

## Piro Pueblo Tour Route, June 20, 2019

### Tips for the Tour

1. Travel to the pueblos are on dirt roads with some loose dirt and sand relatively close to Socorro.
2. Tour route on well traveled roads and safe, however, participation is at your own risk.
3. A high-clearance vehicle is recommended. 4-wheel drive NOT required.
4. The desert will be hot, dry & dusty. *Bring plenty of fluids to drink and snacks for your comfort.*
5. Keep a safe distance from the cars ahead to avoid dust, but stay together.
6. Cell service spotty in some areas.
7. Some walking and climbing required. The amount of walking is up to you.
8. Bring good walking or hiking shoes; don't wear shorts.
9. Bring your camera and binoculars if you have them.

### Tour Description

This guided auto tour will visit three pueblos representing the early, mid, and late cultural phases of pre-1680 (Pueblo Revolt) Piro pueblos. Only the Teypana pueblo has received some excavation. Descriptions of these pueblos are on the following pages. Some walking and climbing hills required.



Socorro Desert Ratts are members of the Socorro County Historical Society (SCHS) and other interested parties preserving and documenting the rich history of Socorro County, New Mexico through research, field work, mapping and photography of historic and cultural sites, including El Camino Real trail and the native Piro.



STOP

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**SAN MIGUEL MISSION CHURCH – SOCORRO, NM**

Photos by Paul Harden except where noted

Today's **San Miguel (Parish) Church** was built when the reoccupation of Socorro was finally approved by Spanish officials in the early 1800s. It was constructed atop portions of the original 1620s built **Nuestra Señora de Perpetuo Socorro** church (Our Lady of Perpetual Help) in the Piro pueblo of **Pilabó**. The church was dedicated by Bishop Alonso de Benavidez on August 3, 1626. Portions of the original Piro mission church walls and foundation can still be seen in the church today.



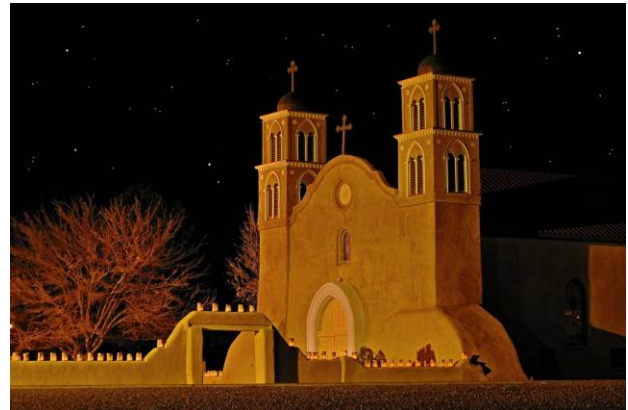
Photo: Socorro County Historical Society  
1880s photo of San Miguel Church in Socorro, NM



Portion of the original foundation and wall from the 1620s pueblo built mission church.



Dr. Michael Bletzer in a recent excavation finding portions of the Pilabó Piro pueblo in Socorro.



In 1600s Franciscan friar tradition, luminarios decorate San Miguel each Christmas.



Photo: San Miguel 1974 Restoration Booklet  
Archeologist David Snow excavating the original 1620s floor and foundation in the 1976 restoration.



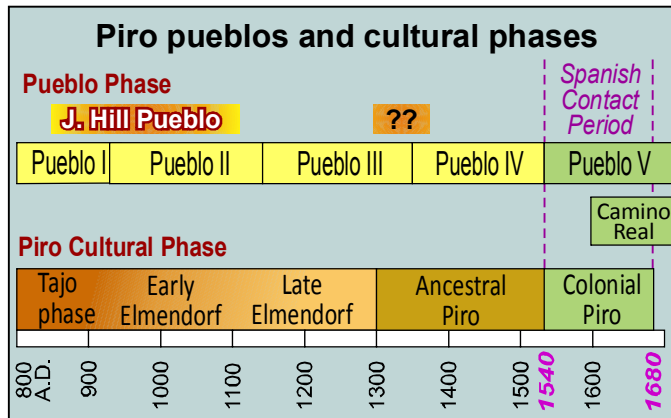
Photo: San Miguel 1974 Restoration Booklet  
Pastor Lebreche inspecting a skull and femur found under the floors in 1976 – determined to be Piro

