



Balcony House

## Welcome

Mesa Verde National Park is one of the premier archeological parks administered by the Department of the Interior, National Park Service. It is one of 15 national park units in Colorado and nearly 400 nationwide.

On June 29, 1906, President Theodore Roosevelt established Mesa Verde National Park to “preserve the works of man,” the first—and still only—national park of its kind. Here is preserved an extraordinary record of the Ancestral Pueblo people who made this place their home for more than 750 years, from A.D. 550 to A.D. 1300.

With over 52,000 acres, Mesa Verde preserves and protects nearly 5,000 archeological sites, including 600 cliff dwellings, and over three million associated objects in the research collection.

As you explore and experience the park, we hope that you relate this place to contemporary Pueblo people along the Rio Grande River, Zuni in New Mexico, and the Hopi of Arizona. These people will help you gain an understanding and appreciation for the continued diversity and continuity of both the past and present represented by Mesa Verde National Park.

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## Make the Most of Your Experience

Mesa Verde is a fascinating national park. Whether you have a few hours or a few days, we invite you to enjoy the spectacular scenery and share this rare glimpse into the ancient culture that shaped this region. Here are a few suggestions for making the most of your time in the park.



Mesa Verde preserves the greatest number of cliff dwellings in North America. Three of these cliff dwellings, Cliff Palace, Balcony House, and Long House, are ranger-guided.

Purchase the \$3.00 tour tickets at:

- Far View Visitor Center
- Morefield Ranger Station
- Colorado Welcome Center, Cortez

Flip to the back page for venue hours and tour details.

### If you have a half-day:

Stop by the [Far View Visitor Center](#)—a 15-mile (24 km) drive from the park entrance—for information and orientation. While there enjoy the interpretive exhibits and bookstore.

Five miles (8 km) south of the Far View Visitor Center is the [Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum](#). The museum contains exhibits and dioramas tracing the lives of the Ancestral Pueblo people. Also available is a 25-minute park video shown every 1/2 hour and the museum bookstore.

Take a self-guided tour of [Spruce Tree House](#), the park's best-preserved cliff dwelling, located adjacent to the museum. Allow one hour for the 1/2-mile round-trip paved trail. There is a 100-ft (30 m) elevation descent and ascent. Rangers are available to answer your questions.

Or, take a scenic drive on the [Mesa Top Loop Road](#). This 6-mile (10 km), 45-minute driving tour includes easily accessible, short, paved walking trails introducing the early occupation of the area. Highlights include views of Square Tower House and Cliff Palace.



### If you have one full day:

You'll have time to do all 1/2 day activities, plus join a ranger for a one-hour guided tour of either [Cliff Palace](#) or [Balcony House](#). You must purchase tickets at the Far View Visitor Center or Morefield Ranger Station.

You could also take a self-guided tour of the [Far View Sites Complex](#), one mile (1.6 km) south of the Far View Visitor Center. This self-guided tour includes Far View House, plus four other villages and a dry reservoir. These sites are linked by a level 3/4 mile (1.2 km) unpaved trail.

### If you have two full days:

Join a ranger for a 90-minute guided tour of [Long House](#) on Wetherill Mesa. You must purchase tickets at the Far View Visitor Center or Morefield Ranger Station.

Drive the Wetherill Mesa Road, hike the trails to the mesa-top sites, and ride the tram to cliff dwelling overlooks. The 12-mile (19 km), 45-minute drive to Wetherill Mesa offers views of Montezuma Valley 2,000 feet below.

Take a self-guided tour of [Step House](#) to view Modified Basketmaker (A.D. 550- 750) and Classic Pueblo (A.D. 1100-1300) period architecture. The 3/4-mile round-trip trail begins near the Wetherill Mesa kiosk, and includes a 100-ft (30 m) descent and ascent on a winding path. Allow 45 minutes to one hour.

### If you have more than two full days:

You'll have the opportunity to explore and tour all ticketed cliff dwellings, drive the park roads, and hike one or more of the park trails. Flip through these pages for detailed descriptions.



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

**Mesa Verde National Park**

Superintendent  
P.O. Box 8  
Mesa Verde National Park  
Mesa Verde, Colorado 81330

**Web Site**

www.nps.gov/meve

**Park Headquarters**

970-529-4465  
Fax 970-529-4637

**Chief Ranger's Office**

First aid and lost and found  
970-529-4461

**Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum**

970-529-4630

**E-mail**

MEVE\_park\_general\_information@nps.gov

**Lost and Found**

May be reported to any ranger

**Employment Information**

with the National Park Service:  
www.usajobs.opm.gov

# Protect Yourself, Protect the Park

It is your responsibility to know and follow the rules and regulations of the park. By observing the rules, you can have a safe and enjoyable visit plus help Mesa Verde preserve its fragile archeological sites and natural ecosystems.

Please follow these precautionary measures so that accidents and injuries are not part of your park experience.

**Rocky Roads**

Mesa Verde roads are built through areas of unstable geologic formations. As a result, rocks and boulders may break loose and fall onto the road, posing a hazard to people and vehicles.

- Pay close attention to the slopes above you, your speed around curves, and all traffic signs
- Do not approach fallen rocks or attempt to move boulders from the road
- If rocks block the road, call a park ranger at 970-529-4461
- Do not park on roadways; use the pullouts

**Cell Phones**

Cell phone service is not available in the park. Telephones are located at all main visitor areas.

**Visiting a Cliff Dwelling Can Be Strenuous**

The cliff dwellings are at 7,000 foot (2134 m) elevation. Please consider your physical health before hiking or going on tours.

Trails are steep and uneven, with steps and ladders to climb. Visiting cliff dwellings or hiking is not recommended for those with heart or respiratory problems. The larger cliff dwellings can be seen from roadway overlooks.

Parents: watch your children—especially at cliff dwelling sites and near canyon rims.

Do not throw rocks or objects into canyons; there may be people below.

**Water**

Carry and drink plenty of water. Water is available at all park facilities, including at Cliff Palace (near parking lot) and at the Wetherill Mesa kiosk. Water is not available at Balcony House.

**Gasoline Advisory**

Gasoline is only available in the Morefield Campground Village; a 15-mile drive from the Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum; plan accordingly.

**Park Resource Protection Regulations**

Visitors must be accompanied by a park ranger to enter cliff dwellings.

Camping is permitted only in Morefield Campground. Food, garbage, and cooking equipment must be kept in a vehicle or hard sided trailer.

Feeding, capturing, chasing, or teasing wildlife, and picking, cutting, or damaging plants is prohibited and can be dangerous.

Be careful with fire. One careless match can wipe out the growth of a lifetime.

Please do not sit, stand, climb, or lean on fragile archeological structures. Only water is allowed in sites; no food or other beverages.

**Pets**

Pets must be physically restrained at all times; animals are not allowed in public buildings or on trails. It is prohibited to leave pets unattended.

**Judgment**

Your safety depends on your good judgment, adequate preparation, and constant attention. Don't ruin your vacation by having an accident. Your safety is your responsibility.

**In case of an Emergency  
Contact a Park Ranger  
or Call 911**



## Road Improvements

Mesa Verde National Park received Federal Land Highways Program projects for a total of \$14 to \$18 million. With these funds the park will resurface the park road from the entrance station to Park Point, which is about 10 miles (16 km) of road. The project will also do preliminary road work near the entrance in preparation for access to the park's new Visitor and Research Center.

