

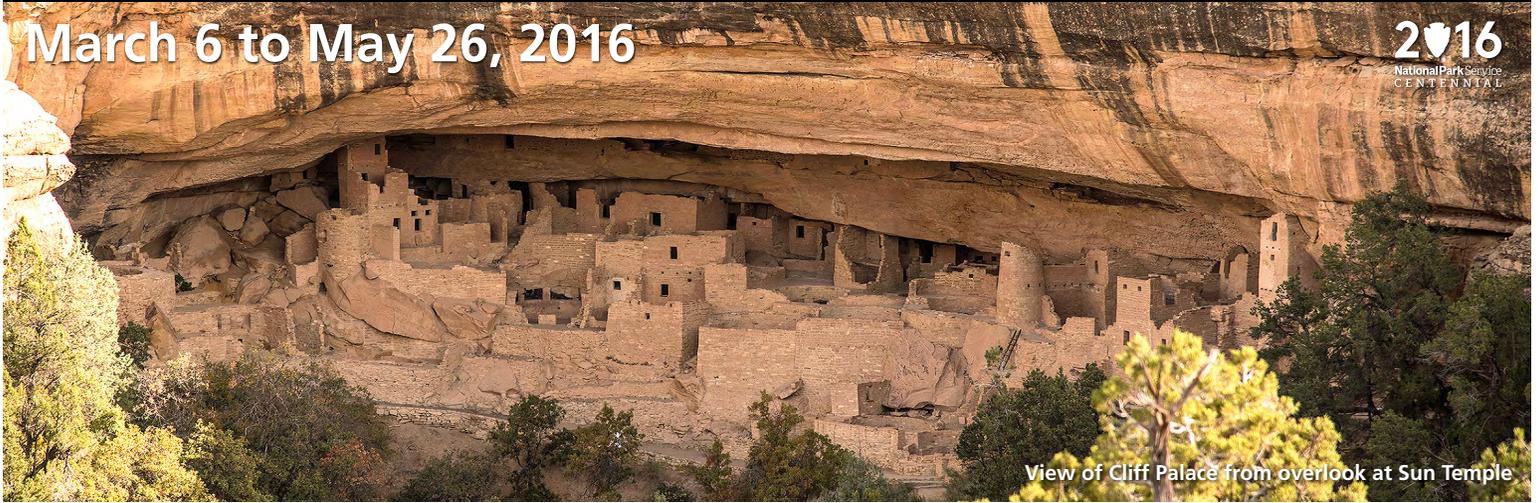
# Visitor Activities

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Mesa Verde National Park



March 6 to May 26, 2016

2016  
National Park Service  
CENTENNIAL



View of Cliff Palace from overlook at Sun Temple

Welcome to Mesa Verde National Park! Mesa Verde offers a spectacular look into the lives of the Ancestral Pueblo people who made it their home for over 700 years, from AD 550 to 1300. Today, the park protects nearly 5,000 known archeological sites, including 600 cliff dwellings. These sites are some of the most notable and best preserved in the United States. 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 ancient America.

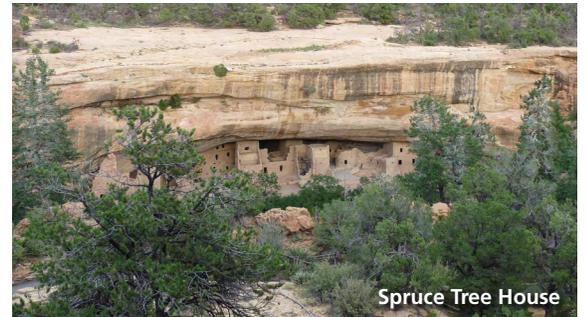
## Visiting the Park

Spring is a lovely time to visit. Many opportunities are available to help you experience this fascinating place, but **most activities depend on weather and road conditions**. So please check with a ranger before beginning any of the described activities. Guide booklets are available at the [Mesa Verde Visitor Center](#), [Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum](#), and at sites along the [Mesa Top Loop Road](#). Stop at the Visitor Center or Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum to plan your visit.

