

TONTO



TONTO NATIONAL MONUMENT/ARIZONA

The Tonto Basin is a land of rugged mountains, sheer cliffs, and deep canyons. At first glance, this is a hostile land, yet the Salado Indians who built the cliff dwellings at Tonto flourished here 600 years ago. The great altitudinal range of the land provided them with a wide variety of native plant and animal foods to supplement their cultivated crops.



THE PEOPLE WHO LIVED HERE

In creating an image of the Tonto cliff dwellers, consider this description of a well-preserved skeleton found in one of the ruins:

A normal Puebloan of Southwest Plateau racial type, female, of advanced age at death; about 4' 9" tall (about 2 inches below average, within normal range). Scalp hair—cut quite short—coarse, apparently straight, dark brown. The skull is brachycranial [round] and high-vaulted, owing to or at least increased by artificial deformation [the back of the head flattened in infancy by a hard cradleboard]. The face is rather small and actually short. Teeth very badly worn, all molars except one lost before death. Arm and leg bones rather muscular, especially the upper arm (generally the case with Pueblo females). Possibly a little arthritis in the lower back. Right leg broken and healed, not straight.

Women wore cotton blankets, skirts of yucca cord, and twilled sandals made of yucca leaves, fibers, or cordage, sotol fibers, or willow and juniper bark. The men wore cotton blankets over their shoulders or around their waists, cotton cloth breechclouts, and twilled sandals. Ornaments included stone pendants and shell pendants, "tinklers," bracelets, and beads.

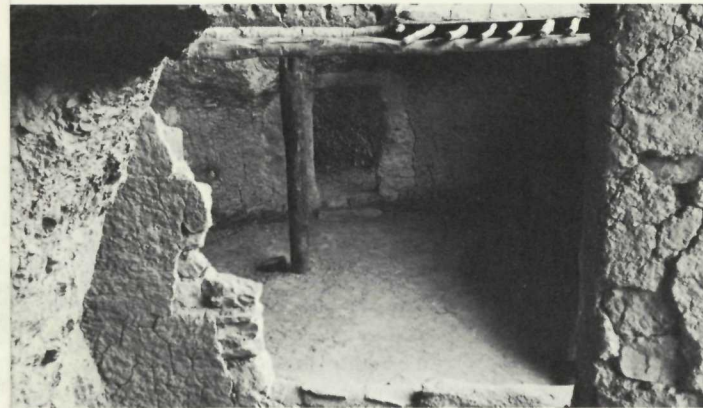
THEIR HOMES

The Salado built their homes in two natural caves, about 2 miles apart by trail, now called Upper Ruin and Lower Ruin, and on a terraced ledge near the latter, referred to as Lower Ruin Annex. The three ruins contain 40, 19, and 12 rooms.

They constructed their dwellings of unshaped blocks of quartzite from the cliffs, laid in adobe mortar. A section, one block in width, was carried up about 2 feet, coated thickly with adobe plaster, and then allowed to set before the next section was added. The floors were of adobe, and the roofs were built of vigas or large poles overlain with smaller poles and a 3- to 4-inch layer of adobe.

If you could transport yourself back six centuries and could look into one of the rooms while it was being lived in, what furnishings would you see? Room 14 (Upper Ruin), apparently burned while still occupied, is described by an archeologist:

In a rough arc near the firepit were a pottery bowl and two jars, a fragment of matting, a charred ring basket, and the base of a large coarse-coiled basket. The charred fragments of a bow, an arrow, and two clubs lay close together but without pattern, as though they had been tied to vigas and fell with the burning roof. Another fragment of matting and other tools were found near the walls as though kept there, out of the way, until needed.



THEIR LIVELIHOOD

The Salado were farmers. Their croplands were in the Salt River flood plain, from 2 to 4 miles from their dwellings and about 1,000 feet lower in elevation. Their irrigation canals were still visible until Roosevelt Dam flooded the valley.



They grew corn, pumpkins, squash, gourds, beans of several varieties, cotton, and grain amaranth. The last is of special interest because its archeological discovery at Tonto is the earliest evidence of its having been raised as a cultivated plant, requiring irrigation.

Wild food plants used in quantity were agave, the fruits of cactuses (such as pricklypear and saguaro), the beans of catclaw acacia, hackberry fruits, juniper berries, pinyon nuts, mesquite beans, and acorns.

Game made up an appreciable part of their diet. The most common animal bones in the ruins were those of deer, pronghorn, jackrabbit, cottontail, and gray fox. Also found were bones of bobcat, cougar, badger, bighorn, prairie dog, porcupine, and quail.

A complete bow and 25 arrows were found with the burial of a small child in the Lower Ruin. The bow of netleaf hackberry was notched at each end for the fiber bowstring. The arrows had reed mainshafts and hardwood foreshafts with no provision for the attachment of stone points. Nock ends had three split feathers and were decorated with painted bands of yellow, red, black, and green, or incised designs rubbed with color. These wood-tipped arrows were probably used to kill small animals. Game was also taken with snares.

