

The Grand Canyon of the Colorado River is the major topographic feature of the Colorado Plateau. Elevation ranges from 8,800 feet/2,860 meters above sea level on the North

Rim to 2,000 feet/610 meters above sea level along the Colorado River. Within this range of elevation, wide variation is found in both the plant and animal life. Aspen, fir, spruce, and ponderosa pine trees found at higher elevations are replaced by desert cactus and shrubs in the inner canyon. Animal life changes as well, from mule deer, coyote, and mountain lion on the rims to bighorn sheep, lizards, and other desert animals within the canyon.

Split-twig figurines made of willow and cottonwood are the earliest definitive evidence of human occupation of the canyon. These artifacts have been found in caves in the Redwall Formation below the rim where they were left 3,000 to 4,000 years ago. The people who made them are thought to have followed a hunting and gathering lifestyle known as Archaic, and most likely they made the figurines for purposes of imitative hunting magic. Arrowheads made by the Archaic people have been found in the inner canyon, as well as on the canyon rims. These early people adjusted their hunting and gathering lifestyle to the environment based on seasonal availability of plants and animals. They would have lived on the rim in the summer and in the canyon during the cold months.

Photo Above: Split-twig figurines have been found throughout Grand Canyon and are believed to be relics of ritual practices. NPS photo

Recent research has provided a hint that people used the canyon earlier than 4,000 years ago. A portion of a paleo-Indian projectile point has been found, opening the possibility that people were in the canyon as early as 10,000 years ago.

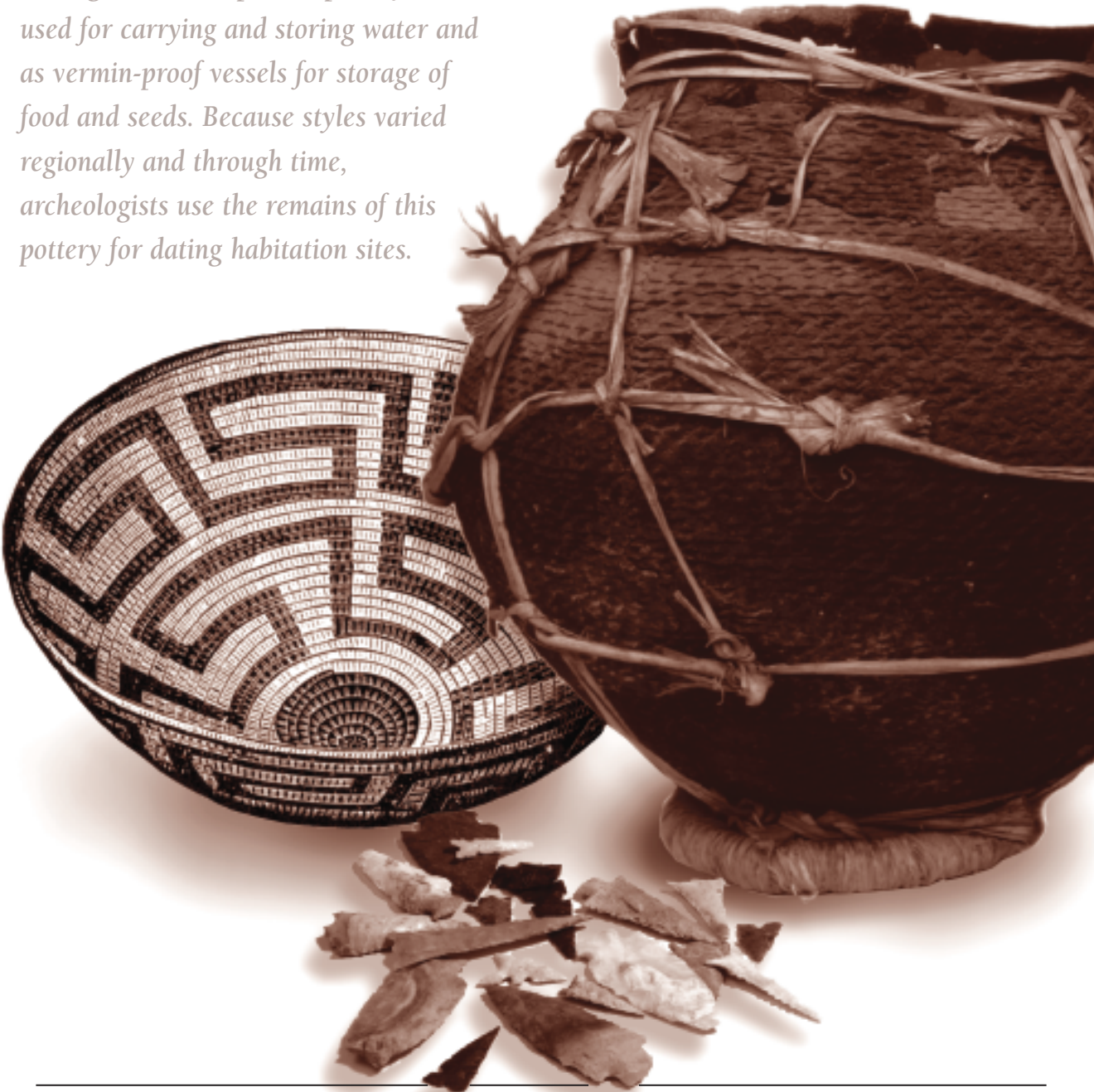
Regardless of exactly how long ago people lived in the canyon, occupation continued from early Archaic times through the period of time known as Basketmaker. During this time, nearly 2,000 years ago, the lifestyle of the people became more settled. They built pithouse dwellings and, as the name suggests, made baskets.

