

MIMBRES PEOPLE

ARCHEOLOGY
ALONG THE BYWAY

www.tmsbyway.com



The Mimbres Valley Photo by Diana Kendall-Dobbs

For nearly 1,000 years, the Mimbres people lived along the Mimbres River Valley, the upper Gila River and nearby mountains of southwestern New Mexico, using the natural resources of the region. Descendants of Archaic hunters and gatherers, they became farmers and built villages near permanent sources of water.

The Mimbres people were named by early Spanish settlers for the *mimbres*, or small willows, found along the river banks. They were part of the larger Mogollon culture, who lived in eastern Arizona, New Mexico and northern Mexico.

The Mimbres culture has been largely interpreted from themes found on its renowned painted pottery. These include the daily life of people, animals in a multitude of forms, and varied geometrical designs, from simple to intricate.

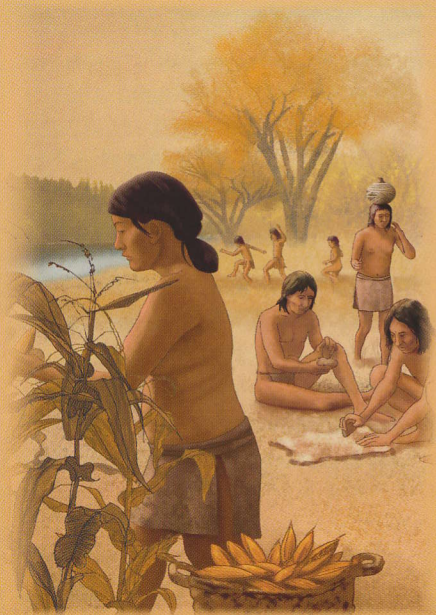


Illustration: John Lund

Early Pithouse Period, 200 - 550 CE. Pithouses were placed on hill-tops. The Mimbres people grew corn along the rivers and made plain brown pottery. Large pithouses, or "kivas," were used for communal and ceremonial purposes. Still reliant on wild foods and hunting, the people probably lived in pithouse villages part-time, moving with the seasons and available resources.

Late Pithouse Period, 550 - 1000 CE. The population grew and relied more on crops. Over time, painted pottery appeared, pithouses changed from round to rectangular and large pit structures called "Great Kivas" were built.

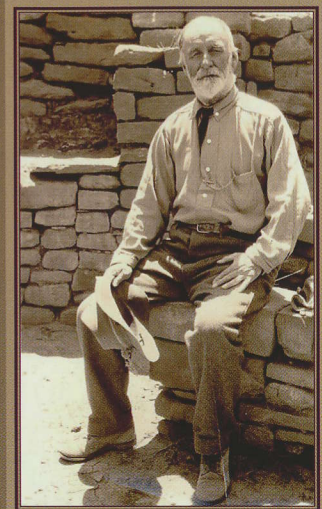
Mimbres Classic Period, 1000 - 1130 CE. Architectural style changed from pithouses to pueblo rooms. Cobblestones walls were held together with mud mortar. Rooms were added as villages grew, until some pueblos had more than one hundred rooms.

The Hopi, Zuni and Acoma claim descent from the Mogollon among other related cultures. Archeologists believe this likely, and in research, the pottery, artifacts and practices of these nations are often compared to the Mogollon.

ARCHEOLOGY OF THE MIMBRES

Although Southwestern archeologists were aware of sites in the Mimbres Valley, none were of particular interest because of the richness of neighboring Pueblo ruins. Mimbres sites were, for the most part, neglected. Widespread commercial looting, farming and cattle ranching have destroyed many sites over the years.

Despite brief publications by Adolph Bandelier, Clement Webster and Walter Hough, the Mimbres Valley did not interest or inspire archeologists until the 1920's and 30's — years after Fewkes' initial excavations at the Osborn and Oldtown ruins. There is renewed interest in this area, mostly along the Trail of the Mountain Spirits Byway.



Jesse Fewkes, one of the eminent archeologists of the early 20th century, introduced Mimbres art to scholars when he published three essays with the Smithsonian Institution between 1914 and 1924. The essays represent the first analysis and description of the abstract and representational designs of Mimbres art and pottery.

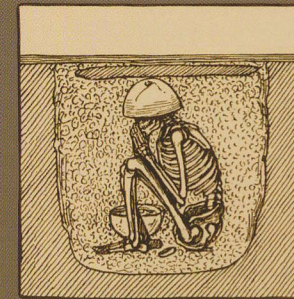


Illustration from *Mimbres: Art and Archaeology*, by J. Fewkes.

