

Anasazi State Park Museum



Utah State Parks

Who Were the Anasazi?

During the 15th and 16th centuries, the Navajo arrived in what is now the southwestern United States. Anasazi is a Navajo word interpreted to mean ancient enemies or enemy ancestors.

Ancestors of their foe, the modern Pueblo Indians, inhabited the area prior to the Navajo. What the Anasazi called themselves, however, probably never will be known. More recently, some archaeologists adopted the term Ancestral Pueblo, which suggests common ties with modern Pueblos.

Although Ancestral Pueblo is probably more accurate, archaeologists have used the term Anasazi for many decades, and it now is generally accepted. It refers to village-dwelling farmers who existed in the southern Colorado Plateau of the Four Corners region of Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, and southern Nevada between about A.D. 1 and 1300.



Coombs Site Excavation

Major excavations at the Coombs Site were undertaken by the University of Utah in 1958 and 1959. Small-scale excavations occurred in 1927 by the Peabody Museum and again by state parks staff between 1970 and 1991.

Excavations uncovered 97 rooms, 10 pit structures, and hundreds of thousands of artifacts. Although major structures have been identified, only about half the site has been investigated. Outlines of unexcavated rooms can be glimpsed across the site. Future excavations would undoubtedly modify some interpretations of the site.

Puebloan Life

Inhabitants of this site maintained cultural ties with the Kayenta Anasazi region of northeastern Arizona. However, trade items from Mesa Verde, Chaco Canyon, western Utah, and Arizona imply contact with many different people. Tree ring dates indicate that timbers used in structures were cut between A.D. 1129 and 1169, suggesting the site was in use during the middle of the 12th century.

More resources were available in this area than at many ancestral Pueblo villages. Inhabitants raised corn, beans, and squash but also depended upon wild game and native plants to supplement their diets. Surrounding mountains and canyons contained bighorn sheep, deer, small game and various plants that produced seeds, nuts and berries.

In spite of these advantages, life for ancestral Puebloans was tough by modern standards. Men averaged 5 feet 4 inches tall and women 5 feet 2 inches. Few people lived past 45 years, and average life expectancy was 33 to 35 years.

Village Abandonment

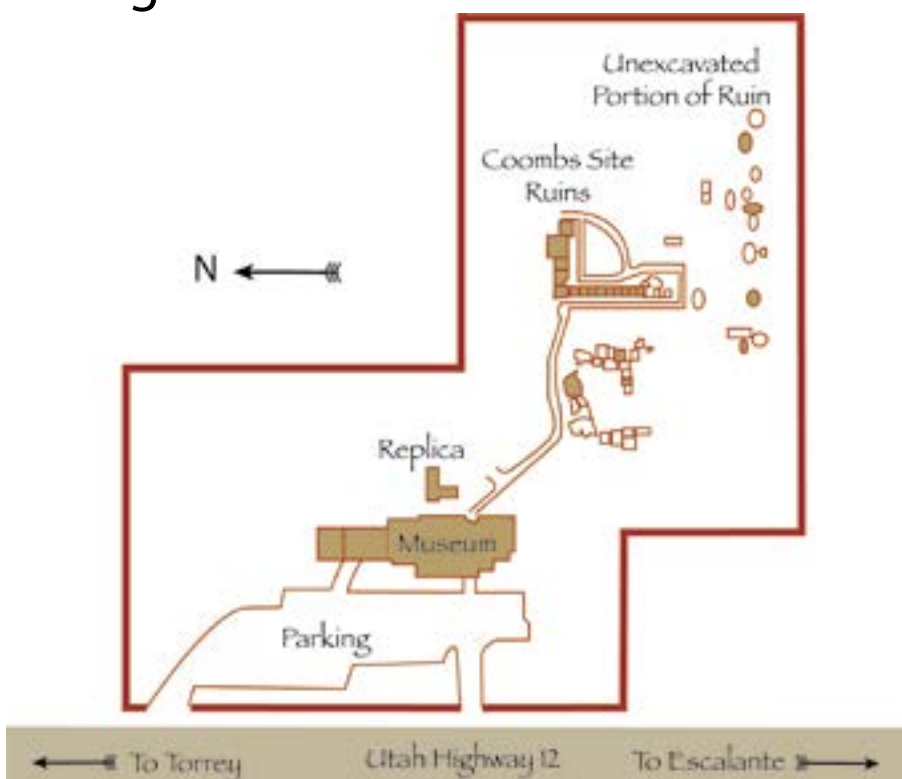
Village inhabitants departed about A.D. 1175 and never returned. Some possible causes may have been resource exhaustion, pressure from outsiders or population growth. Whatever the reason or reasons, the region was not reoccupied until the latter part of the 19th century. At or shortly after abandonment, the village was burned, possibly by the inhabitants. The villagers' fate is unclear, but they may

have returned to the Kayenta region and re-established themselves.

Museum

Interactive exhibits provide visitors the opportunity to grind corn using a mano and metate, identify seeds with a microscope, make rubbings of pottery designs, and listen to American Indians and archaeologists discuss the importance of preserving archaeological sites. There is an auditorium and gift shop.

A short trail from the visitor center leads to the Coombs Site Ruins and a life-size, six-room replica of part of the pueblo. The replica gives the visitor an idea of what life was like for the Anasazi between 800 and 900 years ago.



Cultural Resources

The Four Corners area contains archaeological and historical evidence of people who lived from hundreds to thousands of years ago. These fragile and irreplaceable clues to the past provide opportunities for the professional and nonprofessional alike to study how prehistoric people lived. Please treat the sites with respect, consideration, and care to ensure that future generations have a chance to appreciate our heritage.



Museum Hours

Open year round except for New Years, Thanksgiving, and Christmas.

Visit www.stateparks.utah.gov for daily hours.

Anasazi State Park Museum is in south central Utah along Utah Highway 12 in the beautiful ranching community of Boulder.

Your fees provide for the care, protection, and enhancement of this museum.

Address inquiries to:

Anasazi State Park Museum
PO Box 1429
Boulder, UT 84716-1429
(435) 335-7308

Utah State Parks
PO Box 146001
Salt Lake City, UT 84114-6001
(801) 538-7220
(877) UT-PARKS
(801) 538-7458 (TTY)
stateparks.utah.gov

Utah State Parks Mission

To enhance the quality of life by preserving and providing natural, cultural, and recreational resources for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations.

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