

CUTTHROAT RUINS

As you enter this area, remember that the Hovenweep ruins and artifacts are protected by law. This applies equally to surrounding Bureau of Land Management and Tribal lands. Please do not do the following: Remove or disturb artifacts, including pottery sherds, projectile points, flakes from stone tool manufacture, and rubble from buildings; touch fragile pictographs and petroglyphs; mark on walls; dig or scratch the soil; or climb on ruin walls. If you observe anyone doing any of these things, please report this immediately to a ranger. Explore, enjoy, and contemplate, but let those who visit after you enjoy the area in the same condition.

Cutthroat ruins are in the pinyon-juniper vegetation zone, where Cajon Mesa's higher elevation, increased precipitation, and lower temperatures encourage the mixed stands of pinyon and juniper trees. The complex of towers, kivas, roomblocks, granaries, and water control system is located near the head of a tributary canyon which flows into Hovenweep canyon. Cottonwood trees growing in the drainage indicate the presence of year-round moisture provided by the seep. Coyotes, deer, bobcats, and an occasional mountain lion visit the area, especially in winter.

The main building of the area is Cutthroat Castle -- a kiva situated directly on the edge of the cliff overhang. It is surrounded on one side by another wall forming an attached room. Holes strategically placed in its wall allowed the occupants to view the hillside behind. Note the remnants of original wood beams left in the wall which once must have supported a roof. A crack below the wall in the boulders which leads down below the cliff overhang may have served as an entrance and exit for the building.

Sub-surface testing in the kiva by archeologists revealed that it has a bench along the wall, four pilasters (masonry supports projecting partially from the wall which supported the roof), a hearth (firepit) containing fine white ash, a floor lined with clay, and a deflector. The deflector is an upright slab of rock placed near the hearth to deflect incoming air from disturbing the fire. The users gained entrance by a small doorway between the kiva and attached room.

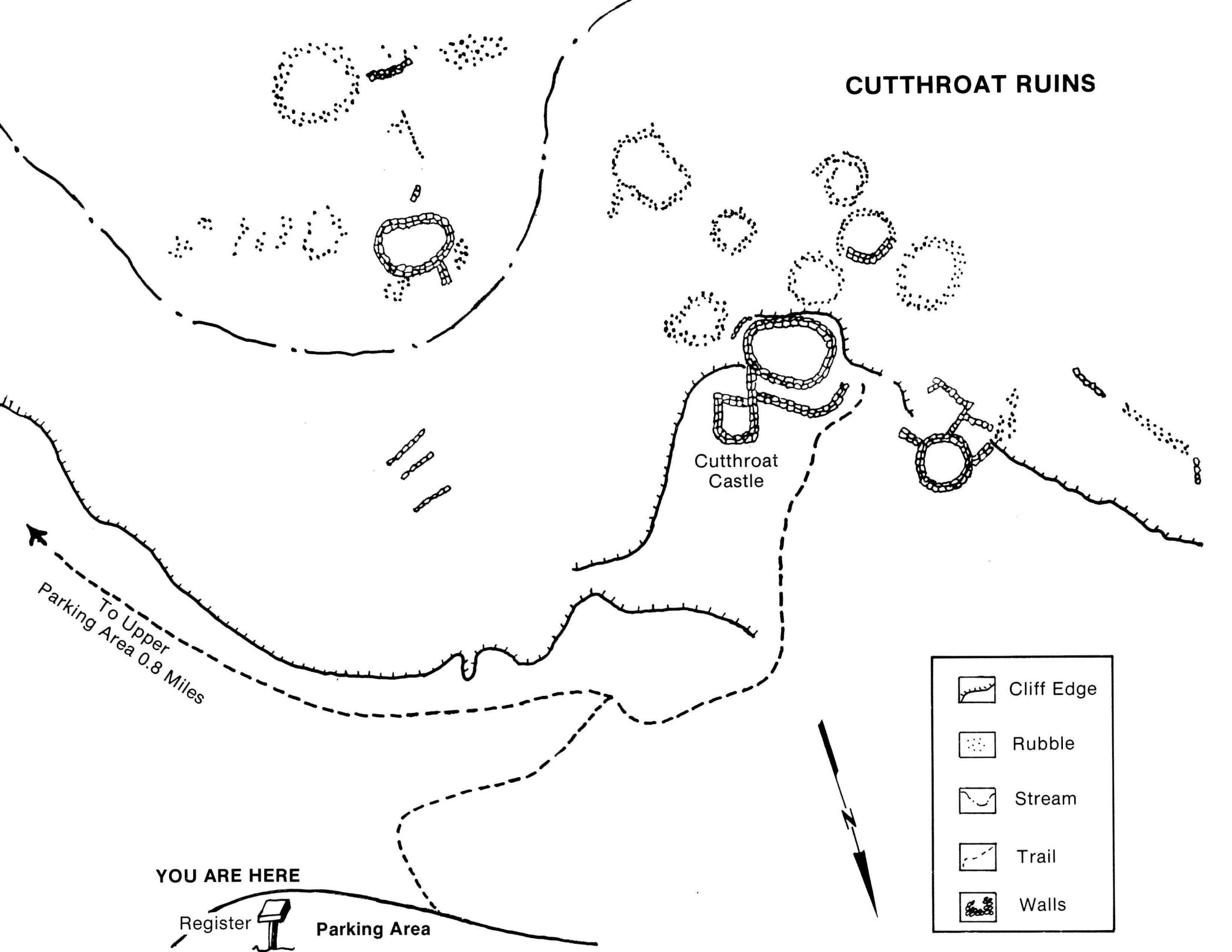
Kivas are used in modern Pueblo villages, though they differ in structure and function from village to village. Some are above ground, others subterranean. Some are rectangular, while others are round. They can have any combination of the following features: Hearth, deflector, bench, roof entryway, side entryway, pilasters, ventilator shaft, and sipapu. A sipapu is usually a hole in the floor which is symbolic of the hole through which, in traditional history, the ancient people emerged from the underworld. The various functions of the kivas include: Location of and rehearsal for ceremonies, storage of dance paraphernalia and sacred objects, and social centers when they are not being used for ceremonies. Both men and women are included in kiva activities in some villages, while in others women are excluded.

As you explore the Cutthroat area, you will notice many depressions in the ground which indicate possible kiva locations. There seems to be an unusually high number of kivas compared to roomblocks. Perhaps for the people who lived here and nearby, this area was primarily a ceremonial center.

Exploration in a roomblock here revealed a series of upright slab bins whose interior walls were sealed with mortar and whose floors were lined with clay. These may have been used for grinding. Below the bins, archeologists found a much coarser style of wall construction, which may signify an earlier period of occupation predating the walls and associated bins. Archeologists feel that these structures were built late in the Anasazi occupation of the area. There is evidence, however, of occupation in the general area from as early as Archaic (3,000 B.C.-A.D. 1) or Basketmaker II times (A.D. 250-A.D. 450).

Feel free to explore the towers at Cutthroat. Note their thick walls, and that several appear to have attached rooms or kivas. Future archeological excavations may reveal answers regarding the uses of these buildings and the site as a whole.

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




Cutthroat Castle

YOU ARE HERE

Register

Parking Area

To Upper
Parking Area 0.8 Miles

-  Cliff Edge
-  Rubble
-  Stream
-  Trail
-  Walls