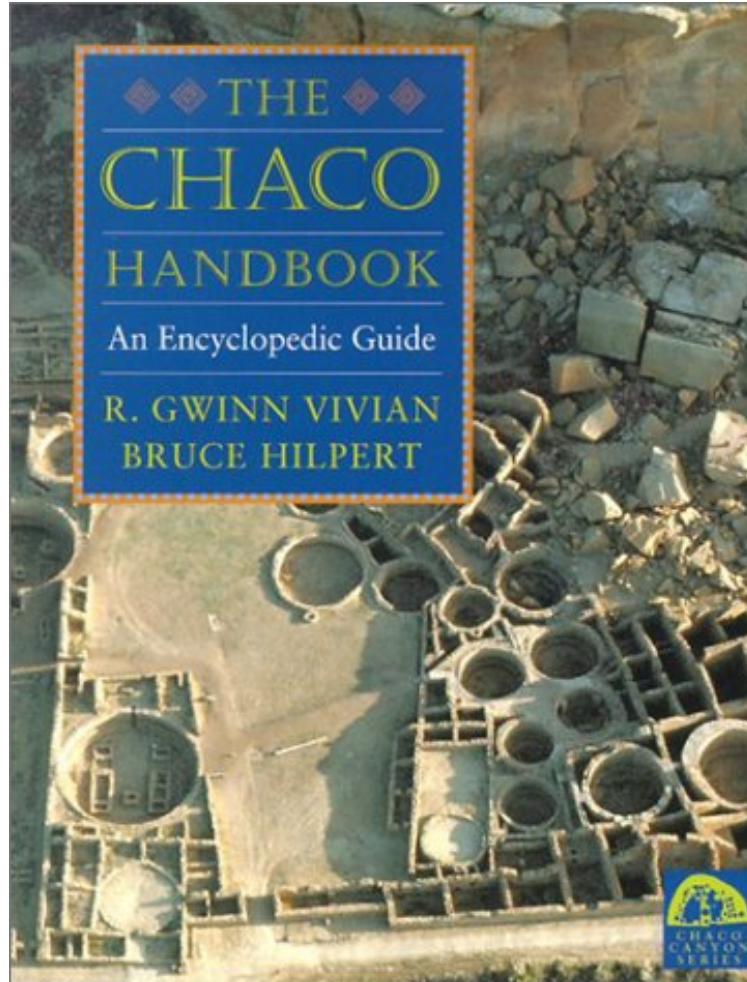


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Chaco Handbook: An Encyclopedia Guide (Chaco Canyon Series)

R. Gwinn Vivian

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R. Gwinn Vivian : Chaco Handbook: An Encyclopedia Guide (Chaco Canyon Series) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Chaco Handbook: An Encyclopedia Guide (Chaco Canyon Series):

24 of 24 people found the following review helpful. a very good reference, but needed a better overview By Robin G. Sowton The Puebloan culture at Chaco Canyon reached its height between AD 1050 and 1120. In addition to constructing great houses, kivas, tools and pottery, the people also had to solve the problems of living in a harsh environment. For example, they developed intricate systems of controlling water through canals, dams, gates, and gridded gardens. This book is an excellent reference that lists subjects alphabetically, with brief descriptions (usually not more than one half to one page in length) for each entry. However, I will echo another reviewer's comment that this is not a useful book to take with you when walking among the ruins of Chaco Canyon National Park. I also did not

