

Arizona's Standing Rocks Become a New National Park

Chiricahua's towers of stone tell a story about volcanoes, time, plants, and protected land.



Tall rock towers and balanced boulders rise from a desert canyon with green trees below.

Chiricahua in southeastern Arizona has a new name on the park map. In October 2026, it was redesignated, or officially renamed, as Chiricahua National Park, according to NASA Earth Observatory. It had been a national **monument** since 1924. A national monument is protected public land. A national park is protected too. The new name can bring more attention to a special place.

The park is famous for tall rock towers. The Apache called the area “The Land of the Standing-Up Rocks.” If you walked there, you might feel small. Some stone pinnacles rise like giant fingers. A **pinnacle** is a tall, pointed tower of rock. Other rocks balance on top of thinner rocks. **Canyons** twist between them.

The story began long before any trail was built. About 27 million years ago, a **volcano** erupted in what is now southeastern Arizona. It spread ash and **pumice** across the land. Pumice is a light rock full of tiny holes. Some hot ash and rock flowed together and hardened. That rock is called tuff, which means rock made from volcanic ash.

Later, water, wind, heat, and cold slowly changed the rock. That breaking and shaping is called **erosion** and weathering. Softer parts wore away first. Harder

parts stayed standing. Over a very long time, the cliffs became spires, hoodoos, and canyons. A hoodoo is a tall, thin rock column.

NASA wrote about the park because its satellites look down at Earth from space. A satellite is a machine that travels around Earth. One satellite, Landsat 9, took a clear image of the area on July 2, 2026. The smallest rock towers are too tiny to see from space. But the picture shows gray rocky land and green stream valleys.

Chiricahua is also a busy place for plants. Four different natural regions meet near the park. They include two **deserts** and two mountain regions. That mix helps many plants grow there. NASA says about 1,000 plant species, or kinds, live in the park. They grow in deserts, grasslands, forests, and brushy areas.

A park can be more than a pretty view. It can be a science clue. The standing rocks tell a story about fire, time, and slow change. They also show how land can hold meaning for many people.

Written from reporting by NASA.

THINK IT THROUGH

1. When a place becomes a national park, more people may want to visit. Is that mostly helpful or mostly difficult for the place? Defend your view.

A strong answer: A strong answer weighs learning and protection against crowding, damage, and respect for the land's meaning.

2. What can a satellite picture show that a hiker might miss, and what can a hiker notice that a satellite might miss?

A strong answer: A strong answer compares big-picture patterns from space with close details, sounds, size, plants, and texture on the ground.

3. If a place near you had an important natural story, what evidence would convince you it should be protected?

A strong answer: A strong answer names criteria such as unusual landforms, living things, history, community meaning, or chances to learn.

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E N C O O A T U C A A D
I N L A O F E N U N N E
E L A O N S A N C L T S
I T N D R Y Y H S U E E
E C N M F Y O U E I T R
T N V O L C A N O A N T
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M P U M I C E O Y I S V
T M I E R O S I O N F N
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O M I T I E E E A N E N

