "Apaches of the Cultivated Fields." Today approximately 165,000 people live in Navajo country.

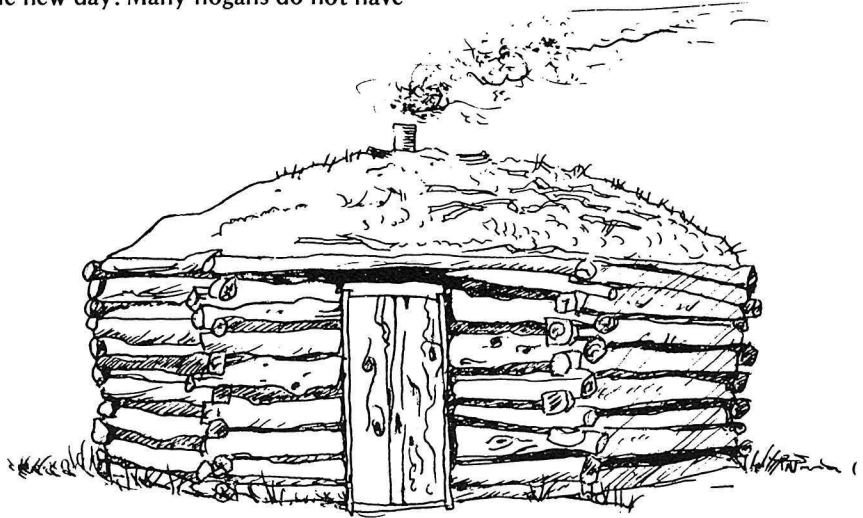
The Navajo Nation is governed by an elected tribal council headed by a tribal chairman. The council is made up of representatives of various election districts. Navajo country is also divided into chapters. Community meetings and activities take place in the

many chapter houses you will see in more populated areas. Navajos have traditionally been a democratic society and never had hereditary chiefs as did some other tribes. Window Rock, Arizona is the capitol of the nation.

Many visitors enjoy sketching or photographing the people and the land. Years ago this would have been considered offensive. Today such activity is common, but permission should be asked before photographing or drawing people or personal property. A fee is often expected.

Hogans are the traditional homes of the Dine. They serve both as residences and as places for certain ceremonies. Often six sided, a hogan may also have more or fewer than six sides. They are usually built from materials readily available — wood, earth, stones, even concrete. The doorway faces the sunrise to allow the occupants to welcome the new day. Many hogans do not have

electricity or running water. You may see pick-up trucks hauling firewood or water from community wells. You will not see towns or cities in the familiar sense. Navajos live in family groups spread throughout the reservation. Small clusters of hogans, trailers, and a house or two may signify more than one generation of a family.



SOME TRAVEL TIPS

While traveling among the Navajos you will notice some differences between the Dine culture and the European-American culture. One such difference is eye contact. To many people eye contact is considered polite and important. Among Navajos eye contact is considered impolite. If you are speaking to a courteous group of Navajos, some may look down or away, even though you may have their full attention.

You may not be successful in striking up a conversation with a Navajo. The general exuberance many cultures define as friendliness is not considered such by the Dine. From childhood they are taught not to talk too much, be loud, or be forward to strangers. Such behavior is considered impolite or showing off. Likewise, touching is seen differently. Among Navajos it may be reserved for close friends and family, and in other cases may be a sign of disrespect. Usually the only physical contact you will see is handshaking, and even then a firm grip is interpreted as being overbearing. When shaking hands a light touch is preferred.

Small herds of sheep, goats, cattle, and horses form an important part of life for many Navajos. Much of the reservation is open range and herds move freely along and across roads. Use caution when driving, especially at night.

The Navajo Reservation observes daylight savings time. The remainder of Arizona does

not. If you are traveling here during this part of the year be aware that time on the reservation is an hour later than such places off the reservation as Phoenix or the Grand Canyon.

Though individual Navajos do not own the land upon which they live, families hold traditional use rights under tribal customary law. Nearly all land on the reservation is part of someone's traditional use area. Therefore hiking or cross-country excursions off established roads without permission is trespassing. This law respects property rights and protects the thousands of archeological sites. Tampering with or removing archeological items is prohibited by both tribal and federal law.

The Navajo Tribe has its own police department. Obey all speed limits while on the reservation. Drive with care and watch for pedestrians along all roads. One last word: alcoholic beverages are prohibited on the reservation.

Traveling the Navajo Nation offers you a rare and special opportunity to learn more about the culture and history of the Dine. We are glad you are here. Enjoy your visit.

Produced with funds donated by Southwest Parks and Monuments Association in cooperation with Hubbell Trading Post National Historic Site.