

chiricahua national monument, arizona





Rising steeply from the dry grasslands of southeastern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico, the Chiricahuas present a verdant, forested island in a sea of desert. Many species of trees, shrubs, and flowering herbs clothe steep canyon walls. Shady glens, alive with birds, are sheltered by rows of strange massive spires, turrets, and battlements in this fascinating wonderland of rocks.

Story of the rocks—What geological forces created these striking and peculiar pinnacles and balanced rocks? Geologists explain that millions of years ago volcanic activity was extensive throughout this region. A series of explosive eruptions, alternating with periods of inactivity, covered the area with layers of white-hot volcanic ash that welded into rock. Because the eruptions varied in magnitude, the deposits were of different thicknesses.

Finally, the eruptions ceased, followed by movements in the earth's crust which slowly lifted and tilted great rock masses to form mountains. The stresses responsible for the movements caused a definite pattern of cracks. Along the vertical cracks and planes of horizontal weakness, erosion by weathering and running water began its persistent work. Cracks were widened to form fissures; and fissures grew to breaches. At the same time, under-cutting slowly took place.

Gradually the lava masses were cut by millions of erosional channels into blocks of myriad sizes and shapes, to be further sculptured by the elements. Shallow canyons became deeper and more rugged as time passed. Weathered rock formed soil, which collected in pockets; and plants thus gained a foothold.

Erosion is still going on slowly and persistently among the great pillared cliffs of the monument. Pedestal, or balanced, rocks have formed and fallen; others are tottering; more are just taking shape. Within a human lifetime, only minor changes may be noticed, but with the passage of centuries the face of the land shows vast changes.

Although the curious erosional remnants and the massive columnar structure of the cliffs will impress you even if you hurry through, you will see much more of geological interest if you use the trails. Here and there are exposed beds of volcanic ash, indicating the explosive nature of the ancient eruptions. One trail is strewn with "volcanic hailstones" weathered out of a ledge composed of marble-like pellets, some firmly cemented into a peculiar "peanut-brittle" rock. Road construction has uncovered shale which was once the mud of a lakebed.

Plants and animals—Because they form an island in a sea of arid grassland, the Chiricahua Mountains afford a haven for a multitude of plants and animals of many species. Elevations from 1,573 meters (5,160 feet) to 2,245 meters (7,365 feet) cause a corresponding range in climatic conditions and types of vegetation. Snows and rains feed springs and small streams. Dense vegetation covers the shaded canyon bottoms and the cool north slopes of the higher elevations. In contrast, southern exposures feel the full heat of the summer sun and produce plants characteristic of the desert. Red-stemmed manzanitas and bark-shedding madrones mingle with the chalky-white limbs of the sycamore and the feathery gray foliage of the Arizona cypress. Green north-facing slopes, covered by chaparral of scrub oak and manzanita, face open southern exposures dotted with a desert vegetation of yuccas, century plants, and cactuses. Seasonal changes bring with them many varieties of wildflowers.

Arizona white-tailed deer are numerous in the Chiricahuas; in the monument, where they are protected, they have become accustomed to man and are frequently seen. Coatis and peccaries are increasing. Rodents are common, as are birds of many species. Each vegetative belt and plant association has its own distinctive animals, some of which are unique because of the relative and long-established isolation of the Chiricahua Mountains.

