

Petrified Forest

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

National Park
Arizona



Desert paintbrush with petrified wood.

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Stories of Climate and Culture Told in Stone

This high, dry grassland was once a vast floodplain crossed by many streams. Tall, stately conifer trees grew along the banks. Crocodile-like reptiles, giant amphibians, and small dinosaurs lived among a variety of ferns, cycads, and other plants and animals known only as fossils today. The trees fell, and swollen streams washed them into adjacent floodplains. A mix of silt, mud, and volcanic ash from distant volcanoes buried the logs. This sediment cut off oxygen and slowed the logs' decay. Then silica-laden groundwater seeped through the logs, replacing the original wood tissues with silica and petrifying the logs.



Puebloan people who were the ancestors of the Hopi and Zuni built Puerco Pueblo over 600

years ago. Permanent villages like this arose with the development of agriculture.



Ancient petroglyphs are found throughout the park. This one is near Puerco Pueblo.

The trees lived over 200 million years ago. Since then, continents moved to today's positions, the region was uplifted, and climate changed. What had been tropical environment became today's semi-arid grassland. Over time, wind and water wore away the rock layers and exposed fossilized ancient

plants and animals. The hills will yield more fossils as weathering sculpts the Painted Desert's soft sedimentary rock.

In Petrified Forest stories abound. Evidence of early human occupation is readily visible. Sites throughout the park tell of human history in this area for over 13,000 years. We do not know the entire story, but there were separate occupations, with a cultural transition from wandering families to settled agricultural villages, or pueblos, and trading ties throughout the region. Evidence in the park of these early people fades about 1400, but their earlier dwellings, potsherds, and petroglyphs still tell their story.

In the mid-1800s federal mappers and surveyors explored here, telling of a remarkable "Painted Desert and its trees turned to stone." Next came pioneers, ranchers, and sightseers. The wood was used for souvenirs and commercial ventures until residents of the region realized that petrified wood supplies were not endless. In 1906 President Theodore Roosevelt set aside select stands of the petrified trees as Petrified Forest National Monument. In 1932, 53,200 more acres of Painted Desert were added. In 1962 Congress designated the national park. In 1970 Congress designated 50,000 acres as one of the first National Park System wilderness areas. In 2004 Congress authorized expanded boundaries that more than doubled the park's size. Research continues to unlock the wealth of the geological, paleontological, and human stories preserved here for this and future generations. Your visit is now part of the long history of Petrified Forest National Park.

Commercial Sources of Petrified Wood

Petrified wood's varied colors came from minerals in the silica-saturated water. Iron, carbon, and manganese made patterns and blends of yellow, red, black, blue, brown, white, and pink. Surprisingly heavy, petrified wood weighs up to 200 pounds per cubic foot. It has a hardness of 7.8 on the 10-point Mohs scale that measures scratch resistance.



It is illegal to collect or remove any petrified wood from the park. You can get samples of the same quality from the same deposits—but collected on private land outside the park—from nearby commercial sources. Slabs of the petrified wood are cut with diamond or Carborundum saws, ground with a silicon carbide grit to smooth the saw marks and roughness, and polished for hours. Artisans fashion jewelry and other decorative objects from the polished pieces.

Do not take even the smallest piece of petrified wood from the park. Multiplied by the hundreds of thousands of visitors here every year, the small pieces stolen from the park can quickly amount to tons.



Petrified wood shows startlingly colorful patterns.

NPS / T. SCOTT WILLIAMS

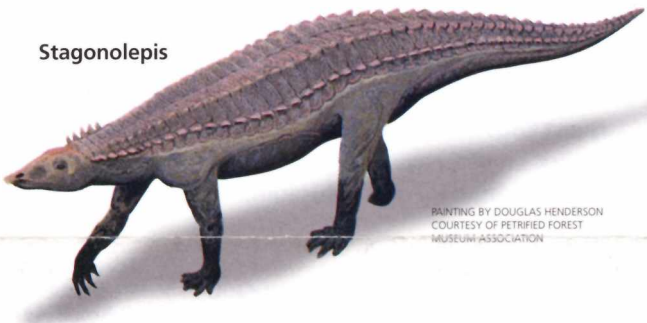
Research into Fossils Continues

Paleontologists have studied fossils in the park since the 1920s, finding the skeletons of the crocodile-like phytosaur; one of North America's earliest dinosaur fossils,

nicknamed "Gertie"; and a skeleton of the aetosaur Stagonolepis, a large, heavily armored reptile that ate plants (right). Donations support paleontologists who

