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Keet Seel (*above*) is the largest cliff dwelling in Tsegi Canyon. Navajo National Monument

preserves three of the largest cliff dwellings of the Ancestral Puebloan people.

1 The doors in this block of rooms (not visible here) opened onto a street that ran the length of the village.

2 Sheltered by an alcove, these cliff dwellings are among the best preserved in the Southwest.

3 Granaries had grooved door jambs. The Ancestral Puebloan people placed rock slabs in

these openings to keep out rodents.

4 Think of these rooms as the home of a family. At night fires flickered in the windows

and figures stirred in the dim light.

5 Dime-sized cores taken from ancient timbers told archeologists when the trees were cut down.

6 Rocks were given a rough shape and then set in mud mortar with the smoothest side out.

7 These poles may have been used for hanging everyday items or ceremonial objects

Canyon Farmers

Centuries ago people farmed the plateaus and bottom lands of these canyons. They built distinctive villages under natural shelters in the cliff walls and successfully met the demands of a rugged environment. For these people periodic migrations were a way of life.

Today nearby Hopi people are among the descendants of these people, with strong ties to the ancient stone villages at Navajo National Monument. These villages are believed to have been stops along the sacred migration paths of at least eight Hopi clans. Tribal elders annually visit these villages and other sacred shrines in the area. They have also identified paintings on canyon walls as clan symbols. The National Park Service preserves these cultural treasures as part of Navajo National Monument.

The two largest villages are best known by the names given to them by the Navajo people who arrived in the vicinity during

the 1800s. In Navajo, Betatakin means "ledge house," and Keet Seel is from an altered Navajo word meaning "broken pottery scattered around." The villages are also known by their Hopi names, Talastima and Kawestima. The people who lived here long ago are called Hisatsinom by the Hopi and Anasazi by the Navajo. Anasazi, which means "ancient one" or "ancestors of the aliens," is not a precise term; it groups many different peoples under the same name, and some find the term offensive. Modern descendants of these people prefer the term "Ancestral Puebloans."

Ancient cultures varied throughout the Southwest. The cultural subgroup that came to live in the vicinity of Navajo National Monument is known as Kayenta. Here, among the Kayenta people, pottery styles became vivid and multicolored. Their buildings were more randomly grouped than those elsewhere. The people living here were not always farmers. In earlier times they hunted small game, gathered wild plants, seeds, and berries, and migrat-

ed with the seasons. Eventually, traders brought seeds of corn and other food crops into the region from Mexico. The Ancestral Puebloans' slowly developing agriculture practices allowed them to remain in one place.

As they became settled farmers they replaced their temporary brush shelters. At first they lived in pithouses—circular, below-ground dwellings common throughout the Southwest. Gradually they moved into above-ground houses. These were separate family dwellings usually built of stone but sometimes of sticks covered with mud—a construction method today called "jacal." To store each year's harvest surplus, often in pottery vessels, Ancestral Puebloans built storage chambers.

By 1200 the land surrounding today's Navajo National Monument was dotted with the farms of the Ancestral Puebloan people. Their villages, built as clusters of masonry rooms, stood nearby.

The people traded far and wide for items like cotton, turquoise, sea shells, and parrot feathers. Through their ceremonies they sought balance and harmony with the natural and spiritual worlds.

Rainfall was as scarce then as now, but usually there was enough to sustain their drought-adapted crops. Even so, harder times prompted the people to repeatedly move their farms and villages. While many communities probably remained in the bottomlands, others took shelter in the cliffs. Among these, Keet Seel and Betatakin flourished for five decades. But ultimately, the people withdrew from their homeland. This may have been caused by many factors working independently or together: drought, erosion, social pressures, religious dictates, or other influences not in the archeological record. The villagers joined other peoples in the Southwest in regional migrations, and from this period of change emerged the contemporary Pueblo people.

