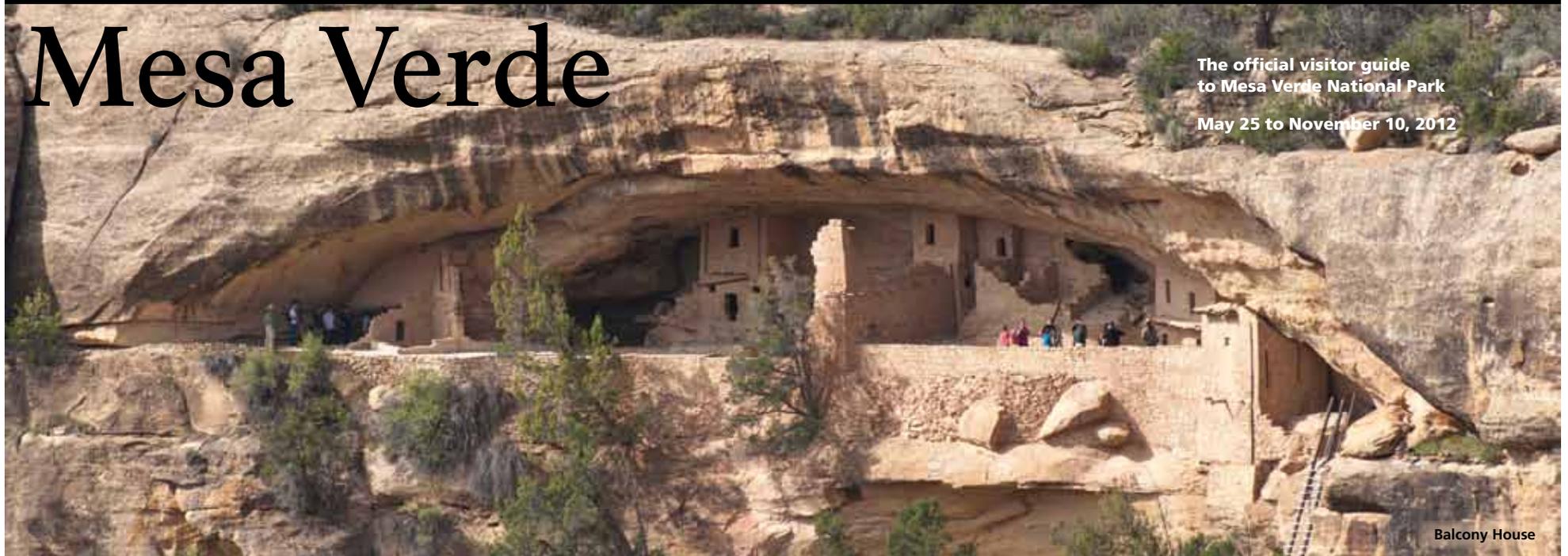




Mesa Verde

The official visitor guide
to Mesa Verde National Park

May 25 to November 10, 2012



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 13 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—U.S. 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 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-foot (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 first purchase tickets at the Far View Visitor Center, Morefield Ranger Station, or Colorado Welcome Center in Cortez.*

You can 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, Morefield Ranger Station, or Colorado Welcome Center in Cortez.*

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-foot (30 m) descent and ascent on a winding path. Allow 45 to 60 minutes

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 available ONLY 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. Telephones are located at all main visitor areas.

Visiting a Cliff Dwelling Can Be Strenuous

The cliff dwellings are at 7,000 feet (2,134 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 or spark can have disastrous results.

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 when temperatures are not hazardous to their health.*

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

Road Improvements

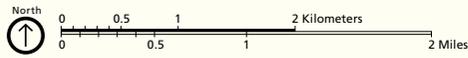
This summer, Mesa Verde National Park will receive a \$4 million Federal Land Highways project to chip seal all roads in the park. This includes the entire 20 mile (32 km) long main park road, Mesa Top Loop Road, Cliff Palace/Balcony House Loop Road, Wetherill Mesa Road, and Morefield Campground roads. Drivers should expect potential delays. Please be prepared for construction vehicles on the road hauling materials; wet oil and lane closures in construction areas; and a pilot car leading traffic through construction sites. Some campground sites will also be closed while roads are chip sealed.

