



# Mesa Verde

The official visitor guide  
to Mesa Verde National Park

May 29 to November 5, 2011



On the trail to Long 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 Puebloans 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 objects and archives in the research collection.

As you explore the park, we hope you will relate this place to the descendants of the Ancestral Puebloans, the contemporary Pueblo people along the Rio Grande River, the Zuni in New Mexico, and the Hopi of Arizona. Understanding this relationship will help you gain an 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 cultural exhibits and browse through the selection of Mesa Verde books in the store.

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 half-hour and the museum store.

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 0.5-mile (0.8 km) 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 half-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](#), 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 0.75-mile (1.2 km) unpaved trail.

### If you have two full days:

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

Drive the Wetherill Mesa Road, hike the trails to 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 to A.D. 750) and Classic Pueblo (A.D. 1100 to A.D. 1300) period architecture. The 0.8-mile (1.3 km) round-trip trail begins at 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**

970-529-4631

**E-mail**

meve\_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 and 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 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, contact a park ranger or call 970-529-4461
- Do not park on roadways; use the pullouts

**Gasoline Advisory**

Gasoline is **ONLY** available at Morefield Campground Village, four miles from the park entrance and an 11-mile drive from the Far View Visitor Center. Gasoline is **not** available at Far View, Chapin Mesa, or Wetherill Mesa. Plan accordingly.

**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 ft (2134 m) elevation. Please consider your 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, respiratory, or other medical problems. Many 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.

Only water is allowed in sites; no food or other beverages.

**Hiking**

**Hiking** in the park is restricted and allowed only on designated trails. All other back-country areas are closed for resource protection.

**Water**

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

**Camping**

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

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

**Resource Protection**

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

Please do not sit, stand, climb, or lean on fragile archeological structures.

The removal, collection, and/or disturbance of any natural or cultural resources on federal lands, including Mesa Verde National Park is prohibited.

Keep Mesa Verde's wildlife *wild*. Feeding, capturing, chasing, or teasing wildlife is prohibited and can be dangerous.

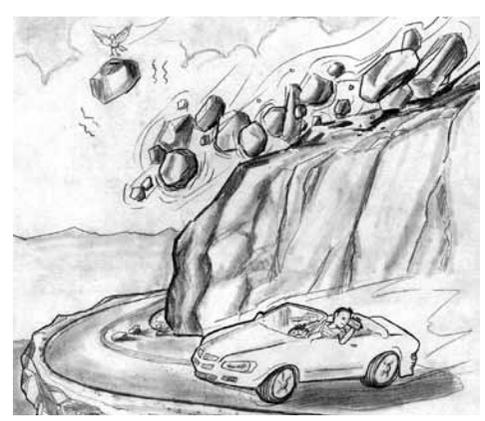
**Pets**

**Pets** must be physically restrained at all times; animals are not allowed in public buildings or on trails. Pets may be walked along paved roads, in parking lots, and at the campground. Clean up after your pet.

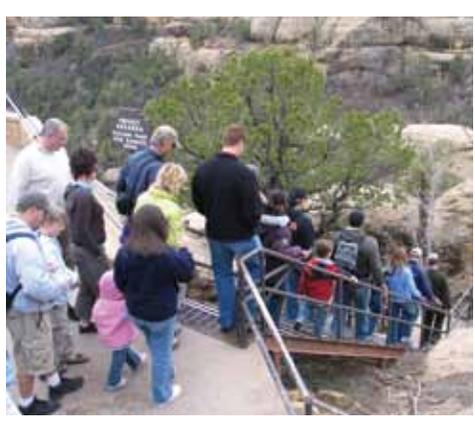
Leaving pets alone and/or tied to any object is prohibited. Pets may be left in a vehicle with proper ventilation and water, *but only in weather that is not hazardous to their immediate welfare.*

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

*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.*



Watch for rocks on the road



Cliff Palace Trailhead



Mule deer on roadway

## Trail Improvements

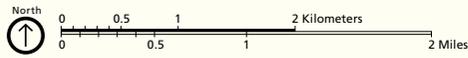
This summer, park crews will repair [trails](#) in Morefield Campground and on Wetherill Mesa. Using a recycling machine, paved trails will be resurfaced with asphalt reclaimed after last year's park road resurfacing. Gravel surfaced trails will be regraded and drainage systems repaired. All trails will be cleared of overgrown vegetation.

Although the trails will be under repair, trail closures are not expected. Please use caution when passing through a work zone, and obey all safety signs and barriers. Watch for small vehicles and trail machines everywhere along the trails.

