

# Tusayan Ruin

Grand Canyon National Park



Painting by Roy Andersen

## Saving our National Stories

Welcome to Tusayan Pueblo Ruin. As you walk the relatively flat 0.1-mile (200 meter) trail around the village, keep in mind that no attempt has been made to reconstruct the structures. With continuing stabilization efforts funded through the Vanishing Treasures program, National Park Service archaeologists have worked to protect the ruin from degradation. Preservation treatment includes partially refilling some previously excavated rooms.

Please respect this place as you would your own home. Do not walk or stand on the walls or enter the rooms. Many stories of the past preserved here have yet to unfold. The archaeological evidence reveals some of the stories. Artifacts and the context in which they are found help archaeologists to interpret the lives of these people. Not only will disturbing the site destroy valuable information, but also it is illegal. The high desert vegetation is fragile; stay on the trails.

## The Human Story

People have lived on the Colorado Plateau for thousands of years. The Paleo-Indians, nomadic hunter/gatherers who lived here 10,000-12,000 years ago, left the earliest evidence. The people of the Archaic cultures which followed produced split-twig figurines found in canyon caves and left rock art to hint at their passing. With the introduction of agriculture about 2000 years ago, villages (pueblos) like this one developed.

This ruin is one of more than 4000 archaeological sites recorded within Grand Canyon National Park. Tree ring dates indicate that people began construction of Tusayan Pueblo around A.D. 1185. The style of buildings and artifacts is typical of the ancestral Puebloan culture.

At any one time, sixteen to twenty people likely lived in this community. What attracted them to settle here? Everyone needs food, water, and shelter. How did they meet these needs? Wild foods and game supplemented cultivated corn, beans, and squash. This is a dry climate. What water sources existed 800 years ago? Look around. What local material could you use to provide shelter? In a land of limited resources, how would you interact with your neighbors?

The history of these people and their culture is interpreted through the material remains and the stories of their descendents. You will notice that many statements in this brochure and the wayside displays include “perhaps,” “it seems,” or “maybe.” Few definitive answers exist.



## The San Francisco Peaks

On most days you can see the distant San Francisco Peaks, considered sacred by several tribes. In the Hopi tradition, the *katsinas*, the spirits, live in these peaks during the winter. The spirits bring rain and other blessings to the people. The Hopi are one of more than twenty Puebloan Indian nations that are descendents of the people who lived here.

Why did they live here? A view of the sacred peaks and a proximity to the point of emergence into this world provide an aesthetic presence. Yucca supplies fibers for baskets and sandals. Piñon pitch waterproofs the baskets. Did water flow from nearby seeps? The soil was sufficiently fertile to grow crops. Perhaps relatives lived nearby.

## Small Kiva and Unexcavated Area

A kiva, a ceremonial chamber, is one of the cultural signatures of the ancestral Puebloan people. Charred wood and other evidence indicate that this small kiva burned and was replaced with the larger one in the southeast corner of the pueblo. Did the community grow and need a larger ceremonial room? Was it bad luck to rebuild over a previous room? Such questions are difficult to answer based on the clues that remain.

To your left is an unexcavated part of the village. When workers excavate a site, they inevitably miss or destroy some items. During the initial excavation in the 1930s, archaeologists left some areas undisturbed so visitors could see an unexcavated site. New technology provides the opportunity to explore the area without destroying anything that lies below the surface.

## The Plaza

Many of the daily activities took place outdoors in the plaza, the center of community life. The south-facing location allowed for good winter exposure to the sun and a view of the San Francisco Peaks. Rooms forming the sides offered protection from the wind. A visitor to the plaza might have seen women grinding corn, others cooking, and children at play. Do you sense a connection to earth and home as you stand near the plaza?

