



Arizona Rocks 34

Text and photos by Ray Grant

Walnut Canyon National Monument is another place near Flagstaff with some good geology. It is located east of Flagstaff just south of Interstate 40 at exit 204. It is mainly an archeology site, but the visitor's center has some good geology information about the rocks in the monument. The ruins consist of a number of rooms built in an alcove in the Kaibab Limestone. The Kaibab limestone (270 ma) was deposited in the ocean and a variety of marine fossils are present. The bottom of the canyon exposes the Coconino Sandstone (275 ma) that formed as desert sand dunes. An interesting note is that archeologists believe the people moved here after the eruption at Sunset Crater (931 years ago) that covered the area where they were living with volcanic ash.



Overview of Walnut Canyon

Kaibab Limestone (265 Million Years Ago)

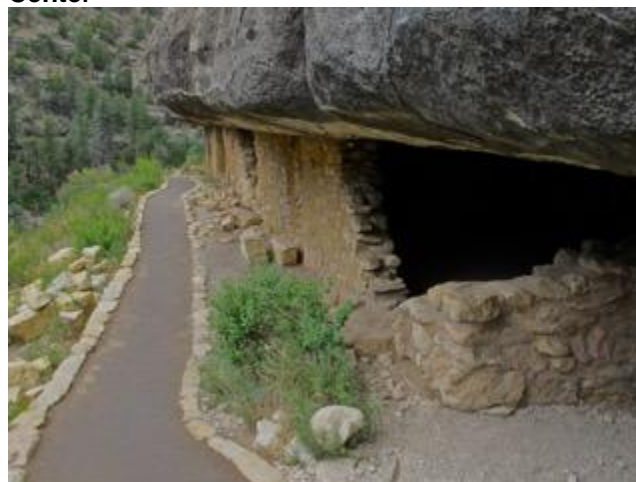


The last portion of the building story of Walnut Canyon comes about when this area was a warm shallow sea.

When marine animals and sea sponges died their shells and skeletons accumulated on the ocean floor and created the limestone we see today.

Alcoves were created by rainwater seeping through the limestone and dissolving softer layers of rock; the wind helped further this erosion. The Ancestral Pueblo people took advantage of the alcoves for homes.

Information about Kaibab Limestone in Visitor's Center



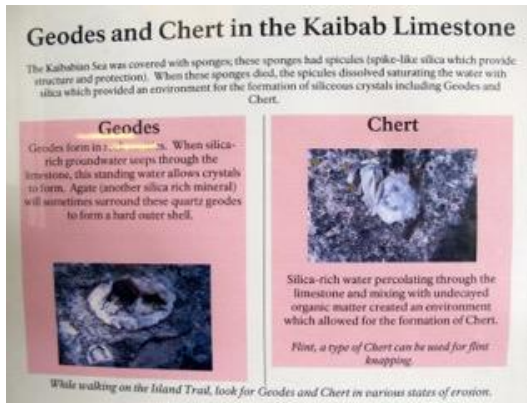
Rooms in alcove in Kaibab Limestone



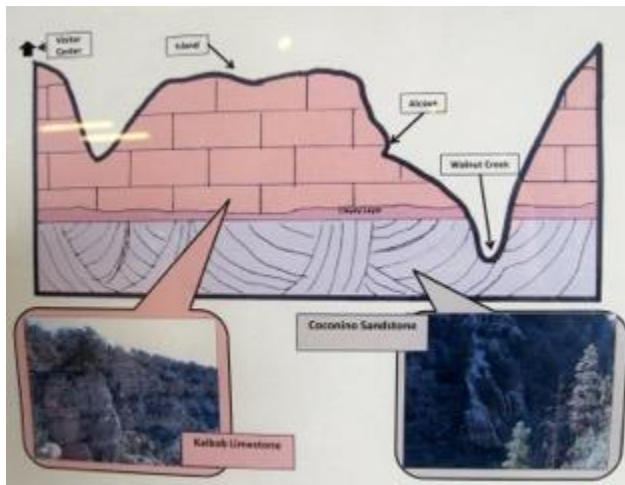
Another view of rooms in the alcove



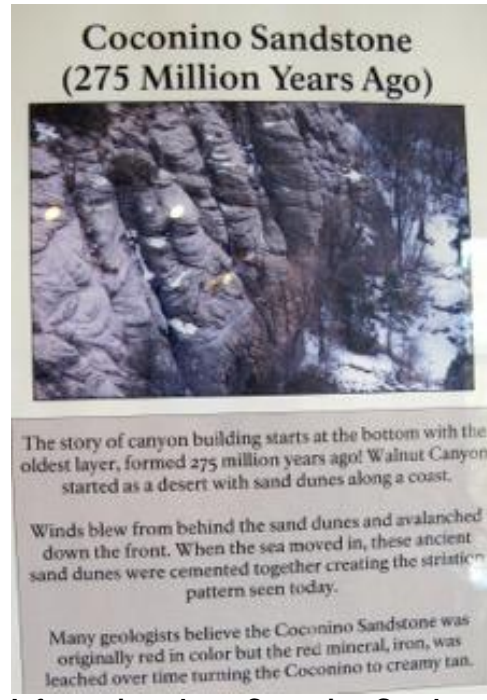
Marine fossils in the Kaibab Limestone Visitor's Center exhibit



Sign in Visitor's Center about geodes and chert found in the area



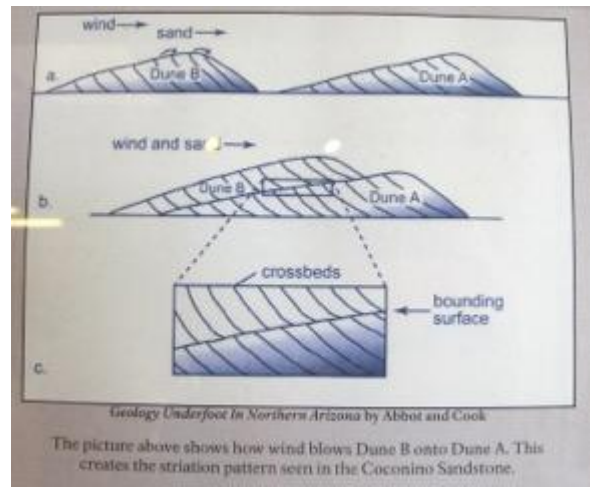
Cross section of Walnut Canyon geology



Information about Coconino Sandstone



Cross beds in the Coconino Sandstone



How cross beds form in the Coconino Sandstone