



Like a ship in a sea of desert, Fajada Butte is home to the famous Sun Dagger petroglyphs. During every solstice and equinox, they are precisely illuminated by contrasts between the sun and shadow.

# Rock of Ages

By Steve Eginore

As much a part of the landscape as the vast desert steppe in which they reside, the ruins of Chaco Canyon, about two hours south of Farmington, remain a cornerstone to the Southwest's rich cultural heritage. What would have been the largest known buildings in the United States at the time, and evidence of some 10,000 years of human occupation, the story of Chaco – from its use as a cultural center in 850 AD to its rediscovery in the late 1800s – plays out like a great novel. Most of the original construction in the canyon started modestly, but over time developed into the massive dwellings evident today. The public structures built throughout the canyon are called great houses, unique among all other architecture in the region due to their distinctive masonry, astronomical alignments and geometrical-ly precise walls. Here's a look:



Light and shadow make for a play of geometric angles inside a Chacoan great house, the Pueblo Bonito.



Highly formalized, the great kiva within Chetro Ketl was probably used for ceremonial practices and beliefs.



The impressive exterior west-facing walls of Pueblo Bonito.



A close-up view of Chacoan brick and mortar aesthetics.



Pueblo Bonito's core-and-venter walls, and large beams of timber typifies the construction style in Chaco Canyon.



A present day Chacaon scans the horizons for visitors.