Permanent masonry dwellings and pottery appeared about 1,200 years ago, during the Pueblo period. At Grand Canyon two separate cultural groups from this period have been identified. Both ancestral Pueblo people and the Cohonina left pottery, chipped stone, and the remains of their houses as reminders of their presence. These people lived at Grand Canyon for at least 500 years, after which they migrated from the area. The Pueblo period was characterized by farming, hunting, and gathering. People lived in houses constructed of stone and mud, similar to modern-day pueblos.

As you tour Walhalla Glades you will stop at six rooms that were common to most structures of the Pueblo period. The map of the ruins will serve as a reference as you are guided through this ancient dwelling.

Photo Right: Large ollas such as the pot above were fitted with fiber lattice for carrying as much as twenty gallons of water. Photo by Tony Marinella, courtesy of the Museum of Northern Arizona

During the Pueblo period, pottery was used for carrying and storing water and as vermin-proof vessels for storage of food and seeds. Because styles varied regionally and through time, archeologists use the remains of this pottery for dating habitation sites.



Further reading: Archaeology of the Grand Canyon: The Walhalla Plateau by Schwartz, Douglas W., Jane Kepp, and Richard C. Chapman; Grand Canyon Archaeological Series, vol. 3, 1981, School of American Research Press, Santa Fe.

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Walhalla Glades



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Grand Canyon National Park

Walhalla Glades Pueblo

Nine hundred years ago, people were living at Walhalla Glades. The site was a summer home to families for over 100 years. Walhalla Plateau is a “peninsula” surrounded on three sides by the Grand Canyon. The elevation in this area is a bit lower than most of the North Rim of Grand Canyon, and updrafts of warm air from the inner canyon allow the winter snows to melt earlier from Walhalla Plateau than from other rim areas. This made Walhalla a favorable place for ancestral people to farm.

More than 100 farm sites have been found on Walhalla Plateau, all occupied between A.D. 1050 and A.D. 1150. These sites usually consist of small, one-room structures known as field houses and agricultural terraces or garden plots where corn, beans, and squash were grown.

It is hard to say how many people lived here at one time, but there may have been not more than twenty. It is likely that the large rooms were living quarters, the small rooms used for storage.

Additional food storage was found on the small “island” visible from the overlook. Sky Island, as it is known, contains the remains of fifteen rooms, eleven of which were used for storage. The remaining four were used for food processing. A good example of one kind of storage room, a granary, can be seen on the Cliff Spring Trail (see map on reverse).

During winter the people moved back into the canyon, probably to Unkar Delta along the Colorado River, where they had been living for at least 200 years. On Unkar evidence suggests that population size increased over the years to a point where farming the delta alone could not produce enough food for all the families. Use of Walhalla Glades for farming could have been a direct result of the shortage of food on Unkar Delta.

Archeologists can understand much about the people who lived here by examining the size of the rooms, their relation to other rooms and other sites, and the kinds of artifacts found. Detailed study reveals the time during which people lived at a particular site, what they ate, where materials came from, and how they provided for themselves. The key to unraveling the questions of the past lies in the artifacts found on the site. Without artifacts, only part of the story can be told. If you find a site, the most important thing to remember is not to move artifacts or take anything away. The position of the artifacts and the artifacts themselves allow the archeologist to interpret the site. Not only will disturbing the site destroy valuable information, it is illegal. Federal penalties can be imposed upon anyone who disturbs an archeological site. If you find a site while at Grand Canyon, mark its location on a map, take pictures if you have a camera, and contact the park archeologist or a park ranger. By doing this, you will help preserve the valuable pieces of our past.

Walking Tour of Walhalla Glades

Stop 1

Room A: Rooms A and B are the oldest parts of the structure, though debris-filled pits beneath them suggest that people lived at this site even earlier. The rooms were made of shaped limestone slabs built up from ground level. At the time of excavation, rock rubble filled the rooms, suggesting that the walls of the rooms were higher and built completely of rock. Remains of adobe and beams in the rubble indicate that the rooms had roofs through which people entered by ladder.

