

Montezuma Castle and Tuzigoot

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

National Monuments
Arizona





Montezuma Castle National Monument



Tuzigoot National Monument

LEFT AND ABOVE—© BOB AND SUZANNE CLEMENZ

Ancient Farmers of the Verde Valley

Montezuma Castle and Tuzigoot invite you into the world of the Southern Sinagua, who flourished in the Verde Valley hundreds of years ago. For thousands of years, hunters and gatherers had roamed the Verde Valley. The area's characteristic agriculture and architecture emerged later, influenced by the neighboring Hohokam and the Northern Sinagua.

The first permanent settlements here resembled those of the Hohokam culture from southern and central Arizona. Between 700 and 900 CE (Common Era) some Hohokam moved north into the valley. These productive farmers grew

corn, beans, squash, and cotton using techniques like canal irrigation. They also made their distinct red-on-buff pottery and built ballcourts. One-room pit houses perched on terraces overlooked their crop fields in the bottomlands.

Northern Sinagua culture, centered around present-day Flagstaff, clearly influenced the above-ground masonry dwellings that appeared about 1125. Small structures and later pueblos, like those built by Ancestral Puebloan people living north of the Mogollon Rim, rose along major streams. By 1150, Southern Sinagua began building large pueblos, often on hilltops

or in cliff alcoves. Montezuma Castle and Tuzigoot villages reached their maximum size in the 1300s and were occupied for another century.

No one knows why the Southern Sinagua migrated away from their pueblos by the early 1400s. It may have been overpopulation, depletion of resources, disease, conflicts within or between groups, climate change, or perhaps spiritual beliefs. Whatever the reasons, many Southern Sinagua likely migrated northward to pueblo villages. Others may have stayed in the Verde Valley and returned to hunter-gatherer ways.

Daily Life of the Southern Sinagua

The Southern Sinagua lived principally by farming and supplemented their staple crops by hunting and gathering. Their surroundings offered an abundance of resources: water from the river and streams, fertile land along-side waterways, and sufficient game—including deer, antelope, rabbit, bear, muskrat, and duck—to augment a diet that relied heavily on corn. They also mined a salt deposit a few miles from present-day Camp Verde. Evidence suggests that salt was traded widely throughout the region.

Skilled Southern Sinagua artisans fashioned stone tools like axes, knives, and hammers, as well as manos and metates for grinding corn. Other crafts included bone awls and needles, handsome woven garments of cotton, and ornaments of shell, turquoise, and a local red stone (argillite) for personal wear.



NPS / WILLIAM A. BAKE

Family tasks included grinding corn, cooking, weaving cloth from locally grown cotton, drying skins, and making baskets. Two items found at Tuzigoot sug-

gest the broad trade network of the Southern Sinagua: Macaws were brought in from Mexico, and some decorated pottery came from the north.

Another specialty was reddish-brown pottery, undecorated but highly polished. These plain vessels probably served for cooking and storage. Decorated pottery vessels found at archaeological sites in this area arrived by trade with neighbors to the north, south, or east.

Southern Sinagua builders made do with local materials for their pueblos. The cobble walls at Tuzigoot are massive but poorly balanced. The limestone at Montezuma Castle is fairly soft and splits unevenly. Yet Montezuma Castle, protected from the elements, was so well built that it has stood for over 700 years. It is one of the best-preserved prehistoric structures in the Southwest.