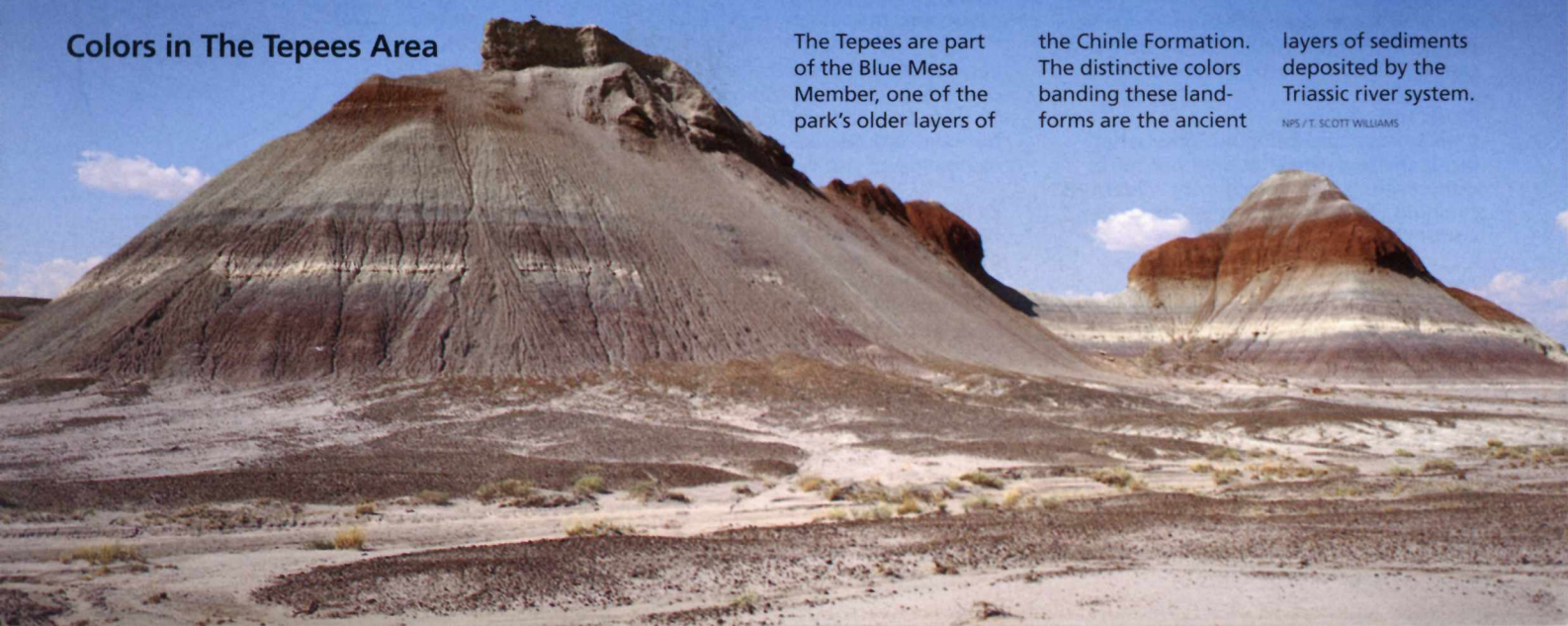
still make important fossil finds and try to figure out what this land was like over 200 million years ago in the Late Triassic Period.

