

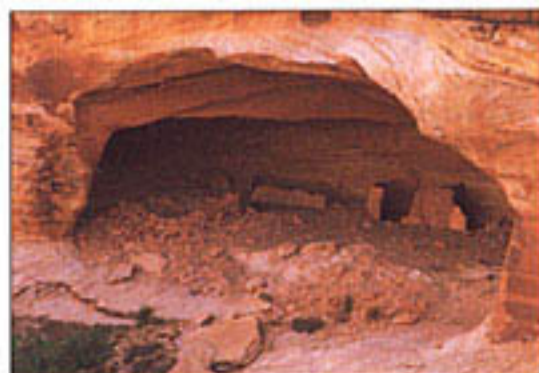
Canyon de Chelly National Monument 7



Flowering cactus

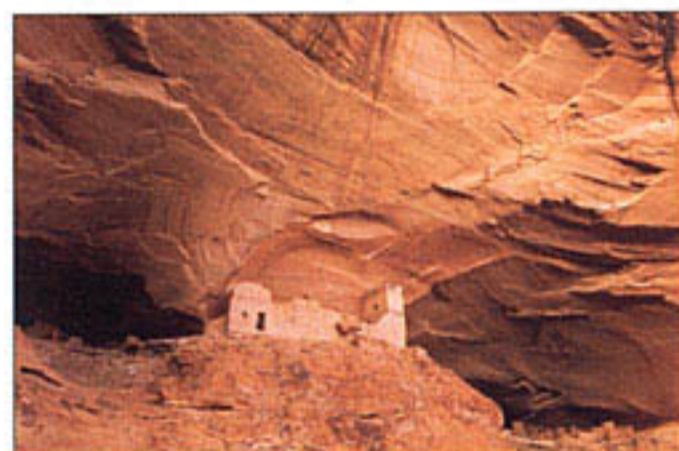
FEW PLACES IN North America can boast a longer or more eventful history of human habitation than Canyon de Chelly. Archaeologists have found evidence of four periods of Native culture, starting with the Basketmaker people around AD 300, followed by the Great Pueblo Builders, who created the cliff dwellings in the 12th century. They were succeeded by the Hopi,

who lived here seasonally for around 300 years, taking advantage of the canyon's fertile soil. In the 1700s, the Hopi left the area and moved to the mesas, returning to the canyon to farm during the summer months. Today, the canyon is the cultural and geographic heart of the Navajo Nation. Pronounced "d'Shay," de Chelly is a Spanish corruption of the Native name *Tsegi*, meaning Rock Canyon.



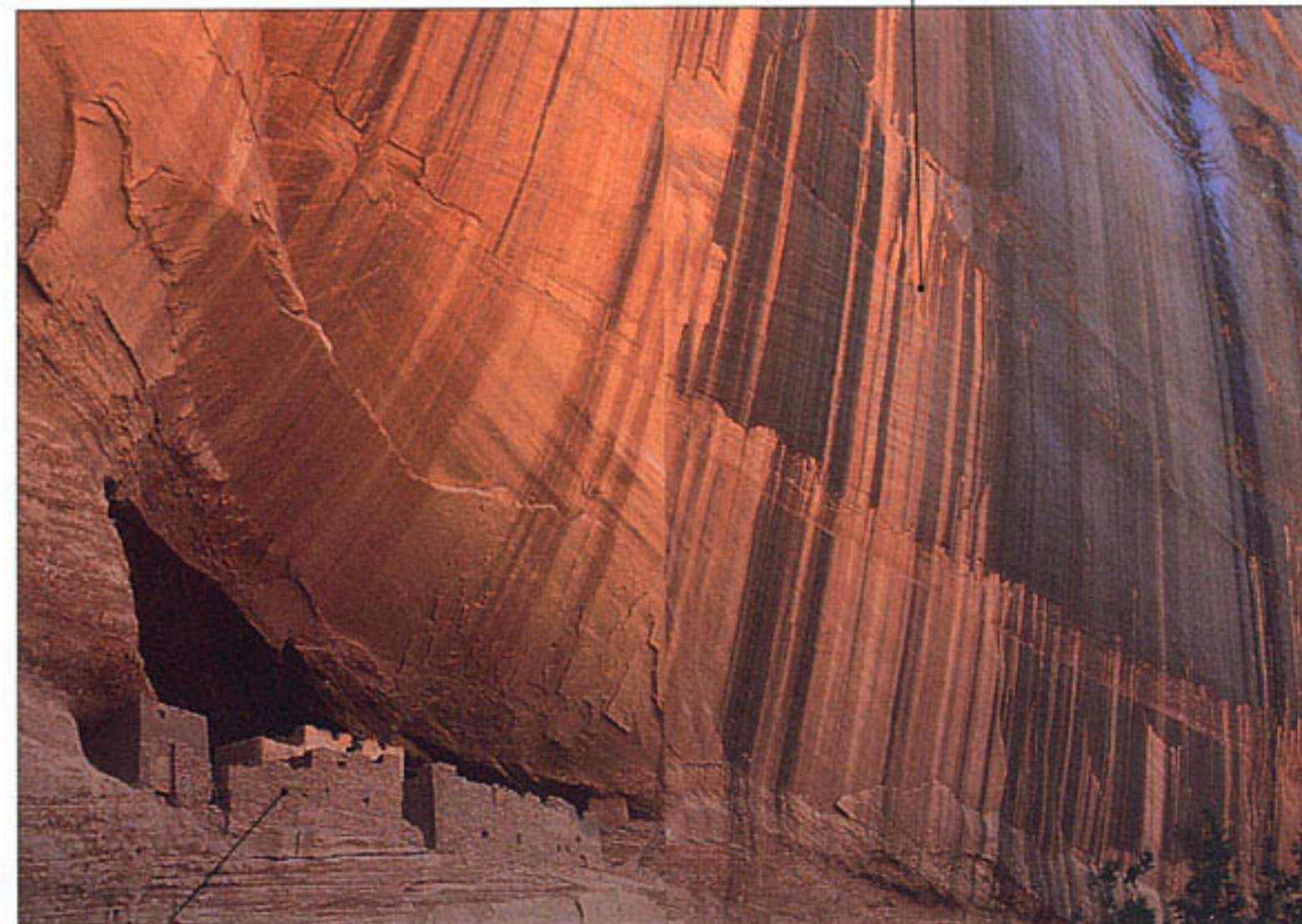
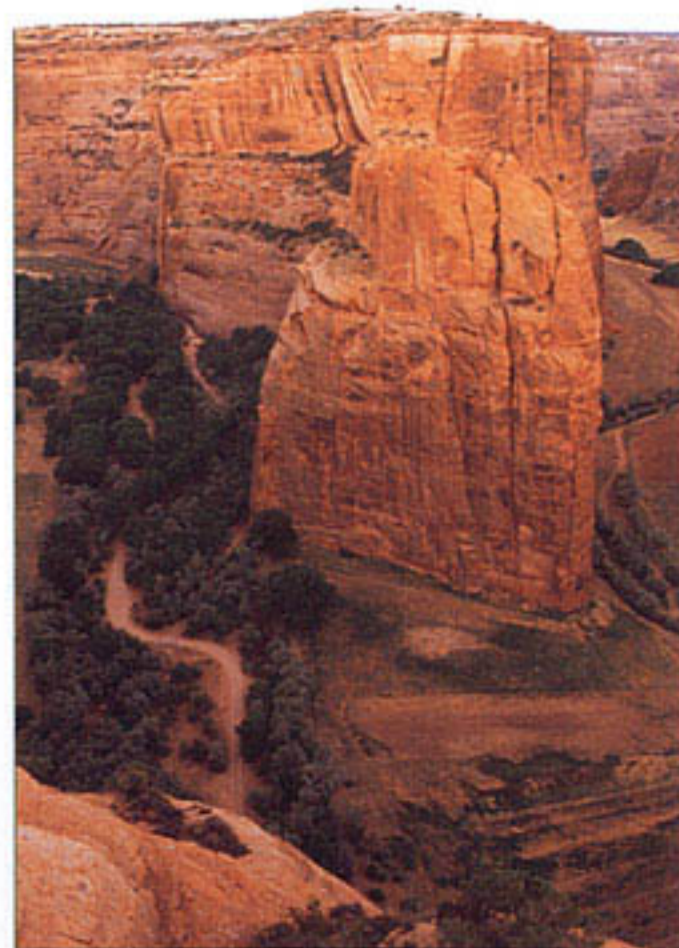
Yucca House Ruin