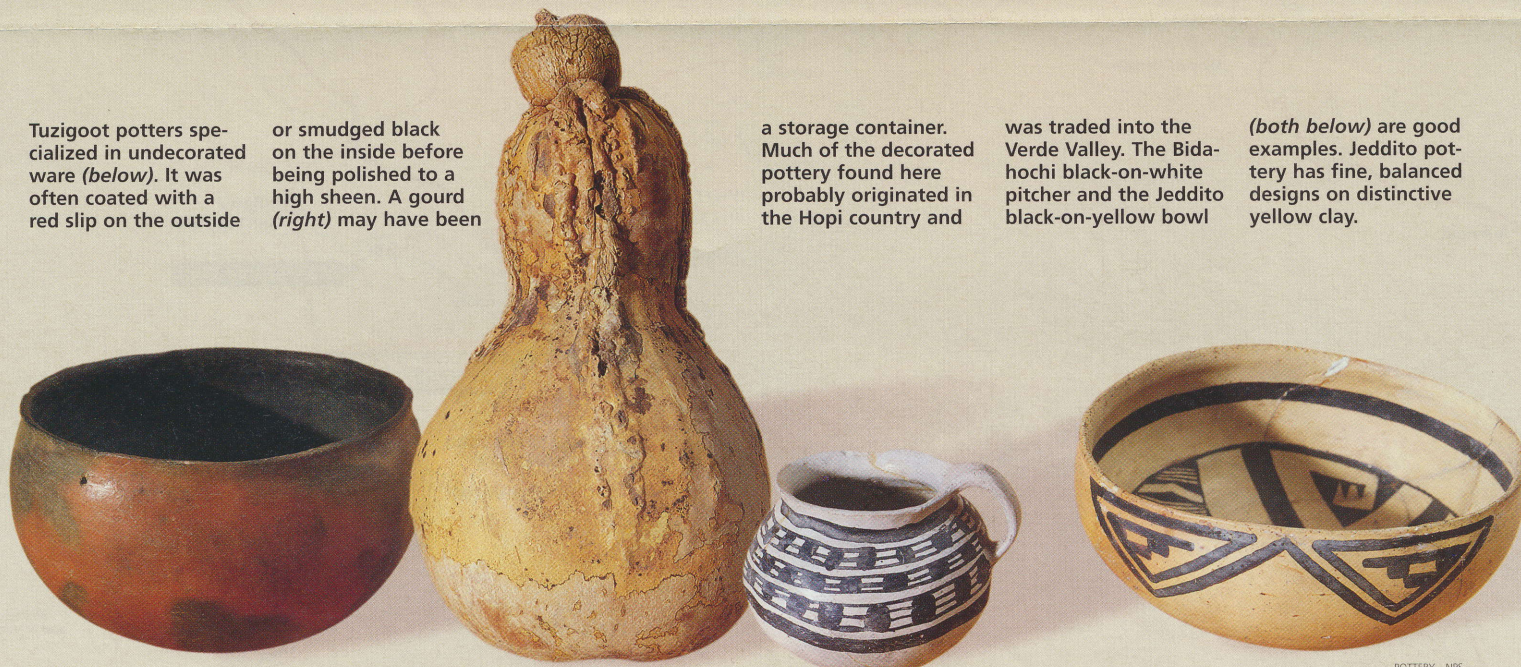
Tuzigoot potters specialized in undecorated ware (*below*). It was often coated with a red slip on the outside

or smudged black on the inside before being polished to a high sheen. A gourd (*right*) may have been

a storage container. Much of the decorated pottery found here probably originated in the Hopi country and

was traded into the Verde Valley. The Bida-hochi black-on-white pitcher and the Jeddito black-on-yellow bowl

(*both below*) are good examples. Jeddito pottery has fine, balanced designs on distinctive yellow clay.



POTTERY—NPS

Visiting the Parks



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Montezuma Castle

Southern Sinagua farmers built this five-story, 20-room dwelling sometime between 1100 and 1300. It occupies a cliff recess 100 feet above the valley. Early American settlers marveled at the structure. They assumed that it was Aztec in origin, hence the name Montezuma Castle. A short distance west, nudging a cliff base, is Castle A. Now badly deteriorated, it was once an imposing five-story apartment-like building with about 45 rooms. Occupants found reliable water in the creek and fertile land on the nearby terrace.

Location Montezuma Castle National Monument and Montezuma Well are 50 miles south of Flagstaff, AZ, off I-17. Tuzigoot National Monument is 50 miles south of Flagstaff via US Alt. 89, the scenic road through Oak Creek Canyon.

Activities Both Montezuma Castle and Tuzigoot have visitor centers with exhibits on Southern Sinagua people who lived in this region. All three sites have short, hard-surfaced walking trails.

Montezuma Well

Montezuma Well has all the surprise of a lake and lush vegetation in the midst of desert. It is a limestone sink formed long ago, still fed by continuously flowing springs. The Southern Sinagua irrigated crops with its waters. In places, you can see traces of the lime-coated irrigation ditches. The pit house on view dates from about 1050. Southern Sinagua dwellings here range in size from one-room houses to large pueblos. Between 1125 and 1400 about 100–150 people lived here.

For a Safe Visit Stay on trails. • Be alert for snakes. • Avoid overexposure to sun and heat. • For fire-arms regulations, check the websites.

Accessibility We strive to make our facilities, services, and programs accessible

to all. For information go to a visitor center, ask a ranger, call, or check our website.

Related Sites You can learn more about Sinagua culture at Walnut Canyon National Monument, just east of Flagstaff,

Tuzigoot

Tuzigoot (Apache for “crooked water”) is the remnant of a Southern Sinagua village built between 1000 and 1400. It crowns the summit of a long ridge rising 120 feet above the Verde Valley. The original pueblo was two stories high in places, with 87 ground-floor rooms. There were few exterior doors; entry was by ladders through roof openings. The village began as a small cluster of rooms inhabited by some 50 persons for 100 years. In the 1200s the population doubled and then doubled again.

and Wupatki National Monument north of Flagstaff off US 89.

More Information Montezuma Castle and Tuzigoot National Monuments are two of over 390 parks in the National Park System. To learn more visit www.nps.gov.

Montezuma Castle National Monument
Tuzigoot National Monument
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0 5 10 Kilometers
0 5 10 Miles

 Unpaved road

PRESCOTT
NATIONAL
FOREST

COCONINO
NATIONAL
FOREST

Tuzigoot National Monument

Jerome State Historic Park

Dead Horse State Park

Red Rock State Park

Slide Rock State Park

Montezuma Well

Montezuma Castle National Monument

Fort Verde State Historic Park

V-Bar-V Heritage Site

