

Welcome to the...

TRAIL of the ANCIENTS

from Colorado



TRAIL of the ANCIENTS



A national scenic byway highlighting the long and intriguing occupation of the Four Corners region by Native American peoples. This route brings you to remote archaeological sites and significant cultural and historical sites in Arizona, Colorado, and Utah — crossing the beautiful and diverse landscapes of the Colorado Plateau. On this journey of discovery, you'll travel through the arid desert of northeast Arizona, the sandstone-rimmed canyons and green valleys of southwest Colorado, and the snow-capped mountains and red rock country of southeast Utah. The adventure on the Trail of the Ancients can begin at any point. Road conditions vary from paved highways to graded roads, some requiring stiff suspension or high clearance. Most stops are on or within a short distance of paved roads.

The area encompassed by the Trail Of The Ancients is truly “the archaeological heartland of America.” The Four Corners area has a dense and highly visible cultural heritage, including numerous archaeological sites, modern communities, and Indian lands. The earliest inhabitants of the area were nomadic peoples who lived in the area from at least 10,000 B.C., sustaining themselves by hunting game and gathering food plants.

The Ancestral Puebloans occupied the Four Corners area from approximately A.D. 1 to A.D. 1300 and left remarkable remnants of their civilization throughout the region. The Ancestral Puebloans developed a stable farming life revolving around large communities and established a rich mosaic of culture that survives even today among the pueblos of Arizona and New Mexico.

The Ute Indians also call this region home, although they also inhabited larger areas of Colorado and Utah, sustaining themselves on the plentiful food sources provided by a hunting and gathering lifestyle. The Utes moved between the mountains and the canyons, living in dispersed communities. With the confinement of the Ute peoples to federally designated reservations, sustenance shifted to ranching. Today there are vital Ute communities along the Trail at Towaoc in Colorado and White Mesa in Utah.

This vast area is also home for the Navajo. The name Navajo was first used by Spanish explorers, but the people call themselves Diné, “The People.” Until recently, most Diné lived in small family communities scattered throughout the Navajo Reservation, the largest reservation in the continental U.S., containing about 16.5 million acres.

In the late 1800s, the Colorado Plateau experienced a ranching and farming boom that supported the thriving mining communities in the nearby San Juan Mountains. The railroad also played an important part in the development of this area. As the land was explored by these new settlers, small Anglo communities emerged throughout the Plateau.

The Trail Of The Ancients is a trail from the past to the future, from adventure to understanding. For an experience you'll never forget, join us along the Trail Of The Ancients.



Colorado

For information on stops in Colorado visit the Colorado Welcome Center 800-253-1616.

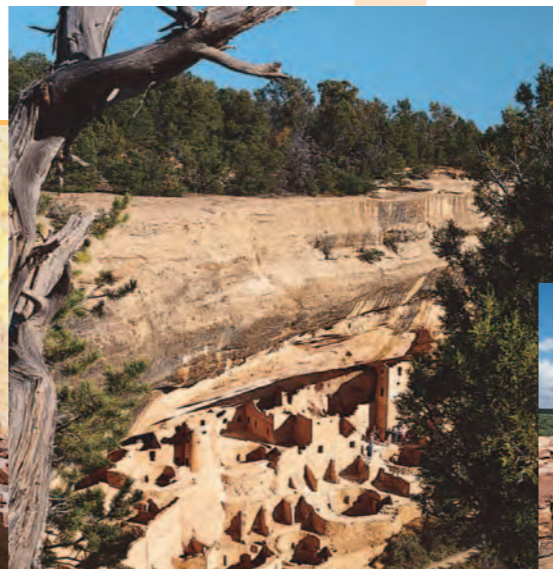
FOUR CORNERS MONUMENT 1

A truly unique landmark - the Four Corners Monument is the only place in the United States where four states meet at a single point. The monument is made of granite, bronze, and colored concrete with inserted metal plates of the great seals of Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, and Colorado. The flags of the four states and the Ute and Navajo nations fly over the monument. Native American vendors sell hand-made jewelry, crafts, and traditional foods. Open year-round. 🇺🇸 🚶 🚗 🚲 🚻