## Spruce Tree House

[Spruce Tree House](#) is the park's best-preserved cliff dwelling. You can observe Spruce Tree House from viewpoints near the Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum.

Rangers will be available at the overlooks daily, from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm (with extended hours in late spring) to answer questions and share information about Spruce Tree House and the Ancestral Pueblo people who once lived there.



Spruce Tree House

## Balcony House

[Balcony House](#) is the most adventurous cliff dwelling tour. This one-hour tour involves climbing a 32-foot (10 m) ladder to enter the site. You will also crawl through a 12-foot (3.7 m) long by 18-inch (46 cm) wide tunnel, and climb 60 feet (20 m) up an exposed cliff face, using two 10- to 12-foot (3.0 - 3.7 m) ladders, and a series of stone steps.

**Tickets are required.** Tickets must be purchased at the Visitor Center located at the park entrance.

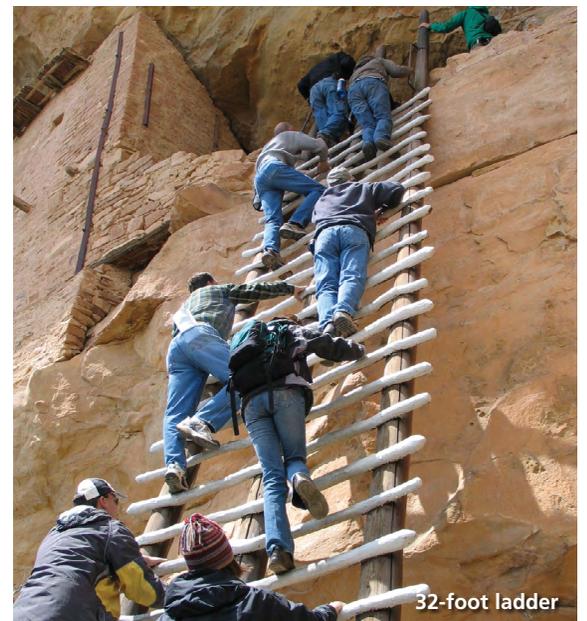
### April 10 to May 7

Tour times: 10:00 am to 4:00 pm; every hour

### May 8 to May 26

Tour times: 10:00 am to 5:00 pm; every hour and 9:30 am and 3:30 pm

Tours begin at the north end of the Balcony House parking lot, a 25-mile (40 km), 1-hour drive from the Visitor Center.



32-foot ladder

## Preservation and Stabilization Work in Cliff Palace and Spruce Tree House

### Preserving Cliff Palace

Cliff Palace, the park's most famous cliff dwelling, is continuing to receive essential preservation work this spring. There are a number of overlooks from which to observe this remarkable cliff dwelling as well as witness the work being done by archeologists and stabilization crews. These include Sun Point View and Sun Temple stops on the Mesa Top Loop Road; and Cliff Palace overlook on the Cliff Palace Loop Road.

### Maintaining the Spruce Tree House Alcove

Although alcoves naturally and continually form through erosion, the alcove surrounding Spruce Tree House has become particularly unstable. Due to a series of rockfalls, a geologic assessment was conducted last fall to ensure the safety of visitors and staff entering the site. The results reveal the significant danger of future rockfalls, especially along pathways into and within the site. Until work can be done to reduce this threat, Spruce Tree House remains closed.

## Explore On Your Own

The [Visitor Center](#) and [Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum](#) will both help you gain insights into the lives of the Ancestral Pueblo people.

The visitor center is located just off U.S. Highway 160 near the park entrance. The museum is located 22 miles (35 km) from the Visitor Center, on Chapin Mesa. A 25-minute video is shown at the museum every half hour. See Visitor Services below for visitor center, museum, and store hours.

[Petroglyph Point Trail](#) begins near the museum. The 2.4-mile (3.9 km) trail leads to a large petroglyph panel. If the trail is dry, it can be hiked as a loop. However, due to ice and snow, you may be directed to hike via the mesa top section of the trail, or the entire trail may be closed. Check with a ranger at the museum for trail conditions and to register for the hike.

