

Tantalizing Towers

The towers of Hovenweep remain some of the most remarkable structures in the ancestral Puebloan world. Some were built as early as the mid 1100's, but most were constructed after A.D. 1230, about a generation before the people left the area. The earliest towers were round or square buildings, but as time went on they became more elaborate—multi-storied, oval, rectangular, or D-shaped in plan, with detailed masonry. Many theories have been offered to explain the existence of the towers.

- **Observations.** Hovenweep Castle and Unit Type House have openings that, during solstices and equinoxes, admit shafts of sunlight. Tracking the light, the people could have used the towers as “calendars” to indicate planting and harvest times.
- **Signaling Stations.** Modern researchers lit grass torches, held them from the tower tops, and discovered a line-of-sight network within the tower complex. This would have been a simple way to let members of the community know of special events.
- **Living or Work Rooms.** Some towers have room divisions or are attached to room blocks, suggesting they might have been dwellings or at least places where people did their chores.
- **Ceremonial Chambers.** The circular, partially subterranean rooms resemble the kivas used for ceremonies in modern-day pueblos. There may be a ceremonial connection between kiva-tower complexes.
- **Storage.** When archeologist Jesse Walter Fewkes excavated here in the early part of the 1900's, he reported jars of corn in many of the towers, supporting the idea that they were used for storage.
- **Defense.** The lack of ground-level doors in the massive walls, the portholes, and elevated vantage points give credibility to the theory that the towers were built for defense or refuge. Many, such as Square Tower, are at the heads of canyons where valuable springs may have needed protection.

Protect the Past

The unique stone towers and other buildings at Hovenweep National Monument are original and extremely fragile. To help preserve them, observe proper site etiquette. Remain on marked trails, do not climb, sit, or stand on any rock walls. Do not touch or disturb any artifacts, including pottery sherds, arrow points, or rock art. Once removed from context, the story they can tell is gone forever.

