



In Search of Eldorado

Link to the Eldorado Song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VczD1olutQ8>



Hello to Family & Friends

I was worried this morning that I might be on an island. It rained for the better part of twelve hours overnight. When I looked out the window I could see some large puddles but I could also see the road. Whew!

It took awhile to get up and eat breakfast (I'm reading a good book I can't put down) and as I was deciding whether to take the possibly muddy hike or not, another truck pulled up and parked. A man headed towards the trail with his dog so I sauntered over and asked him if he knew the trail and if it would be muddy. He had hiked it before, but a long time ago, so he wasn't sure. Then he saw the Brewers logo on my hoodie and started talking baseball. He and his dad, who arrived at the trailhead as we were talking, are beer vendors at the Brewers ballpark here in Phoenix along the first base side. They are also from Wisconsin, Hartford, and have been out here about seven years.

I went back to the RV and read awhile to give them a chance to get ahead of me.

Day 69

Wednesday
March 11th

National
Monuments

Weather
50's to 60's and rainy

In Search of Eldorado

By Edgar Allan Poe

Gaily bedight,
A gallant knight,
In sunshine and in shadow,
Had journeyed long,
Singing a song,
In search of Eldorado.

But he grew old—
This knight so bold—
And o'er his heart a shadow—
Fell as he found
No spot of ground
That looked like Eldorado.

And, as his strength
Failed him at length,
He met a pilgrim shadow—
'Shadow,' said he,
'Where can it be—
This land of Eldorado?'

'Over the Mountains
Of the Moon,
Down the Valley of the Shadow,
Ride, boldly ride,'
The shade replied,—
'If you seek for Eldorado!'

