

Petrified Forest National Park drive

A 28-mile park road connects the petrified wood areas, archaeological sites, and Painted Desert viewpoints. You could easily spend most of a day here, walking the short trails and stopping at most of the overlooks.



The well-named Newspaper Rock at Petrified Forest National Park has many stories to tell. Use your imagination!

Each end of the park has a visitor center with exhibits. You may wish to bring a picnic, since restaurants crop up only at the beginning and end of the drive. The road is open year-round during park hours, but it closes at night and is also closed on Christmas. Dress for the temperature extremes (swings of up to 40°F between day and night) and bright sunshine of the high desert. No accommodations or campgrounds exist within the park.

If you're driving across the state on I-40, you'll save time and distance by starting at the park's south entrance on an eastbound trip and at its north entrance on a westbound one. Otherwise, you may wish to start at the south entrance, as described here, to be sure of having enough time to see the petrified wood, which is concentrated at this end, and then to enjoy the afternoon light over the Painted Desert near the north end of the drive. Hikers can explore wilderness areas of the park. Talk with a ranger for suggestions and to obtain the permit required for overnight trips.

Just inside the south entrance, 19 miles east of Holbrook on US 180, the **Rainbow Forest Museum** 1 displays skeletons of the strange animals that once lived here and

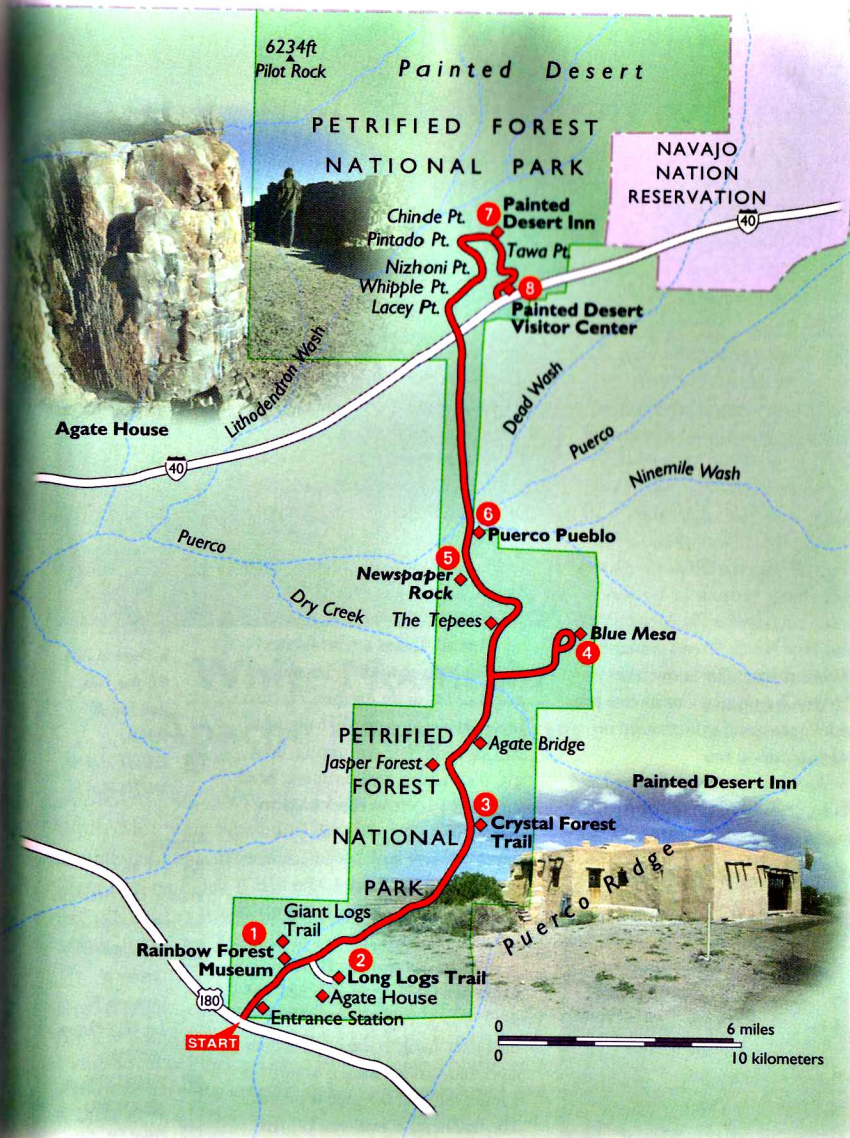
samples of petrified wood from different types of tree. Staff at the information desk/bookstore proffer suggestions and literature on exploring the park. A "Conscience Wood" exhibit displays stolen pieces returned with remorseful stories and apologies. The **Giant Logs Trail**, behind the museum, follows a half-mile loop among monster-size logs. A bit farther down the drive, the **Long Logs Trail** 2 provides another close look at massive logs, some more than 100 feet long, on a half-mile loop. At a trail fork, you can turn off for a half-mile round-trip to **Agate House**, a seven-room prehistoric pueblo constructed entirely of petrified wood. The **Crystal Forest Trail** 3 leads past some of the prettiest and most abundant petrified wood on a half-mile loop. From **Jasper Forest** overlook you get a view of petrified wood that has eroded from hillsides below. A Hashknife cowboy (named after the shape of the brand of the Aztec Land and Cattle Company) once successfully rode his horse across **Agate Bridge**—a petrified log spanning a gully—on a ten-dollar bet. A side road climbs atop **Blue Mesa** 4 for views of the surrounding badlands; you can descend into the badlands on a one-mile interpretive trail.

Back on the main road, the cone-shaped hills called **The Tepees** stand out, with the

- ▶ See area map p. 177
- ▶ Rainbow Forest Museum
- ▶ 28 miles
- ▶ 45 minutes to all day
- ▶ Painted Desert Visitor Center

NOT TO BE MISSED

- Rainbow Forest Museum & Giant Logs Trail
- Long Logs Trail & Agate House
- Crystal Forest Trail
- Puerco Pueblo
- Painted Desert viewpoints
- Painted Desert Inn



minerals in the rock forming bands of colors. Petroglyphs on giant boulders at **Newspaper Rock** 5 show animal, human, and geometric designs left by early Native American tribes. About a hundred rooms surround the plaza of **Puerco Pueblo** 6. A kiva (underground chamber) near the northwest corner indicates that ceremonial life played an important role here.

Each of the **viewpoints** at the north end of the drive provides a different panorama of the Painted Desert, whose stark landscape,

nearly devoid of vegetation, reveals its multi-colored rock layers. **Painted Desert Inn** 7, built as a traveler's stop with Indian labor and local materials, opened at Kachina Point in 1924. It later expanded into a pueblo-style building with picture windows and Hopi murals. Today you can step inside to see the murals and other historical exhibits. A rim trail goes to Tawa Point, half a mile away. The **Painted Desert Visitor Center** 8, just off I-40 Exit 311 (24 miles northeast of Holbrook), is near the north entrance. ■