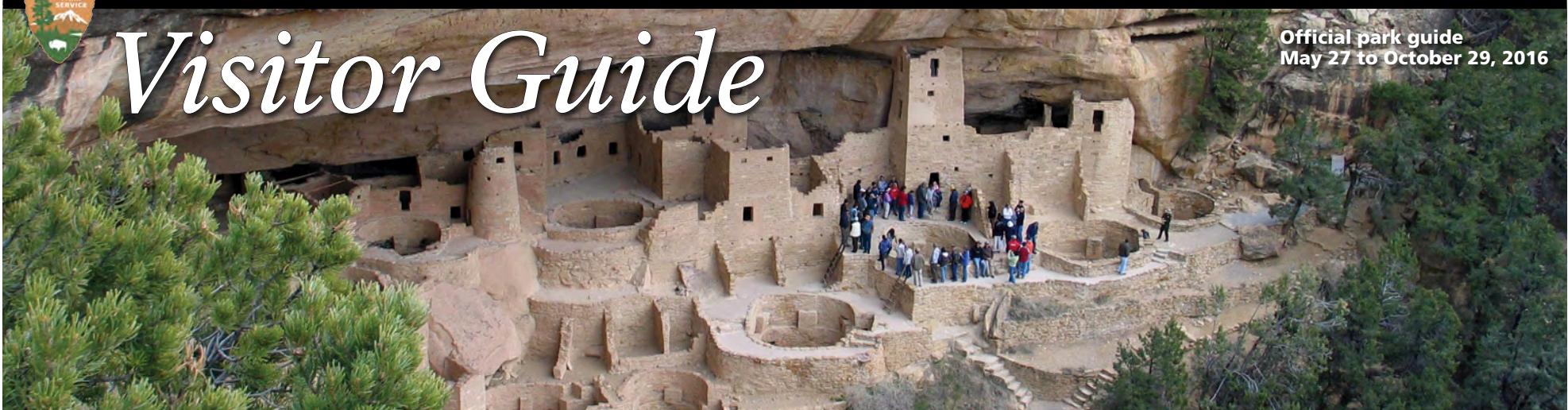




Visitor Guide

Official park guide
May 27 to October 29, 2016



Purchase a Tour Ticket

purchase in park...
purchase online...

go to page 12
go to page 7



Take a Hike...

go to page 4



Explore on Your Own... go to page 5

Celebrating The Centennial Year!

The National Park Service turns 100 years old on August 25, 2016. We are delighted to share this exciting centennial year with several new and special activities such as Balcony House Sunrise Tours, Chapin Mesa Historic District Tours, Wetherill Star Night, Mesa Verde Fun Run, an Evening at the Museum for Kids, and a Founder's Day Celebration. Come enjoy these new experiences while exploring all that continues to make Mesa Verde special.

Remarkably well preserved dwellings nestled within cliff alcoves, multistoried mesa top

pueblos, and sites of early pithouses dug into the earth—all are places that generations of Ancestral Pueblo people called home. “Find Your Park” at Mesa Verde and discover a link between a past and present, vibrant, living culture which reflects the diversity of the human experience. Add magnificent canyon views, plentiful wildlife, and quiet hiking trails, all are yours to explore as we enter a new century.

The national parks are America’s best idea and we want all Americans to “Find Your Park” and share in the legacy of these special places.

2016

National Park Service™
CENTENNIAL

FIND YOUR
PARK

Visitor Services and Facilities

Visitor Center

(Tickets, Store, and ATM)

May 27 to September 5 7:30 am to 7:00 pm
September 6 to October 29 8:00 am to 5:00 pm

Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum (Exhibits, Lost and Found)

May 27 to October 15 8:00 am to 6:30 pm
October 16 to October 29 8:00 am to 5:00 pm

Chief Ranger's Office

(First Aid)

May 27 to October 29 8:00 am to 5:00 pm

Morefield Campground Ranger Station

May 29 to September 5 5:00 pm to 8:30 pm
September 6 Closed for season

Wetherill Mesa Information Kiosk

May 27 to September 11 9:00 am to 6:30 pm
September 12 to October 15 9:00 am to 4:30 pm
October 16 to October 29 Not staffed

Picnic Areas

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

Colorado Welcome Center in Cortez

May 27 to September 5 8:00 am to 6:00 pm
September 6 to October 29 8:00 am to 5:00 pm

U.S. Post Office on Chapin Mesa

May 27 to October 29 Monday through Friday 8:30 am to 3:00 pm
Saturday 10:00 am to 2:00 pm

Protect the Park, Protect Yourself

This partial list of regulations and laws is designed to help you have a safe and enjoyable visit, and to protect Mesa Verde's ecosystems and fragile archeological sites.

