Welcome to the past! Arizona contains some of the nation’s -- and indeed the world’s -- greatest archeological sites. Please take a few minutes to familiarize yourself with this site etiquette guide that will facilitate an enjoyable visit for you, AND for future visitors!

Archeological sites in Arizona are the remains of a long occupation of prehistoric, protohistoric, and historic cultures. They are a fragile and non-renewable resource. You are responsible for the stewardship of these sites, both for public enjoyment and education, and for preserving their scientific values. The following guidelines will help you minimize impacts to archeological sites:

1. Walls are fragile and continually deteriorating. That is why they are commonly called “ruins.”
   Climbing, leaning, sitting, or standing on walls can damage them. Also, picking up or moving rocks, of any size, alters the walls forever.

2. Artifacts, where they lay, tell a story. Once they are moved, a piece of the past is destroyed forever.
   Digging, removing artifacts, or piling them up, changes what can be learned from the pieces of the past.

3. Cultural deposits, including the soil in an archeological site, are important for scientific tests and are used in reconstructing and understanding past environments. For instance, from such information we can learn what kinds of plants were being used by the past inhabitants.
   Please refrain from eating in these sites as they may leave behind crumbs, and please carry out any trash (especially organic remains) you may have while visiting as these may attract critters.

4. Fragile desert plants and soils that are part of archeological sites are destroyed when stray from the trail. Snakes and other small desert animals make their homes in the bushes, under rocks and in burrows, and you may disturb them or put yourself in harm by venturing off trail.
   Please stay on designated trails, they are there for your protection and the protection of fragile cultural remains and desert life.

5. Fire destroys prehistoric organic materials, ruins the potential dating of artifacts, and damages or even destroys rock art.
   Absolutely no fires, candles, or smoking should occur at archeological sites.

6. Oils from even the cleanest hands can cause deterioration of prehistoric walls, and drawings, and ruin the dating potential for future scientists trying to unravel the meaning of symbols painted and pecked on stone.
   Please refrain from touching rock art or any ancient walls when visiting archeological sites.

7. Graffiti (drawing/painting, scratching, and carving) is destructive and can destroy rock art as well as deface wooden/stone buildings.
   Graffiti destroys rock art as well as other historic values

8. Pets damage sites by digging, urinating, and defecating in them. They can destroy fragile cultural deposits and frighten other visitors and native animals.
   Please do not bring pets into archeological sites.
All archeological sites on public (federal and state) land in Arizona are protected by the Archaeological Resources Protection Act in addition to state laws, that prohibit digging, removing artifacts, damaging and/or defacing archeological resources, and protects graves’ (human remains) and grave goods located on state and private land. These laws provide for both felony and misdemeanor charges with jail time, confiscation of property, and large fines.

Due to the sensitivity and fragility of these sites, please do not disclose information about where sites are located, as it could potentially lead to those sites being vandalized or looted. If you see people vandalizing sites, please report it as soon as possible to the public land manager (e.g., the Forest Service, the Arizona State Land Department, etc.) or their law enforcement entity.

By following these simple guidelines, YOU can help preserve these unique and fragile remains of OUR American heritage. Remember, THE FUTURE OF THE PAST DEPENDS ON YOU! Thanks for your cooperation, and we hope that you enjoy visiting archeological sites in Arizona, and wherever your travels may take you.