



Caring for Culture

Stories are hidden within Capitol Reef's historic and prehistoric artifacts

Why should we care about old objects?

Cultural resources tell stories.



Objects left behind and in place by historic and prehistoric people help archaeologists to understand how people, cultures and societies changed and interacted through time. This is information not typically found in historic documentation. Often, it can only be discovered through archaeological investigation that associates people with objects they used and the time period they lived in.



Archaeologists at Capitol Reef National Park work to remove graffiti from historic and prehistoric sites.

How old is old?

Anything older than 100 years is an archaeological resource.



In Capitol Reef, historic artifacts tell stories of the mining era, homesteading, settlement road and trail building and tourism. Prehistoric artifacts tell stories of farming, life in seasonal villages, hunting camps and cultural activities dating back 8,000 years.

Isn't it bad to leave old objects laying around?

It's the ARPA law!

Cultural resources are protected by the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 and you! It's illegal to damage, deface or remove archaeological resources on federal lands. Out of context artifacts can not help scientists understand the past. Archaeological resources are unique and irreplaceable.



Thank you for being a respectful steward of the resources!



Each archaeological site is unique. All cultural sites are very fragile. If a site is damaged the information is lost. If you witness any illegal activity, report it to the visitor center or a ranger.

Archaeological Site Policy "Leave No Trace"

- Inquire at the visitor center about which sites are open to public viewing.
- Resist touching any painted, pecked or incised rock images. Skin oils damage them.
- Writing on any rock surface is illegal.
- Leave all artifacts, such as pottery, stone chips and corn cobs exactly where you see them. Do not make piles of artifacts for others to see.
- Avoid camping, walking or picnicking around archeological sites.
- Human waste left at archeological sites is unsightly, unsanitary and disrespectful.


Trash or Treasure?

What belongs in the trash? Not everything deserves to have a lid on it. Anything more than 100 years old is historic and should be left in place.

TRASH: SAFELY PICK IT UP OR RECYCLE IT

- Rubber
- Diapers and toilet paper
- Cellophane wrappers
- Cigarette butts
- Paper
- Plastic
- Aluminum cans



Capitol Reef National Park recycles 

TREASURE: LEAVE IT BE

When in doubt, contact the Capitol Reef Archeology Office at 435-425-4141.

- Rusted metal objects (cans, nails, scrap metal)
- Purple or aqua glass bottles or fragments
- Thick or distorted glass
- Non-plastic buttons
- Porcelain ceramics
- Horseshoes
- Decayed leather scraps
- Bones, hair, feathers, hide, horn
- Clay ceramics (pottery sherds)
- Lithics (arrowheads, stone knives, flakes)
- Cedar bark, matting, corn cobs
- Wood posts and other wood objects