For more information, questions or additional regulations, please ask a park employee.

How you can protect park resources

Natural and cultural resources at Mesa Verde National Park are protected by federal law. It is illegal to collect artifacts, plants, animals, or natural objects. By leaving them undisturbed, all generations may enjoy and learn from them.

Chasing, capturing, feeding, or teasing wildlife is illegal and dangerous. Keep your food, cooking equipment, and garbage in your vehicle or hard-sided trailer, especially in the campground.

Fire is an important part of Mesa Verde's story. Most fires here were started naturally by lightning. Help us prevent human-caused fires by being very careful with matches, cigarettes, and campfires.

Archeological sites are fragile. Please do not sit, stand, climb, or lean on these ancient fragile structures.



Mule deer - enjoy from a distance

Rock Fall Alert

The park road is built on unstable soils. As a result, rocks and boulders can break loose and fall on the road, posing a hazard to you and your car. If you see boulders blocking the road, do not attempt to move them. Call 970-529-4461 or contact a park employee.

Park Entrance Fees

From May 27 to September 5, the park entry fee is \$15.00 per private car or \$8.00 per person on a motorcycle, on a bicycle, or on foot. Starting September 6, the fee is \$10.00 per car or \$5.00 per person. For commercial vehicle fees, call 970-529-4465 or visit www.nps.gov/meve. Federal Interagency annual access, military, and senior passes are available at the park entrance gate.

Share the road

Park roads are steep, narrow, and winding. There are several overlooks and pullouts available for slower traffic to use so others may pass. Watch for wildlife, pay close attention to your speed around curves, and obey all traffic signs. Do not stop on the roadway. Trailers and towed vehicles are not allowed beyond Morefield Campground. Extra parking is available near the park entrance.

Bicyclists, use caution! The road is steep with few shoulders. Ride single file and stay as far to the right as possible. Bicyclists, like vehicle drivers, must comply with traffic regulations. Although the Wetherill Mesa Road is closed to bicycles, you may transport your bikes and ride its designated trails. In all other areas of the park, bicycles are only allowed on paved roads. Bicycle group size is limited to six on all roads.



Sharing the trails on Wetherill Mesa

Visit a cliff dwelling safely

At 7,000 feet (2135 m) elevation, you may feel short of breath, nauseated, or tire easily. Plan ahead and know your own limits.

Trails into cliff dwellings are uneven and steep, with steps and ladders, cliff edges and tight passages, and strenuous elevation changes. Visiting cliff dwellings is not recommended for anyone with heart or respiratory problems or other physical limitations. You can view many cliff dwellings from roadway overlooks.

Water is vital

Dehydration is a common problem in Mesa Verde. Carry water with you everywhere, and drink it. You can fill reusable water bottles at park facilities, including Cliff Palace and Wetherill Mesa Information Kiosk. Food and other beverages are not allowed in archeological sites.

"Can you hear me?"

Once you drive through the park entrance, cell phone service is limited. A courtesy phone is available near the Morefield Campground Store. Wi-Fi service is available at Morefield Campground, Far View Lodge, Far View Terrace, and Spruce Tree Terrace. In case of emergency, contact a park employee or call 911.

Do you need gas?

Gas is available at Morefield Campground only. You will probably drive at least 50 miles while in the park. Please plan accordingly.

Camping?

Morefield Campground is located four miles from the park entrance. It has over 250 camp sites and 15 full hook-up RV sites. There are restrooms with flush toilets, showers, a camp store, coin-operated laundry, gasoline, and an RV dumping station. Camping is not allowed elsewhere in the park. Other campgrounds are located in Cortez and Mancos, Colorado.

Pets need to be protected too

For your pet's sake, do not leave them in your vehicle without proper ventilation and water, and only when temperatures are not hazardous to their health. Leaving pets alone tied to any object is illegal.

