

ADMINISTRATION

Wupatki National Monument, containing 56 square miles, was established on December 9, 1924. Sunset Crater National Monument, containing 4½ square miles, was established on May 26, 1930. Elevation at Wupatki headquarters is 4,900 feet; at Sunset Crater, the elevation is 7,000 feet.

Wupatki and Sunset Crater National Monuments are administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Wupatki National Monument, Tuba Star Route, Flagstaff, AZ 86001, is in charge of both monuments.

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 widest choice in managing all our resources so each will make its full contribution to a better United States, now and in the future.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
U.S. DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

WUPATKI



SUNSET CRATER

NATIONAL MONUMENTS • ARIZONA

Sunset Crater, with the grace and glow of a lasting sunset, was not always so serene, for 900 years ago it violently erupted and frightened the people away. But it was also kind, for it spread upon the earth an ash that enriched the soil. The people came back . . . at first timidly, then in a rush. They lived here for two centuries, until the very winds that spread the "magic" ash stripped it from the soil. And then the people left . . . forever.

In A.D. 1065, the Indians living near what is now Sunset Crater National Monument were startled by a volcanic eruption. They hurried away, as ash clouded the sky and as cinders rained down upon their homes and farms. When the eruption ceased, a cinder cone 1,000 feet high had been formed, with jagged lava flows at its base. Black ash covered hundreds of square miles and transformed the soil into excellent farmland, drawing the farming Indians back into the area. The ruins of the post-eruptive culture are now preserved in Wupatki National Monument.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE LAND

Prominent in north-central Arizona are the San Francisco Peaks and the surrounding volcanic field, together covering some 3,000 square miles. The area is studded with volcanic peaks, cinder cones, and lava flows that represent a long period of volcanic activity. Evidence has been found here that the eruptions were separated by periods of inactivity during the last 2 million years. Some eruptions were quiet outpourings of molten lava; others were violent.

About 900 years ago the last of these eruptions occurred, producing the symmetrical cinder cone and rough black lava and cinder area of Sunset Crater. Amid a roaring and trembling earth, fiery globs of molten lava, cinders, and ash were blown from a volcanic vent, the wind carrying away the lighter materials. Heavy objects fell around the vent, making the mass of smoking black rocks and cinders grow higher. Ejected stones rolled down the steep slopes, enlarging the base of the cone. Prevailing southwesterly winds caused more of the material to fall on the northeast side.

Sunset Crater.



Wupatki Ruin.



Lomaki Ruin.



Following this activity, the eruption slackened, as explosive outbursts were interspersed with outpourings of molten lava from vents near the base of the cinder cone. Amid steaming spatter cones and crusted lava lagoons, the smoking cone towered above a blackened land. Thus Sunset Crater, youngest member of the San Francisco Peaks Volcanic Field, had been created.

For years, gradually lessening activity continued, as hot springs and vapors seeped out from fumaroles about the vent. Minerals, deposited around the crater rim by the vapors, stained the cinders, which make the summit seem to glow with the hues of a perpetual sunset.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE PEOPLE

About A.D. 600, a few farming Indians, now called the Sinagua, moved into the area near the San Francisco Peaks. These Indians lived in pithouses, which were very efficient dwellings that kept out the summer's heat and winter's cold. Because of the general lack of moisture in the soil, these people located their farmlands near the edge of the old cinder fields which were the best areas for growing crops. We know people were living here at the beginning of the last eruption, for their homes have been excavated from beneath the cinders and ash. Indeed, timbers from these pithouses have given the date of this event.

The volcanic eruption forced those living nearby to flee. But it also spread fine volcanic ash over an area of about 800 square miles. The porous layer formed an excellent mulch that trapped moisture in the soil and turned this catastrophe into a blessing. Indians who had farmed around older cinder cones and those from neighboring regions moved into the area as word of this productive farmland spread.

The Sinagua area became a melting pot of cultures. The Pueblo dry farmers from northeastern Arizona mingled with the Hohokam irrigation farmers from central Arizona. Influences from the Mogollon groups to the south and east and the Cohonino groups to the west have also been discovered here. This is the only place where evidence of such mingling has been found.

Villages were established throughout the area. One of the longest inhabited is now called Wupatki, the Hopi word for "tall house." Its location was probably determined by the presence of a spring, one of the few in this region. From a small pueblo, Wupatki grew to be the largest in the area—during the 1100's, it contained more than 100 rooms and, in places, was three stories high.

Beside the ruin, protected from prevailing winds, is an open-air amphitheater possibly used for ceremonies, and in the valley is a stone-masonry ball court, one of two found in northern Arizona.

Continuous farming and winds stripped the soil of volcanic ash, and in 1215 a severe drought began. The Indians left the area, and by 1225 no one remained.

ABOUT YOUR VISIT

North of Flagstaff, paved roads lead eastward to both monuments from U.S. 89. However, the road into Sunset Crater may be closed by snow for short periods. The Sunset Crater Visitor Center is 2 miles from U.S. 89; the Wupatki Visitor Center is 14 miles. The monuments are connected by a paved road across 18 miles of cinder-covered hills and through several unusual plant and animal communities in Coconino National Forest. You should stay strictly on the road, for driving on the cinders is dangerous.

Uniformed personnel are on duty the year round. Drinking water is available at headquarters of both areas. There are no overnight accommodations in the monuments, but a U.S. Forest Service campground is located across from the Sunset Crater Visitor Center.

Aside from the trees and other plants that have gained a foothold amid the cinders and lava, Sunset Crater must appear much as it did just after eruption. The spatter cones and other evidences of volcanism look as if they have barely cooled.

Lava Flow Nature Trail will take you across some of the lava flow, past a small lava cave and other intriguing places. A guidebook, available at the register stand, is keyed to posted numbers.

Wupatki National Monument contains approximately 800 Indian ruins. Wupatki Ruin itself is one of the most impressive in northern Arizona. Around Citadel Ruin was another concentration of prehistoric Indians. Within 1 square mile there are more than 100 sites, from small earth lodges to large pueblos. The Citadel, as yet unexcavated, was a fortified apartment house—probably one or two stories high with about 50 rooms. Just below it is the small pueblo ruin called Nalakihi, a Hopi word for "house standing alone." Other outstanding sites are Lomaki and Wukoki Ruins and several fortified pueblos.

There are self-guiding trails to Nalakihi-Citadel Ruins and to Wupatki Ruin. Guidebooks keyed to numbers along the trails are available at the beginning of each.

HELP PRESERVE THESE AREAS

Please do not build fires, and be sure to extinguish cigarettes and matches. Do not walk on prehistoric walls, or disturb plants, animals, and geological and archeological features. Keep pets in your car or on leash while you are in the monuments.



Deep, narrow earth cracks, razor-sharp lava, unstabilized back-country ruins, and wild animals are the most prominent hazards in the park. If you go into the ice cave at Sunset Crater, register with a ranger. We hope your visit can be safe, pleasant, and relaxed. But remain alert, especially if this setting is unfamiliar to you.

