

# Monument Valley, Canyon de Chelly, Petrified Forest & More

This four-day trip will especially appeal to you if you'd enjoy traveling in Arizona's Navajo Country where the buttes, canyons and other scenery are like eye candy—dramatic, colorful and full of Wows! Full disclosure: We didn't particularly enjoy the landscape north and east of Flagstaff, but if you add some hills, moisture and plants over two feet tall, it would be OK.

What's special about Northeastern Arizona are Monument Valley's striking buttes, Canyon de Chelly's high red walls and Anasazi ruins, Petrified Forest's hard-as-rock trees, Painted Desert's color where there should be none, and the Navajo Nation's friendly people.

Because the average elevation of these areas is 5,600 feet (1,706 m), and they enjoy a dry climate, this is a good place to visit from spring through fall; June and September are best. If it were on the way to or from someplace, Northeastern Arizona would draw a lot more visitors. Still, nearly one million people trek to this remote area each year to see some of the most beautiful, unusual and interesting scenery in the United States.

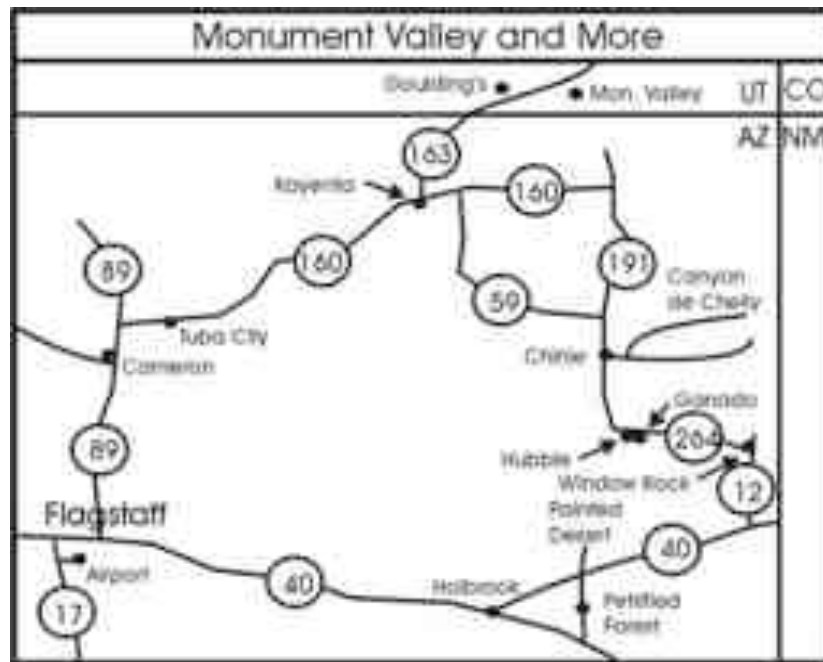
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## *Pathfinder* Newsletter

Summer 2012

Guided Tours of Cities, Towns, and National Parks in the American West  
by the authors of *Seven Perfect Days in Arizona*,  
*Seven Perfect Days in Northern California* and *Seven Perfect Days in Colorado*

So, how do you get to Monument Valley and those other special places? Our choice was via a U.S Airways connecting flight from Phoenix, AZ to Flagstaff, Arizona and then driving from there. (U.S. Airways is the only airline that operates out of Flagstaff.) Other fly-in choices include Las Vegas, NV, Albuquerque, NM and Durango, CO. If you opt for one of these, consider combining this trip with others that have been previously featured in *Pathfinder Newsletter*: “Phoenix, Scottsdale and Apache Trail,” “Sedona: Arizona’s Red Rock Country,” “Santa Fe and Taos: Art and Antiquity in New Mexico,” “Southwestern Colorado: Mountains, a Train Ride and Mesa Verde,” “Grand Canyon: More than a Hole in the Ground,” “Bryce, Capitol Reef and Zion: Crown Jewels of Utah,” and “The Wonders of Page, Arizona.” You can find free issues at [www.traveltheamericanwest.com](http://www.traveltheamericanwest.com).