Leashed pets may accompany you on paved roads and parking lots and in the campground. Pets are not allowed on most trails, or in buildings, even if leashed. There are some pet-friendly trails on Wetherill Mesa and the Mesa Top Loop. Please, clean up after your pooch. Service animals are always welcome, but therapy animals are subject to pet restrictions.

Other Laws & Policies

Firearms

Possession of firearms must comply with federal and state laws. Hunting and recreational use of firearms is prohibited in Mesa Verde.

Marijuana on Federal Lands

As federal property, federal laws apply in Mesa Verde. Possession or use of any amount of marijuana is prohibited anywhere in the park.

Unmanned Aircraft Systems

The use of drones is illegal within the park. Because they impact other visitors' experiences, interfere with emergency operations, and negatively affect wildlife, they should not be used in the park for any reason.

For more information, visit go.nps.gov/mvpolicies.

Make the Most of Your Visit

Top Five Mesa Verde Activities

Take a glimpse into an ancient culture

The Mesa Verde Visitor and Research Center and Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum offer glimpses into the culture of Ancestral Pueblo people. In the Museum, look for a knife with a quartzite blade; can you imagine a hunter skinning a deer using that knife? For facility hours see page 1.



Ancestral Puebloan knife

Visit a cliff dwelling community

Four cliff dwellings are open to the public. Balcony House, Cliff Palace, and Long House can be entered on ranger-guided tours only. Step House on Wetherill Mesa can be explored on your own. Whatever your schedule or interests, details for how to visit a cliff dwelling are on page 5 and 12.



Green Towhee

Explore from your car

Mesa Top Loop Road on Chapin Mesa is a six-mile drive that offers amazing canyon views and opportunities to learn about the Ancestral Pueblo people's occupation and architecture through time. To help plan your drive, read more below.

Go for a walk, hike, or bike ride

Wander Prater Ridge Trail, try to decipher the art on the Petroglyph Trail, discover the lushness of Spruce Canyon, or ride your bikes on Wetherill Mesa. Whatever you decide, taking a walk, [hike](#), or bike ride will give you a chance to see some of the park's hidden gems. See page 4 for trail specifics, and page 5 for information on bicycling or hiking Wetherill Mesa.

Attend an evening program

Looking for something later in the evening? Join the popular Photography Tour of Cliff Palace. Purchase tickets online at www.recreation.gov or go to page 7 for details. The free Morefield Campground Evening Program offers a variety of topics on both natural and cultural history. See page 6 for times.

Planning Your Visit

Whether you have a few hours or a few days, we invite you to enjoy the spectacular scenery and share a rare glimpse into the ancient culture that shaped this region for over 750 years. Here are a few suggestions for making the most of your time in the park.

If you have a half-day:

First, stop by the [Visitor and Research Center](#) at the park entrance. Rangers here will help plan your visit. While there, enjoy the exhibits and browse through the store for a selection of books and trail guides.

Twenty-one miles (33.8 km) south of the Visitor and Research Center is the [Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum](#). Here, exhibits and dioramas trace the lives of the Ancestral Pueblo people. Also available is a museum store and a 25-minute park video shown every half-hour.

View [Spruce Tree House](#), the park's third largest and best-preserved cliff dwelling,

from overlooks located adjacent to the Museum. Information booklets are available. Rangers are at overlooks to answer your questions.

Or, take a scenic drive on the [Mesa Top Loop Road](#). Stops along the six-mile (10 km), 45-minute drive, with easily accessible, short, paved walking trails, reveal the full range of architecture from earliest pithouses to the cliff dwellings. 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 one-hour ranger-guided tour of either [Balcony House](#) or [Cliff Palace](#). Tickets are required. Tickets can be purchased at the Visitor and Research Center, Morefield Ranger Station, or Colorado Welcome Center in Cortez. See facilities hours on page 1.

You can also visit [Far View Sites](#), four miles (6.4 km) north of the Museum. This self-guided walk includes Far View House and four other villages plus a dry reservoir, all linked by a level $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile (1.2 km) dirt path. See page 5.

If you have two full days:

Drive the Wetherill Mesa Road, then hike or bicycle the [Badger House Community Trail](#), or the five-mile Long House Loop to overlooks of cliff dwellings. See page 5 or pick up a Wetherill Mesa Visitor Guide.

