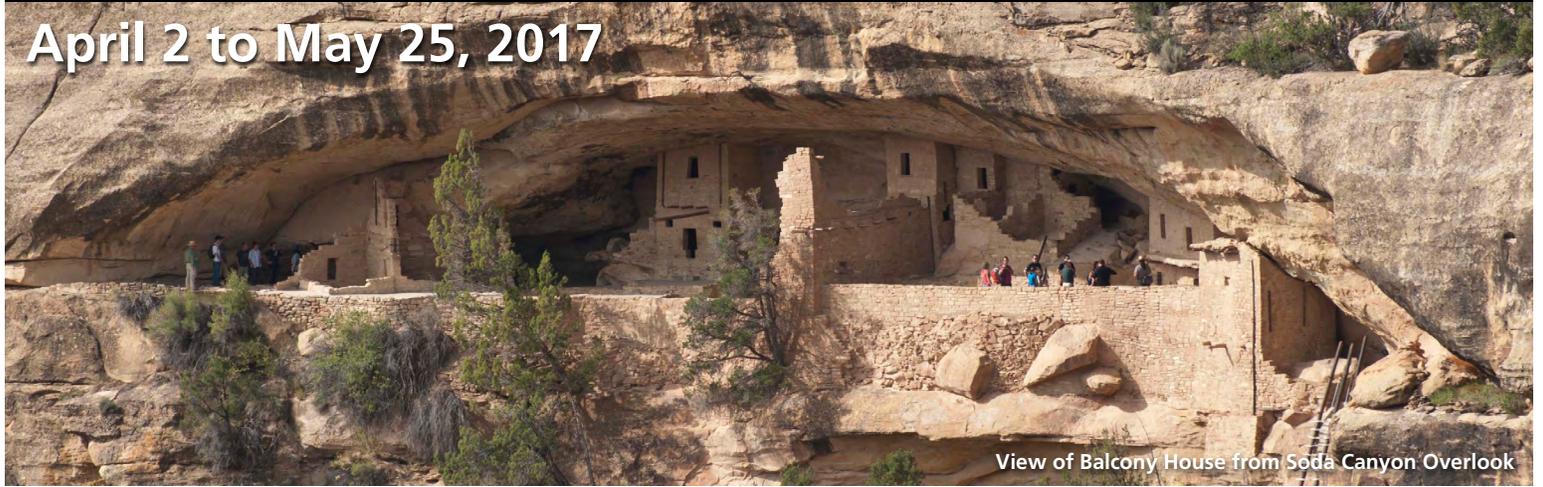


# Visitor Activities

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



April 2 to May 25, 2017



View of Balcony House from Soda Canyon Overlook

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.

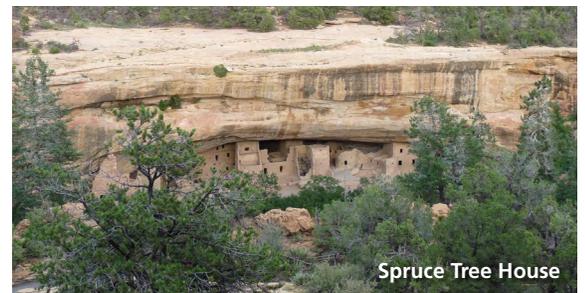
## Visiting the Park

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 third largest and best-preserved cliff dwelling. You can observe Spruce Tree House from viewpoints near the Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum.

A ranger is at the overlook daily to answer questions and share information about Spruce Tree House and the Ancestral Pueblo people who once lived there. Ask a ranger at the museum for hours.



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.** Purchase tickets at the Visitor Center near the park entrance, or at the Colorado Welcome Center in Cortez.

