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Hovenweep National Monument

Colorado National Parks

**US Dept of Interior (NPS) Hovenweep National Monument Square
Tower Group: Hovenweep Memorandum**

National Park Service of the United States

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UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Hovenweep National Monument
Colorado

Hovenweep National Monument, set aside in 1923 by Presidential proclamation to preserve and protect its unique archeological remains, is located along the Utah-Colorado boundary approximately 40 miles west of Cortez, Colorado. It comprises five remarkable groups of abandoned prehistoric stone towers and pueblos. Two ruins groups are in Utah and three are in Colorado.

Cortez is easily reached by two excellent highways, but to find one's way to the wild, remote canyons of the Hovenweep country by automobile is difficult, as the roads in this area are very poor, sometimes impassable, and unmarked. Consequently, this monument appeals especially to visitors desiring either adventure and distinctive touring achievement, or those interested in seeing a rare type of prehistoric architecture not commonly found elsewhere.

The four main ruin clusters are known as the Hackberry and Holly Canyon Groups, located in southwestern Colorado; and the Square Tower Canyon Group and the Cajon (Kah-hone) Group situated just across the state line from the former in southeastern Utah. The Hackberry Canyon Group has two spur canyons with ruins, thus making a total of five ruin clusters for the monument. No scientific excavation of these ruins has been undertaken.

The notable chambered towers of the monument belong to a special prehistoric architectural type, not found in modern pueblos, centering in this area. They are accompanied by small pueblos (villages). The towers are rectangular, circular, D-shaped, or oval, and are generally two or three stories high. Some have single rooms while others have multiple chambers.

Another distinctive feature of the towers is their location along the rimrock at the heads of box canyons. They are invariably situated near springs, and evidently were constructed with a view to protecting the water supply. At strategic angles in the walls, peepholes are found pointing toward canyon floors and toward the open mesas. They were presumably used as lookouts and for shooting at the enemy. Each tower usually has but one small doorway, which is in many cases protected by a rampart or parapet. The buildings are often constructed on almost inaccessible rocks or narrow ledges. It has been suggested that the towers were used as habitations, granaries, or for some communal use, possibly religious. Their general appearance and location, however, are far more suggestive of forts or defensive units.