



The Minimum-Impact Approach for Enjoying Archaeological Sites

Today, the single largest threat to Tribal cultural resources is the unintentional damage caused by visitors. While many of the cultural sites across the landscape have been present for thousands of years, they are not indestructible. Time and the effects of nature are slowly erasing these traces of the past. Sadly, the impacts of humans are accelerating this natural decay. Consequently, when visiting Traditional Cultural Landscapes and historical sites, minimum-impact techniques are required.



- * Keep in mind that not entering a site and viewing it from a distance will reduce the impact a site receives. You may say, “It’s just a couple of us and its just this one time,” but there may be thousands of visitors saying this same thing.
- * If you do enter a site, you should first STOP, LOOK, and THINK. Many sites have fragile objects lying on or just beneath the surface. Try to visually identify each part of the site so you can avoid walking on it.
- * If a trail has been made across a site, stay on it. Random foot traffic can accelerate soil erosion. This is the most severe type of impact caused by continual visits to a site.
- * Rock art and writing can be observed by viewing, sketching, or photographing it. Never chalk, trace or otherwise touch rock art. Any kind of direct contact can cause these features to disintegrate.
- * Cultural sites are places of ancestral importance to ancestral and affiliated Tribes and should be treated with respect.

- * If you observe the ground littered with potsherds, flakes or other artifacts, leave them. If each visitor takes just one of these Tribal cultural resources, it will erase Tribal history and is a violation of law.
- * Remember, cabins and can dumps are archeological too. The desert is dotted with the remains of old mining camps, stage stops, and homesteads. The preservation of historic and precontact sites is equally important.
- * The more time spent within a site, the greater the chance for serious impacts to occur. Consequently, archaeological sites should not be used as picnic areas or camp sites.

Archaeological sites are protected by the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) of 1979 and other, related laws. Severe civil and criminal penalties can be brought against individuals who damage or destroy cultural resources. If you discover illegal activity, please notify the local BLM Ridgecrest Field Office at 760-384-5400, or in person at 300 South Richmond Road Ridgecrest, CA 93555.