

OUTLYING RUINS GUIDE

Five of the six Hovenweep ruins groups are within a 20 mile drive of each other along the Utah-Colorado border section of Cajon Mesa. The sixth group, Goodman Point, is 14 miles northwest of Cortez. The primary road, which is dirt and receives infrequent maintenance, can be impassable to all but 4-wheel drive vehicles following rain or snow. The side access roads to the outlying groups are not maintained, and are rough in places. If you are not familiar with driving on these types of roads, please use caution, especially if you have a low clearance vehicle. Inquire locally to find out about changing road and weather conditions.

The small Hovenweep units range in size from 14 acre Cutthroat to 400 acre Square Tower. Surrounding lands belong to the Navajo Nation, Bureau of Land Management, State of Utah, or private landowners. All of these neighboring lands are being managed on a multiple use basis. Please respect the rights of these landowners and the activities being pursued on them.

Cajon Mesa slopes gently to the south. Elevational differences along the mesa result in differing precipitation amounts and vegetation types. Cajon at 5150' gets approximately 9" annually, and has a shrubland vegetation cover. Square Tower at 5220' gets 11.5" annually and is predominately sagebrush. Cutthroat unit at 5880' receives approximately 13" and has a pinon-juniper cover. You can find dry-farming agricultural land a few miles farther north.

The visible canyonhead remains represent only one phase in the long continuum of Anasazi occupation on Cajon Mesa. Although the canyonhead spring areas had been used for centuries, most of the structures you see were built after A.D. 1200. Just prior to this time, people occupied the surrounding mesa tops, and even continued living in those places, though in smaller numbers, while the canyonhead areas were being developed. Why the people began concentrating in the canyonheads is still unclear. From ancient pollen analysis it appears that the area was somewhat more moist than today from about A.D. 900 - 1100, thus enabling dry farming on the mesa tops. From A.D. 1100 - 1300, however, there was a drying trend, and the canyonheads may have offered conditions for more intensive water control. They may also have provided a more dependable water supply and a location which was more easily defended.

Each unit has a short trail through the ruins areas. Although similar in terms of building material and location near a spring or seep, each ruin cluster has its own unique architecture and setting. Feel free to wander and explore. Only limited archeological work has been done at Hovenweep. You can help preserve the area for future study and improve our understanding of Hovenweep by taking care not to disturb any of the ruin walls, soil, or artifacts. The walls are quite fragile and cannot withstand the pressure of someone walking on them. Even shallow digging or scratching in the earth can disturb artifacts or other features whose location is important to their understanding. Writing on the cave walls not only destroys the beauty of prehistoric rock art, but also removes deposits which can yield more information about the lives of the prehistoric people. These quiet areas are yours to enjoy and contemplate. Let those who visit after enjoy them in the same condition.

There is a trail register, short interpretive summary, and pit toilet at each area. You are invited to sign the register and leave your comments.

HOVENWEEP NATIONAL MONUMENT

OUTLYING RUINS MAP