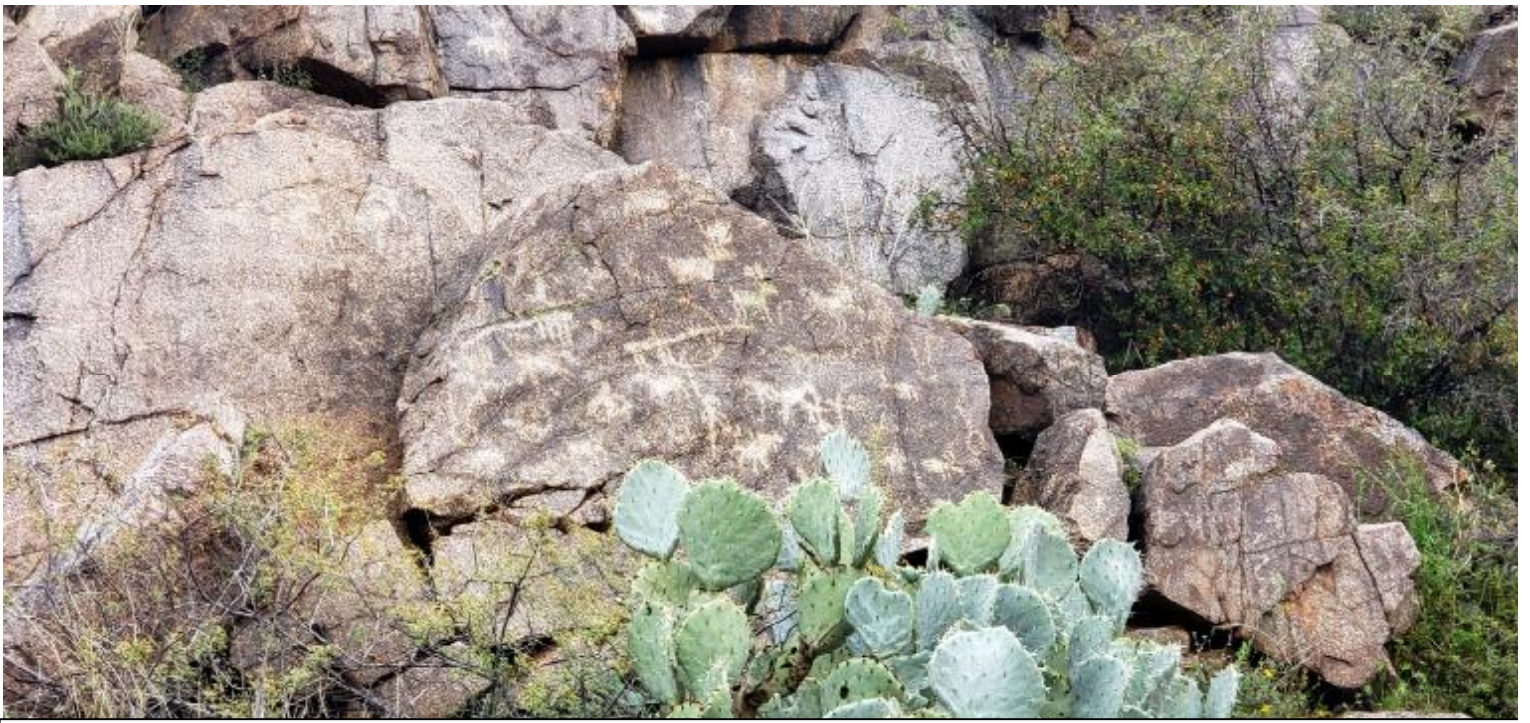


As it turns out, the trail is mostly IN the creek, not alongside it, and with non-waterproof hiking boots and all the rain, it was a challenge to hop from one sandy mound to the next. This would be a great hike with warmer temps, a swimming suit and a pair of water shoes. Just walk right down the middle of the stream. For the most part the trail was sandy, not muddy. My feet got a little wet but not bad.



The 'trail', according to AllTrails, ended here at the falls, but if a person wanted to they could boulder along this waterway until they reach the steep valley where it originates. If it had not been raining, which makes the boulders slippery and shoes wet, I would have given it a go. But I didn't feel comfortable on the rocks.





I ran into Brian, Adam and Holly (the dog) again down here and they pointed out the petroglyphs which were interesting to see. We talked some more about Wisconsin, snow, the desert, and my travels, then went our separate ways.



Next stop was thirty miles up the road in Camp Verde. I didn't realize this whole valley is just filled with cliff dwellings, pueblos and evidence of civilizations that no longer exist.



Creekside Community

Between approximately 1100 and 1400, the Castle neighborhood also included a larger pueblo and numerous small alcove homes in the cliff face along Beaver Creek.

Nestled in a limestone cliff overlooking the creek, Montezuma Castle could have housed about 35 people. Including families in nearby pueblos and rock shelters, perhaps 150 to 200 people made up this community. In turn, these people belonged to a network of villages united

by kinship, agriculture, and cultural traditions that stretched dozens of miles along the Verde River and its tributaries, including Beaver Creek, from the Mogollon Rim to the Black Hills. Archeologists call this the Southern Sinagua culture area.

These farming communities thrived until around 1350 to 1400 when people began leaving the Verde Valley, moving toward other population centers to the north and east, including those along the Little Colorado River and the Hopi Mesas.



The original roof beams protruding from the wall to the right of the tower and the large beam ending in the wall above the tower, provide a sense of scale—the Castle is not as high up or as large as it might appear.

The builders chose their home site wisely, taking advantage of the shelter that a natural alcove provided. The majority of what you see today is original, and the Castle is thought to be one of the best-preserved sites from the period, likely due to its inaccessibility.

This Castle Supported by...

