

Official Map and Guide

P E R H A P S

It was the notion of immortality—an inspiration for creative endeavors since the dawn of the human race—that compelled people to write their lives into rock. Compared with our life spans, El Morro is timeless. Though geological and erosional forces will in the long run dismantle the sandstone layers, a protective layer of hard rock at the top has delayed the process longer than that of the surrounding land which once rose as high. So it seems as if El Morro has always existed and always will. Those wielders of stone and steel who reached out to future passers-by have left a rare gift. An ancient Indian's carving of bighorn sheep, a Spaniard's "pasó por aquí," a precisely chiseled name from America's westward expansion weave a variegated tapestry of the peopling of New Mexico.

El Morro is a *cuesta*—a long formation with a gentle upward slope that drops off abruptly at one end. This land is composed of sandstone layers deposited by wind, desert streams, and an ancient sea. Sandwiched between upward pressure from underground forces and the weight of newer rock above (since eroded), the sandstone developed cracks that gradually weathered into the long vertical "joints" prominent today (above and right).



Fred Hirschmann

Travelers along the ancient trade route depended on El Morro's source of water, a pool of runoff and snowmelt. As they rested in the shadow of the bluff, they added their own messages to the rock. Today the pool waters sunflowers, cattails, and native grasses on the shore.



Stephen Trimble



David Hunsch

The ruins of two Anasazi pueblos sprawl atop the mesa. The smaller north pueblo is an unexcavated mound blanketed with cacti and shrubs. The northeast corner of A'ts'ina pueblo (left) was unearthed by archeologists in the 1950s and has been stabilized. The pueblos were abandoned around AD 1400 as people moved to larger, consolidated villages in the Zuni Valley. The Zuni people, descendants of the Anasazi, live today in western New Mexico.

Jerry Jackel (above)

Your visit to El Morro

Location
El Morro National Monument is 125 miles—about 2½ hours by car—west of Albuquerque, New Mexico. From I-40 at Grants (42 miles); go southwest on N. Mex. 53 to park entrance on left. From I-40 at Gallup (56 miles); go south on N. Mex. 602, then east on N. Mex. 53 through Ramah to park entrance on right.

Facilities
There are campsites and picnic areas inside the park; an RV park is located near the entrance to the monument. Supplies and food service are available in Ramah. Lodging is available in Grants or Gallup.

Climate
Expect hot, dry weather in summer, with afternoon thunderstorms in July and

August. Temperatures can dip well below freezing in winter. Weather conditions such as snow, ice, lightning, or high winds may force temporary closure of Mesa Top Trail.

Activities
The park is open every day of the year except Christmas day. Summer hours are 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.; hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. the rest of the year. Trails close ½ hour before the general park closing time. Contact the park staff in advance to arrange group orientation talks. On summer weekends rangers present campfire programs.

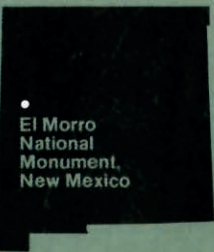
Stop first at the visitor center. The museum has exhibits on the 700 years of human activity at El Morro. A 15-minute video-

tape gives an introduction to the park. Children can examine rock, plant, and wildlife specimens at the "touch table."