find it as useful when approaching it as an 'introduction' to the culture. It is useful however if you're reading another book about Chaco Canyon or you're already familiar with the culture and you want to look up what a Herradura is or to identify what the Rabbit Ruin is and where it's located. There are black-and-white photos and pen-and-ink drawings displayed throughout the book, and there are also maps of topographic and hydrologic features of the area. My only disappointment is that it was touted on the back cover as 'The Beginner's Salvation' but I never got the beginner's 'big picture' when reading the book's introduction. I would've preferred an overview that addressed the subject in this sequence: reasons the Puebloans began moving and settling into the area, what did early aspects of the culture look like, what main conflicts/issues did they have to resolve along the way and how, what did later aspects of the culture look like, and what were some possible reasons why they left. Instead, I had to wade through a lot to piece this together and there are still a few pieces missing. An overview followed by the introductory chapters would've been more effective. Overall though, as a reference, this book has some great information. Also, a travel note if you're planning to visit Chaco Canyon... To get to the park, you have to take a 20-mile long desolate dirt road. I would recommend not taking a regular car or RV out there. When I was there in September, we were just leaving the park as it started to rain. I soon felt fortunate that we had rented an SUV because the road very quickly turned into a thick muck.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. best Chaco Canyon book. By Diane Kelly This is THE book on Chaco Canyon. Easy to hop around, nice index, very thorough. nice job, Bruce and Gwinn! 26 of 31 people found the following review helpful. A superb introduction to The Chaco Phenomenon By Theodore A. Rushton Chaco Canyon, site of one of the most remarkable civilizations in North America prior to the European invasion, has long been the subject of speculation, fantasy and intense scientific exploration and study. The mystery of its origins may never be unraveled, which is perhaps the enduring lure of the Chaco Phenomenon. Visit the ruins of an English castle, or a coastal monastery destroyed by Vikings, and the origins and fate are readily available. At Chaco, the Great Houses built from about 850 AD to 11 AD were the highest stone structures built in the Americas until at least the 18th century. For Navajos and New Agers, like the English of 850 AD when called on to explain Roman ruins, the structures were built by gods. The reality is more prosaic, Chaco was built by the ancestors of today's pueblo Indians. The mystery is "Why?" The Chaco Handbook doesn't attempt to solve the mystery. Instead, it provides a concise handbook of Chacoan studies, illustrated with more than 100 maps, drawings and photos, plus definitions of 250 of the common terms relating to more than a century of exploration and investigations. On the basis of my personal visits beginning in the 1960s, it is the best single volume introduction available to explain Chaco. It's up-to-date, covering some of the latest original and provocative work by longtime professionals such as Thomas Windes and Steve Lekson. It also mildly debunks the sensationalism of Christy Turner who caused a brief flurry of revulsion with his suggestion it was an ancient pueblo cannibalism center. It's a handy reference for anyone who has visited, an invaluable resource for anyone who plans to visit and a perfect introduction even for those unable to visit. Instead of the usual detailed archaeological minutiae, "The Chaco Handbook" is ideal for average readers. Written by two consummate experts with decades of professional experience, it is an excellent introduction to visiting and thinking about Chaco. After reading this book, dozens of other books are available which range from professional reports and analysis of excavated sites to esoteric speculation that varies from Aztec warlords to visitors from outer space. Once again, based on personal experience, this book is the next best thing to living there for several months. Care for some speculation? Chaco was abandoned after 1100 AD when the Southwest was hit by a decades-long drought; I've studied quality reports of Chaco groundwater which is laced with high levels of natural pollution that can cause mental retardation. The decline roughly coincides with the introduction of the Kachina religion, still a vital part of Zuni and Hopi societies -- two good reasons to start over someplace else. When we consider why people do things -- such as build Chaco in the first place, or abandon it after 250 years -- we're looking at some fundamental ideas about the origins and fate of societies. Why migrate to Chaco and build Great Houses? Look at it this way -- Why should Europeans migrate to America and build a Great Society? Chaco is a metaphor for our world. This is the fun of studying and speculating about Chaco, a rich and materialistic society that offered far more than a marginal or subsistence life. The Chaco Phenomenon was a vast construction project lasting hundreds of years, with a profound impact on the regional ecology. It leaves the enduring question, "What inspired these Pueblo Ancestors to such greatness?" Granted, this book doesn't delve into such idle and sometimes amusing speculation. But, it offers a concise and comprehensive background for those who ponder such issues, and I recommend it as the best introduction available. It's part of the charm of studying Chaco, the temptation (by amateurs at least) to combine facts with "What if?" speculation. "The Chaco Handbook" is the best introduction you will get.

Chaco Canyon in Northwestern New Mexico contains a remarkable set of ancient puebloan ruins. Occupied between AD 850 and 1150, Chaco appears to have been the cultural and political center of a network that extended throughout the Four-Corners region. The Chaco Culture National Historical Park is now a protected site and has been continuously studied for a century. R. Gwinn Vivian and Bruce Hilpert have written an encyclopedic handbook to help organize the extensive amount of information available for Chaco, as well as to stimulate speculation and encourage further exploration. The result is a highly accessible but thorough reference. The Chaco Handbook includes over 250

cross-referenced, alphabetical entries, 100 figures and illustrations, plus histories of Chaco's development and archaeological research. Entries address important Chacoan and related sites, place-names, archaeological and ethnographic terms, objects and architectural features, and institutions and individuals. The utility of this fascinating handbook extends well beyond the immediate vicinity of the Park, for it will be useful to anyone with an interest in the ancient puebloans, including specialists. Whether used during a trip to Chaco, following visits to Chacoan places, or as a quick reference for dates and definitions, The Chaco Handbook will guide readers to greater exploration of Chacoan culture and the Chaco world.