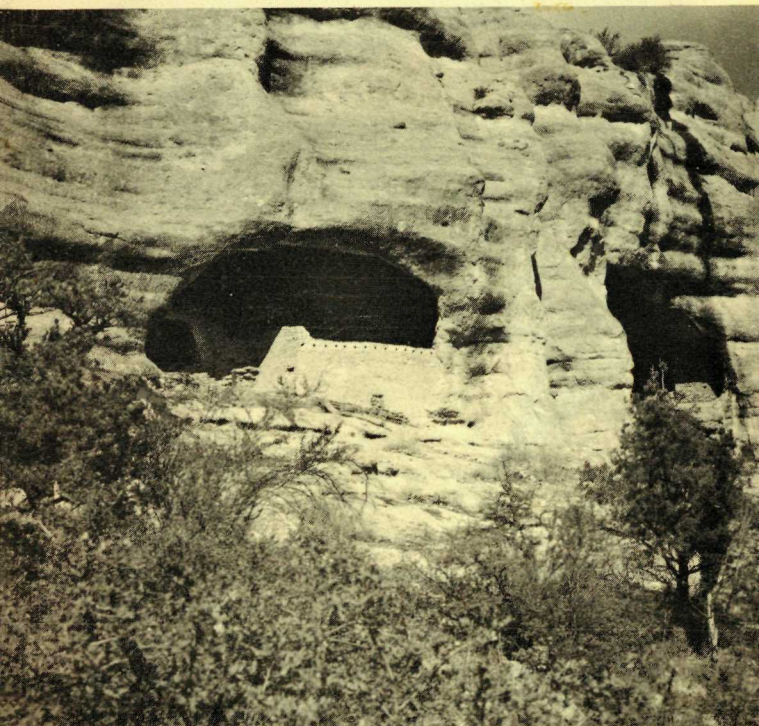
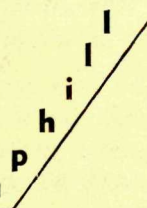


**Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument
New Mexico**



Gila Cliff Dwellings

Self-Guiding Trail Booklet

1/2 mile: mostly u 

VIEWPOINT — HALFWAY

About One Hour Round Trip

**If You Wish to Keep This Booklet,
Please Deposit 10c in the Box.**



Please Read

To insure your safety and to preserve the unspoiled beauty of this National Monument, as well as to protect its archeologic structures, the following rules and regulations must be observed:

Parents should keep their children under control at all times. No running. You are responsible for your safety and your children's safety.

All canyon travel is limited to the main trail, and visitors must not hike off the trail for any reason. At the Cliff Dwellings the trail is narrow in several places. Please be **CAREFUL!**

You may report the sighting of a lizard or snake, but it is expressly forbidden to kill or harm these creatures. If a rattlesnake is seen, **LEAVE IT ALONE.** Report the location to a Ranger.

Picking flowers, throwing rocks, molesting wildlife, or collecting specimens of any kind is prohibited.

GILA

CLIFF

DWELLINGS

Please use this booklet as an aid toward understanding the Cliff Dwellers' way of life. There will be numbered markers along the trail to indicate points of interest. The following numbered paragraphs correspond to the posts.

1 Walking the path in Cliff Dwellers' Canyon, you will see the dwellings when you are well up the trail. Within the wilderness area there are many other ruins, but the dwellings here are the largest and best preserved. Remains of other prehistoric pueblo villages, built on canyon floors and ridge tops, can still be found today. Several hundred years after the cliff dwellers left this area, another Indian people moved in—the Mimbrenño Apache. The arrival of white settlers and the conflict that resulted spelled the end of Indian use in this vast area.

2 The small stream which has formed this canyon over millions of years supplied the cliff dwellers with a dependable year-round water supply. Along its banks these people found some of the numerous wild foods important for their survival. Besides man, numerous plants and animals depend upon the stream for their existence.

3 Look at the cliff to your right and notice the different types of rock exposed by the stream. These local formations are of volcanic origins. The top layer of light brown rock, formed about 6 million years ago, is called Gila Conglomerate. The dark stains running down it are called “desert varnish” and are created by water and various minerals in solution washing over the cliff. Below this, the darker and older rock is known as “Last Chance” andesite. Sole occupant of the inaccessible cave above you was an eagle. It is believed the Indians never used it.

