

YUCCA HOUSE NATIONAL MONUMENT

This monument, established December 19, 1919, preserves the ruins of a prehistoric village in southwestern Colorado a few miles west of Mesa Verde National Park. The site chosen by its builders is on the gently sloping base of Sleeping Ute, a mountain so named because, silhouetted against the horizon from the northeast, it resembles the outline of a sleeping Indian. The village is now a cluster of mounds with no sign of a wall rising above their surfaces, but due to the large size and extent of the mounds, there is every reason to believe that when excavated they will prove of great archaeological interest and educational significance. The land upon which the ruins are situated (approximately 10 acres) was a gift of the late Henry Van Kleeck of Denver, Colorado.

The ruins have been known for many years, and were first described by Professor William H. Holmes in 1877; the two most conspicuous mounds were designated by him as the "Upper House" and the "Lower House". The former is the most prominent of all the mounds of the ancient village, rising from 15 to 20 feet above its foundation and dominating the many smaller mounds by which it is surrounded. The "Lower House" in its essential features is different, and stands isolated by a hundred yards from the cluster of mounds that compose and include the "Upper House".

The stone used in the building is chiefly of the fossiliferous limestone that outcrops along the base of the Mesa Verde tableland a mile or more away, and its transportation to the site of the village must have entailed a great work for people so totally without facilities.

The name "Yucca House" was selected for the monument because the Indians of the Montezuma Valley called Sleeping Ute Mountain by a name meaning Yucca, for there is an abundance of the Yucca plant growing on the mountainsides.

The monument is located about 15 miles south of Cortez, Colorado, just westward of well-traveled Highway 666 (from Cortez to Shiprock, New Mexico). To reach the monument from the intersection of routes 160 and 666 in Cortez, Colorado, follow US 666 south 8.5 miles. Turn right (west) on Road B, which is a good dirt road identified only by a small green street sign with white lettering. Follow Road B across its intersection with Road 21, to the junction of Road 20.5. Turn right (north) on Road 20.5 and follow it through several jogs north, west, north and west again (there is only that one road) to a small group of buildings, including a white house with a red roof. Across the road from the house is a parking lot. The journey will take a total of 10 minutes. Enter the small corral through the gate, and use the stile over the far corral fence to enter the monument proper. Sign the visitor book, walk the ruins area, absorb the beauty of the site in this valley below Mesa Verde National Park in the distance to the east, try to imagine life in the pueblo hundreds of years ago, and retrace your route, leaving only footprints and taking only photographs.

The National Park Service does not recommend travel to this monument for the casual visitor, and those who do visit will find the approach road almost impassable in wet weather. The monument, which is patrolled periodically by a Ranger in the summer months, is under the supervision of the Superintendent, Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado. You may address the Superintendent for additional information.