Add a two-hour, 2.25 mile (3.6 km) ranger-guided hiking tour of [Long House](#) on Wetherill Mesa. Tickets are required. Tickets can be purchased at the Visitor and Research Center, Morefield Ranger Station, or Colorado Welcome Center in Cortez.

Visit [Step House](#) to view Modified Basket-maker (AD 550 to AD 750) and Classic Pueblo (AD 1100 to AD 1300) period architecture. The one-mile (1.6 km) round-trip trail begins at the information 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 tour all ticketed cliff dwellings, drive all the park roads, and hike one or more of the park trails. See pages 4 and 12.

Exploring on Foot

Chapin Mesa



Farming Terraces

0.5 miles (0.8 km) round-trip

Beginning and ending on the road to Cedar Tree Tower, this $\frac{1}{2}$ -mile loop trail leads to a series of prehistoric check dams built to create farming terraces. The check dams improved crop yields by collecting water and soil from natural run-off.

Petroglyph Point & Spruce Canyon Loop Trails

Each trail is a 2.4-mile (3.9 km) loop

Both trails begin from the Spruce Tree House trail. The gate to the trailheads is open 8:30 am to 6:15 pm from May 27 to September 11. (Ask for hours after September 11.) Please plan your hike accordingly.

The **Petroglyph Point Trail** follows an ancient canyon path to the park's largest petroglyph panel, 1.4 miles (2.3 km) from the trailhead. It then climbs to the mesa top with views of Spruce and Navajo Canyons as it returns to the museum. The **Spruce Canyon Trail** follows the bottom of Spruce Canyon, and switchbacks up to the mesa top near the picnic area on the museum loop road.

Soda Canyon Overlook Trail

1.2 miles (1.9 km) round-trip

This easy walk begins $\frac{1}{2}$ mile north of the Balcony House parking area along Cliff Palace Loop Road. The trail leads to canyon edge views of Balcony House and other archeological sites along Soda Canyon.

Wetherill Mesa



Badger House Community Trail

2.25 miles (3.6 km)

This mixed graveled path and paved trail begins at the information kiosk and winds through four mesa top sites and 600 years of history.

Nordenskiöld Site No. 16 Trail

2 miles (3.2 km) round-trip

Named for Gustaf Nordenskiöld, who explored the area in 1891, this trail offers a leisurely walk through recovering fire-scarred vegetation and leads to an overlook of Nordenskiöld Site No. 16. Please note: there is no shade; bring sun protection and water.

For more information on Wetherill Mesa trails, pick up a Wetherill Mesa Visitor Guide.



Nordenskiöld Site No. 16 trail

Morefield Campground



Point Lookout Trail

2.2 miles (3.5 km) round-trip

Follow the switchbacks up Point Lookout and traverse the mesa top. From the top, you will see sweeping views of Montezuma and Mancos Valleys and distant mountains.

Knife Edge Trail

2 miles (3.2 km) round-trip

The trail follows the park's historic entrance road from the northwest corner of Morefield Campground towards the Montezuma Valley overlook. This unpaved level trail provides wonderful views of the Montezuma Valley.

Prater Ridge Trail

7.8 miles (12.6 km) to complete north and south loops

Beginning on the west end of Morefield Campground, the north loop trail ascends Prater Ridge and follows the top of the ridge above the Montezuma Valley. The shorter south loop offers views of Prater Canyon.

Please respect these fragile places by leaving plants, animals, and artifacts undisturbed.

For your safety:

- Hiking is permitted only on designated trails
- Carry and drink plenty of water
- Stay away from cliff edges as undercut overhangs are dangerous
- Trails can be muddy and slippery after summer rains; proper footwear is recommended
- Pets are not allowed on trails (except designated trails on Wetherill Mesa)

Exploring on Your Own

Chapin Mesa

Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum

Dioramas and artifacts provide insight into Ancestral Pueblo people's lifeways. A 25-minute orientation film is shown on the hour and half-hour. A museum store, water, restrooms, cafe, gift shop, and post office are located nearby.

Spruce Tree House

Mesa Verde's best-preserved and third largest cliff dwelling was constructed between AD 1211 and AD 1278. This prehistoric village, built into a natural alcove, may have housed 60 to 80 people in about 130 rooms and eight kivas.

Although *Spruce Tree House* is closed due to recent rockfalls (see page 9), you can observe the cliff dwelling from viewpoints near the Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum.