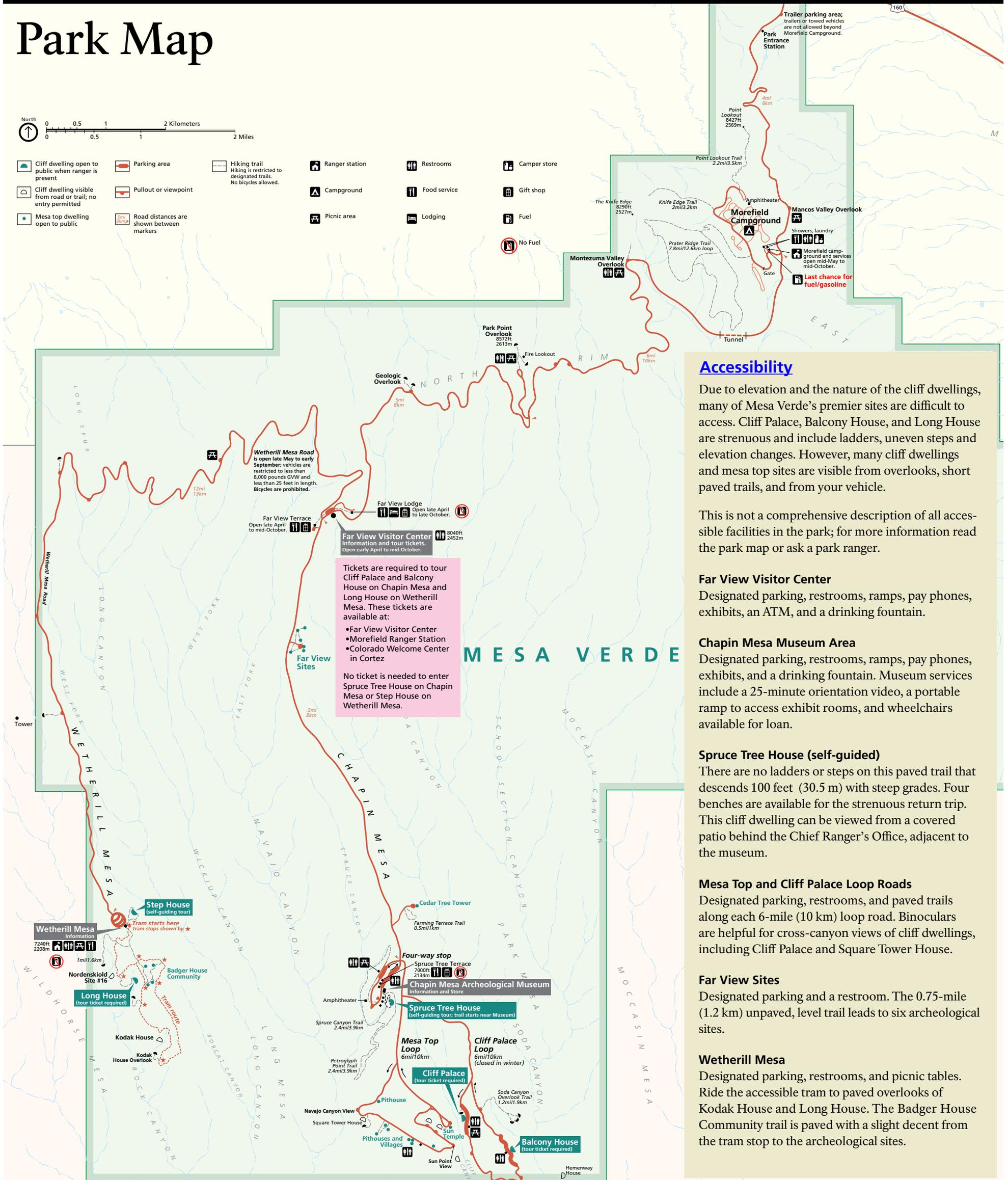


Prater Ridge Trail

# 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         |
|   |  |   |                | No 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.

### Chapin Mesa Museum Area

Designated parking, restrooms, ramps, pay phones, exhibits, and a drinking fountain. Museum 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 feet (30.5 m) with steep grades. Four benches are available for the strenuous return trip. This cliff dwelling can be viewed from a covered patio behind the Chief Ranger's Office, adjacent to the 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

Designated parking and a restroom. The 0.75-mile (1.2 km) unpaved, level trail leads to six archeological sites.

### Wetherill Mesa

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

# 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 Archeological Museum for details. For information on cliff dwelling tours, turn to the back page.



Evening Campground Program

## Morefield Campground Evening Program

Enjoy a National Park Service tradition by joining a ranger for a 45-minute evening presentation at the Morefield Campground Amphitheater (weather permitting). Bring a flashlight.

May 29 to September 5  
Nightly at 9:00 pm



Far View Sites

## Far View Sites Walk

This one-hour, easy to moderate 0.75-mile (1.2 km) ranger-guided walk explores life on the mesa top. Meet the ranger at Far View House, adjacent to the [Far View Sites](#) parking lot, one mile south of Far View Visitor Center.

May 29 to September 5  
Monday and Friday at 4:00 pm  
September 6 to October 10  
Monday at 4:00 pm



Ancestral Puebloan Pottery

## Far View Lodge Evening Program

The park joins with ARAMARK to offer evening presentations at the Far View Lodge. Subjects vary from pottery styles and wildlife to perspectives on the Ancestral Puebloan landscape. Join a ranger for this 45-minute program in the Far View Lodge lower level "library."