Stagonolepis



PAINTING BY DOUGLAS HENDERSON
COURTESY OF PETRIFIED FOREST
MUSEUM ASSOCIATION

Colors in The Tepees Area



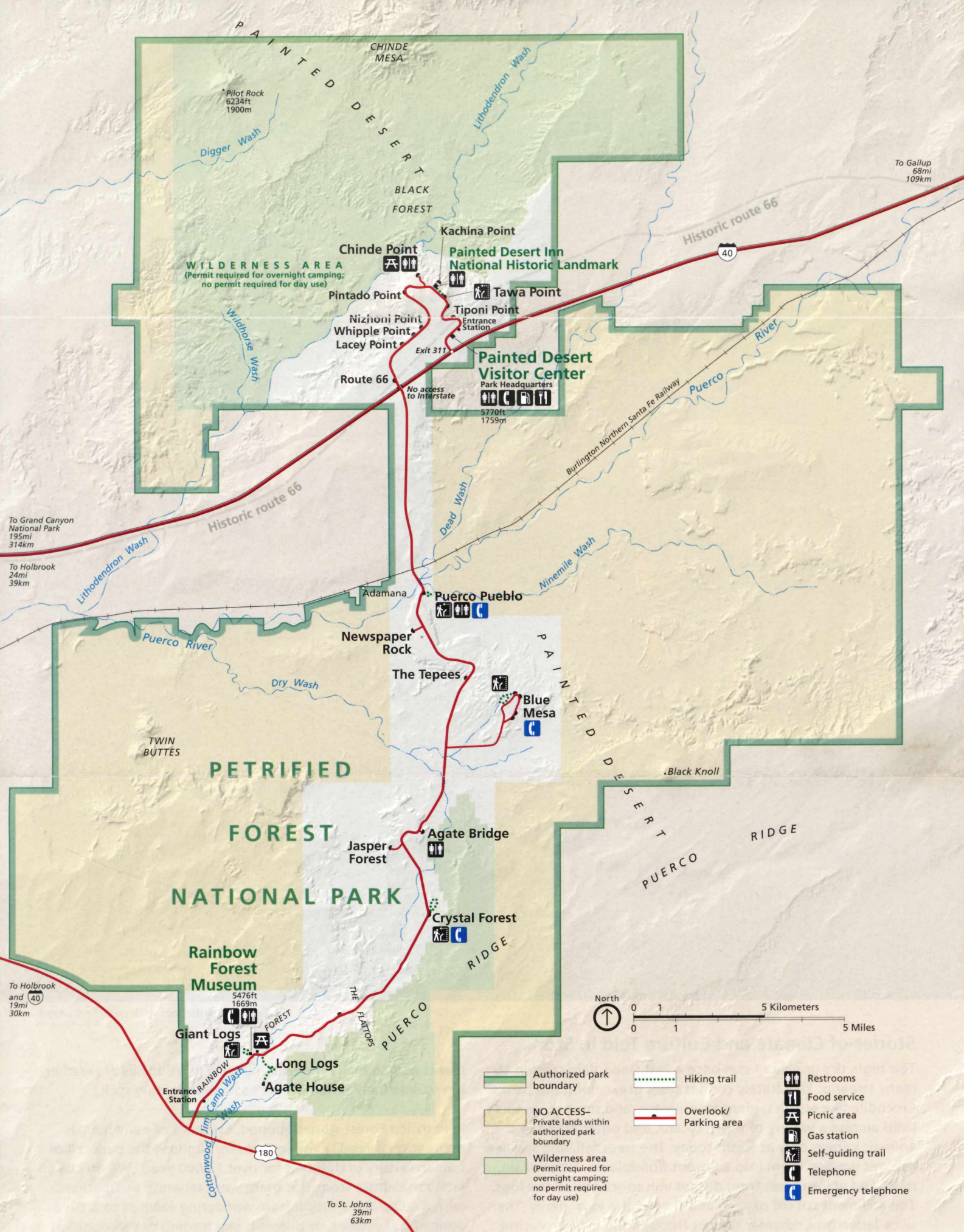
The Tepees are part of the Blue Mesa Member, one of the park's older layers of

the Chinle Formation. The distinctive colors banding these land-forms are the ancient

layers of sediments deposited by the Triassic river system.

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Visiting Petrified Forest



Visiting the Park

Visitor Centers There are three visitor facilities in the park. Painted Desert Visitor Center and Rainbow Forest Museum offer exhibits and a 20-minute orientation movie. Painted Desert Inn National Historic Landmark is a Pueblo Revival-style structure with cultural history exhibits. All of the visitor facilities offer bookstores and restrooms.

Park Road The 28-mile park road offers overlooks with long-distance vistas of the Painted Desert and parking areas for access to hiking trails, picnic areas, and the designated wilderness.

Tawa Point and Rim Trail Easy one-mile round-trip between Tawa and Kachina points. An unpaved trail with wayside exhibits and plant identification signs.

Kachina Point and Rim Trail Renovated by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s, Painted Desert Inn boasts extensive views of the Painted Desert, and murals by Hopi artist Fred Kabotie. Access to Rim Trail.