Arizona Sycamore

Platanus wrightii

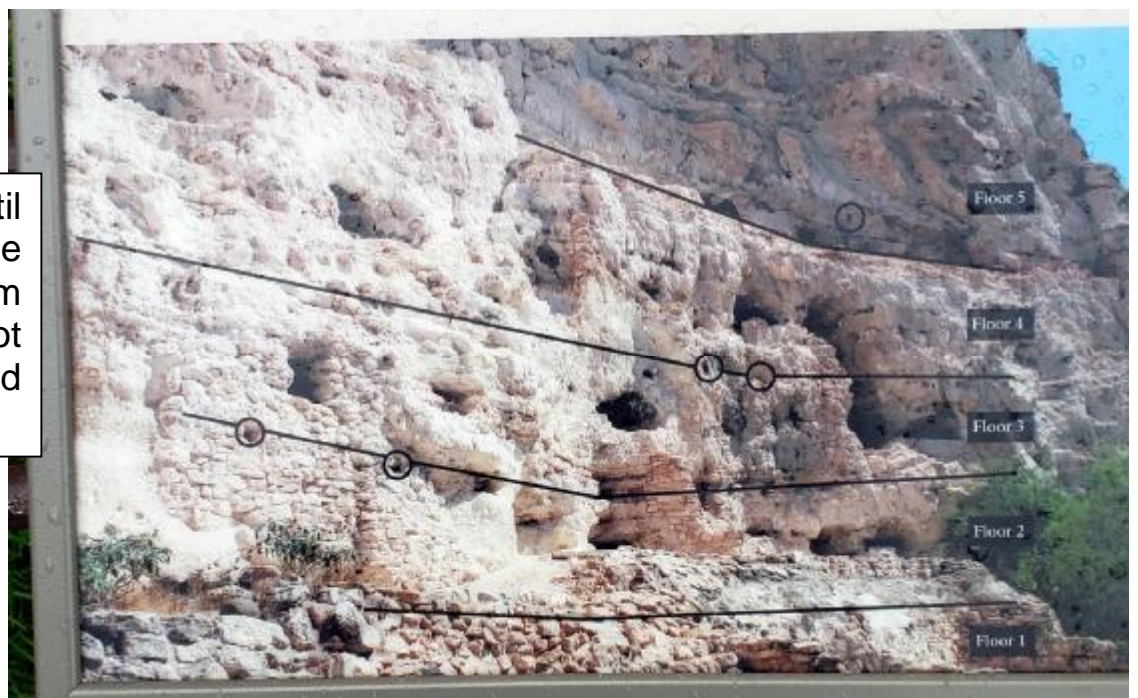
Plane-tree family; Platanaceae

Creating a giant umbrella of huge spreading branches, white bark, and a broad open crown with star-shaped leaves reaching 120 feet (37 m), this beauty is one of Arizona's largest trees. Seasoned logs can last for centuries—the roofs of Montezuma Castle are still supported by sycamore beams today, 700 years after construction.





I didn't realize until now that I took the picture above from almost the same spot as the diagram. Good eye.





This diorama was made in 1951 when the park personnel realized that all the foot traffic through the ruins was, ironically, ruining them. So they decided that if visitors could not see inside of the structure they would have to make something that showed how the natives lived. Note that you can see the roof beams pointed to earlier.



Welcome To
Montezuma Well

The 1/3-mile, paved and signed trail ahead of you leads up a short hill and down to the rim of this naturally occurring spring in the desert. Empty cliff houses, caves and ruins of stone pueblos are all that remain of a 14th-century farming community that once flourished here.

We invite you to enjoy Montezuma Well in a safe and leisurely manner.

Please walk carefully and stay on the trail. Help us preserve this unique spring and surrounding remnants of an earlier civilization.

