



Foundation Document Overview

Montezuma Castle National Monument

Arizona



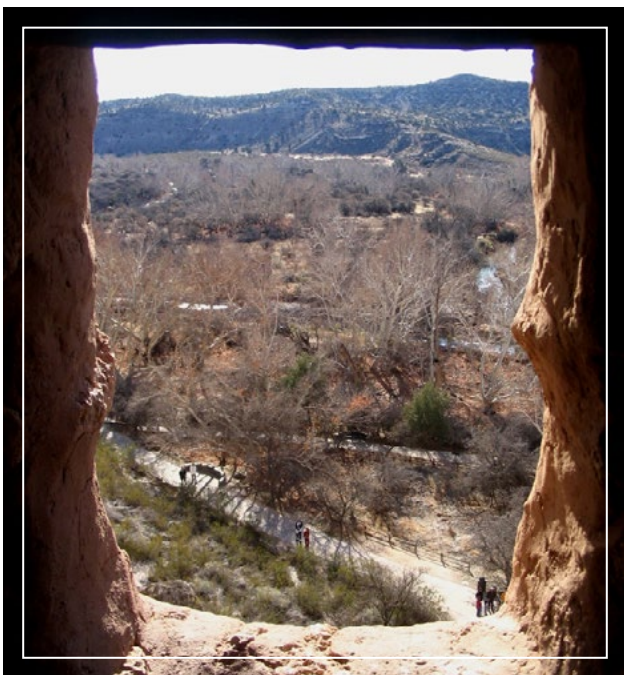
Contact Information

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Purpose



The purpose of MONTEZUMA CASTLE NATIONAL MONUMENT is to protect, study, and interpret the outstanding prehistoric and historic cultural features and natural ecosystems including iconic cliff dwellings, artesian-fed sinkhole, and desert riparian environment.



Significance

Significance statements express why Montezuma Castle 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.

- Montezuma Castle is an iconic and well-preserved Sinaguan cliff dwelling. The castle is the most visible feature of a larger community found within a diverse natural landscape in the Verde Valley of Arizona.
- The archeological features at Montezuma Castle National Monument represent a continuum of land use from prehistoric cultures through the present and offer enormous learning potential about human adaptation to a harsh desert environment.
- Montezuma Well is an artesian spring within a limestone sink containing substantial scientific value, endemic species, and a natural outlet connected to remnants of an extensive prehistoric and historic irrigation system. More than 50 archeological structures can be seen around the interior of the sink along with many features in the surrounding area.
- The natural and cultural resources within Montezuma Castle are significant to the 16 associated American Indian tribes as evidenced by oral histories, the archeological record, and continuing practices and beliefs.
- Montezuma Castle and associated features were among the first four national monuments created through the Antiquities Act of 1906, resulting in outstanding preservation and protection of major archeological resources.
- The New Deal-era civilian work programs that provided the excavation, management, and development of Montezuma Castle National Monument pioneered archeological efforts in the Southwest of this and other national monuments.

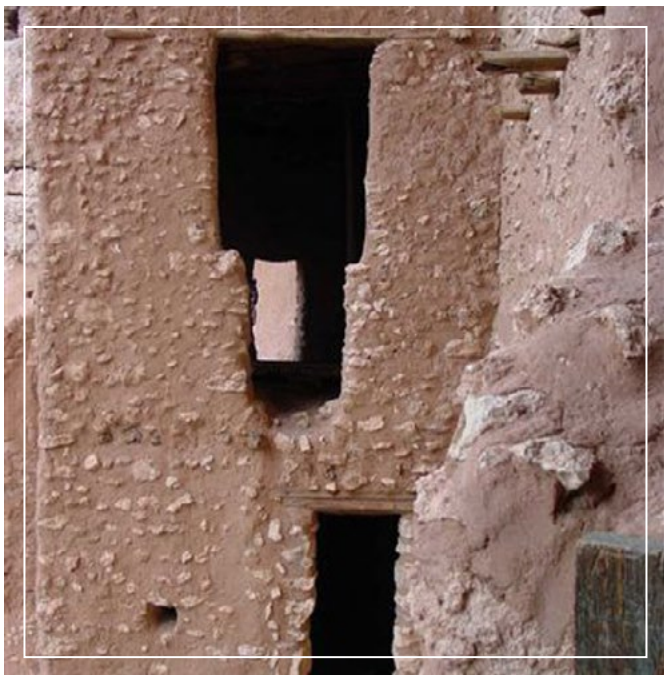
Fundamental Resources and Values

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.

