



Hike into the Prehistoric Past

In the steep bluffs surrounding Tonto Basin, two prehistoric cliff dwellings inspire us to imagine the people who were once here.

Buildings, pottery, and weaving (*below*) point to a crossroads of people and ideas that lasted around 200 years.

Explorers of the late 1800s and early 1900s fueled our interest in them. Who lived here? Why? How? What was life like for them?

Protected at Tonto National Monument since 1907, these artifacts of an ancient people keep us curious about life 700 years ago.



LEFT TO RIGHT: WOVEN SANDALS, POLYCHROME JAR, SALADO RED-ON-WHITE BOWL, TEXTILE, TONTO PLAIN JAR, CLIFF POLYCHROME BOWL, SALADO RED JAR, STONE GRINDING TOOL, POLYCHROME BOWL—NPS

LOWER CLIFF DWELLING (TOP), LANDSCAPE (BOTTOM)—© JABON EAGAR

Continuous Movement of People and Ideas

Starting around 10,000 years ago, the **first settlers** hunted animals and gathered plants. Around 2,500 years ago people began diverting water for crops like corn, beans, squash, and cotton. With the introduction of agriculture, pithouse villages, roof-covered structures dug in the ground, formed along the Salt River.

Around 1250 CE (Common Era) more people moved to the basin. They built **larger settlements** in the valley and on nearby hillsides. By 1300 around 3,000 people lived in the basin. Who were they? Why were they here? Were they a distinct culture?

We refer to this period as **the Salado Phenomenon**. People we collectively call the Salado culture converged here from around 1300 to 1450 CE. They seem to have used cooperation and innovation to meet common challenges. Their architecture, pottery, and textiles reflect a mix of people and ideas at one place and time.

Some people lived in cliff dwellings built from adobe mud, quartzite rock, and wooden materials for the roofs. The distinctive black-on-white-on-red pottery suggests some people moved into the Tonto Basin from northern Arizona. Called **Salado polychromes** today, this pottery was the most

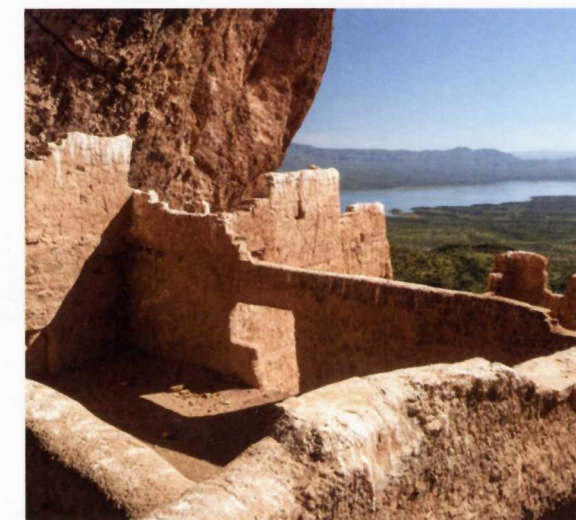
widely distributed of its kind in the Southwest. Artifacts from the cliff dwellings suggest the Salado people traded local goods for exotic items across long distances, like macaws from Mexico and seashells from the California coast. Cotton textiles, sandals, and baskets found at the dwellings make up one of the Southwest's largest collections of woven fibers. Archeologists are still searching for clues as to why this culture diminished within the Tonto Basin by 1450.

During the 1860s and 1870s the US military forcibly removed the **Apache and Yavapai** residents of Tonto Basin, opening the area for new settlers. The cliff dwellings first gained widespread attention with publications of **Adolph Bandelier's** 1883 visit to Tonto Basin. But careless visitors to these ancient homes soon degraded the pristine quality of the dwellings he described.

People wanted to preserve the dwellings. In 1907 **President Theodore Roosevelt** established Tonto National Monument. The law says the cliff dwellings "are of great ethnological, scientific, and educational interest, and it appears that the public interest

would be promoted by preserving these relics." Today, people continue a **10,000-year tradition** of calling Tonto Basin home, largely due to its abundant natural resources. Several southwestern tribes trace their ancestry back to the Salado culture.

Experience the park's cliff dwellings. Discover some of the best preserved examples of artifacts from the Salado culture at the visitor center museum. Enjoy miles-long vistas, and glimpse the Sonoran Desert. Immerse yourself in the past as you explore the homes of ancient people.