All trails and overlooks along the Mesa Top Loop Road will also be receiving upgrades and asphalt replacement. This will include the use of an asphalt recycler with trucks on the road. There may be some short-term closures of individual sites and construction traffic on the roads throughout the project.

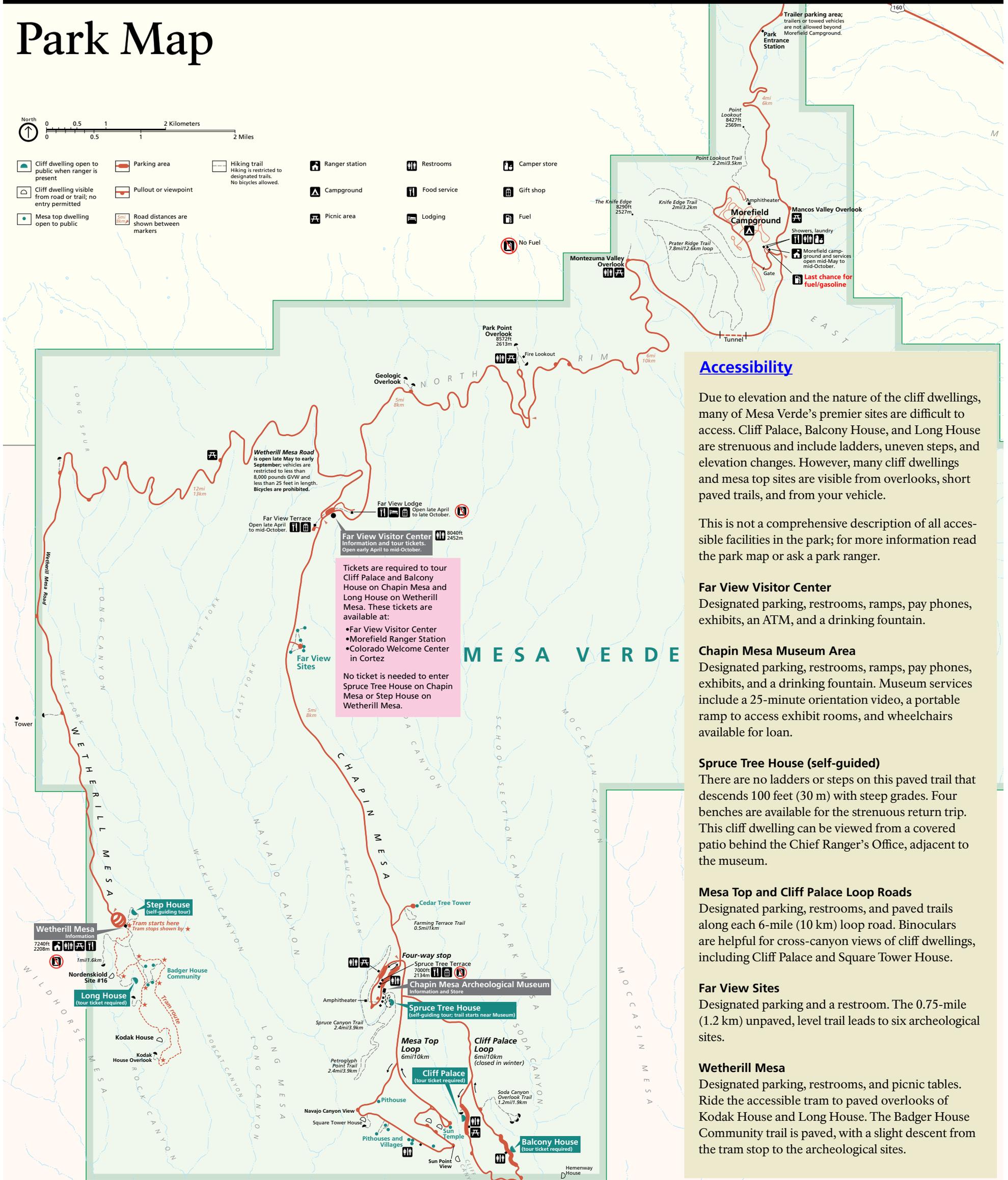
Caution is advised at all times. We apologize for the inconvenience. Thank you for your patience.



Park Map



- | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|----------------|--------------|--------------|
| Cliff dwelling open to public when ranger is present | Parking area | Hiking trail
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 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 descent 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 25 to September 3
Nightly at 9:00 pm



Hopi Dancers

Special Events

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

May 26 and 27: The 12th annual Indian Arts and Cultural Festival will be held at the Far View Terrace, near the visitor center. Artisans' work is judged and presented for public viewing and sale.