## *The Day Before Day One*

The drive from Flagstaff to Monument Valley, mostly on Highways 89 and 160, is 182 miles, to just north of the Arizona-Utah border. Except for the San Francisco Mountains, which dominate the skyline around Flagstaff, the landscape is unremarkable until you get to about 80 miles south of Kayenta. By that time, you’ll be well into the Navajo Nation. *Here are two heads-up: 1) Arizona does not operate on Daylight Savings Time, but the Navajo Nation does. So during that period, you’ll need to set your watches one hour ahead when you get to Cameron. 2) If you enjoy an evening glass of wine or a cocktail, you’ll want to stock up in Flagstaff. Liquor cannot be purchased anywhere in the Navajo Nation, including restaurants.*

From Kayenta to Monument Valley, on Highway 163, you’ll see an increasing number of small buttes and larger cliffs comprised of the well-recognized formation called Canyon de Chelly Sandstone (de Chelly is pronounced d’Shay). The distinctive rock formation on your right

about seven miles (11 km) north of Kayenta is 1,500-foot-high (457 meter) Agathla Peak, known locally as El Capitan. It is considered sacred by the Navajo.

You'll find the entrance to Monument Valley's Navajo Tribal Park 20 miles north of Kayenta, across from Goulding's Trading Post, which you'll visit tomorrow. We suggest that you keep to the left upon entering The View's parking lot. Park your car next to the Visitor Center and enjoy the classic view of Monument Valley. The two buttes that look like upturned hands with thumbs apart from the fingers are called the West and East Mittens. (See the photo of the West Mitten on page 1.)

Though pricey, we recommend The View Hotel for your overnight stay in Monument Valley. Opening your curtain in the morning and stepping out on your deck to enjoy the spectacular view is worth a few extra bucks. The View Restaurant serves up excellent breakfast, lunch and dinner; [www.monumentvalleyview.com](http://www.monumentvalleyview.com); 435-727-5555. Goulding's Lodge is another nearby accommodation that gets good ratings on [www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com); 866-875-8456, [www.nationalparkreservations.com/monument\\_valley\\_gouldings\\_lodge.php](http://www.nationalparkreservations.com/monument_valley_gouldings_lodge.php). Aside from those two, check Tripadvisor for lodgings in Kayenta, AZ or Mexican Hat and Bluff, UT. *Book your room as early as possible; rooms are hard to come by during peak season.*

## *Day One* – Monument Valley

Today, you'll enjoy the heart of Monument Valley and Goulding's Trading Post Museum, then drive to Chinle and look down into one of Nature's beauty spots, Canyon de Chelly.

So, how did the various buttes in Monument Valley come to be? The short version of the story is this: From approximately 570 million to 65 million years ago, much of the land now known as the Colorado Plateau (parts of Arizona, Utah, Colorado and New Mexico) was under a shallow inland sea. During that time, sands were deposited and compressed into sandstone. Then, a collision of the earth's plates caused the Rocky Mountains and the Colorado Plateau to be uplifted. Since then, the Colorado Plateau has been eroded by rain, wind and ice over the millenia to its current average elevation of



5,200 feet (1,585 meters) in Arizona and Utah. *The buttes in Monument Valley did not erode like other land around them because they're topped by a conglomerate rock that resists erosion.*

It was movie director John Ford who made this scene famous. He filmed seven movies in Monument Valley during the 1930's, most of them with John Wayne. They include "Stagecoach" and "The Searchers." Segments of many other movies, as well as TV commercials, were also shot here. Some of the buttes are sacred to the Navajo people, who we'll focus on later in this issue.

What is there to do in Monument Valley besides look at that truly beautiful scene? You can visit the Visitor Center. You can take a hike around the West Mitten on Wildcat Trail. You can drive the 17-mile Valley Drive. And you can hire a Navajo guide who can take you deeper into Monument Valley. We don't recommend the last two activities. If you do take the Valley Drive (extremely rough, unpaved road), or a Navajo-guided tour, plan on at least two to three hours.

Instead, we recommend that you take a Navajo-guided tour in Canyon de Chelly when you get there, because that terrain and the roads are not nearly as rough. Why is a Navajo-guided tour necessary? Monument Valley and Canyon de Chelly are Navajo lands, and to protect the land and respect the people who live there, licensed Navajo guides are a requirement if you wish to get past the more common views of these two special sites.

