



Bicycling Chaco Canyon

Bicycling is a great way to get to many of the Chacoan sites and to experience the canyon, its wildlife, its solitude, and the ever-changing environment. Below are bicycling options to consider.

The Canyon Loop Drive

Bicycling the 9-mile paved Canyon Loop Drive is an excellent way to see the canyon. A permit is not required. The drive begins just beyond the visitor center. The road is nearly level, and open from sunrise to sunset. Bike racks are located at the visitor center and in the parking lots at: Una Vida, Hungo Pavi, Pueblo Bonito and Chetro Ketl, Pueblo del Arroyo, and Casa Rinconada. The road is one way. Be alert to traffic.

Wijiji Trail

Trailhead: Opposite the campground
(1 ¼ miles east of the visitor center)

Distance: 3 miles roundtrip

Elevation gain: Mostly level

Time: 1 to 2 hours

Note: This trail provides a short easy ride to a medium-sized Chacoan site.

Permit Required: Obtain a free permit at the Visitor Center, from a campground host, or self-register at trailhead.

Wijiji is one of the most symmetrical of all the great houses (monumental public buildings) in Chaco Canyon. The building contained about 225 uniformly-sized rooms, arranged compactly around two kivas. The rear row of rooms was three stories high, stair-stepping down to two stories, with one-story rooms surrounding the plaza. The uniform construction at this great house suggests that it was built in a single, brief construction surge between AD 1110 and 1115.

Several features typical of Chacoan great houses are missing at Wijiji. There is no great kiva in the plaza, although one is located ½ mile away. Wijiji lacks a midden (trash deposit). Another typical great house feature missing at Wijiji is the arc of connected rooms enclosing the plaza. Some researchers think the people never completed Wijiji, which would explain both the lack of refuse, great kiva, and enclosed plaza.

Casa Chiquita (on the Peñasco Blanco Trail)

Trailhead: Beyond Pueblo del Arroyo parking area

Distance: 2 miles roundtrip to Casa Chiquita

Elevation gain: 150 feet

Time: 1 hour to bike to Casa Chiquita and return. Add another 4 to 5 hours to hike to Peñasco Blanco and return.

Note: **You may only ride a bike as far as Casa Chiquita. From there, you must hike to Peñasco Blanco.** This is the longest back-country trail. It is relatively level and provides many opportunities to view Pueblo and Navajo petroglyphs and historic inscriptions. Peñasco Blanco is an unexcavated great house, unique in design (oval), and connected to several Chacoan roads to the west.

Permit Required: Obtain a free permit at the Visitor Center, from a campground host, or self-register at trailhead.

Casa Chiquita is a compact great house dating to the AD 1060s and thought to have been built in one construction episode. This site features a nearly square block of rooms surrounding an elevated kiva. The entire site was built into and on top of a natural hillside.

This great house shares common features with nearby Kin Kletso. Both are built in the McElmo style--a later style of construction using the Chacoan great house plan with a different type of masonry--pecked, loaf-shaped blocks of tan sandstone. Both sites also feature a row of tiny, one-story rooms along the fronts of the buildings.

Kin Klizhin

Trailhead:	From the Visitor Center, go south on Highway 57 to an unmarked turn-off (3.8 miles south and west of the visitor center).
Distance:	24 miles roundtrip from the Visitor Center
Elevation gain:	200 feet. The 2-track dirt road traverses gently rolling country with many hills and valleys.
Time:	5 to 6 hours to ride the trail and visit the site.
Note:	Our most strenuous ride provides an all-day ride to a distant Chacoan great house community beyond the canyon. Be prepared for your ride. This road leaves and re-enters park lands. Please respect the private property of the park's neighbors.
Permit:	Not required, but check in at the visitor center for current information and directions.

Kin Klizhin is a small Chacoan great house that lies about 7 miles southwest of Pueblo Bonito. Archaeologists believe that it was a civic and ceremonial center utilized by many surrounding communities. Located on Kin Klizhin Wash, at an elevation of 6,520 feet, Kin Klizhin was connected to Chaco's center by a Chacoan road. The relationship between this "Chacoan outlier" and the core of Chaco Canyon is not well understood. Was this an independent community, or did the people support and serve the people in the core of Chaco Canyon?

Farming was an important aspect of the community, and the people may have provided food to the core area of Chaco Canyon. In the valley below the site, the community erected a large masonry and earthen dam on Kin Klizhin Wash to divert flood waters into a canal and ditch system to water fields just downstream of the dam. This dam was modified in historic times and provided Navajo farmers with water for their cornfields.

For your comfort and bicycling safety

- Wear a helmet.
 - Secure bikes at the bike racks.
 - Follow the rules of the road and be alert for vehicles. Please ride single file.
 - Carry plenty of water and snacks with carbohydrates.
 - Prepare for extreme weather. Bring along sun protection, a hat, and rain gear.
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You can help protect and preserve this significant part of our world heritage by following basic rules:

- ***Do not collect pottery or other protected artifacts, plants, or rocks anywhere in the park.***
 - ***Do not walk, climb, sit, or lean on fragile walls.***
 - ***Stay on designated roads and trails. Do not take bikes cross country or into sites.***
 - ***Pets are not permitted in sites.***
 - ***The Chacoan sites and the Canyon Loop Drive close at sunset. Camping only in Gallo Campground.***
 - ***Night riding requires lights and reflectors, and is limited to paved roads and the campground road.***
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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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