

# Photo Summary of Field Trip to Tonto National Monument Upper Ruin Cliff Dwelling

February 19, 2023

Led by Sharon DuBose, RCC President; Coordinated by Brent Reed, Board Member  
Most Photos by Dennis DuBose. Some by Lou Jackson.

Sponsored by Rim Country Chapter (RCC) of the Arizona Archaeological Society (AAS)  
Guides provided by the National Parks Service.

All text and captions to these photos are by Dennis DuBose. Dennis DuBose is responsible for all inaccuracies in this text and these captions. Photos are by Dennis DuBose unless otherwise noted.

Nine Field Trippers from Rim Country Chapter and several other AAS Chapters assembled at the Tonto National Monument off Highway 188 in Tonto Basin. There are two Cliff Dwellings at the Monument. The Lower Ruin, a short climb on a paved trail above the Visitor's Center, is open for self-guided tours. The Upper Ruin can only be visited with a Guide by appointment. The Upper Ruin is more remote, requires a 600 foot climb up a rocky trail, and needs some guidance. The National Park Service provided a Guide and an Assistant Guide for the hike up to the Upper Ruin. The Guide paused frequently along the trail so hikers could catch their breath and sip some water. The nominal excuse for the pauses was to point out various native plants whose remains had been found in the Tonto Cliff Dwellings and discuss their uses by the Prehistoric Americans who lived there 1250 to 1450 AD. Archaeologists classify these Prehistoric Americans as the Salado Culture.

Photo of the Lower Ruin by Lou Jackson ...



Although Field Trippers could visit the Lower Ruin on their own if they wished, the scheduled tour was to the Upper Ruin ... Photo of Upper Ruin by Lou Jackson...



Our Guide first sat us down to go over hike procedure and for an overview about the Cliff Dwellings and the People who built them and once lived in them...





On the trail in the beginning ... And about halfway up, with a glimpse of the Upper Ruin, while listening to our Guide explain the many uses of Yucca and Agave employed by the former inhabitants.





Our Guide called for a final rest, snack, and water stop just before entering the Upper Ruin. We left all food and packs here so as to not to contaminate the archaeological site. We were instructed to not leave any crumbs to attract rodents so close to the Ruin.



Entering Upper Ruin



At Upper Ruin ... The steps are modern additions, as are the temporary wooden braces holding up a leaning wall center right.



Guide Points to Braces



During recent weather and earth tremors this forward wall began to lean. I believe that this wall may have been reconstructed by early archaeologists decades ago.



Later, from inside the Ruin, we could look down to a time lapse camera monitoring the status of the wall.



Field Trippers begin to enter the interior of the Upper Ruin





The filled in doorway is to prevent visitors from using this route as an entry or exit and possibly damaging the structure or themselves. Going on into the rear of the Ruin ...







Inside is an interior rear courtyard and work area sheltered from the weather, shaded from the sun, yet open to light. The center area of the rear courtyard features a boulder with apparent grind holes and other work areas on it.

And the farther end has a spring water catch basin.





Although the spring water catch basin was “dry” at our visit, it has a small “weed” growing in it. According to our Guide, that weed has been there for at least ten years since he has been observing it and it is always green, never dries out, even though there appears to be no water at present.





Turning and looking out over the Upper Ruin walled structures, the view is magnificent, with Roosevelt Lake Reservoir far below ... Photos by Lou Jackson.



The Prehistoric Americans who built this village apparently deliberately did not build all the way up to the “cave” ceiling, leaving a broad gap overhead to let light into the rear courtyard ...



Photo by Lou Jackson

In one room some artifacts had been left on display by archaeologists: a Metate with some Manos, some Original Wood Beams





Many of the interior walls still preserved the finger strokes and even hand prints of the Prehistoric American workers who plastered them 800 or more years ago



On the way out, the Guide focused on a two story room passed by earlier. It still had some original wood beams in place and the remains of the floor/ceiling separating the two stories ...



The floor/ceiling originally extended out more, as shown by beam socket holes on the left and burnt beam ends on the right.





### Burnt Beam Stubs

According to our Guide, at one time long ago some campers chose to camp under this shelter and they built a fire for warmth. They put in too much fuel and ended up setting the overhead wooden floor on fire, destroying part of it.

Our guide retrieved a box he had hidden in this room in which he had some interesting artifacts that had been found in the Tonto Cliff Dwellings that were remarkably preserved due to the natural protection of the site.



Potsherd, Corn Cob, Quid, and two Squash Stem Pieces. The Quid is from a chunk of roasted agave, chewed to extract the sweet flesh, and then the fibrous Quid is spat out.

Setting out after a four hour tour ...



Still a long ways down to get back home...