June 30 and July 1: Flora Lomayestewa has been bringing her Hopi dance group from Shungopavi village on Second Mesa to Mesa Verde for the last 24 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 15: Starr Tafoya from Santa Clara Pueblo has given pottery demonstrations at Mesa Verde for over fifteen years. She is an award winner at the Santa Fe Indian Market. Join her at the Chapin Mesa Amphitheater near the museum at 3:00 pm for a demonstration, firing, and sale of black and redware pottery.

September 8 and 22: The Wetherill Mesa Bike and Hike will take place on two Saturdays in September. This is a special time of year to visit as the more relaxing fall season replaces the busy days of summer. 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. The road to Wetherill Mesa will be opened from 9:00 am to 4:30 pm. Come enjoy the autumn at Wetherill Mesa.



Ancestral Puebloan Pottery

Far View Lodge Evening Program

The park joins 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."

June 12 to September 8
Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday 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 28 to September 3
Monday at 7:00 am
September 10 to October 1
Monday at 8:00 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.

Junior Ranger Station

Visit the Mesa Verde Junior Ranger Station at the Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum for some extra Junior Ranger fun. Learn more about the Ancestral Pueblo people and Mesa Verde National Park with kid-friendly exhibits or hands-on activities. Pick up a Junior Ranger booklet, or if you're finished, this is a great place to be sworn in as a Mesa Verde Junior Ranger and receive your badge.

Located Inside Museum Courtyard
Open June 11 to August 11
3:00 pm to 6:00 pm

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 25 to early/mid August
5:00 pm to 8:30 pm



Ranger Programs (tickets required)

Mesa Verde National Park offers visitors opportunities to learn more about the park. Tickets for the hikes can be purchased at the Far View Visitor Center or online at www.recreation.gov. *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.



Mug House



Square Tower House



Wetherill Mesa Experience

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 on their Mesa Verde experience.

May 25 to August 18
Nightly at 7:15 pm

August 19 to September 3
Nightly at 7:00 pm

September 4 to September 15
Nightly at 6:45 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.

Mug House

This strenuous 2-hour, 3-mile (4.8km) round-trip hike offers the opportunity to see a rarely visited cliff dwelling. Mug House, built about A.D. 1150, was likely home to approximately 80 to 100 people.

The hike traverses an unpaved, uneven trail that descends 100 feet (30 m), and includes steep drop-offs, switchbacks, and scrambling up and down boulders. This hike may not be appropriate for young children or children carried in backpacks. Each hiker must be able to scramble over boulders and navigate steep gravel trails unassisted.

May 27 to September 2

Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday at 10:00 am

- Meet at the Wetherill Mesa Information Kiosk
- Tour is limited to 10 people
- Price: \$25.00 per person

Square Tower House

A strenuous 2-hour, 1-mile (1.6 km) round-trip hike leads to a stunning and surprisingly intimate cliff dwelling. Unusual aspects of Square Tower House include an original kiva roof and the Crow's Nest, both features that cannot be seen from the overlook.

The hike involves 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. This hike may not be appropriate for young children or children carried in backpacks. Each hiker must be able to scramble over boulders and navigate steep gravel trails unassisted.

May 26 to June 16 **and** September 4 to October 6
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: \$25.00 per person

Wetherill Mesa Experience

This moderate 4-hour, 4-mile (6.4km) round-trip hike is along gravel and paved trails that cross Wetherill Mesa and provide spectacular views. The hike introduces the story of the Ancestral Pueblo people and the environment in which they lived. You'll visit archeological sites that range from early-period occupation in pithouses to much later construction of the cliff dwellings. This hike is appropriate for well-prepared hikers of any age.

September 5 to October 3

Wednesday and Sunday at 10:00 am

- Meet at the Far View Visitor Center parking lot no later than 9:00 am
- Tour is limited to 14 people
- Price: \$15.00 per person
- Bring your own lunch or snacks

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. With the possibility of road construction delays, please add at least another 30 minutes to your travel time.
To be fair to others, the tour may leave without you if you are late. Please plan accordingly.

Be Prepared!