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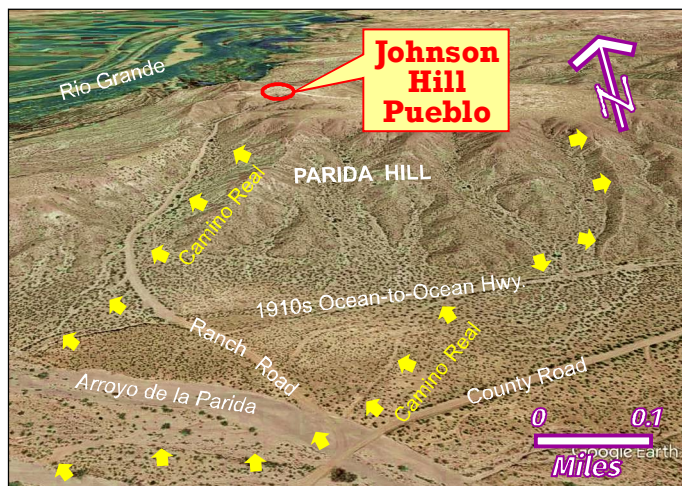
**JOHNSON HILL PUEBLO**

**Age:** Pueblo I & Pueblo II Site  
**Type Site:** Roomblocks with pit structures

**Visit Summary:** A fairly good dirt road leads right to this BLM marked site. About 6 miles from Socorro. The main pueblo structure is only yards off the road. Easy access, no hiking. This small site is an example of the earliest Piro pueblo construction utilized by a clan of a few families. Most pueblos of this early era were built on the river banks. This is an exception of being built near the river, but on a high gravel bench with a magnificent view of the Rio Grande Valley. Some visible segments of El Camino Real can also be seen nearby in this area.



**Site Profile:** Johnson Hill pueblo is misnamed – it’s actually located on Parida Hill, a noted obstacle on El Camino Real trail (Johnson Hill is about a mile to the east). Regardless, Michael Marshall has identified this unexcavated small pueblo as a multicomponent site of the Tajo/Pueblo I and Elmendorf/Pueblo II phases. There are two small rock structures of two rooms each and two nearby pithouse depressions of the early Tajo/Pueblo I phase. A few yards to the south is a very distinctive linear structure of the later Pueblo II phase with seven rooms. The amount of rubble suggests full-height masonry walls were used (not adobe or jacal). Plain brown ware pottery and other types verifies the early age of this pueblo site and traces of the later Ancestral Piro glazeware. This may suggest the pueblo was not occupied continuously, but had 2–3 different periods of occupation.



GoogleEarth image of the Johnson Hill pueblo, north of Socorro and Parida arroyo.



Photo by Paul Harden

Cholla growing along the edges of the 7-room Pueblo II room block. Individual rooms can be seen at the site.