These projects are long-standing priorities for Mesa Verde National Park. They address the Department's highest-priority mission needs; generate the largest number of jobs in the shortest period of time; and create lasting value for the American public.

Drivers should expect potential delays. This work will include: construction vehicles on the road hauling materials back and forth from the park entrance to the construction sites; rough and uneven road surfaces in construction areas; a pilot car leading traffic through construction sites and in some cases traffic lights will direct vehicles.

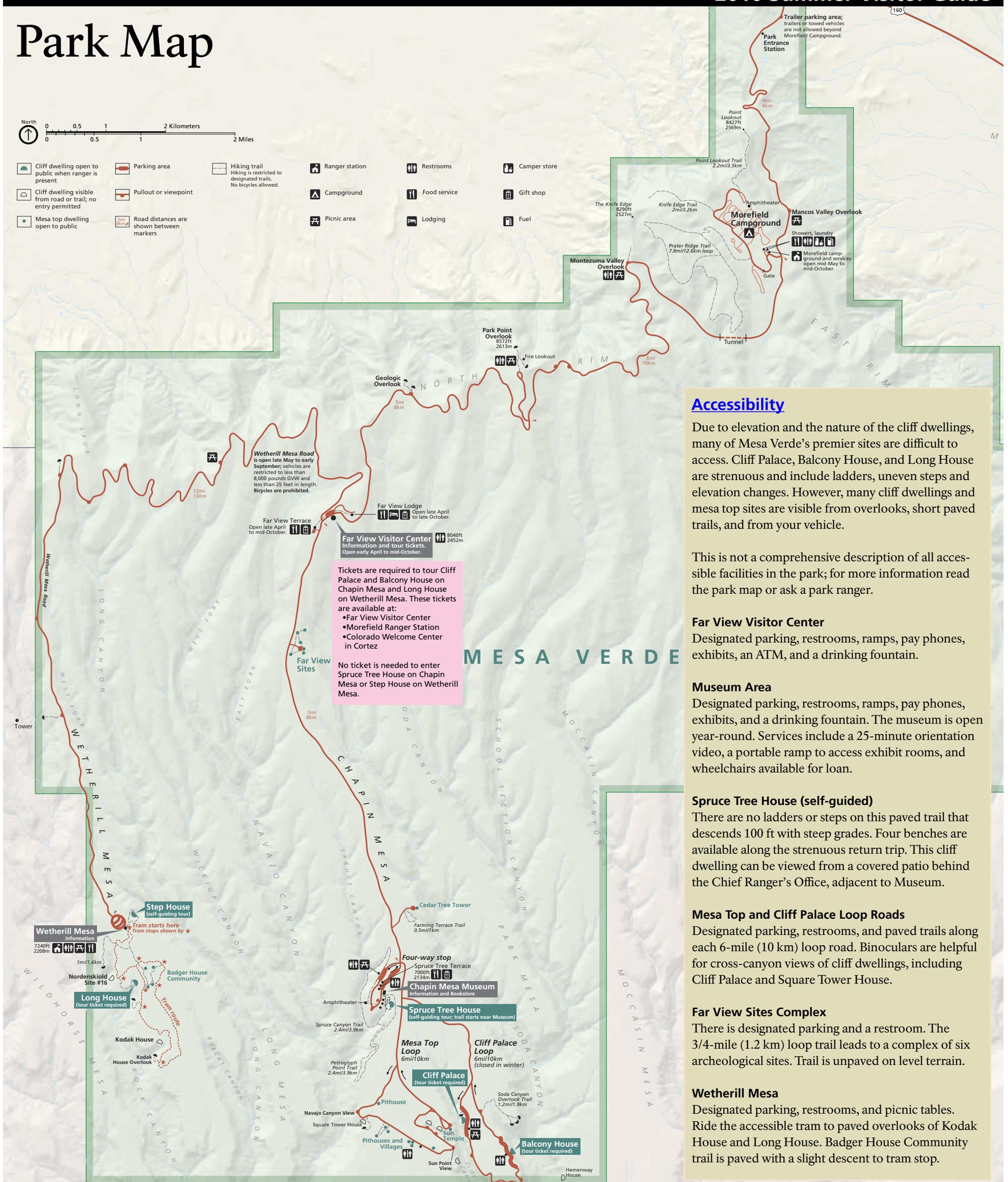
Caution is advised at all times.



# Park Map



- |   |  |   |                |              |              |
|---|--|---|----------------|--------------|--------------|
| Cliff dwelling open to public when ranger is present          | Parking area                             | Hiking trail<br>Hiking is restricted to designated trails. No bicycles allowed. | Ranger station | Restrooms    | Camper store |
| Cliff dwelling visible from road or trail; no entry permitted | Pullout or viewpoint                     |   | Campground     | Food service | Gift shop    |
| Mesa top dwelling open to public                              | Road distances are shown between markers |   | Picnic area    | Lodging      | Fuel         |



Tickets are required to tour Cliff Palace and Balcony House on Chapin Mesa and Long House on Wetherill Mesa. These tickets are available at:

- Far View Visitor Center
- Morefield Ranger Station
- Colorado Welcome Center in Cortez

No ticket is needed to enter Spruce Tree House on Chapin Mesa or Step House on Wetherill Mesa.

## Accessibility

Due to elevation and the nature of the cliff dwellings, many of Mesa Verde's premier sites are difficult to access. Cliff Palace, Balcony House, and Long House are strenuous and include ladders, uneven steps and elevation changes. However, many cliff dwellings and mesa top sites are visible from overlooks, short paved trails, and from your vehicle.

This is not a comprehensive description of all accessible facilities in the park; for more information read the park map or ask a park ranger.

## Far View Visitor Center

Designated parking, restrooms, ramps, pay phones, exhibits, an ATM, and a drinking fountain.

## Museum Area

Designated parking, restrooms, ramps, pay phones, exhibits, and a drinking fountain. The museum is open year-round. Services include a 25-minute orientation video, a portable ramp to access exhibit rooms, and wheelchairs available for loan.

## Spruce Tree House (self-guided)

There are no ladders or steps on this paved trail that descends 100 ft with steep grades. Four benches are available along the strenuous return trip. This cliff dwelling can be viewed from a covered patio behind the Chief Ranger's Office, adjacent to Museum.

## Mesa Top and Cliff Palace Loop Roads

Designated parking, restrooms, and paved trails along each 6-mile (10 km) loop road. Binoculars are helpful for cross-canyon views of cliff dwellings, including Cliff Palace and Square Tower House.

## Far View Sites Complex

There is designated parking and a restroom. The 3/4-mile (1.2 km) loop trail leads to a complex of six archeological sites. Trail is unpaved on level terrain.

## Wetherill Mesa

Designated parking, restrooms, and picnic tables. Ride the accessible tram to paved overlooks of Kodak House and Long House. Badger House Community trail is paved with a slight descent to tram stop.

# Ranger Programs (no tickets required)

Joining a ranger is a great way to learn more about Mesa Verde National Park. Visit the Far View Visitor Center and Chapin Mesa Museum for details. For information on cliff dwelling tours, turn to the back page.