Prehistoric people did not have this present-day view of Roosevelt Lake from the Upper Cliff Dwelling. © JABON EAGAR

Visit the Homes of Ancient People

Upper Cliff Dwelling



© JABON EAGAR

Lower Cliff Dwelling



© ADRIANO ZAMBALDO

Exploring Tonto National Monument

Directions The park is 110 miles east of Phoenix. From Globe take AZ 188 West. From AZ 87 (Beeline Hwy.) take AZ 188 East. The Apache Trail (AZ 88) is a popular scenic alternative. This unpaved, mountainous route takes 2 to 3 hours.

Plan Your Visit The park is open 8 am to 5 pm daily except December 25. The visitor center has information, museum exhibits, a bookstore, a video, and a nearby picnic area. There is a \$10 per person entrance fee; children 15 and under are free. All Federal Passes (Annual, Senior, Access, Military, Fourth Grade, Volunteer) are accepted. Summers are hot (100°F or higher); winters are generally mild. Rainy seasons occur in winter and summer (monsoons).

Lower Cliff Dwelling Trail (1 hour roundtrip) A paved 0.5-mile, self-guiding path ascends 350 feet. The trail opens at 8 am year-round. Check in at the visitor center when you arrive. From September through May start your hike before 4 pm. From June through August you must start your hike before 12 pm.

Upper Cliff Dwelling Tour (3 to 4 hours roundtrip) Three miles roundtrip on a rocky trail. Visit by ranger-guided tour only, offered Friday through Monday from November through April. Reservations required; call 928-467-2241.

Accessibility We strive to make our facilities, services, and programs accessible to all. For more information go to the visitor center, ask a ranger, call, or check our website. The visitor center's first floor, museum exhibits, restrooms, and picnic area are wheelchair-accessible. Service animals are welcome.

Camping and Services Camping in the park is prohibited. Camping is available around Roosevelt Lake. Services are available in Globe, Payson, Tonto Basin, and Roosevelt.

Safety and Regulations **Water is required when hiking to the dwellings. Bring your own bottle.** Watch for signs of heat-related illness. Free spring water is available at the visitor center. • Pets, leashed and under control, are allowed only on the Lower Cliff Dwelling trail and are prohibited in the dwelling. • Stay on established trails; steep grades and uneven surfaces can be hazardous. • Do not climb or lean on dwelling walls. • Beware of cactus plants, aggressive bees, and venomous animals like scorpions, spiders, snakes, and Gila monsters. If you encounter a rattlesnake, back up slowly and tell a ranger. • Do not collect or disturb any plants, animals, or archeological objects; federal law protects them. • For firearms regulations check the park website.

Emergencies call 911

More Information Tonto National Monument is one of over 400 parks in the National Park System. Learn more about the national parks at www.nps.gov.

Tonto National Monument
26260 N. Arizona HWY 188, #2
Roosevelt, AZ 85545
928-467-2241
www.nps.gov/tont
Follow us on social media.



Ringtail
© DAVID WELLING

National Park Foundation.
Join the park community.
www.nationalparks.org

©GPO:2021-416-165/82783 New in 2019

Desert landscape
© JABON EAGAR

Who else lives at the park?

How can a place at the edge of the Sonoran Desert be home to over 200 species of wildlife and lush plant life? A dynamic landscape reveals the answer.

Ancient seas, sediment layers, and erosion formed the valley. Block uplifts, deposits, and erosion formed the mountains.

During the Salado Phenomenon the Salt River and Tonto Creek left rich soils that nourished people, animals, and plants. Cycles of flooding and drought were disastrous, yet many species adapted to the rugged terrain.

Adult javelina
with offspring
© WILDNATUREIMAGES/RON NIEBRUGGE



Black-tailed
jackrabbit
© GAIL WEST



Arizona black rattlesnake
© MELISSA AMARELLO



Elevation changes and water availability create habitats in desert, semi-desert, and wetland environments.

As you explore the variety of life that makes its home here, which animals and plants will you discover?

Saguaro
NPS/JANE HANNA



Canyon wren
© TOM GREY

Teddy bear cholla
© LON BREHMER AND ENRIQUETA FLORES-GUEVARA



Mountain lion
© DIEMEL MONDHER



Prickly pear cactus
© MARK BYZEWSKI

Canyon tree frog
© BRYAN SMITH

Gila monster
© CAMERON ROGNAN

