

Hohokam

The first farmers of the Sonoran desert are known as *Hohokam*, a Pima Indian (O'othom) word meaning "those who are gone" or "all used up". Although we do not know what these remarkable Indians called themselves, we do know that they flourished in the desert for over a thousand years.

By AD 300, the Indians of southern Arizona had learned the art of pottery making and had become successful farmers. They grew corn, beans, squash, cotton, and tobacco. They also made extensive use of the wild plants and animals of the desert.

The largest Hohokam Indian settlements were located along the Salt, Gila, and Santa Cruz rivers. Hohokam canals obtained water from these year-round rivers.

Although small at first, Hohokam irrigation systems eventually included over 700 miles of main canals, and countless miles of channels leading directly into fields. Digging and maintaining these systems was quite an accomplishment for a group with only stone and wood tools and no beasts of burden.

Hohokam society passed through several periods of development. Hohokam culture reached its peak in architectural and political development during the Classic Period, approximately AD 1150 to 1450. Casa Grande Ruins National Monument preserves structures and artifacts of the Classic Period.

The monument is named after the largest Hohokam structure in the Gila River valley: The *Casa Grande*, which means "big house" in Spanish. This eleven room, four story building dominates the Hohokam village of which it was the center.

The purpose of the Casa Grande remains an enigma. Was it the dwelling of a leader? A place for special ceremonies? Several openings in its upper stories align with the sun and moon at certain points in their cycles. Perhaps it was used, in part, as an observatory. Research into this and other topics in Hohokam archaeology continue.

Those Who Are Gone

The Casa Grande was built in the early 1300's. Sometime in the late 1300's, the Hohokam began to abandon their villages. Apparently the society ran into severe difficulties only a generation or two after the Casa Grande was built.

Canals fell into disuse, trade routes broke down, the leaders lost their authority, arts and crafts were forgotten, and the population declined. By AD 1450, Hohokam culture had come to an end.

Archaeologists do not know all the reasons for the decline and end of Hohokam culture. Recent findings indicate, however, that a series of devastating floods in the 1350's and 1380's may well have played a role in the breakdown of Hohokam economic and political systems. There may have been other factors at work, too.

Some families may have left the desert altogether. It appears that some people, in contrast, may have survived in the desert, in very small settlements. No matter what difficulties the Hohokam had, some small scale farming was still possible.

The early Spanish explorers of the 1600's and 1700's found just these kinds of settlements in what had once been Hohokam territory. The early Spanish named the Indians of the southern Arizona *Pima* and *Papago*. In their own language they are the Akimel O'othom and the Tohono O'odham. They may be the descendants of the Hohokam.

Many Tohono O'odham (Papago) people live on a large reservation west of Tucson. The largest Pima reservation is the Gila River Indian reservation, which covers the land between Casa Grande Ruins National Monument and the Phoenix metropolitan area. Several smaller Pima and Tohono reservations are in the vicinity.

The Casa Grande Ruins museum, ruins trail, and sales area contain displays and literature on the archaeology, history, and recent Indian culture of the area.

Other Points of Interest

The Hohokam lived in a large area of the southern Arizona desert. Fortunately, a few of these sites have been preserved, and museums in the area display Hohokam artifacts and interpret Hohokam culture.

Arizona State Museum. Located on the west side of the campus of the University of Arizona in Tucson, this museum has displays on many Indians of the Southwest, including the Hohokam.

Besh-Ba-Gowah. In the town of Globe, this museum and archaeological site includes reconstructed Salado Indian homes and a self guided trail through the ruins of a prehistoric pueblo.

Heard Museum. At 22 East Monte Vista Road in downtown Phoenix, this privately operated facility includes extensive displays on the prehistoric and contemporary Indian cultures of the Southwest, an arts and crafts shop, and a book store.

Montezuma Castle and Well National Monuments. Just off of I-17, about 90 miles north of Phoenix, these archaeological sites include a Sinagua cliff dwelling and museum (Castle) and a Hohokam pit house and a short self guided trail (Well).

Painted Rocks State Park. About 20 miles west of Gila Bend there are extensive Hohokam rock carvings for public viewing; no museum.

Park of the Canals. Located at 1660 North Horne in Mesa, this small park preserves sections of ancient Hohokam canals, and is one of the few places where these features are open to the public.

Pueblo Grande Museum. This City of Phoenix park, museum, and archaeological site is open to the public at 4619 East Washington Street. The site includes a self guided trail over the ruins.

Tonto National Monument. Overlooking Lake Roosevelt east of Phoenix, this Salado cliff dwelling includes an uphill self guided trail and a museum.