CANYONS

DESERTS

EROSION

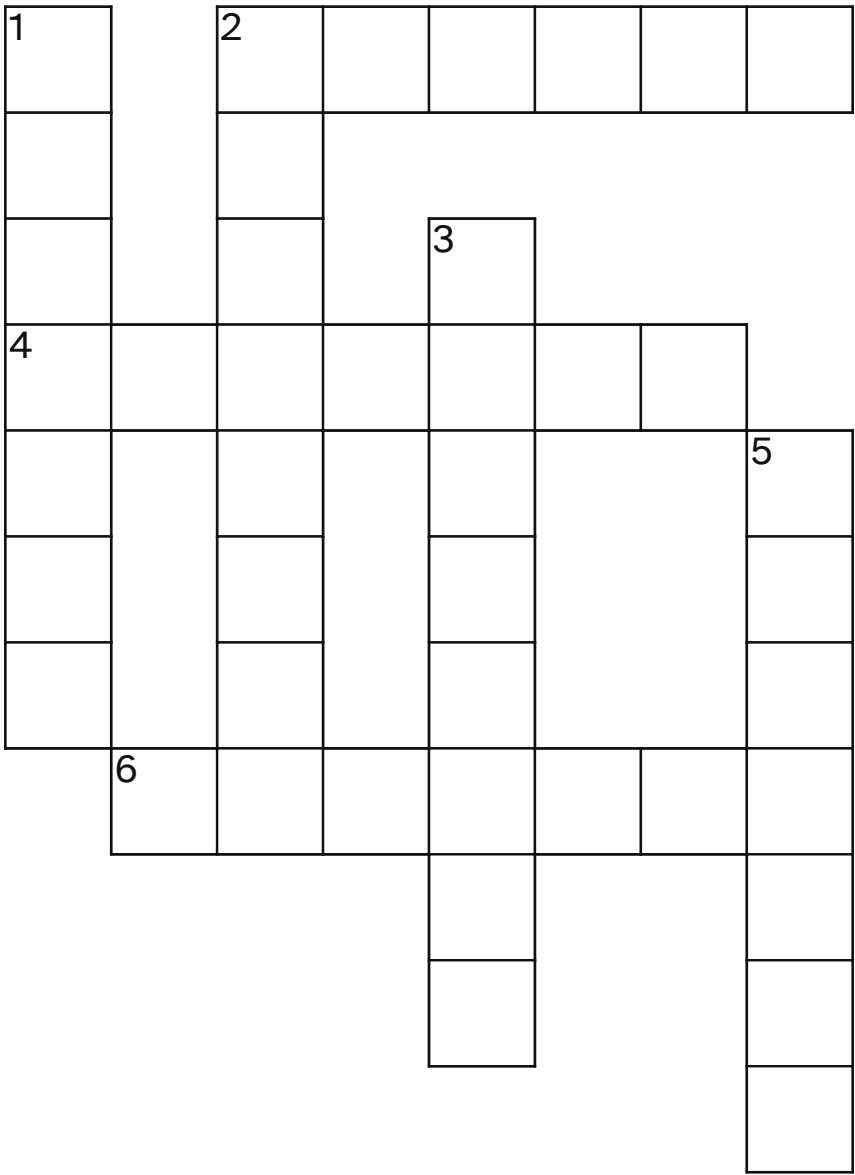
MONUMENT

PINNACLE

PUMICE

VOLCANO

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ACROSS

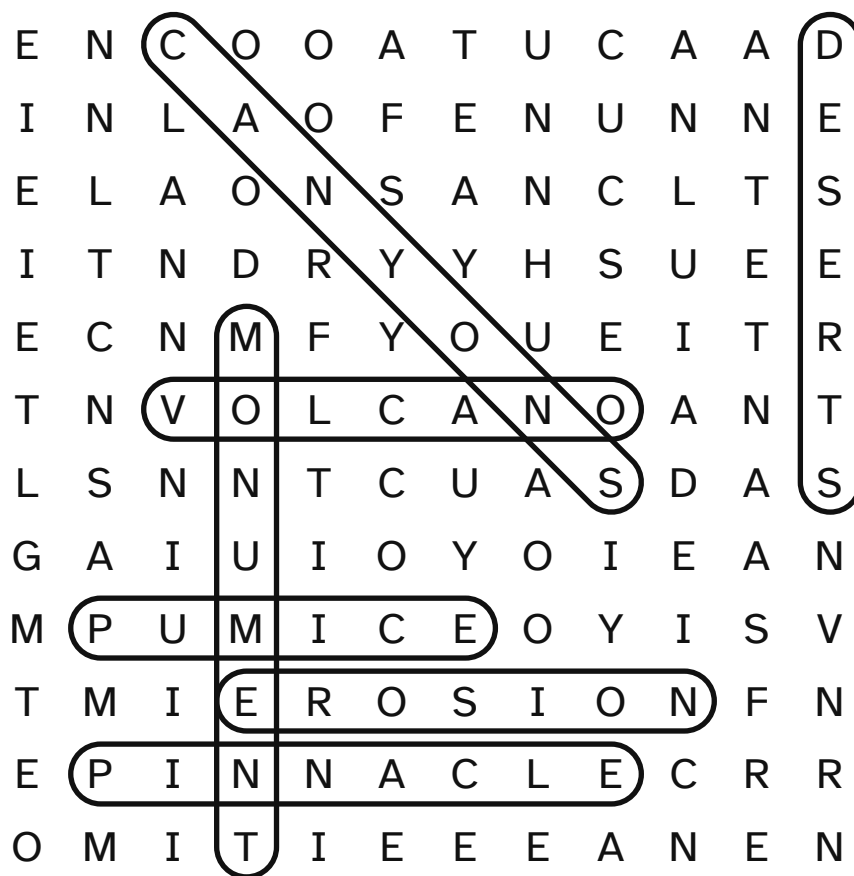
- 2 Light volcanic rock filled with tiny holes
- 4 Deep, narrow valleys with steep rocky sides
- 6 Very dry places with little rain

DOWN

- 1 Opening in Earth that can erupt with hot rock, ash, and gas
- 2 Tall, pointed tower of rock
- 3 Protected public land that is special or important
- 5 Slow wearing away of land by wind, water, heat, or cold

Arizona's Standing Rocks Become a New National Park

— answer key



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Where this came from

This article was written for 3andB from the reporting below. It is not a reprint — the wording is ours and the facts are theirs.

NASA

“The Land of the Standing-Up Rocks”

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<https://science.nasa.gov/earth/earth-observatory/the-land-of-the-standing-up-rocks/>

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The article with a note on each question, a word search, a crossword, and the answer key to both.

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