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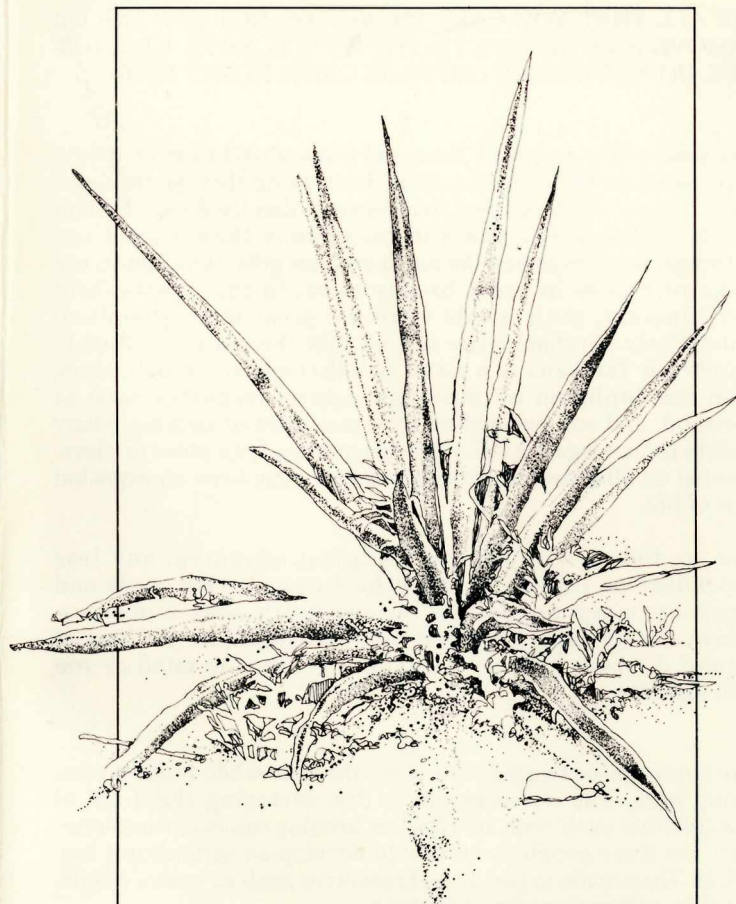


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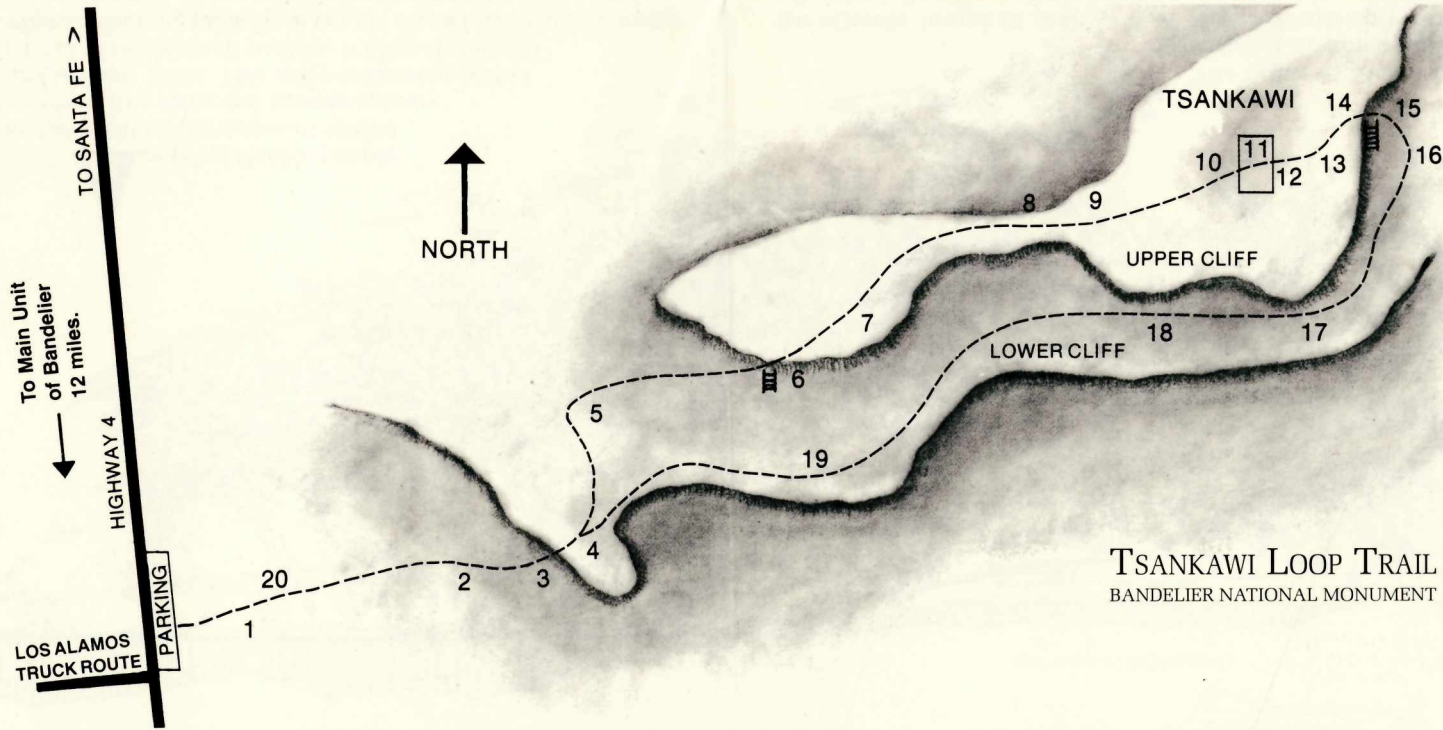
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Tsankawi Trail
BANDELIER NATIONAL MONUMENT