**Visitor Center** – There is an information specialist to answer questions, and a few paintings and artifacts, but the two highlights of the Center are the information boards that describe Monument Valley and the Navajo Code Talkers Exhibit. The Navajo people are very proud of the 400 Navajo marines who managed to keep the Japanese in the dark about troop movements and other actions in the Pacific Theater during World War II. Not one of the Code Talkers' radio communications was deciphered by the enemy, and that was instrumental in winning major battles and shortening the war.

**Wildcat Trail** – You can hike this trail without hiring a guide. It will take you completely around the West Mitten. We strongly recommend it as a way to get a feel for the landscape. Except for one long hill, which has a sandy patch, this is a flat, easy, 1.5- to 2.5-hour hike of 3.3 miles that you will surely enjoy. There are 11 signs along the trail that point out native plants, including Rabbitbrush, Juniper, Yucca, Serviceberry and Sagebrush. Seeing the towering West Mitten up close is quite a treat. You'll find the trailhead just off the southwest corner of the Visitor Center's/The View Hotel's parking lot, near where the all-dirt Valley Drive begins. There is a separate parking lot at the trailhead. Be sure to carry at least one quart (.9 liter) of water per person. You may also need a hat and sunscreen.

**Time Check** – You'll probably need one hour to adequately see the Goulding's Trading Post Museum and another 1.5 to 2 hours to drive the 91 miles to Chinle, the gateway to Canyon de Chelly. Ideally, you'll be able to take in the seven overlooks of the south rim of the canyon before dinner (another 1.5 hours). Whatever you do—if the sun is shining—don't miss the Spider Rock Overlook. It's spectacular with the western sun on it!

### **Goulding's Trading Post Museum**

As you exit the Monument Valley entrance, cross Highway 163 directly into the Goulding's property. You'll find the museum next to the lodge's restaurant and gift shop buildings. It's the oldest building on the property and has a wagon and stagecoach out front.

Harry Goulding and his wife, Leone (Harry called her "Mike"), opened the trading post in 1928 and ran it for 40 years. Their roomy quarters are upstairs and are comprised of a living room with dining area, a kitchen and a bedroom.

The store was on the first level and today contains viewing cases full of artifacts and a film room, where John Ford's movies and many others are featured. There are photographs throughout, featuring the Gouldings and their personal history.

Our suggestion: grab a copy of the eight-page pamphlet (title: "Goulding's Trading Post Museum") near the front entrance, and use it to help guide yourself through the museum; there are things in it that you would otherwise miss.

### **The Drive to Chinle and the South Rim**

Next, return to Kayenta the way you came, then turn left on Highway 160 and drive about eight miles (12 km) to Highway 59. Turn right and drive about 44 miles (71 km) on Highway 59 to Highway 191/Many Farms. You'll enjoy the colorful and merging ridges along this route. Turn right (toward Ganado) and drive another 14 miles (22 km) to Chinle.

Then turn left on Main Street and drive about two miles (3 km) until you see the Canyon de Chelly Visitor Center on your right. Pass the Visitor Center and drive about one-half mile (.8



km) until the road divides, North Rim (Canyon del Muerto) to the left and South Rim (Canyon de Chelly) to the right. (The canyons are in the shape of a "Y.") Take the South Rim route and stop at and enjoy as many overlooks as you can. Our favorite overlooks were Junction, White House and Spider Rock. Spider Rock is special, especially with the late afternoon sun on it. The taller of the two spires rises 750 feet (229 m) and has religious significance to the Navajo.

Surprisingly, although one is below ground level and the other is above ground level, the overall impression you get as you look down into the canyon is similar to that of Monument Valley; that is, they're both colorful, they're primal, they're on a grand scale, and they're mostly free of human influences.

We recommend the **Junction Restaurant** for dinner (and breakfast and lunch tomorrow). It's located at 100 Main St. in Chinle; 928-674-8443. We also found the Best Western to be a fine overnight accommodation.

