

News from Nan

TRAVEL

GILA CLIFF DWELLINGS, NEW MEXICO

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The Gila Cliff Dwellings are at the end of a spectacularly beautiful byway beginning in Silver City, in the western part of New Mexico. In April 2008 we visited them on an RV trek around the West during the time we were living in Lyons, Colorado.

The people who built the cliff dwellings were part of the Mogollon culture, who combined hunting and gathering with farming and traditionally built pit houses or surface pueblos in the mountainous area of Arizona and New Mexico. The Mogollon found abundant game and fertile soil in the Gila River valley for both native vegetation and their crops of corn, beans, and squash.



Pictograph

The Mogollon built inside the caves of Cliff Dweller Canyon with rock, mortar, and timbers from trees that were cut between 1276 and 1287 A.D. By 1300 the Gila Cliff Dwellers had moved on.



Paint pots

After the Mogollon left, no one lived in the area for more than a century. Apaches migrated to the upper Gila River about 1500.



Cliff dwelling

The legendary leader Geronimo was born near the Gila River headwaters in the early 1820s. By about 1850 the area was under U.S. control, and by 1870 the federal government began relocating the Apaches onto reservations.



Cactus



Gila Creek

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