May 29 to September 5  
Nightly at 7:00 pm



View from Knife Edge Trail

## Bird Hike

Bring your binoculars to look for golden eagles and peregrine falcons. Meet the ranger at the [Knife Edge trailhead](#) located in Morefield Campground for this 2-hour, 2-mile (3.2 km) round-trip hike. The trail provides views of Montezuma Valley and is an excellent place to see wildlife. Bring water.

May 29 to September 5  
Sunday and Wednesday at 7:30 am

# Park Fun For Kids

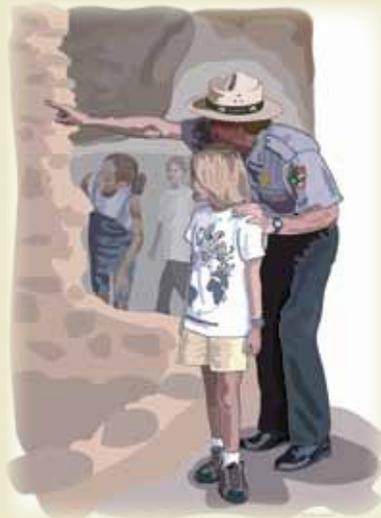
## Junior Ranger Program



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. When done, 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 after 5:00 pm to pick up a Junior Naturalist Activity Booklet and check out a Discovery Pack.

Morefield Campground Ranger Station  
Open May 29 to early August  
5:00 pm to 8:30 pm



Hopi Dancers

## A Vibrant Culture

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

**May 29:** A Juried Indian Art Market will be held at the Far View Terrace, near the visitor center. Artisans' work is judged and presented for public viewing and sale.

**July 2 and 3:** Flora Lomayestewa has been bringing her Hopi dance group from Shungopavi village on Second Mesa to Mesa Verde for the last 23 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 10 and 11:** Native American Art Demonstration and Sale will be held at the Wetherill Mesa Pavilion. Artists will demonstrate the making of coiled pottery, kachina carving, basketry, and other traditional art forms. The tram will not be running, so you are invited to ride your bike or hike along the tram road. Long House and Step House will be open for self-guided tours with rangers available to answer your questions. For this special event, the road to Wetherill Mesa is opened from 9:00 am to 4:30 pm. Come enjoy the fall at Wetherill Mesa.

**September 17:** Jane Baca and Starr Tafoya from Santa Clara Pueblo 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 black and redware pottery.

# Ranger Programs (tickets required)

Mesa Verde National Park joins with its partner, the nonprofit Mesa Verde Institute, to provide visitors opportunities to learn more about the park. Tickets for the hikes can be purchased at the Far View Visitor Center store or online at [www.mesaverdeinstitute.org](http://www.mesaverdeinstitute.org). *Tickets are non-refundable.*

For a ranger-guided tour of Cliff Palace, Balcony House or Long House, turn to page 12. To see a park map, turn to page 3.



Mealing bins in Oak Tree House



Fire Temple



Square Tower House



Portion of Spring House Trail

## Summer Hikes

### 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.



May 29 to September 5  
Nightly at 7:00 pm

- Meet at Cliff Palace Overlook
- Tour is limited to 20 people
- Price: \$10.00 per person  
*Tickets sold ONLY at the Far View Visitor Center.*

### Oak Tree House and Fire Temple

A moderately strenuous 2-hour, 1-mile (1.6 km) round-trip hike. Includes walking along cliff edges, climbing a 15-foot (4.6 m) ladder and hiking a narrow dirt path to visit two cliff dwellings. Hikers will also get to see a unique plaster panel that is undergoing preservation treatment.

May 29 to September 5

Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday at 8:00 am

- Meet at Sun Temple (Mesa Top Loop Road)
- Tour is limited to 10 people
- Price: \$20.00 per person. You can purchase tickets online at <http://oaktreefiretemple2011.eventbrite.com>

## Fall Hikes

### Square Tower House

A strenuous 2-hour, 1-mile (1.6 km) round-trip hike. Includes hiking along exposed cliff edges, scrambling down rocky slopes, and climbing a 20-foot (6.1 m) ladder and two shorter ladders to visit a spectacular cliff dwelling. Highlights include views of the "crow's nest," a unique feature not seen from the overlook, and an original kiva roof, one of only two partially intact roofs in the park.

September 1 to October 15

Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday at 8:00 am

- Meet at Square Tower House Overlook (Mesa Top Loop Road)
- Tour is limited to 10 people
- Price: \$20.00 per person. You can purchase tickets online at <http://squaretowerhouse2011.eventbrite.com>

### Spring House

This is a very strenuous 8-hour, 8-mile (12.9 km) round-trip hike along an unpaved, uneven trail. Includes steep drop-offs, switchbacks, and an elevation change of 1,500 ft (457 m). Hikers will also be rewarded with 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.

September 1 to October 15

Wednesday, Friday and Sunday at 8:00 am

- Meet at the Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum
- Tour is limited to 14 people
- **Bring your own lunch** and snacks for this day long hike
- Price: \$40.00 per person. You can purchase tickets online at <http://springhouse2011.eventbrite.com>

### Be On Time

Please be at your hike departure location, ready to go, at least 15 minutes early. Note that the park road is narrow and winding, and can take 45 to 60 minutes to drive from the park entrance to the departure areas.  
**The tour will leave without you. Please plan accordingly.**

## Yucca House National Monument



Partially standing walls

Experience a sense of discovery by visiting this sprawling, unexcavated Ancestral Puebloan site that has remained largely untouched for the past 800 years! The 0.5-mile (0.8 km), 1-hour easy to moderate hike is led by a park archeologist.

