

NAVAJO NATION  
2010

TOURISM



# Navajo Nation Discover Navajo

## **Navajo Nation Tourism Department**

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- **Important Note**

*The Navajo Nation recognizes Daylight Savings Time, even though the state of Arizona does not. Please be aware of this while on your tour!! When it is 2 PM in Arizona, it is 3 PM on the Navajo Nation.*

### **Introduction**

Among some 500 Indian tribes and 318 reservations recorded in the country by the 2000 Census, the Navajo Nation is the home of the largest American Indian tribe; and sprawls across northeast Arizona, New Mexico and Utah. Navajos are believed to have originally migrated from western Canada and belonged to an American Indian group called the Athabascans. According to some scientists, some Athabascan bands first came into the American Southwest around the year 1300. Some settled in southern Arizona and New Mexico and became the different Apache tribes. Apache languages sound very much like Navajo. By the year 1700, Navajos were living in northern Arizona, New Mexico, southern Colorado and Utah. They gave their land the name of Diné tah.

Until 1846, California, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, New Mexico and Colorado were still part of Mexico. By 1848, the Americans had defeated the Mexican army and annexed the above states to the United States. During those days, Navajos and the Spaniards were constantly waging war against each other. At the same time, the Navajos and the Pueblos were fighting against each other. Navajos fought against Mexicans, New Mexicans and Americans.

## **Navajo Reservation**

In 1864, thousands of Navajos were forced to surrender to American soldiers and endured "The Long Walk" to Ft. Sumner, New Mexico where they lived in horrible conditions. The Navajo Reservation was established with the signing of the Treaty of 1868 when they were finally allowed to return to their homeland. At that time, it was quite small, covering a territory containing Fort Defiance, Chinle, Many Farms and Shiprock. Since then, the Navajo Reservation has expanded significantly to cover an area mentioned in the introduction above.

## **Navajo Nation**

The origin of the Navajo Government goes back to 1923, when the first Navajo Tribal Council was established. However, it was not until 1938 when the very first election took place. Since then through 1989, the Navajo Nation government consisted of the tribal Council headed by the Chairman of the Council. In December 1989, Title 2 Amendments were passed, which established a three-branch system of government, comparable to the major democracies of the world.

The Executive Branch is headed by the President and the Vice-President. They are elected by the popular vote of the Navajo people for a term of four years. The Judicial branch is headed by the Chief Justice who is appointed by the President and then confirmed by the Navajo Nation Council. The Navajo Nation Council comprises the Legislative Branch of the Navajo Nation. It consists of 88 members called Council Delegates. These delegates are elected for a four-year term by the registered voters of all the 110 Chapters, which are the smallest administrative units on the Navajo Nation.

Window Rock was chosen as the capitol of the Navajo Nation in the early 1930s by John Collier, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs at the time. Not only was the Window Rock a unique and beautiful sandstone formation, it was also just one day's ride by horseback to the nearest railroad (Gallup, NM).

## **Geography and Topography**

The Navajo Nation has an area of over 27,000 square miles and is situated on the southwestern Colorado Plateau. Very often, the size of the Navajo Nation is compared to that of the state of West Virginia. It is the largest reservation in the United States and is characterized by arid deserts and alpine forests with high plateaus, mesas and mountains reaching as high as 10,388 feet in altitude. There are also low desert regions with an altitude as low as 2,760 feet. Volcanic activities and wind and water erosions have formed and



carved the Navajo Nation's many majestic mesas, mountains and canyons. Navajoland boasts a number of world-renowned scenic wonders of the Southwest: e.g., Canyon de Chelly, Shiprock Pinnacle, Monument Valley, and the Chuska Mountains.

The traditional Navajo land is encompassed within the Four Sacred Mountains that were created by the Holy People for the Navajos. In the east is 'Sisnaajinii,' - -Mt. Blanca; in the south, 'Tsoodzil,' -- Mount Taylor, near Grants, N.M.; in the west 'Dook'o'oosliid,' -- San Francisco Peak, near Flagstaff, Ariz.; and in the north, 'Dibe'Nitsaa,' -- Mt. Hesperus.