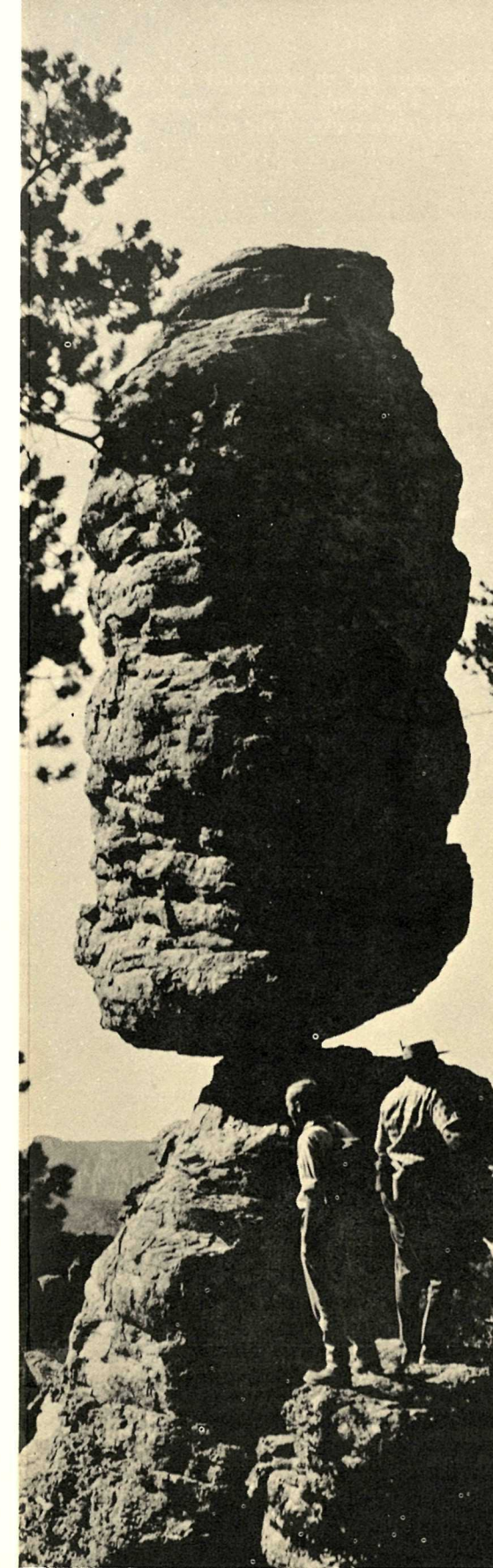
Indians of the Chiricahuas—What student of American history has not heard of Cochise and Geronimo, famous

warriors of the Chiricahua Apache Indians? For more than 25 years, they led a valiant yet vain attempt to halt the march of civilization and retain their way of life.

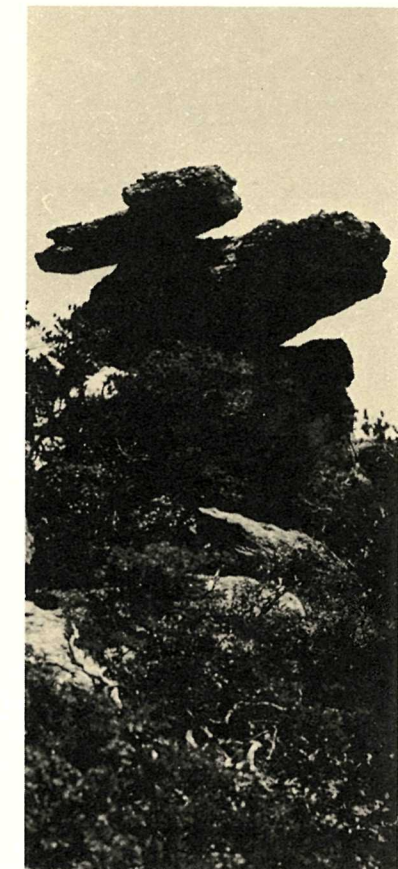
Mountain ranges of the Southwest were long the home of the nomadic Apache Indians. These resourceful people lived mainly on wild animals and native plants. When the Spaniards came into the area, some Apache tribes moved into the Chiricahua Mountains, from which they descended to plunder the invaders' horses, cattle, and grain. The horses they stole from the Spaniards increased their mobility and widened their range of activities, so that what is now the southeastern corner of Arizona became an Apache stronghold.

After the Gadsden Purchase from Mexico in 1853, and the opening of the region to settlement by American citizens, these Apaches became more troublesome. American troops were dispatched to the Southwest to protect settlers, prospectors, travelers, and the stages of the Butterfield Overland Mail, which were sometimes attacked. This skirmishing turned to open warfare in 1861 after the Bascom Affair, an event that touched off a dozen years of bloody warfare, when the army attempted to capture Cochise for a crime committed by another band of Indians. Of all the many camps and forts established in the Southwest, none played a more vital role in the final subjugation of the Chiricahuas than Fort Bowie. From its founding in 1862 until the final surrender of Geronimo in 1886, Fort Bowie was the focal point of military operations against the Chiricahua Apaches.