2006 Ranger Presentation



1930s Ranger Presentation



## Morefield Campground Evening Program

In 1907, archeologist Jesse Fewkes offered the first evening campfire talks in the history of the National Park Service at Chapin Mesa Amphitheater near Spruce Tree House. Today, rangers continue his tradition with 45-minute presentations at the Morefield Campground Amphitheater (weather permitting). Bring a flashlight.

Nightly at 9:00 pm

May 30 to September 6

## Far View Lodge Evening Program

In 2008 the park joined with ARAMARK to offer evening presentations at the Far View Lodge. Subjects vary from discussions on pottery styles to perspectives on the Ancestral Puebloan landscape.

Join a ranger in the Far View Lodge lower level "library" to learn more about the park resources.

Nightly at 7:00 pm

May 30 to September 6

## A Vibrant Culture

Contemporary Pueblo people from Hopi, Zuni, and Rio Grande Pueblos are descendants of the Ancestral Pueblo people of Mesa Verde. On three occasions park rangers will host Pueblo artisans and dancers as they share their vibrant culture.

**May 30:** A Juried Indian Art Market will be held at the Far View Terrace, near the Visitor Center. Artisan's work is judged and presented to the public for viewing and sale.

**July 3 and 4:** Flora Lomayestewa has been bringing her Hopi dance group from Shungopavi village on Second Mesa to Mesa Verde for the last 21 years. The Lomayestewa family invite you to view traditional Hopi dances at the Chapin Mesa Amphitheater near the museum. These are scheduled both days at 11:00 am, noon, 2:00 pm, and 4:00 pm.

**September 18:** Jane Baca and Starr Tafoya have given pottery demonstrations at Mesa Verde for over fifteen years. They are award winners at the Santa Fe Indian Market. Join them at the Chapin Mesa Amphitheater near the Museum at 3:00 pm for a demonstration, firing, and sale of Santa Clara Pueblo pottery.

# Park Fun For Kids

## Junior Ranger Program

Hey, kids! Become a Junior Ranger and have a great time learning about Mesa Verde National Park.

Children from age 4 to 12 can become a Junior Ranger. Just pick up a free activity booklet at the Far View Visitor Center or Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum, explore the park and complete the activities, then take the booklet to any park information center for review. A special Mesa Verde Junior Ranger badge is awarded for a job well done.

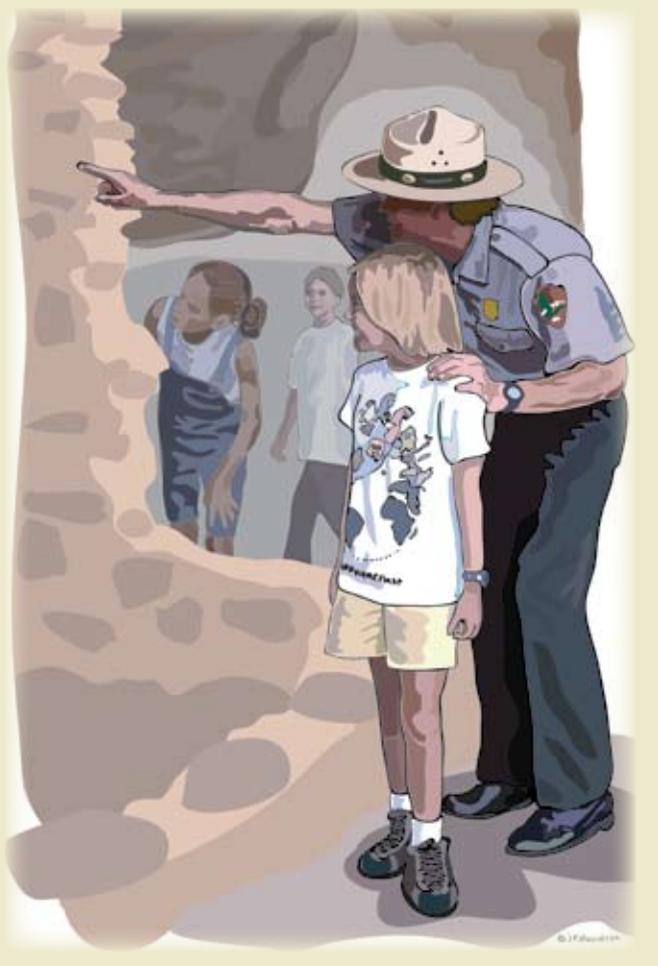
Becoming a Junior Ranger is a great way to explore the national parks and to help take care of them for the future.

## Fun at Morefield Campground

Camping is a wonderful opportunity to discover the natural side of Mesa Verde, and late afternoon is a great time. For a fun, family-oriented way to explore your natural surroundings, stop by the Morefield Ranger Station to pick up a Junior Naturalist Activity Booklet and check out a Discovery Pack.

Morefield Campground Ranger Station

- Open May 30 to early August
- 5:00 pm to 8:30 pm



Hopi dancers

# Ranger Programs (tickets required)

Mesa Verde National Park joins with its partners, park concessioner ARAMARK and the non-profit Mesa Verde Institute, to provide visitors opportunities to learn more about the park. Tickets for ranger-guided bus tours can be purchased at the Far View Lodge front desk or online at: [www.visitmesaverde.com](http://www.visitmesaverde.com). For all other hikes purchase tickets at the Far View Visitor Center bookstore or online at [www.mesaverdeinstitute.org](http://www.mesaverdeinstitute.org). *Tickets are non-refundable.*

For a ranger-guided tour of Cliff Palace, Balcony House and Long House, turn to page 12. To view a park map, turn to page 11.



## Wetherill Mesa Experience

This five mile, 5-hour (10 km) easy to moderate hike introduces the broad community landscape story of the Ancestral Pueblo people from earliest occupation in pithouses to the cliff dwellings. Binoculars are highly recommended for cross canyon views of multiple cliff dwellings. Be at the Wetherill Mesa kiosk at 9:45 am.

Tour is limited to 14 people  
Price: \$35.00 per person  
Daily: 10:00 am to 3:00 pm, May 30 to September 6  
Lunch is provided

## Spring House Hiking Tour

This very strenuous, 8-hour, 6-mile (10 km) hike along an unpaved, uneven trail has an elevation change of 1,000 ft (304 m), and includes steep drop-offs and switchbacks.

Spring House is not the only cliff dwelling you will see during this day long hike. Hikers will have stunning views of Buzzard House, Teakettle House, Daniel's House, as well as other archeological sites perched in the sandstone recesses of Navajo and Wickiup Canyons. Meet the ranger at the Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum at 7:45 am.

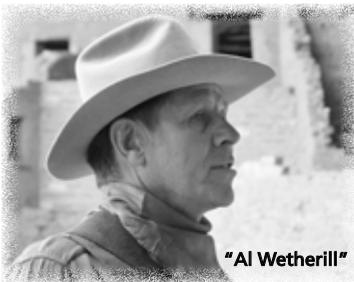
Location: Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum  
Tour is limited to 14 people  
Price: \$35.00 per person  
Daily: 8:00 am to 4:00 pm, May 30 to September 30.  
Lunch is provided



Spring House Trail

## Twilight in Cliff Palace

Join historical figures from Mesa Verde's past for a 90-minute tour of the park's most popular cliff dwelling, Cliff Palace. These characters, locked in their own time period, will give a fascinating perspective of their Mesa Verde experience.



