

HOLLY 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.

The Holly Group of ruins was named after an early rancher in the area, Jim Holley. The ruins are situated around a canyonhead with no visible seep or spring along its walls. The cottonwood trees in the drainage below, however, indicate that water is not far below the surface.

As you approach the area, low masonry walls appear to your left along the canyon rim. These may have been habitation rooms. Beyond them in the canyon is Tilted Tower, a structure situated atop a large boulder. Sometime in the last 800 years the boulder upon which it was built shifted, causing part of it to topple into the canyon below.

Walk a few feet farther so that you can view the building on top of the boulder in the canyon bottom. Boulder House consists of two rooms, and from tree ring dating, we know they were not built before AD 1201. Look closely for the hand and toe holes pecked into the boulder which lead up to its only doorway.

Archeologists dug test pits here and found several items, including: a firepit, two delicately shaped projectile points, several awls made from deer and turkey bones, a scraper made from a deer humerus, and a portion of a corrugated jar.

As you walk farther along the trail toward the largest ruin, look for the rim dam with soil sediments built up behind. By collecting ancient pollen from these sediments, archeologists discovered what plants were likely raised here. They found evidence of corn, beans, beeweed (Cleome), wolfberry (Lycium), and cattail (Typha). Beeweed does not naturally occur in the area today. Modern Pueblo people encourage beeweed in their corn fields, boil it to make a black dye for pottery painting, collect the young leaves for greens, and use parts of it for medicine. Wolfberry commonly grows near archeological sites and also around the Hopi villages. The thorny plant with its acidic red berries has been an important food source for both Pueblo and Navajo people. There are wolfberries growing near the largest structure, Holly Great House, which is farther along the trail. Modern Hopis encourage the growth of cattails which are useful for food and construction. Cattails grow naturally in canyonhead seep and spring areas, although the rim dam would have provided the extra moisture they require.

The tower you encounter next on the trail is unusual in that the outside wall is rounded and the inside has a rectangular corner. Notice how it is built directly over a crack in the cliff overhang. Access to the structure may have been gained through this crack.

The last and largest structure, Holly Great House, still retains its original walls, though they have been stabilized. The juniper beams placed by the National Park Service on the inside help to support them. Archeologists found inside a plastered floor with a firepit, grinding stones, lithic tools, and a number of ceramic vessels. The most intriguing discovery was a storage jar filled with dirt containing 175 animal bones including: western spadefoot toad, collared lizard, spiny lizard, American gold finch, rufous-sided towhee, cottontail, amphibian and reptilian vertebrae and fragments, and other bird and rodent fragments. The room in which it was found may have served ceremonial or storage purposes. Archeologists have suggested that similar bone filled jars found at Mug House at Mesa Verde served symbolic and ceremonial functions.





You may enter the canyon for a closer look at Boulder House and the farming terraces along the canyon slopes.

TO
SQUARE
TOWER
4 MI.

GREAT
HOUSE

BOULDER
HOUSE

HOLLY RUINS

-  WALLS
-  RUBBLE
-  CLIFF EDGE
-  TRAIL

S  N

TILTED TOWER

YOU ARE HERE


PARKING AREA

