

Rules for Visiting Chaco Culture National Historic Park

Please review these rules with your group before visiting the park.

We want you to have an enjoyable and safe time visiting the park. We urge you to care for this special place so that other people can have the same experience. Historical and cultural parks are very special places and require that we take extra care to preserve them. Once a cultural site is harmed, it cannot be repaired, and we all lose an important part of our history.

1. Wherever you go in the park, walk softly on the earth and leave no trace.

Walk and hike on the established trails in order to protect the fragile cultural sites, the fragile desert soils, and the desert plants. Walking off the trails can trample the soils and plants, and damage the cultural sites. Do not shortcut trails. This causes erosion. Please hike in small groups so that everyone has room to stay on the trail, and no one gets lost or separated from the group.

2. Look with your eyes, not with your fingers.

Sometimes it can be tempting to pick up and remove things. The plants, rocks, animals, and artifacts are protected in all national parks and must be left where you see them. If you disturb or remove an artifact, it will destroy the information we may someday gain from that item in the original context. Artifacts are an important part of our shared history and belong where they were left centuries before. Take a photo of the artifact or sketch the design instead.

3. Please respectfully visit this special place.

These sites are part of the history and traditions of the Pueblo peoples of New Mexico, the Hopi in Arizona, and the Navajo people, who continue to respect and honor them. Please treat these sacred places respectfully.

4. Running, yelling, and loud play are not appropriate in Chaco Culture National Historic Park.

You share the park with other citizens of the United States and the world. Quiet, respectful visitation is expected in the park. We want you to have fun and enjoy your visit to Chaco, but remember that Chaco is an outdoor museum, not a playground. Leave rocks where they are as the Chaco people may have placed them over 1100 years ago for a very special reason. Never throw rocks from the tops of the cliffs. Never write or scratch your name on rocks on canyon walls. Do not touch, chalk, or add to the petroglyphs.

5. Stay off of the buildings.

The 1100 year old walls of the Chaco buildings are very fragile! Help preserve the walls by not climbing, sitting, or walking on them. Some of the rocks are loose, and you can easily fall off, so take care of your own safety too.

6. Your safety is important.

Please pay attention to your surroundings, where you walk, and what you do, so that you can prevent injury to yourself and others. Many of the trails are rough and uneven. Always be careful and watchful for holes, rocks, and drop offs along the trails and paths. Do not climb on the boulders; many are loose and unstable.

7. Drink plenty of water and eat snacks.

Do not hike or go on a guided walk on an empty stomach. Be sure to take plenty of water to drink along the way. Fainting and heat exhaustion are our most common medical problems. Lack of food and water is the main cause.

8. Watch the weather; stay away from cliffs and over looks when there is lightning and thunder.

When touring the park, be aware of the weather. Thunderstorms at Chaco are frequently accompanied by lightning and can be very dangerous. Watch dark clouds and seek shelter when a storm is near. During the rainy season (July to September) carry a raincoat or a poncho with you.