## Storage Rooms

Notice how small these rooms seem. Since no trace of habitation, such as fireplace hearths, existed within them, people may have used them for storage. Imagine corn still on the cob piled like firewood, or large clay jars filled with beans or pine nuts resting against the walls. A common artifact found during excavation was grinding stones. The hand-held *mano* slid across the larger *metate* to grind corn or seeds. Since changeable weather determined crop success, storing food assured survival from year to year. Modern tribes set aside about one quarter of each crop for seed and another quarter for ceremonial uses or trade.

## The Kiva

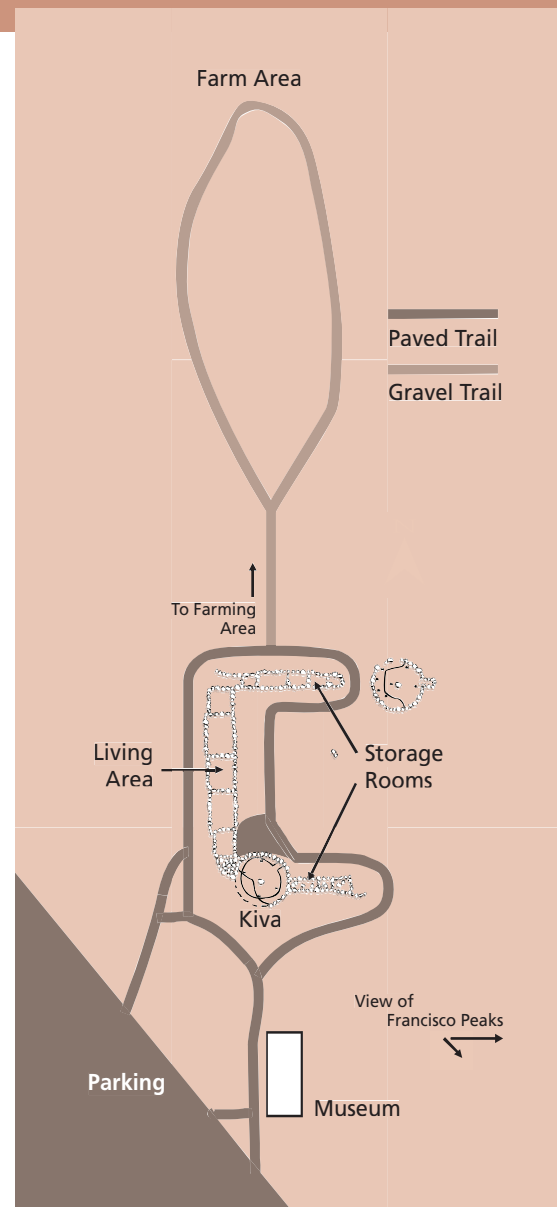
Ceremonial activities took place in the kiva. Notice the banquette (bench) that encircles slightly more than half of the interior. Posts placed along this bench supported the upper structure. A covering of brush and mud made the walls and roof of the kiva. A ventilated fire pit heated the room. The small hole between the banquette and fire pit, the *sipapu*, symbolizes the point of emergence and reminds people from where they came. The Hopi believe that the actual place of emergence, the *Sipapuni*, is located deep within Grand Canyon.





## What's in a name?

Many archaeologists feel that strong evidence connects the people who lived here and in other sites throughout the Southwest with the modern Hopi and Pueblo communities of eastern Arizona and the Rio Grande Valley in New Mexico. Years ago, when researchers first explored these sites, the Navajo term *anasazi* was used to refer to the inhabitants. Early archaeologists roughly translated this term as “ancient enemies.” Understandably, today's Pueblo people do not appreciate having their forefathers referred to as enemies. The Hopis refer to their ancestors as *Hitsatsinom*. The National Park Service has chosen to use *ancestral Puebloan* to emphasize the connection between ancient and modern Puebloan cultures.



## Farm Area

The path leads to the area thought to have been the fields for this community. Recent stock tanks and other disturbances have destroyed much of the evidence. Eight hundred years ago check dams and terraces may have served to catch and hold the scant rain. Farmers placed seeds deep in the soil in small plots, much as occurs on the Hopi mesas today.