Perched on the mesa top, this ruin of an Ancestral Puebloan house sits in a rock hollow, precariously overhanging a sheer drop to the valley floor.



Mummy Cave Ruin

These two pueblos, separated by a central tower, were built in the 1280s by Ancestral Puebloans, who inhabited them for more than 1,000 years. An overlook provides a good view of this impressive ruin.



Stone and adobe cliff dwellings were home to the Ancestral Puebloans from the 12th to the 14th century and were built to face south toward the sun, with cooler areas within.

Navajo Fortress

This imposing rock tower was the site of a three-month siege in the early 1800s, when a group of Navajos reached the summit via pole ladders to escape the invading Spaniards. The persistence of Kit Carson (see p171) and starvation led them to surrender and they were marched to a camp in New Mexico.

Canyon Landscape

The sandstone cliffs of Canyon de Chelly reach as high as 1,000 ft (300 m), towering above the neighboring meadows and desert landscape in the distance. The canyon floor around the cliffs is fringed with cottonwood bushes, watered by the Chinle Wash.



The pale walls of the White House cliff drop 550 ft (160 m) to the canyon floor.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Road map D3. 2 miles (3.5 km) east of Chinle and I-191. **P** PO Box 588, Chinle (520) 674-5500. **D** daily. **P** partial. **O** obligatory within the canyon except White House. **I** **I**



Hogan Interior

The hogan is the center of Navajo family life. Made of horizontal logs, a smoke hole in the center provides contact with the sky, while the dirt floor gives contact with the earth. A door faces east to greet the rising sun.

WHITE HOUSE RUINS

This group of rooms, tucked into a tiny hollow in the cliff, seem barely touched by time. The dwellings were originally situated above a larger pueblo, much of which has now disappeared. It is the only site within the canyon that can be visited without a Navajo guide, reached via a steep 2.5-mile (5-km) round-trip trail that winds to the canyon floor and offers magnificent views.

MASSACRE CAVE

The canyon's darkest hour was in 1805, when a Spanish force under Lieutenant Antonio Narbona entered the area. The Spanish wanted to subdue the Navajo, claiming they were raiding their settlements. While some Navajo fled by climbing to the canyon rim, others took refuge in a cave high in the cliffs. The Spanish fired into the cave, and Narbona boasted that he had killed 115 Navajo including 90 warriors. Navajo accounts are different, claiming that most of the warriors were absent (probably hunting) and those killed were mostly women, children, and the elderly. The only Spanish fatality came when a Spaniard attempting to climb into the cave was attacked by a Navajo woman and both plunged over the cliff, gaining the Navajo name "Two Fell Over." The Anglo name is "Massacre Cave."



Pictograph on a canyon wall showing invading Spanish soldiers