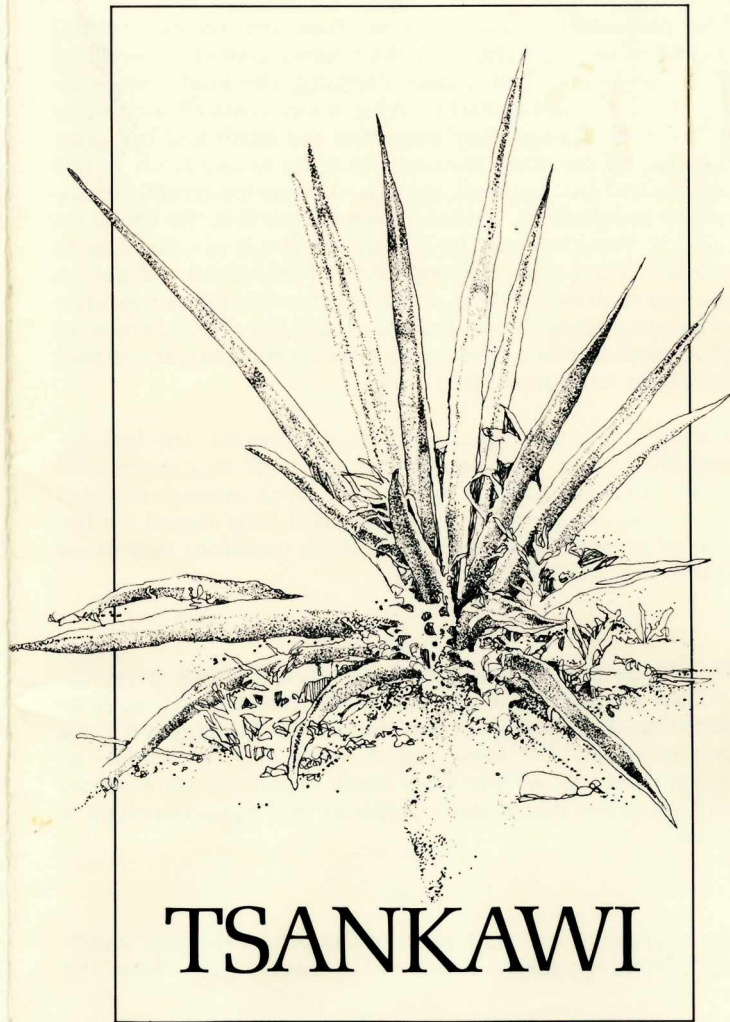
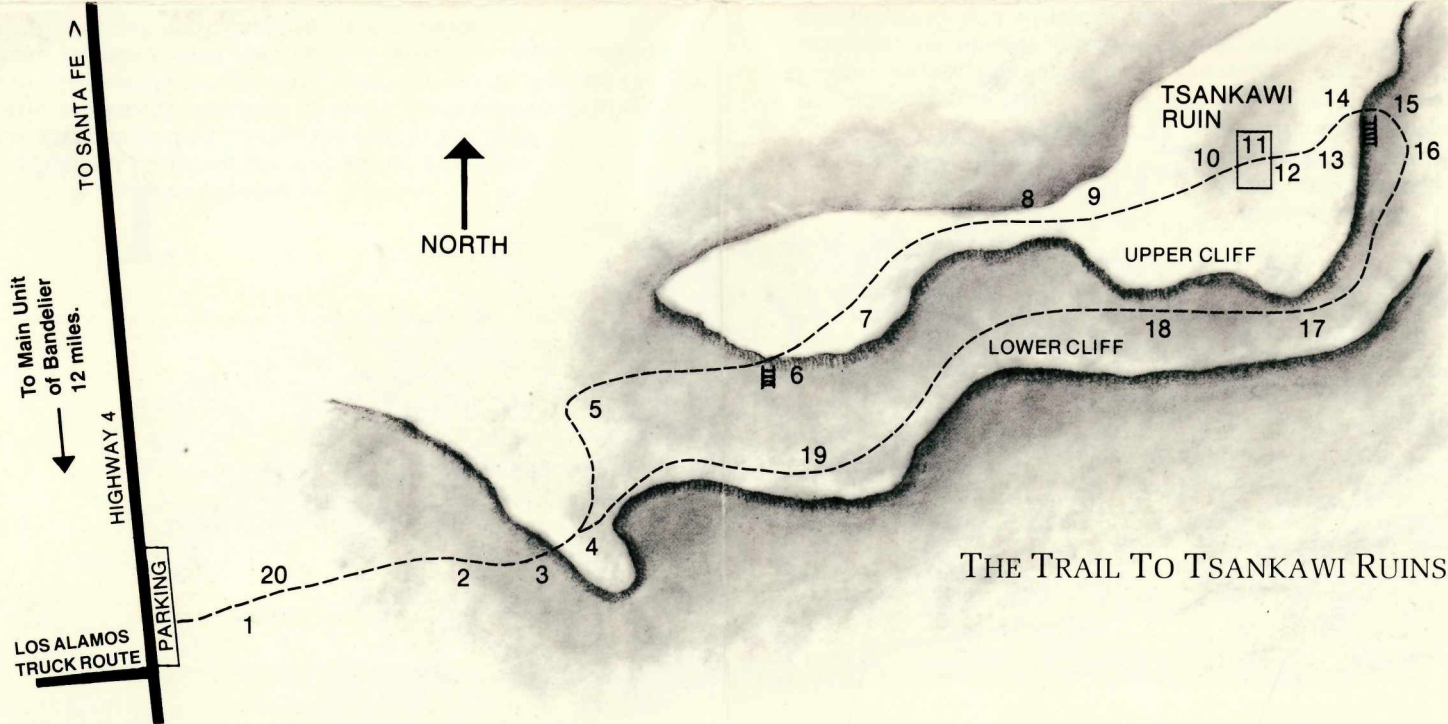


