



Foundation Document Overview

Wupatki National Monument

Arizona



Contact Information

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Purpose



The purpose of WUPATKI NATIONAL MONUMENT is to preserve and protect thousands of archeological sites scattered across the stunning landscape of the Painted Desert and the grassland prairies, including several large, prominent pueblos atop fiery red sandstone and black volcanic flows.

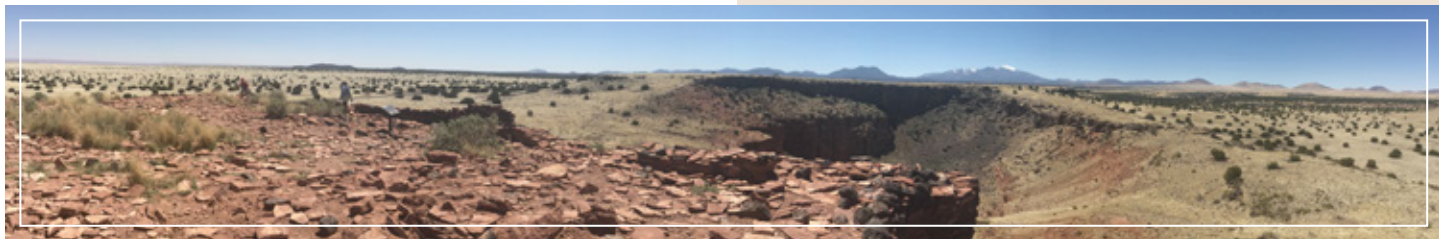


Significance

Significance statements express why Wupatki National Monument resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- **Archeology.** Wupatki National Monument protects one of the most densely populated archeological landscapes of the Southwest, where multiple cultural groups coexisted and interacted in the wake of the eruption of Sunset Crater Volcano.
- **Connections from Past to Present.** Natural and cultural resources within the monument are significant to a number of contemporary American Indian tribes, as evidenced by oral history, archeological study, and continuing traditional practices.
- **Native Grasslands.** Wupatki National Monument harbors one of the largest protected areas of juniper savanna, grassland, and desert shrubland within the southern Colorado Plateau region. It provides habitat for native species sensitive to human land-use and habitat fragmentation impacts and serves as a critical scientific research area for pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*) and regional environmental change.
- **Scenery and Setting.** The clean air and environment of Wupatki National Monument provide exceedingly rare opportunities to experience uninterrupted vistas, stunning night skies, and natural sounds in a wilderness environment.





Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Archeological Resources.** Wupatki National Monument contains a dense concentration of ancient and historic archeological sites, including pueblos, a ball court, amphitheater, agricultural features, petroglyphs, and associated artifacts, in an exceptional state of preservation that allows ongoing research and interpretation.
- **Natural Setting / Wilderness.** The largely undeveloped terrain conveys wilderness values through a sense of solitude, dark night skies, and natural quiet. Sandstone outcrops, grasslands, mesas, buttes, and volcanic hills appear against the backdrop of the Painted Desert and the San Francisco Peaks. This landscape also provides habitat for local wildlife, such as pronghorn, golden eagle, prairie falcon, and Wupatki pocket mouse.

Wupatki National Monument contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **Collections.** The museum collection of Wupatki National Monument contains 484,489 cataloged objects, including pre-contact pottery, sandals, projectile points, and bone awls; plant and animal specimens; unusual early Triassic paleontological trackways and skin impressions; paintings of Wupatki archeological sites; and archives and photographs representing the history of the monument since its inception.
- **Historic Resources.** The historic structures and landscapes at Wupatki include buildings and trail features from the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and Mission 66 eras of NPS management.

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

The following unified interpretive themes have been identified for Flagstaff Area National Monuments:

- **The Human Experience and the Value of Heritage.**
- **The Continuum of Cultural Occupation and Ancestral Homelands.**
- **Landscape and Life: The Interplay of Human and Environmental History.**
- **Laboratories and Research Benchmarks.**
- **Geology within the San Francisco Volcanic Field.**
- **Climate Change.**

The following interpretive themes have been identified for Wupatki National Monument:

- **Human Occupation, Lifeways, and Environmental Change.**
- **Cultural Diversity and Interaction among Pueblo Ancestors.**
- **Ancestral Homelands and Cultural Traditions.**
- **Cultural Resource Integrity.**
- **Habitat Preservation.**
- **Scenic Views and Soundscape.**

Description

Established by presidential proclamation in 1924, Wupatki National Monument preserves numerous archeological sites of ancient peoples on the southwestern Colorado Plateau. The monument occupies 56 square miles of dry, rugged land 26 miles north of Flagstaff, Arizona, and is characterized by dramatic geologic landforms, climatic extremes, scarce water, and diverse plant and animal species.

Wupatki and the surrounding area contain more than 5,000 archeological sites, dating mostly to the period after the eruption of nearby Sunset Crater Volcano in the 11th century. These sites range from single-room field houses to exceptionally well-preserved, free-standing pueblos of 50 to 100 rooms. A cultural crossroads, Wupatki was home, at various times, to several American Indian tribes and preserves a tangible record of clan migrations and the extensive trading practices through the centuries. The monument contains a national register-eligible cultural landscape, the Visitor Center Complex Historic District.

Undeveloped, with few impacts from nearby communities, the monument provides an increasingly rare opportunity to view a vast dark night sky and experience natural sounds much like Wupatki's early inhabitants. Broad vistas of desert grasslands, mesas, buttes, the Painted Desert, and volcanic hills contrast sharply with the San Francisco Peaks, which are visible in the distance across the Wupatki landscape.