## *Day Two* – Jeep Tour of the Canyon

Now that you've seen a canyon from above, it's time to see one from ground level. You have two choices, the second of which is, by far, the best. The first is to hike down the White House Trail to the White House Ruin. As you might guess, the trailhead is located at the White House Overlook on South Rim Road. From there, you can hike 2.5 miles (4 km) round trip via numerous switchbacks. It's the only trail in the canyon that can be hiked without a Navajo guide. We've not hiked the trail, but we were told that visitors are not permitted inside the ruin, to prevent damage to it, and that fences keep visitors a safe distance away from the ruin. Plan two hours for this activity. Take water with you.

The second way to see the canyon from ground level is to hire a Navajo guide and take a three-hour driving tour of the canyon floor, most likely by Jeep. (See the photo on page 1.) This is easily arranged by contacting one of the five Navajo guide services that can be identified on Google (keywords canyon de chelly navajo guides). We chose Canyon de Chelly Tours, [www.canyondechellytours.com](http://www.canyondechellytours.com), operated by Leon Skyhorse Thomas, primarily because of the great comments made by contributors on TripAdvisor.com. We were delighted with our experience with them in Canyon del Muerto, the canyon that can be seen from the North Rim.

Tours generally leave at 9:00 am and 1:00 pm from the Canyon de Chelly Visitor Center parking lot. The tours are not cheap—about the cost of a downtown musical show—but are well worth it. Cash is the preferred method of payment.

*The Visitor Center is open daily 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, 928-674-5500,*  
<http://www.nps.gov/cach/index.htm>.

What will you see in Canyon de Chelly? What makes it “well worth it”?

This is one of the oldest continuously-inhabited sites in the U.S. It is the epicenter of Navajo history and culture, both a physical and a spiritual home. The two canyons have about 2,700 Anasazi ruins. Most are not in good repair; you'll see only a few of those that are, and you'll see them from a distance to keep them that way. The Anasazi were native Americans who preceded the Navajo in this canyon; since they left no written record, little is known about them. You'll also see petroglyphs, which are drawings scratched into rock by Anasazi, Hopi and Navajo people.

But, mainly what you'll see are the dramatic canyon walls, the canyon's sandy bottom, the constantly changing ribbons of water running through the canyon, fruit and other trees, and some evidence of current-day occupancy by the Navajo—fences and an occasional residence. Only about 30 Navajo families live in the canyons year-round; most live up on the rim where they have access to running water and other conveniences.

The two canyons were carved by flash floods after the Colorado Plateau uplift. Canyon del Muerto is 34 miles (55 km) long and has walls that range from 200 feet to 1,000 feet (61 to 305 m) in height. Canyon de Chelly is 26 miles (42 km) long. The black streaks are washed-down minerals called “canyon varnish.”

In 1863, more than 5,000 Navajo occupied the canyons—until the U.S. cavalry, forced by General J. H. Carleton and led by Kit Carson, cut down their 3,000 peach trees (a major source of sustenance) and forced them to undertake the Long Walk to uninhabitable Bosque Redondo (Fort Sumner) in New Mexico Territory. Many died during the Long Walk and while at Bosque Redondo, so when the Navajo returned to Canyon de Chelly four years later, it was with significantly reduced numbers. The whole episode was a terrible stain on the U.S. Government's Indian Policy.

Are there animals in the canyon, you want to know. Yes, many different animals, including black bears, raccoons, porcupines, squirrels, chipmunks and coyotes. That list came from our Navajo guide, Calvin, who grew up in this canyon and still has family property there.

### **Hubble Trading Post National Historic Site**

To get to the Hubble Trading Post, return to Highway 191 and head south 30 miles to Highway 264 (Burnside), then turn left and drive about four and one-half miles (7 km). You'll find the trading post on your right. There are two buildings to see for certain: the visitor center and the trading post itself. In the visitor center and bookstore, we saw a Navajo woman weaving a rug that the Navajo are famous for producing.

The trading post was established in 1876 by John Lorenzo Hubbell who was highly respected by the Navajo for his fair business dealings and personal services such as translating and composing letters and for his care during a smallpox epidemic. It remained in the family until it was sold to the Federal Government in 1967 to be preserved as a national historic site. All those years, until the present, the Navajo have purchased groceries and other supplies from the store while bringing hand-crafted blankets, rugs, jewelry, pottery and baskets for trade or sale. You can see many of these products displayed, and available for purchase in the store, in the Rug Room and in the Jewelry Room.