TSANKAWI LOOP TRAIL

BANDELIER NATIONAL MONUMENT

Bandelier National Monument, New Mexico, was established in 1916 and covers 37,737 acres. Tsankawi, this detached portion of the Monument, is 12 miles from the main unit of the park. Bandelier has many scattered archeological sites, including this large unexcavated village 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, remove or damage plants, rocks, cliffs, wildlife, pottery or other artifacts. Area closes at dusk. Leave no litter. Pets are not permitted.

WARNINGS

Trail involves climbing a 12-foot ladder. May not be passable for strollers or people who must travel

on fairly level surfaces. Carry drinking water. Rubber-soled shoes are recommended. Electrical storms may occur at any time. Should this happen, seek shelter in a lower area. Trails are often icy in winter.

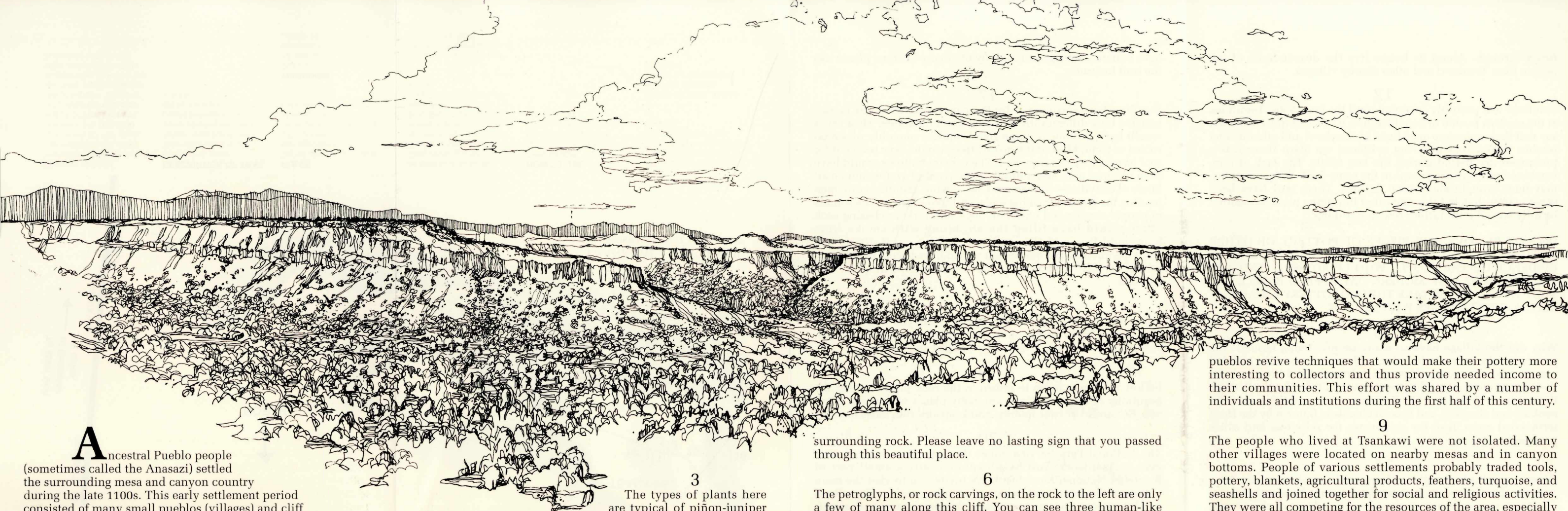
Tsankawi is at 6,600 feet elevation. Walking and climbing are more strenuous.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