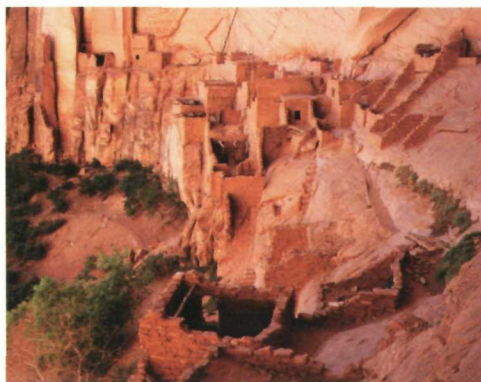
Cultures of Navajo National Monument

Ancestors of the Hopi (Hisatsinom) lived here for thousands of years. Trade brought corn seeds and other crops into the region. Hisatsinom life-ways changed from nomadic hunting and gathering to farming. They built multi-storied stone masonry houses clustered in villages in Tsegi and Nitsin canyons.

These ancestral lands remain very important to the Hopi. Fire, Flute, and Bighorn Sheep clans

inhabited Keet Seel. Betatakin was home to the Deer, Fire, Flute, and Water clans. Inscription House is a Rattlesnake, Sand, and Lizard clan village. These places are active spiritual and physical links between past, present, and future.

You are standing on Navajo Nation land. The boundaries of the Navajo (Diné) homeland are four sacred mountains: Blanca Peak (*Sis Naajinii*), Mount Taylor (*Tsoo Dzil*), the San Francisco Peaks



Betatakin alcove interior

©GENE BALZER

(Dook'o'osliid), and the La Plata Mountains (Dibe Ntasa).

The Diné changed from hunting and gathering when the Spanish introduced domesticated animals. Sheepherding became central to their lives. The Diné have a long tradition of using the area around Navajo National Monument for sacred and economic purposes.

The San Juan Southern Paiute feel a strong connection to these canyons. They lived in Tsegi Canyon and near Inscription House, hunting, gathering, and raising crops. They lived in this area for many hundreds of years, neighbors to the Hopi and Navajo tribes. Their largest communities are at Hidden Springs, near Tuba City, and at Navajo Mountain. The San Juan Southern Paiute are skilled basket-makers.

The Zuni have lived in the southwest for thousands of years; home is now in New Mexico. They consider the Tsegi Canyon region an essential part of their traditions. It is known as the "northern canyons," from which several of their clans originated. The Zuni traveled through this area on their way to Grand Canyon to mine salt. Betatakin is celebrated in Zuni songs, traditions, and lives.

Ancient Artists

The prehistoric Pueblo people had a successful social order and crafted products we admire today. Geometric designs of grace and balance decorated their vessels, and the patterns in their finely-woven fabrics grew from the same aesthetic principles. The pot at right is an example from the Kayenta world. It was originally a household item, perhaps used to serve or store food.



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For Your Safety

This is a natural area with canyons, cliffs, falling rocks, flash-floods, lightning, and other hazards. Be alert and

safety conscious at all times. Rocks can fall at any time in the alcoves and canyons. Visitors on tours enter the alcoves at their own risk.

More Information
Navajo National Monument
HC-71 Box 3
Tonalea, AZ 86044-9704
928-672-2700
www.nps.gov/nava

The park radio station, AM 1610, broadcasts 24 hours with the latest park information.

Navajo National Monument is one of over 390 parks in the National Park System. The National Park Service cares for

these special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage. Visit www.nps.gov to learn more about parks and National Park Service programs in America's communities.

Navajo

Visiting the Monument

To reach the monument, follow U.S. 160 50 miles northeast of Tuba City or 20 miles southwest of Kayenta. A 9-mile paved road, Ariz. 564, takes you from U.S. 160 to the monument. There are exhibits and films, and books on

sale at the visitor center. Navajo Arts and Crafts Enterprise has a gift shop specializing in Navajo silverwork. The visitor center and restrooms are accessible to visitors with limited mobility.

Campground and General Information

Two campgrounds and a picnic area are available first-come, first-served. Group camping sites are also available. The campgrounds have charcoal grills, but wood fires are not allowed. The nearest food and fuel are at

Black Mesa Trading Post at the junction of Ariz. 664 and U.S. 160. Pets must be leashed at all times. They are not allowed in buildings or on trails.