Excavations of prehistoric sites found burials in which the body was in an upright crouched position with a bowl (often, but not always painted) placed over their heads. The bottom of bowls were pierced through the use of a sharp object, leaving a hole, or "kill" hole, as they are often called. It has been suggested that by placing the bowl over the head of the deceased, the spirit is allowed to escape the body through the hole.

Main text source: *Mimbres Pottery*, www.anthropology.si.edu

① WESTERN NEW MEXICO UNIVERSITY MUSEUM

houses one of the world's largest permanent collections of Mimbres pottery, baskets, artifacts and cultural information about the Mimbres people. The museum creates opportunities for visitors to experience authentic and significant artifacts firsthand in meaningful contexts.

Free Admission / Gift Shop / Restrooms
Location: Fleming Hall, at the top of 10th St. in the center of the campus.
1000 W. College Ave., Silver City, NM
Hours: M-F 9 - 4:30, Sat. and Sun. 10 - 4
Phone: 575-538-6386
Email: info@wnmuseum.org
www.wnmuseum.org/about.html

② SILVER CITY MUSEUM

Visitors can explore, understand and celebrate the rich and diverse cultural heritage of southwestern New Mexico at this historical home converted to a museum. It has a limited Mimbres People collection consisting of pottery and lithic material from the Mimbres, Mogollon and Casas Grandes peoples.

Admission: \$3 suggested donation per person
Gift Shop / Restrooms / Guided group tours available by prior arrangement
Location: 312 W. Broadway, Silver City, NM
Hours: Tue.-Fri. 9 - 4:30, Sat. and Sun. 10 - 4
Closed Mondays
Phone: 575-538-5921 / 1-877-777-7947
www.silvercitymuseum.org

⑥ WEST FORK GILA RIVER SITE

The West Fork provided reliable water for plants, animals and people to thrive. Interpretive panels show how four distinct cultures dwelled here for more than 2,000 years. In 1883, a homesteader cabin was constructed on top of the last pueblo. The outline of several room blocks from a Classic Mimbres pueblo allows visitors to experience the size of living spaces from 1,000 years ago. In the early 60s, the site was excavated before the highway to the Gila Cliff Dwellings was constructed.

Location: Hwy 15, mile marker 43, south of Gila Cliff Dwellings Natl. Monument.
Info: US Forest Service: 575-388-8201
www.fs.usda.gov/main/gila/learning/history-culture

⑦ LAKE ROBERTS VISTA SITE

With sweeping views of Lake Roberts, this Classic Mimbres pueblo site may have had as many as 50 rooms and a great Kiva, built on top of a Late Pithouse period village of pit structures. Interpretive signs are found along a 250 yard paved trail.

Free access. Day use only
Restroom and picnic table at trailhead / Wheelchair accessible
Location: HWY 35, mile marker 25
Info: US Forest Service - 575-388-8201
www.fs.usda.gov/main/gila/learning/history-culture

⑧ MIMBRES CULTURE HERITAGE SITE

includes the Mattocks Archeological Site, Mimbres Museum and two New Mexico Territorial Adobe homes built in the 1880s. The Mattocks Site is a large collection of pit houses and pueblo villages dating from 550 to 1140 CE. Bowls recovered from the site are recognized worldwide as some of the finest examples of Classic Mimbres Artwork. The houses contain a rich collection of early settlement history and are some of the last old ranch houses remaining that are open to the public.

Site admission: \$3 per person, \$6 for groups of 4 to 6
Restrooms / Most of site wheelchair accessible