### **Climate**

The continental climate has cold winters, hot summers, and average annual precipitation ranging from less than 6 inches to more than 20 inches in the mountains. Usual temperatures range from 0 degrees Fahrenheit to the mid-80s, but can drop as low as -30 degrees F., and may reach 100 degrees during the hottest summer days, but these extremes are rare. Even after a hot day, expect a balmy night in the 50s. Monsoons concentrate most of the annual rainfall in July and August, but don't be surprised to wake up on a winter morning with a white blanket of snow covering the ground.

### **Population/Demographics**

Total Enrollment.....	300,000
Total Navajo living on the Navajo Nation.....	200,000
Male 49.02%	or 88,469
Female 50.98%	or 91,993
American Indians	97.1%
Navajo	96.41%
White	.....2.89%
2006 projections were .....	201,060
Median Age.....	24 years
Unemployment rate .....	48.54%

### **Culture**

The Navajo people, the Diné, passed through three different worlds before emerging into this world, The Fourth World, or Glittering World.

The Diné believe there are two classes of beings: the Earth People and the Holy People. The Holy People are believed to have the power to aid or harm the Earth People. Since Earth People of the Diné are an integral part of the universe,

they must do everything they can to maintain harmony or balance on Mother Earth.

The number four permeates traditional Navajo philosophy. In the Navajo culture there are four directions, four seasons, the first four clans, and four colors that are associated with the four sacred mountains. In most Navajo rituals there are four songs and multiples thereof, as well as many other symbolic uses of four.

When disorder evolves in a Navajo's life, such as an illness, medicine men use herbs, prayers, songs and ceremonies to help cure patients. Some tribal members choose to be cured at the many hospitals on the Navajo Nation. Some will seek the assistance of a traditional Navajo medicine man. A qualified medicine man is a unique individual bestowed with supernatural powers to diagnose a person's problem and to heal or cure an illness and restore harmony to the patient.

There are more than 50 different kinds of ceremonies that may be used in the Navajo culture – all performed at various times for a specific reason. Some ceremonies last several hours, while others may last as long as nine days.

### **Navajo Arts**

Navajos are unsurpassed in their ability to create exquisite and multi-faceted art. Nowhere is this truer than in the beauty of their silversmithing. It is believed that Navajos began working with turquoise after returning from the "Long Walk" from Fort Sumner, New Mexico on 1868. Aside from its ornamental value, turquoise is especially important to the Navajo people because of its religious significance and its representation of well-being in an individual.

Navajos believe that the Holy People, who originated with First Man and First Woman, made baskets for ceremonial purposes.

Navajo rug weaving is recognized throughout the world, not only because of its aesthetic qualities, but also because of its unique stylistic changes. Navajo women believe the art of weaving was taught by Spider Woman, who constructed a loom according to directions given by the Holy People. Today, distinct styles of rugs identify designs woven in different regions: Two Grey Hills, Ganado, Teec Nos Pos and Crystal – all famous world-wide.

Sandpainting, another unique and symbolic art form originating with the Holy People, was and still is primarily ceremonial. Sandpaintings represent an array of ceremonies and sacred songs.

## **Canyon de Chelly National Monument**

Nowhere in Navajoland is the blend of past tradition and present culture more evident than at Canyon de Chelly National Monument. The Navajo people still have a mystical bond to this redstone canyon that cuts an almost tropical path of trees and flowers through the desert. The 26-mile canyon's sheer cliffs range from 30 to more than 1,000 feet, providing a spectacular backdrop for hundreds of Anasazi ruins, as well as modern Navajo homes and farms.