April 20, May 18, August 17, September 21

- Meet at the Cortez Welcome Center at 4:30 pm and carpool to the site
- Tour is limited to 15 people
- Price: Free, but must pre-register online at <http://yuccahouse2011.eventbrite.com>

## 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 front desk, Far View Terrace tour desk, Morefield Campground Store and online at [www.visitmesaverde.com](http://www.visitmesaverde.com). Tours end October 22, 2111.

(\*Prices subject to change.)



## Be Prepared, or Be Turned Away

### 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 history, 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 and rain gear are suggested. A 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 terrain.

### 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.

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



# Self-Guided Activities (no tickets required)

## Chapin Mesa

### Far View Sites

Far View House plus four other villages and a dry reservoir are located along this level 0.75-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 7:30 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 explore ancient farming terraces. The road is open 7:30 am to sunset.



Cedar Tree Tower

### Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum

The museum features 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 museum store, water, restrooms, snack bar, gift shop, and post office are located nearby.

**May 29 to October 15**

Open 8:00 am to 6:30 pm

**October 16 through winter**

Open 8:00 am to 5:00 pm



Museum diorama

### 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 mesa 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 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 0.5 mile (0.8 km) round-trip. Trail begins at the Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum. Rangers are available to answer your questions.

**May 29 to September 5**

Open 8:30 am to 6:30 pm

**September 6 to October 15**

Open 9:00 am to 6:30 pm

**October 16 to November 5**

Open 9:00 am to 5:00 pm

**After November 6**

Free guided tours at:

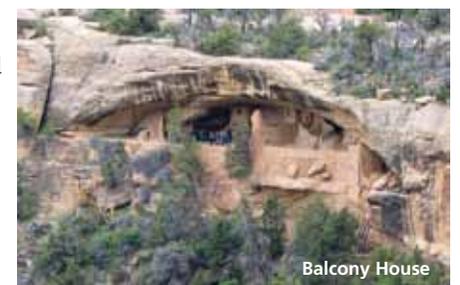
10:00 am, 1:00 pm and 3:30 pm



Visitor exiting Spruce Tree House kiva

### Soda Canyon Overlook Trail

The 1.2-mile (1.9 km) round-trip unpaved trail begins 0.5 miles (0.8 km) 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 twelve 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 7:30 am to sunset.

Allow 45 minutes to one 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.

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 one hour for this drive round-trip. Pullouts are available.

The Wetherill Mesa Road opens at 9:00 am and closes at 4:15 pm daily. 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 at 4:15 pm on September 5.



View of Montezuma Valley

### Wetherill Mesa Kiosk

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

Tram service is available from the kiosk every half-hour beginning at 9:30 am. 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.

The last tram to visit trails and overlooks leaves the kiosk at 3:30 pm.



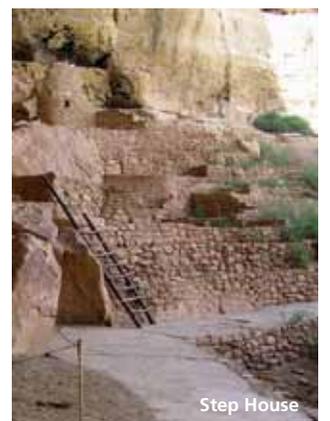
Wetherill Mesa kiosk

### 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 about 0.8 mile (1.3 km). The loop trail begins near the Wetherill Mesa kiosk. A ranger is available for questions.

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

Trail to Step House open 9:30 am to 4:30 pm. Site closes at 5:00 pm.



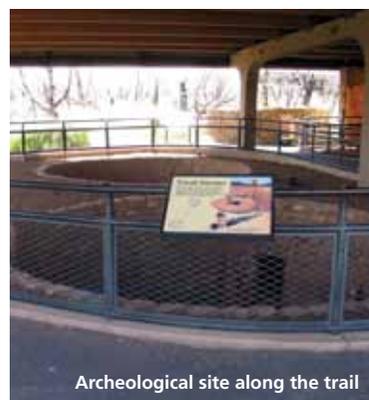
Step House

### Badger House Community Trail

Allow 45 minutes to 1.5 hours to walk this 2.4-mile (3.9 km) round-trip trail. This combination gravel and paved trail begins at the Wetherill Mesa kiosk and wanders through four mesa top sites, covering nearly seven acres. Your walk through this area is a journey through 600 years of prehistory.

Take the tram to the Badger House Community tram stop for a shorter, more accessible option. Ask a ranger at the kiosk for details.

Trail open 9:30 am to 4:30 pm.



Archeological site along the trail

### Nordenskiold #16 Trail

This easy 2-mile (3.2 km) round-trip gravel trail begins at the Wetherill Mesa kiosk and meanders through a burned area to an overlook of the Nordenskiold Site #16 cliff dwelling. Allow 30 minutes to one hour.

