



Native American Traditions

POTTERY FROM THE PUEBLOS

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PEOPLE OF THE PUEBLOS

ACOMA PUEBLO

Acoma Pueblo is in northwestern New Mexico between Gallup and Albuquerque. It is believed to be one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the United States, probably built before the 10th century.

Called “Sky City,” the pueblo is on top of a 357-foot sandstone mesa. The pueblo covers about 70 acres.

Today, fewer than 50 of the 3,000 Acoma live at the pueblo; most live in nearby villages.

COCHITI PUEBLO

The Pueblo de Cochiti is in north-central New Mexico, north of Albuquerque and southwest of Santa Fe on the banks of the Rio Grande. The pueblo has 53,779 acres of land, used for farming, livestock, recreation, and residential construction. The 1,175 pueblo members retain their native language, Keres. Each Cochiti belongs to a clan, and cultural traditions are strong. The ancient pueblo has been occupied since at least 1250 and continued to be the main residence of the Cochiti people through the historic period.

HOPI PUEBLOS

The Hopi Pueblos are situated on top of First Mesa, Second Mesa, and Third Mesa in northeastern Arizona. The Hopi live in 12 traditional villages with a total population of about 10,000. Hopi pottery is made at First Mesa villages. Second Mesa villages are noted for silver overlay jewelry and coiled plaques. Third Mesa communities focus on agriculture, textile weaving, and wicker baskets and plaques. The oldest Hopi village at First Mesa is Walpi, established in 1690. Second Mesa’s Shungopavi village was first at the base of the mesa and moved to the top of the mesa after the Pueblo Revolt of 1680. Oraibi of Third Mesa is another among the oldest continuously inhabited settlements in North America, established in 1100 at the base of the mesa and later moved to the mesa top.

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ISLETA PUEBLO

Just south of Albuquerque, Isleta Pueblo is in the Rio Grande Valley. It is one of the largest pueblos in New Mexico, with an area of more than 329 square miles. The pueblo has a population of about 4,000. Isleta Pueblo was established about 1200. The pueblo was destroyed after the 1680 revolt; the original Tigua Indians reoccupied it around 1710.

JÉMEZ PUEBLO

Jémez lands cover 88,000 acres northwest of Albuquerque and southwest of Santa Fe along the north bank of the Jémez River. The only remaining Towa-speaking pueblo in New Mexico, its 3,400 tribal members include descendants of the Pecos Pueblo, which was inhabited until 1838. When the Jémez country was first encountered by Coronado in 1541, the nation was among the largest and most powerful of the puebloan cultures with a population estimated at 30,000 members.

PICURIS PUEBLO

Picuris Pueblo is on the western slope of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains on 15,000 acres north of Santa Fe. Once the largest of the four Tiwa-speaking pueblos, it is now the smallest with about 340 inhabitants and 1,800 tribal members. The isolated pueblo along the banks of the Rio Pueblo was first occupied about 1250 in a migration from a larger pueblo, now in ruins, in the Pot Creek area.

SAN ILDEFONSO PUEBLO

The village of San Ildefonso, northwest of Santa Fe, is the most-visited northern pueblo in New Mexico. About 458 of the 1,500 tribal members live in the pueblo. The flourishing art community averages 20,000 visitors annually and is the center of the Pueblo arts revival. The people of San Ildefonso migrated from the Mesa Verde communities in southern Colorado to what is now Bandelier National Monument west of today's pueblo. A drought in the 1300s forced a move from the high mesas to the Rio Grande Valley.

SAN JUAN PUEBLO

Just north of Santa Fe, the 12,000 acres of the San Juan Pueblo is surrounded by farmland along the Rio Grande River. It has been inhabited for more than 700 years, with about 100 of the original buildings still standing. The largest of the Tewa-speaking pueblos, its population numbers 6,700. The pueblo is today the

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headquarters of the Eight Northern Indian Pueblos Council and home of the Oke-Oweenge Arts and Crafts Cooperative.

SANTA CLARA PUEBLO

The Tewa-speaking pueblo of Santa Clara, in the northwest corner of New Mexico on the west bank of the Rio Grande, has a population of 10,600 people. Their ancestors came from Puyé and Shufinne and they now act as caretakers for the Puyé cliff-dwelling ruins. Santa Clara Pueblo was established about 1550.

SANTO DOMINGO PUEBLO

Today's pueblo was built around 1700 after several earlier pueblos were destroyed by flooding along the Rio Grande in north-central New Mexico. It is near the ancient Cerrillos turquoise mines, and the village people maintain a tradition of jewelry-making. Its population of 3,100 makes it the largest of the Keresan pueblos and the fifth largest of the New Mexican pueblos.

TAOS PUEBLO

Taos is the northernmost of the New Mexico pueblos. Approximately 200 people among the population of 4,500 live at the pueblo full-time. Taos today functions like three towns: the business district of art galleries, restaurants, and shops; Taos Pueblo itself; and Ranchos de Taos, a farming and ranching community settled by the Spanish. Inside Taos Pueblo, the traditional way of life has endured, and no electricity or running water is allowed by tribal custom. The main parts of the present pueblo buildings were probably constructed between 1000 and 1450. Because the mica mixed with the adobe gave the buildings a golden sheen, the Spanish believed that Taos Pueblo was one of the legendary golden cities of Cibola. Hlauuma (north house) and Hlaukwima (south house) are the largest group of multistory pueblo dwellings and among the oldest continuously inhabited communities in the United States.

TESUQUE PUEBLO

Nine miles north of Santa Fe, the 17,000 acre Tesuque reservation is one of the state's smallest pueblos with a population of about 800. The pueblo has probably existed since 1200, although the village was abandoned after the Pueblo Revolt of 1680. The present site has been occupied since 1694.

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TIGUA PUEBLO

The Tigua Indians live in the Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, often called Tigua Pueblo. It lies on the southern boundary of El Paso, Texas and is the only Puebloan tribe still in the state. Their ancestral home was Pueblo Gran Quivera in New Mexico. First occupied around 800, by 1300 it was one of the largest pueblos in the southwest.

ZIA PUEBLO

Zia (or Sia) pueblo sits atop a small mesa near the Jémez River in the Sierra Nacimiento Mountains. The Keres-speaking pueblo once had eight plazas and 6,000 people, but its population today is just 650 members with two plazas surrounded by traditional dwellings. Their early ancestors are believed to be the Anasazi of Chaco Canyon and Mesa Verde. They claim Pueblo Bonita and Mesa Verde as their ancestral home. The Zia Pueblo has been occupied continuously since about 1250.

ZUÑI PUEBLO

The Zuñi Pueblo lies on the Zuñi River in western New Mexico near the Arizona border. It has a population of 7,750 people on a 259-square mile reservation. They speak the Zuñian language, which is unrelated to other Pueblo languages, but are believed to have descended from ancient Pueblo cultures of the desert southwest.