"Al Wetherill"

Location: Cliff Palace Overlook  
Tour is limited to 20 people  
Price: \$10.00 per person  
Nightly at 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm  
May 30 to September 6

## Mug House Tour

This strenuous 2-hour, 3-mile (4.8 km) round-trip hike is along an unpaved, uneven trail that descends 100 ft (30 m), and includes one ladder, steep drop-offs, switchbacks, and scrambling over boulders.

Named for three mugs tied together and found hanging inside one of its rooms, Mug House was built about A.D. 1150 and likely supported 80 to 100 people.

Location: Wetherill Mesa kiosk  
Tour is limited to 14 people  
Price: \$15.00 per person  
Daily: 10:00 am to 12:00 pm  
May 30 to September 6



## Construction Delays

There are a variety of road construction projects in progress in the park. Add at least one hour driving time from the park entrance to arrive at the hike departure location on time.

**The tour will leave without you**

**Plan accordingly**



## Be Prepared, or Be Turned Away

**NOT prepared, NOT going, NO refund**

### Trail Conditions

The trails are at 7,000 ft (2134 m) elevation, uneven, unpaved, and most include steps and ladders. Many traverse narrow paths along cliff edges and move through tight passages.

### Your Health

Consider your physical health before joining a hike. Hiking is not recommended for those with heart or respiratory problems, or other physical difficulties.

### Water

Carry and drink plenty of water. Two quarts are mandatory for each hiker.

### What to Bring

Sturdy footwear is required. Sunscreen, snacks, a small first-aid kit, rain gear, camera, and binoculars will make the hike more enjoyable.

### Kids

Children must be able to walk the extent of the trail on their own without difficulty. Adults carrying children in backpacks must maintain mobility and balance on rugged trails.

### Rain or Shine

The weather is variable. It's possible to begin in full sun and end with a thunderstorm. Plan for all weather conditions.

### Judgment

Your safety depends on your own good judgment, adequate preparation, and constant attention. Don't ruin your vacation by having an accident. Your safety is your responsibility.

## Ranger-guided Bus Tours

Mesa Verde National Park partners with park concessioner ARAMARK to conduct ranger-guided tours that share modern views of the Ancestral Pueblo people. These bus tours include short walks to archeological sites along the Mesa Top Loop Road and a hiking tour of Cliff Palace.

The **700 Years Tour**, a 4-hour morning tour, departs Far View Lodge (with pick up at Far View Terrace) at 8:00 am. Tickets are \$45.00 for adults and \$34.00 for children 11 years and under.

The **Classic Pueblo Tour**, a 3.5-hour afternoon tour, departs Far View Lodge (with pick up at Far View Terrace) at 1:00 pm. Tickets are \$35.00 for adults and \$17.50 for children 11 years and under.

Bus tour tickets are available at the Far View Lodge, Far View Terrace tour desk, Morefield Campground Store and online at [www.visitmesaverde.com](http://www.visitmesaverde.com)

# Self-Guided Activities (no tickets required)

## Chapin Mesa

### Far View Sites Complex

Far View House plus four other villages and a dry reservoir are located along this level 3/4-mile (1.2 km) unpaved trail. This trail explores Ancestral Puebloan life on the mesa top from A.D. 900 to A.D. 1300. The area is open 8:00 am to sunset.



Far View Sites

### Cedar Tree Tower

An Ancestral Puebloan mesa top tower and kiva complex can be viewed. There is also a trail to view ancient farming terraces. The road is open 8:00 am to sunset



Cedar Tree Tower

### Chapin Mesa Museum

The museum displays dioramas illustrating Ancestral Puebloan life. There are also exhibits of prehistoric artifacts, a chronology of Ancestral Puebloan culture, and other items related to the park. A 25-minute orientation film is shown on the hour and half-hour.

A bookstore, water, restrooms, snack bar, gift shop, and post office are located nearby.

- May 30 to October 16  
Open 8:00 am to 6:30 pm
- October 17 through winter  
Open 8:00 am to 5:00 pm



Museum

### Spruce Canyon Trail

The Spruce Canyon Trail offers an opportunity to explore the canyon bottoms of Mesa Verde and discover what plants and wildlife thrive in this habitat.

The 2.4-mile (3.9 km) loop trail branches off the Spruce Tree House Trail, follows the bottom of Spruce Tree Canyon, turns up Spruce Canyon, climbs to the mesa top, and returns to the Museum through the picnic area.

Gate access is only available when Spruce Tree House is open. Registration is required at the trailhead or Museum.



Spruce Canyon Trail

### Petroglyph Point Loop Trail

This 2.4-mile (3.9 km) loop trail branches off the Spruce Tree House Trail and continues below the edge of the plateau to a petroglyph panel, climbs to the mesa top, and returns along the canyon rim to the Museum.

Gate access is only available when Spruce Tree House is open. Registration is required at the trailhead or Museum.



Petroglyph Panel

### Spruce Tree House

Mesa Verde's best-preserved and third largest cliff dwelling, Spruce Tree House, was constructed between A.D. 1211 and A.D. 1278. The dwelling contains 130 rooms and 8 kivas built into a natural alcove. It is thought to have been the home to about 60 to 80 people.

Allow 45-minutes to one hour for the 100-ft (30 m) descent and ascent on a winding path. The total walking distance is 1/2 mile (1 km) round trip. Trail begins at the Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum. Rangers are available to answer your questions.

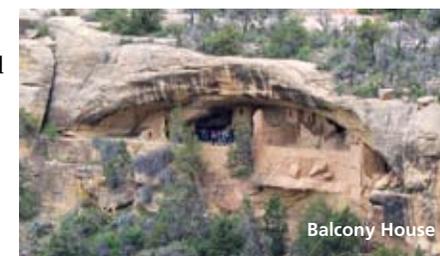
- May 30 to September 6  
Open 8:30 am to 6:30 pm
- September 7 to October 16  
Open 9:00 am to 6:30 pm
- October 17 to November 6  
Open 9:00 am to 5:00 pm
- After November 7  
Free guided tours at:  
10:00 am, 1:00 pm and 3:30 pm



Visitor exiting Spruce Tree House kiva

### Soda Canyon Overlook Trail

The 1.2-mile (1.9 km) round-trip unpaved trail begins one mile north of the Balcony House parking area on the Cliff Palace Loop Road. Bring your binoculars on this easy walk to the canyon edge for views of Balcony House and other archeological sites in Soda Canyon.



Balcony House

### Mesa Top Loop Road

A 6-mile (10 km) driving tour has short, paved trails to 12 easily-accessible surface sites and views of cliff dwellings. Highlights include Square Tower House and cross canyon views of Cliff Palace.

The road is open 8:00 am to sunset. Allow 45 minutes to 1 hour



Mesa Top Loop Site Shelters

# Self-Guided Activities (no tickets required)

## Wetherill Mesa

### Wetherill Mesa Road

Less crowded than the rest of the park with only trails and tram transportation, Wetherill Mesa offers visitors a quiet setting to appreciate the archeological sites and scenery.

The Wetherill Mesa Road opens at 9:00 am and closes at 4:15 pm daily. This 12-mile (19 km) drive from the Far View Visitor Center follows the northern and western boundary of the park offering spectacular views of the surrounding valleys. Allow 45 minutes to 1 hour for this drive roundtrip. Pullouts are available.

