

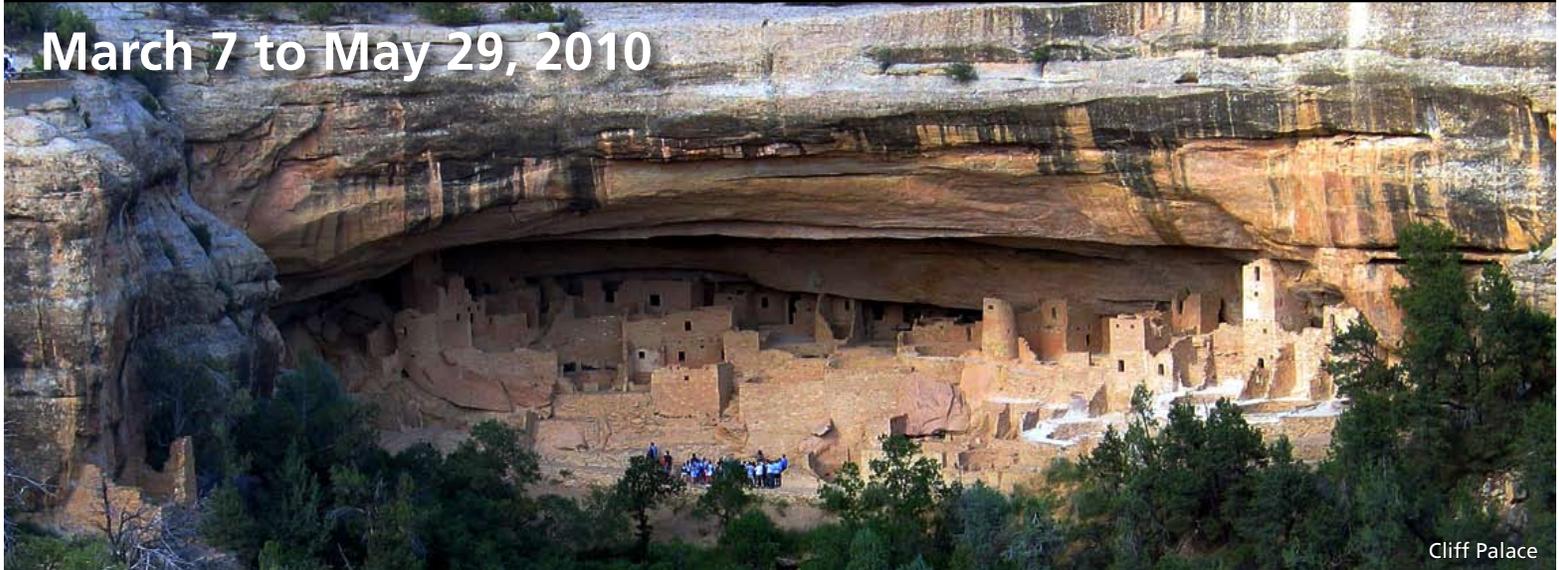
Visitor Activities

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Mesa Verde National Park

March 7 to May 29, 2010



Cliff Palace

Welcome to Mesa Verde National Park. Mesa Verde is the only national park set aside “to preserve the works of man.” The park is 52,073 acres, 8,100 of which is designated wilderness. The Ancestral Puebloans moved into the Mesa Verde area by AD 550, occupying the Colorado Plateau region until AD 1300. From the many sites located here and in the surrounding Four Corners area, archeologists have compiled one of the most significant chapters in the story of prehistoric America.

Visiting the Park

Spring is a special time to visit the park. However, road conditions can be challenging, and you might have to hike or ski to overlooks to view some of the Chapin Mesa cliff dwellings. Please review all your options carefully. Stop first at the Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum or, after April 11, at the [Far View Visitor Center](#). Park rangers will help you plan your visit.

Spruce Tree House

[Spruce Tree House](#) is located near the Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum. The 1/2-mile (.8 km) winding, paved trail includes a steep 100-ft (30 m) descent and ascent. The path is moderately strenuous. It can be icy in the early spring. Dress warmly.

March 7 to April 10

Free one-hour tours are at 9:00 am, 11:00 am, 1:00 pm, 3:00 pm, and 4:00 pm. **Tickets are not required.**

April 11 to April 30 - Site is closed for trail paving

May 1 to May 29 - Self-guided 9:00 am to 6:30 pm

Spruce Tree House Overlook Talk

In lieu of a tour of Spruce Tree House, rangers will offer 30-minute talks about the site. Meet the ranger just below the Chief Ranger’s Office on the Spruce Tree House Trail.

