

# Walnut Canyon

National Monument  
Arizona

National Park Service  
U. S. Department of the Interior

## Official Map and Guide

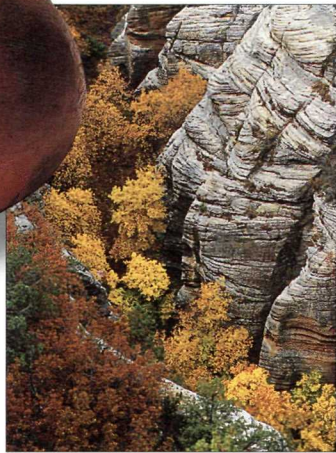


Tom Bean

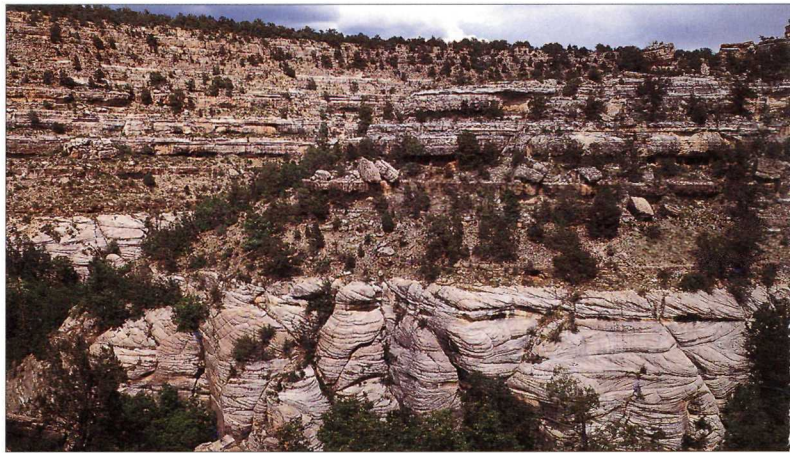


Clockwise from top: Sinagua cliff home in north-facing wall; Kaibab limestone layers resting on Coconino sandstone; boxelders and Arizona black walnut on canyon floor; black-and-white bowl obtained in trade; locally produced redware olla.

Tom Bean (bowl); George H.H. Huey (olla)



Dan Peha



Dennis Flaherty

## The People Without Water

Dwellings on the cliff faces, sheltered in caves, were home to Walnut Canyon's inhabitants more than 800 years ago. Inside the canyon and throughout the pine forests on its rims, these people made their living by farming, hunting deer and small game, gathering an assortment of useful plants, and trading. The people are today known as the Sinagua—Spanish for “without water”—whose name is a tribute to their ability to turn a relatively dry region into a homeland.

Though the Sinagua were the canyon's only permanent residents, artifacts found here indicate that they were preceded by Archaic peoples who traveled throughout the Southwest thousands of years ago and probably occupied the canyon seasonally. These nomadic people were long gone by the time the Sinagua appeared in the rugged volcanic terrain northeast of present-day Flagstaff sometime before A.D. 600. Perhaps the Sinagua migrated from elsewhere, or perhaps they broke away from a local group and developed a distinct way of life. Like earlier inhabitants, they were probably attracted by the region's abundance of plants and animals. But while the Sinagua took advantage of the same wild food sources as their predecessors, they were also farmers.

The Sinagua built one-room pithouses near their agricultural fields, where they employed dry-farming techniques to grow corn and other crops. Archeologists once thought that debris from the eruption of nearby Sunset Crater in 1064-65 made the land more fertile, creating a prehistoric land rush to the San Francisco volcanic field and bringing change to Sinagua life. Recent findings discredit this theory; the Sinagua were more likely influenced by increased rainfall, new water-conserving farming practices, trade, and a general population increase in the Southwest. This period after the eruption, when Sinagua culture flourished, is marked by a change in architecture from the pithouse style. The large, above-

ground villages at Wupatki and Elden Pueblo date from this time, as do Walnut Canyon's cliff dwellings, built between 1125 and 1250. The canyon builders took advantage of natural recesses in the limestone walls, where water flowing for millions of years eroded the softer rock layers, creating shallow caves.