Trail open 9:30 am to 4:30 pm.



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 one hour.



View of Montezuma Valley

### Prater Ridge

Allow about 4 hours for this 7.8-mile (12.6 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

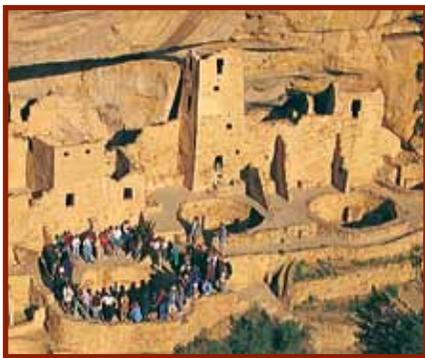
Concessions at Mesa Verde National Park are managed by ARAMARK–Mesa Verde. We provide lodging, retail shops, food services, campground, and guided bus tours. Call 800-449-2288, 970-529-4422 locally, or visit and book on-line at [www.visitmesaverde.com](http://www.visitmesaverde.com).



Metate Room at Far View Lodge



Kiva Room



Half day ranger guided tours



Summer artist demos at Far View Terrace



Native handcrafts



Concessions at Mesa Verde National Park are managed by ARAMARK and authorized by the National Park Service.



**NEW for Campers!**  
"Far View Explorer Tour"

Family fun on this Half day Guided Tour, includes Lunch



## Morefield Campground Area

**Morefield Campground:** (CLOSES: Oct. 13, 2011)  
Camp Store, Knife Edge Cafe, RV & Tent Camping, Showers, Laundry, and Fuel

## Far View Area

**Far View Lodge:** Lodging, Metate Room Restaurant & La Mano Lounge, and Gift Shop. (CLOSES: Oct. 23, 2011)  
**Far View Terrace:** Restaurant, Mesa Mocha Espresso Bar, and Gift Shop. (CLOSES: Oct. 13, 2011)  
**Tours Closing dates:** 700 Years Tour and Classic Pueblo Tour **Oct. 22, 2011**; Far View Explorer Tour **Sept. 28, 2011**

**Delicious  
Homemade  
FUDGE**  
AT FAR VIEW TERRACE  
**Buy 1/2 pound,  
Get second  
1/2 pound  
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Check at Tour Desk in  
FAR VIEW TERRACE  
**Buy 1 afternoon  
tour seat,  
Get second seat  
at 50% OFF**  
New reservations only.



# Mesa Verde Museum Association

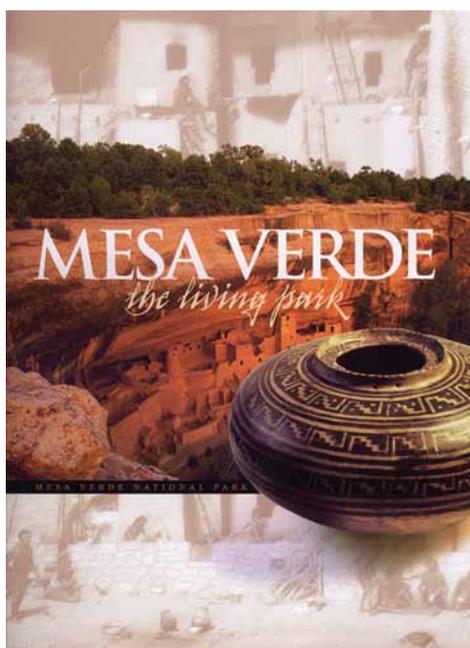


Supporting education, interpretation, and research at Mesa Verde National Park since 1930

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 stores 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 ranger 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!



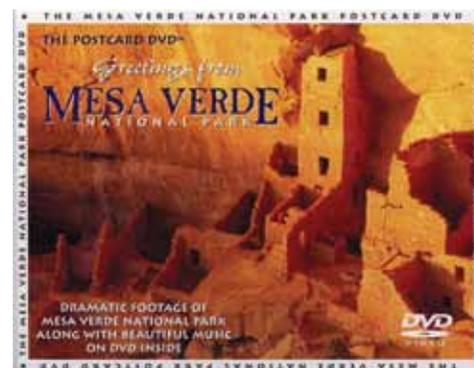
**Mesa Verde: The Living Park**  
This award-winning book introduces the cultures of the Colorado Plateau that came before written history – the makeup of their societies, hunting and farming, art and their most prominent legacy, Mesa Verde.



**Engaging Literature**  
Explore Mesa Verde and the Southwest through popular fiction! We offer a great selection of Nevada Barr and James Doss mysteries, Louis L'Amour adventures, and more.



Mesa Verde Black-on-White pottery replicas, miniatures, and ornaments.



