

San Juan Basin Archaeological Society

a Colorado Nonprofit Corporation

Site Visitation Etiquette at Archaeological, Cultural and Historical Sites and Photo Policies at Sensitive Sites

SJBAS Site Visitation Etiquette

Proper etiquette at both archaeological, cultural, and historical sites is important for preservation of these resources. These guidelines are not specific to SJBAS members but apply to anyone visiting these sites. Proper etiquette for site visitation is similar to “leave no trace” ethics for enjoyment of wilderness areas. Please enjoy your visit; after you have departed, the site should be in the same condition as it was before your arrival. There may be variations in proper site etiquette between land management agencies and landowners, so please respect any more-stringent site-specific requirements.

- 1) **Avoid walking on or disturbing middens.** Middens are prehistoric trash heaps usually located immediately in front of or down slope of an alcove or cliff site. They are often identified by soft, charcoal-stained soil. Middens contain valuable archeological evidence of day-to-day activities that reveal significant preferences in pottery, food, tools, and even treatment of the dead. Since foot traffic causes erosion, please stay off the middens.
- 2) **Do not lean, stand, or sit on prehistoric walls,** as your activity may weaken the bonding material and eventually destroy them. Stay clear of more precarious sites, since any pressure, vibrations, and soil compaction may result in damage to the site.
- 3) **Leave all archaeological and historical artifacts where you find them,** including arrowheads, potsherds, or tools, as well as historic artifacts, 50 years old or older. In their original context, artifacts contain a wealth of information. Visitors who rearrange their finds are robbing the items of their true value.
- 4) **Do not eat or prepare food within 100 feet of an archaeological or historical site.** Food remnants attract rodents that can cause significant damage to a site.
- 5) **Do not camp or build a campfire within 100 feet of an archaeological or historical site.** Fires can ruin walls by causing spalling, the peeling off of rock surfaces. Fires also blacken the walls and roofs of the site. Not only are the smudges unsightly, they also can affect archaeological dating.
- 6) **Dogs are not allowed on SJBAS field trips.** Dogs damage sites by digging, urinating, and defecating in them. Their actions can destroy fragile cultural deposits.
- 7) **Do not touch petroglyphs and pictographs in any way.** Even the slightest amount of contact with the oils in human skin can cause erosion of petroglyphs and destroy delicate pigments in pictographs. Taking tracings can cause direct mechanical damage to a petroglyph. Adding chalk or re-pecking petroglyphs destroys the original.
- 8) **Preserve historic inscriptions.** Often these names and dates inscribed with bullet lead and charcoal are the only means to retrace artifacts in museums to their original sites. Look for names like Wetherill, J.L. Ethridge, C.C. Graham, McLoyd, C.B. Lang, W.J. Billings, Harry French, D.W. Ayres, Emory Knowles, and Orian Buck.
- 9) **SJBAS is not a law enforcement agency** and great care should be taken when encountering persons in the act of vandalizing or destroying these resources. Take pertinent notes, time, date, number of persons, their appearance, auto license plates, etc. and report the incident ASAP to the appropriate authorities or land management agency. If encountering misinformed persons, consider opening a dialogue for educational purposes if it can be done in a non-confrontational manner.

SJBAS Photographic Policies

The objectives of the SJBAS photographic policies are to protect sensitive archaeological and cultural sites by safeguarding their location, protect the interests and reputation of SJBAS, and to comply with Tribal photographic policies during tours of archaeological and cultural sites on Tribal lands. This policy is directed toward sensitive

archaeological and cultural sites; photographs and video taken at other sites may be freely shared on social media, but without any reference to SJBAS.

Definitions

Sensitive archaeological and cultural sites

For the purposes of this policy, sensitive archaeological and cultural sites are those whose locations are not placed in the public record through official Government or Tribal sources including documents, websites, or USGS maps.

Location information

Location information includes location-revealing photos and videos, coordinates, maps, and links to pages that display this information. Location-revealing photos and videos are those that include landmarks that can be used to determine specific site location.

Coordinates include those contained in the exchangeable image format (EXIF) metadata embedded in digital photos taken with GPS-enabled cameras and smart phones. To comply with this policy, all GPS location information, if present, must be removed from photos and video before posting.

Social Media

Websites and computer programs that allow people to communicate and share information on the internet using a computer or mobile phone. Some examples are Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, Tumblr and all other public internet platforms.

Photographic Policies

- 1) Photographs and video of sensitive archaeological and cultural sites that do not contain location information may be taken during an SJBAS field trip for personal or SJBAS use.
- 2) Photographs and video of sensitive archaeological and cultural sites taken during an SJBAS field trip may not be posted on social media without express written permission from the site owner or land manager, including but not limited to Government or Tribal agencies or private entities that own or legally control the land on which the sites are located.
- 3) Photographs and video of sensitive archaeological and cultural sites which reference SJBAS may not be posted on social media without express written permission from the SJBAS Board.
- 4) The use of drones on SJBAS field trips is prohibited.
- 5) Field trip leaders have the discretion to prohibit still and video photography on any field trip.
- 6) Consider your fellow field trip participants and be considerate of them when you place yourself in close proximity to any rock art, structure, or other features that you would like to photograph and do not block the view of others while interpretation of the feature may be given by a guide.

I have read and agree to abide by the SJBAS Site Visitation Etiquette guidelines and Photographic Policies.

Signature: _____ Date: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name: _____ Name: _____

Adopted December 2019