



Petroglyphs



What are they?

Petroglyphs are rock engravings thought to be an ancient way of communicating. The petroglyphs found at Pipestone National Monument may date from either of the two early prehistoric periods: the Early Woodland Period (3000 B.C. to 500 A.D.) or the Late Woodland Period (900 to 1750 A.D.).

Most petroglyphs were made by "pecking," or striking the rock with a sharp piece of stone. Using a hammer stone on a stone chisel provided more control.

The purpose may include ceremonial descriptions, recording of important events, clan or family symbols, storytelling, or history.

"We left our totems or marks on the rocks - we cut them deep in the stones, and they are there now. The Great Spirit told all nations to meet there in peace, and all nations hid the war-club and the tomahawk." – Mandan warrior to George Catlin, 1836

The Quartzite Trail

The Sioux Quartzite cliffs on the Circle Trail are called 'outcroppings.' This exposed bedrock can be seen peeking above the ground from Sioux Falls, SD to New Ulm, MN, forming the Quartzite Trail. Over 20 petroglyph sites have been found along the Quartzite Trail! Key petroglyph sites around the region, country, and world are listed below:

The most well-known in this area of Minnesota:

Jeffers Petroglyphs (90 minutes east)

- Over 5,000 petroglyphs dating back 7,000 years
- 27160 County Road 2
Comfrey, MN 56019
- 507-628-5591

Oldest Known Petroglyphs in North America (so far)

Winnemucca Lake (Nevada)

- 10,500 to 14,800 years old
- Deep carvings in limestone boulders
- Images resemble trees, ovals, and diamonds in chains

Oldest Known Petroglyphs in the World (so far)

Bhimbetka Petroglyphs (India)

- Date to 290,000-700,000 BCE
- Consists of cupules and engravings on quartzite in Auditorium Cave on 700+ rock shelters

The most well-known NPS site for petroglyphs:

Petroglyph National Monument (New Mexico)

- 17-mile ridge containing over 25,000 petroglyphs
- 6001 Unser Blvd. NW
Albuquerque, NM 87120
- (505) 899-0205