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Hovenweep National Monument

Colorado National Parks

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### Hovenweep: The West's Fabulous Deserted Valley

Desert News Magazine

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**ERODED BOULDER HOUSE** stands in the foreground, and beyond it stands the ruin of Twin Towers, which is quite modern with its two-level entrances and basement.



San Juan was just to the south? And why the peculiar structures that seem to have been neither homes nor bastions of defense? Were they devoted to some ancient religion, or were they storehouses for the meager crops that were harvested there? Visit Hovenweep, part the curtains of uncertainty, and question such ruins as Square Tower House at the head of abrupt Square Tower Canyon.

For therein lies the fascination of visiting Hovenweep. There, and in the delight you experience in finding a place seeming to be thousands of years and millions of miles from the hustle and tired roar of our civilization. For the Deserted Valley is all of that. Spend a night there (you'll have to carry your own accommodations—there's nothing but a barren shelter cabin, and it may be locked), and you'll discover just how far away from smoke and city lights you can get and still remain on this planet. A mid-night sky of velvet seems studded with a million stars. And through the still standing walls of the Hovenweep villages a soft wind sighs and soothes the restless ghost of a people who return only in shadow to reclaim their forgotten cities.

Villages deserted and left alone for over 600 years. Take away every fragment of writing and recorded history. Leave only questions for the future generations who live at that future date. And there you have Hovenweep. In four separate groupings within the monument's boundaries are found some of the most unique and best-preserved ruins to be found anywhere in the Southwest.

While not of the immensity of Mesa Verde palaces or the Casa Grande watchtower, the Hovenweep ruins show artistry and complexity not often found among the ancient Indian buildings. The Ruin Canyon cluster, Cajon, Holly, and Hackberry groups all harbor ruins that inspire and mystify the casual observer and the curious scientist. For archeology offers no more of an answer to the why and wherefore of Hovenweep's origin and destiny than you can see by going there. The experts can only guess, as you and I can, what manner of people built these strange towers. Why did they build them on the very rim and in the depths of the shallow, but rugged canyons, out on the arid Sage Plain when Mesa Verde and the LaPlata Mountains were so easily accessible to the east, and the plenty of the



Hovenweep Castle as seen from tower in Square Tower Canyon