You may have seen old stores in the past, but what makes this one different is the interactions that occurred here—a white couple living among, trading with, and helping Native Americans in a very isolated location.

In addition to the store, you can visit the Hubble Home (guided tours for a fee), and other components of Hubbell's domain, including the barn, blacksmith shop, wareroom, kitchen coop, bunkhouse, equipment shed, guest hogan, corral and gardens. (Ask for the brochure with the map in the visitor center.) When you finish, you'll feel as though you've stepped back in time—to the 1880's.



The trading post is generally open daily 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, 928-755-3254, [www.nps.gov/hutr](http://www.nps.gov/hutr).

Now, it's time to drive the 28 miles from Ganado to Window Rock—to learn a little about the Navajo and their Nation.

We have a shopping treat for you at the Navajo Arts & Crafts Enterprise, which is located on Highway 264 immediately west of the Quality Inn. (We recommend that you stay at the Quality Inn and eat your meals there; 48 W.Highway 264, 928-871-4106, [www.qualityinn.com/hotel-window\\_rock-arizona-AZ236](http://www.qualityinn.com/hotel-window_rock-arizona-AZ236)). You may be able to squeeze in some shopping (or just looking) before you eat dinner. We have never seen so much beautiful native handcrafted jewelry in one place. The store also sells quality Navajo rugs and pottery. Just try to get out of there in less than one hour! Open Monday-Saturday 9:00 am to 8:00 pm and Sunday 12noon to 6:00 pm; 928-871-4090; [www.gonavajo.com](http://www.gonavajo.com).

## *Day Three* –Window Rock and the Navajo Nation

Later this afternoon, you'll drive south to Highway 40 and west to the Painted Desert. Along the way, you'll find that Highway 12 is a very lovely stretch of road. Until then, you'll be further immersed in Navajoland: at the Window Rock itself; with a quick look at the Navajo Nation's government buildings; at the Navajo Nation Museum; and at the Navajo Nation Zoological Park.

### **Navajo Nation**

In 1969 the U.S. Government changed the designation of this people and its land from “Navajo Reservation” to “Navajo Nation.”

We quote here from a flyer published by Hubbell Trading Post, “Traveling Among the Navajo,” because it's a wonderful summary of what we learned:

“The Navajo Nation encompasses about 25,000 square miles (65,000 square kilometers), about the size of West Virginia. Located primarily in Arizona, the nation also extends into Utah and New Mexico. In addition there is much Navajo country in New Mexico, which is outside the nation....

“The Navajo language is frequently used. For some people Navajo is their only language. Most Navajo also speak English, but with varying degrees of skill....

“The Navajo call themselves ‘Dine’—‘The People.’ They have been living here for more than four hundred years....

“Today approximately 175,228 people live in Navajo country. The Navajo Nation is governed by an elected tribal council headed by a president. The council is made up of representatives of various election districts. Navajo country is also divided into chapters. Community meetings and activities take place in chapter houses. The Navajo have traditionally been a democratic society and never had hereditary chiefs as do some other tribes. Window Rock, Arizona is the capitol of the Navajo Nation.

“[Except for a few towns such as Tuba City, Kayenta, Chinle and Window Rock], you will not see towns or cities in the familiar sense. Navajos live in family groups spread throughout



the nation. Small clusters of hogans, trailers and a house or two may signify more than one generation of a family.”

Despite the predominance of Navajo people everywhere we went, we found them to be friendly, open, attractive and helpful. We never once felt uncomfortable, or that we were viewed as strangers or interlopers in their land. When we needed help with driving directions or had questions in a restaurant, market, or the museum, assistance was always freely and comfortably given.

### **Government, a Memorial, and a Hole in the Rock**

Yes, there is an actual geological site known as Window Rock. And it's fronted by the headquarters, or Capitol, of the Navajo Nation. You get to it by driving north on Indian Route 12, which is one block west of the Quality Inn. Turn right at the second street, known as both Window Rock Blvd. and Indian Route 100. You'll drive or walk past various buildings, including Administration, Educational Center, Veterans Office, Training Center, Council Chambers, Legislative Offices, Presidents Office, Judicial Offices, Records and Communication, Fish and Wildlife, Archaeology and Fleet Management. This is the core of the Navajo Nation's government.