**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.



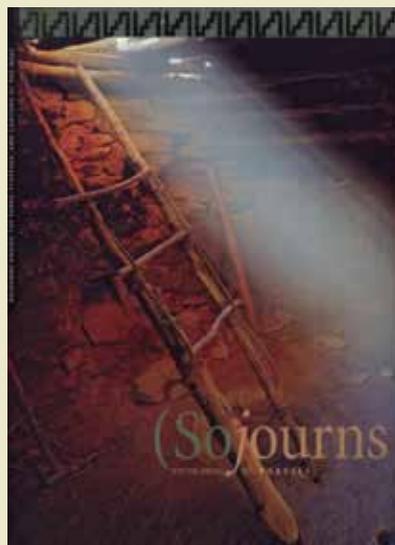
Educational children's books and activities.

## Support Mesa Verde!

The Mesa Verde Museum Association (MVMA) 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 Museum Association

**10% off your purchase**

Present this coupon at the register.

Redeemable at stores in the  
Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum,  
Far View Visitor Center, and the  
Colorado Welcome Center in Cortez

Coupon is good on all regularly priced items. Not valid with other discounts.

Expiration Date: 12/31/2011

# Your Dollars at Work

## Stewardship Mission

Mesa Verde National Park staff 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, 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.

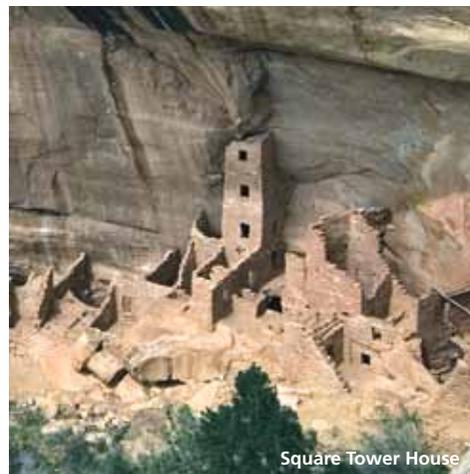
These dollars are being put to work in the following ways:

\$2,150,000 to reduce the backlog of facility maintenance.

\$485,000 to improve trails.

\$1,700,000 to restore and protect the cultural and natural landscapes, preserve museum objects, and rehabilitate historic structures.

\$1,100,000 to provide visitor orientation and education, amphitheater repair, visitor center improvements and exhibit replacements.



Square Tower House

### Architectural Preservation

This project will preserve three cliff dwellings through stabilization treatments and documentation. The sites, Square Tower House and two sites in Rock Canyon, are designated high priority as a result of on-going condition assessment. Paid for in part by a State Historical Fund grant from the Colorado Historical Society, funds will also be used to design and produce a new exhibit at the Square Tower overlook. The exhibit will display a site map and historic photographs, and describe current documentation and preservation methods. (See page 5 for details on guided hikes into Square Tower House this fall.)

### Research at Spring House

Spring House is a large, unexcavated cliff dwelling containing over 55 rooms and an active spring. Although vital to the local ecosystem, moisture from the spring is currently eroding the dwelling's architecture. This project will use an interdisciplinary approach to study the spring and its effects on the site. The park will use the results to create a balanced management plan that will protect the dwelling while maintaining the health of the spring.

### Waste Water Treatment System

The waste water system that services the Morefield Campground and Village will be repaired to ensure continued operation of this critical utility system.



Architectural rendering of the new Mesa Verde Visitor and Research Center

### Construct the Mesa Verde Visitor and Research Center (VRC)

The VRC is being built at the park entrance and will orient visitors to opportunities within the park and surrounding area. It will house a state-of-the-art collection management and research facility for the park's museum collection of over three million objects and archives. Construction of this new LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) facility is expected to be completed in fall of 2012.



Point Lookout Trail

### Trail Repairs

Repair is underway on 12.9 miles (20.8 km) of popular hiking trails in the Morefield Campground area, 3.3 miles (5.3 km) of trails on Wetherill Mesa, and the trail to Park Point, the highest point in the park. The work includes repairing tread, drainage structures and retaining walls, and clearing brush.

### Waste Water Lift Station

The Chapin Mesa lift station sends waste water to a treatment facility. This project will increase its capacity to meet current and future demands.



Rehabilitation of the Spruce Tree House Trail nears completion

### Other 2011 Projects

- Replace Morefield Amphitheater electric and lighting system
- Update 45,000 archeological digital image files
- Rebuild fences along the park boundary
- Build two vault toilets on Chapin Mesa
- Enlarge water valve vaults to improve employee safety in these confined spaces
- Correct safety issues on 33 historic walkways and porches
- Replace heating/cooling system in library

### Completed Projects

- Rehabilitated the Spruce Tree House trail (repaired retaining walls, corrected sharp curves, and resurfaced the trail tread)
- Repaired 20 miles of the park's main road
- Replaced water lines in the campground
- Constructed photovoltaic net metering system at the water treatment plant
- Installed new, energy efficient lighting in 26 buildings
- Installed energy efficient windows in two buildings
- Installed new exhibits panels
- Repaired water line road and replaced segments of park water line from Mancos Valley to Morefield Campground
- Rehabilitated archeological site shelters on Wetherill and Chapin Mesas
- Updated 2,600 archeological site records