Trail Conditions

The trails are at 7,000 feet (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. *At least two quarts are mandatory for each hiker.*

What to Bring

Wear sturdy footwear. Bring sunscreen, rain gear, and camera. No food is allowed in Mug House or Square Tower House; bring a sack lunch on the Wetherill Mesa Experience.

Kids

Children must be able to walk the extent of the trail on their own without difficulty.

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.

Construction Delays

There are a variety of road construction projects in progress in the park. Add at least 30 minutes to the normal 45 to 60 minute driving time from the park entrance to arrive at the hike departure location on time.

ARAMARK Bus Tours

Mesa Verde National Park concessioner ARAMARK conducts guided bus tours that offer modern views of the Ancestral Pueblo people. These tours include short walks to archeological sites along the Mesa Top Loop Road and a hiking tour of Cliff Palace.



MESA VERDE
—COLORADO—

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. Tours end October 20, 2012.

(*Prices subject to change.)



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

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 and Farming Terrace Trail

An Ancestral Puebloan mesa top tower and kiva complex can be viewed. There is also a short trail to explore ancient farming terraces. The road is open 7:30 am to sunset.



Cedar Tree Tower



Museum diorama

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 25 to October 20
Open 8:00 am to 6:30 pm
October 21 through November 10
Open 8:00 am to 5:00 pm

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.

Access to the trailhead is only available when the gate to Spruce Tree House is open (see schedule, below left). Registration is required at the trailhead or museum.



Spruce Canyon Trail

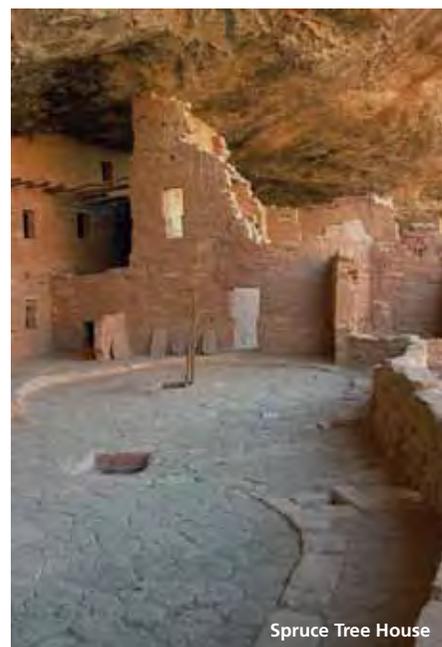
Petroglyph Point Loop Trail

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.

Access to the trailhead is only available when the gate to Spruce Tree House is open (see schedule, below left). Registration is required at the trailhead or museum.



Petroglyph panel



Spruce Tree House

Spruce Tree House

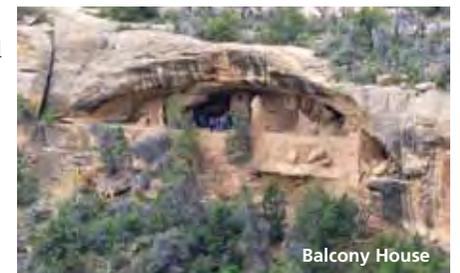
Mesa Verde's best-preserved and third largest cliff dwelling was constructed between A.D. 1211 and A.D. 1278. The site contains 130 rooms and 8 kivas built into a natural alcove. It is thought to have been the home to about 60 to 80 people.

Allow 45 minutes to one hour for the 100-foot (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 25 to September 3
Open 8:30 am to 6:30 pm
September 4 to October 20
Open 9:00 am to 6:30 pm
October 21 to November 10
Open 9:00 am to 5:00 pm

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 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 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 Chapin Mesa 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 feet in length. Bicycles are prohibited. This road closes for the season at 4:15 pm on September 3.



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-foot (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.



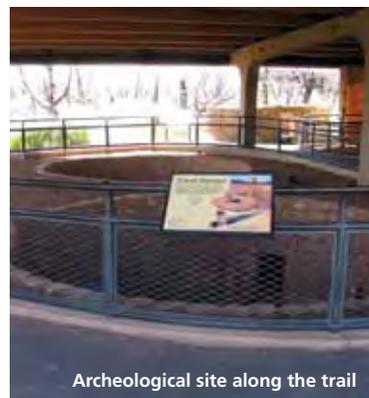
Step House

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. 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.