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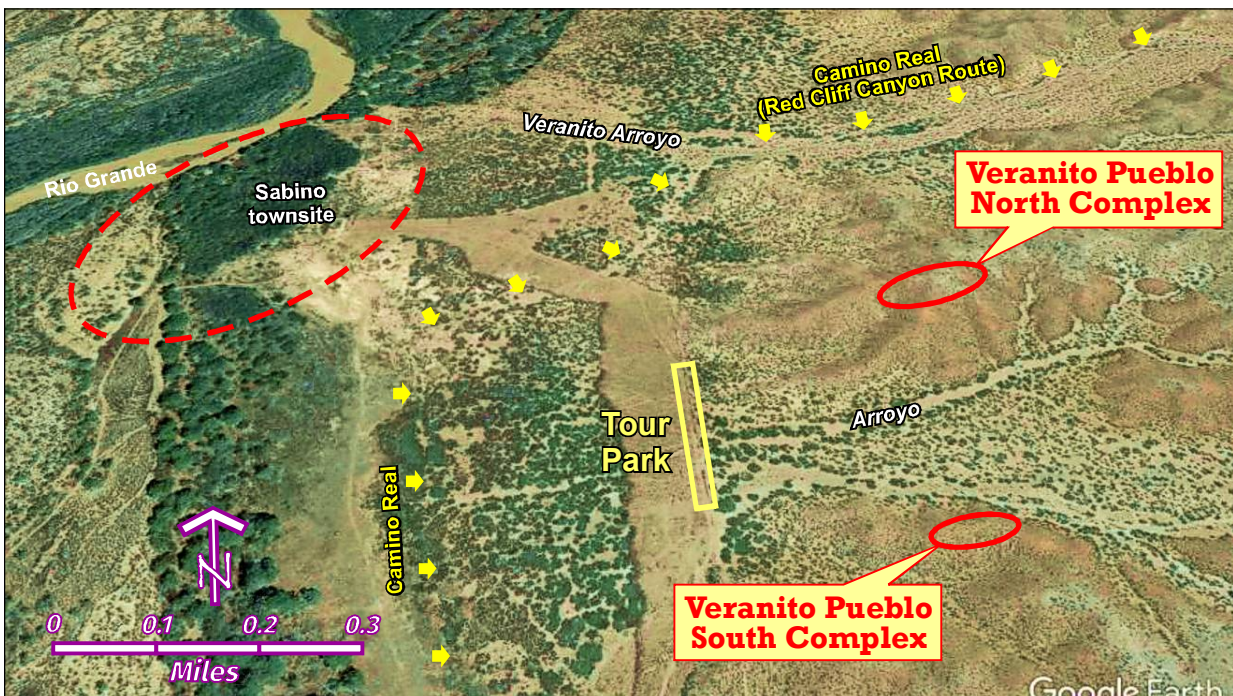
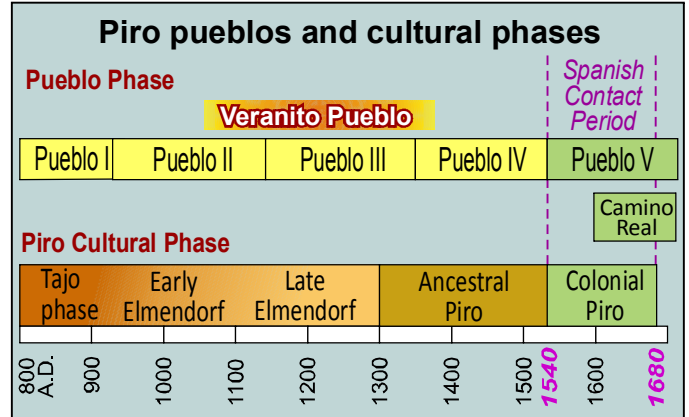
**VERANITO VILLAGE PUEBLO**

**Age:** Late Pueblo II & Pueblo III Site, Late Elmendorf/Ancestral Piro period

**Type Site:** Four roomblocks, 55 rooms, village complex

**Visit Summary:** A fairly good ranch road leads to very near the site. About 8½ miles from Socorro. This is a pueblo “village” built atop two different hills (ridges) separated by an arroyo and walking distance apart. Some moderate climbing is required to reach the pueblos atop the ridges. This is a site with visible room blocks and rock debris indicating multi-story sections.

**Site Profile:** The Veranito pueblo complex consists of four separate house constructions. Three of the structures are small cobble-based jacals with rock foundations located on the south ridge containing about 20 rooms. The fourth structure is a large L-shaped room block with about 30 rooms located on the north ridge. The amount of rock debris along the structures and fallen down the sides of the ridge indicates full-height masonry walls and perhaps multi-story in places. A square isolated building is located near the room block, possibly multi-storied. There are also other isolated structures on the side of the north ridge, and a couple about ¼-mile to the southeast, possibly hunting camps. Occupation was the Late Elmendorf period into the 1300s (pre-contact pueblo). Surface pottery is sparse at this site (no excavations performed) making exact site dating difficult. Remnants of the old Spanish village of Sabino is about ¼-mile to the west. It was first mentioned in 1780 and a popular stop and paraje (camp) for travelers on El Camino Real through the 1800s, and occupied until about the 1930s. Much of Sabino has been destroyed by the 1929 and 1937 floods and erosion from the river. Surface pottery shards at Sabino suggests the site of perhaps another ancient pueblo once existed closer to the river.