The name Anasazi has long been used for the prehistoric farmers of the Four Corners. The term now favored is ancestral Puebloan, indicating they were the ancestors of modern-day Pueblos. Many Pueblo people maintain physical and spiritual connections to these places. Please appreciate and respect them.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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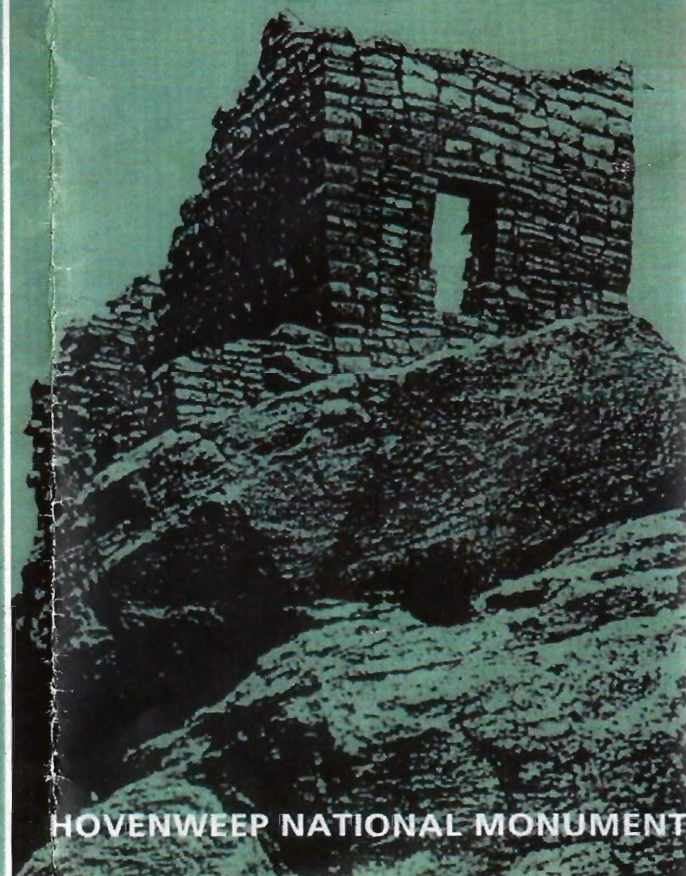
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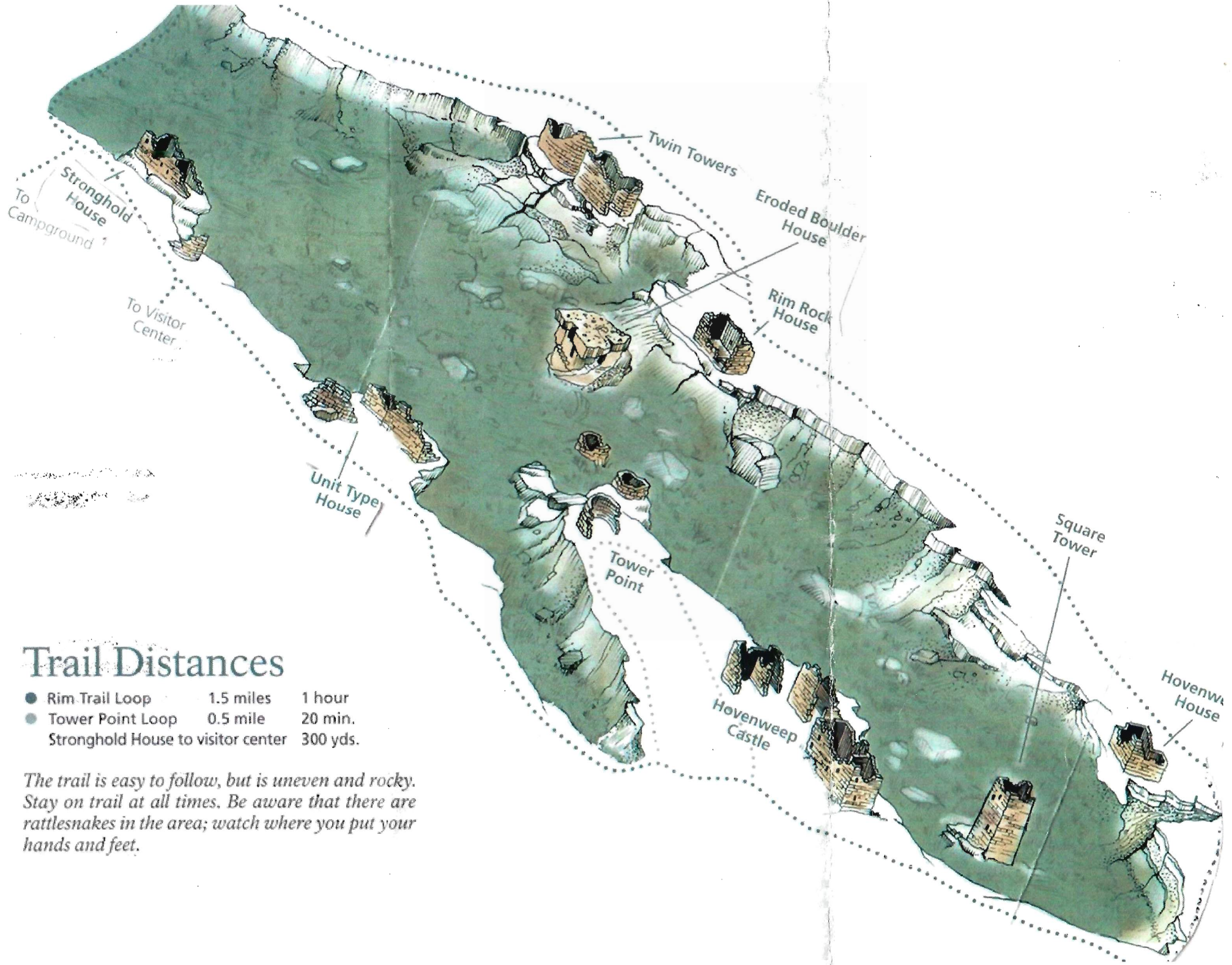
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Little Ruin Canyon

TRAIL GUIDE



HOVENWEEP NATIONAL MONUMENT



Trail Distances

- Rim Trail Loop 1.5 miles 1 hour
- Tower Point Loop 0.5 mile 20 min.
- Stronghold House to visitor center 300 yds.

The trail is easy to follow, but is uneven and rocky. Stay on trail at all times. Be aware that there are rattlesnakes in the area; watch where you put your hands and feet.