Rangers are at the overlooks daily, from 8:30 am to 6:30 pm (with shorter hours in the fall) to answer questions and share information about Spruce Tree House and the Ancestral Pueblo people who once lived there.



Far View Sites

This mesa top community includes Far View House, four other villages, and a dry reservoir. In ancient times, this community was a place of modest homes interspersed with small farm fields. It was a place filled with people, vibrant life, and constant change. As you follow the woodland trail among the six sites, read the trailside signs to learn about Ancestral Pueblo life in the surrounding landscape between AD 900 to 1300. The level, unpaved $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile trail (1.2 km) is open 8:00 am to sunset. Parking is limited to vehicles under 25 feet.

Wetherill Mesa

Getting There: Wetherill Mesa Road

Less crowded than Chapin Mesa with only biking and hiking trails, Wetherill Mesa offers a quiet setting to appreciate the archeological sites and scenery. The 27-mile (43.5 km) drive from the Visitor and Research Center follows the northern and western boundary of the park, offering spectacular views of the surrounding valleys. Allow 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ hours for this drive.

The Wetherill Mesa Road is open 8:00 am to 7:00 pm from May 27 to September 11. After September 11, it is open 8:00 am to 6:00 pm.

Vehicles must be less than 25 feet (7.6 m) long to drive this road. Vehicles over 8,000 lbs GVW are prohibited. Bicycles are not allowed on this main road.

Wetherill Mesa closes on October 31 or when weather conditions close the road.



Bicycling the Long House Loop paved trail

Exploring Wetherill Mesa

At the end of the Wetherill Mesa Road, you will find a parking area and the start of the Long House Loop, from which you may hike or bicycle the various trails. It has two seasonal operations, summer and fall. For more detailed information on Wetherill Mesa activities, pick up a [Wetherill Mesa Visitor Guide](#).

May 27 to September 11

The Wetherill Mesa Information Kiosk is open 9:00 am to 6:30 pm. Picnic tables, restrooms, sales area, and snack service are located nearby. A visit to Step House is free and open daily from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. If you plan to visit Long House, *be sure to purchase a ticket for the hiking tour at the Visitor and Research Center at the park entrance*. See page 12.

September 12 to October 15

The information kiosk is open daily, 9:00 am to 4:30 pm and Step House is open 9:15 am to 4:00 pm. Ranger-guided tours of Long House are offered at 9:30 am, 12:30 pm, and 2:00 pm.

October 16 to October 29

(date of closure is weather dependent)

Wetherill Mesa trails are open for biking and/or hiking. The information kiosk is not staffed at this time and no services are available.



Accessibility

Access to Mesa Verde's premier sites is physically challenging. Most cliff dwelling trails are steep and uneven, with steps and ladders, cliff edges and tight passages, and include strenuous elevation changes. However, many cliff dwellings and mesa top sites are visible from roadway overlooks, short paved trails, and from your vehicle.

For assistance, ask a park employee, or call 970-529-4465 for more information.

Accessible services:

Mesa Verde Visitor and Research Center

Designated parking, restrooms, exhibits, an ATM, a drinking fountain, and a wheelchair available for loan. Audio description and assistive listening available.

Far View Sites

Designated parking and a portable restroom. An unpaved gravel $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile (1.2 km) level trail to six archeological sites.

Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum Area

Designated parking, restrooms, exhibits, a drinking fountain, and a ramp. Services include a portable ramp to enter exhibit rooms, a wheelchair available for loan, and a 25-minute orientation film with captions, audio description, and assistive listening.

Spruce Tree House Overlook

You can view Spruce Tree House from an easily accessible covered balcony behind the Chief Ranger's Office, adjacent to the Museum.

Mesa Top and Cliff Palace Loop Roads

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

Wetherill Mesa

Designated parking, restrooms, picnic tables, and information kiosk.

Park Ranger Programs- No fee

Discover Mesa Verde with these free programs given by park rangers. Stop in at the Visitor and Research Center and Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum for details. Children must be accompanied by an adult at all times. Programs may be cancelled during inclement weather. For information on touring a cliff dwelling, see page 12.



Morefield Campground Evening Program

Enjoy a National Park Service evening tradition! Archeologist Jesse Fewkes began the first evening campfire talks in the history of the National Park Service at Mesa Verde National Park in 1907.