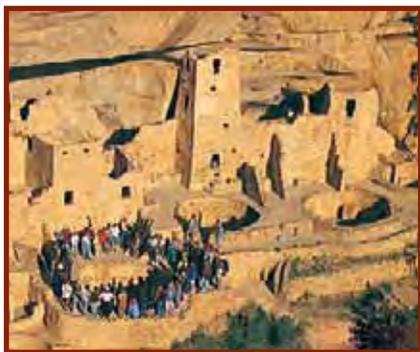
Fine dining at the Metate Room at Far View Lodge



Kiva Room at Far View Lodge



Morefield Campground at Mesa Verde



Cliff Palace Guided Tour



Native Handcrafts at Far View and Spruce Tree



Cafeteria-style Dining and Gifts



Morefield Campground Area

Morefield Campground: (CLOSES: Oct. 15, 2012)
Camp Store, RV & Tent Camping, Showers, Laundry, and Fuel. Knife Edge Cafe (CLOSES: Sept. 4, 2012)

Far View Lodge: Lodging, Metate Room Restaurant & Far View Lounge, and Gift Shop. (CLOSES: Oct. 21, 2012)
Far View Terrace: Restaurant, Mesa Mocha Espresso Bar, and Gift Shop. (CLOSES: Oct. 13, 2012)
ARAMARK Tours: 700 Years Tour and Classic Pueblo Tour (CLOSES: Oct. 20, 2012)

Delicious Homemade FUDGE

AT FAR VIEW TERRACE

Buy 1/2 pound, Get second 1/2 pound at 50% OFF

Two Specialty Guided Bus TOURS

Check at Tour Desk in FAR VIEW TERRACE

Buy 1 afternoon tour seat, Get second seat at 50% OFF

New reservations only.



Guided Tours travel by air conditioned bus



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 programs, in-depth learning opportunities, and retail operations. MVMA stores are located 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. Proceeds from all our programs and retail sales support educational, research, and ranger programs in Mesa Verde National Park. Members receive a 20% store discount! Call 970-529-4445 or 1-800-305-6053, or visit www.mesaverde.org 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!



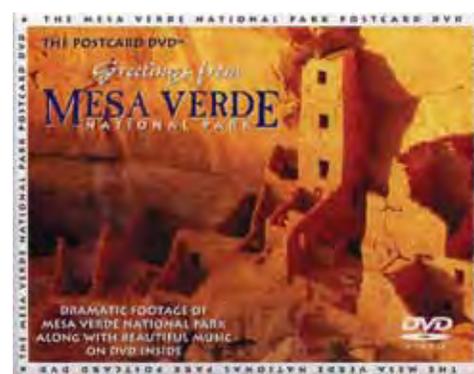
Mesa Verde: The First 100 Years
Recently Mesa Verde National Park celebrated its first century as a national park. To commemorate this milestone, and as a timeless tribute to one of the world's great archeological treasures, the Mesa Verde Museum Association published this award-winning compendium of documents, photos, and essays tracing 100 years of Mesa Verde history. Originally priced at \$21.95, this paperback title is being offered at the special price of just \$5.00! (Member discount does not apply. Offer good only while supplies last.)



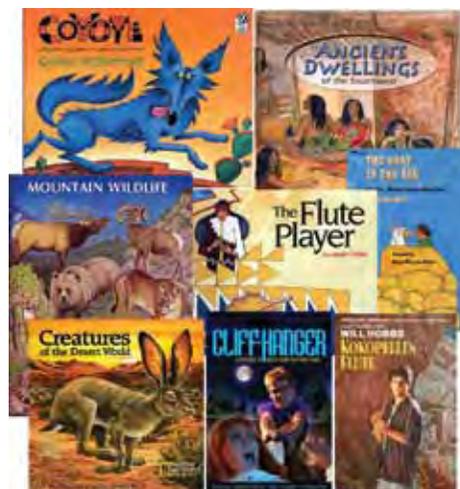
Engaging Literature
Explore Mesa Verde and the Southwest through popular fiction! We offer a great selection of Nevada Barr and James Doss mysteries, Louis L'Amour adventures, and more.



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.

Mesa Verde Junior Ranger Logo Items

We've designed a special colorful logo to recognize Mesa Verde Junior Rangers! It features the tower from the Square Tower House cliff dwelling (which you can see from the Mesa Top Loop), a brightly-colored collared lizard, an Ancestral Puebloan black-on-white pottery design found in the Mesa Verde region, and the iconic "flat hat" that park rangers wear. We offer a variety of educational products and apparel for every Junior Ranger that features this distinctive logo. Come see our selection today.