March 7 to April 10

10:00 am, 12:00 pm and 2:00 pm

April 11 to April 30

11:00 am, 1:00 pm, 3:00 pm and 5:00 pm

Cliff Palace

[Cliff Palace](#) is the largest cliff dwelling. Tours begin April 11. The tour is one hour in length, with a walking distance of 1/4-mile (400 m). It involves climbing five, 8- to 10-foot (2.6-3 m) ladders, for a 100-foot (30 m) overall vertical ascent.

Tickets are required. Tickets are \$3.00 per person, for all ages, and can only be purchased at the Far View Visitor Center.

April 11 to May 15

Tours are scheduled every hour 9:00 am to 5:00 pm

May 16 to May 29

Tours are scheduled every 1/2 hour 9:00 am to 5:00 pm

The tour begins at the Cliff Palace Overlook, an 8-mile (13 km), 20-minute drive from the Far View Visitor Center.

Balcony House

[Balcony House](#) is the most adventurous cliff dwelling tour. Tours begin April 11. This one-hour tour involves climbing a 32-foot (10 m) ladder to enter the dwelling. At the exit, you crawl through a 12-foot long by 18-inch (4 m x 46 cm) wide tunnel, followed by a 60-foot (20 m) climb up the open cliff face using two 10-foot (3 m) ladders and a series of stone steps.

Tickets are required. Tickets are \$3.00 per person, for all ages, and can only be purchased at the Far View Visitor Center.

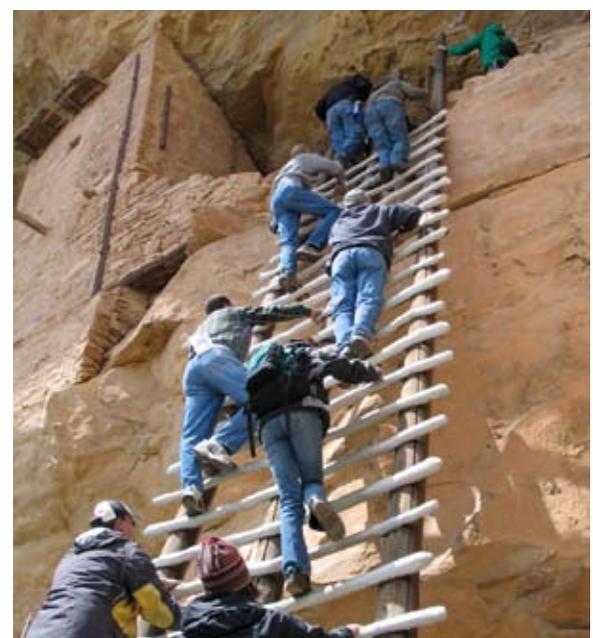
April 11 to May 15

Tours are at 9:30 am, 12:00 pm, 2:00 pm and 3:30 pm

May 16 to May 29

Tours are scheduled every hour 9:00 am to 5:00 pm

The tour begins at the sun shelter at the north end of the Balcony House parking lot.



Visit On Your Own

[Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum](#) contains exhibits about the Ancestral Pueblo people. The museum is located 20 miles (33 km) south of the park entrance. A 25-minute park video is shown every half hour. A bookstore is located within the museum.

March 7 to April 10 - 8:00 am to 5:00 pm

April 11 to May 29 - 8:00 am to 6:30 pm

[Petroglyph Point Trail](#) begins near the Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum. The 2.8 mile (4 km) trail leads to a panel of petroglyphs. In clear weather, the trail can be hiked as a loop. However, due to ice and snow, the trail might be closed. Or you may be directed to access the panel via the mesa top section of the trail. Ask the ranger at the museum desk for trail conditions and register for the hike.

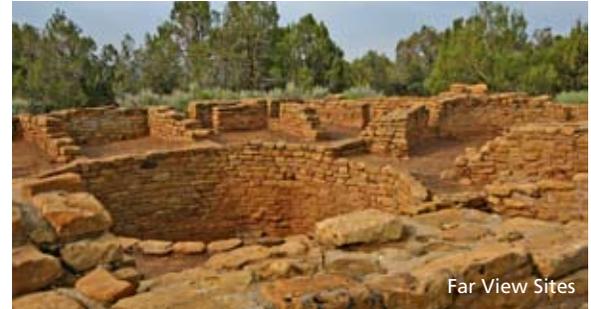
March 7 to April 10 - 9:00 am to 5:00 pm

April 11 to May 29 - 9:00 am to 6:30 pm

[Cliff Palace Loop Road](#) is not plowed in the winter. If you would like to cross-country ski, snowshoe, or hike this 6 mile (10 km) loop road, park just outside the locked gate without blocking access. Highlights include Cliff Palace and Soda Canyon Overlooks (view of Balcony House.) After the snow melts off the entire road, or by April 11, the gate will be unlocked from 8:00 am to sunset.