Vehicles are restricted to less than 8,000 lbs GVW and less than 25-ft in length. Bicycles are prohibited. This road closes for the season on September 7.

### Wetherill Mesa Kiosk

At the end of the Wetherill Mesa Road you will find a ranger kiosk, picnic tables, a bookstore and snack service available from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm.

Tram service is also available from the kiosk. Ride the tram to view archeological sites and take hiking trails. Long House ticket holders will be seated first. Others will be seated on a space-available basis.

### Badger House Community Trail

Allow 45 minutes to 1.5 hours to walk this 2.5-mile (4 km) trail. This combination gravel and paved trail begins at the Wetherill Mesa kiosk and wanders through four mesa top sites. This group of sites covers nearly seven acres. Your walk through this area is a journey through 600 years of prehistory.

If you prefer, take the tram to or from the Badger House tram stop and shorten the trail to 1.2 miles (1.9 km).



View of Montezuma Valley

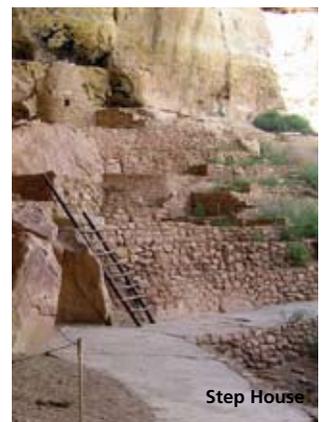


Wetherill Mesa kiosk

### Step House

Allow 45 minutes to one hour for the 100-ft (30 m) descent and ascent on a winding path. Total walking distance is .8 mile (1.3 km). The round-trip trail begins near the Wetherill Mesa kiosk. A ranger is available to answer your questions.

Step House is unusual in that two separate occupations can be compared in the same alcove; Modified Basketmaker, dating about A.D. 626, and a masonry pueblo dating to Classic Pueblo times A.D. 1226.



Step House



Artist rendition of a tower

### Nordenskiold #16 Trail

This easy 2-mile (3.2 km) round-trip gravel trail begins at the Wetherill Mesa kiosk and leads you through a burned area to an overlook of the cliff dwelling Nordenskiold Site #16

Allow 30 minutes to one hour.



Nordenskiold Site #16

## Morefield Campground Trails

### Knife Edge

This 2-mile (3.2 km) round-trip trail follows the old road alignment from the northwest corner of Morefield Campground toward Montezuma Valley Overlook. This trail provides views of the Montezuma Valley and is an excellent place to watch sunsets and see wildlife. A trail guide is available. Allow 45 minutes to 1 hour.



View of Montezuma Valley

### Prater Ridge

Allow about 4 hours for this 7.8-mile (12.5 km) trail that begins on the west end of Morefield Campground. The trail ascends the east side of Prater Ridge for 1.1 miles (1.8 km), and follows a loop around the top of the ridge, returning via the same route. For a shorter hike, follow only the north loop (3.6 miles/5.8 km) or south loop (2.4 miles/3.9 km).

Changes in the landscape and views of the surrounding area are highlights of this trail.



Prater Ridge Trail

### Point Lookout

Allow about 2 hours for this 2.2-mile (3.5 km) round-trip trail. The trail begins on the north side of the Morefield Campground amphitheater parking lot. The trail switchbacks up the south side of Point Lookout and follows the top of the mesa offering excellent views of both Montezuma and Mancos Valleys, as well as the surrounding countryside.



View of La Plata Mountains

# Food, Shopping, Guided Tours, and Lodging

Concessions at Mesa Verde National Park are managed by ARAMARK–Mesa Verde National Park.

We provide lodging, retail shops, food services, campground, and guided bus tours.

(800) 449-2288, 970-529-4422 locally, or visit and book on-line at [www.visitmesaverde.com](http://www.visitmesaverde.com)



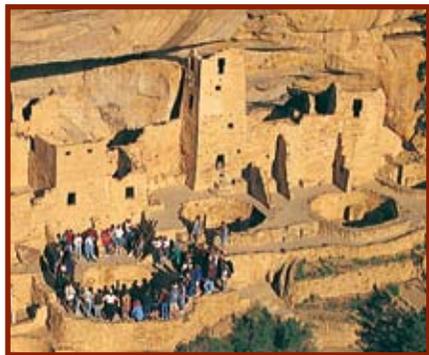
Metate Room at Far View Lodge



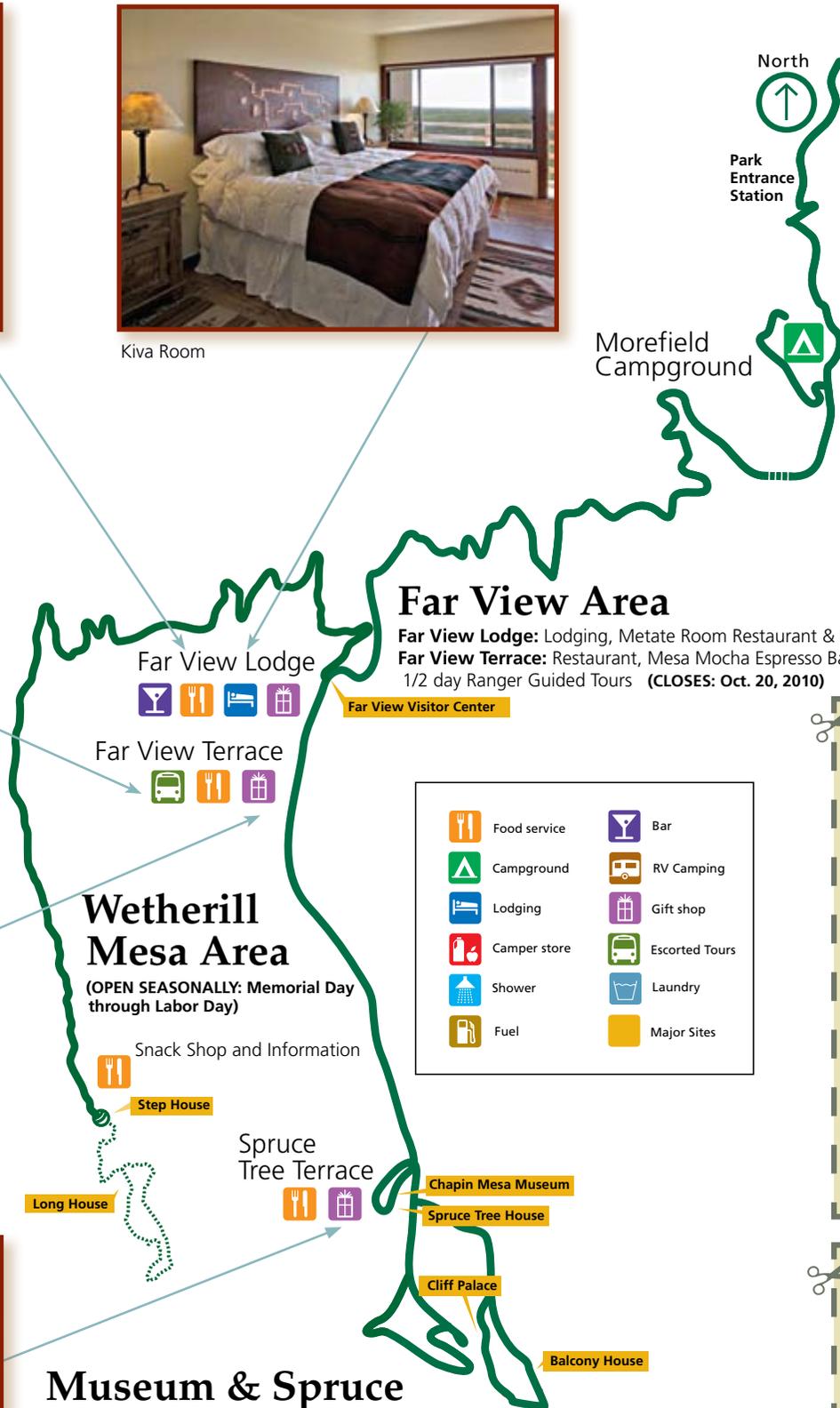
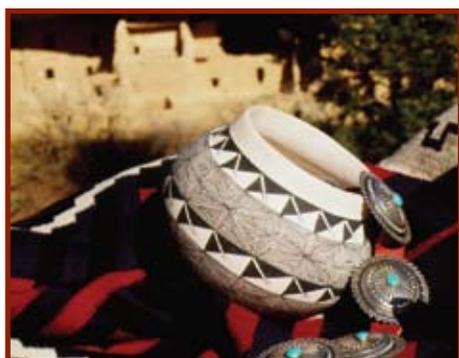
Kiva Room