Kids who present their completed Mesa Verde Junior Ranger booklet and their badge at any MVMA store will receive a 10% discount on their entire purchase!



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: 12/31/2012

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.

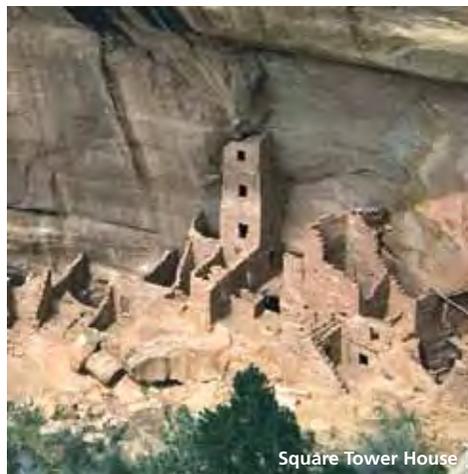
Part of this responsibility is ensuring you know how your money is being spent and how these activities benefit you, the park, and future generations.

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.

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

- \$942,000 to reduce the backlog of facility maintenance.
- \$4,056,000 to improve roads and trails.
- \$818,000 to restore and protect cultural and natural landscapes, preserve museum objects, and rehabilitate historic structures.
- \$1,057,000 to provide visitor orientation and education, visitor center improvements, and exhibit replacements.



Square Tower House

Architectural Preservation

Two projects are underway. The first project is the continuation of the work started in 2011 to 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 House overlook. (See page 5 for details on tours to Square Tower House.)

The second project is the replacement of the wall caps at Far View House located in the Far View Community. The new soft caps of soil and vegetation will allow moisture to be absorbed by the vegetation instead of entering the wall interiors and eroding the ancient architecture.

"Greening" the Fleet

The park, in partnership with the ARAMARK Corporation, Southern Colorado Clean Cities Coalition, and the Greater Philadelphia Clean Cities has been awarded a grant to acquire a 38-passenger propane bus, a 15-person propane shuttle van, and four propane truck conversions. The park will construct two propane fueling stations, one of which will eventually be open to the public. The grant also includes an outreach and education component. This project is planned to begin in early summer.



Mesa Top Loop road and overlook

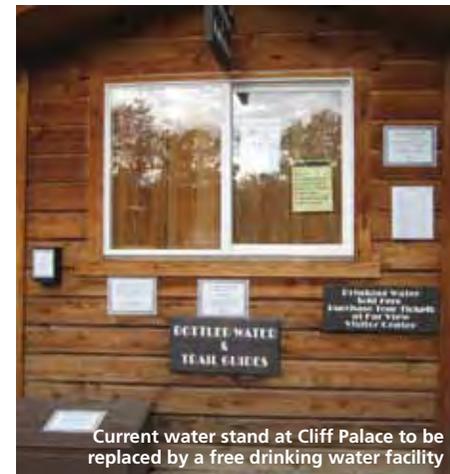
Road and Trail Repairs

Repair is underway on 67 miles (107.8 km) of park roadways. All the paved roads and parking areas will be patched and chip sealed. Please be aware that minor traffic delays associated with these repairs will occur from May through October. This work can only be performed during warmer, drier weather and is necessary to maintain and extend the life of the park's paved roads for the next 10 to 15 years.

Paved visitor use trails and overlooks along the Mesa Top Loop Road will also be repaired. Approximately 52,000 square feet (4,831 sq. m) of asphalt tread will be replaced and repairs to overlook retaining walls will be completed. Please be aware that pedestrian access may be temporarily closed at some of the archeological sites and overlooks along this road in order to complete these repairs this summer.

Drinking Water at Cliff Palace

Drinking water at Cliff Palace has been limited to bottled water due to the deteriorated and leaking water system that allowed water to migrate into the Cliff Palace alcove. This project provides an alternative to selling bottled water by installing a new self-contained drinking water system. Fountain and bottle filler facilities will be constructed to provide drinking water to visitors at no charge. Construction is scheduled for completion in mid to late summer.



