



A View from the Roof



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Land and People

Climb to the roof at Tuzigoot and explore the vista that surrounds you. What you see may depend on your perspective. A geologist notices terrain shaped by powerful natural forces. A botanist might notice vegetation patterns changing with the distant hills. A family here 1,000 years ago might have viewed this landscape as a place supplying all their needs. With water, fuel, and ample food harvested both from nature and from farms, life was good for many generations. The paved, 1/3-mile (0.5 km) Tuzigoot Pueblo trail will lead you on a journey through time.

Sounds of Life

The Tuzigoot pueblo was occupied between 1100 and 1425 C.E. (Common Era, or A.D.) It was once a thriving community, one of the largest in the Verde Valley. The rooms may seem empty now, but they were once filled with the sounds of life—hard work, play, laughter, crying, solemn meetings, joyful celebrations. The people here were part of a culture archeologists call Sinagua, though we may never know what they called themselves.

As it takes you through the site and the landscape, the path ends atop the pueblo's highest tower. The view today is a strong link with Tuzigoot's first residents. Like the people who lived here and eventually migrated away, the view has changed in some ways, while maintaining much of its original character in others.

Earliest Foundations

The land at Tuzigoot is its foundation in more ways than one. Its physical bedrock holds up the walls, but its resources sustained human survival.

The pueblo's ridge is aligned north-to-south, with the Visitor Center at its north end. In that direction, one can see a series of steep, highly eroded limestone ridges. These are remnants of a primeval time, 2–8 million years ago, when the Verde Valley was covered by shallow lakes and dried-up, sandy playas. Over eons, the lakes and playas deposited material that was compacted into limestone. As the land drained, the Verde River carved the new stone into the ridges we see now—including the ridge Tuzigoot itself was built on.

The First People

Archeologists believe humankind first entered this landscape 10,000–13,000 years ago, thousands of years before the pueblo walls were built atop the ridge's steady rocks. Though the land looks dry and spare, this setting provided a virtual breadbasket for hundreds of generations of hunter-gatherers. Cacti, mesquite, yucca, juniper, and other plants provided materials for food, medicine, and even crafts. Throughout the Verde Valley, four distinct ecosystems provided dozens of edible and useful plants, all within walking distance of most locations.

Tavasci Marsh

Today at the base of the nearest northern ridge, several small springs produce 9–12 gallons of water every *second*, an incredibly important resource in this desert environment! In prehistoric times, they likely gushed even more. The water was probably fundamental to the selection of Tuzigoot's ridge for a permanent dwelling by 1100 CE.

A shallow basin east of the springs impounds millions of gallons of water in Tavasci Marsh. Suddenly, the parched desert bursts with green!

Grasses give way to open water surrounded by cattail, sedges, and other aquatic species. Cottonwoods grow in moist areas away from the banks, and a little further from the water, dense growths of velvet mesquite and catclaw acacia thrive.

The marsh was critical to Tuzigoot's people. They wove reeds into baskets and mats. Trees became roof beams, and mud was used for mortar in pueblo walls. The people hunted marsh animals and used marsh water to quench their crops.

Riparian Homeland

Looking southeast from Tuzigoot, one sees that Tavasci Marsh was not the only water source for the people who lived here. Before you is the entire expanse of the Verde Valley, with the Verde River flowing past the south end of the pueblo, opposite today's visitor center.

Try to imagine experiencing this vista during the time of Tuzigoot's occupation. The valley was a broad oasis—a well-watered land with many marshes, creeks, and a large variety of deciduous trees along the river. Native desert vegetation filled the space between this riverside corridor and the higher terrain at the valley's edges. Even today, though much of the water has been consumed, sixty percent of all plant and animal species in the Verde Valley need these riparian areas to survive.

For the people of Tuzigoot and the Verde Valley, this landscape was home. The Mogollon Rim on the east, the Black Hills on the west, Sycamore Canyon to the north, and Fossil Creek to the far south bounded a region they occupied for centuries—more than three times longer than the United States has been a country.

Over time every hill, ridge, mountain, and knoll became part of their history. They established more than forty major villages from one end of the valley to the other and occupied sites including Montezuma Castle, Montezuma Well, Palatki, Honanki, and V-Bar-V.

People and Time March On

By the late 1300s, the people of the Verde Valley began to move. A few families at a time, they left their homes and migrated to new places. By 1425 Tuzigoot's rooms were empty. Many people traveled east and north, following ancient trails to villages where the Hopi and Zuni—some of their descendants—live today.

As you look south and west from Tuzigoot now, much of what you see has been altered over the last century by the mining and processing

of rich metal ores in the Black Hills. Modern communities now surround Tuzigoot: Jerome on the nearby mountain slope, Clarkdale with its cement plant and old smelter buildings, and Cottonwood with its glittering lights. The flat expanse west of the pueblo's base is where tailings from a copper smelter were deposited during this area's mining days. In 2007, the land was rehabilitated with new soil and seeded with native vegetation. With time, mesquite and catclaw forests will flourish there again.

Panorama of the Ages

A view from the roof at Tuzigoot provides a perspective of time from ancient prehistory to today. From a single perch atop the pueblo, we see evidence of the ages at work on land, water, people, and cultures.

Imagine this magnificent sight without any present-day human activity—the river with its thick, riparian vegetation; the low hills covered with mesquite and creosote and catclaw; the sparsely vegetated montane foothills leading up to dark forests of ponderosa pine and oak in the higher mountain range called the Black Hills.

Despite all the changes to the land over the past 1,000 years, the view from Tuzigoot still inspires. What must it have been like to live here when these walls were home to a thriving Sinagua way of life?