These were also the years of the Sinagua culture's greatest geographical extent. Settlements ranged from the eastern slopes of the San Francisco Peaks northeast to the Little Colorado River and south to the Verde River valley. Trade items found in Sinagua dwellings include turquoise from the Santa Fe area, seashell ornaments from the Gulf of Mexico and the Gulf of California, and macaw feathers from Mexico. These goods may have been acquired by Sinagua intermediaries who arranged trade between other groups of people.

The Sinagua lived in the cliff dwellings for little more than 100 years, then departed for reasons that are still unclear. By about 1250 they occupied new villages a few miles southeast along Anderson Mesa. It is generally believed that the Sinagua were eventually assimilated into Hopi culture. The Hopi today call their ancestors the Hisatsinom (“people of long ago”); their tradition suggests that these early migrations were part of a religious quest to have all clans come together.

Sinagua homes remained largely undisturbed until the 19th century. In the 1880s the railroad brought souvenir hunters to the ancient dwellings. Theft and destruction prompted local efforts to preserve the canyon and soon drew national support. In 1915 Walnut Canyon was declared a national monument. Nearly 800 years have passed since Sinagua voices and laughter could be heard. Today, as you explore the trails, imagine the canyon alive with people carrying food and water, greeting one another and building their cliffside homes.

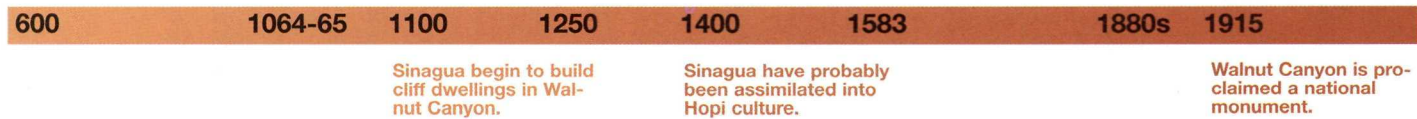
Sinagua people arrive in San Francisco volcanic region northeast of Flagstaff.

Sunset Crater is created in several volcanic eruptions; Sinagua life begins to change.

Sinagua depart Flagstaff area for new villages to the south.

Antonio De Espéjo opens Spanish exploration of northern Arizona.

Walnut Canyon becomes a popular destination for souvenir hunters.



### About Your Visit

**Administraton** Walnut Canyon National Monument is part of the National Park System, one of more than 360 parks that are important examples of our country's natural and cultural heritage. Address inquiries to: Superintendent, Walnut Canyon National Monument, Walnut Canyon Road, Flagstaff, AZ 86004-9705, or call 520-526-3367.

### Hours and facilities

There is an entrance fee to the park. The park is open every day of the year except December 25. Hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; hours may be extended in summer. Remember that this part of Arizona is on Mountain Standard Time year-round.

Stop first at the visitor center, which has an information desk, exhibits, a bookstore, and a panoramic view.

Two paved foot trails begin at the visitor center. The Island Trail, a 0.9-mile loop, passes 25 of the cliff dwelling rooms and takes you through different plant-life zones (see map on the reverse side of this brochure). There is a 185-foot climb (240 stairs) back to the canyon rim.

The 0.7-mile Rim Trail overlooks the canyon and takes you by the ruins of Sinagua rim-top structures.