In 1872, the Chiricahua Apaches were placed on a reservation, and Arizona enjoyed a brief period of relative peace. In 1876 the reservation was disbanded and most of the Indians were sent to San Carlos, Ariz. Resistance of the Chiricahuas all but ended with the final surrender of Geronimo; however, the Apache Kid and "Big Foot" Massai staged several one-man escapades in later years. Cochise Head, just north of the monument, and Massai Point and Massai Canyon, within its boundaries, immortalize the names of two famous Apaches.

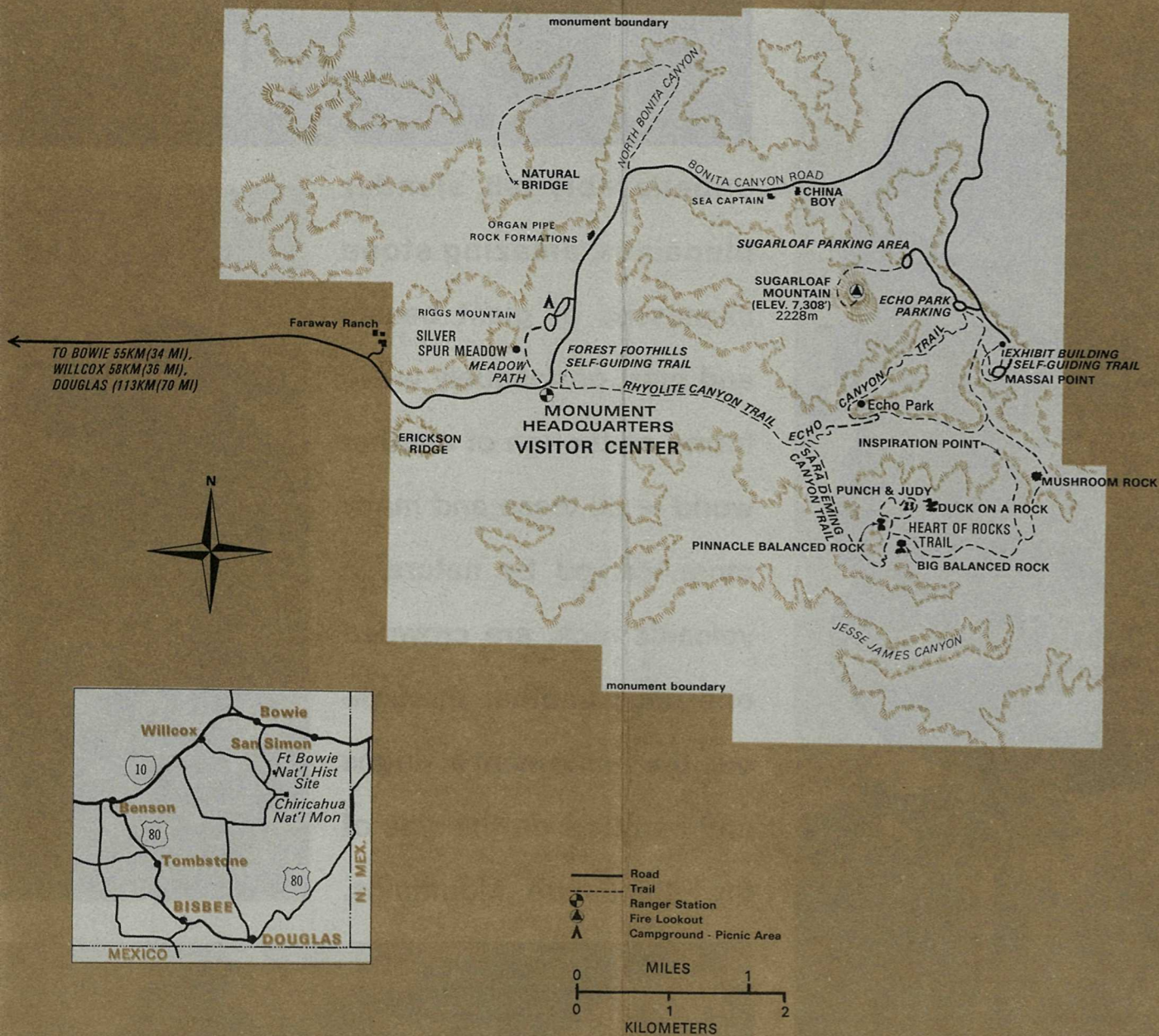


unbelievably tall, slender pinnacles, amazing stone likenesses of giant beasts and men, grotesquely weird forms as though of another world — all these and many more, carved by nature in volcanic rock, are crowded one upon another throughout the monument's ridges and canyons on the side of the Chiricahua Mountains.