Mesa Top Trails

Sandal Trail This paved trail leads to an overlook with a spectacular cross-canyon view of the ancient village of Betatakin (one mile round-trip).

Aspen Forest Overlook Trail This trail branches off the Sandal Trail and descends steeply 300 feet to view an ancient forest of aspen (0.8 mile round-trip).

Canyon View Trail This trail leads to a view into Betatakin Canyon and Canyon View campground (0.6 mile round-trip).

Free Guided Hikes

Betatakin Tours are ranger-guided. This strenuous, round-trip hike takes 3 to 5 hours. The elevation is 7,300 feet, and the climb out of the canyon is 700 feet. Wear sturdy shoes

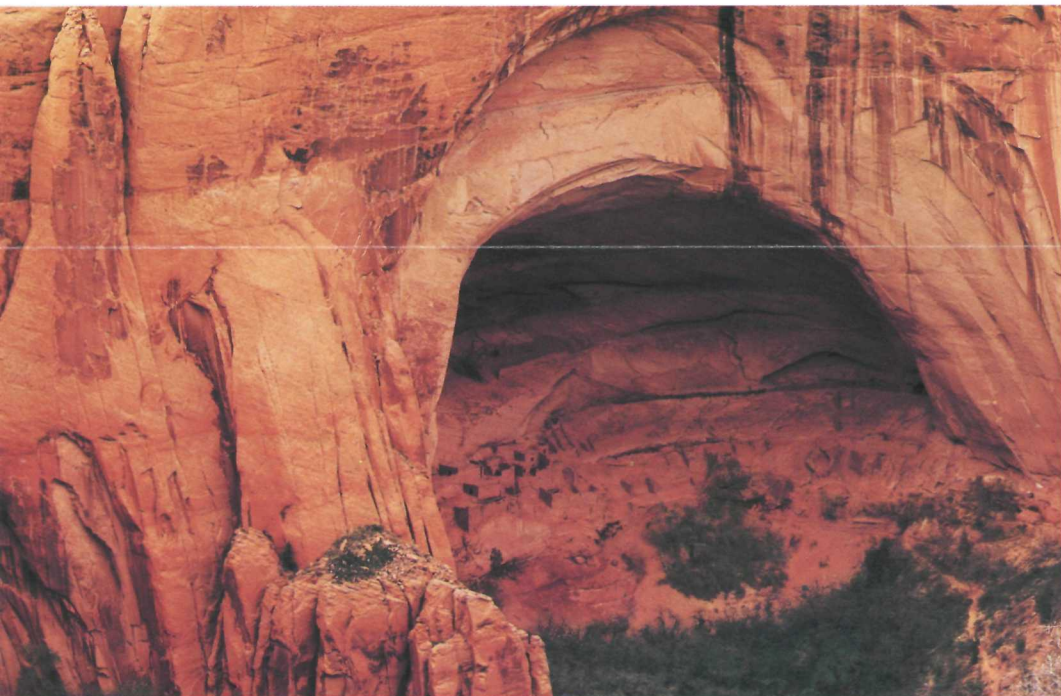
and carry two liters of water. **If you have heart or respiratory problems, do not attempt this hike.** Call 928-672-2700 for tour times.

Keet Seel Hikers must acquire a backcountry permit from the visitor center. Daily limit is 20 people for this 17-mile roundtrip hike on a primitive trail. Elevation

loss and regain is 1,000 feet.