Family fun on this 5 hour Guided Tour, includes Lunch



Navajo weaving at Far View Terrace



**Morefield Campground Area**  
**Morefield Campground:** (CLOSES: Oct. 13, 2010)  
 Camp Store, Knife Edge Cafe, RV & Tent Camping, Base Camping, Showers, Laundry, and Fuel

**Far View Area**  
**Far View Lodge:** Lodging, Metate Room Restaurant & La Mano Lounge, and Gift Shop. (CLOSES: Oct. 21, 2010)  
**Far View Terrace:** Restaurant, Mesa Mocha Espresso Bar, and Gift Shop. (CLOSES: Oct. 11, 2010)  
 1/2 day Ranger Guided Tours (CLOSES: Oct. 20, 2010)

**Delicious Homemade FUDGE**  
 AT FAR VIEW TERRACE  
**Buy 1 pound, Get half pound FREE**

**Ranger Guided Bus TOURS**  
 Check at Tour Desk in FAR VIEW TERRACE  
**Buy 1 afternoon tour seat, Get second seat FREE**  
 New reservations only.



# Mesa Verde Museum Association

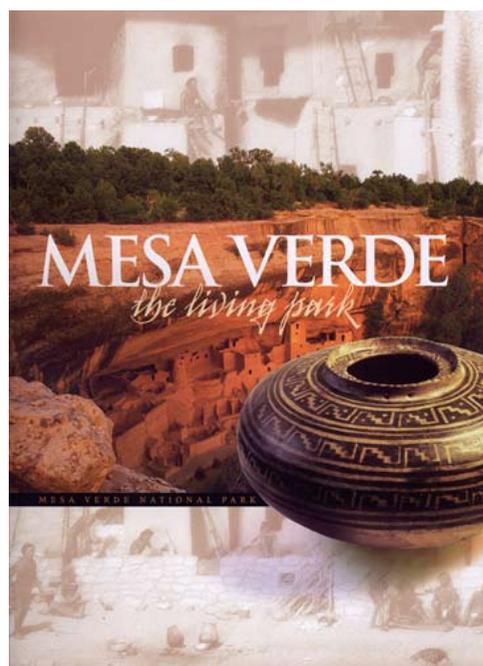
Supporting education, interpretation, and research at Mesa Verde National Park since 1930



The nonprofit Mesa Verde Museum Association (MVMA) provides educational and interpretive materials and experiences to visitors of Mesa Verde National Park through an active publishing program, volunteer and membership opportunities, the Mesa Verde Institute, and operation of retail bookstores in the Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum, Far View Visitor Center, Wetherill Mesa kiosk, Morefield Ranger Station, the Colorado Welcome Center at 928 East Main Street in Cortez, and online at [www.mesaverde.org](http://www.mesaverde.org). Proceeds from all our programs and retail sales support educational, research, and interpretive programs in Mesa Verde National Park. Call 970-529-4445 or 1-800-305-6053 for more information

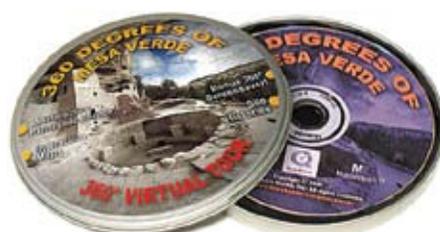
## Enhance Your Park Visit

You'll find an outstanding selection of Mesa Verde products and publications at MVMA stores. All proceeds support the park!



### Mesa Verde: The Living Park

This award-winning book introduces the cultures of the Colorado Plateau that came before written history – the makeup of their societies, hunting and farming, art and their most prominent legacy, Mesa Verde.



### 360 Degrees of Mesa Verde

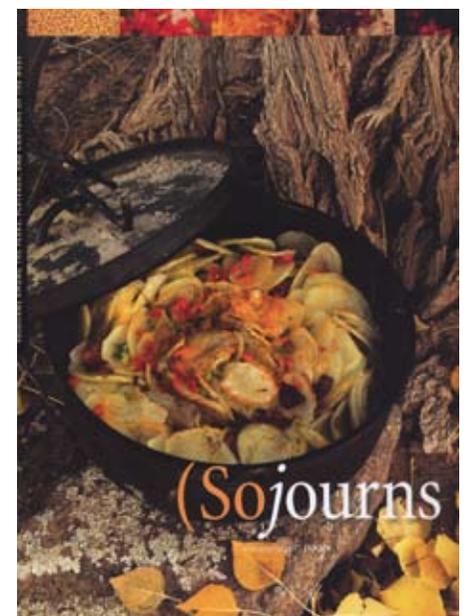
This 360-degree, panoramic CD tour allows you to virtually explore areas of Cliff Palace, Balcony House, Long House and Spruce Tree House that are not open to the public.

## Help Us Help Mesa Verde!

The Mesa Verde Museum Association is teaming with the Mesa Verde Foundation (the park's nonprofit capital fundraiser) to help protect and preserve Mesa Verde National Park. Become a member and your annual dues will support the mission of both organizations. Members receive MVMA store discounts, park updates, an annual wall calendar, and discounts at most other national parks and public land visitor center bookstores! Memberships start at \$30 per year. Members at the \$50 or higher level also receive the award-winning *Sojourns* magazine twice a year.

### It's Easy to Join:

- Visit MVMA stores in the park and at the Colorado Welcome Center in Cortez,
- Call 970-529-4445 or 800-305-6053, or
- Go to [www.mesaverde.org](http://www.mesaverde.org).



