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**ARIZONA**

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**Petrified Forest National Park**

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On first impression, the **Petrified Forest** may not sound very appealing as it comprises stone log fragments scattered over a rather remote and otherwise featureless section of Arizona desert. Apparently it comes as a disappointment to some who expect the trees to be still standing in thick rocky groves instead of lying flat in sections as they are. However, the petrified logs are extremely beautiful with most unexpectedly bright colors, and the park is adjacent to the scenic **Painted Desert** so it is well worth a visit especially as it is quite easily reached, being close to the main east-west route interstate 40.

**Petrified Forest Map:**

 [PDF format map of Petrified Forest National Park](#), from the National Park Service (204 kb).

**The North Approach:** A 27 mile road runs through the Petrified Forest National Park, from I-40 exit 311 to US 180; the closest town is **Holbrook**, 25 miles to the west. The visitor center is at the north end and there is a small museum at the south entrance. The first few miles of this road winds through the Painted Desert, north of the interstate, and has 9 viewpoints of the rolling multicolored landscape. The patterns visible in the eroded soft sedimentary rocks are due mainly to hematite (red), limonite (yellow) and gypsum (white), and the colors are especially striking at sunset.

The park boundaries have been extended twice, in 1932 and 1970, to include a large area of the desert to the north but there are no trails into this region although back-country camping is allowed. Several other sections of northeast Arizona are also known as the Painted Desert, including a large region around US 89 north of Flagstaff, close to the Colorado River. Soon after the park entrance, the road turns due south, crosses the interstate and a branch of the Atchinson, Topeka and Santa Fe railway, and passes through the petrified region. There are various features of interest - an Indian ruin, ancient petroglyphs and several geological formations - together with 4 main areas of petrification, listed below.

**VIEWPOINTS**

**Blue Mesa:** reached by a short loop road, this has many logs lying around an area of undulating blue-grey mounds of clay. Often the logs lie partially buried in the clay, and erosion gradually but continuously exposes more of them. There are no trails in this region as the soils are too delicate.

**Jasper Forest:** is a large expanse of logs scattered over a wide and rather

**Photographs**

- [9 views of the Petrified Forest National Park](#)

**More Information about the Petrified Forest**

- [Conservation](#) - measures taken to prevent thefts of rock samples
- [Geology](#) - how the stone logs were formed

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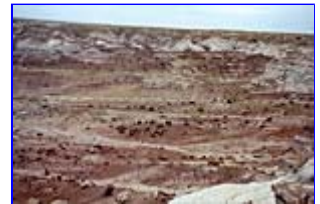
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[Jasper Forest](#)



[Rainbow Forest, Long Logs Trail](#)

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desolate valley. There used to be a lot more, but this was one of the main locations for collecting by early prospectors who removed logs by the cartload. There is a good viewpoint but again no hiking opportunities. Opposite, a short road leads to agate bridge, a long complete unbroken log lying over a stream bed. The bridge was reinforced by concrete early this century but it is of course forbidden to walk across.

**Crystal Forest:** Further south, a short trail passes through Crystal Forest. This was once strewn with especially beautiful logs, which had crevices containing clear quartz and purple amethyst crystals, but all the best specimens were removed by souvenir hunters long ago. It was this theft that prompted local citizens to petition for the creation of the then National Monument, which was established in 1906 - National Park status was not achieved until 1962. A few small crystalline specimens can still be seen, amongst other more typical logs.

**Rainbow Forest:** The area with the most densely-scattered petrified wood is Rainbow Forest, near the south entrance of the national park. There is a museum, which amongst other exhibits has a large collection of apologetic letters sent by visitors who have taken rock samples and later regretted their actions. Hundreds of pieces of petrified wood are returned each year. Through the museum, a short foot trail winds through the **Giant Forest** area which has some of the biggest logs in the park. Nearby, the Long Logs trail gives perhaps the most impressive views - the path passes hundreds of large beautifully colored examples, often several meters in length. There is also an old hut, **Agate House**, constructed entirely of petrified wood by Indians in the 16th century.

**Camping:** Partly to protect the natural resources, there is no NPS campsite in Petrified Forest National Park; the only camping within the park is for backpackers in the Painted Desert wilderness area, north of the interstate. The surrounding land also has patches of petrified wood, and is privately owned and fenced off, so there is no place for free camping nearby. Closest options for this seem to be one of several junctions of I-40, either side of the park turn-off - exits 303, 320 and 325, each of which has short tracks leading into the desert where overnight parking/camping should be possible.

**Hotels:** For hotels, nearby Holbrook has about 12 choices - one is the Holiday Inn Express Holbrook at 1308 E. Navajo Blvd, just north of I-40 (exit 286) and 25 miles from the northern entrance to the national park. The hotel has 59 rooms, was renovated as recently as 2006, and is within walking distance of the center of Holbrook, which is a small town but with a fair selection of restaurants and shops.

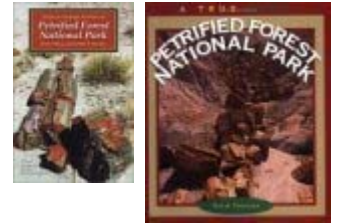
[Check rates/make reservation at the Holiday Inn Express Holbrook](#)

- [Canyon de Chelly National Monument](#) (99 miles) - deep canyon on Navajo land, with many Anasazi cliff dwellings

#### Petrified Forest - Similar Places

- [The Bisti Badlands](#), New Mexico - a distant landscape of colorful undulating mounds with occasional fossil specimens
- [Buckskin Gulch](#), Utah - here, petrified wood is scattered around the start of the Wire Pass side canyon

Selected Petrified Forest books, from [amazon.com](#)



[Holiday Inn Express Holbrook](#)

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