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TSANKAWI



Bandelier National Monument, New Mexico was established in 1916 and covers 32,737 acres. Tsankawi, this detached portion of the Monument, is 12 miles from the main unit of the park. Bandelier has many scattered ruins, including this large unexcavated ruin located on a mesa top.

DESCRIPTION OF TRAIL

Length: 1½ miles
Time required: 2 hours
Terrain: level but involves some climbing and narrow places between rocks. It will be necessary to climb a ladder.

RULES

Do not disturb or remove any pottery or other artifacts. The area closes at dusk. Leave no litter. Pets are not permitted.

WARNINGS

Trail involves climbing a 12-foot ladder so may not be passable for strollers or

people who must travel on fairly level surfaces. Rubber-soled shoes are recommended. Electrical storms may occur at any time. Should this happen, seek shelter in a lower area.

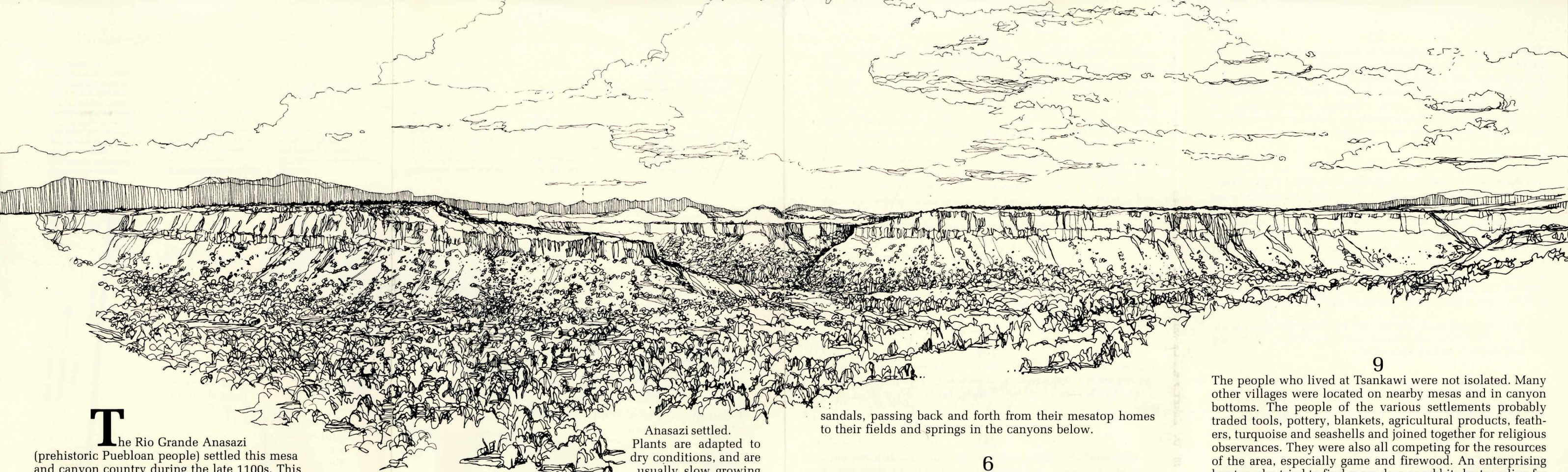
Tsankawi is at 6,600 feet elevation so walking and climbing are more strenuous.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Numbered stops along the trail correspond to numbered paragraphs in the trailguide

