BETATAKIN The name means "Ledge House" in Navajo. This is the most accessible ruin in the monument. Resting on the steeply sloping floor of a large natural alcove with a roof nearly 500 feet high, Betatakin was constructed and abandoned in two generations, between 1250 and 1300. The 135 rooms include living quarters, granaries, and one kiva or ceremonial chamber. It seems likely that additional kivas once existed here and have been destroyed by rockfall, since large pueblos such as this have usually been found to contain numerous ceremonial structures.

The towering red sandstone walls of Betatakin Canyon also shelter a pocket of quaking aspen, Douglas-fir, scrub oak, and boxelder. The trail to the ruin leads through this small grove in the canyon bottom—a shady haven in the midst of the stunted pinyons and junipers that surround the canyon.

The ruin was discovered in 1909 by Byron Cummings, a pioneer archeologist of the Southwest, and John Wetherill, a rancher and trader who, along with his older brother Richard, discovered many of the major Anasazi cliff dwellings in the San Juan region. Betatakin was stabilized in 1917 by Neil M. Judd of the Smithsonian Institution.

KEET SEEL Richard Wetherill discovered this ruin in 1895. The largest cliff dwelling in Arizona, it has 160 rooms—living quarters, storage rooms, and five or six kivas. Keet Seel, "Broken Pottery" in Navajo, gives the impression of having been abandoned for only a few years—not for seven centuries.

You may visit Keet Seel from April through September, weather and personnel permitting, but you must register at park headquarters at least 1 day in advance, in person or by mail. Visitation is limited to 20 persons per day and 1500 per year. The 8-mile primitive trail to the ruin crosses the canyon stream many times. You can go by foot or obtain horses from Navajo Indians through the superintendent. The hike is arduous, and a full day is needed for the round trip. Overnight trips are permitted only when a ranger is on duty during the summer.

INSCRIPTION HOUSE This ruin is at the base of a high-arching sandstone cliff on the north side of an arm of Nitsin Canyon. It consists of about 74 living quarters and granaries and one kiva. A tree-ring date of 1274 indicates that Inscription House was built about the same time as Betatakin and Keet Seel.

The ruin is named for an inscription noted in 1909 by Byron Cummings and John Wetherill on the plastered wall of one of the rooms. Later, John Wetherill recalled that the still legible letters read—"C H O S 1661 A d n." The date may be 1861. Inscription House is closed indefinitely because of urgent stabilization needs. It will be reopened when stabilization is completed.

TREE RING DATING An approximate date for the construction of a prehistoric building can be determined by comparing the pattern of annual growth rings of trees used in the construction with the known pattern of tree growth for the area. Trees add new growth each year, and the thickness of this new growth in the trunk of the tree is determined by the amount of rainfall in the area that year. Since rainfall varies from year to year, a distinctive pattern of new growth rings develops over a period of years. This distinctive growth pattern is the basis for this dating method, fixing in time the calendar year in which any particular tree was cut.
BETATAKIN, KEET SEEL, AND INSCRIPTION HOUSE—SPECTACULAR CLIFF DWELLINGS OF THE INDIAN FARMERS WHO LIVED IN THE CANYON COUNTRY OF NORTHEASTERN ARIZONA SEVEN CENTURIES AGO.

For about 1,300 years the San Juan basin in Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Arizona was occupied by Indians called the Anasazi, after the Navajo word meaning "the ancient ones." The earlier groups roamed over this high plateau country, hunting, trapping, gathering nuts and seeds, and growing some corn and squash. Traces of these people are faint, but what remains foreshadows a rich cultural tradition.

By A.D. 400, agriculture had become an important part of the economy. With a better and more dependable source of food, the Anasazi population increased and permanent houses were built. Gradually, three distinct cultural centers emerged: Mesa Verde in southwestern Colorado, Chaco Canyon Anasazi seemingly migrated southeastward to more fertile lands along the Rio Grande, and the Kayenta Anasazi probably moved south to the Hopi mesas. The Hopi Indians, still carrying on their traditional ways and customs, give us a vivid picture of pueblo life as it was lived 700 years ago at Betatakin, Keet Seel, and Inscription House.

The Kayenta district is now inhabited by Navajos. These people have been here only about a hundred years and are not related to the prehistoric Anasazi.

TO OUR VISITORS Increasing use and subsequent wear of these cliff dwellings have forced the National Park Service to limit the number of people who may enter the ruins. The limits are set with the goal of the least damage consistent with public use. Only 20 people per day are allowed into Keet Seel; 20 per tour into Betatakin; and 10 per day into Inscription House when it is reopened after stabilization. All tours must be accompanied by a ranger.

Please keep pets on leash at all times; they are not allowed in buildings, on trails, or in the ruins.

ADMINISTRATION Navajo National Monument, established on March 20, 1909, and containing 600 acres, is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Tonalea, AZ 86044, is in immediate charge. Phone (602) 672-2366.

National Park Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

FOR YOUR SAFETY This is a natural scenic area with canyons, cliffs, loose rock, and other natural hazards. Make your visit a safe one for you and your family.