Today, that tradition continues. Join a ranger in the Morefield Campground Amphitheater to learn about Mesa Verde's fascinating natural and cultural history. Topics vary by night and can include Ancestral Puebloan history, plants and animals of the park, dark night skies, regional resources, and more. Bring a flashlight.

•May 28 to July 23 at 9:00 pm •July 24 to August 20 at 8:30 pm •August 21 to September 4 at 8:15 pm



Historic District Walking Tour

To commemorate the National Park Service 2016 Centennial Year, we invite you to join us for a special tour of Mesa Verde's Historic District. This 1.5 hour, easy walking tour of early park buildings highlights how archeologists, rangers, and New Deal Laborers, created the first cultural national park in the United States. From the Antiquities Act of 1906 and the NPS Organic Act of 1916, to the New Deal and into the 21st century, hear the influences that have shaped the first century of Mesa Verde National Park.

Tours offered daily at 1:00 pm. Meet in front of the Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum.

Park Fun For Kids

Junior Ranger Program

Hey, kids! Become a Junior Ranger and have a fun time learning about Mesa Verde National Park. Becoming a Junior Ranger is a great way to explore your national parks and help take care of them for the future.

Activity Booklet

Children from age 4 to 12 can become a Junior Ranger. Just pick up a free activity booklet at the Visitor and Research 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.

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 with kid-friendly exhibits or hands-on activities. This is a great place to be sworn in as a Mesa Verde Junior Ranger and receive your badge.

Located Inside Museum Courtyard

June 15 to August 14

3:00 pm to 5:30 pm*

*Open longer when staffing allows

Discovering Morefield Campground

Camping is a wonderful time to discover the natural side of Mesa Verde. For a fun, family-oriented way to explore your natural surroundings, pick up a Junior Naturalist Activity Booklet and check out a Discovery Pack.



Morefield Ranger Station

May 29 to September 5

5:00 pm to 8:30 pm

Junior Ranger Station (in Museum)

June 15 to August 14

3:00 pm to 5:30 pm



Park Ranger Programs- Fee

Mesa Verde offers visitors opportunities to explore the backcountry of the park. Purchase tickets for these special hikes and tours online at www.recreation.gov. Tickets are non-refundable. *For a ranger-guided tour of Balcony House, Cliff Palace, or Long House, see page 12.*



Oak Tree House mealing bins



Mug House



Wetherill Mesa Bike & Hike Adventure



Portion of Spring House Trail

Spring House

Spring House is the largest unexcavated cliff dwelling in the park. It is an extremely fragile site, so you will not enter, but get excellent views from a platform at the south end of the village. This 8-hour, 8-mile (12.9 km) round-trip hike is very strenuous. Expect an unpaved, uneven trail with an elevation change of 1,500 feet, steep drop-offs, one short ladder, and switchbacks.

May 1 to May 25 and September 11 to October 12

• Sundays and Wednesdays at 8:00 am

• Price: \$40.00 per person. Tour is limited to 10 people.

Oak Tree House

Built on two ledges, it has 60 rooms. Enjoy close up views of this well-preserved site that features plastered walls and varied architectural styles. Also enjoy vistas of Cliff Canyon, Cliff Palace, and Sun Temple. This 2-hour, 1-mile (1.6 km) round-trip hike is moderately strenuous. Expect a narrow, unpaved, uneven trail, with steps carved into sandstone, steep drop-offs, and two ladders up to 15 feet (4.6 m) tall.

May 3 to May 28

• Tuesdays and Saturdays at 8:00 am

• Price: \$25.00 per person. Tour is limited to 10 people.

Sept. 12 to October 14

• Mondays and Fridays at 8:00 am

• Price: \$25.00 per person. Tour is limited to 10 people.

Balcony House Sunrise Tour

Begin your day as the Ancestral Pueblo people have for generations. Climb into Balcony House as the sun rises, and step into the 21st century of our national parks. Tour is 90 minutes. See page 12 for trail description.

• Tours are offered:

May 7 5:30 am September 21 6:15 am

June 20 5:15 am September 22 6:15 am

June 21 5:15 am October 10 6:30 am

• Price: \$15.00 per person. Tour is limited to 25 people.

Twilight Photography Tour

Photographers, here is chance to spend 90 minutes in Cliff Palace with a park ranger in a small group setting. Dramatic sunset lighting will appeal to both amateur and professional photographers as well as those seeking a deeper connection with this extraordinary archeological treasure. Tours offered nightly.