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The Rio Grande Anasazi (prehistoric Puebloan people) settled this mesa and canyon country during the late 1100s. This early settlement consisted of many small pueblos (villages) and cliff dwellings containing from 6-30 rooms. Around 1300 these people started moving into fewer but larger pueblos. Tsankawi was built sometime in the 1400s.

1

The prehistoric inhabitants of Tsankawi (tsank-ah-WEE) were totally dependent on their environment. Everything they possessed—their homes, clothing, and food—came directly from “Mother Earth.” After many years of occupancy they left. Although they respected the Earth and her gifts, they had to use some resources in order to stay alive. In this sparse, arid environment, their needs were too great to be sustained indefinitely. Archeologists tell us that the abandonment of Tsankawi may have been the result of a decrease in rainfall, along with the depletion of important natural resources such as firewood, and soil exhaustion from centuries of farming. Many Pueblo Indian legends tell of groups moving from place to place. Moving on after several generations may have been an expected part of life.

Are we today, with all our technical advances, any less dependent on our environment for survival? Our needs and wants are much greater, and we are much more numerous. Where can we move to if we live with little regard for the laws of nature? Some answers to these questions may come to mind as you take this tour.

2

This landscape has changed little since the time when the Indians were living here. The environment is dry with no more than 15” of rain each year, and frost or freezing can occur into mid-May. Yet these people were able to develop an agricultural way of life. They made expert use of resources such as native plants and wildlife as well as various type of stone.

3

The vegetation here is typical of the pinyon-juniper woodland found in many areas of the Southwest where the

and not very tall, “pygmy forest.” Ponderosa pines, common at higher, wetter locations, are usually found only near arroyos (drainages) where more moisture is available.

Along the trail are rabbitbrush, yucca, saltbush, mountain mahogany, and other plants that the people depended on for medicines, dyes, spices and tools.

SEE ALL THAT YOU CARE TO, BUT DO NOT DISTURB OR REMOVE ANY ARTIFACTS, POTTERY, PLANTS OR WILDLIFE THAT YOU SEE HERE. DO NOT DEFACE CLIFFS OR CAVES IN ANY WAY. IF THIS SECTION OF TRAIL IS TOO DIFFICULT, A LADDER IS AVAILABLE TO YOUR RIGHT.

4

A little over a million years ago huge eruptions of the Jemez (HAY-mess) volcano covered the surrounding area with a thick layer of tuff (volcanic ash). The resulting tableland, now called the Pajarito (pa-ha-REE-toe) (little bird) Plateau, was cut by streams, leaving the mesas and canyons around you. The Jemez Mountains west of here are the remnants of this volcano. State Road 4 enroute to Jemez Springs passes through the Valle Grande, part of the huge 15-mile-wide crater.

The Anasazi were a “stone age” people; they had no metal. Tools had to be fashioned from other locally-available materials. Hard basalt found nearby was used to enlarge caves in the softer tuff cliffs and to shape building blocks. Basalt was also fashioned into manos and metates, stones for grinding corn. Obsidian (volcanic glass) from the Jemez volcano was used to make arrow points, knives, and scrapers.

5

Many sections of the trail you are following are worn 8 to 12 inches into solid rock as a result of thousands of prehistoric feet using the same trail for centuries. Throughout the Pajarito Plateau there is a network of similar trails, often connecting villages or leading to farming areas. They were cut into rock and worn by generations of the Anasazi, barefooted or in

Anasazi settled. Plants are adapted to dry conditions, and are usually slow growing leading to the name

sandals, passing back and forth from their mesatop homes to their fields and springs in the canyons below.

6

The petroglyphs, or rock carvings, on the rock to the left are only a few of the many along this cliff. You can see three human-like figures, bird designs, four-pointed stars, and other symbols. The large figure appears to have corn husks or feathers on the top of its head.

Petroglyphs are common throughout this area and much of the American Southwest. A few still have significance to present-day Native Americans, but the meaning of most has been obscured by the intervening centuries.