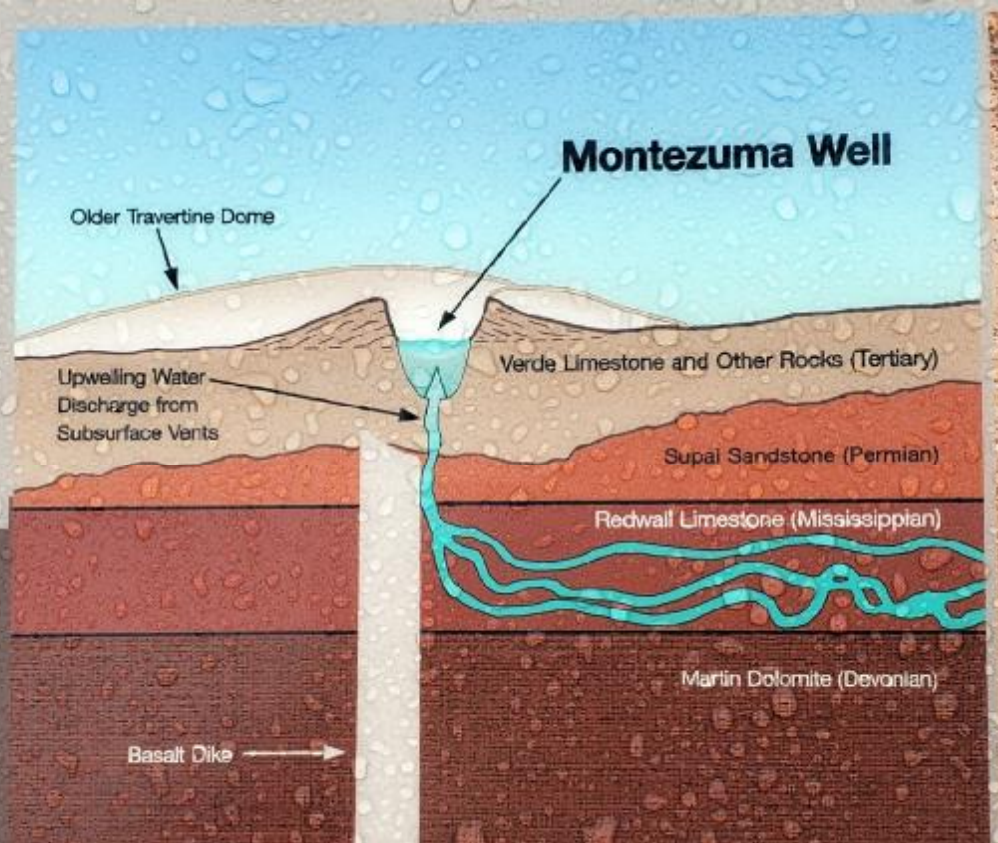
 A map of the Montezuma Well area. The map shows a paved trail leading to the well. Key locations marked on the map include "INFORMATION", "YOU ARE HERE", "PARKING", and "TOUR BUSES". The well itself is depicted as a circular feature with a central spring. The surrounding area is shown with a grid of lines and various landmarks.

About seven miles away is Montezuma Well, a more remote section of the same National Monument.

Montezuma Well is significant in its cultural meanings and natural uniqueness. Ahead lie 15 million gallons (57 million liters) of water springing from primordial origins, nestled within unique geology, and providing refuge to species of animals and plants found nowhere else in the world.



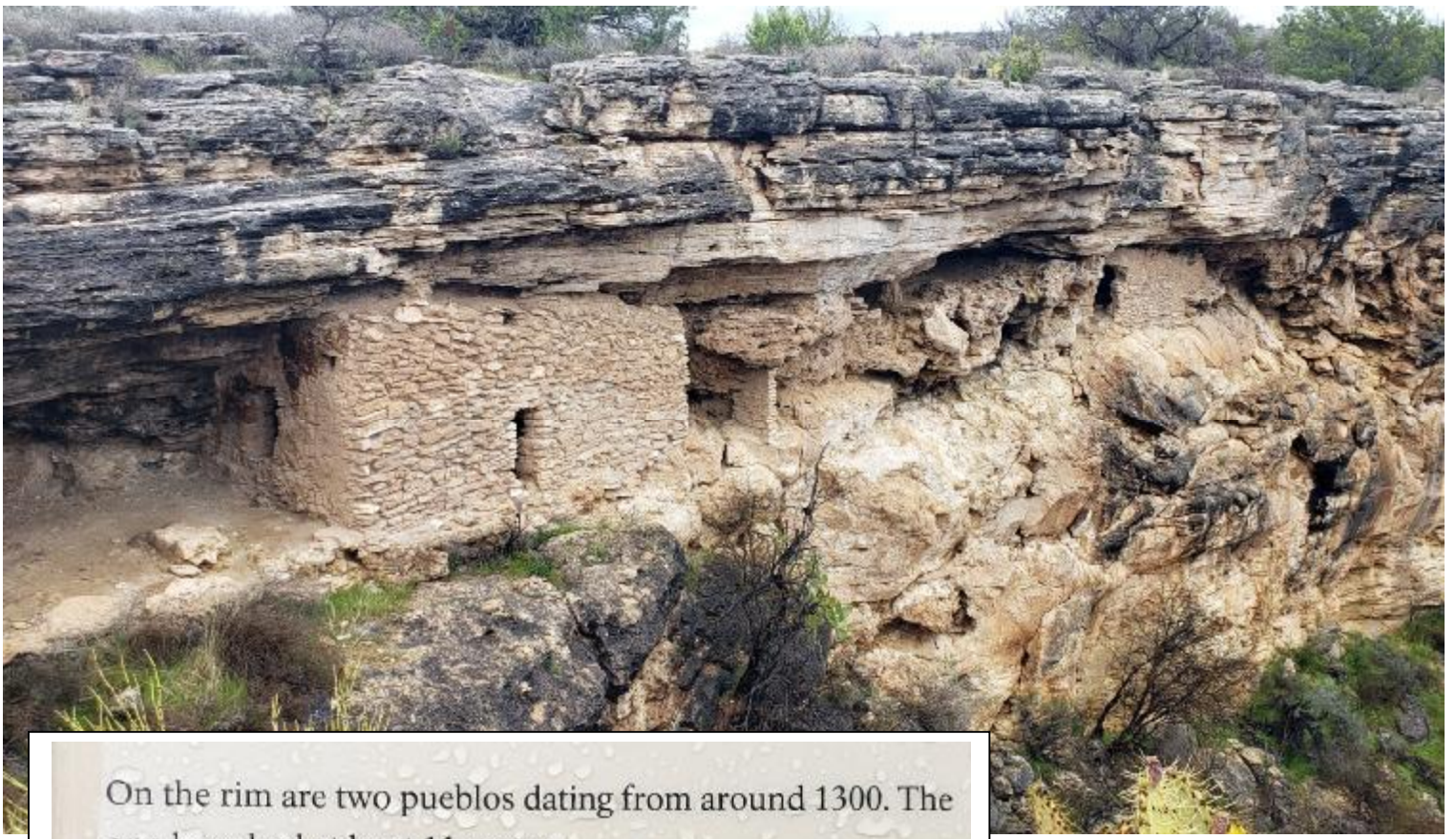
The panoramic shot here is a gross injustice to the well, makes it look like a pond, but the well is 470 feet across.



