# People of the Blue-Green Water

The Havasupai call themselves Havasu 'Baaja, the People of the Blue-Green Water. For more than 1,000 years, their home has been Havasu Canyon, a side canyon of the Grand Canyon in Arizona. A spring-fed creek runs through it, bright blue-green, over a series of waterfalls. The village of Supai sits eight miles below the canyon rim. There is no road to it. Mail still arrives by mule.

For centuries, Havasupai families farmed corn, beans, and squash in the canyon during spring and summer. In fall and winter, they moved up to the plateau above to hunt and gather among the pinyon and juniper trees.

Havasupai women were known for their baskets. Large burden baskets were carried on the back. Flat trays were used to toast seeds. Water bottles were woven tightly and coated with pine pitch so they would not leak. Black designs, made from a plant called devil's claw, showed animals, stars, and geometric shapes. Basket making is a tradition the Havasupai have worked to keep alive.

In 1882, the U.S. government limited the Havasupai reservation to 518 acres, less than one square mile, at the bottom of the canyon. When Grand Canyon National Park was created in 1919, the Havasupai lost the plateau lands where families had spent their winters.

The Havasupai never stopped asking for their land back. In 1968, a federal commission ruled that their land had been taken unfairly. They kept pushing Congress, and in 1975 the United States returned about 185,000 acres to the tribe.

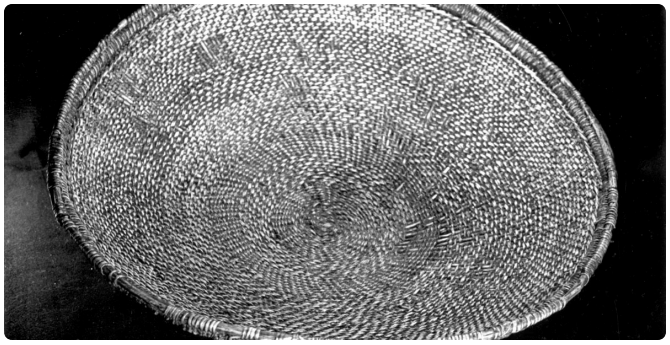
Today the Havasupai are working to protect their water. A uranium mine operates on the plateau near the canyon, and the tribe worries it could pollute the underground water that feeds their creek and waterfalls. After years of pressure from the Havasupai and other tribes, the president created a new national monument in 2023 that closes nearly a million acres around the Grand Canyon to new mining claims. Its name, Baaj Nwaavjo I'tah Kukveni, joins Havasupai and Hopi words. It means "where tribes roam" and "our ancestral footprints."

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## Havasupai baskets

Havasupai baskets from the Grand Canyon National Park museum collection:



Parching tray



Coiled basket with a devil's claw design, about 1930

Source: Grand Canyon National Park, CC BY 2.0.

## Design your basket

Draw a large circle, as if you are looking down into a basket. Fill it with a pattern that tells the story of a place. It can be a place you know, a place you've read about, or a place you imagine.

Use shapes, lines, and repeated symbols instead of words.

Choose two or three things that matter most about the place, and repeat each symbol so it becomes a pattern.

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