Archeological evidence shows that people have lived in the canyons of Canyon de Chelly for nearly 5,000 years – longer than anyone has lived uninterrupted anywhere on the Colorado Plateau. The first residents built no permanent homes, but remains of their campsites and



images etched or painted on the canyon walls tell us their stories. Later, people we call Basketmakers built household compounds, storage facilities, and social and ceremonial complexes high on ledges in the walls of the canyons. They lived in small groups, hunted game, grew corn and beans, and created paintings on the walls that surrounded them. The ancient Puebloan people followed. Predecessors of today's Pueblo and Hopi Indians, they are often called Anasazi: a Navajo word meaning ancient one. These Puebloan people built the multi-storied villages, small household compounds and kivas with decorated walls that dot the canyon alcoves and talus slopes. About 700 years ago most of these people moved away, but a few of them remained in the canyons. Later, migrating Hopi Indians and other tribes spent the summers hunting and farming here. Finally, at the end of a long journey, the Navajo arrived. They built homes in the canyon, learned new crafts and new ways of farming, and added their own designs to the walls of this ancient gallery.

There are many ways to look at the human history of Canyon de Chelly. Archeologist and historians examine physical evidence – artifacts and written accounts – to place humans on a timeline, a chronology that marks events on a calendar. To the Navajo and many American Indians, the passage of time is not important. Native histories and the past are explained through traditional beliefs, stories and images.

From the sandy canyon floor by all-terrain vehicle, or from the rim on a self-guided tour by car, Canyon de Chelly National Monument is one of the Navajo Nation's most popular all-day adventures.

### **Hubbell Trading Post National Historic Site**

The oldest continuously operated trading post on the Navajo Nation, Hubbell Trading Post is an important thread in the fabric of Navajo history. Established in 1876, this mercantile and others founded by John Lorenzo Hubbell came to be the lifeline of supplies for Navajos looking to re-establish themselves following the “Long Walk” of 1864. It was



also a place for Navajos to meet and socialize in the days before the advent of the automobile. The family sold the 160 acre site to the National Park Service in 1967. Today, the trading post still sells groceries and dry goods but it is also a National Historic Site and features a

bookstore, exhibitors, rug weaving demonstrations and picnic tables. Visitors can also take a self-guided tour of the grounds and a Ranger-guided tour of the original Hubbell home. Summer hours are 8 AM – 6 PM (5 PM closure in winter). The Trading Post hosts two Native American Art auctions each year – one in May and another in August.

### **Monument Valley Navajo Nation Tribal Park**

One of the centerpieces of beauty on Navajoland – and one of the world’s most recognized landscapes – is Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park, straddling the border of northeastern Arizona and southeastern Utah on the Colorado Plateau. The area is comprised of sandstone buttes, mesas and spires and is entirely within the Navajo Indian Reservation.

Many Navajos live within the park. Many of these people are among the most traditional Diné on the reservation, honoring their traditional beliefs. They live in traditional hogans; make their living by herding sheep, weaving Navajo rugs and silversmithing. They haul water, use kerosene lanterns and cook over a campfire. This is a chosen pathway - the way to walk in harmony with the earth.



In 1921, a young shepherd from Colorado, Harry Goulding, caught sight of Monument Valley and he instantly knew that this wild country was where he

must live. Two years later, he and his wife, Mike, arrived, ready to homestead on a section of state land. They built a two-story trading post, which still stands, in 1927-28. During the time of the Great Depression when the economy affected everyone, even the Navajos who were able to sell few of their sheep or rugs, Harry Goulding believed that if Hollywood would film a western in Monument Valley, much needed cash would flow into the area. He met with film director John Ford at United Artists, and, as they say, "the rest is history."

Many films have been made in Monument Valley. Old westerns, such as Stagecoach in 1939, My Darling Clementine in 1946, Fort Apache in 1948 and She Wore a Yellow Ribbon in 1949 gave moviegoers the impression that the entire west looked like the scenery in Monument Valley. In more recent years, Monument Valley has served as the stage for countless movies, television commercials and print ads.

Through this exposure and improvements in access to the area, Monument Valley has become a major tourist attraction. In 1958, the Navajo Tribal Council established thirty-thousand acres of Monument Valley as the Navajos' first tribal park. Ceremonies celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the park are planned for 2008.