A hypothetical model for the origin of the Well's water: groundwater that originates from rocks high on the Colorado Plateau to the north moves through solution channels in the Redwall Limestone and emerges directly below Montezuma Well.

Ancient Water

The water bubbling into Montezuma Well today fell as rain and snow atop the Mogollon Rim over 10,000 years ago.



On the rim are two pueblos dating from around 1300. The one here had at least 11 rooms.

The dwelling farther down the trail has a visibly larger room and at least 17 smaller ones. The height of one fallen wall, a little over 13 feet (4 m), is evidence that one room may have had an upper story. Rooms vary in size,

averaging about 190 square feet (18 sq m). In Verde Valley pueblos from this time, one room probably housed a family of four.





The rock pile to the left split off from the wall on the right.

A Balanced System

A continuous supply of water supports the Well's native plants and animals, but why doesn't it overflow?

Each day water enters the bottom of this pool and exits here through the opening to your right. When the Well's water swells above this main opening, additional cracks on either side allow it to drain. The water moves through a 150-foot-long (46 m) underground passageway created by water dissolving the porous travertine. It emerges outside

of the Well above Wet Beaver Creek. There, prehistoric farmers channeled the water into a canal to irrigate crops.

Water takes seven minutes to flow from here out into the canal at the outlet. The constant flow of water into and out of the Well creates a stable system for aquatic plant and