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

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Ancstral Pueblo people (sometimes called the Anasazi) settled the surrounding mesa and canyon country during the late 1100s. This early settlement period consisted of many small pueblos (villages) and cliff dwellings. Around 1300 these people started moving into fewer but larger pueblos. Tsankawi was built sometime in the 1400s.

SEE ALL THAT YOU CARE TO, BUT DO NOT DISTURB OR REMOVE ANY ARTIFACTS, POTTERY, PLANTS, OR WILD-LIFE. DO NOT DEFACE CLIFFS OR CAVES IN ANY WAY.

1
The prehistoric people of Tsankawi (sank-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 moved on. 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 ancestral Pueblo people left Tsankawi as a 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 if we live with little regard for the laws of nature? Answers to these questions may come to mind as you take this tour.

2
The climate has changed little since the time when Indians were living here. The environment is dry, averaging about 15” of precipitation 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, wildlife, and various types of stone.

3
The types of plants here are typical of piñon-juniper woodlands found in many areas of the Southwest where ancestral Pueblo people settled. Plants adapted to dry conditions are usually slow growing and not very tall, thus the name “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 juniper, piñon, rabbitbrush, yucca, saltbush, mountain mahogany, and other plants that the people depended on for food, medicines, dyes, spices, and tools.

4
A little over a million years ago, huge eruptions of the Jémez (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 Jémez Mountains west of here are remnants of this volcano. State Road 4 enroute to Jémez Springs passes through the Valle Grande, part of the huge 15-mile-wide crater.

The ancestral Pueblo people had no metal; tools had to be fashioned from other locally available materials. Basalt (hard, dense volcanic rock) 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 Jémez volcano made a perfect material for arrow points, knives, and scrapers.

5
Many sections of the trail you are following are worn 8 to 12 inches into solid rock. Throughout the Pajarito Plateau there is a network of similar trails, often connecting villages or leading to farming areas. They were cut and worn into the rock by generations of ancestral Pueblo people, barefooted or in sandals, passing back and forth from their mesa-top homes to the fields and to springs in the canyons below.

Thousands of visitors come to Tsankawi every year; modern-day hard-soled shoes easily do damage to the ancient trails and

surrounding rock. Please leave no lasting sign that you passed through this beautiful place.

6
The petroglyphs, or rock carvings, on the rock to the left are only a few of 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 cornhusks or feathers on top of its head.

Petroglyphs are common throughout this area and much of the American Southwest. Meanings of some are still known to present-day Indians. These drawings have cultural importance to local Pueblo people; please treat them with respect. Because they are carved into soft tuff, even touching these petroglyphs can cause permanent damage.

A project begun in 1998 put fill material here and in other parts of the trail that had been badly worn by visitor use.

MODERN GRAFFITI IS NOT WELCOME AMID THE PREHISTORIC ART—LEAVE THE CLIFFS AND PETROGLYPHS UNMARKED. IF THIS SECTION OF TRAIL IS TOO DIFFICULT, A LADDER IS AVAILABLE TO YOUR RIGHT.