UTE MOUNTAIN TRIBAL PARK 2

The Tribal Park has been set aside to preserve remnants of the Ancestral Puebloan and Ute culture and is operated as a primitive area in order to protect the land's cultural and environmental resources. Tours are guided by Ute Indians who have a broad knowledge of the Ute and Ancestral Puebloan cultures. For the sake of preservation and protection, self-guided tours are not allowed. Call 800-847-5485 for tour reservations. Open seasonally. 🇺🇸 🚶 🚶 🚶

Tree House Kiva at Ute Mountain Tribal Park
Bernadette Heath



CORTEZ CULTURAL CENTER 3

Housed in a 1909 historic building, the Cultural Center is a forum for arts, education, and culture. The Center's museum has interpretive exhibits on the Ancestral Puebloan, Ute Mountain Ute, and Navajo. Native American dances are held at the Center Memorial Day through Labor Day, followed by in-depth Native American cultural programs. Open year-round Monday - Saturday. 🚶 🚶 🚶 🚻

COLORADO WELCOME CENTER 4

Visitors are always warmly received at the Colorado Welcome Center where free information on local, regional, and statewide attractions is available. The Center houses a small collection of Ancestral Puebloan artifacts as well as displays of regional Native American art. Open year-round. 🚶 🚶 🚶 🚻

MESA VERDE NATIONAL PARK 5

Spectacular cliff dwellings and numerous mesa-top villages built between A.D. 450 and A.D. 1300 provide an unparalleled opportunity to experience the life of the Ancestral Puebloan people. Mesa Verde National Park is a world renowned center for exploring this ancient culture by walking, driving, ranger-guided, or bus tours of the park. Mesa Verde, the first National Park set aside to preserve the works of humankind, has been designated a World Heritage Site and was recently voted #1 historic monument in the world and one of National Geographic Travelers “Fifty Places of a Lifetime”. Open year-round. 🇺🇸 🚶 🚶 🚶 🚶 🚶 🚶 🚶 🚶 🚶 🚶 (wheelchair accessible in some areas)

Left: Cliff Palace at Mesa Verde
Bill Proud

Below: Lowry Pueblo
Bill Proud



ANASAZI HERITAGE CENTER 7

A museum for interpreting the history and culture of the Four Corners region. The Center's hands-on Discovery Area, education programs, permanent exhibits, and films explore archaeology and local history, as well as Pueblo, Ute, and Navajo lifeways. Over three million artifacts from southwest Colorado are curated at the museum and available for research. Open year-round. 🇺🇸 🚶 🚶 🚶 🚻

LOWRY PUEBLO 9

This twelfth-century pueblo contains 40 rooms and eight kivas. A great kiva was constructed outside the village itself. Chacoan and Mesa Verde building styles are represented at this site. Open year-round, depending on road conditions. 🚶 🚶 🚶

CROW CANYON ARCHAEOLOGICAL CENTER 8

During the summer months, this archaeological research and education center provides full-day programs that explore the Ancestral Puebloan world through a site tour of a working excavation and a hands-on activity. Reservations are required for the day program; call 800-422-8975. 🇺🇸 🚶 🚶 🚶



Left: Anasazi Heritage Center

Below: Crow Canyon Archaeological Center
Bill Proud



THE GALLOPING GOOSE 6 RAILCAR AND MUSEUM

Explore the important role of the railroad in this area's history at the Rio Grand Southern Railroad Museum. Rio Grande Motor Car #5, also known as the Galloping Goose, has undergone complete restoration and stands in front of the museum as a monument to the “railroad era.” Open seasonally. 🚶 🚶 🚶 🚻

HOVENWEEP NATIONAL MONUMENT 10

Located in both Colorado and Utah, this site is shared by both states on the Trail of the Ancients. Six Ancestral Puebloan sites are located at Hovenweep. These sites were all erected around A.D. 1200 and are characterized by their unique square, oval, circular, and D-shaped towers. Square Tower site is easily accessible; to visit the other sites requires back-road travel and hiking. Open year-round. 🇺🇸 🚶 🚶 🚶 🚶 🚶

Montezuma's Castle at Hovenweep National Monument
Bill Proud



TRAIL of the ANCIENTS



Utah

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from Utah & Arizona

Utah



For information on the stops in Utah contact San Juan County Visitor Services at 800-574-4386.

