

# Chacoan World

Dr. David R. Wilcox

May 5-9, 2009

*Nearly 1,000 years ago, people of the Southwest created the Chacoan World of great houses and great kivas linked by a complex road system. MNA Senior Curator of Anthropology Dr. David R. Wilcox, recently named Archaeologist of the Year, leads this exploration of Chaco Canyon and associated archaeological sites in New Mexico, Colorado, and Utah. Visit a major great house and great kiva site en route to Chaco Canyon. Explore “downtown Chaco,” the ritual precinct for the Chacoan core community. See the restored great kiva at Aztec Ruin and other great houses at Wijiji, Pueblo Pintado, Salmon, and Escalante Ruins. After visiting the Anasazi Heritage Center, we will spend a night at Recapture Lodge, explore the Bluff and Cottonwood Falls great houses and a petroglyph panel along the San Juan River.*

## **May 5th**

6:30AM

Meet at the MNA Ventures parking area

Our first day will be spent traveling to Chaco Canyon with a few stops to point out, where we are within the Chacoan landscape, have a picnic lunch, and then a visit Kin Ya-a in route to camp. Our day will conclude with a wonderful dinner under the stars in the bottom of Chaco Canyon.

## **May 6th**

7 AM

Breakfast at camp

After a stop at the Visitor’s Center, this day will be spent exploring the great houses of Chaco Canyon, beginning with the best known, Pueblo Bonito and Chetro Ketl. Long thought to be “communal houses” analogous to Taos or Zuni Pueblo, these buildings in fact were something else. Knowledge gained in the last 25 years suggests that they were public buildings at the center of a “core community” distributed in Chaco Canyon and the area immediately around it. The nature of human activities that took place in these buildings is still a matter of debate, and we will discuss those competing ideas. An idea I will advance is that these buildings, in part, were designed to hold food tribute that was brought in annually from communities distributed within 2.5 days (55 miles) of the Canyon core community. The kind of socio-political and ideological systems that could have brought about this kind of economic process will be discussed and debated.

After lunch, those who would like can walk up to the site of Pueblo Alto north of Bonito and Chetro Ketl; others may explore Kin Kletso and Pueblo del Arroyo. Depending on time, we will also explore the great kiva Casa Rinconada and other Chaco Canyon sites.

We will then eat dinner back at our camp.

### **May 7th**

7 AM

Breakfast at camp

After we break camp and load the vehicles, we take the trailhead, located at the campsite, for the Wiegi site. After exploring this site, we will drive south to the Pueblo Pintado site, where we will visit and have a picnic lunch. From there will head to Bloomfield, NM, to the site of Salmon Ruin. Built between A.D. 1088 and 1094, this was the first very large great house outside Chaco Canyon. Its organizational characteristics and political meanings will be discussed.

We will camp that evening at the San Juan Cottonwood group site at Navajo Lake.

### **May 8<sup>th</sup>**

7AM

Breakfast at camp

After we break camp and load the vehicles, we will travel to Aztec, NM, to visit the Aztec West great house. Built between A.D. 1110 and 1130, a generation after Salmon, it quickly became the third largest, and was part of a complex quite similar to the buildings of “downtown Chaco”. It appears to be a “secondary center” established by the Chacoan polity (political organization) at the edge of the 2.5-day zone the Canyon dominated. Doorway patterns at this site afford an opportunity to gain new insights into behavioral organization of the building. We will also examine the relationship of Aztec East and several tri-wall structures to the Aztec West building.

2PM

We will then drive north to visit the Anasazi Heritage Center in Dolores, CO for a collections tour with Tracy Murphy (at 2pm!). We will explore the exhibits building and the Escalante and Dominguez Pueblo ruins located on the museum grounds. After our visit, we will drive westward to Bluff, UT, where we will stay at the famous and charming Recapture Lodge. After check-in we will enjoy a gourmet dinner at the Cow Canyon Restaurant in Bluff.

**May 9th**

7 AM

Breakfast at Recapture Lodge

After breakfast we will visit the Bluff Great House and Bluff Mormon Cemetery and then briefly stop to see a Pueblo I site nearby. We will then drive north to see the Cottonwood Falls Great House and return to Sand Island for a picnic lunch, viewing the rock art while we are there.

After lunch we will depart for Flagstaff via Mexican Hat, Monument Valley, Kayenta and Tuba City. We should return to Flagstaff by 5:30 PM on Sunday evening.