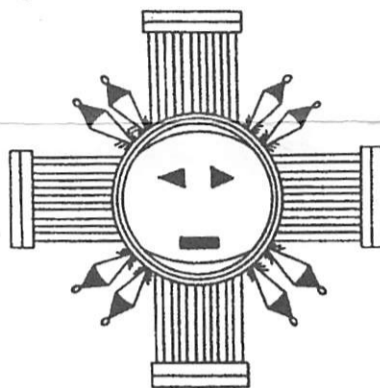
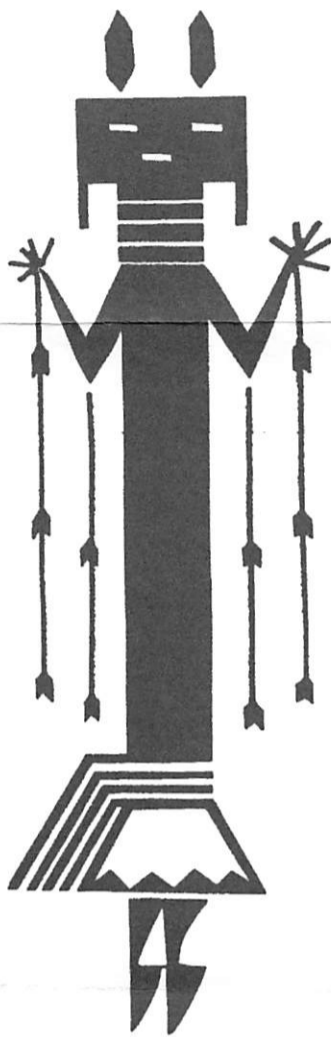




Traveling Among the Navajo

Welcome to the Navajo Nation. The Nation offers a variety of recreation and cultural opportunities. Experience the natural wonders of Monument Valley Tribal Park, reflect upon the lives of the Anasazi people who left the ruins in Canyon de Chelly and Navajo National Monuments or visit Hubbell Trading Post National Historic Site where customers have traded since 1878.



The Land

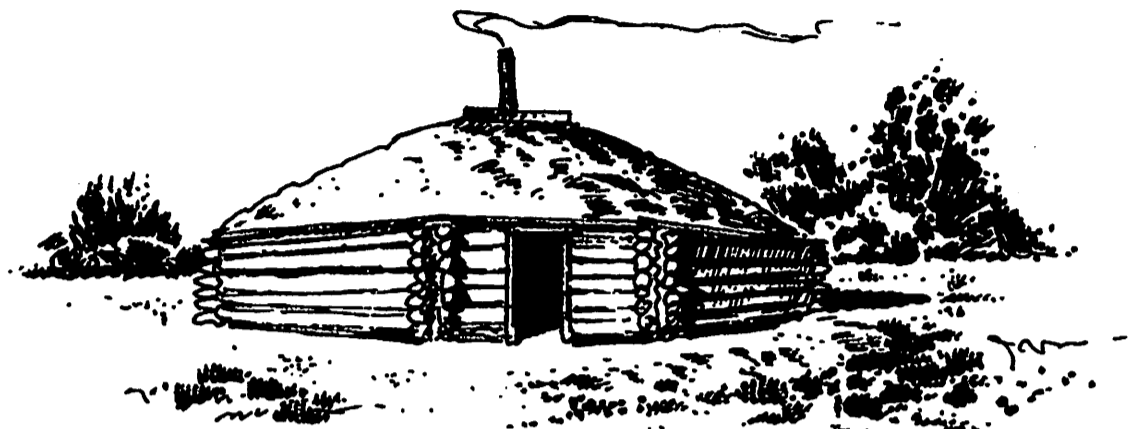
The Navajo Nation encompasses about 25,000 square miles (65,000 square kilometers), about the size of West Virginia. Located primarily in Arizona, the nation also extends into Utah and New Mexico. In addition there is much Navajo country in New Mexico, which is outside the nation. Spectacular canyons, rugged mountains, forests, lakes and deserts combine to create a landscape not easily forgotten.

The Language Listen closely as you travel here. The Navajo language is frequently used. For some people Navajo is their only language. Most Navajo also speak English, but with varying degrees of skill. The language, of the Athabascan family, is complex and difficult for outsiders to learn. It is capable of amazingly fine distinctions, especially in describing this land.

The People The Navajo call themselves “Diné”— “The People.” They have been living here for more than four hundred years. When the Spaniards explored this area in the 1600s they used the name “Apache de Navajo,” meaning “Apaches of the Cultivated Fields.” Today approximately 175,228 people live in Navajo country. The Navajo Nation is governed by an elected tribal council headed by a president. The council is made up of representatives of various election districts. Navajo country is also divided into chapters. Community meetings and activities take place in chapter houses. The Navajo have traditionally been a democratic society and never had hereditary chiefs as do some other tribes. Window Rock, Arizona is the capitol of the Navajo Nation. Many visitors enjoy sketching or photographing the people and the land. Years ago this would have been considered offensive. Today such activity is common, but permission should be asked before photographing or drawing people or personal property. A fee is often expected.

Hogans

Hogans are the traditional homes of the Diné. They also serve as places for certain ceremonies. Often six sided, a hogan may also have more or fewer sides. They are usually built from materials readily available — wood, earth, stones, even concrete. The doorway always faces east to allow the occupants to welcome the new day. Many hogans do not have electricity or running water. You may see trucks hauling firewood or water from community wells. You will not see towns or cities in the familiar sense. Navajos live in family groups spread throughout the nation. Small clusters of hogans, trailers, and a house or two may signify more than one generation of a family.



Some Travel Tips

While traveling among the Navajo you will notice some differences between the Diné culture and the European-American culture. One such difference is eye contact. To many people eye contact is considered polite and important. Among Navajos eye contact is considered impolite. If you are speaking to a courteous group of Navajos, some may look down or away, even though you may have their full attention.

You may not be successful in striking up a conversation with a Navajo. The general exuberance many cultures define as friendliness is not considered such by the Diné. From childhood they are taught not to talk too much, be loud, or be forward to strangers. Such behavior is considered impolite. Likewise, touching is seen differently. Among Navajos this may be reserved for close friends and family, and in other cases may be a sign of disrespect. Usually the only physical contact you will see is handshaking, and even then a firm grip is interpreted as being overbearing. When shaking hands a light touch is preferred.

Small herds of sheep, goats, cattle, and horses form an important part of life for many Navajos. Much of the nation is open range and herds move freely along and across roads. Use caution when driving, especially at night.

The Navajo Nation observes daylight savings time. The remainder of Arizona does not. If you are traveling here during this part of the year be aware that time on the Navajo Nation is an hour later than such places off the nation as Phoenix or the Grand Canyon.

Though individual Navajos do not own the land upon which they live, families hold traditional use rights under tribal customary law. Nearly all land on the Navajo Nation is part of someone's traditional use area. Therefore hiking or cross-country excursions off established roads without permission is trespassing. This law respects property rights and protects thousands of archeological sites. Disturbing or removing archeological items is prohibited by both tribal and federal law.

The Navajo Nation has its own police department. Obey all speed limits while on the nation. Drive with care and watch for pedestrians along all roads. One last word: alcoholic beverages are prohibited on the Navajo Nation.

Traveling the Navajo Nation offers you a special opportunity to learn more about the culture and history of the Diné. We're glad you're here. Enjoy your visit.