[Cliff Palace Loop Road](#) is closed to vehicular traffic until early April. During this time, it is open to cross-country skiing and snowshoeing, or walking if there is no snow. No vehicles are permitted. To explore this 6-mile (10 km) road, park just outside the locked gate, but do not block the gate. Highlights include Cliff Palace and Soda Canyon overlooks (view of Balcony House).

In early April, the gate will be open daily for vehicular traffic 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 sites and cliff dwelling overlooks. Highlights include views of Square Tower House and Cliff Palace from Sun Point and Sun Temple overlooks. Open daily 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 museum, this 3/4-mile (1.2 km) trail is not plowed. If gate is closed, park just outside the gate without blocking access. Open from 8:00 am to sunset; wheelchair accessible with help.

[Wetherill Mesa](#) will open May 1 or as soon as weather and road conditions permit. Explore the 5-mile Long House Loop (the former tram road) by foot or bicycle, stopping at cliff dwelling overlooks such as Long House, Nordenskiöld #16, or Kodak House. Walk through or bicycle the Badger House Community to see early mesa top sites. Wetherill Mesa is a 45-minute drive from the Wetherill Road turn-off near mile 15. (Please note that bicycles are not allowed on the Wetherill Mesa Road.)

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

## Visitor Services

**National Park Service**  
970-529-4465, [www.nps.gov/meve](http://www.nps.gov/meve)

**Mesa Verde Museum Association, Park Partner**  
970-529-4445, [www.mesaverde.org](http://www.mesaverde.org)

### Information

Visitor Center, Store, and ATM

March 6 to April 9	8:30 am to 4:30 pm
April 10 to May 26	8:00 am to 5:00 pm

Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum and Store

March 6 to April 9	9:00 am to 5:00 pm
April 10 to May 26	8:00 am to 6:30 pm

Colorado Welcome Center in Cortez

March 6 to May 26	8:00 am to 5:00 pm
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**Picnic Area** (not plowed in winter)

Chapin Mesa Picnic Area	8:00 am to sunset
Cliff Palace Picnic Area	8:00 am to sunset

**U.S. Postal Service**

March 6 to March 31	
Monday to Friday	8:30 am to 3:00 pm
April 1 to May 26	
Monday to Friday	8:30 am to 3:00 pm
Saturday	10:00 am to 2:00 pm

**Aramark, Park Partner**  
800-449-2288, [www.visitmesaverde.com](http://www.visitmesaverde.com)

Spruce Tree Terrace, Café, and Gift Shop	
March 6 to March 16	11:00 am to 3:30 pm
March 17 to April 13	11:00 am to 4:30 pm
April 14 to May 26	10:00 am to 5:00 pm

Far View Terrace, Café, and Gift Shop

Opens May 2	
Breakfast	7:00 am to 10:00 am
Lunch	11:00 am to 3:00 pm
Dinner (starting May 16)	5:00 pm to 8:00 pm

Far View Lodge, Gift Shop, and Restaurant

Opens April 14	
Breakfast	7:00 am to 9:30 am
Dinner	5:00 pm to 9:30 pm

Morefield Campground and Camp Store

Off Season Camping, Limited Services  
April 14 to April 27

Full campground services opens April 28

**Aramark Bus Tours** begin April 14. The 4-hour *700 Years Tour* is offered in the morning and afternoon, and includes short walks to archeological sites on the Mesa Top Loop Road.

Tickets can be purchased from Aramark at the Visitor Center, Far View Lodge, Far View Terrace, and Morefield Camp Store.

## 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.
- Leashed 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. It is illegal to feed, stalk, capture, or tease wildlife.



## 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 km) elevation to 8,572 feet (2,613 km) at Park Point. The air is thin and very dry. Stay hydrated!
- Consider your physical health BEFORE hiking or going on tours.
- Carry and DRINK plenty of water.