Mesa Verde Black-on-White pottery replicas and miniatures

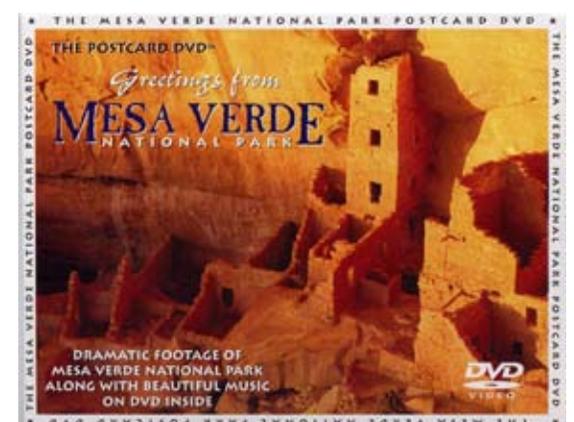
**Mesa Verde Museum Association**  
**10% off your purchase**  
 Present this coupon at the register.  
**Redeemable at the Chapin Mesa Museum and Far View Visitor Center Bookstores, and the Colorado Welcome Center in Cortez.**  
 Coupon is good on all regularly priced items.  
 Expiration Date: 12/31/2010



Educational children's books and activities

### Mesa Verde DVD Postcard

A mailable postcard with a 20-minute DVD showcasing the spectacular views and Ancestral Puebloan dwellings of Mesa Verde. The film features beautiful music and is a great way to recall your trip or to send as a gift.



# Your Dollars at Work

The staff of Mesa Verde National Park strive to be effective stewards of the park's natural, cultural, and historical resources. We also work hard to see that all visitors have an enjoyable and educational experience.

Part of this responsibility is ensuring you know how your money is being spent and how these activities benefit you, the park, and future generations.

Many of the news briefs selected are not behind the scenes, but are activities you may experience during your visit and may arouse your curiosity. It might be as simple as the sound of an electric drill, a glimpse of a helicopter's shadow as it flies overhead, the short delay in your trip due to road construction, or researchers painstakingly mapping an archeological site.

There is a purpose behind each and every one of these activities, and we, as caretakers of your national park, feel these projects are important to the continued preservation of this national treasure and the overall park mission.

**These dollars are being put to work in the following ways:**

- \$22,000,000 to reduce the backlog of facility maintenance
- \$600,000 to provide accessible trails
- \$800,000 to restore cultural and natural landscapes, protect museum objects, and rehabilitate historic structures
- \$2,000,000 to provide visitor orientation and education, amphitheater repair, visitor center improvements, and replacement of exhibits



Spruce Tree House Trail

**Spruce Tree House Trail**

In 1908 Dr. Jesse Walter Fewkes of the Smithsonian Institution excavated Spruce Tree House, making it available to the public. The trail we use today has changed little since it was first built. This spring the park will rehabilitate this trail by repairing retaining walls, correcting sharp curves, and resurfacing the trail tread, improving the accessibility to this popular site.



**Water Treatment Plant**

The park is partnering with Empire Electric Association, the local electrical provider, to reduce power consumption at the park's main water treatment plant. Two photovoltaic net metering systems will be connected to the most energy demanding facility in the park. Annual cost savings are projected to be \$20,000.



Orientation Wayside

**Waysides**

Throughout the park you will encounter wayside exhibits. These exhibits are panels of information located along trails and cliff dwelling overlooks. Many of these panels have been updated, but others are being replaced due to weather damage.

**Archeological Site Shelters**

The majority of the park's archeological sites are on the mesa tops and susceptible to weathering and fires. Those open to the public along the Mesa Top Loop and at Badger House Community are covered. However, the existing curtain or panel structures are deteriorating and are no longer safe or adequately protect these archeological sites. The new panel design will better protect this important part of the park story.

**Waterline Replacement**

The park will replace approximately five miles of water line between the Chapin Mesa water tank and the park's northern boundary in the Montezuma Valley. This water line is an essential component of the park's domestic water system that provides water for park operations and over 575,000 visitors annually.



Vault Toilet on Wetherill Mesa

**Park Road Work**

Ten miles of the main park road will be repaired and rebuilt, while the remaining ten miles will be chip sealed.

**Other 2010 Projects**

- Build three vault toilets along park road
- Restore native plants along road shoulders and other construction projects
- Update backlogged records for 2,600 park archeological sites
- Rebuild fences along the park boundary
- Architectural documentation of Spruce Tree House cliff dwelling
- Document designs in Ancestral Puebloan period plaster

**Completed Projects**

- Spotted owl survey
- Replaced park radio and phone system
- Rehabilitated fire lookout tower and repaired and upgraded overlook trails and wayside exhibit panels at Park Point
- Developed Junior Ranger booklet
- Repaired Wetherill Mesa Road and park entrance road from Mile 10 to 20
- Printed park brochures
- Replaced Park Entrance Kiosk
- Weed Control at Park Entrance
- Installed Filtration Upgrade to Water Treatment Disinfection System

## “Greening” the Fleet on Wetherill Mesa

One of the first transportation or shuttle systems funded by the National Park Service was here in Mesa Verde. The Wetherill Mesa shuttle system has been in operation since 1973. For four decades visitors to the “quieter” side of Mesa Verde have parked their cars and, in a sense, carpoled to the archeological sites.

The park in this next decade will continue its “green” effort by replacing three gasoline powered trams with new alternative fuel vehicles. With funding received from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), three 52-passenger trams powered by environmentally friendly biodiesel will transport park visitors to Long House, Badger House Community, and the trail to Nordenskiold #16. The park will look at all operations in an effort to continue to “green the fleet” and reduce its carbon footprint.



©Trams International- Model 6000Tram Set

## *Surfacetus artifactii*: An Endangered Species?

In recent months, media attention has focused on artifact looting on public lands. While this problem warrants a serious response, another critical issue threatens archeological sites: disturbance or removal of small, seemingly less significant surface artifacts. The allure of a striking fragment of black-on-white pottery or a nearly complete arrowhead is strong. The desire to touch the past and marvel at the human artistry is universal. But removing or displacing these surface artifacts can be surprisingly damaging to the archeological record. Many would also say that it is disrespectful to the spirit of the potter or toolmaker.

Some archeological sites are identified by the presence of surface artifacts. These artifacts provide clues about the people who made them. Pottery fragments reveal a timeframe for when a site was inhabited. They can also provide details about the community; a tally of corrugated cooking pots may help with population estimates. Large numbers of “serving” bowls could indicate community gatherings, or “feasting.” Redware pottery found in the Mesa Verde area suggests trade with western neighbors. Similarities in pottery designs can even help trace migration routes. Each sherd is one piece of an enormous, complex puzzle. Although the puzzle will never be complete, each piece paints a more detailed picture of the past.

It is easy to visit archeological sites in a respectful, responsible way. Replace pottery or stone fragments exactly where you found them. Don’t move things around, make “displays,” or remove anything from the site. The power of a pot sherd or stone flake fades in a dresser drawer. Touch the past—gently—and pay your respects to the potter, the archeologist, and future visitors to the site.



## Lost, then Found

People have been collecting artifacts from Mesa Verde for at least 120 years. Prior to the park’s establishment, and before protective legislation was passed, artifacts were removed from many archeological sites by “pot hunters” and other collectors. Since Mesa Verde became a national park in 1906, archeological explorations and excavations have been numerous, and often quite thorough. The alcove sites, where artifacts are frequently well-preserved, have been especially well documented. That’s why it stunned park archeologists when this exceptional artifact was unearthed.

