

Archaeological Site Etiquette Guide

Today, the single largest problem that a cultural resource manager will deal with is unintentional damage caused by visitors at a cultural resource site. Sadly, these impacts occur even at sites where visitors consistently practice minimum-impact techniques. Therefore, when visiting a cultural resource site, minimum-impact techniques are a requirement. There can be no compromise in protecting these fragile and priceless cultural resources.

Archaeological Protection Laws

Archaeological resources anywhere in Scottsdale are protected by Chapter 46 of the Scottsdale Revised Code. Archaeological resources within the McDowell Sonoran Preserve (Preserve) are further protected by the Preserve rules in Chapter 21 of the Scottsdale Revised Code. Please notify Preserve staff, at 480-312-7013, if you discover any illegal activity in the Preserve, or the Police Department at 480-312-5000 for non-emergencies. Archaeological sites, which often include cultural resources, human remains and grave sites, are also protected by the Federal Antiquities Protection Act of 1906, the Federal Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 (ARPA), the Arizona Antiquities Act (AAA), and the Arizona State Historic Preservation Act (SHPA). Local, state and federal laws provide for prosecution with fines and/or imprisonment.

The following guidelines will help you minimize your impact at a cultural resource site that you may visit.

- STOP, LOOK and THINK before entering a cultural resource site. Keep in mind that not entering a site and viewing it from a distance will reduce the impact a site receives. Users of the Preserve are required to stay on the trails. If a trail has been built across a site, stay on it.
- Try to locate the midden area (the trash or debris pile), so you can avoid walking on it. A midden is extremely fragile and will contain important archaeological artifacts and information. Walking over or through a midden will cause damage or erosion that may undermine the walls or structures above. This is the most severe type of impact that is caused by continual visits to a site.
- When you see "thousands" of potsherds and other artifacts, leave them. If each visitor took just one artifact, there would soon be none left. People may say, "It's just a couple of us and it's just this one time," but there may be thousands of people saying the same thing.
- Artifacts, in context (where they lie), tell a story. Once they are moved, a piece of the past is destroyed forever. Digging, removing or piling up artifacts changes what could be learned from these pieces of the past.
- Do not camp in or near a cultural resource site. It is illegal to do so. Preserve rules prohibit camping.
- Moving rocks and tree branches to climb to high places will destroy the integrity of a site. Avoid touching plaster walls.
- Enjoy rock art (petroglyphs) by viewing, sketching, and photographing it. NEVER chalk, trace, or otherwise touch rock art. Any kind of direct contact causes these ancient figures to disintegrate. Oils from even the cleanest hands can cause deterioration.
- Creating modern "rock art" is vandalism and is punishable by law.
- Never build fires in alcoves, even alcoves that don't seem to contain cultural resource remains. Sites may not be obvious.
- Climbing on roofs and walls, or rock formations, can destroy in a moment what has lasted for centuries.
- Cultural resource sites are places of ancestral importance to Native Peoples and should be treated with respect. Specific sites are sacred to some Native Peoples.
- Pets can damage a cultural resource site by digging, urinating and defecating in them. Please do not bring pets onto a cultural resource site.

Courtesy of the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) and the Bureau of Land Management, with additions from Pueblo Grande Museum & Archaeological Park guide. Edited for City of Scottsdale distribution by the Historic Preservation Office, 480-312-2831, <http://www.scottsdaleaz.gov/historiczoning/arch>