

Photo Summary of Field Trip to Wupatki National Monument

November 20, 2022

Coordinated and Led by Brent Reed (RCC Board Member)

Photos by Dennis DuBose, Mari Townsend, and Brent Reed

Sponsored by Rim Country Chapter (RCC) of the Arizona Archaeological Society (AAS)

This Field Trip included visits to Four Ruin Areas of Wupatki National Monument
Wupatki Pueblo complex, including pueblo, great kiva, ball court, and blowhole
Wukoki Pueblo Ruin
Box Canyon Ruins
Lomaki Pueblo Ruin

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Field Trippers from Rim Country Chapter and several other AAS Chapters assembled at the Wupatki National Monument Visitors' Center, arriving by self-arranged transportation. Wupatki National Monument is north of Flagstaff.

The Wupatki Pueblo Ruin Complex is a short walk behind the Visitor's Center.



Wupatki Pueblo Complex Features

Brent Reed arranged for park Archeologist Garrett to give the Field Trippers a narrated tour of the Wupatki Pueblo Ruin Complex.

This began with a stop at the overlook of the entire complex (see photo above), followed by a walk down the paved walkway to the Wupatki Pueblo, where several stops were made.



Full View of Wupatki Pueblo Ruin

Wupatki means “Long Cut House” in the Hopi Language. It is indeed a long narrow pueblo occupying a small ridge capped by boulders, a somewhat defensive position. It is the largest pueblo in the area, having about 100 rooms.



Field Trippers Entering Wupatki Pueblo Ruin



A Tall Doorway in Wupatki Pueblo Ruin

Photo by Brent Reed

This is unusual, as doorways are usually small, requiring a crawl to enter. This one was enlarged by Basque Sheepherders who camped in the ruin many years ago.



Looking up at the Far End of Wupatki Ruin from the Trail to the Great Kiva



Two RCC Field Trippers Examining Wall Masonry Construction at Backside of Wupatki



The Same Two RCC Field Trippers inside a Wupatki Pueblo Nearby Room.

Note the beam holes in the upper left edge for a ceiling/upper-floor. Normally, ceilings are not this high. Excavation indicated that the original lower room was abandoned and repurposed as a trash dump, raising the floor considerably. Then it was again repurposed as a room with higher floor and a room was added above, hence the beam holes.



Better View of Some of the Beam Holes



Nearby, Some Decorative Stone Construction

Photo by Mari Townsend



Backside of Wupatki Pueblo

Photo by Mari Townsend

Several broken Metate Grindstones are left by excavators scattered around.

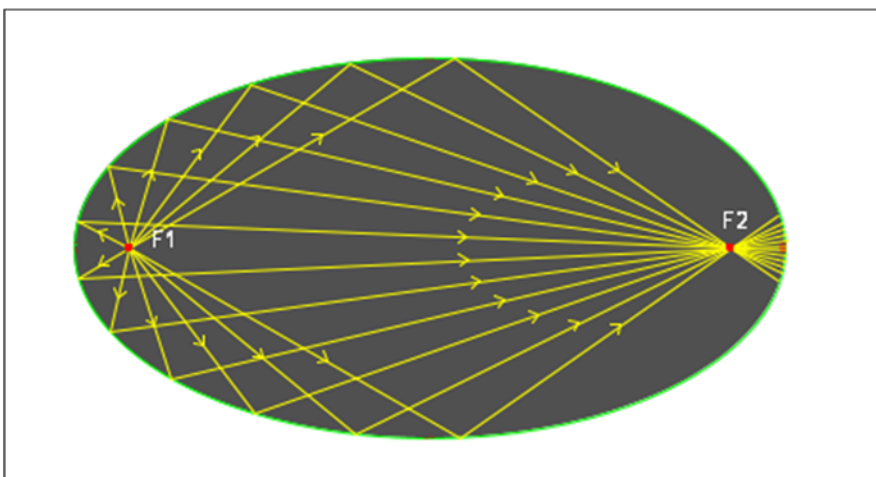
A second feature of the Wupatki Pueblo Complex is the Ball Court. It is commonly believed that the Prehistoric Americans who lived here used the court for playing a ball game something like the one played in MesoAmerica (Mexico).



