

CASA GRANDE RUINS NATIONAL MONUMENT TRIP WITH THE RIM COUNTRY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Comments and Photos by Diane Seago

On December 18, 2021, some of us were lucky enough to be a part of the back country tour by Monument Archeologist Alycia Hayes. She was very gracious and came in on her Saturday off to present. Those present included members of Rim Country, San Tan, and Phoenix Chapters.

This what Kim Gilles said about this trip, “ I have been on three different back country tours of Casa Grande and all three of them to different places on the monument’s backcountry but yesterdays was the best”. A sentiment that I think was felt by most on this trip. We also need to say “thank you” to Kim for planning/organizing this trip. Kudos to Kim!!



We saw platform mounds, ball courts, a preservation test wall, and even 2 owls.

The tour started at the ball court overlook and the platform mound areas and then proceeded to a prehistoric trash mound where a guide had recently found a copper bell. Unfortunately, we were not able to see the bell. It is in a safe location. At the trash mound, those on the field trip found shell fragments, lithics, and a large variety of painted pottery shards, which the archeologist helped identify.



Not all trash piles are prehistoric. The archaeologist showed us a pile of lithics, and shards left by the Smithsonian Museum in the early 1900's. At that time, the Smithsonian was only interested in whole ceramic pots and other complete archeological items. They discarded the other items. Obviously, very different from what archaeologists do today.

At Casa Grande National Monument, they practice preservation archeology, so there is no excavation. It is an exhibition ruin used for education and non-invasive research. We were then shown, adobe test walls, which demonstrated different preservation methods to determine which method is most effective after years of exposure. Both ASU and U of A participated.



Next, we moved to the maintenance yard with buildings made by the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) in the 30s. There was even a historic Sinclair gas pump.



The last stop was the main building, where we caught glimpses of the 2 resident owls. Currently, visitors are not allowed in the building but according to some of our participants, at one time you were able to walk thru it.



The tour took longer than expected but was truly fun and informative.