Current water stand at Cliff Palace to be replaced by a free drinking water facility

Waste Water Treatment System

The waste water systems that service Far View Visitor Center, Lodge and Terrace and the Morefield Campground will be repaired to ensure continued operation of these critical utility systems.

Other 2012 Projects

- Rehabilitate disturbed lands and control invasive plants
- Prepare a Historic Resources Study
- Repair the roof of the Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum and nine other buildings
- Survey park boundary in Mancos Canyon
- Repair fences along the park boundary
- Upgrade law enforcement and emergency services communications equipment

Completed Projects

- Rehabilitated Chapin Mesa waste water lift station
- Replaced Morefield Amphitheater electric and lighting system
- Repaired trails in Morefield Campground, Wetherill Mesa, and Park Point
- Rebuilt fences along the park boundary
- Enlarged water valve vaults to improve employee safety in these confined spaces
- Corrected safety issues on 33 historic walkways and porches
- Replaced heating/cooling system in the park library

Visitor and Research Center to Open Fall, 2012

You may notice a remarkable new building being constructed at the entrance to Mesa Verde National Park. The new Mesa Verde Visitor and Research Center (VRC) will open in the fall of 2012 and has two major purposes. It will replace the aging Far View Visitor Center as the park's primary facility for orienting visitors to opportunities within the park and surrounding area. It will also house a state-of-the-art research and storage facility for the park's archives and museum collection of over three million objects. This new LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) facility is an exciting and long-awaited project.

Work is also underway to move the park's museum collection to the VRC. The project involves the packing, transportation, unpacking, and storing of museum objects and archives from the current repository located on Chapin Mesa. The move is expected to be completed in early 2013.



Architectural rendering of the new Mesa Verde Visitor and Research Center

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. It grows in the red loess soil on mesa tops in old growth pinyon-juniper woodlands between 6,500 and 7,500 feet (1981 to 2286 m) 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 horses and cattle.

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 to avoid trampling sensitive plants and transporting cheatgrass seeds.



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 (from October 21 to November 10 ONLY)
- Colorado Welcome Center, Cortez

For 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-foot (30 m) vertical climb. Total walking distance is 0.25 miles (0.4 km). Tour begins at the Cliff Palace Overlook, an 8-mile (12.9 km) drive from the Far View Visitor Center.

May 25 to September 3

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

September 4 to October 20

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

October 21 to November 10

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

November 11: Closed for season



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



Note: Essential preservation work on Cliff Palace may be required this summer; tour schedule disruptions are possible.

Balcony House

Adventurous Cliff Dwelling Tour

This one-hour tour involves climbing a 32-foot (9.8 m) ladder, crawling through a 12-foot (3.7 m) long tunnel, and climbing up a 60-foot (20 m) open cliff face with stone steps and two 10-foot (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 25 to September 3

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

September 4 to October 20

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

October 21: 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-foot (4.6 m) ladders within the site. The round-trip hike is 0.75 mile (1.2 km), with a 130-foot (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 feet (8 m) long are prohibited on the Wetherill Mesa road.

May 25 to September 3

10:00 am, 10:30 am, 11:00 am, 12:00 noon, 1:00 pm, 2:00 pm, 3:00 pm, 3:30 pm and 4:00 pm

September 4: Closed for season



Long House entrance trail



One of the 15-foot (4.6 m) ladders

Visitor Services

Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum

May 25 to October 20 8:00 am to 6:30 pm
October 21 to November 10 8:00 am to 5:00 pm

Far View Visitor Center and ATM

May 25 to September 3 8:00 am to 7:00 pm
September 4 to October 20 8:00 am to 5:00 pm
October 21 Closed

Morefield Campground Ranger Station

May 25 to early/mid August 5:00 pm to 8:30 pm
Early/mid August Closed

Colorado Welcome Center in Cortez

May 25 to May 27 8:00 am to 5:00 pm
May 28 to September 3 8:00 am to 6:00 pm
September 4 to November 3 8:00 am to 5:00 pm
November 4 to November 10 9:00 am to 4:00 pm

Wetherill Mesa Kiosk

May 25 to September 3 10:00 am to 5:00 pm
September 4 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 25 to November 10 8:00 am to 5:00 pm

U.S. Postal Service

May 25 to October 31
Monday through Friday 8:30 am to 4:30 pm
Saturday 10:00 am to 2:00 pm
November 1 through winter
Monday through Friday 8:30 am to 4:30 pm
Saturday Closed