Field Trippers in the Wupatki Ball Court

Photo by Mari Townsend

The Ball Court is roughly elliptical in shape. Our guide Garrett pointed out that if a person speaks softly at one focus of the ellipse, they can be clearly heard at the other focus. We tested it and it appeared to work.



Ellipse Showing How a Sound at Focus 1 is Reflected Off the Sides to Reconcentrate at Focus 2

Near the Ball Court is the Blow Hole. The Blow Hole was discovered in the mid-1960s during some excavations on the Ball Court. There was a rainstorm and it washed away dirt covering the Blow Hole. The excavators built a protective pen around the hole, which has since been replaced by the current one. It has a mesh screen down about a foot to keep people from throwing bottles and trash into it.

I have been at the Blow Hole several times during the summer, when the day is hot. I always found the Blow Hole then to be blowing out refreshing cool air. This time, however, in November the Blow Hole was sucking air in. It made a soft roar as it did so.



Feeling the Earth Breathe In

It is not known if the Blow Hole was open when the Prehistoric Americans lived at Wupatki. It is quite possible that it was known to them and they located here because of it. The Blowhole at Wupatki Pueblo was not the first one discovered in the area in modern times. Several were discovered beforehand and many more afterwards. The RCC November Meeting Speaker David Purcell gave an interesting presentation about

the history of Blow Holes in the area. Also, in 2021 he participated in a survey of Wupatki National Monument to determine if there was any association of Blow Holes with archaeological sites. The survey found dozens of such cases, many apparently marked by stones, shrines, or offerings.

The area is covered with fissures and cracks going down into the earth, many of them connected as far as 24 miles apart. Geologists estimate over seven billion cubic feet of air fills this underground system. The air coming out of the Wupatki Pueblo Blow Hole has been measured at times at 30 miles per hour.



Field Trippers Examine, Feel, and Hear the Wupatki Pueblo Ruin Blow Hole



A Few Field Trippers Visited the Great Kiva “Meeting Room” ...

But most just decided to look down on it, a good view from Wupatki Pueblo itself ...



Photo: Mari Townsend

Next, Field Trippers moved to nearby Wukoki Pueblo Ruin. Although it is smaller than the Wupatki Pueblo, Wukoki means “Big House” in the Hopi Language. Actually, early archaeologists used this name for Wupatki Pueblo. But popular references referred to it as Wupatki, so the name Wukoki was repurposed for this pueblo ruin.

Wukoki Pueblo appears to have been built entirely upon the top of a huge boulder.



Field Trippers Approach Wukoki Pueblo Ruin



Field Trippers in Wukoki Pueblo, Entering a Room



Apparent Original Wood Beam Stubbs of Upper Room Inside Wukoki Room



View Out From Wall Hole in Room ... Outside View of the Wall Hole, Back of Wukoki



Field Tripper in Wukoki Room takes in the Size and Height



Exiting a Room in Wukoki Pueblo



Field Trippers On Wukoki "Plaza"



Field Trippers Posing on Wukoki "Balcony," Taken from "Plaza" Photo by Brent Reed

Next, the Field Trippers headed down the road to visit a structure called the Citadel. Unfortunately, the trail to the Citadel was closed.



I have been up to the Citadel once many years ago. As I remember, it is a massive stone walled circle with a narrow entrance gap. It was apparently a place of potential refuge, not a habitation site.

So, skipping the Citadel, the Field Trippers went to the nearby Box Canyon Ruins, actually within sight.



Field Trippers standing next to one ruin while viewing another on the other side of Box Canyon left horizon and also Lomaki Ruin slight center right horizon.



Field Trippers by Nearside Box Canyon Ruin, Lomaki visible on Left Horizon



Same Ruin Viewed from Across Box Canyon



Field Trippers Gathering Near Lomaki Ruin Down-Canyon from Box Canyon Ruins



Field Trippers at Lomaki Pueblo Ruin

These three small pueblos are all built right on the edge of Box Canyon. This appears to be a defensive choice as the pueblos could only be approached from one side.



Inside a Room at Lomaki



Field Trippers at Lomaki Pueblo Ruin Looking Down at Box Canyon

Box Canyon is actually not a Canyon eroded by running water. It is a very large fissure opened up as the earth's surface tore apart.