7
Why did the people choose this and other similar mesatop locations for their homes? The lack of soil here may be due to heavy livestock grazing in the 1800s. In the 1400s the mesatops may have been more likely places for farming than they are now. Some of the fields of corn, beans, and squash could also have been located in the canyons below to take advantage of runoff. Today there is no permanent source of water here. Prior to the development of the modern community of Los Alamos, there may have been a permanent stream to the north 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. 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 remains of a home and school built by Madame Vera von Blumenthal and her friend Rose Dugan in 1918. They wanted to help the potters at nearby

pueblos revive techniques that would make their pottery more interesting to collectors and thus provide needed income to their communities. This effort was shared by a number of individuals and institutions during the first half of this century.

9
The people who lived at Tsankawi were not isolated. Many other villages were located on nearby mesas and in canyon bottoms. People of various settlements probably traded tools, pottery, blankets, agricultural products, feathers, turquoise, and seashells and joined together for social and religious activities. They were all competing for the resources of the area, especially game and firewood. An enterprising hunter who tried to find more deer and rabbits by travelling far from his village would soon be approaching another. A trip to the mountains might be more successful, but the meat would have to be brought back, a long carry in a time when horses were not available.

10
In the Tewa language of the nearby Pueblo people, the name for Tsankawi (*saekewikwaje onwikege*) means “village between two canyons at the clump of sharp, round cacti.” The large settlement 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 used in the villages of present-day Pueblo Indians.

The rooms were constructed of tuff blocks, shaped using harder stones and then laid-up with mud mortar. Walls were then plastered inside and out. Roofs were made of wood and mud.

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 left the many small villages throughout the 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. What was once the home of many people has been reduced to the low mounds of rubble that you now see.

11
The villagers had a spectacular view of their surroundings. To the west are the Jémez Mountains. To the east are 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, which the Rio Grande

flows through. Along its banks live the descendants of the people from Tsankawi and other nearby villages.

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 sites. 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 generations, 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 is done.

DO NOT REMOVE ANY PIECES OF POTTERY OR OTHER ARTIFACTS. THEY ARE IMPORTANT ARCHEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE OF THE PEOPLE WHO LIVED HERE, AND ARE PROTECTED BY LAW. MODERN-DAY PUEBLO PEOPLE SAY THEY WOULD NEVER TAKE THE OLD POTTERY BECAUSE IT BELONGS TO THE ONES WHO MADE IT.

13

Why did the village have so many rooms? Being farmers, the people would have needed plenty of space for storage of dried corn, beans, and squash. The food they stored had to provide for their needs not only for the present year, but also for times when there were crop failures. Other rooms would have been used for cooking and sleeping, and special chambers (known by the Hopi term *kiva*) were used for gatherings for religious and other purposes.

14

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

THE TRAIL BEYOND HERE INCLUDES A 12' LADDER AND SEVERAL NARROW PATHS; 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, TURN RIGHT, AND RETURN BY THAT LOWER ROUTE TO THE BEGINNING OF THE TRAIL.

15

Most of the caves carved into the soft tuff 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 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? Today these stairways

have suffered damage from use by too many visitors; please use the trail instead.

17

Standing here surrounded by the caves, canyons, and mesas, imagine how different the area was when inhabited. Most caves would have had one or more small, square, smoothly plastered rooms in front. Most of the nearby 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 cooking, sewing, grinding corn; men tending the farms or making tools; children playing. The sounds of people singing and children, dogs, and turkeys chasing each other would have filled the air, along with smoke from household fires and the 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. 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 State Road 4. The Visitor Center, monument headquarters, and a self-guiding trail are located in Frijoles Canyon. Park rangers are on duty to answer questions and help plan your visit, and an introductory 10-minute slide program is available. During summer, interpretive activities may be offered. The museum contains exhibits on the continuing culture of the Pueblo people.

Other facilities and services in the headquarters area are: **Frijoles Canyon Tyuonyi Trail**, self guiding. Pets are not permitted on any park trails.

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; no hookups or showers. Closed in winter.

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

Hiking: In addition to the Main Loop Trail, there are over 70 miles of maintained trails in the monument's 23,000 acres of designated wilderness. Wilderness permits are required for 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: National Park Service staff members are dedicated to helping you enjoy and preserve this beautiful, irreplaceable part of your national heritage. If you need additional information or are unsure about regulations, ask a ranger.