Puerco Pueblo A partially stabilized 100-room village built between 1250 and 1380 may have housed nearly 200 people. A short paved trail through the site offers wayside exhibits and views of petroglyphs.

Newspaper Rock With the spotting scopes at the overlook, see hundreds of petroglyphs that are etched into stone.

The Tepees Layered blues, purples, and grays created by iron, carbon, manganese, and other minerals stand in cone-shaped formations.

Blue Mesa and Blue Mesa Trail A 3-mile loop road with views of badlands, log falls, and pedestal logs and a self-guiding one-mile loop trail with a short steep section.

Jasper Forest Erosion of the high rocky bluff has left hundreds of petrified logs once encased in the bluff strewn across this valley below.

Crystal Forest and Trail Easy 0.8-mile paved trail through a landscape of exquisitely colorful petrified logs that once held glassy amethyst and quartz crystals.

From Rainbow Forest Museum, an easy 0.5-mile walk to the trailhead for: **Long Logs Trail**—0.6-mile trail through the park's largest concentration of petrified wood; and **Agate House Trail**—0.5-mile trail to a partially restored pueblo of petrified wood. The round-trip total for both is 2.6 miles.

Giant Logs Trail Easy 0.4-mile paved trail with stairs, passes the park's most massive log, known as "Old Faithful." Enter through Rainbow Forest Museum.

Services

Painted Desert area: gift shop, restaurant, gas station, travel store, pay phone, post office.

Rainbow Forest area: gift shop, snack bar, pay phone. Find restaurants, lodging, and campgrounds in nearby communities.

Picnic and Camping

Chinde Point and Rainbow Forest offer picnic shelters. The park does not have campgrounds. For backcountry wilderness camping you must get a free permit at a visitor center.

Accessibility

We strive to make our facilities, services, and programs accessible to all. For information go to a visitor center, ask a ranger, call, or check our website.

More Information

Petrified Forest National Park
PO Box 2217
Petrified Forest, AZ 86028-2217
www.nps.gov/pefo
928-524-6228

Petrified Forest National Park is one of over 390 parks in the National Park System. To learn more about national parks and National Park Service programs in America's communities, visit www.nps.gov.

Petrified Wood Warning

Federal law prohibits collection or removal of petrified wood or any natural, archeological, or historical object from its setting. Violators will be fined, imprisoned, or both. Rock shops in nearby communities sell petrified wood collected from private lands outside the park.

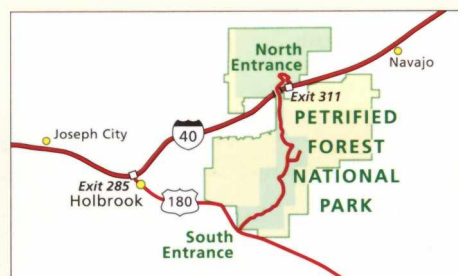
Use emergency phones to report wood thieves—or call 928-524-9726.



Painted Desert's varied palette unfolds before you from a trail near Kachina Point.

Wilderness Hiking and Camping Park at Kachina Point. The wilderness trailhead is behind Painted Desert Inn. Get a free permit—required for overnight camping—at any visitor center up to one hour before the park closes. **Water** is not available in the backcountry; carry one gallon per person per day. There are no designated campsites. No permit is required for day use.

Safety and Regulations Please use caution and enjoy a safe visit. • Lightning, high winds, and flash floods can accompany summer storms; avoid open areas. • Elevation averages 5,600 feet; know your limits. • Watch your step and your children—prevent trips and falls at overlooks and cliff edges and on trails. • Objects thrown over cliffs may injure people below. • Do not climb on petrified logs; their sharp edges can inflict painful wounds. • Avoid wild animals; they may carry deadly diseases. • Do not stop in roadway; park in designated areas only. • Pets must be on a leash at all times and are not allowed in buildings. • Bicycles and motorized vehicles are permitted only on the paved park road. • Federal law prohibits collecting petrified wood, fossils, rocks, plants, animals, and archeological objects. • For firearms regulations, visit the park website or ask a ranger.



Save Time and Gas
Eastbound: I-40 Exit 285 to US 180 east from Holbrook to south entrance, drive north in park to I-40.

Westbound: I-40 Exit 311 to north entrance, drive south in park to US 180, west to Holbrook and I-40.