What is Mesa Grande?

Mesa Grande Cultural Park is a prehistoric archaeological site associated with the Arizona Museum of Natural History and is one of the City of Mesa’s premier cultural treasures! Located near the heart of Downtown Mesa, this archaeological site is home to one of two remaining prehistoric Hohokam platform mounds. Platform mounds are still considered as sacred sites to many people living today. The Hohokam (also known as the Ancestral Sonoran Desert People), were the only cultural group in prehistoric North America to rely on extensive canal systems to irrigate approximately 100,000 acres of farmland to grow crops including corn, beans and squash. Archaeological work in the Salt River area suggests that at one time, there were nearly fifty platform mounds in existence, many of them occurring along major canal systems. It is believed that these may have functioned as administrative or ceremonial centers for large villages in the Salt River Valley. The Mesa Grande platform mound was one of the larger mounds that have been discovered and was built and used by the Hohokam between AD 1100 and AD 1450.
Mesa Grande is open from **mid-October through the beginning of May**

Mesa Grande is located at

**1000 N. Date St. Mesa, AZ 85201**
Field Trip Costs

$6.00 per person including chaperones

$9.00 per person for joint field trips to Mesa Grande and the Arizona Museum of Natural History

*We do have Title I funding – please ask as our funding varies from year to year.

Length of time

90 minutes for Mesa Grande only

3.5 hours for joint trips to Mesa Grande and the Arizona Museum of Natural History

Start time

10 am for either program

Lunch space

The veranda of the Heritage Center at Mesa Grande. We can accommodate 75 students at one time. School groups larger than 75 students must book a joint trip. Joint trips include a guided program at Mesa Grande and an unguided visit to the Arizona Museum of Natural History.

You can find more information and book your field trip online here

Please call 480-644-3553 if you have any additional questions.
What can you expect on your field trip?

At Mesa grande, you and your students will have an exclusive opportunity to explore an authentic Hohokam platform mound, get hands on archaeological experience and discover more about Arizona’s prehistory in a dynamic environment! Our field trips are divided into three main stations, a tour station, a mock excavation station and a biology focused station.

Tour station
Students will get an interactive overview of important archaeological concepts with an opportunity to see actual objects from the Hohokam tradition. They will then have a short guided tour of the archaeological site with an emphasis on the archeology of the platform mound.

Mock excavation Station
Students will examine a mock excavation unit, complete with artifacts and archaeological features. These gridded units teach proper field methods like mapping, measuring and recording of finds. They will also use their skills of observation and inference to interpret their finds and determine what time period they are studying.
**Biology Station**

Students are part of an interactive discussion of the similarities and differences between the teeth of herbivores, carnivores and omnivores. Students get the opportunity to handle real skulls and examine the teeth. We then discuss how and why humans use tools in place of teeth and students can try their hand at hunting rabbits in the Hohokam style.
Standards met

3rd Grade History and Social Studies Standards:

3.E1.1 Describe and discuss industries and occupations that have shaped Arizona.

3.E2.1 Explain how availability of resources affects decision making in Arizona with respect to water and other natural resources.

3.E2.2 Describe how Arizona is connected to other states, Mexico and other nations by movement of people, goods and ideas.

3.G1.1 Use and construct maps and graphs to represent changes in Arizona over time.

3.G2.1 Explain how people modify and adapt to the Arizona environment.

3.G3.1 Describe the movement of people in and out of Arizona over time.

3.G4.1 Describe how Arizona has changed over time.

3.H1.1 Utilize a variety of sources to construct a historical narrative exploring Arizona’s cultures, civilizations and innovations.

3.H2.2 Examine how individuals and groups have worked together throughout Arizona’s history.

3.SP1.1 Create and use a chronological sequence of related events to compare developments that happened at the same time.

3.SP1.2 Compare life in specific historical time periods to life today.

3.SP1.3 Generate questions about individuals and groups who have impacted history.

3.SP3.1 Develop questions about Arizona history, geography, government and economics.

3.SP4.1 Explain probable causes and effects of events.

3rd Grade Mathematics Standards

3.MD.B.4 Generate measurement data by measuring lengths using rulers

3.MD.C.5 A square with side length 1 unit, called a ‘unit square’ is said to have ‘one square unit of area’ and can be used to measure area.

3.MD.C.6 Measure areas by counting unit squares (e.g. Square cm, square m, square in.)
4th Grade History and Social Studies Standards

4.E2.1 Examine concepts of scarcity, choice, opportunity cost and risk

4.E3.1 Compare different industries, occupations and resources as well as different forms of income earned or received that have shaped the Americas.

4.G1.1. Use and construct maps and graphs to represent changes in Arizona over time.

4.G2.1 Compare the diverse ways people or groups of people have impacted, modified or adapted to the environment of the Americas.

4.G3.1 Explain how the location and use of resources affects human settlement and movement

4.SP1.2. Compare life in specific historical time periods to life today.

4.SP1.3 Generate questions about individuals and groups who have shaped significant historical events.

4.SP3.1 Develop questions about events and developments in the Americas

4.SP3.2 Compare information provided by various sources about events and developments in the Americas.

4.SP4.1 Explain probable causes and effects of events and developments.
Mesa Grande is a sacred and special place to many people that still live today. Please share these tips with your group prior to your visit.

Leave things where you find them

Please do not pick up anything off the ground or dig anything up. Let’s leave things in place for future archaeologists!

Walking feet

Please walk and stay on the path when at Mesa Grande and avoid digging your feet into the ground or pathways.

Stay together

One chaperone per ten kids is required. One chaperone per five kids is even better. Please keep your group together so no one gets lost.

Indoor voices

Please remember to keep your voice down at Mesa Grande. We want to make sure you can hear our educators and not distract other students or visitors.
Don’t touch-unless invited!

There are somethings that your educators will invite you to touch on your visit. Otherwise, please refrain from touching without permission.

Food and drink

At Mesa Grande there are drinking fountains at the front of the Visitor Center and students are encouraged to carry water bottles. Food is only allowed at lunch and all wrappers, containers, etc. must be disposed of in our trash and recycle bins.