

# HORSESHOE RUIN

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 which include 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.

Jesse W. Fewkes, an early explorer and archeologist, visited Horseshoe Ruins in 1918 and named it for the horseshoe shape of the large structure at the head of the canyon. A circular room is surrounded by a semi-circle of three smaller rooms, but none are connected by doorways or windows. Note the dimpled surfaces of the sandstone blocks, carefully pecked by stone tools to fit smoothly together. There is one unusual lap joint of two blocks located on the outer wall at the southwest corner. This is a rare example of painstaking work, perhaps reflecting an individual mason's skills more than anything else. This type of joint enlarges the surface area of abutting stones, increasing the strength and stability of that part of the wall.

Inspect the long rim dam which extends from the west side of Horseshoe House along the canyon rim. Notice the soil sediment built up behind the wall. This dam was an effective means of slowing down water runoff, diverting the flow where it was wanted below, and capturing soil for agricultural use.

You can descend into the canyon by following the path going east from Horseshoe House. As you approach the seep area under the rim, look carefully for the handprints on the wall. Most were made by dipping the hand in a thick liquid clay, then pressing it to the wall. There are a few red prints in addition to other circular designs. Take care not to touch, as they are very fragile and will easily rub off. Most are made with the right hand. Some researchers suggest that the prints are a kind of signature made at the end of a prayer. Look for the smooth depressions in the boulders near the seep, where the people may have ground corn, seeds, paints, or stone tools.

Walk along the overhang and into the small kiva. Compare the fineness of the masonry with that of Horseshoe House. Some of the original plaster still clings to the base of the wall closest to the cliff. Archeologists' test pits revealed a hearth almost a meter deep cut into the bedrock floor of the kiva. The walls are thick with blackened smoke from the hot fires that burned here.

Kivas are still used among modern Pueblo people for different functions which 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.

Ajoining the kiva on the other side is a small storage area. Look for faint negative handprints on its ceiling. The interior stones, reddened by fire, attest to a possible fire which ravaged this structure. Historic photographs show that the wall stretching from the kiva edge, across the top of the boulder to the cave wall, and which enclosed the area, was still intact in 1876. By 1941, the wall had fallen.

You can retrace your steps and walk the trail out to the tower overlooking the juncture of the two small canyonheads. There is a low wall stretching across the point between the tower and the mesa top. Perhaps it was to aid in better protecting the tower against intruders. The prominent position of the tower suggests its use as a lookout, or maybe to enable communications with other towers further down the canyon. The functions of these structures are still a puzzle.