EDGE OF THE CEDARS MUSEUM STATE PARK 12

Explore an Ancestral Puebloan site at this official archaeological repository. One of the largest and most comprehensive collections of artifacts from the Ancestral Pueblo, Navajo and Ute people, and Euro-American settlers is housed in this museum. Open year-round. ♿ 🚗 📶 📶 📶

BUTLER WASH PUEBLOAN CLIFF DWELLINGS 13

Notable for its circular and rectangular kivas, this site was possibly inhabited by people from Mesa Verde or the area around Kayenta, Arizona. This Pueblo III site was active during the A.D. 1200s. 3/4 mile round trip hike to viewing area. Open year-round. 🚗

COMB RIDGE 14

This serrated sandstone ridge is a geologic monocline. It begins in the Blue Mountains to the north and ends near Kayenta, Arizona 80 miles to the south. Unmaintained roads lead to scenic areas, archaeological sites, and primitive camping. Open year-round depending on road conditions. 🏠 🚗



Edge of the Cedars State Park
Edge of the Cedars State Park

Right:
Annual International Bluff
Balloon Festival
Bill Proud

Front cover:
(Utah)
Monument Valley
Robert Ribera



VALLEY OF THE GODS 18

Tucked at the foot of Cedar Mesa, this rugged landscape holds numerous monoliths. The drive through the valley is 17 miles long. Best light for viewing is early morning or evening. Open year-round depending on road conditions. 🚗 🏠 📶

GOOSENECKS STATE PARK 19

Located on the rim 1,500 feet above the Great Goosenecks of the San Juan River, this park provides the most striking example of an "entrenched river meander" in North America and a glimpse into 300,000 million years of geology. Open year-round. 🚗 🏠

SAND ISLAND 21

Not an island at all, this popular launch site for float trips on the San Juan River is also the location of a large petroglyph panel displaying rock art from 800 to 2,000 years old. The panel presents a comprehensive overview of the rock art found all along the San Juan River. Open year-round. 🚗 🏠 🏠

HISTORIC TOWN OF BLUFF 20

Bluff, the oldest Anglo community in southeast Utah, founded in 1880, has been home to people for thousands of years. The original fort still stands and many surviving homes, evidence of the wealth of the community during the Victorian era, are in use. Enjoy hikes to nearby rock art and archaeological sites or a walking tour of the historic town. 🚗 🏠 📶 📶 📶

NATURAL BRIDGES NATIONAL MONUMENT 16

Although it was discovered by Anglo explorers in 1883, native peoples used this area for many years before. Trails lead to each bridge and a comprehensive trail traverses the canyon bottom. Small archaeological sites are scattered throughout the canyon. Recently designated the first National Dark Sky Park, as well as the first NPS park to be solar powered. Open year-round. (wheelchair accessible in some areas) 🚗 🏠 📶 📶 📶



Owachomo Bridge at Natural Bridges National Monument
National Park Service

Arizona



Arizona

For information on the stops in Arizona contact Tourism Information at 800-842-8257.

CANYON DE CHELLY NATIONAL MONUMENT 24

The sheer red rock canyons and rock formations of Canyon De Chelly shelter hundreds of prehistoric Indian sites, including many cliff dwellings. Navajo tribal members still live in the canyon, raising sheep and cattle and growing crops. A visitor center offers exhibits and cultural displays. Visitors into the canyon must be accompanied by a park-authorized Navajo guide. Open year-round. 🚗 🏠 📶 📶 📶 (wheelchair accessible in some areas)