4 You are a visitor in a community where each one, living and non-living, interacts with another. The presence of each member of a community affects all the others and the community becomes a vital, dynamic chain of life in which everyone plays a part. A butterfly takes nectar from a flower and is caught by a dragonfly, which is captured by a leopard frog, which is attacked and swallowed by a garter snake. The snake ends up as a meal for a red-tailed hawk. When the hawk dies his body will decay and return minerals and chemicals to the soil, providing the necessary nutrients for more flowers to grow on. This sequence is one small part in the vast web of life on earth.

5 The Indian’s existence was an everyday struggle. To survive, early man was forced to utilize everything and waste nothing—a lesson modern man should learn. Most animals such as turkey, deer, elk, rabbits, and squirrels were prey for the Indians. Even insects were probably not overlooked in the constant search for food. Wild plants were very important, providing food, fuel, medicine, building material, and fibers for wearing apparel. The ponderosa and pinyon pine, black walnut, yucca and canyon grape, are examples of the many plants used.

6 Seven naturally formed caves occur in the face of the cliff about 150 feet above you. Six of these caves contain ruins of the cliff dwellings, with a total of 40 rooms — probably the homes and storerooms of several families (40-50 people). These Pueblo Indians were part of the Mogollon culture which once covered much of southeastern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico. The name “Mogollon” is derived from Don Juan Ignacio Flores Mogollon, the governor of New Mexico in 1712-1715.

7 From just such a vantage point as this, early explorers and discoverers might first have seen the dwellings. Some frontiersman, hunting or trapping beaver on the Gila, likely was the first, but no written record has been found. In 1884, a prominent archeologist, Adolf Bandelier, first recorded having visited the caves. Bandelier was guided here by stories told to him by the local frontiersmen. He recorded the dwellings as being in much better condition than they are at present. The ruins are now preserved for all to see and enjoy with hope of preventing further destruction.

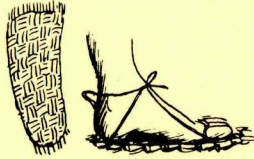
SEE MAP OF CAVES ON BACK PAGE

8 This first cave may have been the home of one family. Of the three storage rooms that once stood here, all that remains are the foundations. On the floor are a firepit for cooking and light and two potrests for large round-bottom jars. Mogollon Indians were a small people by our standards, averaging in height 5’1” for women and 5’5” for men. Their clothing would have varied with the seasons. In warm weather loincloths of woven cotton would have been worn. Cold weather would have required addition of feather-lined cotton leggings and blankets of turkey feathers and animal skins.

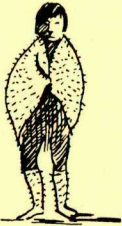


Loincloths

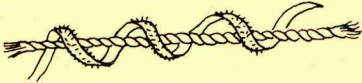
CLOTHING



Sandals



Robes made of
Yucca fiber and
wrapped with
rabbit fur or feathers



9 Some stabilization work has been necessary on these rooms, although most of the masonry is original. The purpose of the “T” shaped doorway is unclear. Perhaps the “T” shape was convenient for entering the room while carrying a burden. The wood you see here is original and was dated by a study of the tree rings. Comparative thickness and thinness of the annual growth rings of trees form patterns which are distinctive through time. Given a certain location and type of tree, a specialist can determine when a tree was cut down—much the same way a detective discovers a criminal by his fingerprints. Tree rings tell us that some of these rooms were constructed in the 1280’s.

10 A great deal of group effort must have been necessary to build these homes. The walls are made of flat stones held in place by mortar. The mortar was made from clay-like dirt and water carried from the river bottom. With stone axes and/or fire they shaped supporting beams (called vigas) for the roofs. Some of these beams appear above you. Roofs were still intact when Bandelier visited the caves, but were destroyed by vandals in the early 1900’s.

11 All of the caves have been excavated by archeologists and the artifacts studied. These excavations revealed the two rooms below, and it is interesting to note they have some features in common with modern pueblo ceremonial rooms. Perhaps it was here that religious orders of men conducted their ancient prayers and rituals. In the back of this cave dances could have been held. Looking up toward the ceiling, you can still see the heavy black coating of soot left by smoke from their many fires. Most of the large rocks on the floor had fallen long before the Indians lived here.