Stop 2

Room B: Near the north wall of this room is a small, slab-lined fire pit. A total of eight hearths like this one, used for cooking and heating rooms, were found at this site.

Stop 3

Rooms C & D: A short time after rooms A and B were built, these two rooms were added to the structure. The walls were built of large unshaped limestone blocks set on edge. Entry into room D was probably through the roof, and the two rooms were connected by an entryway that can still be seen. The amount of rubble found during excavation suggests that these walls were masonry up to the roof. In rooms C and D postholes, perhaps for roof supports, were found during excavation. Burned and unburned adobe and charred beams give further evidence of the type of roof used.

Stop 4

Room D: The on-edge placement and size of this large limestone slab are unusual. Archeologists do not know if it had a special function. Notice the lichen growing on the face of the rock. The portion of the rock that has no lichen was below ground before excavation of the site. If you had visited the site before excavation, your feet would be as high as the lichen line of the rock.

Stop 5

Rooms E & F: These two small rooms, which contain no evidence of full masonry walls or roofs, were built sometime after the larger rooms. Their size and location suggest that they were used for storage.

Stop 6

Rooms G, H, & I: These rooms were not as well constructed as the larger rooms, and there is no evidence of full walls or roofs. It is possible that these rooms—the larger room I and the smaller rooms G and H—were built and occupied by that last people to live at the site after the rest of it burned.

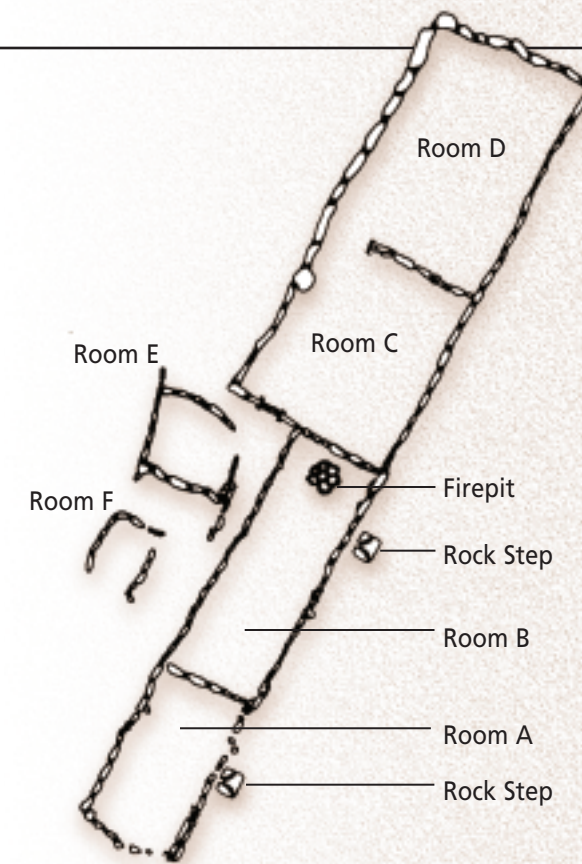
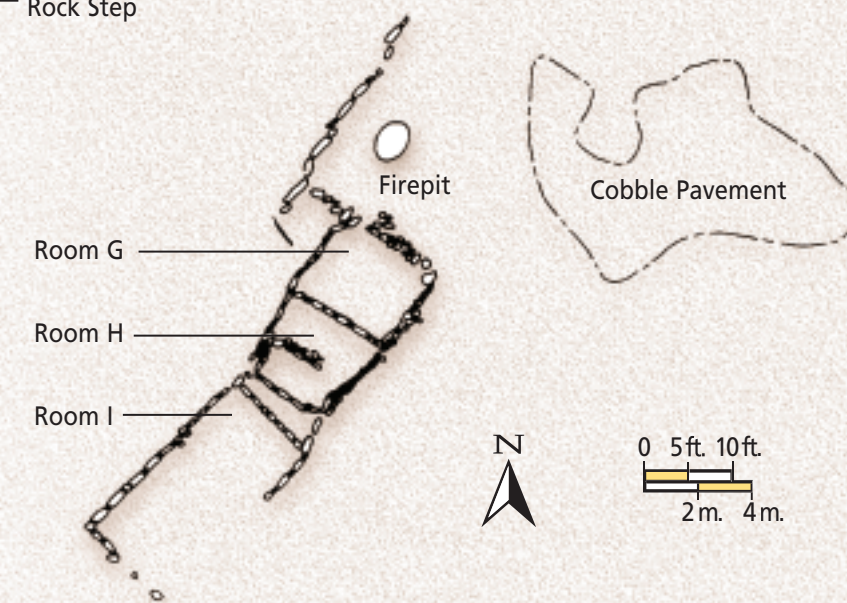


Illustration Above: An artist's conception of many of the daily activities of the Pueblo people over 800 years ago. Painting by Roy Anderson (original painting displayed at the Tusayan Museum on the South Rim).



Please do not walk on the walls.