MODERN GRAFFITI IS NOT WELCOME AMID THE PREHISTORIC ART—LEAVE THE CLIFFS AND PETROGLYPHS UNMARKED

7

Why did the people choose this, and other similar mesatop locations, for their homes? A lack of soil here would have made farming possible only in a few small scattered places. Most of their fields of corn, beans and squash were located in the canyons below to take advantage of runoff. Today there is no permanent source of water here, but prior to the development of the modern community of Los Alamos there may have been a permanent stream north of here in Los Alamos Canyon. Mesatop dwellers would have had to use pottery jars to carry drinking water from the stream, or store rainwater in structures like the one you will see at Stake 14. The mesatop locations may have been chosen for defensive reasons, but there is no evidence of warfare or strife. Perhaps there were other reasons for which we have no evidence.

8

In the valley to the northeast are the remains of a home and school built by Madame Vera von Blumenthal and her friend Rose Dugan in 1918. They wanted to revive and improve the quality of pottery at nearby Indian pueblos, an effort shared by a number of individuals and institutions during the first half of this century. The project resulted in improved native ceramic art and also enabled the craftspeople to get better prices for their wares.

9

The people who lived at Tsankawi were not isolated. Many other villages were located on nearby mesas and in canyon bottoms. The people of the various settlements probably traded tools, pottery, blankets, agricultural products, feathers, turquoise and seashells and joined together for religious observances. They were also all competing for the resources of the area, especially game and firewood. An enterprising hunter who tried to find more deer or rabbits by traveling far from his own village would soon get into the territory of another village. A trip to the mountains might be more successful, but then the meat would have to be brought back, a long carry in a time when horses were not available.

10

The Tewa Indians name for Tsankawi (*saekewikwaje on-wikege*) means “village between two canyons at the clump of sharp, round cacti.” The large “apartment house” had about 350 rooms. It was two and perhaps even three stories high in some places. It is roughly rectangular in shape and enclosed the large central courtyard or plaza in front of you. Everyday living activities occurred in the plaza along with various dances and ceremonies. This architectural plan of room blocks surrounding a central plaza is still in use among the villages of present-day Pueblo Indians.

The rooms were constructed of tuff blocks, shaped by harder stones and laid-up with mud mortar. The walls were then plastered inside and out.

Archeological evidence indicates Tsankawi was probably built during the 1400s and inhabited until the late 1500s. Archeologists refer to this time as the Rio Grande Classic Period. Local people had abandoned the many small villages throughout this area and moved together to build large pueblos such as Tsankawi.

The centuries have taken their toll. Roofs have fallen in and the walls have partially collapsed. Windblown material has sifted in and what was once the home of many people has been reduced to the low mounds of rubble that you now see.

The townspeople had a spectacular view of their surroundings. To the west are the Jemez Mountains, and to the east the Sangre de Cristo (Blood of Christ) Mountains and the Española Valley. About 70 miles south are the Sandia (watermelon) Mountains, just east of Albuquerque. This entire area is part of a major geologic feature, the Rio Grande Rift, through which flows the Rio Grande. Along its banks live the descendants of the people from Tsankawi and other nearby villages.

11

The two shallow depressions in the plaza are kivas, or ceremonial rooms. These circular rooms were usually built below ground level and a ladder through a hole in the roof provided entrance. Kivas, mainly used by the men, were places for religious observances, crafts, meetings and schooling the young men. Kivas exist in present-day pueblos, although they are not always round or underground.

12

Tsankawi was probably occupied until the late 1500s. Traditions at the modern pueblo of San Ildefonso, 8 miles northeast of here, say that their ancestors once lived in Tsankawi and other nearby pueblo ruins. From tree-ring evidence we learn there was a prolonged dry period during the late 1500s. The lack of rain, combined with growing crops in the same fields for 300 years without replacing essential soil nutrients, may have brought about crop failures. There may have been other reasons too, but this and other intriguing problems cannot be fully solved until further research and excavation is done.

DO NOT REMOVE ANY PIECES OF POTTERY OR OTHER ARTIFACTS. THEY ARE IMPORTANT ARCHEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE OF THE PEOPLE WHO LIVED HERE.

13

This round depression, and several similar structures around the outside of the main building, are apparently kivas.

14

At one time this low wall held a small reservoir. After summer showers, drainage from the rooftops and plaza of Tsankawi was impounded in this structure. Most of the Classic Period sites have similar reservoirs which are strategically located to receive runoff from the villages.