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**VERANITO VILLAGE PUEBLO**

Photos by Paul Harden



**Veranito pueblo site and view looking west**



**North Complex: Volunteers recording dimensions of the main roomblock**



**South complex: Remnants of a linear room block of 10-12 rooms, jacal construction**



**South complex: Foundations of the 10-room U-shaped jacal "pueblito."**



**North complex: Looking west along the ridge at the collapsed walls of the main roomblock with about 30 rooms.**



**North complex: The stand-alone isolated square structure of solid masonry construction.**

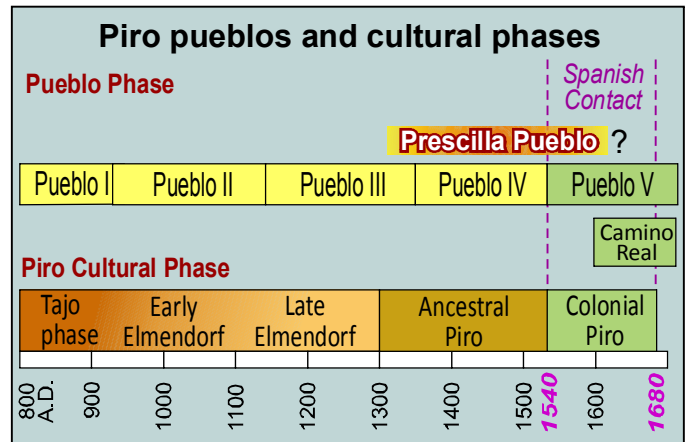
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**PUEBLO DE LA PRESCILLA**

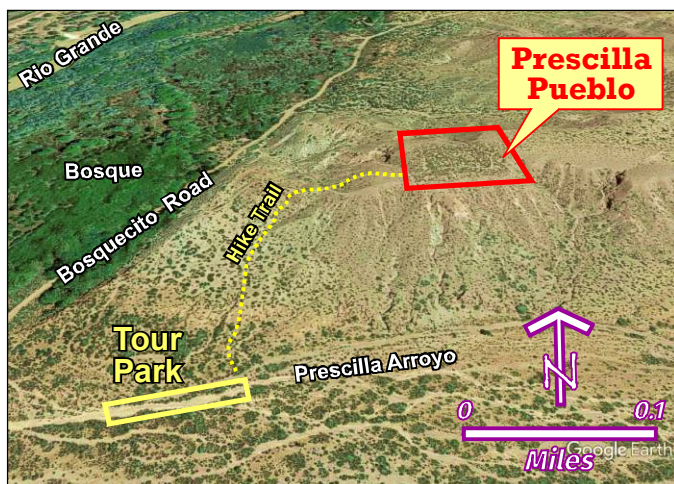
Age: Pueblo III Site, Ancestral and Colonial Piro

Type Site: Four roomblocks, 115 rooms

**Visit Summary:** *This pueblo is directly across the river from Socorro. Drive is about 8 miles, 4 miles on a good dirt road. The county road is bladed atop El Camino Real trail in this area. This is a late period Piro pueblo of about 115 rooms built atop a high ridge. It is a fairly hefty climb up the steep side of the ridge, though not dangerous. It overlooks Socorro with an extensive view of the Rio Grande valley. There are four roomblocks surrounding a plaza and a kiva with distinctive walls and rooms in places.*