May 27 to July 23 7:15 pm
July 24 to September 5 6:45 pm

• Tour is limited to 12 people
• Price: \$20.00 per person, all ages

Know Before You Go

Your safety depends on good judgment, adequate preparation, and constant attention. Wear sturdy shoes or boots, and bring plenty of water. Shade is limited, so bring a hat and sunscreen. Evaluate your physical condition when choosing a hike.

Elevations range between 7,000 and 7,500 feet (2134 m and 2286 m) above sea level. You should plan for all weather possibilities because weather conditions are quite variable. It's possible to begin your hike in full sun and end with a thunderstorm or a snowstorm.

What To Bring

Bring a minimum of ½ gallon (2 liters) of water per person. You will also need a daypack large enough to carry water, sunscreen, hat, rainwear, binoculars, and camera. Wear sturdy hiking shoes. Please do not bring any type of snack or food, or drinks other than water into a cliff dwelling.

Restrictions

Due to overhanging branches, uneven terrain, and footing obscured by vegetation, children must be able to keep pace with the group and walk the extent of the trail on their own without difficulty. Children in backpacks are not permitted on these special backcountry tours.

Please understand that once you begin these hikes, neither you nor your children may "turn around" as there will be no ranger to escort you back to the trail-head. Carefully consider the distance and difficulty of this hike before purchasing a ticket.

Please Be On Time

Please be at your hike departure location, ready to go, at least 15 minutes early. The park road is narrow and winding, and can take 45 to 60 minutes to drive from the park entrance to departure locations. To be fair to others, the tour may leave without you if you are late. Please plan accordingly.

Celebrating the National Park Service Centennial (1916-2016)



Come join us in celebrating the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service with special events all year long. Ask a ranger, or visit <http://go.nps.gov/meve-events> for details.

June 20/21, September 21/22, October 10

Balcony House Sunrise Tours (CM)

Begin your day as the Ancestral Pueblo people have for generations. Climb into Balcony House as the sun rises. See page 7 for details. \$15.00 per person.

July 2 and 3

Traditional Hopi Dances (VRC)

The Lomayestewa family, from Shungopavi village on Second Mesa, invites you to view traditional Hopi dances scheduled both days at 11:00 am, 12:00 pm, 2:00 pm, and 4:00 pm.

August 25

Founder's Day (Various locations)

A day of activities celebrating the 100th Birthday of the National Park Service. Events include cultural dances and demonstrations, and curation tours of the museum collection.

September 3 and 4

Geotourism Fair (VRC)

The fair brings together cultural, historic and educational groups from throughout the Four Corners, along with Native dancers, artisans and representatives from local Tribes and Pueblos. Learn about the sites, events, and programs that are off the beaten track and exciting to discover.

September 10

Starr Tafoya Pottery Demonstration (VRC)

Starr Tafoya from Santa Clara Pueblo, is an award winner at the Santa Fe Indian Market. Join her at 10:30 am for a demonstration, firing, and sale of her black and redware pottery.

September 17

Mesa Verde Fun Run (CM)

A 5K run along the Mesa Top Loop and a one-mile fun walk around the Chapin Mesa Headquarters/Museum Loop. \$10.00 registration fee.

October 1

Wetherill Star Night (WM)

On this night of the New Moon, join us for an evening of stargazing and storytelling at Wetherill Mesa. Listen to ancient tales, and search for dark sky sightings of blue-green Uranus, red Mars, or the famous Lagoon Nebula. Event begins at 7:30 pm.

October 21

Evening at the Museum for Kids (VRC)

Do your kids like the Night at the Museum movies? If so, they'll enjoy an evening of fun activities led by Museum Curator, Tara Travis. The activities are designed to be both entertaining and educational. For ages 9 to 11. To register, call 970-529-5074.

Event Locations

CM Chapin Mesa WM Wetherill Mesa
VRC Mesa Verde Visitor and Research Center

Mesa Verde Artist-in-Residence Program

Mesa Verde's Artist-in-Residence (AIR) program, managed by the Mesa Verde Museum Association (MVMA) provides professional writers, composers, and visual and performing artists the opportunity to pursue their particular art form while being surrounded by the park's inspiring ancient architecture and natural landscape. Four artists are selected annually to live in the park for two weeks during the spring or fall pursuing their craft. They will each present a free public demonstration, performance, or talk during their residency.