THE TRAIL BEYOND HERE INCLUDES A 12' LADDER AND SEVERAL NARROW PATHS WORN INTO THE STONE; YOU MAY WANT TO RETRACE YOUR STEPS. IF YOU WISH TO SEE SOME OF THE CAVE DWELLINGS ASSOCIATED WITH TSANKAWI, FOLLOW THIS TRAIL TO THE CLIFF EDGE, PROCEED DOWN THE LADDER TO THE FIRST LEDGE, AND RETURN BY THAT LOWER ROUTE TO THE BEGINNING OF THE TRAIL.

15

Most of the caves carved into the cliff to your left had small masonry buildings, known as talus pueblos (talus is the loose stone at the base of a cliff) constructed in front of them. These buildings have long since collapsed. Often the only remaining evidence of them is the socket holes where roof timbers were anchored. Try to imagine what it might have been like to be cooped up inside these small rooms during long, cold, snowy winter nights with a smoky fire for light and heat—summer must have been welcome! But the people also had another way to get out of smoky homes. Notice that all the nearby mesas have cave rooms on the south-facing side. This location would have been a real advantage in winter. The afternoon sun would warm the cliffs, melt the snow, and allow the people to spend at least a few hours outside on sunny days. By contrast, the north-facing slopes often retain their snow cover throughout the winter.

YOU ARE WELCOME TO EXPLORE THESE CAVES, BUT PLEASE BE RESPECTFUL OF THEM AND CAREFUL FOR YOUR OWN SAFETY.

16

Stairways or hand and toehold trails like this one were cut into the stone in several places. They provided routes to the mesatop that would have been much easier to use than the cleft in the rock you climbed. At best it was still a perilous climb. If the pueblo was placed on the mesatop for defense, would these access points have made the villages less secure?

17

Standing here surrounded by the caves, canyons, and mesas, imagine how different the area was when inhabited. Each cave would have had one or more of the small, square, smoothly-plastered rooms in front. Most of the trees would have been cut for roof beams, tools or firewood. The canyon bottoms would have been covered with agricultural fields. Around you would be all kinds of activities — women grinding corn, cooking, sewing; men tending the farms or making tools; children playing. The sounds of chants being practiced and children, dogs, and turkeys chasing each other would have filled the air, along with smoke from household fires and smells of cooking, meat drying and many people in close quarters. It would have been a lively, busy scene, far different from today's atmosphere of quiet and solitude.

18

If you look carefully as you go along the trail, you will see many more petroglyphs on the cliffs. Depending on light conditions, some may be obvious, while others may be faint and hard to see.

19

Follow the lower ledge to return to the rock platform near the beginning of the trail. There are many places with sharp drop-offs. Be careful of your footing, and keep children close to you.

20

The National Park Service hopes that you have enjoyed your visit to Tsankawi. You have explored only a small part of Bandelier National Monument. We invite you to visit the main section of the monument, which is 12 miles south on Road 4. The Visitor Center, Monument headquarters, and numerous ruins are located in Frijoles Canyon. The Visitor Center is open daily from 8 AM to 4:30 PM (longer hours in summer). A park ranger is on duty to answer questions and help plan your visit, and an introductory 10-minute slide program is available. During summer many interpretive activities are offered. The museum contains exhibits on the continuing culture of the Pueblo people.

Other facilities and services in the headquarters are:
Frijoles Canyon Ruins Trail, open all year, self-guiding.

A small picnic area is located near the Visitor Center in Frijoles Canyon. No fires or charcoal; fuel stoves OK.

Camping: Juniper Campground, with space for tents or trailers, is on the mesa above Frijoles Canyon. Each campsite has a table, fireplace and parking area. Modern restrooms and water taps are centrally located.

Interpretive Programs: During the summer, rangers present many walks, talks and other programs. Check at the Visitor Center.

Hiking: In addition to the main ruins trails there are over 70 miles of maintained trails in the 29,000 acres of the Monument's back country. Wilderness permits are required for day or overnight hikes and are available free at the Visitor Center.

Accommodations and Meals: The Frijoles Canyon Snack Bar and Curio Shop offers light meals and native crafts. Overnight accommodations are available in the nearby communities of Los Alamos, White Rock, Española and Santa Fe.

Remember: The uniformed employees of the National Park Service are here to make your stay at Bandelier National Monument more enjoyable. If you wish additional information or are unsure about regulations, ask a ranger.