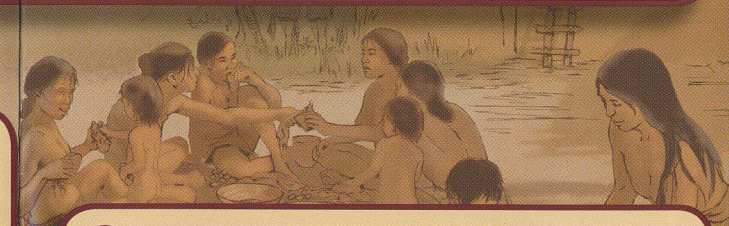
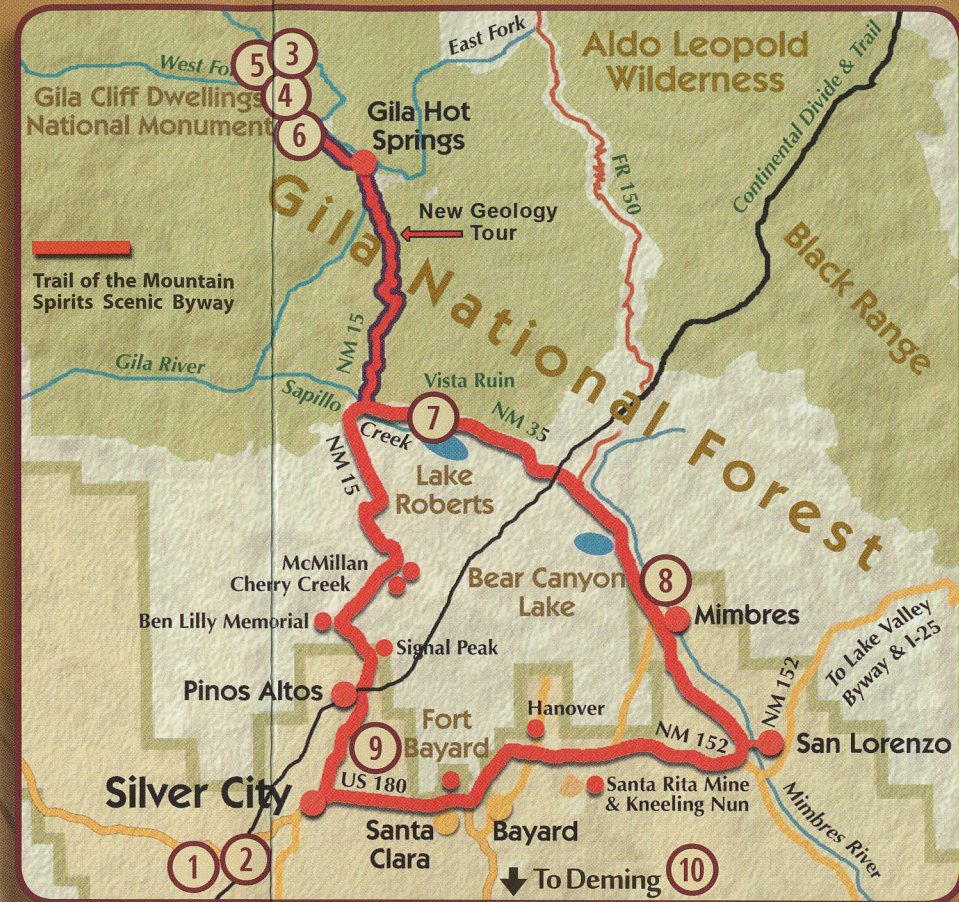


Illustration: Karen Carr

③ GILA CLIFF DWELLINGS NATIONAL MONUMENT

Gila Cliff Dwellings are the largest known Mogollon (Tularosa phase) cliff dwellings complex and provide the public with unparalleled opportunities to walk amongst well preserved structures built over 700 years ago. Architectural features and associated artifacts, including many that predate the construction of the dwellings, are exceptionally preserved within the six natural caves of Cliff Dweller Canyon. The cliff dwellings are not wheelchair accessible.

GILA VISITOR CENTER, managed jointly by the US Forest Service and the National Park Service, houses a small cultural resources museum, which includes artifacts of different peoples who lived in the area, an orientation film for the cliff dwellings, a national park store and an information and orientation station. Wheelchair accessible.

Location: Terminus of Hwy 15. From Hwy 35, through the Mimbres River Valley, or via Hwy 15, from Pinos Altos. Approximately 2 hours from Silver City.

Fees: \$10/family, \$3/person, 16 and older.

Free with Federal Pass

Hours: Cliff Dwellings and Contact Station - Daily 9 - 4

Museum and Visitor Center - Daily 9 - 4:30

Phone: 575-536-9461

Email: gicl_information@nps.gov

www.nps.gov/gicl/index.htm



Photo: Chris Runoff

④ **TJ SITE** includes the last known large, intact Classic Mimbres phase pueblo settlement and offers outstanding research potential due to the unusually high integrity of its unexcavated sections. Surface studies suggest the site was used from approximately 500 to 1400 CE and includes evidence of use by peoples of the Salado culture from eastern Arizona during the 15th century. The site is administered jointly by the National Park Service and the Forest Service.

Admission is by invitation only or through participation in planned events. Info: Gila Cliff Dwellings Natl. Monument - 575-536-9461

⑤ **TRAIL TO THE PAST** starts at Lower Scorpion Campground and takes visitors to a large, nearby pictograph panel with many brightly colored paintings. About 1/4 mile up a small canyon east of the campground, visitors will find a small, three-room cliff dwelling. The pictographs are accessible, with some assistance, to wheelchairs.

