

TRAVEL

WORTH THE TRIP

Hike among the mysterious ancient towers of Hovenweep

By Robin Tierney
Special to *The Washington Examiner*

Square, circular and D-shaped towers have stood for eight centuries on a canyon rim at what's now Hovenweep National Monument in Utah. Their function remains a mystery. Celestial tracking? Message signaling? Spiritual ceremonies? Or defense, considering the strategic portholes and lack of ground-level doors?

There's plenty to contemplate during walks around this silent pre-Columbian historical site along the southeastern border of Utah.

Structures are perched on boulders and tucked under ledges. Some, such as the three-story Square Tower, are positioned at the heads of canyons where water flowed. Ancestral Puebloans had built a check dam above the spring to catch storm runoff.

The visitor center, campsites and the Square Tower Group are the only parts of Hovenweep accessible by paved road. Upon arrival, suggests ranger Todd Overbye, get historical background about past residents and sites, some excavated a century ago by Smithsonian archaeologist Jesse Fewkes.

Then follow the natural but

smooth Little Ruin Canyon Trail. Wear a brimmed hat for sun protection at that altitude; you'll be walking about 90 minutes.

The 2-mile rim-side trail provides excellent views of diverse structures built between 1200 and 1300 A.D., with fine masonry evident in the rectangular stones. Boulder House was built without outside scaffolding, each floor constructed from the inside, starting bottom to top. Climbing hand- and toe-holds can be seen below the entrance.

Other sights from the loop trail include rugged mountains stretching to the horizon and "Avatar"-like

IF YOU GO

Hovenweep National Monument, Utah

» Info: nps.gov/hove, 970-562-4282

collared lizards with brilliant yellow heads and turquoise and white-dotted bodies.

There's plenty more to see. Primitive trails lead to fascinating remains at Cutthroat Castle, Cajon, Goodman Point, Holly and Horseshoe/Hackberry villages.

The monument attracts out-

doors lovers with disabilities. Wheelchair-accessible features include the visitor center, part of the campground and the walkway leading to the first canyon overlook, notes Chris Nickel, lead ranger at the monument. "The video program at the visitor center is also closed-captioned." Park admission is \$6 per vehicle, and the small, quiet campground has \$10 tent and RV sites (no hookups).

After exploring the mystery-laden towers by day, Hovenweep visitors turn their eyes to the stars at night. They glitter in a sky as tranquil and dark as in the Ancestral Puebloans' time.

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GAS TANK AWAY

A 'fair' finale to summer fun awaits in Timonium, Md.

By Marie Gullard
Special to *The Washington Examiner*

It is surprising the number of people who have yet to make Labor Day plans. These are often the very ones who fight against summer's end, who will happily travel at the drop of a hat to a lively place in their youth filled with wonder, discovery and all the excitement of mid-July. Could the Sept. 6 finale of the 129th Maryland State Fair be such a destination?

"We really feel like we have something for everyone here," said Grove Miller, who for the last 34 years has served as the fair's chairman. "There's plenty of agricultural exhibits, plenty of home arts exhibits, barn tours [with] a chance to get up close to the animals and rides."

Indeed, the fair's midway is larger and brighter than ever. And, as a Labor Day incentive to visit, \$20 purchases a daylong ticket aboard as many of the 40 rides as often as stamina (and stomach) will allow. "Kiddie Land" offers tame but fun rides for the little ones, while the midway promises to thrill even the bravest fairgoers.

The fair's fare is varied and delicious and, as one might expect, exuding the tastes of summer. Visitors have the opportunity to enjoy corn dogs, cotton candy, crab cakes and other mouth-watering sandwiches, along with corn on the cob, fruit, ice cream and many other products fresh from Maryland farms at the Maryland Foods Pavilion. New this year, fairgoers may purchase in-season fruit and vegetables at the Farmers Market in the Farm & Garden Building.

As always, the fair recognizes the talents of Marylanders of all ages as well as the hard work of thousands of 4-H and Future Farmers of America

IF YOU GO

Labor Day Finale at the Maryland State Fair

» **Where:** Timonium State Fairgrounds
» **Distance:** About 45 miles from D.C.
» **Info:** 410-252-0220 ext. 227, marylandstatefair.com

members who will compete in shows and demonstrations all day long.

Entertainment, back by popular demand each year, includes a daily Master of the Chainsaw demonstration, the Swifty Swine Pig Racing Show, the University of Maryland Agricultural Fair Tours, a Maryland Guernsey Association's Cow Milking Clinic, and the Birthing Center, where families have the opportunity to witness the miracle of birth of calves and piglets under the supervision of veterinarians and students.

"Many children can relate to livestock because of the size," said Dave Draing, the fair's agricultural superintendent. "Most of the animals that are young are pretty docile and can be trained to do almost anything with time."

Even in these savvy, technological times, the spirit and feel of a state fair is about as American as a World Series and, year after year, it never seems to change — unlike kids that grow up. Still, the excitement and nostalgia is for everyone.

"We have already started planning for next year," Miller said, with child-like enthusiasm.