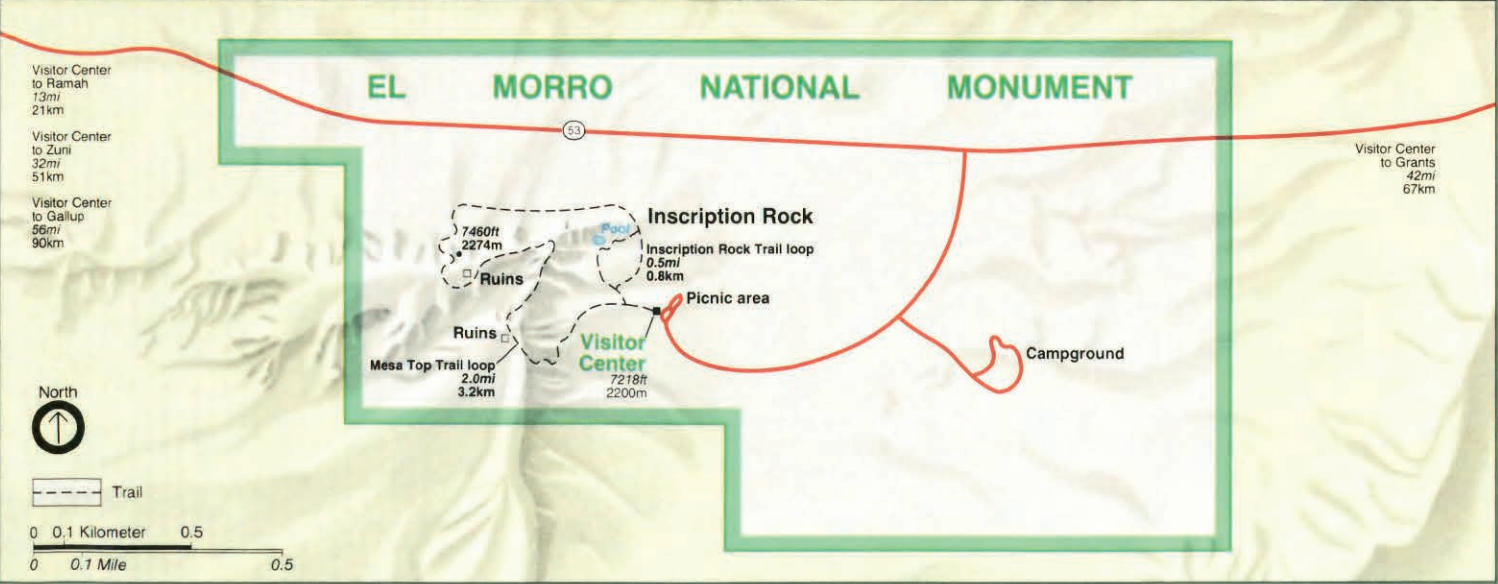
There are two self-guiding trails that begin at the visitor center. Guide booklets are available; wayside exhibits along the way mark points of interest. Inscription Rock Trail (a paved, ½-mile loop) passes the carvings at the base of the cliff. Mesa Top Trail, 2 miles round-trip from the visitor center, continues upward from the lower trail. Wear sturdy shoes, carry water, and be prepared for a steep climb over varied terrain. At top are the ancient pueblo ruins and a panoramic view.

Access
The parking lot, picnic tables, campground, and

Administration
El Morro National Monument is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. The National Park System protects more than 350 of the country's significant natural, cultural, and recreational areas. Contact: Superintendent, El Morro NM, Rte. 2, Box 43, Ramah, NM 87321-9603. (503) 783-4226.



El Morro National Monument



Pasó por aquí: Passed by here

On a main east-west trail, dating from antiquity, rises a great sandstone promontory with a pool of water at its base. The Zuni Indians, whose Anasazi ancestors lived here, call it A'ts'ina—'place of writings on the rock.' The Spaniards

called it El Morro—"the headland." Anglo-Americans called it Inscription Rock. Over the centuries those who traveled this trail stopped to camp at the shaded oasis under the cliffs.

They left carved evidence of their passage—symbols, names, dates, and fragments of their stories that register the cultures and history intermingled on the rock.

The Anasazi

ANCIENT VILLAGERS

The Zuni Indians descended from desert hunter-gatherers. About 2,000 years ago, they joined in a general shift toward the cultivation of crops that gave birth to the Southwest's Anasazi tradition. In time, small villages appeared along the streams of this arid land. As more centuries passed the Anasazi built large multi-storied towns laid out around plazas.

The Zuni towns centered on the Little Colorado River drainage. As trading middlemen between the Anasazi world and other cultures of the Southwest, the Zuni played a central role in the transmission of trade items and cultural values.