The rest of the government is out in the hinterland. At the local level, there are 110 Chapters that are authorized to make many decisions regarding chapter members. The Navajo Nation has its own police force.



Put it all together and the Navajo Nation's government is a "semi-autonomous Native American-governed territory." It's the largest Native American group, by land area, in the United States. Were you as surprised as we were about the scope and level of sophistication of the Navajo Nation's governance?

By now, you've seen the Window Rock itself. Of course, the town and Navajo Nation headquarters were named for this landmark.

Take a look, also, at the Code Talker memorial and at the Veteran's Memorial. Beautifully designed by the Navajo, they are poignant recognitions of the Navajo contribution to our military past.

### **The Navajo Nation Museum**

To get to the museum, return to Highway 264 the way you came, turn left (east) and turn left again at the second street.

This was another surprise to us. After seeing nothing but modest structures everywhere we traveled in the Navajo Nation (except for The View Hotel in Monument Valley), we found this museum to be very impressive, inside and out. It opened in September of 1997.

Although small as museums go, this one is in a contemporary building that would look nice as the primary museum in most small cities in the U.S. Its main entrance and Hogan-like lobby/atrium are open and airy. Positioned around the atrium are three galleries, an auditorium, a large Library and Resource Collection, three conference rooms, two resource rooms, a gift shop and a snack shop.

If you're looking for a typical "museum" full of historical Indian artifacts, you won't find it here. The goal of the museum is to feature the culture and history of the Navajo Nation. The Library is an important component of that; it contains 40,000 photographs and 61,000 books that are made available to residents of the Navajo Nation as well as to outside authors and researchers. Two of the galleries contain mostly rotating exhibits that feature Navajo arts and crafts. The third deals with the Navajo religion, the "Long Walk" (the Navajo holocaust), the Treaty of 1868 (which returned the Navajo to their ancestral lands), and contains some items related to the daily life of the Navajo. The museum is in the process of developing a core exhibit called "The Culture and History of the Navajo."

There is an interesting 20-minute video, titled "Among the People," about the Navajo Nation, which plays continuously on one side of the atrium/lobby.

Open Monday through Friday 8am to 5pm, and Saturday from 9am to 5pm. Closed on Sunday. Located at Highway 264 and Loop Road; 928-871-7941; [www.museumsusa.org/museums/info/1154146](http://www.museumsusa.org/museums/info/1154146).

### **Zoo and Botanical Park**

As you exit the museum, look ahead and to the left for the entrance to the zoo. On the way to the zoo, stop at the hogan to get some idea of how the Navajos traditionally lived.

Unless the temperature is terribly hot, allocate about a half-hour to an hour for a leisurely walk-around of this quaint zoo. We liked it for its unpretentiousness, its close-up display of the animals, and its easiness to navigate.

The zoo features the animals that can be found within the Navajo Nation. They are rescue animals, rather than animals that were captured and taken from the wild.

Open Monday through Saturday, 10am to 5pm, closed Sunday. [www.navajozoo.org](http://www.navajozoo.org).

### **Painted Desert**

It should be about mid-afternoon by the time you finish touring the zoo—plenty of time for you to drive to and enjoy the Painted Desert. The first part of your drive, south to Interstate 40, will be on Highway 12; much of it is wooded and bordered by colorful bluffs. That will be in contrast to the arid grassland that you'll find on Interstate 40.

The Painted Desert Visitor Center is just north of Interstate 40's Exit 311. (It's actually the visitor center for the whole of Petrified Forest National Park.) It's open from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm. The entire park is open from 7:00 am to 7:00, 7:30 or 8:00 pm depending on the time of year.

An hour and one-half should be enough time for you to see the visitor center and the Painted Desert portion of Petrified Forest National Park. The Painted Desert portion of the park is north of Interstate 40 and the Petrified Forest portion of the park is south of I-40. You'll see the Petrified Forest part of the park tomorrow, driving from south to north.