12 A good example of Pueblo Indian architecture is seen in this large room. Look closely to see how the floor has been leveled. The cave rock was cut by the use of stone hammers. Details of roof construction can also be seen here. Major roof beams supported smaller beams which were covered by wood slabs and a thick layer of mud. Small doorways made it easier to control cold winter drafts. Small ventilation holes were sources of fresh air for their fires. Smoke escaped through rooftop doorways. Archeologists believe that Indian life was centered on the rooftops and plazas during warm weather.

**PLEASE DO NOT LEAN ON OR CLIMB
OVER THESE ANCIENT WALLS.**

13 Construction was still in progress when the Mogollon left. The room to your left was never completed. Note that the floor had never been leveled as in other rooms. On the outside corner of its nearest wall there are some thin stones protruding, probably joining stones for an intended addition to the village. To your right is a room that probably was entered only through a rooftop hatchway. The ladder was most likely a pole with notches cut into it, spaced for the hands and feet.

NARROW TRAIL — DO NOT CROWD

14 Protruding beams and two doorways show us that this dwelling is two stories tall. The lower door is rocked up to prevent entry into this delicate structure. Possibly these small rooms were used as dwellings. Note the smoke hole above the doors.

15 This large storage bin is partially filled with corn cobs. Corn, beans, and squash were grown to supplement their diet of wild foods. These crops would have been grown along the valley of the West Fork of the Gila River and on the mesa across from you. On the cave walls above you are some Indian paintings (pictographs) drawn with red hematite, a mineral found nearby. The meanings of the one serpent-like and two man-like figures are not known. Other pictographs may be seen at the U.S. Forest Service "Trail to the Past," beginning just a few yards from Camping Units 1-7.

16 On the floor of this large room, you may see the stones used for grinding seeds. The larger flat stone is a metate, the smaller, a mano. Corn would be ground into a meal and mixed with water and salt to make a tortilla-like bread. This bread would then be baked on a flat stone griddle. One of the seven recorded burials removed from

the cave area was found here, buried just outside the wall extending to your left. Often these people are found buried with their handsome black-on-white pottery, jewelry, tools, and other items they would need in their life after death.

17 Winter in the wilderness creates a need to store food. One common method was to build airtight seals of masonry over the fronts of caves and overhangs. Another method was to use storage cists for grain. A cist appears to your lower right, and was lined with rocks and plaster to prevent rodents from digging in. The missing top may have been a stone slab.

18 The Mogollon Indians inhabited these caves for a relatively short period of time, perhaps only about 80 years, between A.D. 1270 and 1350. About 1350 they left as part of a general migration out of this region. Today some of their descendants may be found as members of the western Pueblo villages of the Hopis and Zunis. Why the Mogollon left may never be fully understood, but it seems to be the result of a slight climatic shift in temperature. This downward shift made dry farming of their late-maturing corn very difficult, due to a shorter growing season, forcing them to move to more promising farmlands.

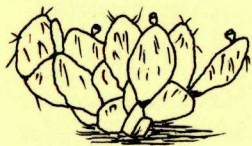
RETURN TO MAIN TRAIL BY EITHER LADDER, THEN CONTINUE LEFT.

19 Cave 6 is CLOSED to public entrance due to the DANGEROUS condition of the rock floor. There are signs of habitation inside the cave. Notice the soot on the ceiling? There are also remains of walls from a couple of small rooms in the upper portion of the cave (not visible from where you are). Another of the few burials from this area was found in this cave.

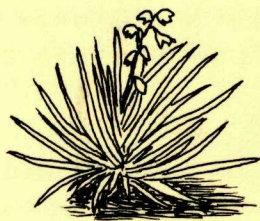
CAUTION — TRAIL IS STEEP FOR THE NEXT 100 YARDS. PLEASE FOLLOW THE STEPS AND DO NOT CUT CORNERS.

