

Montezuma Castle

Tuzigoot

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

National Monuments
Arizona





Montezuma Castle



Tuzigoot

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Ancient Farmers of the Verde Valley

Montezuma Castle and Tuzigoot welcome you to the world of the Southern Sinagua, a prehistoric culture that once flourished in the Verde Valley. Although people living as hunters and gatherers occupied the Verde Valley for thousands of years, advances in agriculture and architecture here are attributed to the influence of two neighboring cultures—the Hohokam to the south and the Northern Sinagua to the north.

The first permanent settlements in the Verde Valley resembled those of the Hohokam (Pima for “those who have gone”) culture, which extended throughout southern and central Arizona. Between 700 and 900 CE (Common Era) some Hohokam moved north into the valley. These skilled farmers grew

corn, beans, squash, and cotton using a variety of techniques that included canal irrigation. They are also known for producing red-on-buff pottery and constructing ballcourts. Dwellings were one-room pithouses built on terraces overlooking their fields in the bottomlands.

Above-ground masonry dwellings are attributed to Northern Sinagua (Spanish for “without water”) influence or migration into the valley by about 1125. Northern Sinagua culture centered around present-day Flagstaff. Small structures and later pueblos, like those built by Ancestral Puebloan people living north of the Mogollon Rim, were built along major streams in the valley. By 1150, Southern Sinagua

began building large pueblos, often on hilltops or in cliffs. Montezuma Castle and Tuzigoot villages reached their maximum size in the 1300s and were occupied for another century.

No one knows why the Southern Sinagua abandoned their pueblos by the early 1400s. Possible explanations include overpopulation, depletion of natural resources, disease, conflicts within and between groups, changes in weather patterns, and perhaps even spiritual beliefs. Whatever the reasons, some Southern Sinagua may have migrated to pueblo villages to the north or Hohokam villages to the south, while others may have stayed in the valley and returned to hunter-gatherer ways.

Daily Life of the Southern Sinagua

While the Southern Sinagua lived principally by farming, they supplemented their staple crops by hunting and gathering. Their surroundings supplied them with an abundance of resources. There was water in the river and streams, fertile land alongside the waterways, and sufficient game—including deer, antelope, rabbit, bear, muskrat, and duck—to augment a diet that relied heavily on corn. They also mined a salt deposit located a few miles from the present town of Camp Verde, and there is evidence that salt was traded widely throughout the region.

The Southern Sinagua were fine artisans. They fashioned stone tools of the usual variety: axes, knives, and hammers, as well as manos and metates for grinding corn. Their crafts included bone awls and needles, handsome woven garments of cotton, and ornaments of shell, turquoise, and a local red stone (argillite) for personal decoration.



NPS/WILLIAM A. BAKE

The Sinagua Room in the Tuzigoot Visitor Center gives us a glimpse of everyday life in Puebloan times. Family tasks included grinding corn, cooking, weaving cloth from locally grown cotton,

drying skins, and making baskets. Two items suggest the trade network of the Southern Sinagua: macaws were traded in from Mexico, and some decorated pottery came from the north.

Another one of their specialties was reddish-brown pottery, undecorated but highly polished. These plain vessels probably were used for cooking and storage. The decorated pottery vessels found at archeological sites in this area were acquired through trade with neighbors to the north, south, and east.

The Southern Sinagua built their pueblos from locally available materials. The cobble walls at Tuzigoot are massive but poorly balanced. The limestone at Montezuma Castle is fairly soft and splits unevenly. Yet Montezuma Castle, which admittedly is protected from the elements, was so well built that it has stood for over 600 years and is one of the best-preserved prehistoric structures in the Southwest.

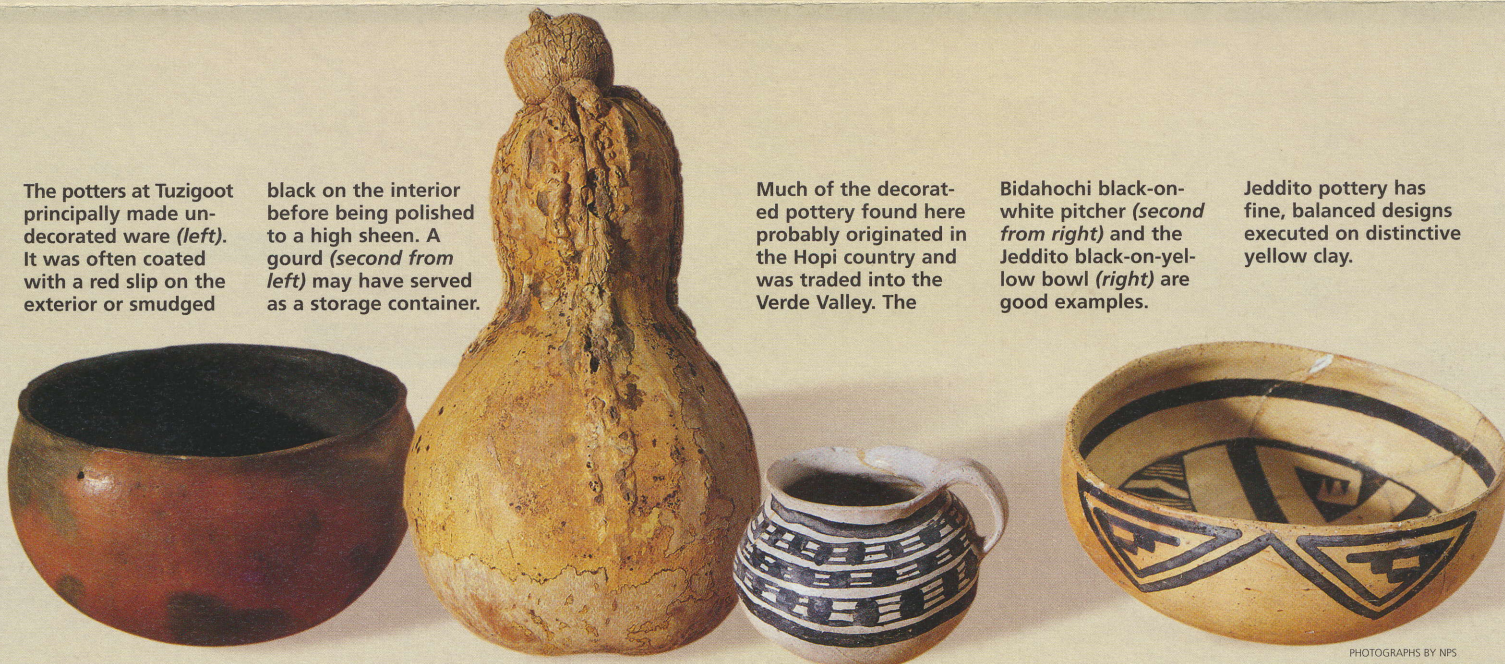
The potters at Tuzigoot principally made undecorated ware (*left*). It was often coated with a red slip on the exterior or smudged