*Here's a heads-up: the entrance fee is \$10 per car for a seven-day period. If you are a U.S. citizen or permanent resident 62 years of age or older, you are eligible for the Interagency Senior Pass (formerly the Golden Age Passport, which still works). It costs only \$10 at the entrance gate and gives you lifetime access to all U.S. National Parks and National Monuments. Up to three passengers who are with you will be admitted free of charge.*

Be sure to see the 20-minute informational film in the visitor center, "Timeless Impressions." There are eight Painted Desert viewing points along the road that starts just north of the visitor center. The three that we liked best were Tiponi Point and Kachina Point (at the Painted Desert Inn) for their colorful views of the Painted Desert, and Pintado Point for its grand view of the countryside. The photo on page 1 was taken at Kachina Point. From Pintado Point, it's possible to see the San Francisco Peaks near Flagstaff, 120 miles/193 kilometers to the west.

Actually, that view is of the entire Painted Desert, which starts a little north of the San Francisco Peaks, at about Cameron and Tuba City, and runs southeast in a band about 60 miles wide to where you're standing. (See the map on page 2.) It's made up of primarily red- and gray-colored stratified layers of shale, siltstone and mudstone. The colors come from iron and manganese compounds in the rock.

*Important Note: If you don't plan to drive on Route 66, or to drive south through the park, you will need to return to Exit 311 of Interstate 40 to leave the park.*

From there, Exit 289 in Holbrook is only 21 miles away. For accommodations and restaurants, we suggest that you Google "Holbrook, AZ Lodging" and "Holbrook AZ Restaurants." Look for the TripAdvisor ratings. We found the Travelodge at 2418 E. Navajo Blvd. to be better than adequate (clean, comfortable, hot continental breakfast) and within short walking distance of the restaurant that we recommend for dinner: Mesa Restaurante Italiana at 2318 Navajo Blvd., 928-524-6696.

## *Day Four* – Petrified Forest

Our assumption is that you'll need to be in Flagstaff about the middle of the afternoon to catch your return flight. That's very doable since this activity will take about a half day. Lunch can be gotten at the restaurant next to the Painted Desert Visitor Center before you head back to Flagstaff.

From south of town, take Highway 180 (not 77!) 18 miles east to the south entrance of Petrified Forest National Park. Just outside the entrance, you'll come upon to Petrified Forest Center, a privately-owned store that sells polished and unpolished petrified wood and other tourist goodies—perhaps your one chance to acquire a piece of petrified wood. *Warning: it's illegal to remove even small pieces of petrified wood from the national park.* About 2.4 miles (3.9 km) beyond the entrance station, you'll come to three attractions that are clustered together: the Rainbow Forest Museum, the Giant Logs Trail and the Long Logs Trail. All are worthwhile.

But first, here is our 30-second version of how the park's petrified wood came about: Some 225 million years ago, coniferous logs were washed down swollen rivers from distant mountains and became buried in mud, sand and volcanic ash in this area. Over time, the logs' wood cells were replaced by waterborne, brightly-colored minerals such as quartz and jasper until they became stone-like.

The **Rainbow Forest Museum** is the place to get a fuller description of how these logs became petrified and to see fossils of animal and plant life that were similarly preserved. One of those animals was a nine-foot (2.7 m) crocodile-like reptile called a phytosaur. Behind the museum, you'll find the half-mile-long (0.8 km) **Giant Logs Trail** where you'll see lots of color in the ends of the logs, as well as "Old Faithful," the park's largest log. You'll find the trail-



head for **Long Logs Trail** about a one-half mile walk from the entrance of the museum, and from there you can make your way two miles (3.2 km) round trip to Agate House, a small pueblo built entirely of petrified wood. This is another opportunity to get a feel for the countryside...and possibly see a bright green lizard or two.

Following the visitors pamphlet which you received at the entrance station, stop at as many points of interest as you can with the time you have left—but don't miss **Crystal Forest** and **Puerco Pueblo**.

Petrified Forest National Park is open daily 7:00 am to 6:00, 7:00 or 8:00 pm, depending upon the time of year; 928-524-6228; [www.nps.gov/pefo](http://www.nps.gov/pefo).

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**Next Issue: "Alaska's Denali and Kenai"**