



Arizona Trail Steward Guide to Cultural Resources

When you're out on the Arizona Trail it's important to remember that you are probably walking in the footsteps of people who have lived on this landscape for 10,000 years or longer. Many of the trails we hike run and ride on were used as traditional footpaths as people migrated seasonally, pursued animals, and visited sacred sites. Evidence of these people has been left behind in the form of cultural resources, or artifacts. Each one of these individual pieces fits into a larger puzzle of understanding the people and their way of life. When a piece is missing, that makes it harder to understand, and sometimes the story may be lost altogether. Each artifact on the land is a vital part of Arizona's history and it's our responsibility to protect them.

This quick guide is intended to give you, a Steward of the Arizona Trail, information on what you may find while doing routine maintenance when moving dirt is likely to reveal artifacts hidden below the surface.

WHAT YOU MAY FIND

The most common artifacts you're likely to see are flaked stone, ground stone, and ceramics.



FLAKED STONE

Flaked Stone are small pieces of rock that were broken and chipped to make tools like blades and projectile points. While finding an intact arrowhead is rare, finding bits of flaked stone is very common. Although they may not be as alluring, they're just as important to protect and preserve.

Clues for identifying flaked stone:

- Look for "chips" or "flakes" of smooth, shiny and unusual rock that differs from the soil and rocks around it.
- Flakes are sometimes in a cluster.
- Look closely at the flake and you may see a sharp edge, a flattish edge, and a circular fracture pattern within the rock.

GROUND STONE

Ground Stone are rocks that were used to process nuts, seeds and other food sources, and have been polished smooth over time. Handheld stones (mano) are often smooth or flat on one or both sides, and still rough around the edges – this is how to tell them apart from river stones (which are smooth all around). Ground stone also includes the surface on which the seeds were ground with the mano – called a metate. These can be the size of a dinner plate or part of a larger bedrock formation.



Clues for identifying ground stone:

- Mano
 - Look for handheld size rocks that are smooth or even flat on one or both sides.
 - Some manos are intended for single-hand use, while others required two hands.
 - Manos are often of a very different composition of rock than is commonly found nearby.
- Metates
 - Look for large flattish rocks near water sources, such as creeks and streams.
 - Look for dinner-plate size rocks that are very smooth on one side, and sometimes have grooves from repeated grinding.

CERAMICS

Ceramics, or pottery, are very common throughout the Southwest and were important in cultural development throughout Arizona. It allowed people to carry water, cook food, store grain, and was also important for ceremonial purposes. Finding an intact pot or jar is rare, but the evidence of those vessels – small individual sherds – is very common. Ceramics are most commonly brown, and occasionally the pottery was painted and you'll be able to see faint lines of color from the natural pigments from thousands of years ago. These are true "puzzle pieces," and in the hands of a skilled archaeologist can be put back together to form the original vessel. Ceramics are one of the most important pieces of evidence used to determine the culture and time period people lived in that location. Every piece is precious.



Clues for identifying ceramics:

- 1-inch-diameter pieces of pottery, often brown or the same color as the soil nearby.
- Square, rectangular and triangular shapes – these stick out as unnatural shapes in nature.
- Often smooth on both sides, with rough stone-like edges. One side is often finely polished.
- Occasionally faint signs of pigment in brown, yellow, red, orange or black.
- Sometimes found in clusters within the same area.

CANS, BOTTLES AND HISTORIC TRASH

Anything found on public land that is older than 50 years is considered an artifact and is protected under federal law. This includes old rusty cans, bottles, fence lines and anything else that is evidence of the past. If it looks 50 years or older, treat it with the same care as an arrowhead. While historic trash may not be as interesting, it does play a role in the history of Arizona and there is much to be learned from the things people left behind.



OTHER ARTIFACTS

There are many other types of artifacts you may find, including:

- roasting pits (lots of charcoal, stones and animal bones).
- shell jewelry (white sea shell pieces, often times with a tiny hole or partial hole).

HUMAN REMAINS

Pieces of human bone, or cremated bones that appear as grey-white ash with small flecks of bone that appear polished white with a slight blue hue. These are especially important to protect (see **Report It** below).

WHAT YOU MUST DO

If you discover cultural resources while on the Arizona Trail, consider yourself fortunate to be connecting with a chapter of Arizona history and our shared heritage. It's a special experience, so take a moment to appreciate it. Then, follow these steps to help protect the resource:

Leave What You Find

- Remember that one of the Leave No Trace ethics is "leave what you find." This is especially true for artifacts. It's important the artifacts and human remains stay right where you found them. Why? Because where you find it is just as important as what you find.
- Don't excavate! Inadvertently finding artifacts and human remains on the surface while doing trail work is expected, but don't ever dig deeper or dislodge an artifact that is already securely in the ground.

Document It

- A photograph, GPS coordinates and description is an ideal way to document your discovery (see Report It below). Most smart phones attach GPS coordinates to photographs if you have your "location services" turned on. No cell phone? No worries. A description of the location works well, too.
- After you document the individual artifact, take a few minutes to look around the immediate vicinity to identify if other artifacts are nearby. Document those, too.

Protect It

- If you discover an artifact during a dirt-moving project, it's best to STOP, leave the area alone, and move 10 meters (30 feet) away before resuming work. Repair/remove any hazards in the trail tread but don't keep moving dirt in the area the artifact appeared.
- How can you further protect the artifact(s) from potential impacts, like boots and wheels and hooves on the AZT? Sometimes, if they are in the middle of the trail, this involves moving them just downhill of the trail. Be sure to note this in your documentation, too.

Report It

- Every land manager has a designated person who is responsible for documenting and protecting cultural resources. They need to hear about whatever you find. Please reach out to the land manager contact on the Trail Steward page (aztrail.org/explore/trail-stewards/) with details.
- Also share the information with the ATA (ata@aztrail.org). The ATA will make sure it gets to the archaeologist or other designated cultural resource specialist.
- Don't share the information with others. We know it's tempting to share what you find, but too many of Arizona's cultural resources have been lost to collectors, looters, and others who are more interested in personal gain than cultural resource protection. Absolutely never share the information through social media or any public online platforms.
- If you discover human remains (prehistoric, historic or more recent) the first call you should make is to the local Sheriff's Department. Just call 911 and tell them it's not an emergency, then provide the information. The County Coroner will then determine who should be involved in the investigation and protection of the remains.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Federal Laws

If you'd like to learn more about the thoughtful regulations protecting cultural resources on public land, please research the American Antiquities Act, Archaeological Resources Protection Act, National Historic Preservation Act, and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

- Archaeological Education and Stewardship

Arizona has some wonderful organizations that engage the public in understanding archaeology, visiting significant sites, teaching ancient tool making techniques, protecting archaeological sites through a volunteer site steward program, and much more. Reach out to Archaeology Southwest (archaeologysouthwest.org) and Old Pueblo Archaeology Center (oldpueblo.org) to learn more.