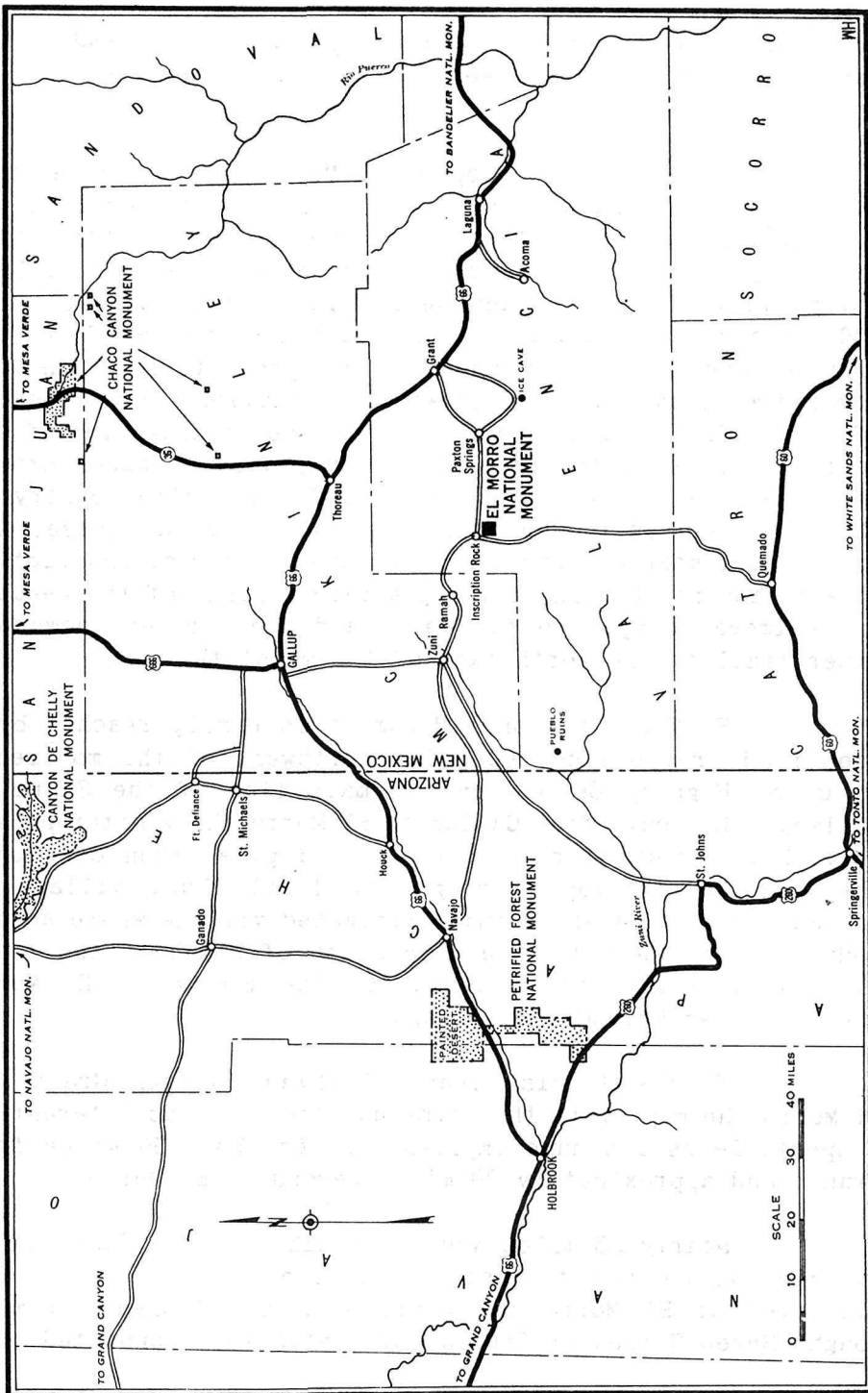


APPROACH ROADS TO EL MORRO NATIONAL MONUMENT



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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EL MORRO NATIONAL MONUMENT,
NEW MEXICO

The El Morro National Monument was established in 1906 to preserve the historic old rock named "El Morro" by the intrepid representatives of the King of Spain who ventured into the Southwest long before colonists arrived on the eastern shores of America.