A'ts'ina Ruin atop El Morro dates from the time of larger towns. Archeological evidence shows that A'ts'ina and nearby massive pueblos were built about the same time—in the late 1200s. After only 50 or 60 years they were abandoned. (Perhaps they were meant only to be temporary: unusual heat and drought may have driven the Zuni from the river valleys to the high ground around El Morro.)

For the Zuni people, A'ts'ina and nearby sites continue to be sacred places, parts of a larger homeland that once stretched far beyond today's Zuni Reservation. The symbols and pictures communicate both the mundane and the spiritual. Eventually a new

breed of travelers took inspiration from the Indian scribes. With points of steel they continued the story in records of conquest and colonization.

HOME ON THE DESERT'S ROOFTOP

The Anasazi, ingenious farmers of the high desert, were master builders. Their earliest structures, half-buried pithouses, evolved into above-ground pueblos by AD 1000. Soon the Anasazi were building many of their pueblo villages on mesa tops, perhaps with defense in mind or perhaps simply to be high above the plain.

A'ts'ina pueblo, the larger of the two pueblos atop El Morro, dates from about AD 1275. Its builders made use of what they

had around them: flat sedimentary rock that cut easily into manageable slabs piled one on top of another. Clay and pebbles cemented the slabs.

The pueblo was about 200 by 300 feet and housed between 1000

and 1500 people. Multiple stories of interconnected rooms—875 have been counted—surrounded an open courtyard. Square and circular kivas—underground chambers that recall the pithouse era—provided space for informal gather-

ings as well as religious ceremonies.

Corn and other crops were grown in irrigated fields down on the plain; the surplus was stored in well sealed rooms in the pueblo for times of need. Grinding bins and firepits remain today. Rainwater was collected in cisterns on the mesa top. The pool at the base was also frequently used, as hand-and-toe "steps" on the cliff face attest. An alternate trail for the residents may have followed the one still in use.

The Spaniards

NEW WORLD COLONIZERS

The second generation of conquistadors—those who had missed the Mexican conquest—pursued a medieval myth of golden cities to be found at a place called Cibola. Shipwrecked soldiers wandering from Texas through New Spain's northern deserts heard stories of Indians who lived in cities yet farther north. If this was Cibola, it meant the chance to relive the glories and riches of Aztec Mexico.

But for explorer Francisco Vázquez de Coronado and those he led in 1540, the Zuni and other Pueblo Indian towns proved disappointing. They were modest outposts of central Mexican civilization. These Pueblo Indians lived in solid towns, pueblos built of masonry or adobe. They gained a sufficiency from their agriculture. But their riches were intangible—the songs and ceremonies that kept them in harmony with the spirit world and with each other—not the gold of Aztec or Inca.

Decades passed as New Spain's frontier slowly pushed northward, lured by discovery of silver deposits. In 1581, the Franciscan brother Fray Augustín Rodríguez shared leadership of an expedition that revisited the pueblos of New Mexico. Inspired with religious zeal, Fray Augustín and another friar stayed on with the Indians when the expedition returned. This episode was important. It foreshadowed the primary purpose of New Mexico as the northern outpost of New Spain: Lacking riches, the future colony was eventually supported and justified as a field of

missionization. Salvation of Indian souls would serve both God and State.

Another expedition, sent to search for the two friars, resulted in the first historical record of El Morro. Antonio de Espejo headed north to the Rio Grande pueblos, where he confirmed that the Franciscans had been killed. Then he explored westerly toward Zuni. On March 11, 1583, he recorded his stop at a place he called *El Estanque del Peñol* (the pool at the great rock). In 1598 Don Juan de Oñate officially colonized New Mexico. He brought 400 colonists and 10 Franciscans north, along with 7,000 head of stock. From the beginning, hard winters, lack of food, and the great distance from Mexico caused hardship and discontent among the colonists. Oñate's explorations finally killed the last hopes for quick riches. Returning from one of these expeditions, Oñate inscribed his name at El Morro on April 16, 1605—the first known historical inscription on the rock.