20 Pause here for a moment. Look at the plants here and on the other side of the canyon. Do you see any pine trees on this side? What does this mean? There are other differences that cannot be easily seen from here, but all are caused by the same conditions. The slope you are standing on is facing southeast and therefore receives a maximum amount of direct sunlight. The opposite side faces northwest and receives much less direct sunlight. What this means is that the soil on the other side contains more moisture at any one time than on this side. This is why large pine trees can grow across the canyon, but not over here.

21 Cactus plants served the Indians in many ways, the fruits being edible, and the heavier spines possibly used as pins or needles. The yucca was about the most useful of all the plants. The roots could be made into soap, the fibers from the leaves were used in clothing, rope, and sandals. The fruit, flowers, stalk, and buds were all edible.

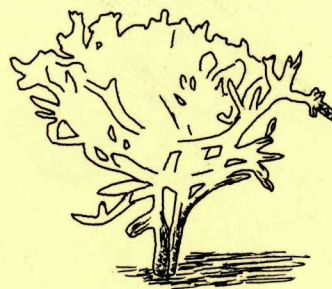


Plains prickly pear



Yucca

8-72—10M—4th Edition (revised)



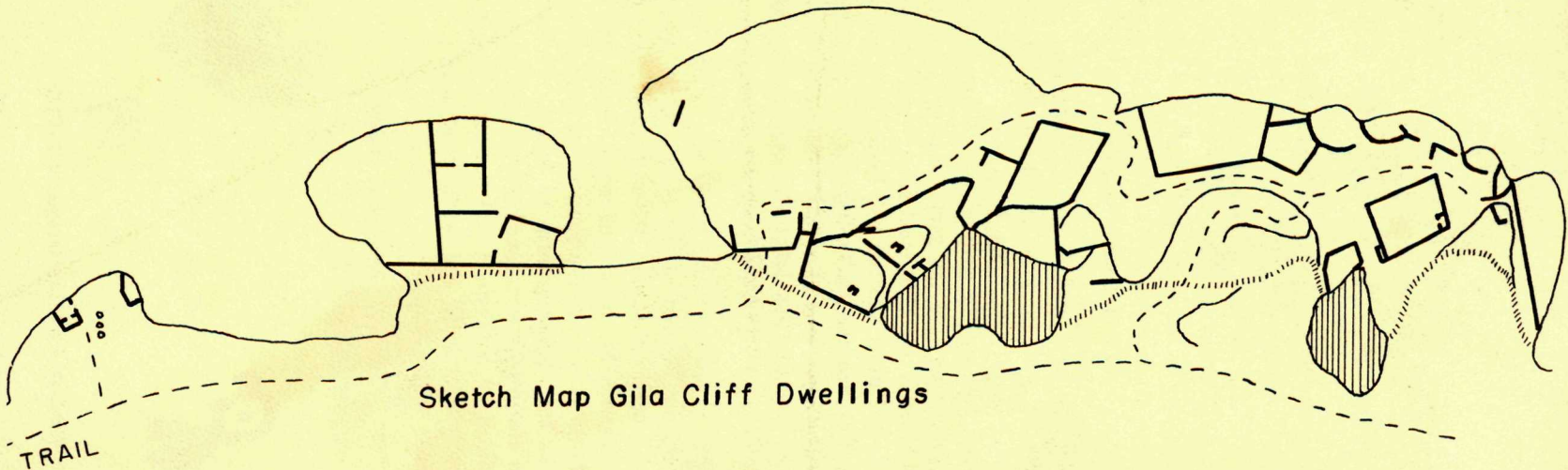
Cholla, cane or walkingstick

22 You have walked around the corner of the hill and are now on the northeast facing slope. Notice the pine trees (see #20). The burned tree on the ground is an important part of the ecology of the area. Bacteria and fungi will break it down for food, insects will bore holes in it, and small animals will live in and under it. The tree will eventually decay into the soil, providing minerals and other nutrients for new trees. The fire that felled this big tree played an important role in the life of the forest.

23 The river flowing below you is one of the main sources of life in this area. Wildlife comes here for water. River bottom trees provide homes for numerous birds, small animals, and insects. For untold years rivers have provided routes for migrating birds to follow. Prehistoric men also used river channels as natural highways, as did the frontiersmen and trappers. It was the river bottom land and water that attracted the Indians to live here.

Every Litter Bit Hurts





Sketch Map Gila Cliff Dwellings