As its name signifies, the great buff monolith, rising 300 feet above the surrounding lava-strewn valley, has been carved and worn by erosion until it resembles a huge castle or fortress. And a real fortress it was to the conquistadores of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, who found in a cove on its south side space enough to shelter a whole company of soldiers and a spring offering cool refreshing water.

There the colorful caravans of capitans of the Castilian Army, governors general, padres, and soldiers found rest and refreshment, safe from attacks by hostile Indian tribes, as they journeyed between Old and New Mexico, for the Zuni-Acoma Trail, the first highway crossing New Mexico, ran through the section in which El Morro lies.

While resting in its shade, the explorers cut into the soft sandstone of the great rock records of their journeyings. The first such record left on Inscription Rock, as El Morro is known locally, was made by Governor Juan de Onate in 1605, two years before the founding of Jamestown. Carved with a dagger over an early Indian petroglyph, it reads: "Passed by here the Adelantado (Governor) Don Juan de Onate

from the discovery of the Sea of the South on the 16 of April of 1605". This historical record was made by Governor Onate, said to be the founder of the City of Santa Fe, on his memorable trip to the Gulf of California, which he calls the Sea of the South. He started in the fall of 1604 from San Gabriel, on the Rio Grande, with friars Escobar and San Buenaventura and his soldiers. He traveled by way of Acoma, Zuni, and Moqui Villages and the Little Colorado River to Yuma and the Gulf of California which he reached on January 25, 1605.

Over fifty Spanish inscriptions appear on the sides of Inscription Rock, the last dated 1774. Thus for nearly 170 years El Morro was a refuge and camping place for parties engaged in maintaining Spanish rule over the Pueblo Indians of that section.

High up on the face of the cliff, a hundred yards beyond the water cove on the south and east face of the rock, are Indian petroglyphs, antedating the Spanish inscriptions by hundreds of years. These have never been deciphered, but it is believed they may be symbols representing various clans of the Pueblo Indians and were not intended to tell a story. Apparently, they were made by Indians who lived long ago on top of the mesa, where their ruined terraced homes may be seen today.

That the old Spanish and early Indian inscriptions may be preserved, the carving of names or initials by visitors is strictly prohibited, with a heavy fine and imprisonment imposed by law for violation.

Near the water cove is an ancient carved hand and foot trail used by the prehistoric inhabitants, leading from the water hole to the pueblo towns on top of the mesa. Three other trails lead from the ground to the village sites, one having been discovered within the last two years.

Across the bridged arroyo south of the petroglyphs lies the best camping spot in the monument. Nestled among the big, shady pines, with its out-door fireplace, it is always

inviting. Other attractive camping places are located on the north face of the cliff several hundred yards west of the inscriptions.

A climb to the top of El Morro may easily be made by following the marked trail and climbing the ladder at the only difficult place. On reaching the top the visitor is rewarded by the sight of the great spreading ruins of a village which, probably a thousand years ago, had a population of 500 Indians. The wall of the old village stands nearly 4 feet high at one place, but most of the prehistoric ruins are covered with the sand and growth of centuries. From the top of the cliff the visitor will enjoy a spectacular view of the Zuni Mountains to the northeast, covered by a somber growth of dense pine trees and the great volcanic butte country to the south and east. By following an indicated course, the tourist may make his way easily across the top of Inscription Rock to the north ruin, getting a rare glimpse of the beautiful primeval canyon to the west, and then proceed down another trail to the north face of the monolith.

El Morro National Monument is easily reached by a good road from Gallup, 60 miles northwest of the monument, on U. S. Highway 66 and on the main line of the Santa Fe Railway. En route from Gallup to El Morro the visitor passes through a forest of cedar, pinon, and pine, then down over the Zuni Reservation, through the little Zuni Village of Pascado, and to Ramah, a small irrigated village where accommodations may be had. One mile south of Ramah is the ranch of Evon Z. Vogt, the custodian of the monument. El Morro lies 14 miles beyond the village.

If the tourist leaves Highway 66 from Grant for El Morro, he may visit the Perpetual Ice Cave, as interesting a spectacle as its name implies. It is about 30 miles from Grant, and approximately 20 miles beyond is El Morro.

Nearly 23 miles west of Ramah lies the Zuni Indian Village, which the tourist may include on his trip. The histories of El Morro and Zuni, with its fabled and much sought Seven Cities of Cibola, are intimately connected.