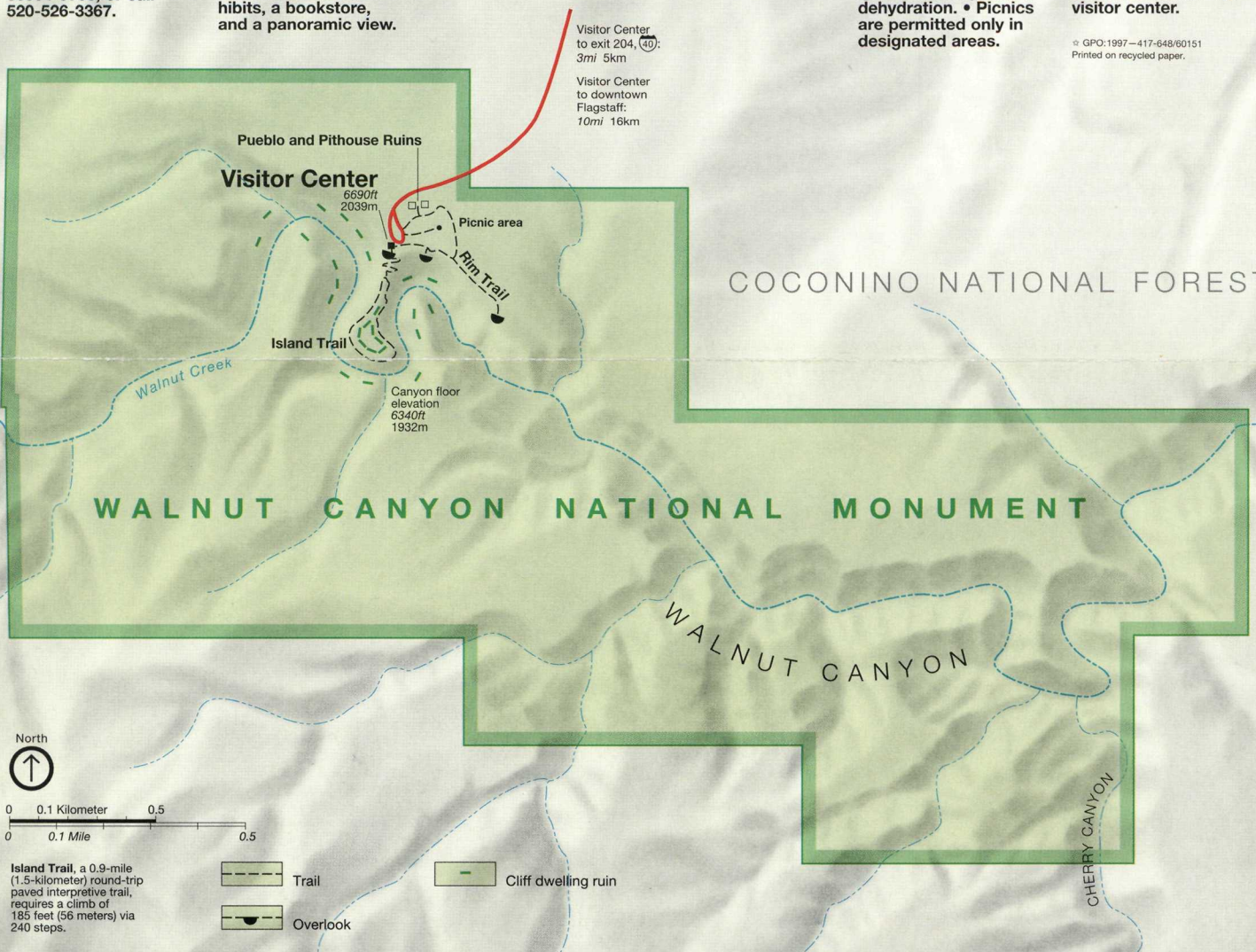
The park has a picnic area. Campgrounds are available nearby. Lodging and restaurants can be found in the Flagstaff area.

**For your safety and the park's protection** All plants, animals, and archeological objects within the park are protected by federal laws; there are substantial fines for damage to or removal of these resources. • Elevation at the canyon rim is nearly 7,000 feet; be careful when attempting strenuous activity such as climbing stairs. • Drink plenty of water to prevent dehydration. • Picnics are permitted only in designated areas.

Open fires are not allowed. • Stay on the trails when hiking; off-trail hiking is allowed only with permission from the superintendent. • Pets are not permitted in the visitor center or on the trails.

**Location** Walnut Canyon National Monument is 10 miles east of downtown Flagstaff. From I-40, take exit 204 and follow the entrance road to the visitor center.

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Island Trail, a 0.9-mile (1.5-kilometer) round-trip paved interpretive trail, requires a climb of 185 feet (56 meters) via 240 steps.

--- Trail  
 Overlook  
 Cliff dwelling ruin

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## Reconstructing the Sinagua Past

It is difficult for us to know exactly how the Sinagua lived. They left no discernible history when they departed the Flagstaff region sometime before 1250. In the 1880s, pothunters removed many Sinagua possessions, dynamiting some of the cliff-dwelling walls to allow in more light for their search.