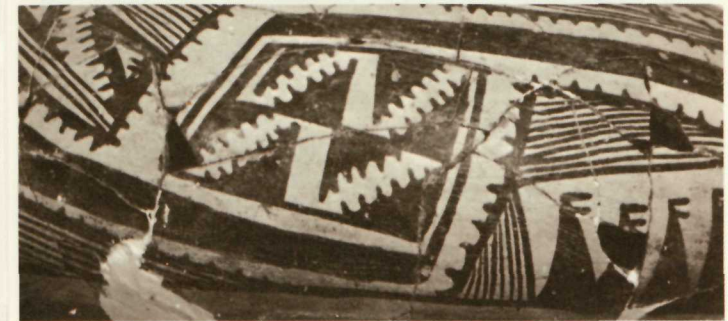
THEIR CRAFTSMANSHIP

The Salado made plain pottery and a distinctive pottery called Salado polychrome. To produce one type of this pottery, the artisan covered the interior of a redware bowl with a white clay coating, on which she painted a design in black; she then burnished the exterior until a gloss was attained. The potter who added a simple design in thin red paint created another type. Vessels with designs on the outer surface represent still another type.

The many fragments of cotton textiles found in the cliff dwellings indicate that weaving was their finest craft. Employing several techniques, they wove handsome fabrics for themselves and for trade. Prominent among the dyes used were brown, black, yellow, deep blue, and dark blue-green or blue-black. The last two colors have not been recorded elsewhere.

Their implements, fashioned from local materials, included stone metates and manos, axes, mescal knives, arrowshaft straighteners, and projectile points; bone awls; and wooden loom tools. They made pipes of reed, close-coiled basketry of woody splints and yucca strips, and coarse basketry of grass bundles and sotol strips. From "beargrass" they wove matting, cradleboards, and carrying straps.

The Salado traded over a wide area, obtaining shell ornaments from southern neighbors and decorated pottery from people to the north.



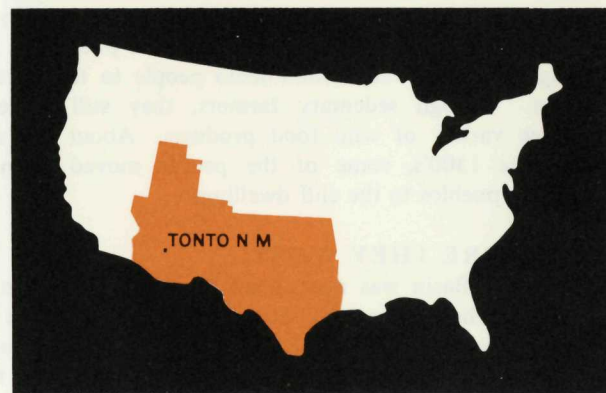
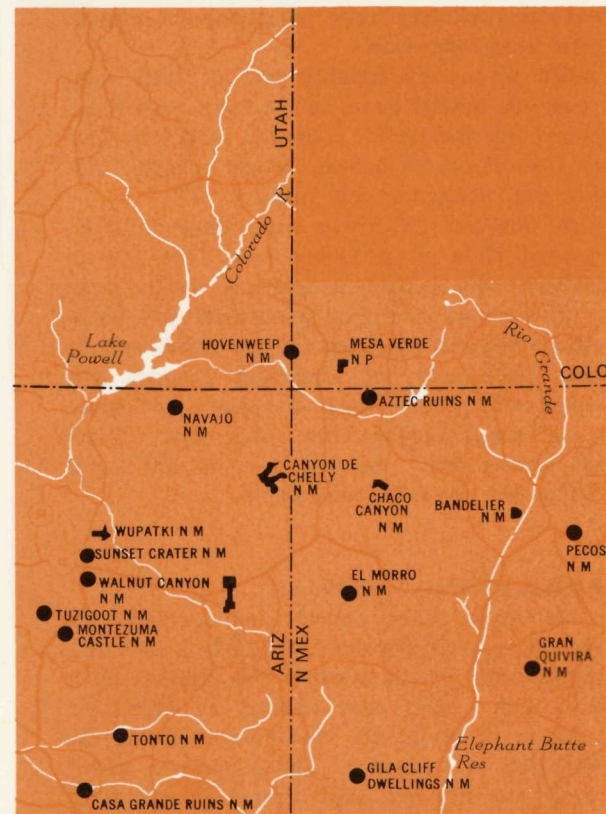
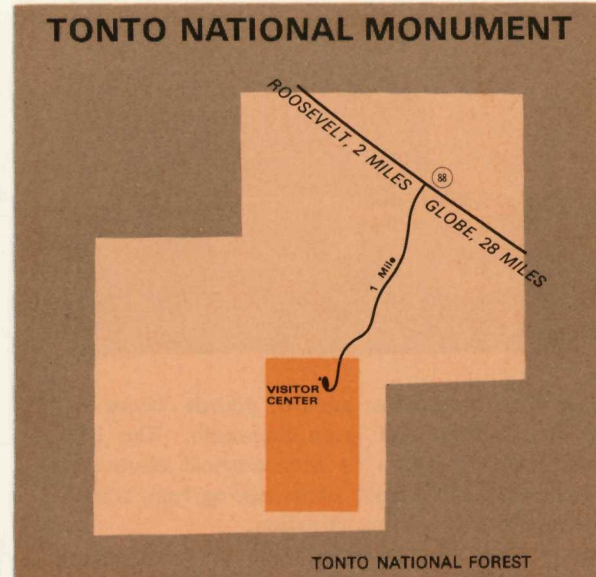
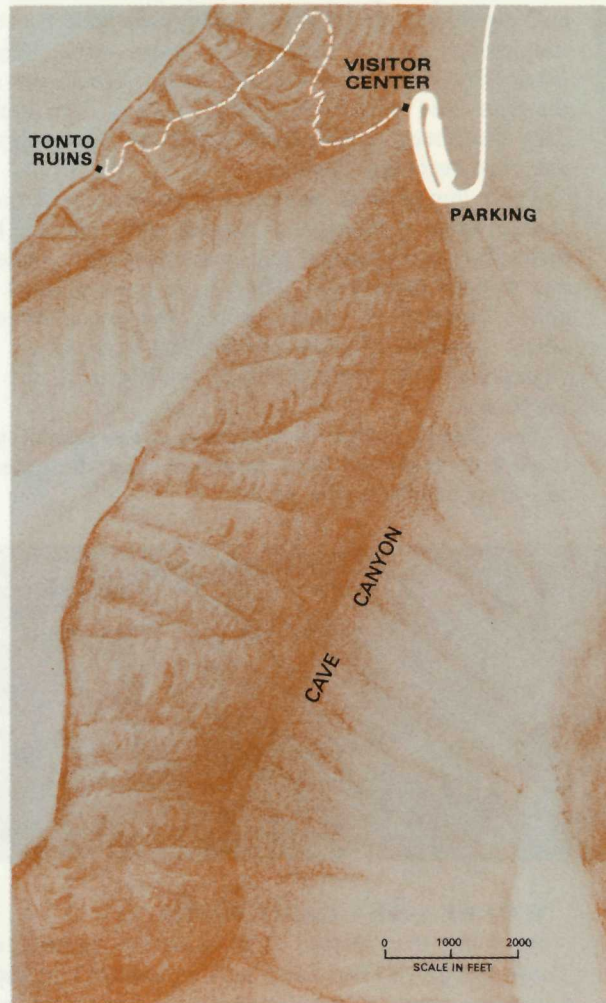
WHERE THEY CAME FROM