There followed scores of other Spanish inscriptions as governors, soldiers, and priests took the El Morro route to Zuni and other western pueblos. These brief notes in stone give a thumbnail sketch of New Mexico's Spanish history as it happened on those far western marches. Routine records of passage—a name and a date attached to the standard *pasó por aquí*—vary with accounts of battle and revenge for an ambushed detachment or a martyred priest. For this was the very fringe of the New Mexican frontier, far from

Santa Fe. The western Pueblo Indians used this distance to buffer Spain's religious and secular controls.

Over the years, resentment of these controls forged Pueblo Indian unity. They revolted in 1680 and killed or drove the Spaniards from New Mexico. After the Reconquest by Don Diego de Vargas (recorded by the general on El Morro in autumn 1692), peace and war alternated on the western marches, according to the character of the missionaries and governors. By 1750 the energies of both Church and State had declined in the poor and isolated province of New Mexico. This was caused partly by increased warfare with encircling Navajo, Apache, Ute, and Comanche Indians. Few Spanish travelers passed by El Morro during this period.

A final surge of Navajo campaigns, trail blazing, and visits to the Zuni and Hopi pueblos occurred as the 1700s shaded into the 1800s. But in fact the western pueblos and El Morro stood beyond the effective dominion of Spain. During the years under Mexico, 1821-46, the New Mexicans devoted their western frontier energies to war with the Navajo Indians north of the Zuni-El Morro area. Indian travelers had the rock and its pool mainly to themselves.

OÑATE: THE LAST CONQUISTADOR

In the history of Don Juan de Oñate is the essence of the Spanish New Mexican story. He founded the first permanent colony in New Mexico, explored its terrain, and opened a history that has lasted nearly 400 years. He was visionary, tenacious, sometimes ruthless, and always courageous—in every way a Spaniard of his time.

Because of persistent stories of mines, threats from other powers, and the many Pueblo Indians to be missionized, the King decided to found the far-northern colony. Oñate got the contract. He paid for the expedition; the King gave him honors and titles and furnished priests. Oñate's colony proved marginal. Difficulty and danger sapped the colonists' resolve. Distance from Mexico City slowed supplies and reinforcements. Oñate came under criticism



Oñate led colonists north (yellow) to the vicinity of present-day Santa Fe. From there he made two fruitless searches: east (green) toward the fabled

riches of Quivira, then west (red) looking for the Pacific Ocean. It was on the latter exploration that he stopped at El Morro.

from dissidents in his own ranks. His harsh treatment of the Acoma Indians, who resisted the conquerors, prompted charges of inhumane severity at the court of inquiry that examined his governorship. Through all these troubles, Oñate persevered and held the settlement together.

Oñate's expeditions brought home the truth about New Mexico. This was a country that could sustain colonists willing to work the land. Its Indians could be converted and made citizens of Spain's empire. Lacking precious metals, the history of New Mexico would be the history of villagers, Spanish and Pueblo, adjusting to each other. Oñate and the stalwart colonists and Franciscans who survived those first hard years laid the foundation.

The Americans

EXPANDING WESTWARD

The Mexican-American War (1846-48) made New Mexico part of the United States. Army expeditions to the Zuni country and into troubled Navajo land began immediately. Lt. James H. Simpson of the Army's Topographical Engineers accompanied one of these and, with artist Richard Kern, took a side trip to El Morro in September 1849. The beautiful inscriptions inspired the men to two days of labor copying them. Midway through their task, the men paused before the "exquisite picture" of the shaded pool, then climbed to El Morro's crest. From the aerie of the abandoned ruins, they took in the "extensive and pleasing prospect" below. Simpson's was the first written description of what he named Inscription Rock, and Kern's drawings the first recording of the inscriptions.

Emigrants to California used the El Morro route. One group, escorted by a company of dragoons, passed through in 1849. Another

party that same year robbed the hospitable people of Zuni, who traditionally welcomed and fed all travelers. A later party left 26 names on the rock.