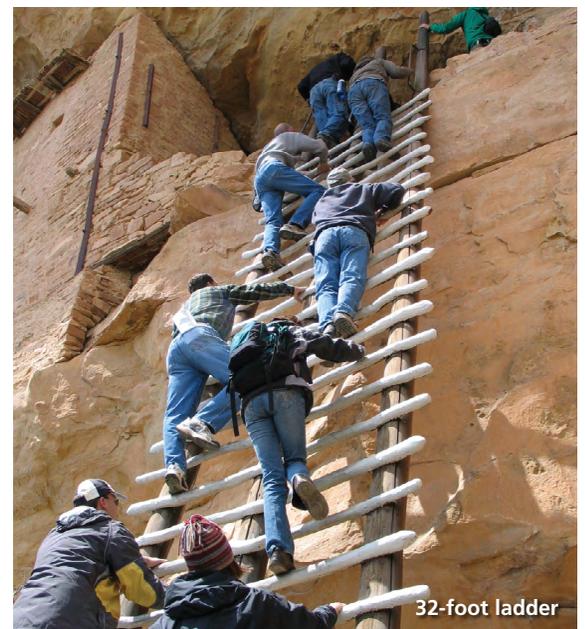
### April 9 to May 6

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

### May 7 to May 25

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. Viewpoints include the Sun Point View and Sun Temple stops on the Mesa Top Loop Road; and the 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. A geologic assessment completed in late 2015, revealed a significant danger of rockfalls along pathways into and within the site. This year, a geotechnical firm will conduct a detailed evaluation using laser imaging that will provide recommendations for treatment. Until work can be done to reduce the rockfall threat, the site 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. If there is snow or ice, you may be directed to hike via the mesa top section of the trail. Check with a ranger at the museum for trail conditions and to register for the hike.

[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 Square Tower House overlook, and views of Cliff Palace from Sun Point View and Sun Temple. The Mesa Top Loop Road is open daily, 8:00 am to sunset.

[Cliff Palace Loop Road](#) is open daily, 8:00 am to sunset. Highlights include Balcony House (see page 1 for information on tours and tickets), views of Cliff Palace, and the 1.2 mile (1.9 km) Soda Canyon Overlook Trail.

[Far View Sites Complex](#) includes Far View House, four other villages, and a dry reservoir. This 3/4-mile (1.2 km) trail is located four miles (6.4 km) north of the museum. Open from 8:00 am to sunset; wheelchair accessible with help.



[Wetherill Mesa](#) will open April 30 or as soon as weather and road conditions permit. Explore the 5-mile Long House Loop by foot or bicycle, stopping at cliff dwelling overlooks such as Long House, Nordenskiöld #16, and 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 turn-off near milepost 15. (Bicycles are not allowed on the Wetherill Mesa Road. Vehicles must be less than 25 feet long to drive this road. Vehicles over 8,000 lbs GVW are prohibited.)

[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

April 2 to April 8	8:30 am to 4:30 pm
April 9 to May 25	8:00 am to 5:00 pm

#### Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum and Store

April 2 to April 8	9:00 am to 4:30 pm
April 9 to May 25	8:00 am to 6:30 pm

#### Colorado Welcome Center in Cortez

April 9 to May 25	8:00 am to 5:00 pm
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### Picnic Area

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

### U.S. Postal Service

April 2 to May 25	
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

April 2 to April 12	11:00 am to 4:30 pm
April 13 to May 25	10:00 am to 5:00 pm

#### Far View Terrace, Café and Gift Shop

Opens April 14	
Breakfast	7:00 am to 10:00 am
Mesa Mocha Espresso Bar	7:00 am to 8:00 pm
Lunch (starting May 1)	11:00 am to 3:00 pm
Dinner (starting May 15)	5:00 pm to 8:00 pm

#### Far View Lodge, Gift Shop, and Restaurant

Opens April 13	
Dinner	5:00 pm to 9:30 pm

#### Morefield Campground and Camp Store

Off Season Camping, Limited Services  
April 13 to April 26  
Full campground services opens April 27

**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. Purchase tickets 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.