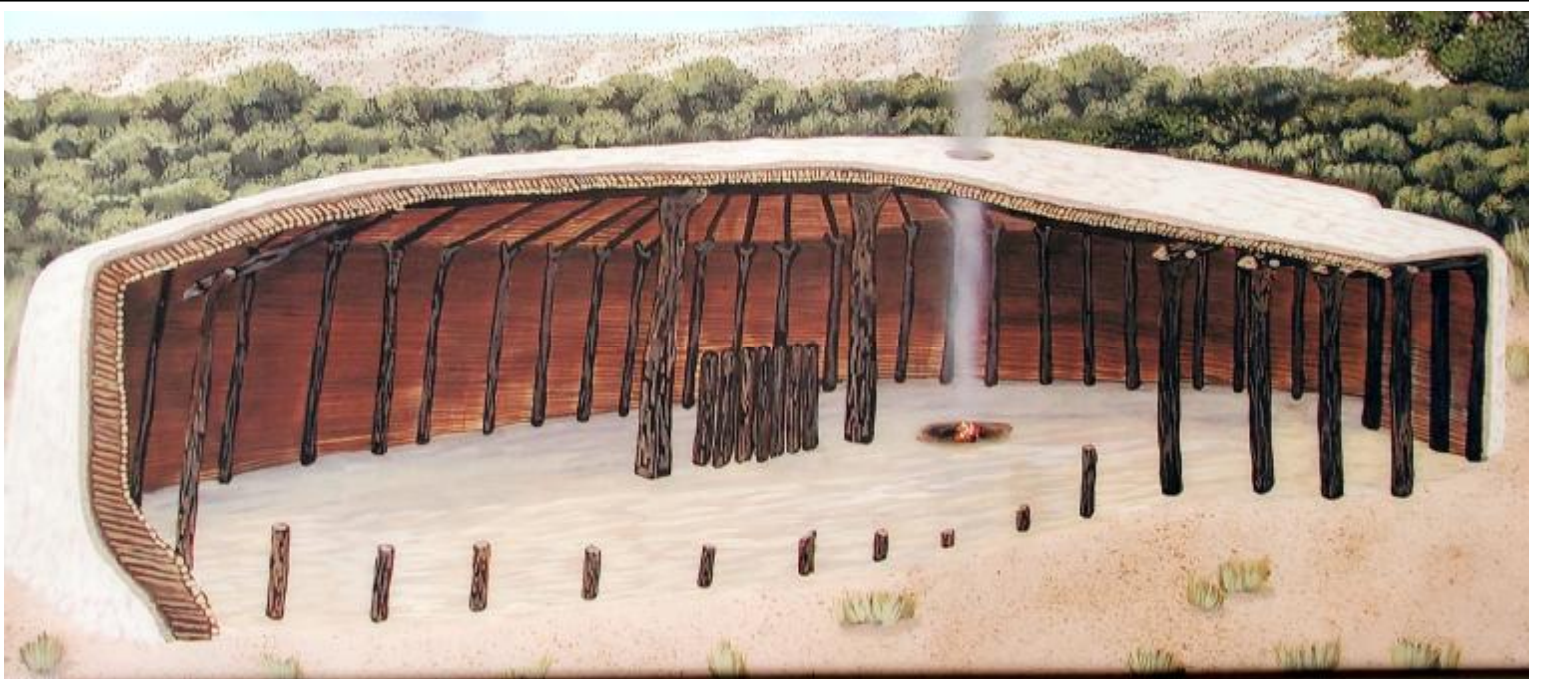
animal life. Around 10 percent of the water turns over each day, replenishing the nutrients that feed both microscopic algae and larger plants along the Well's shore—which in turn provide food and oxygen for the Well's animals.

Even in times of drought, the water in the Well does not diminish. Endemic leech, amphipod, snail, diatom, and water scorpion species exist here and nowhere else on Earth. Migrating ducks, native Sonoran mud turtles, and muskrats often swim the waters, while other wildlife inhabits this lush area.



This dwelling is down near the water, set back into a cave. This would have been a very shaded and cool spot in the heat of the summer. Today it's called home by a colony of large eared bats.

One of four in the area, this pit house dates to about 1050. Several families may have lived here or, more likely, used it as a community structure. It resembles similar houses from the same period built by the Hohokam culture near modern Phoenix, which may hint at contacts and relationships with people living here.



As you can see by the water droplets on the plaques, it rained off and on all day.

When I first arrived at Montezuma Castle I was turned away due to the RV. RV's are not allowed in the parking lot until after 2 p.m.

I'd read that on the website but forgot. Since it was 1:00 already I just pulled across the street and ate lunch and looked for a spot to park tonight. I considered staying right there at the casino because tomorrow I want to visit the Tuzigoot National Monument, about 17 miles west. But when I searched Harvest Hosts I found a golf course in Cornville which is only seven miles from Tuzigoot and directly on my way there.

I gave them a call, received an OK and drove a couple miles farther to a grocery store for some milk.

Back to the golf course, which was already closed for the day, and probably will be tomorrow also due to the weather, and found a spot at the end of the parking lot.

Until next time.....