## “Greening” the Fleet on Wetherill Mesa

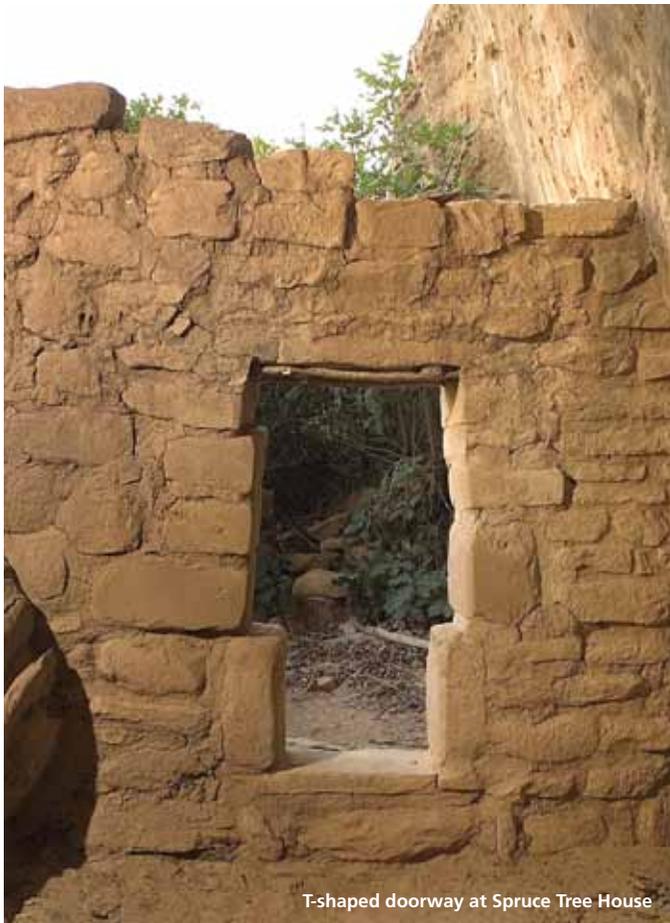
The Wetherill Mesa shuttle system has been in operation since 1973. Visitors to the “quieter” side of Mesa Verde National Park have parked their cars and, in a sense, carpoled to the archeological sites. Today, you’ll encounter the park’s newest effort at being “green” during a visit to Wetherill Mesa. Take the tram to one of the sites or scenic overlooks, and you’ll be riding one of three 52-passenger biodiesel trams purchased in 2010 with American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds. These new alternative fuel vehicles are quieter, safer, and more reliable and were built specifically for constant use in the high elevation and hot summers of Mesa Verde. They use 20 to 25 percent less fuel than the vehicles they replaced, reduce emissions by over 12 percent, and have a greater passenger capacity!

In addition to the trams, the park recently converted all its diesel vehicles to biodiesel and is continuously evaluating operations in order to “green the fleet” and reduce its carbon footprint.



New biodiesel tram at Wetherill Mesa

# Doorways to the Past



T-shaped doorway at Spruce Tree House

Doorways are one architectural feature that archeologists study to help them piece together elements of the Ancestral Puebloan past.

There are two basic types of doorways common to late masonry pueblos in the Mesa Verde region -- rectangular and T-shaped. Because of the many well-preserved cliff dwellings at Mesa Verde National Park, archeologists have been able to determine patterns in the placement and use of these doorways. The small rectangular openings allowed entry and exit from private, domestic spaces such as living rooms and granaries. Many of these could be closed for security or privacy. The characteristic T-shaped doorways appear to have provided access to public spaces such as centralized plazas, and were usually open. The ability to distinguish between domestic and public use doorways is an important step in

ultimately determining room function, population size, and social make-up of pueblos and cliff dwellings.

The origins of T-shaped doorways are unknown. Were they simply designed for ease of passage, or were they symbolic? Symbolism is suggested by the occasional appearance of T-shaped niches and windows or loopholes that seem to mimic the doorways. The shape is found throughout the Colorado Plateau and as far south as Paquimé and other sites in Chihuahua, Mexico. The earliest well dated examples of T-shaped doorways are found throughout the charismatic 11th century pueblos of Chaco Canyon.

Whatever the meaning, it is certain that these simple passages represent a universal connection between Ancestral Puebloans of the greater southwest.



T and rectangle shaped doorways

# Preserving a Rare Endemic Plant

Schmoll's milkvetch (*Astragalus schmolliae*) is an herbaceous perennial wildflower in the legume family. It is among the rarest of Colorado's endemic plant species. It has a very restricted range, found almost exclusively in the Chapin Mesa area of Mesa Verde National Park and a portion of the adjacent Ute Mountain Ute Tribal Park. In December 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) officially designated Schmoll's milkvetch as a candidate species for the Threatened and Endangered Species list. The primary justification for listing Schmoll's milkvetch is the invasion of its habitat by cheatgrass and other exotic plant species, such as musk thistle.

The habitat of Schmoll's milkvetch is very specific, growing in the red loess soil on mesa tops in old growth pinyon-juniper woodlands between 6,500 and 7,500 feet in elevation. Over the last two decades, a significant portion of this extremely limited habitat has burned, creating new management challenges and additional concerns for the long-term survival of this globally rare species. The plant's population has declined 39% from estimates based on data collected in 2001 and 2003.