To reconstruct what life must have been like, archeologists and anthropologists rely on what survived the centuries: building ruins, ceramic fragments, tools, ornaments,

and agricultural areas. Study of the rimtop and canyon dwelling sites reveals much about settlement patterns.

The Sinagua story has been pieced together by examining objects, comparing them with the ways of prehistoric groups elsewhere in the Southwest, and learning the oral traditions of the Hopi, the probable descendants of the Sinagua. Though incomplete, this story tells us a good bit about life in Walnut Canyon.

### Rimtop Croplands

The canyon rims, relatively flat with pockets of deep soil, were the main farmlands. Even in the semi-arid climate, water was available most of the time, though Walnut Creek probably did not flow year-round. To conserve rainwater and, more importantly, to collect soil, the people built check dams and terraces. Their major crops were a drought-resistant variety of corn and several kinds of beans and squash.

Recent evidence shows that edible wild plants were just as important to the Sin-

agua diet as cultivated crops. More than 20 species of plants that could have been used for food and medicine still grow in the canyon. Among these are wild grape, serviceberry, elderberry, yucca, and Arizona black walnut. On the rims, edible wild plants were fewer but no less sought-after. The Sinagua also hunted deer, bighorn sheep, and an assortment of smaller animals.

### Canyon Homes

Walnut Canyon homes were generally situated on cliffsides facing south and east to take advantage of warmth and sunlight. A few sites faced north and west; these may have been occupied during the warmer months. Although the cliff dwellings are the most visible ruins in the park, other archeological sites such as pithouses and free-standing pueblos dot the canyon rims.

Archeologists believe that it was Sinagua women who built the homes. The dwellings were made from shallow caves eroded out of the limestone cliffs by water and wind. To form walls, builders gathered limestone rocks, shaped them roughly, then cement-

ed them together with a gold-colored clay found in deposits elsewhere in the canyon. Wooden beams reinforced the doorways. Finally, the walls were plastered with clay inside and out.

