



# Foundation Document Overview

## El Morro National Monument

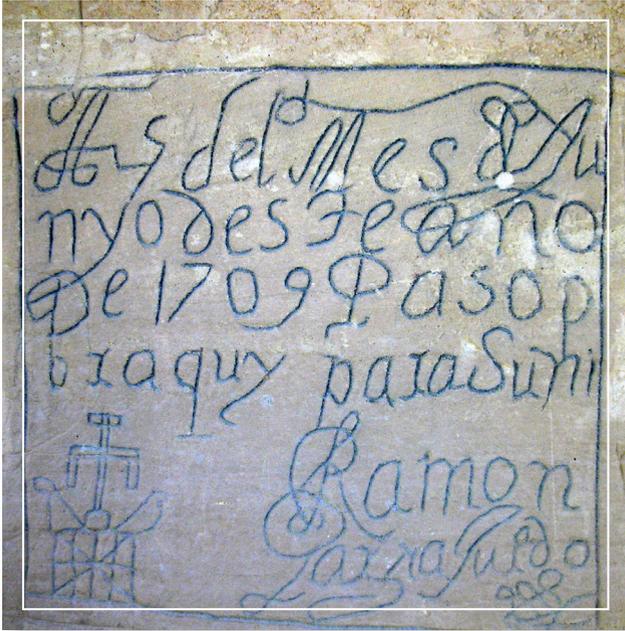
New Mexico



### Contact Information

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## Purpose

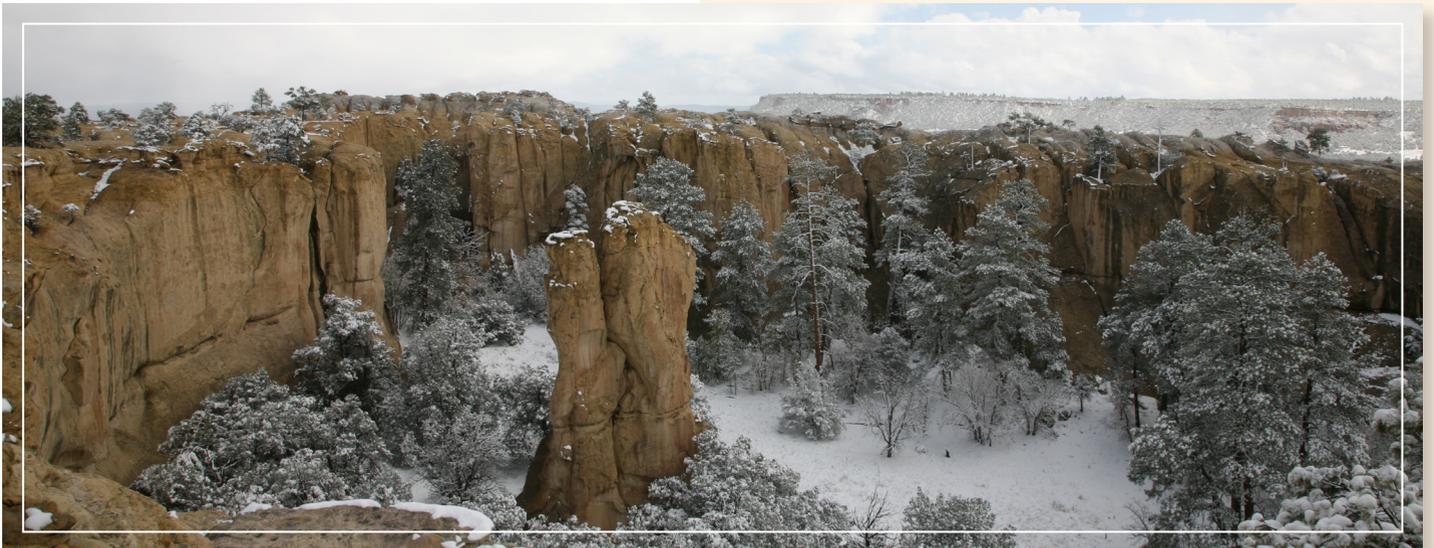


*EL MORRO NATIONAL MONUMENT preserves Inscription Rock, its inscriptions, petroglyphs, and ancestral Puebloan archeological sites, and provides opportunities to experience these resources in their natural setting.*