Casa Grande Ruins

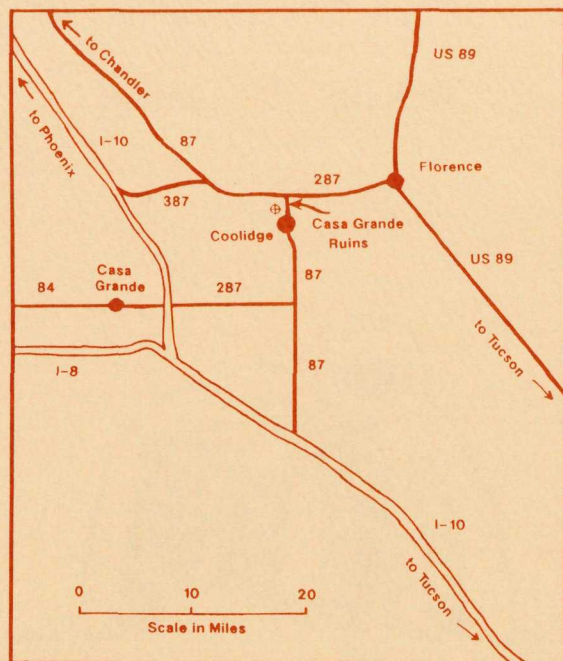
National Monument



1892 -1992

Coolidge, Arizona

Getting There



Casa Grande Ruins National Monument is located on State Route 87 at the north end of the town of Coolidge, which is about half way between Phoenix and Tucson.

From Phoenix, go east on Interstate 10 to Exit 185 for State Route 387. Follow the signs to Casa Grande Ruins and Coolidge. Take Route 387 to Route 87, turn right and keep going until you get to the Ruins.

From Mesa, take Country Club Road (State Route 87) south through Chandler across the Gila River Indian Reservation to Coolidge.

From Tucson, go west on I-10 to Exit 211 B, and take Route 87 north, follow the signs to Casa Grande Ruins and Coolidge.

Take U.S. 89 (Oracle Road) to Florence as an alternate route from Tucson. Between Oracle Junction and Florence, U.S. 89 is The Pinal Pioneer Parkway. In Florence, take Route 287 to Coolidge.

Planning Your Visit

Hours and Fees:

The Visitor Center and self guided trail at Casa Grande Ruins National Monument are open from 7 am to 6 pm daily throughout the year, including holidays.

An entrance fee of one dollar per adult is charged at the Visitor Center. Children 16 and under are free. U.S. citizens 62 years of age and older are free, as well as all those in the same vehicle (except busses). Bona fide educational groups visiting as part of a class are admitted free.

Golden Eagle, Golden Age, and Golden Access passes are honored and are available in the Visitor Center.

Facilities and Services:

Your first stop will be at the Monument's Visitor Center, which includes museum exhibits with Hohokam artifacts and a sales area with educational literature. Rangers are on duty to lend assistance and answer questions.

A short, self guiding trail takes you from the Visitor Center through part of the prehistoric Hohokam village that is under federal protection. The trail takes you to, but not inside, the Casa Grande. Outdoor displays explain the features of the village and interpret Hohokam culture and history.

A picnic area with shade and water is available. Camping is not permitted, and the picnic area closes at 6 pm.

Several local RV parks accept overnight campers with self contained units. Gasoline, food, lodging, and RV camping are available in Coolidge (1 mile away) and in other nearby towns. State parks with camping facilities are 30 miles away.

All facilities in the Monument, including the ruins trail and picnic area, are wheelchair accessible.

Climate:

Winter visitors should expect mild temperatures with highs in the 60's and 70's and occasional periods of rain. Lows average in the 30's and 40's, with occasional brief periods of below freezing temperatures.

Spring and fall are warm and dry, with highs in the 80's and 90's and lows in the 40's and 50's.

Summer visitors should expect highs exceeding 100 degrees and the possibility of dust storms, violent thunderstorms, and high winds.

Safety:

Visitors should always remember that the desert can sometimes be very harsh and can change suddenly. Heat exhaustion and heat stroke can be avoided by taking precautions and by avoiding strenuous activities, especially in the summer months.

Many plants have sharp thorns or spines. Poisonous animals, though rare, are here and one must always watch one's step. Feeding of the ground squirrels is not permitted and is dangerous; many of these animals carry diseases.

Pets are permitted in the Visitor Center and along the trail, but they must be kept on leashes at all times in any location within the park. Do not leave pets in vehicles or tied up unattended.

Keep young children in hand at all times. Know your limitations and exercise caution.

Please Remember:

Casa Grande Ruins National Monument, part of the National Park system, preserves and protects delicate and irreplaceable remains of a prehistoric Indian culture.

Everything within the park is protected by law. Taking of souvenirs is not allowed. Defacing of any structure or display is a federal crime and is punishable by fine and imprisonment.

Administration

Casa Grande Ruins was set aside for protection and preservation by President Benjamin Harrison in 1892. There was no National Park Service at that time; early archaeological work and preservation programs were conducted by the Smithsonian Institution.

The National Park Service was created in 1916 by an act of Congress. Two years later, Casa Grande Ruins was designated a National Monument administered by the National Park Service.

Casa Grande Ruins is the first archaeological site in the country to receive federal protection and funding for stabilization. On June 22, 1992, Casa Grande Ruins celebrates its first centennial anniversary. Contact the Superintendent for more information on this event.

For further information on Casa Grande Ruins or on the National Park Service, write to Casa Grande Ruins National Monument, 1100 Ruins Drive, Coolidge AZ 85228; or call (602) 723-3172 or FAX (602) 723-7209.