## Dating

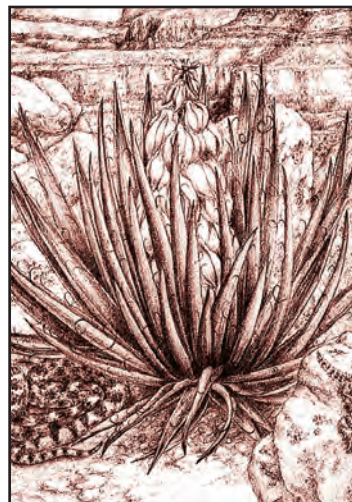
Tree ring dating explained on this exhibit helps determine the age of sites like this one. Archaeologists also study potsherds to develop time lines based on style, form, color, and decoration.

## The Marketplace

The ancestral Puebloan people used the forest for their supermarket. Piñon (top right) provided wood for construction, heating, and cooking. Pine needles, high in vitamin C, were brewed as tea. Pine pitch waterproofed baskets and made a bandage to hold cuts together. Piñon nuts are high in fat, protein, and carbohydrates.

Utah juniper (lower right) also supplied firewood. Its shreddy bark peeled readily and provided insulation, padding, and sandal soles. Juniper berries could be eaten raw, but were more often used as flavoring for stew or venison. Ashes of the scale-like leaves were added to bread as a leavening agent and for flavor.

Yucca (below) provided strong fibers that could be twisted or braided into twine or rope or made into sandals. The flowers and seedpods could be eaten. Some native people still use yucca root soap for ceremonial purposes.

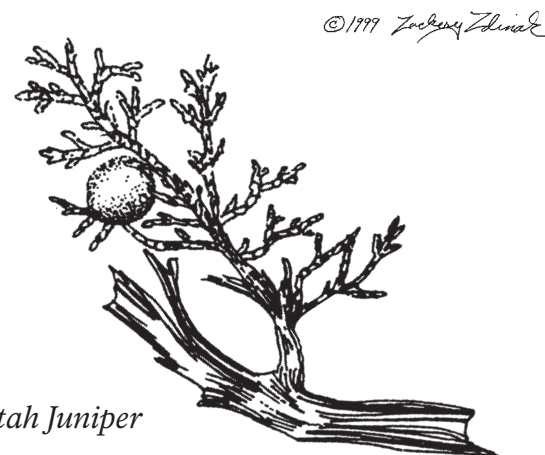


Regulations protect all plants and animals in national parks. Leave fragile plants undisturbed. Modern digestive systems may not be prepared for the sudden intake of berries and wild plants. Do not pick or eat any plants.

Piñon



Utah Juniper



## Creating a Community

The resources available in the Grand Canyon area determine building size, style, and construction and the lifeways of its people. Limestone, the cap rock on the rim, becomes building stones, but is fairly hard and difficult to shape. Scant water, high elevation, and limited suitable soil kept villages small. Nearby ruins hint at a wider community that called Grand Canyon home.

## Stories Coming to Life

As you look over the pueblo before you, imagine the families who chose to make this their home. They, like you, had dreams, hopes, and worries. They bore children and raised them to take part in community life. Here was home, the anchor of their world.

They created beautiful pottery and perhaps baskets. Some items were so small they may have been for decoration or toys—evidence that life was more than mere survival. Why did the families stay in this chosen place for only a few decades? Where did the people go from here? We study the archaeological clues and record the oral traditions in an attempt to understand.

Grand Canyon has been home to people for thousands of years. Considered sacred by many, this is a nurturing land, a place of spiritual and physical enrichment. Many visitors share this connection today.

The National Park Service strives to protect the natural and cultural environment and to ensure the integrity of your experience. We hope that what you learned will generate more questions about the lives of the ancestral Puebloan people. May your enhanced level of interest and knowledge inspire you to help us to preserve and protect this wonderful legacy.



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