**Site Profile:** This pueblo is a large masonry complex of a series of roomblocks built around a rectangular plaza with a kiva in the northwest corner. It was recently discovered in 1984 during the Rio Abajo Piro survey by archaeologist Michael Marshall. He estimated 95 ground level rooms and about 20 second story rooms. The roomblocks are defined by easily seen mounds of reduced adobe, rock foundations, and rubble. The walls and individual rooms are seen in places. The north central complex was clearly a multi-storied structure. The irregular shape of the west roomblock, containing several small courtyards, may have been used for protection from the wind for cooking. There are scattered lithics and pottery at the site, dating the village to the Pueblo IV/Ancestral Piro phase with occupation likely into the early Spanish Contact period, and no doubt occupied for much the same time as Pilabó (Socorro) directly across the river. During that period, the two pueblos were easily within sight of each other. Much could be learned from this late period pueblo; hopefully it will receive a professional excavation in the future.



GoogleEarth image of the Prescilla pueblo directly across the river to the east from Socorro (ancestral Pilabó pueblo)



Collapsed walls on one of the roomblock mounds. There may be intact rooms buried under the mounds.

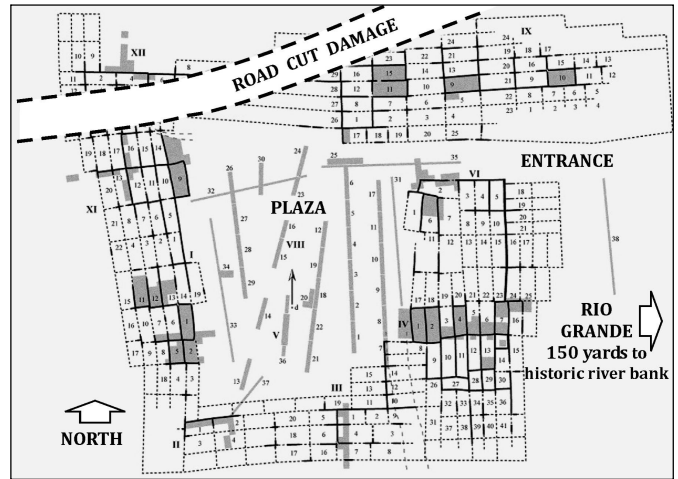
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**TEYPANA PUEBLO**

**Age:** Late Pueblo III & Pueblo IV Site, Ancestral Piro and Spanish contact period pueblo  
**Type Site:** About 200 rooms, village complex with defensive walls, built near the river

**Visit Summary:** *This pueblo is located just off of paved road NM-1 and down a short dirt road about a mile south of the hamlet of Luis Lopez.*

**Site Profile:** This is a large masonry and adobe pueblo of about 200 rooms, some multi-story, built around a plaza. The Piro at this pueblo offered food to the starving Juan de Oñate Expedition in May 1598. It was renamed Socorro for the help and assistance given the Spaniards. Thus, it was the first Socorro. About 1620, the Spaniards began consolidating the Piro into one of four mission pueblos. Teypana was ordered abandoned with the people moving to Pilabo. The people took the name Socorro with them, renaming Pilabo to Socorro – today’s Socorro.



**Map of the Teypana pueblo. Areas excavated by Dr. Bletzer 2000-2006 are shown in grey.**

Teypana (also called Plaza Montoya) was partially excavated led by Dr. Michael Bletzer. Teypana produced very few artifacts of value, proof of the orderly abandonment of the pueblo. No intact pottery was found. Even the wood beams, vegas, and weaving looms had apparently been removed and relocated to Socorro. Several rooms in the different wings were excavated that showed the pueblo was under almost constant construction and repair from the early 1500s until the 1620s abandonment. A kiva has never been found. After abandonment, it appears it was occupied by a few Piro that continued to work the fields to provide food for Socorro. As per practice, all excavations were filled back in, such that there is little to see today at the site except some remnants of the pueblo walls and plaza area. But underneath is one of the largest known Piro pueblos.



**A typical room excavated showing mealing bins, cooking hearth, metates, and food storage areas.**



**This room was used for weaving, evidenced by the holes that once supported the loom.**

