

GILA CLIFF DWELLINGS

YOUR VISIT

The monument is open all year except December 25 and January 1. Visiting hours: 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. from June 1 to September 1 and 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. the rest of the year.

To reach the monument, drive 47 miles north from Silver City, by way of N. Mex. 25 and 527, cross the bridge, and follow the road along the rocky course of the West Fork of the Gila River. There is no public transportation to the monument.

Your first stop should be at the visitor center, a joint project of the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service, where you may obtain information and suggestions that will add to the enjoyment of your visit.

The ½-mile trail leads to and through the cliff dwellings, about 180 feet above the canyon floor. The trail is steep in places, so you should walk slowly and watch your step. The round trip takes about 1 hour.

TJ Ruin, near the visitor center, will soon be excavated. Personnel at the visitor center will be able to tell you whether or not visitors are permitted to examine the site.

The cliff dwellings are a short drive up the West Fork of the Gila. Park your car in the parking area, walk across the footbridge, and you will be at the beginning of the trail. Here, at the ranger station, you will find guide leaflets, with paragraphs keyed to markers along the trail.

As you follow the trail up shady Cliff Dwelling Creek, observe the plants, probably the same assemblage of species that the cliff dwellers knew and used so well. Be alert for a sudden flash of color—the painted redstart, a small black-and-white bird with a bright red breast. Some people come to the monument especially to observe these little beauties, which seem to find the insects they busily seek in the trees and shrubs along the stream.

GILA NATIONAL FOREST AND WILDERNESS AREA is administered by the Forest Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Rare opportunities for hiking, horseback riding, and camping in rugged country are to be found in the Gila National Forest and Wilderness Area. You may obtain detailed information and maps on these activities at the visitor center.

ACCOMMODATIONS AND SERVICE. Improved campgrounds and picnic areas are available. For information on their location and use, inquire at the visitor center or ask a uniformed ranger. Although there are no accommodations within the monument, the store at Gila Hot Springs offers groceries, snacks, camping and picnicking supplies, soft drinks, gasoline, and ice. Arrangements for guided pack trips may be made at Gila Hot Springs.

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF YOU. *Removing or marring* any natural or manmade object is not allowed. *Hunting* is not permitted within the monument. *Pets* must be kept on leash, or under some other form of direct physical control, at all times. *Speed limit* within the area is 25 miles an hour. Drive carefully and enjoy the scenery. *Trash containers* are available. Previous visitors left the trails, parking areas, and other parts of the monument clean. You will want to do as much for those who follow you.

ADMINISTRATION

Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument, containing 533 acres, was established on November 16, 1907. Administration of the monument was transferred from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to the U.S. Department of the Interior on August 10, 1933. Because of the monument's virtual inaccessibility until the recent completion of the approach road, few people have visited it.

A superintendent, whose address is Gila Hot Springs, N. Mex. 88061, is in immediate charge of the monument.

THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR—the Nation's principal natural resources agency—has a special obligation to assure that our expendable resources are conserved, that our renewable resources are managed to produce optimum benefits, and that all resources contribute to the progress and prosperity of the United States, now and in the future.

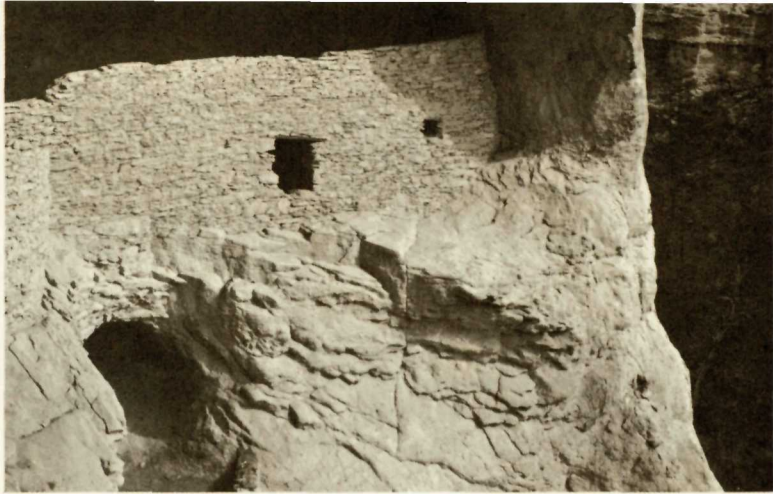
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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE





Seven centuries ago, the people who traveled to the communities in what is now Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument did so on foot, following trails across mesas and mountains and along the clear streams. Until recently, the routes were still little more than trails, and the few people who made the trip to the ruins did so on foot, on horseback, and by 4-wheel-drive vehicle. Today, you can drive to the monument over a surfaced road. The road ends at the monument.

Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument is surrounded by Gila National Forest and lies at the edge of the Gila Wilderness Area, the Nation's first designated wilderness area. This designation means that the wilderness character of the area will not be altered by the intrusion of roads or other evidences of man's presence.

The monument and the national forest and wilderness area offer you a glimpse of the homes and lives of Indians who lived here at the time of the Crusades. The surroundings must appear today very much as they did when the cliff dwellings were built.

THE PEOPLE WHO LIVED HERE

The earliest ruin that has been found within the monument is a pit-house of a type that was made from about A.D. 100 to 400. This dwelling, in the open, was circular and had a narrow entrance 2 feet wide and 10 feet long, on the east side; the floor was below ground level. People of this period, referred to by archeologists as the Mogollon, grew corn and beans, hunted, and gathered wild plant food. They made plain brown pottery and undoubtedly were skilled in crafts whose products have disappeared. Such things as nets and snares, baskets, and wooden tools last but a short time in open sites.

Remains of later pithouses are present within the monument. This house type was prevalent in the area until about 1000, when traits or influences from the Pueblo Indians to the north began to affect the lives of these people. Square houses, built above ground, became the style; some were of masonry or adobe construction, and some were made of wattle (interwoven twigs). A new local type of white pottery with black designs was developed at about the same time.

Cliff dwellings were erected during this period of influence from the north, and so was the pueblo known as the TJ Ruin, on a terrace overlooking the West Fork of the Gila River, near the visitor center.

The term "cliff dwellers" refers to Pueblo people who built their homes in natural caves. But Pueblo people also built in the open. Here at the monument are examples of both types of settlements, which were occupied—at least for a while—simultaneously.

Seven natural caves occur high in the southeast-facing cliff of a side canyon, and five of the caves contain the ruins of cliff dwellings—a total of about 35 rooms. Walls of the dwellings were constructed of stone from the formation exposed in the cliff, the Gila Conglomerate. All building timbers are original. Tree-ring dates are 1287-90.

Probably not more than 8 or 10 families lived in the cliff dwellings at any one time, but the rooms were used for several generations.

The TJ Ruin is composed of contiguous rectangular rooms. Construction details will be revealed by the archeological excavations.

The people were farmers; their fields were on the mesa tops and along the river. They raised squash, corn, beans, and probably amaranth and tobacco. And they supplemented these with animals that they hunted or snared and with wild berries and nuts gathered from the forest.

They were excellent weavers and skilled potters, producing handsome brown bowls with black interiors and black-on-white vessels.

Products obtained by trade with other peoples included pottery, such as the Mimbres Black-on-white and Gila Polychrome, cotton, obsidian for arrow points, and shell for ornaments.

What was their appearance? The women averaged slightly under 5 feet in height; the men were a few inches taller. They were slight of build, yet muscular. They had dark hair and eyes and brown skin.

Women's clothing consisted of small cotton blankets worn around the shoulders, "skirts" or "aprons" of yucca cord, and sandals plaited of yucca, agave leaves, and bark. The men wore headbands, small cotton blankets draped over their shoulders and probably sometimes tied around their waists as kilts, breechclouts of woven cotton, and plaited sandals. Both men and women probably wore their sandals only while walking on rocky hillsides. Few objects of adornment, such as bracelets and beads, have been found here.

And so these small, diligent, artistic people lived in their cliff houses and riverside village, tilling their fields with digging sticks, grinding their cornmeal with metate and mano, fashioning their pottery and cloth, carrying on trade with Indians of other communities, hunting, and gathering wild plants and fruit. For generations, the sounds of their voices and laughter echoed in the canyons. And then there were only the sounds of the streams and birds.

By about 1400, the Indians had abandoned their homes and fields. Why they left and where they went are not known. Perhaps they joined other Indians to the north or south.

For some 100 years after the farmers left, the area was uninhabited. Then this wilderness became the homeland of several bands of Apaches, whose raids added to the difficulties faced by early Spanish settlers near the area.

After acquisition of the region by the United States under the terms of the Gadsden Purchase, the Apaches directed their depredations against American pioneers traveling across southern New Mexico. A small military camp was established at Gila Hot Springs in the late 1800's to guard the local homesteaders.