- **Montezuma Castle Cliff Dwelling and Related Archeological Resources**
- **Montezuma Well**
- **Cultural Connectivity**
- **Cultural Landscape**

Montezuma Castle 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.

- **Historic features**
- **Flora and Fauna**
- **Paleontological Resources**
- **Scientific Value**



Interpretive Themes

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.

- **Prehistoric Cultures.** Prehistoric land use patterns and human settlement in the Verde Valley illustrate the continuum of occupation in the Southwest and demonstrate human adaptation, ingenuity, survival, trade, and ways that cultures influence and affect one another.
- **Contemporary Cultures.** Numerous American Indians of today maintain cultural connections to Montezuma Castle and Montezuma Well and claim direct descent from the people who lived or traded in the Verde Valley during prehistoric times.
- **Archeology.** Montezuma Castle National Monument serves as a benchmark of pioneering archeological efforts in the Southwest and demonstrates evolving scientific inquiry, methods, and interpretations that help us understand past human experiences and how they inform the present.
- **Ecology.** The different ecosystems of the Verde Valley in proximity to one another support a diversity of plants and animals and serve an important role in scientific discovery and species survival as habitat is lost to development worldwide.
- **Antiquities Act.** Montezuma Castle National Monument was the first prehistoric structure protected under the Antiquities Act for its “ethnological value” and demonstrates America’s commitment to preserving public places for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of current and future generations.
- **Water Resources.** The Verde River and its tributaries connection among the Verde Valley communities continue to be critical to the sustenance of prehistoric and modern life in the valley.

Description

Theodore Roosevelt proclaimed Montezuma Castle as one of the nation's first national monuments under the new Antiquities Act on December 8, 1906. In 1943 the monument was expanded to include the limestone sinkhole and archeological features known as Montezuma Well. The Montezuma Well section of the monument was expanded in 1959 to protect additional related resources. In 1978 and again in 2003 the monument expanded to better protect the areas adjacent to the cliff dwelling (see appendix A). This brought the total size of the monument to 1,004 acres with 16.83 acres of nonfederal land.

Montezuma Castle National Monument and the Montezuma Well unit of the monument are near the town of Camp Verde in central Arizona. Recreational visitation has been steady for the last 10 years, averaging about 571,446. The monument attracts many visitors heading either north or south along US Highway 17 (US 17) from Phoenix to Flagstaff. Visitors will often stop in the community of Camp Verde to explore the area and nearby Tuzigoot National Monument and Oak Creek Canyon in Sedona.

Visitors access the monument through the visitor center and follow a path along Beaver Creek. After a short distance walking along the base of limestone cliffs the Castle is slowly revealed, nestled in a recess 100 feet above you. The well-preserved castle rises more than 5 stories high and contains 20 rooms. Many other varied structures and rooms share the cliff face with the castle. The path ends at the base of what was once a larger but now less impressive structure called Castle A.

The castle was built in early AD 1100 by the Southern Sinagua. It is so well built, that it has stood for over 600 years and is considered one of the best-preserved prehistoric structures in the Southwest. Although it is not known exactly how many people inhabited the castle or the nearby structures, evidence indicates that at its height, approximately 150 or more lived in the immediate area.

In the early 1400s, Montezuma Castle was no longer occupied. But the descendants of the Southern Sinaguans did not just disappear, they probably migrated north to pueblo villages and to the desert cultures to the south.

Montezuma Well is on Beaver Creek, 6 miles farther upstream from Montezuma Castle. The well is a natural flowing artesian spring within an immense limestone sink caused by the collapse of an underground cavern—1.5 million gallons of water flow through the well every day through large underwater vents. The water drains down a 300-foot-long cave and emerges into the remains of pre-contact irrigation canals and ditches, now thickly coated with lime.

