**Navajo Indian Facts**

The Navajo Indians, who are also known as Dine, are a Southwest Nation of semi nomadic Native American Indians. The Southwest region consists of Arizona, California, New Mexico, and parts of Utah. Today, the Navajo live on a reservation which spans over 14,000 square miles. It lies between Arizona and New Mexico and the fact that it is an extremely arid, barren region has made it a challenging place to live. The information below is meant to give a brief overview covering the who, what, where, when and why of the Navajo Indians.

**Basic Facts about Navajo Indians** Most Navajo families lived in hogans. These cone-shaped buildings were made of wooden poles and tree bark and were covered in clay. The Navajo believed that if the main door was positioned to open to the east it would bring them good blessings.

* Early Navajo people wore clothing made from deer hides. Woven cloth or knitted wool was used in later years. Something similar to a poncho was worn in later years as well, called a squaw-dress. They also wore colorful decorated blankets and sashes.
* The Navajo were known for being fierce warriors. They often raided New Mexican Indians, Spanish settlers and settlements along the Rio Grande River taking their horses and livestock.
* The Long Walk in the 1860's was the start of a dark period in Navajo history. Americans moved into their homeland and thousands of Navajo were captured and killed before the remaining tribe members were forced to walk from Window Rock, Arizona to New Mexico, a distance of over 300 miles. Approximately 200 Navajo died on this forced march.
* One of the most notable chiefs in Navajo history, Manuelito, signed a treaty with the U.S. government that allowed the Navajo to return to their homeland. As part of the treaty, he also negotiated livestock, farming tools, a clothing stipend and schooling for children.

**Navajo Indian Art and Jewelry Facts** Navajo art is recognized throughout the world. Navajo women were known for their spectacular weaving skills. Traditional rugs were intricately woven as were wraparound dresses and blankets.

* Their signature baskets are much more than just pretty decorations. Each piece of the basket has a special meaning and they are often used in traditional ceremonies.
* For ceremonial purposes that centered around healing, the Navajo created sand paintings. Colored sand was used to depict around 1000 traditional designs on a variety of mediums such as containers and vases.
* Navajo Indian jewelry was often made by Navajo silversmiths who learned their trade from the Mexican and Spanish people. Silver was a popular metal to combine with stonework, especially turquoise, to create beautiful pieces of jewelry for personal use and for trade. They often melted down American coins and Mexican pesos to obtain their silver.

**Navajo Indian Food Facts** The Navajo were adept farmers who grew maize, squash, beans, and even fruits such as peaches. They farmed only during the summer months when their fields were flooded.

* The women gathered wild berries, seeds, and herbs while the men hunted deer, rabbit, mountain goats, and prairie dogs.
* Families also raised sheep and goats that provided them with meat, milk, and fleece. The Navajo spun wool into yarn to use for clothing, blankets, and rugs.