Location: The trailhead is located between the Gila Visitor Center and Gila Cliff Dwellings Natl. Monument.

Info: US Forest Service - 575-388-8201

www.fs.usda.gov/main/gila/learning/history-culture

Restrooms / Most of site wheelchair accessible
Location: Wilson Education Foundation, 14 Sage Rd., Hwy 35, Mimbres, 3.8 miles from Rte 152. Look for signs.

Call for OPEN dates
And times
575.536.3333

⑨ **DRAGONFLY PETROGLYPH SITE**. The Dragonfly Trail is a 3 mile loop trail leading visitors to petroglyphs, which are the main attraction and located approximately 1.5 miles from the trailhead. The site is named for the dragonfly petroglyph image found here. There are many miles of trails at this location open to hiking, bicycles and equestrian use. During the right months, visitors will be treated to the sight of many live dragonflies.

Free access / Restroom and picnic table at trailhead
Location: Trailhead is located roughly 7 miles east of Silver City on the Ft. Bayard Game Refuge on the north side of Hwy 180 in Arenas Valley. Brown road signs guide visitors to the trailhead. Open year round.
Info: US Forest Service - 575-388-8201
www.fs.usda.gov/main/gila/learning/history-culture



⑩ **DEMING-LUNA MIMBRES MUSEUM** houses a world-class collection of Mimbres pottery and artifacts which are well displayed and quite extensive.

Admission: Free (donations appreciated)

Restroom / Gift Shop

Location: 301 S. Silver Ave., Deming, NM

Hours: Mon. - Sat. 9 - 4. Call for Sun. hours (seasonal)

Phone 575-546-2382

www.lunacountyhistoricalsociety.com

MIMBRES PEOPLE TIMELINE

CE (Common Era) 100: Hunting and gathering peoples of Mimbres Valley use gourds and baskets as containers.



Early Pithouse Period

200-550: Plain brown, gourd shaped vessels using coiling technique are made for utility purposes. First permanent villages develop. Population increases.

Late Pithouse Period

550-1000: Red burnished bowls

650: First painted bowls

Style I: First Black-on-White bowls

750-900: Repeating geometric patterns covering the entire interior of bowls

800: Figural designs depicting animals first appear. Use of negative space and radial division of designs.

Style II: Black-on-White bowls

900-1000: Increased artistic precision of painted bowls. Fine lines and hatch marks found on bowl rims. Population increases.

Style III: Classic Black-on-White



Mimbres Classic Period

1000-1130: Bowls show detailed animal and human figures with geometric rim designs. Population reaches 5000.

1100: Mimbres pottery no longer made

1150: Dispersal of Mimbres people

1200: Post-Mimbres villages established

1450: Mimbres Valley abandoned



Photo: Rich Luhr

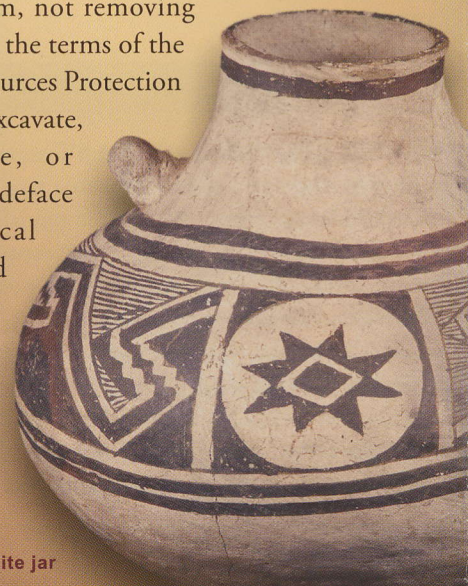
WHILE ENJOYING ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES, MAKE SURE TO:

- Never deface sites or rock art
- Leave what you find
- Never build fires near sites
- Avoid climbing or leaning on rock art
- Never chalk, trace or alter rock art surfaces
- Avoid touching petroglyphs and pictographs, as the oils from your hands can damage or change rock art



Bird effigy

Archeological sites are extremely fragile. Please help to protect them by "leaving no trace," not disturbing them, not removing any artifacts. Under the terms of the Archaeological Resources Protection Act it is, "illegal to excavate, damage, remove, or otherwise alter or deface any archaeological resource located on federal public lands or Indian Lands without an ARPA permit." Criminal penalties will be charged.



Black-on-White jar