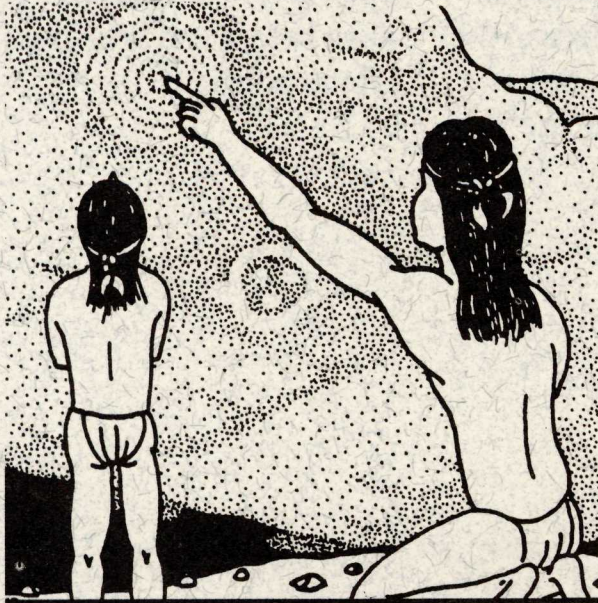


Petrified Forest

National Park
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Puerco Pueblo's Solar Calendar



For several thousand years the prehistoric people of the Southwest have used rock surfaces as their drawing board. Recent research has suggested that some petroglyph sites in Petrified Forest National

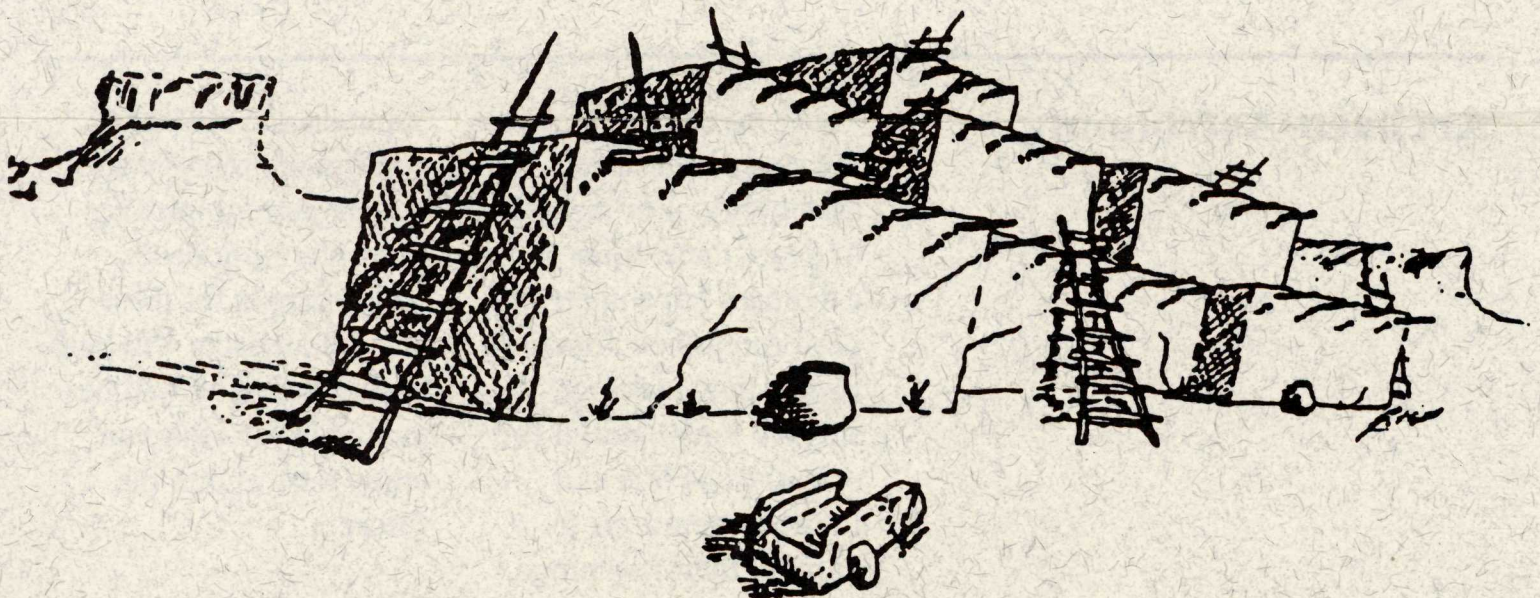
Park are more than simple drawings. They are in fact solar calendars!

Watch an ancient solar calendar at work from June 14 thru the 27 at 8:30 a.m.

Where is Puerco Pueblo and What Will You See?