Army exploration and railroad-survey expeditions stopped at El Morro in 1851 and 1853. A few years later (1857) the Army experimented with camels for desert transportation. Thus did a caravan more Arabic than American pass by El Morro.

An 1868 Union Pacific survey party looked for a rail route past El Morro. But the 35th parallel route, earlier recommended by the Topographical Engineers, took the trains through Campbell's Pass some 25 miles north of El Morro.

When the first train steamed over the Continental Divide in 1881, the old trace past El Morro was obsolete as a long-distance thor-

oughfare. Traditional traffic between Acoma and Zuni persisted. The Navajo Indians and Mormon settlers of the nearby Ramah district continued to pass by as trade, herding, and ranching demanded. But the shift of mainline transportation north of the Zuni Mountains ended the historic function of El Morro as a watering place and camp on the long trail between the Rio Grande and western deserts.

THE U.S. ARMY CAMEL CORPS

The inscriptions "Beale" and "Breckinridge" recall a novel experiment by the U.S. Army in the 1850s. Major Henry C. Beale and Edward F. Beale, Superintendent of Indian Affairs in California, had long sought to solve the water problem on the route from the Mississippi River to California through the desert Southwest. The team won funding in 1855, then proceeded to Europe and Africa to study the habits of camels in captivity. In Egypt and Turkey they obtained 33 camels, hired three Arab handlers, and sailed back to Texas to begin training.

Local residents near Camp Verde, Texas, admired the animals; one woman sent President Franklin Pierce a pair of socks knitted "from the pile of one of our camels." When the

westward expeditions started in 1856, officers reported camels superior to horse and mule trains. Another 41 camels were added to the corps in 1857. P. Glimmer Breckinridge of Virginia, in charge of 25 camels, inscribed his name as a caravan passed El

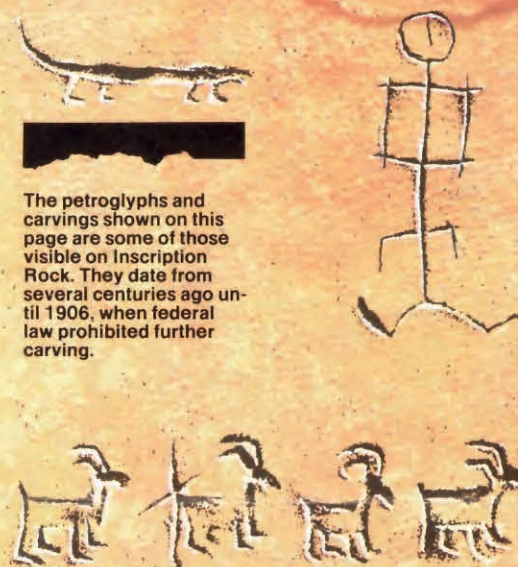
Morro that year.

"The camels are coming," trumpeted a newspaper headline when an express wagon drawn by the exotic beasts rolled into Los Angeles in December 1857. "Their approach made quite a stir among the native

population, most of whom had never seen the like." The article described how camels could pull a load over a mountain where mules balked, ate cactus, and could "live well where our domestic animals would die."

Camp Verde fell into the hands of the Confederates at the beginning of the Civil War, putting an abrupt end to the camel corps. Most of the animals were sold at auction, sometimes ending up in zoos and circuses. Some escaped; as late as the turn of the century feral camels were reportedly spotted from Mexico to Arkansas.

Source: "Uncle Sam's Camel Corps," by Fred S. Perrine, *New Mexico Historical Review*, 1926.



Aquiesboel sin, c'c'
E vaag, q' Conquist
ANIA S. FE. VALOR
Corona to del nebo
me xico asv costa
NO 12 1692

Por aqui paso
paso por aqui
Pasamos por aqui

Lt. JH Simpson USA & RH Kern Artist
visited and copied these inscriptions,
September 17th 1849.
Capt. 1st Cal. Cav.

OHIO
BRECKINRIDGE

Zuni

Long