## Significance

Significance statements express why El Morro National Monument resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- Inscription Rock has more than 2,000 inscriptions, petroglyphs, and pictographs that document a cultural continuum of more than 1,000 years, from Ancestral Puebloans to Spanish explorers, European American surveyors, pioneers, military expeditions, and other travelers.
- El Morro National Monument contains a high concentration of exceptional archeological resources; well-preserved and largely unexcavated pueblo sites atop Inscription Rock are among the largest 13th and 14th century settlements in the American Southwest.
- El Morro's distinctive combination of geologic and geographical features—the natural travel corridor, highly visible landmark with a pool of water at its base, and the carvable texture of its soft sandstone—provided a perfect natural canvas for early inhabitants and travelers to leave their mark.



## Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Inscriptions, Petroglyphs, and Pictographs.** Inscription Rock has more than 2,000 inscriptions, petroglyphs, and pictographs that document a cultural continuum of more than 1,000 years, from Ancestral Puebloans to Spanish explorers, European American surveyors, pioneers, military expeditions, and other travelers.
- **Archeological Resources.** El Morro National Monument contains a high concentration of exceptional archeological resources; well-preserved and largely unexcavated pueblo sites atop Inscription Rock are among the largest 13th and 14th century settlements in the American Southwest.
- **Cuesta and Natural Setting.** El Morro's distinctive combination of geologic and geographical features—the natural travel corridor, highly visible landmark with a pool of water at its base, and the carvable texture of its soft sandstone—provided a perfect natural canvas for early inhabitants and travelers to leave their mark.

El Morro National Monument contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **Cultural Landscape.** The vernacular landscape associated with pre-European contact development and use of the cuesta and the El Morro Valley.
- **Historic Structures.** El Morro's historic structures were built to support the early management of the monument by the National Park Service. Buildings, utility systems, trails, and other facilities were constructed, mainly between the late 1920s and mid-1960s.
- **Museum Collection.** El Morro's museum collection contains 57,000 cataloged objects, including assemblages of prehistoric and historic artifacts, natural history specimens, and historic and rare archives.

## Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- Inscription Rock bears witness to ordinary and extraordinary events that have shaped the multicultural legacy of the American Southwest. Its 2,000 inscriptions and petroglyphs, documenting a 1,000-year cultural continuum, offer reflection on past, present, and future relationships of people to this land.
- The large pueblo villages atop the cuesta provide opportunities to ponder interactions between humans and their environment, the advantages and ingenuities of communal living, and peoples' spiritual connections to El Morro.
- Water—the force that carved the landscape and drew residents, explorers, and travelers to this place—may in time erase the fragile first-hand accounts of daily life, conquest, and colonization documented on the cliff face.



# Description

One of the most impressive and accessible records of Southwest history is exposed on a single rock. El Morro, a sandstone promontory rising 200 feet from the valley floor has more than 2,000 inscriptions and petroglyphs of many cultures spanning 1,000 years along its half-mile sheer cliff face. Monument visitors can gaze upon original markings of pueblo residents, Spanish explorers, early surveyors, and pioneers in symbols, signatures, poetry, and prose right where they were originally carved.

El Morro, Spanish for headland, is a *cuesta*—a rock formation that slopes upward gently on one side and drops off abruptly on the other. The massive bluff has been a landmark for centuries along an ancient east-west trade route between pueblos. But it is the pool of water at its base that drew and sustained people here. A natural catchment for snowmelt and rainfall cascading over the cliff, the pool provided reliable water for generations of residents atop the rock and relief for travelers crossing this arid land.

Atsinna, or “where pictures are on the rock” in the Zuni language, is the largest of two pueblos atop El Morro. The multistoried pueblo, with about 350 rooms and multiple kivas, housed up to 1,000 people who farmed the valley until the late 1300s, when populations shifted west. Atsinna remains a significant connection for pueblo descendants, the Navajo, and other tribes.

