

San Juan Basin Archaeological Society
a Colorado Non-Profit Corporation



Field Trip Report

Trip Description: ___ Acoma Pueblo

Date: Sep 3-5 2025

Trip Leader(s): ___ Rusty Chamberlain

Participation Limit: 12

Participants:

Rusty Chamberlain, Hunter McCleary, Lorraine McCleary, Tom DeHurdy, Denise Lane, Rick Stockwell, Lisa Stockwell

Remarks:

Wednesday – After some communication issues, we met at the Visitor Center. The McCleary's and Rusty had lunch while the Rick, Lisa, Tom, and Denise watched the informational movie. The trail over El Moro starts out the back of the visitor Center. We chose the recommended clockwise route. It goes pretty much straight up the cliff face. Back in the 30's the CCC created the trail by building stairs where they could and carving where they couldn't. It is really not too bad and hand rails are installed where possible. Before one gets to the top there are level places to admire the view and, in our case, the approaching storm clouds. On the top the trail passes through the partially excavated late 13th century pueblo village of Atsinna. The full pueblo had over 300 interconnected rooms with a central plaza. The 10 or so viewable rooms are a small part of the whole village area.



ACOMA - EL MORO FIELD TRIP 2025

Up here one has a 360-degree view, including the surrounding storm clouds and lightning. But, overhead we experienced partly cloudy skies. From here the trail drops down the back up a narrow ridge. On this other section of the mesa is another village called North Atsinna. We could only see a few sections of the outer wall. The Park Service provided benches all along the trail. We stopped at one here to admire the view to the north and colorful cliffs including a huge weathered chunk that is barely holding on. Do not want to be under it when it goes.



This is a view of the box canyon into El Morro.

From here the trail leads down to Inscription Wall, famous for the many inscriptions carved by passersby since 1598.

The Park provides a ranger talk at the Pool below the Inscription Wall. This pool is the reason people have stopped here for untold years.

Thursday – Our group met at the Holliday Inn in Grants at 9:00 for our drive to Acoma Visitor Center and Museum. While we waited for our 10:30 tour, we watched the informational film, explored the museum and wandered outside to see where we get the bus. Across the drive two Acoma potters waved us over. We chatted with them about how they make their products and a little bit about the connection between Acoma and the neighboring pueblo of Laguna.

ACOMA - EL MORO FIELD TRIP 2025



The short bus ride past scattered adobe dwellings and fields took us up to Skycity. Our guide, whose nick name is Gubby, gathered us at the north wall of the monastery attached to the big adobe church. He introduced himself and explained the rules for the tour, the photos we could and could not take. Here and during the half hour in the church, Gubby talked about history of Acoma people before the Spanish arrived and the not so happy history after. Kiva had occupied the ground where the adobe church now stands. The Spanish had the Acomas fill in the kivas and build the church there. The Spanish also had the Acomas to bury religious leaders within the adobe walls of the church. Because it is essentially a cemetery, the church was not destroyed during the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 and still stands today.



After the church, we toured the town. Gubby showed us where the Acomas rebuilt their kivas disguised as houses. They are identified by ladders built from long vigas.



ACOMA - EL MORO FIELD TRIP 2025

Throughout our tour, we had many opportunities for stopping to visit with potters and make purchases. At the end of the tour, we had the opportunity walk down from the mesa or take the bus. Lisa and I wisely opted for the bus.

After lunch we gathered at the El Malpais Visitor Center. It is a lovely building with a wall of windows looking out over the lava flow or Malpais in Spanish. The ranger there was very engaged in answering our many questions about the Malpais and sites in the local area. Some of wanted to check out the Acoma-Zuni Trail. In the end, we all went and enjoyed a pleasant 2-mile hike to end a busy day.

Friday – Our group split up for this day. Half went off to see Zuni since it is so close and is on the way home. The Zuni contingent recommends Zuni as a trip for next year. The other contingent explored the sites along the East side of El Malpais including a pueblo ruin excavated in the late 1940's. The first stop, always a good move, the BLM's Visitor Center. The attendant was very helpful and sent us on our way with directions to the Ditter site. There is an Eastern trailhead for the Acoma-Zuni trail but we skipped that and went on to the Sandstone Bluffs. Up on these bluffs one has a 180 degree view out over the lava filled valley. It is also a great place for you kids to expend their energy. The La Ventana Arch is quite dramatic. It is viewable from the parking area and has a paved path for a closer view.



Our last stop in the monument was the Lava Falls Trail. It was fun trying to find the cairns to stay on the trail. The landscape here is interesting. No dirt, just black lava. All along the 1 mile "trail" are collapsed areas which the trail sometimes goes through. We found only one lava fall.



From the Lava Falls we left the monument and headed south to the Ditter site. It takes some doing to get to the Ditter site as there is no sign pointing to it. But the three of us enjoyed the effort and found the site. It is a mid-13th century Pueblo III village with about 35 rooms and a

ACOMA - EL MORO FIELD TRIP 2025

large unroofed kiva. It was excavated in 1947-49 by Alfred "Ed" Dittert Jr. and R.J. Ruppe Jr. After exploring the pueblo, we returned to our cars, said our good-byes, and headed home.

Suggestions if trip is repeated:

I suggest we do this again. Maybe combine Acoma and Zuni in a trip.

Prepared by

Rusty Chamberlain