



Spring Equinox Tour of Los Morteros and Picture Rocks Petroglyphs Archaeological Sites

Saturday March 20, 2021

8 a.m. to noon*

Old Pueblo Archaeology Center's executive director, archaeologist Allen Dart, leads this tour to two of the Tucson area's premier archaeological sites.

Los Morteros, an ancient village site inhabited by Hohokam Indians from about 850 to 1300 CE, has been studied by archaeologists and historians for more than a century. During its heyday it was the center of an extended community of related Hohokam settlements along the Santa Cruz River. The core of Los Morteros, now preserved in a Pima County natural and cultural resources park, encompasses a large public architectural feature interpreted as a ballcourt used for ritual and other purposes plus many refuse mounds, room blocks, hundreds of pithouses, and thousands of artifacts. Also present are some petroglyphs and numerous bedrock mortars that inspired the site's name (*los morteros* is Spanish for "the mortars").



Bedrock mortars for which "Los Morteros" is named
(Pima County Cultural Resources & Historic Preservation Office photo)



One of these petroglyphs at the Picture Rocks site shows an interesting sunlight interaction on equinox days

The Picture Rocks site, situated in the foothills of the Tucson Mountains, contains hundreds of ancient rock symbols created mostly by the Hohokam, although some of the designs may date before 500 CE. The symbols there include dancing human-like figures and whimsical animals as well as abstract designs. At least some of the petroglyphs evidently were ritually important, as evidenced by the observation that at least one of them is a marker for both the equinoxes and the summer solstice. An equinox calendar petroglyph at the site exhibits a specific interaction with a ray of sunlight on the morning of each equinox regardless of the hour and minute of the actual celestial equinox. Participants in this tour will see that sunlight interaction with the calendar glyph unless clouds block the sunlight.

The Picture Rocks site is on a religious retreat property where silence and meditation are important. The tour is therefore limited to 32 people.

* \$30 donation per person (\$24 for Old Pueblo Archaeology Center and Friends of Pueblo Grande Museum members) helps support Old Pueblo's education and research programs. Donations are due within 10 days of reservation request or by 5 p.m. Thursday March 18, whichever is earlier. Cancellations made 30 days or more before departure will not be charged. Cancellations 8 to 30 days before departure will be refundable at 50% of the fee paid unless the cancelled space can be filled. Cancellations 0 to 7 days prior to departure date are not refundable.

The tour will meet at Los Morteros and caravan from there to Picture Rocks.

Registrants are responsible for their own transportation and are advised to wear sturdy shoes & bring drinking water. All participants are asked to wear masks and practice social distancing during the tour to reduce spreading of disease.

To register and obtain meeting place directions, contact Old Pueblo Archaeology Center at 520-798-1201 or info@oldpueblo.org.

For more information about Old Pueblo Archaeology Center's activities please visit our web site at www.oldpueblo.org.