In June 2004, archeologist Chris McAllister was assessing the condition of an alcove site near an established hiking trail. Although the site is closed to the public, it has been visited with some regularity through the years (by both authorized and unauthorized persons). While crawling in the back of the low, narrow alcove, Chris thought she saw a bit of chipped stone. As she brushed aside the dirt, she gasped. There lay a stone knife, left behind by an Ancestral Puebloan over 700 years ago.

The knife is fully intact with a complete wooden handle, stone blade, sinew hafting, and braided yucca strap. Residue analysis revealed both rabbit and human proteins on the blade. This amazing artifact is a stark, personal reminder of the daily life of the Ancestral Puebloans who once inhabited these canyons. It is a reminder of the incredible archeological finds yet to be discovered.

This stone knife is on display in the Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum.



## An Unwelcome Visitor



Aliens have invaded Mesa Verde. Summer visitors are likely to see their round purple flower heads nodding atop tall prickly stalks. These unwelcome invaders are musk thistles (*Carduus nutans*, Latin for “nodding thistle”), aggressive weedy plants native to southern Europe. Arriving in the late 1970s, these thistles now occupy hundreds of acres in the park, sometimes in dense stands where little else can grow. Mesa Verde is fighting back.

We are attempting to eradicate these and other alien weeds using mechanical, chemical, and biological methods, but we need your help. Although this species produces beautiful purple flowers, resist the urge to collect them. Each flower head can produce hundreds of seeds that remain viable in the soil for many years, just waiting for an opportunity to spread. Like other “invasive” weeds, musk thistle is adapted to disturbed environments such as road shoulders, construction sites, and landscapes altered by wildfire like those visitors pass through on Chapin and Wetherill Mesas. Don’t allow this marauding menace to hitch a ride with you.

# Tickets are Required to Tour Cliff Dwellings

Stop first at the Far View Visitor Center located 15 miles (25 km) from the park entrance. There, park rangers will help you plan your visit.

Cliff Palace and Balcony House are popular ranger-guided cliff dwelling tours. During periods of high demand, you may be asked to choose only one of these tours per day.

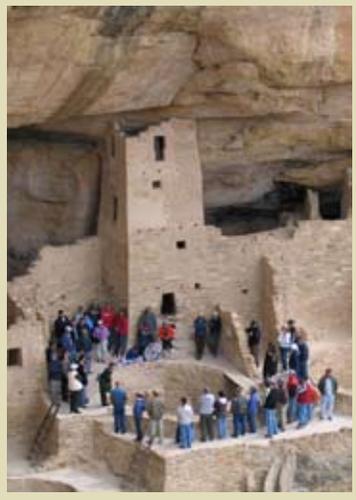
A tour of Long House, located on Wetherill Mesa, can be taken on the same day as the Cliff Palace OR Balcony House tours.

Tour tickets are \$3.00 per tour, per person, regardless of age.

**Purchase tour tickets at:**

- Far View Visitor Center
- Morefield Ranger Station
- Chapin Mesa Museum (**ONLY** from October 17 to November 6)

For venue hours see **Visitor Services** below.



## Cliff Palace

### Mesa Verde's Largest Cliff Dwelling

This one-hour tour involves descending uneven stone steps and climbing five ladders for a 100-ft (30 m) vertical climb. Total walking distance is 1/4 mile round-trip. The tour begins at Cliff Palace Overlook, an 8 mile drive from the Visitor Center.

**May 30 to September 6**

Every half-hour: 9:00 am to 6:00 pm

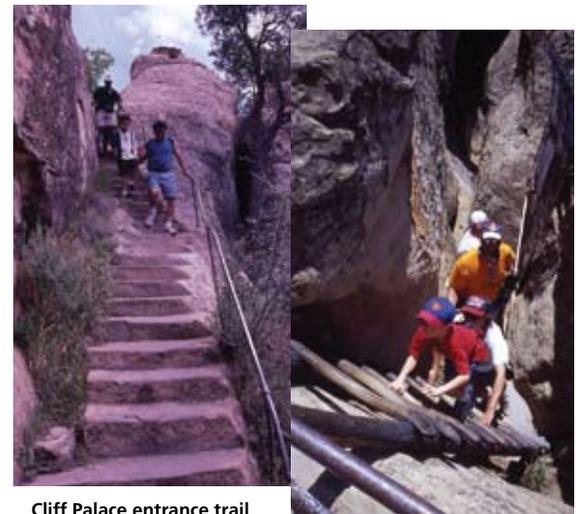
**September 7 to October 16**

Every half-hour: 9:00 am to 5:00 pm

**October 17 to November 6**

Every hour: 9:00 am to 4:00 pm

November 7: Closed for season



Cliff Palace entrance trail (above) and exit trail (right)

## Balcony House

### Adventurous Cliff Dwelling Tour

This one-hour tour involves climbing a 32-ft ladder, crawling through a 12-ft long tunnel, and climbing up a 60-ft (20 m) open cliff face with stone steps and two 10-ft (3 m) ladders to exit the site. The tour begins at the north end of the Balcony House parking lot, a 10 mile (16 km), 25- minute drive from the Far View Visitor Center.

**May 30 to September 6**

Every half-hour: 9:00 am to 5:00 pm

**September 7 to October 16**

Every hour: 9:00 am to 5:00 pm

October 17: Closed for season



Balcony House entrance ladder



Balcony House tunnel



Exit trail ladders

## Long House on Wetherill Mesa

### Mesa Verde's Most In-Depth Tour

Starting with a tram ride to and from the trailhead, this 90 minute tour involves climbing two 15-ft (4.5 m) ladders within the site. The round trip hike is 3/4 mile (1 km), with a 130-ft (40 m) gain in elevation upon exiting. Tour begins at the Wetherill Mesa Kiosk, a 12 mile (19 km) drive from the Far View Visitor Center. Allow 45 minutes for this drive. Vehicles over 25-ft (8 m) long are prohibited on this road.

**May 30 to September 6**

10:00 am, 10:30 am, 11:00 am, 12:00 noon,

1:00 pm, 2:00 pm, 2:30 pm, 3:00 pm, 3:30 pm and 4:00 pm

September 7: Closed for season



Long House entrance trail



One of the 15-ft (4.5 m) ladders

## Visitor Services

### Chapin Mesa Museum

May 30 to October 16 8:00 am to 6:30 pm

October 17 through winter 8:00 am to 5:00 pm

### Far View Visitor Center and ATM

May 30 to September 6 8:00 am to 7:00 pm

September 7 to October 16 8:00 am to 5:00 pm

October 17 Closed

### Morefield Campground Ranger Station

May 30 to early August 5:00 pm to 8:30 pm

Early August Closed

### Colorado Welcome Center in Cortez

May 30 to 31 8:00 am to 5:00 pm

June 1 to August 31 8:00 am to 6:00 pm

September 1 through winter 8:00 am to 5:00 pm

### Wetherill Mesa Kiosk

May 30 to September 6 10:00 am to 5:00 pm

September 7 Closed

### Picnic Areas

Chapin Mesa Picnic Area 8:00 am to sunset

Cliff Palace Picnic Area 8:00 am to sunset

### Chief Ranger's Office

(First aid and lost and found)

May 30 to November 6 8:00 am to 5:00 pm

### U.S. Postal Service

May 30 to October 31

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

Saturday 10:00 am to 1:45 pm

November 1 through winter

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

Saturday Closed