[Mesa Top Loop Road](#) is a 6 mile (10 km) drive with short paved trails to view twelve easily-accessible archeological sites, including surface dwellings and cliff dwelling overlooks. Highlights include Square Tower House and views of Cliff Palace from Sun Point and Sun Temple overlooks. The road is open 8:00 am to sunset, weather permitting.

[Far View Sites Complex](#) includes Far View House, four other villages, and a dry reservoir. Located four miles (6.4 km) north of the Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum, this 3/4-mile (1.2 km) trail is not plowed. Park just outside the gate without blocking access. The area is open 8:00 am to sunset.



Far View Sites

[Hiking Trails](#) are scattered throughout the park. The most popular are the Petroglyph and Spruce Canyon Trails near the Chapin Mesa Museum. For details and trail conditions ask a ranger.

Visitor Services

National Park Service

970-529-4465, www.nps.gov/meve

Mesa Verde Museum Association, Park Partner

970-529-4445, www.mesaverde.org

Information

Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum and Bookstore

March 7 to April 10 - 8:00 am to 5:00 pm

April 11 to May 29 - 8:00 am to 6:30 pm

Far View Visitor Center, Bookstore and ATM

April 11 to May 29 - 8:00 am to 5:00 pm

Colorado Welcome Center in Cortez

March 7 to May 29 - 8:00 am to 5:00 pm

Picnic Area (not plowed in winter)

Chapin Mesa Picnic Area - 8:00 am to sunset

Cliff Palace Parking Area - 8:00 am to sunset

U.S. Postal Service

March 7 to March 31

Monday to Friday - 8:30 am to 4:30 pm

April 1 to May 29

Monday to Friday - 8:30 am to 4:30 pm

Saturday - 10:00 am to 1:45 pm

ARAMARK, Park Partner

800-449-2288, www.visitmesaverde.com

Spruce Tree Terrace Restaurant and Gift Shop

April 1 to May 26 - 10:00 am to 5:00 pm

May 27 to May 29 - 10:00 am to 6:00 pm

Far View Terrace, Restaurant and Gift Shop

Opens May 6 - 7:00 am to 8:00 pm

Breakfast - 7:00 am to 10:00 am

Lunch - 11:00 am to 3:00 pm

Dinner - 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm

Far View Lodge, Gift Shop and Restaurant

Opens April 22

Dinner: 5:00 to 9:30 pm

Morefield Campground and Store

Opens May 11 - 8:00 am to 8:00 pm

Bus Tours begin April 23 and depart from the Far View Lodge, with a pick up at Far View Terrace. These ranger and driver-guided tours share contemporary interpretation of the Ancestral Pueblo people, and include short walks to archeological sites along the Mesa Top Loop Road, and a hiking tour of Cliff Palace.

700 Years Tour: 4-hour morning tour

Classic Pueblo Tour: 3-hour afternoon tour

Far View Explorer: 5-hour tour, includes lunch

For further information and to purchase tickets contact ARAMARK at the Far View Lodge.

Know the Rules of the Park

We want you to have a safe and enjoyable visit. Follow park rules, not only to protect yourself but also to preserve Mesa Verde's archeological sites and natural environment.

- Archeological structures are fragile. Take care not to touch, sit, stand, climb, or lean on walls.
- Pets can be walked along paved roads and in parking lots. Pets are not allowed on trails, in archeological sites, or in buildings. Do not leave pets unattended.
- Help us keep wildlife wild. Please do not feed, stalk, capture, or tease wildlife.



Chipmunk

For Your Safety

In case of emergency, call 911

Park Road Advisory

- Watch for snowplows working on the road
- Follow all traffic signs
- Beware of rocks in the road
- Gasoline is not available in the park

High Elevation

- Mesa Verde ranges from 7,000 feet (2,134 m) elevation to 8,572 feet (2,613 m) at Park Point. The air is thin and very dry.
- Consider your physical health BEFORE hiking or going on tours.
- Carry and DRINK plenty of water.