Ironically, Schmoll's milkvetch is the victim of a vicious circle. In recent decades, a drying and warming climate has led to an increase in fire frequency and intensity, the results of which have created conditions allowing noxious weeds like cheatgrass

to spread through a significant portion of its range. The cheatgrass invasion, in turn, can alter the fire regime, providing extra fuel that may contribute to even more wildfires which could adversely impact Schmoll's milkvetch habitat permanently. At Mesa Verde, Schmoll's milkvetch is additionally threatened by drought, development, and browsing by large herbivores, including feral livestock.

Currently, the park is increasing its efforts to learn more about this globally rare plant to better understand its decline and create a strategy for its long-term conservation. These management plans include:

- Maintaining a strong and flexible noxious weed eradication program in the park.
  - Continuing to monitor and fund research on Schmoll's milkvetch.
  - Keeping human impacts to a minimum.
  - Promoting Schmoll's milkvetch as a valuable part of the natural heritage of the Mesa Verde area.
- As one of Colorado's rarest endemic plants, it is part of what makes this area unique and could help foster an interest in rare plant conservation and conservation in general.

You can help! Stay on established trails. Sensitive plants will not be trampled and cheatgrass seeds that cling to hiker's clothing are prevented from spreading further.



Left:  
Schmoll's milkvetch



Below:  
Musk thistle and cheatgrass taking over a burned area.

# 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, you can purchase tickets for one of these three, physically challenging tours.

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.

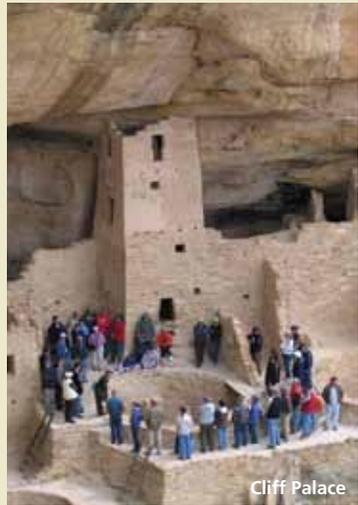
A tour of Long House, located on Wetherill Mesa, can be taken on the same day as the Cliff Palace OR Balcony House tours.

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 Archeological Museum (ONLY from October 16 to November 5)
- Colorado Welcome Center, Cortez

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



Cliff Palace

## 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 0.25 mile (0.4 km) loop. Tour begins at Cliff Palace Overlook, an 8-mile (12.9 km) drive from the Far View Visitor Center.

**May 29 to September 5**

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

**September 6 to October 15**

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

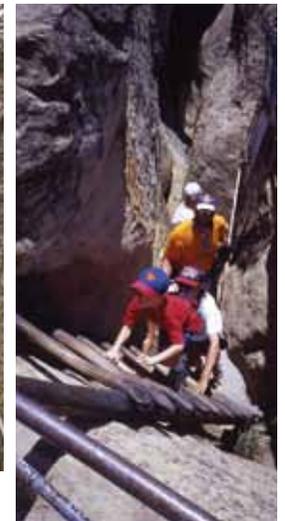
**October 16 to November 5**

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

November 6: 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 (9.8 m) ladder, crawling through a 12-ft (3.7 m) 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. Tour begins at the north end of the Balcony House parking lot, a 10-mile (16 km), 25-minute drive from the visitor center.

**May 29 to September 5**

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

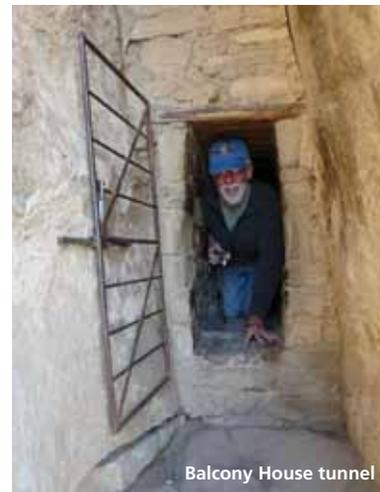
**September 6 to October 15**

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

October 16: 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 (4.6 m) ladders within the site. The round-trip hike is 0.75 mile (1.2 km), with a 130-ft (40 m) gain in elevation exiting the site. 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 the Wetherill Mesa road.

**May 29 to September 5**

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 6: Closed for season



Long House entrance trail



One of the 15-ft (4.6 m) ladders

## Visitor Services

### Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum

May 29 to October 15 8:00 am to 6:30 pm

October 16 through winter 8:00 am to 5:00 pm

### Far View Visitor Center and ATM

May 29 to September 5 8:00 am to 7:00 pm

September 6 to October 15 8:00 am to 5:00 pm

October 16 Closed

### Morefield Campground Ranger Station

May 29 to early August 5:00 pm to 8:30 pm

Early August Closed

### Colorado Welcome Center in Cortez

May 29 9:00 am to 5:00 pm

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

September 6 through winter 9:00 am to 5:00 pm

### Wetherill Mesa Kiosk

May 29 to September 5 10:00 am to 5:00 pm

September 6 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 29 to November 5 8:00 am to 5:00 pm

### U.S. Postal Service

May 29 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