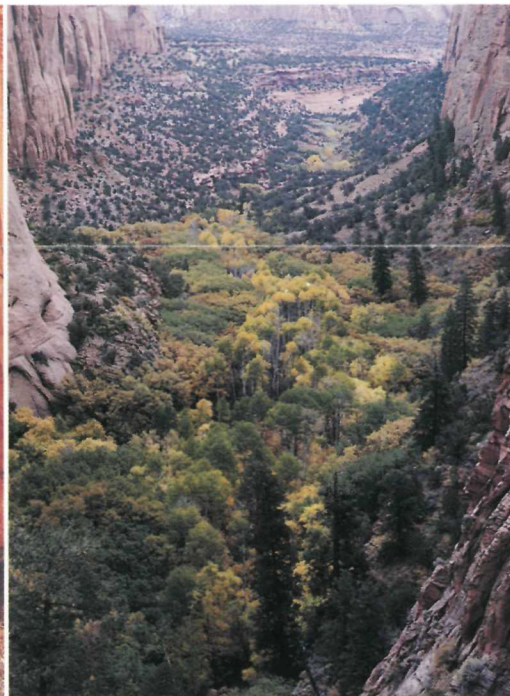
These cliff dwellings are a fragile part of our national heritage.

Please help us preserve them by not disturbing them, removing anything, or entering them without a ranger.