At some time before A.D. 900, the Indians of the Tonto Basin, who had lived there as hunters and gatherers for many years, adopted pottery and other ideas from groups to the south and west. By the 1100's, they lived along the valley floors in small compact pueblos, a dwelling type borrowed from Pueblo people to the north and east. Though sedentary farmers, they still gathered a large variety of wild food products. About the middle of the 1300's, some of the people moved from their valley pueblos to the cliff dwellings.

WHERE THEY WENT

Tonto Basin was abandoned by the Salado soon after 1400. Their departure seems to have been part of a general exodus of Puebloans from the southern mountains of the Southwest. Some apparently moved north to the Zuni villages; others may have gone south and east, to be absorbed by other Indian groups.

TONTO



SOUTHWEST REGION

SOUTHWEST ARCHEOLOGICAL AREAS

ABOUT YOUR VISIT

The monument is open all year, but the most comfortable weather occurs between late October and early June. Visiting hours are from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

From Phoenix, take U.S. 60-70 to Apache Junction; turn left on Ariz. 88, and proceed along the scenic Apache Trail to Roosevelt. The visitor center is 3 miles beyond Roosevelt. Average driving time from Phoenix is 4 hours.

From Globe or Miami, take Ariz. 88 to the monument entrance, a distance of 28 miles.

Your first stop at Tonto should be at the visitor center. Here you can see items made and used by the Salado. Here, too, you will find personnel to answer your questions and suggest ways that will make your visit meaningful and enjoyable.

Features along a self-guiding trail and in the Lower Ruin are explained in a guide booklet, obtainable at the visitor center. If you wish to visit the similar but larger Upper Ruin, you must make arrangements at least 4 days in advance.

Many of the desert plants that you will see along the trail are the same species as those used by the Salado—barrel cactus, saguaro, ocotillo, California jojoba, Teddy bear cholla, Wheeler sotol, datil yucca, and Sonora jumping cholla.

Picnic facilities are available within the monument, but overnight stays are not permitted. Food and lodging are available in Roosevelt and there are camping areas in Tonto National Forest.

ADMINISTRATION

Tonto National Monument, containing 1,120 acres, was established on December 19, 1907. It is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Roosevelt, AZ 85545, is in immediate charge.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities for water, fish, wildlife, mineral, land, park, and recreational resources. Indian and Territorial affairs are other major concerns of America's "Department of Natural Resources." The Department works to assure the wisest choice in managing all our resources so each will make its full contribution to a better United States—now and in the future.

U.S. DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