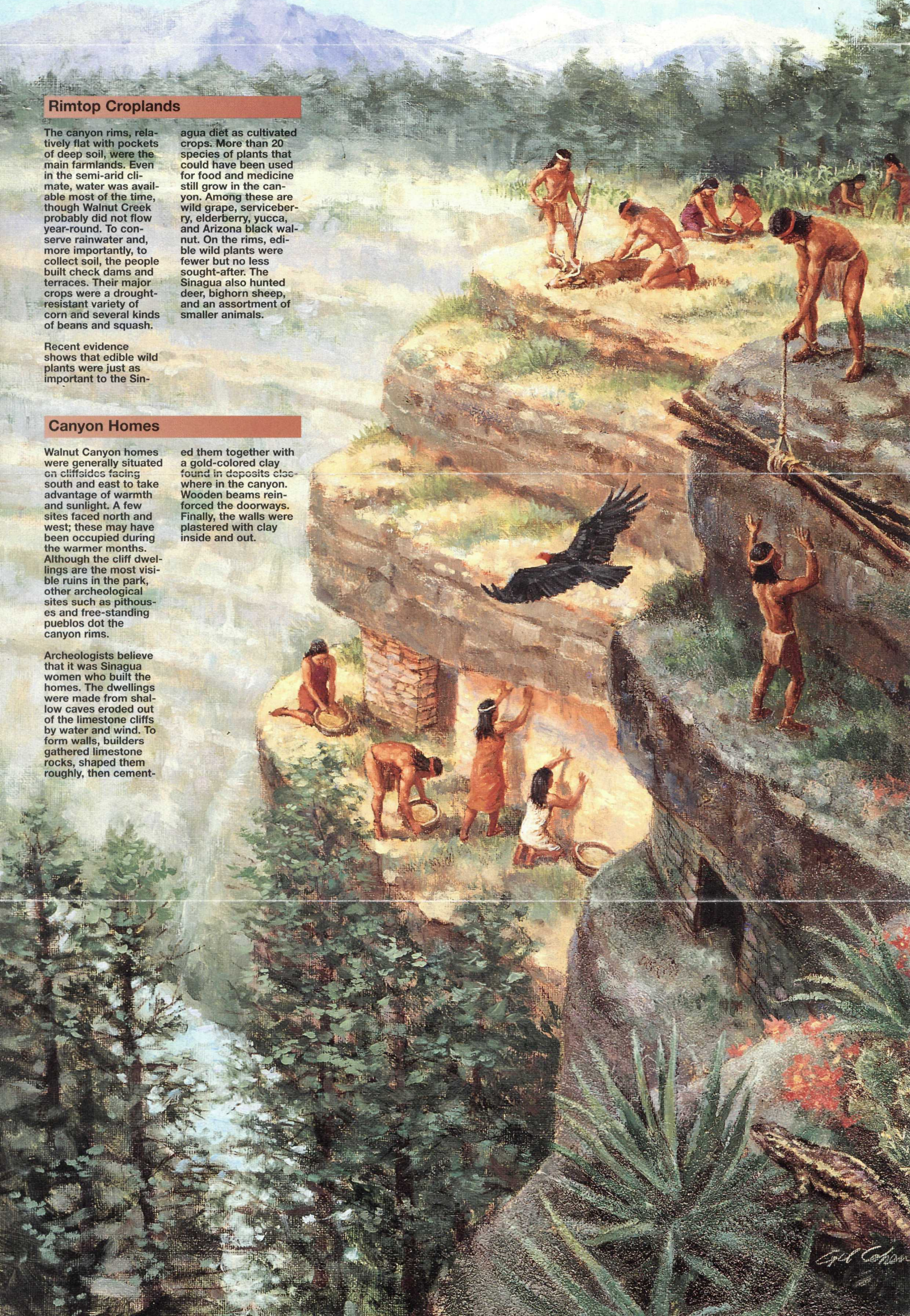
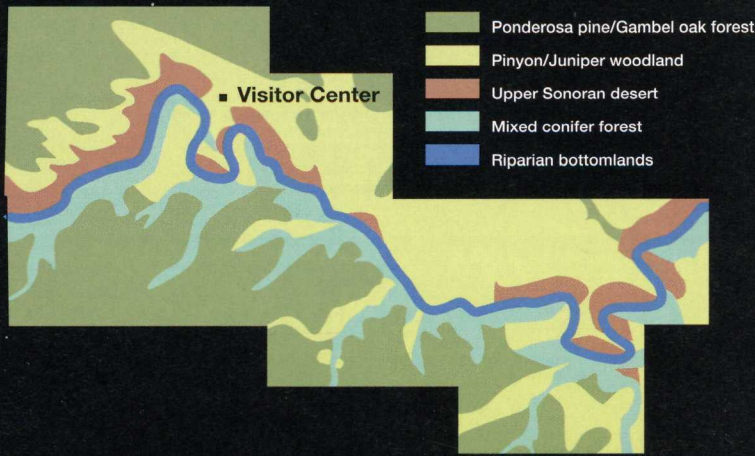


Illustration by Gil Cohen

## Plantlife Zones of Walnut Canyon

Walnut Canyon has an unusual array of biological communities, each characterized by different temperatures and plantlife, and determined largely by the amount of sunlight the community receives. These plantlife zones are miniature versions of the zones spanning the western part of the continent from Mexico to Canada—all within the canyon's 20-mile length and 400-foot depth. As you walk the Island Trail you will travel from the Upper Sonoran desert, with yucca and pricklypear cactus, to the cooler, moister Pacific Northwestern forests of shade-tolerant shrubs and mixed conifers (including Douglas fir). Elsewhere in the canyon and on the rims are pinyon/juniper woodland and ponderosa pine/gambel oak forest, found throughout the southwestern United States. At the bottom is the riparian (riverbank) community, which includes boxelder and the Arizona black walnut for which the canyon was named.



Tom Bean



Tom Bean



Tom Bean

Pricklypear cactus (top), claret cup cactus (lower left), and yucca (right) thrive in the Upper Sonoran desert plantlife zone, generally found on the south-facing slopes that receive full sunlight. Pricklypears had edible pads—spines removed—and sweet,

juicy fruit. The yucca was especially useful to the Sinagua for food, soap, fiber, and construction material. The pinyon pine (upper left) provided firewood, timber, black sap for

dye and adhesives, and nutritious nuts. Ponderosa pine trees (center) once covered the region surrounding the canyon; their long, straight trunks were prized for use in ladders and as support beams for structures.



George H.H. Huey