NAVAJO NATIONAL MONUMENT 23

Spectacular cliff dwellings—Betatakin and Keet Seel—are located in the Monument's canyons. A visitor center includes displays, an overlook of Betatakin, and a nature trail. Hikes into the canyon are possible only with permits or on ranger guided tours. The Monument is open year-round, but hikes to Betatakin and Keet Seel are available only from Memorial Day to Labor Day. 🚗 🏠 📶 📶 📶 (wheelchair accessible in some areas)

Below: Canyon de Chelly Bill Proud



Monument Valley window
Jim McCarthy

GRAND GULCH PRIMITIVE AREA 17

Ancient communities thrived in Grand Gulch for more than 1,000 years. The fifty-two mile long canyon contains pictographs and petroglyph panels and sites from the Basketmaker and Pueblo periods. Travel is limited to hiking or horseback. A variety of permits and fees are applicable. Open year-round, weather permitting. 🚗 📶 📶 📶

MULE CANYON RUIN 15

This well-preserved Pueblo surface site includes a partially reconstructed kiva and residence unit, as well as informative signing. Open year-round. 🚗 🏠 📶

SOUTHEAST UTAH WELCOME CENTER 11

Information is provided by the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, US Forest Service, San Juan County, Canyonlands Natural History Association, and the City of Monticello. Brochures, maps, books, and other media are available. Open daily March–October with abbreviated hours November–February. 🚗 🏠 📶

MONUMENT VALLEY 22

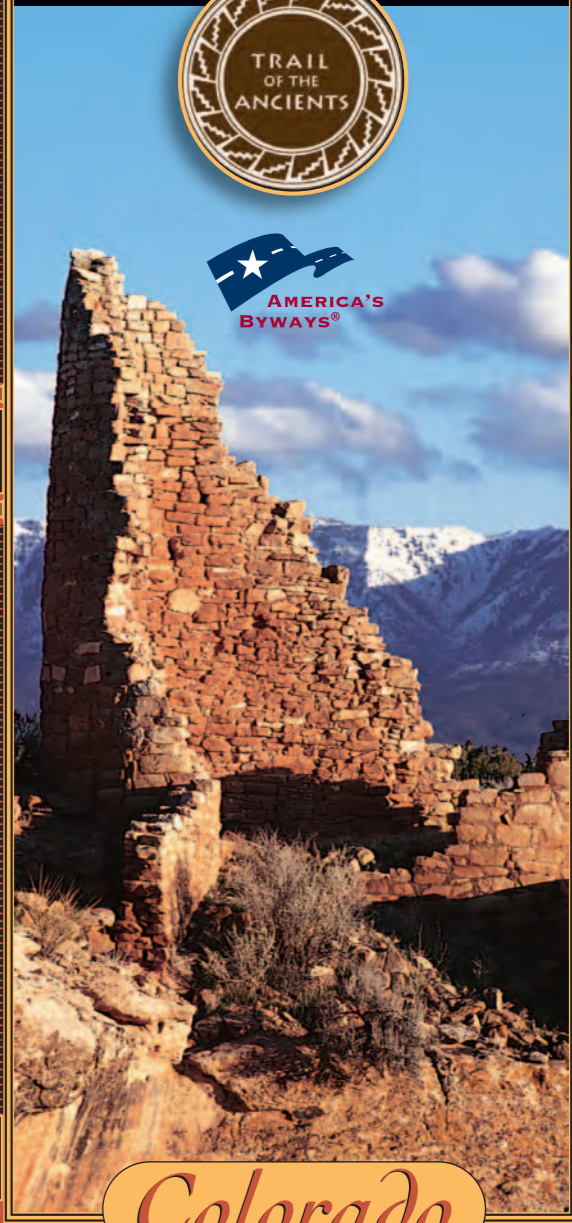
Captivating at any time of the year, picture perfect views await around every bend. The buttes, mesas, canyons, and free-standing formations reveal their greatest beauty at sunrise and sunset. Guided tours are recommended and available at the Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park or at Gouldings Lodge. Open year-round. (wheelchair accessible in some areas) 🚗 🏠 📶 📶 📶



Below: Left & Right Mitten buttes in Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park
Gouldings Lodge



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Colorado