

Title:

Rock Collecting Trip

Word Count:

539

Summary:

Rock collecting? We were in the Arizona desert for the hot springs. Then an old Mayan Indian showed us what he found.

Keywords:

rock collecting, arrowhead hunting, arizona desert

Article Body:

Rock collecting wasn't part of the plan. Neither was arrowhead hunting. Then we met Felix. He was a Mayan Indian, he told us, whose family had migrated from Mexico. Now he was living in an old RV. He was there to enjoy the hot springs, like us. The Arizona desert has more than just hot springs hidden in it though.

We shared meals and campfires for a week, and then he took my wife Ana and I into the desert to show us ancient metates (grain-grinding stones) and arrowheads. In addition, we found Apache Tears, Fire Agate, and hundreds of other beautiful rocks of every type. They were just laying scattered in the desert once he showed us the right places.

Irina, a nineteen-year-old self-described "rainbow kid," who had been living in her van for months, rode with Felix in his old pickup. Ana and I followed in our van. Two hours at the first stop yeilded many beautiful rocks, and a few pieces of ancient pottery. The recent rain had made the rocks and artifacts stand out, washing them clean.

Ana and Irina found odd pieces that might have been arrowheads. The old pottery pieces I found couldn't compare with Felix's half of a pot painted with an intricate design. Most likely, it was hundreds of years old. Felix was always seeing things we missed.

Arrowhead Hunting

Felix showed us ruins of an old Pony Express station. Long-forgotten and unmarked, the grass-and-mud-block walls were still partially standing. I looked aound, and realized the we still hadn't seen one other car. There are some

isolated areas in Arizona. Because Felix insisted the building would have been fired upon by arrows, we started arrowhead hunting around the ruins.

Behind the ruins, and up the hill, Felix showed us rocks with six-inch wide holes in them. They were a foot deep or more, perfectly round, and filled with water. Water storage had been their purpose, he explained, and he and Irina drank the water collected in them. We like fewer bugs in our water, so we just enjoyed this peaceful spot, and watched the valley below.

We had some luck searching for rocks and arrowheads, but not like Felix. We did find hundreds of pieces of pottery, but all very plain looking. Felix found pottery that had beautiful designs on it, and metates. He also found a tiny, perfectly made, clear quartz arrowhead. It had probably been used to hunt small birds two hundred years earlier.

We each wandered a bit, and later, one by one, returned to the van to cook beans with instant rice on our camp stove. Then we said our goodbyes, and traded addresses. Felix and Irina went back to the hot springs, while we headed the other way with bags of rocks, an antelope antler, and two broken arrowheads.

Notes:

You can look for arrowheads and ancient pottery, but it may be illegal to keep any artifacts now. Go out after a rain and you can see Fire-agate and Apache Teardrops laying on the sand. There are some designated rockhound areas in southeastern Arizona. The BLM office in Safford can give you more information on where to go for the best rock collecting.