CHIRICAHUA

For Your Safety—Be alert for an occasional rattlesnake during warm weather. The scenic drive is winding and mountainous; watch for fallen rocks on the road.



Reminders—Hunting is prohibited. Firearms must be cased or broken down to prevent their use. All pets must be on leash or kept in a vehicle; they are not permitted on trails. The disturbance of any animal, plant, or feature is prohibited. No wheeled vehicles are permitted on the trails.

ABOUT YOUR VISIT

The entrance, on the west side of the park, can be reached by road from Bowie, Willcox, Douglas, and Bisbee.

Please stop at the visitor center, about one and one-half kilometers (one mile) inside the boundary, and pay the entrance fee. Camping fees can be paid here, too. National Park Service personnel will explain features of the park and suggest ways to see them. The visitor center has exhibits that graphically describe the history and natural history of the area. This preparation will increase your enjoyment of what you will see along the scenic drive and on the trails.

Massai Point Drive—This paved mountain road leads up Bonita Canyon to Massai Point, from which you can get an extensive view of the park and of Sulphur Springs Valley to the west and San Simon Valley to the east. At the Massai Point Exhibit Building, you can learn about local geology.

Trails—More than 27 kilometers (17 miles) of trails provide views of all the park's features. For your and others' safety, we suggest that you stay on the trail. Other tips: Wear comfortable shoes, take water and food on the longer trips, plan to be back before dark, and set an easy pace.

Massai Point Trail—You can obtain a guide booklet for this trail in the Massai Point Exhibit Building. Features along the trail include a balanced rock, lookout point with telescope, and plants of the transition life zone. Walking time for the one kilometer (one-half mile) loop trail 20 to 30 minutes.

Echo Canyon—The five-kilometer (three-mile) walk through Echo Canyon to Echo Park presents one of the most scenic sections of the park. Walking time: two hours, round trip.

Heart of Rocks—This hike leads to such interesting rock formations as Punch and Judy and Big Balanced Rock. You should carry water on this trip. Round trip: six and one-half hours.

Sugarloaf Peak—A one and one-half-kilometer (one-mile) trail from the Sugarloaf parking area will bring you to the peak, one of the highest points in the park and one that offers exciting views in all directions. Walking time: one hour and 20 minutes, round trip.

Forest Foothills Trail—This self-guiding trail, starting at the headquarters parking area, will take you among plants of the Upper and Lower Sonoran life zones. Walking time for the one-half-kilometer (one-third-mile) loop trail: 20 minutes.

Natural Bridge Trail—This eight-kilometer (five-mile) round trip takes you through Picket Park to a viewpoint opposite the Natural Bridge. Walking time: two and one-half hours, round trip.

Meadow Trail—A one-kilometer (one-half-mile) trail from the visitor center to the campground takes you by the Silver Spur Meadow. Walking time: 20 minutes.

Shuttle Service—A shuttle bus is provided at selected times to take hikers to the Sugarloaf, Echo Canyon, and Massai Point parking areas. Hikers are then free to make a one-way trip back to the visitor center.

Climate—Temperatures are generally moderate. The mean daily temperature in January is 4°C (40°F) and in July, 23°C (74°F). Most of the average yearly precipitation of 46 centimeters (18 inches) occurs during July and August. Except for winter, the rest of the year is relatively dry.

Camping and Accommodations—There is a campground in Bonita Canyon, one kilometer (one-half mile) from the visitor center, at an elevation of 1,628 meters (5,340 feet). Camping is restricted to this area. A 14-day limit on camping is enforced in summer, the season of heaviest use; this limit may be extended at other times.

Drinking water, fireplaces, and tables are provided for 37 campsites; restrooms are centrally located. The fireplaces are a charcoal-burning type. Limited quantities of charcoal are available for purchase at the visitor center. **Firewood gathering is prohibited in the park.** Trailers up to 6.1 meters (20 feet) can be accommodated, but there are no hookups. Picnic facilities are available in the campground.

Motels, restaurants, commercial campgrounds, and trailer parks are located in Willcox.

ADMINISTRATION

Chiricahua National Monument, established on April 18, 1924, is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. The superintendent's address is Dos Cabezas Star Route, Willcox, AZ 85643. The telephone number is 602-824-3560.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

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