black on the interior before being polished to a high sheen. A gourd (*second from left*) may have served as a storage container.

Much of the decorated pottery found here probably originated in the Hopi country and was traded into the Verde Valley. The

Bidahochi black-on-white pitcher (*second from right*) and the Jeddito black-on-yellow bowl (*right*) are good examples.

Jeddito pottery has fine, balanced designs executed on distinctive yellow clay.

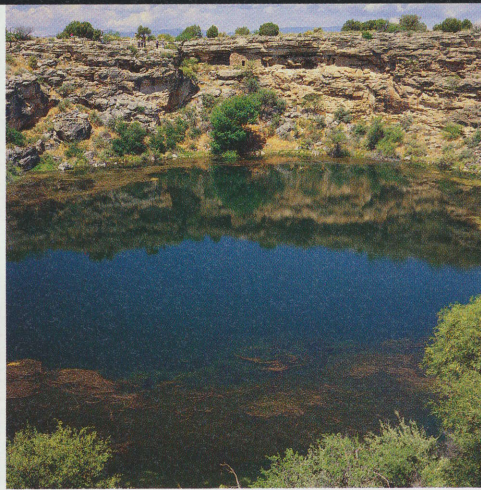


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Visiting the Parks



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Montezuma Castle

Southern Sinagua farmers began building this five-story, 20-room dwelling (*above*) early in the 1100s CE (Common Era). It stands in a cliff recess 100 feet above the valley. Early settlers marveled at the structure and assumed that it was Aztec in origin, hence the name Montezuma Castle. A short distance west is Castle A, once an imposing six-story apartment-like building with about 45 rooms. It is now badly deteriorated. This dwelling was built against the base of the cliff. The creek was a reliable source of water, and there was fertile land on the nearby terrace.

Location Montezuma Castle National Monument and Montezuma Well are 50 miles south of Flagstaff, Ariz., off I-17. Tuzigoot National Monument is 50 miles south of Flagstaff via U.S. Alt. 89, the scenic road through Oak Creek Canyon.

Activities Montezuma Castle and Tuzigoot both have visitor centers with exhibits on prehistoric Southern Sinagua people who lived in this region. All three sites have short, hard-surfaced walking trails.

Montezuma Well

Montezuma Well has all the surprise of a lake and fairly lush vegetation in the midst of desert. The well is a limestone sink formed long ago by the collapse of an immense underground cavern. The springs that feed it flow continuously. The Southern Sinagua irrigated crops with its waters. Traces of their irrigation ditches, thickly coated with lime, can be seen in the park. The Hohokam pithouse on view was built about 1100. Southern Sinagua dwellings here vary in size from large pueblos of 50 rooms to one-room houses. Between 1125 and 1400 about 150 to 200 Southern Sinagua people lived here.

For a Safe Visit Stay on trails. • Be alert for snakes. • Avoid overexposure to sun and heat.

Related Sites Other National Park Service sites illustrative of the Sinagua people are Walnut Canyon National Monument, just

outside Flagstaff, and Wupatki National Monument, 45 miles north of Flagstaff on U.S. 89. Also on U.S. 89, Sunset Crater Volcano National Monument is the site of volcanic eruptions that had a significant influence on Sinagua culture.

Tuzigoot

Tuzigoot (Apache for “crooked water”) is the remnant of a Southern Sinagua village built between 1125 and 1400. It crowns the summit of a long ridge that rises 120 feet above the Verde Valley. The original pueblo was two stories high in places, with 77 ground-floor rooms. There were few exterior doors; entry was by way of ladders through openings in the roofs. The village began as a small cluster of rooms inhabited by about 50 persons for 100 years. In the 1200s the population doubled and then doubled again as refugee farmers, fleeing drought in outlying areas, settled here.

Montezuma Castle and Tuzigoot National Monuments are two of over 380 parks in the National Park System. Visit www.nps.gov to learn more about parks and National Park Service programs in America's communities.

More Information Montezuma Castle and Tuzigoot National Monuments P.O. Box 219 Camp Verde, AZ 86322 928-567-3322 www.nps.gov/moca www.nps.gov/tuzi

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0 5 10 Kilometers
0 5 10 Miles

Unpaved road

PRESCOTT
NATIONAL
FOREST

COCONINO
NATIONAL
FOREST

Tuzigoot
National Monument

Montezuma Well

Montezuma Castle
National Monument

