Old Pueblo Archaeology Center Presents

Flyer date
May 19, 2023

Autumn Equinox Tour to Los Morteros and Picture Rocks Petroglyphs Archaeological Sites

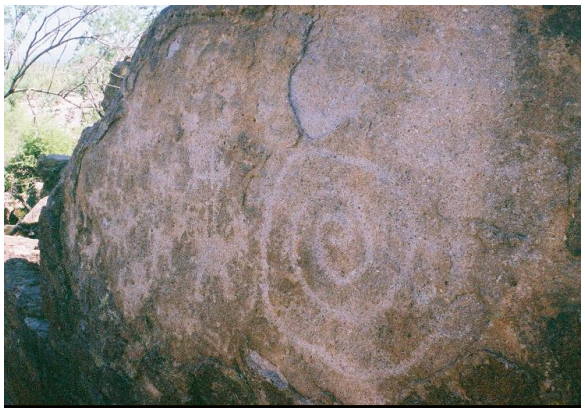
Saturday September 23, 2023
8 am to noon

Los Morteros is named for these bedrock mortars. (Pima County Cultural Resources & Historic Preservation Office photo)

Old Pueblo Archaeology Center's executive director, archaeologist Allen Dart, leads this tour to two of the Tucson area's premier pre-European archaeological sites. The tour will meet at Los Morteros and caravan from there to Picture Rocks.

Los Morteros, an ancient village site of the 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 sites 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, probably hundreds of pithouses, and thousands of artifacts. Also present are petroglyphs and the bedrock mortars that inspired the site's name – *Los Morteros* is Spanish for "The Mortars."

The Picture Rocks site in the Tucson Mountains foothills contains hundreds of ancient rock symbols made mostly by the Hohokam, although some of the rock designs may predate 500 CE. Some of the Picture Rocks petroglyphs depict dancing human-like figures and whimsical animals, while others are more abstract. At least some of the glyphs evidently were ritually important because at least one of them is a marker for both the spring and autumn equinoxes and for the summer solstice of each year. This calendar petroglyph 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, so this tour's participants will get to see the sunlight interact with the calendar glyph if clouds do not block the sunlight on the tour day.



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

Participants provide their own transportation and are advised to wear sturdy shoes & bring drinking water.

A donation of $35 per person ($28 for Old Pueblo Archaeology Center and Friends of Pueblo Grande Museum members) is due 10 days after reservation request or by 5 pm Thursday September 21, whichever is earlier.

Tour meeting place is near Silverbell Road and Linda Vista Blvd. in Marana, Arizona. Parking space at Picture Rocks is limited so tour attendance is limited.

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

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.