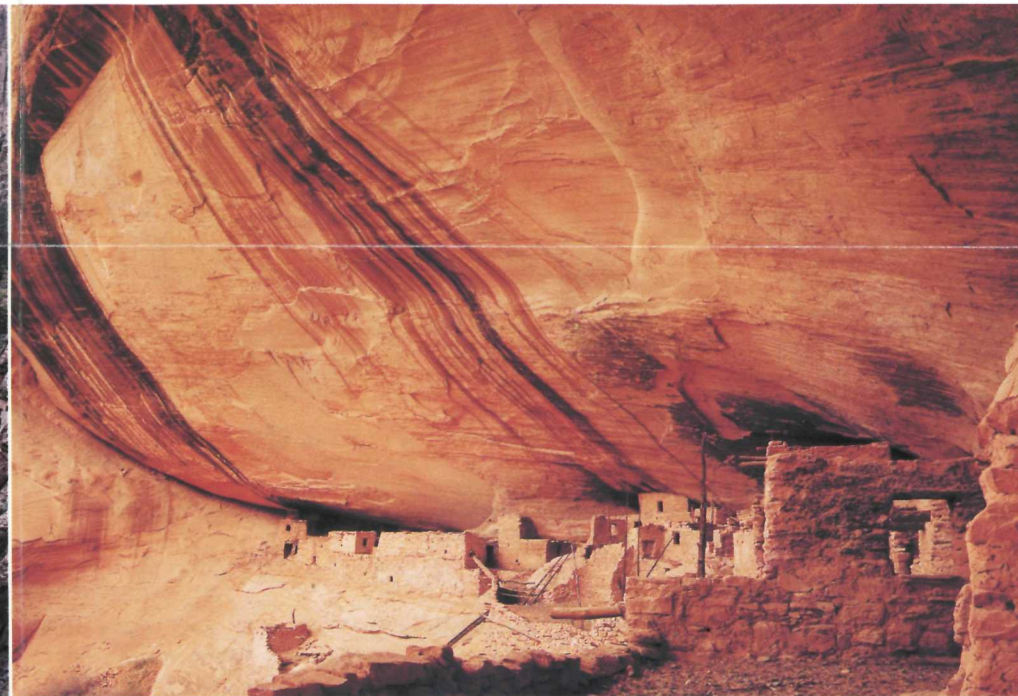
Betatakin

©DAVID MUENCH



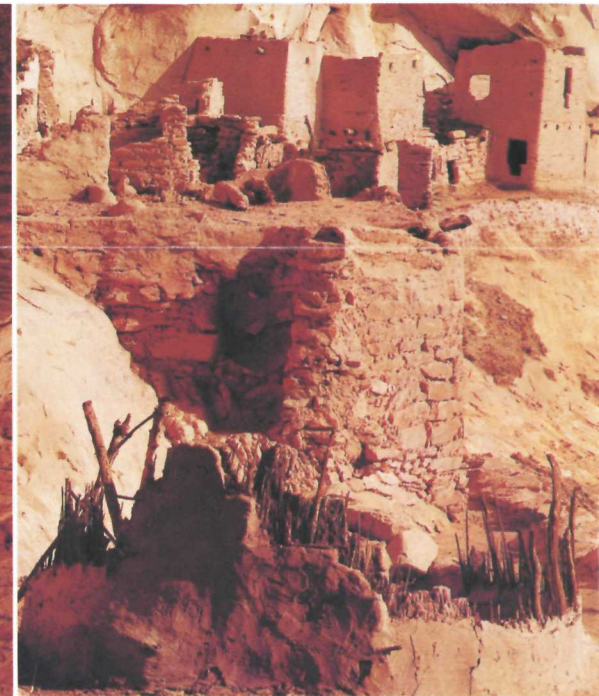
Betatakin

©RUSSELL BODNAR



Keet Seel

©DAVID MUENCH



Inscription House

©DAVID MUENCH

Betatakin

Though agricultural fields lay a mile down-canyon, settlers were attracted to this alcove: It was deep enough for shelter and, because it faced south, was warmed by the winter sun and cool in summer shade. The inhabitants lived here only a short time between 1250 and 1300.

Keet Seel

Keet Seel was occupied much longer than Betatakin. Tree-ring dating and pottery found below the dwelling show that some people settled here by the year 950. Those early houses are completely gone, but a few timbers and some stones were reused in building a second village.

In 1272 building activity surged at Keet Seel and new pottery styles emerged. The population may have approached 150 before

the settlement went into decline and families began to leave. Families who remained converted the abandoned rooms into granaries, apparently storing food against hard times. About 1300, these last residents also departed, but not before sealing the doorways of many rooms containing pottery jars of corn. Perhaps they planned to return someday.

The Hopi

It was the Hisatsinom, ancestors of the Hopi, who built the architectural wonders that we know today as Betatakin, Keet Seel, and Inscription House. Each was the village of a distinct clan. They are the ancestral homes of Hopi clans today.

One can envision men, women, and children working together to build their homes in the large alcoves, high above the canyon floor—shaping the soft sandstone, making adobe bricks, and collecting

water in pottery vessels to make mortar for bonding the adobe bricks and sandstone. It took great effort to haul building materials up to the alcoves, using only hand/toe holes carved into the cliff face. At the same time they had to tend their fields, hunt, and make pottery, arrow points, and clothing.

With all of these activities, these resilient people also made time for ceremonies as evidenced by their kivas. Here various clans developed ceremonies they would take to

the Hopi mesas when they left. Prayers and offerings remain important to Pueblo people today. Ceremonies for rain—so that crops can mature for harvest—and prayers are central to Pueblo lives and are communal. Hopi elders still make pilgrimages to these ancestral villages.

The Navajo

The Navajo emigrated to the Southwest from northern Canada in the late 1500s or earlier. They lived alongside the more settled Pueblo Indian farmers in a relationship characterized by times of peace and trading and times of raiding and counterraidering. Upon acquiring the horse and sheep from the Spanish they became a powerful nation.

As their power grew so did conflicts with their Hopi and Pueblo neighbors. To end the conflict, the U.S. Army in 1863–64 invaded the Navajo homeland, killing people and destroying homes, crops, and livestock. Much of the tribe was taken captive and marched nearly 300 miles to a reserve near Fort Sumner, N. Mex. Under a treaty four years later,

the Navajo were allowed to return to their own land with enough sheep to start anew. The "Long Walk," however, remains a tragic ordeal in Navajo memory.

Today there are over 300,000 Navajos living on or near reservations. New ways enrich their traditions as the Navajo continue to adapt to the changing world.



Navajo rug weaver

NPS



Navajo hogan and family in the Lukachukai Mountains, Navajo Nation.

©DAVID MUENCH



Herding sheep in Tsegi Canyon

©RUSSELL BODNAR

Related Sites

Ancestral Pueblo cultures developed in three important centers: Kayenta (represented by this monument), Mesa Verde (at Mesa Verde National Park), and Chaco (at Chaco Culture National Historical Park). The map locates these and other parks associated with Pueblo cultures, including Canyon de Chelly, Aztec, and Wupatki.



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