The pueblo is located on the main park road almost midway between the north and the south entrance. If you have entered the park off of Interstate 40, travel south on the park road for eleven miles. If you entered the park from Highway 180 travel north for fifteen miles.

A boulder behind Puerco Pueblo is etched with a small circular petroglyph that marks the summer solstice. During the sun's morning trek, a shaft of light is projected onto a boulder and travels down the side to penetrate the center of a small circle.

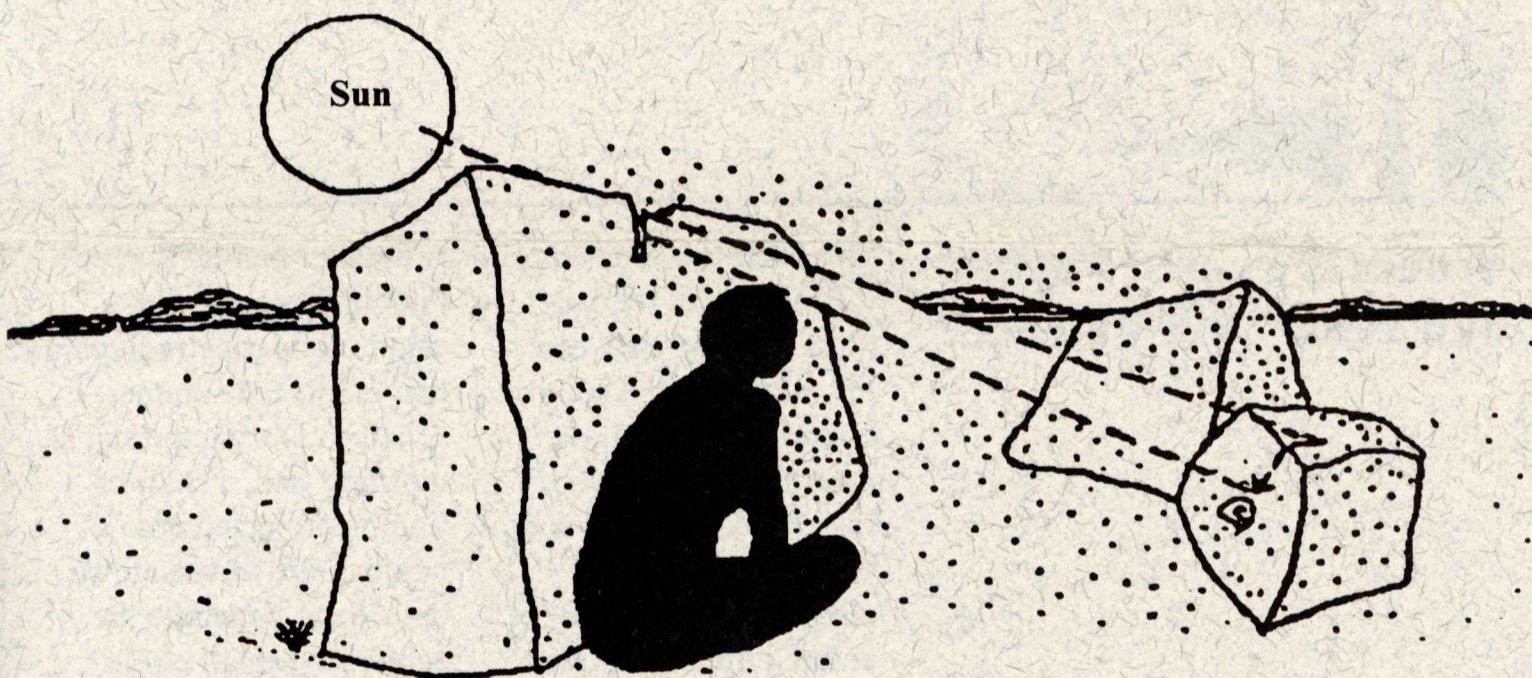


How Do Solar Observatories Work?

Solar calendars are single petroglyphs, most commonly circles and spirals, which interact with sunlight and surrounding rocks to mark the passage of the seasons.

If you were to watch the sun rise and set over a long period of time, you would notice that the sun follows different paths throughout the year. In the summer it rises in the northeast and in the winter, it rises in the southeast.

As the sun's position changes, shadows and sunlit images are projected onto the rock carvings. These projections mark the winter and summer solstice, the shortest and longest days of the year, as well as the equinoxes, the midpoints between the two solstices. Evidence also indicates that some petroglyphs interact 45 days before and after the winter solstice.



Archaeo-Astronomy

Many mysteries remain in the study of archaeo-astronomy. For hundreds of years these solar calendars have unerringly performed their function. Sadly, they may not survive long enough for scientists of this and future generations to unravel their meanings.

Vandals and collectors continue to remove and deface petroglyph sites at an alarming pace. Your respect for these ancient artifacts will help ensure that they will be available for others to enjoy now and in the future.