May 27: Gregory Spaid, photographer

September 16: Bronwyn Mauldin, environmental writer

September 30: Kit Frost, landscape photographer

October 14: Joyce Heuman, painter

Ask a park employee or contact MVMA at 970-529-4445 for specific time, location, and subject for the presentations. For more Artist-in-Residence program information, please visit <http://go.nps.gov/mvair>.

Four Corners Lecture Series

The Four Corners Lecture Series is produced by several local organizations who sponsor speakers each year. Visit <http://go.nps.gov/4cls> to see a list of all speakers and subjects for each free presentation.

The following programs will be held at 7:00 pm in the Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum auditorium.

May 20: Donna Glowacki - *The Making of a Village: Growth & Change at Spruce Tree House.*

June 3: Ren and Helen Davis - *Landscapes for the People: George Alexander Grant, First Chief Photographer of the National Park Service.*

June 17: Fred Fagergren - *Like Father, Like Son: Seventy-Six Years in the National Park Service.*

July 22: Brian Forist - *That's How It Was in the Cs: The Work and Legacy of the Civilian Conservation Corps at Mesa Verde and Beyond.*

August 19: Larry Gore - *Happy Birthday, National Park Service. One Hundred years of birth and growth of America's best idea.*

The Spruce Tree House Alcove



Left: Areas of previous and potential rockfalls. Right: 1940 photo of widest section of crack above Spruce Tree House.

The forces of nature that formed the shelters that contain Mesa Verde's cliff dwellings are still active, and the alcove containing the dwelling of Spruce Tree House has become particularly unstable. Due to a series of rockfalls, a geologic assessment was conducted last fall to ensure the safety of visitors and staff entering the site. Preliminary results revealed the risk of continued rockfalls, especially along pathways into and within the site. Until a full geotechnical assessment is conducted and work is done to reduce this threat, Spruce Tree House is closed.

The primary concern is a large, naturally forming arch located within one of several cracks that exist in the cliff above Spruce Tree House, nearly parallel to the outer edge (above right). Attempts to slow the erosional processes forming the arch began in 1940 with the cleaning and covering of the crevice. In 1960, a large rock fall from a ledge under the lip of the cliff overhanging the south end of Spruce Tree House led to the 1961-2 anchoring of the natural rock arches. The earlier covering was removed, the arches were pinned to the cliff face, and the crack was filled with aggregate and cement grout. Forty two rock anchor bolts, some 16 feet long, were drilled horizontally into the cliff face to secure the arches. In the fall of 2015, a number of smaller rock falls, some of which fell on the public trails, occurred within the alcove in the area of the large arch. The site was closed in order to conduct an assessment and remove loose rock material from the cliff face and ledges. The scaling operation brought down about 60 cubic feet (cf) of material from the alcove edge. Some of the rock removed had a harder, desiccated outer surface with a substantially softer interior, revealing that sections of the sandstone are weakening due to water leaching the calcium carbonate matrix that binds the sand particles within the sandstone.

Before any new stabilization can be done, a thorough geotechnical assessment will need to be conducted. This will include taking a more sophisticated look at the arch-forming mechanism using Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR, a remote sensing method using laser imaging), and then performing a 3-D computer analyses of the data. Specialists will use the data to plan for additional work, if needed, using more modern engineering techniques to ensure the continued stability of the arch.

Preserving Cliff Palace



Southern end of Cliff Palace built on unstable soil and rubble.

Cliff Palace continues to be the focus of site preservation efforts. In May, 2011, archeologists discovered extensive cracks, wall deformation, and structural movement in the southern half of Cliff Palace. Park staff and experts from around the country worked to document the extent of deterioration, and developed a plan for emergency stabilization work.

The root of Cliff Palace's structural problems is the foundation – or the lack of a stable foundation – upon which the entire southern end of the community was built in the 13th century. Although the northern areas appear firmly based on bedrock, the southern end is footed in loose, unconsolidated soil and rubble. After nearly eight centuries, the lack of a solid base has caused the structures in the southern end of the site to slide downhill at uneven rates, leading to cracks, falling walls, and general instability.

Since some of the needed repairs cannot be safely done while visitors are in the site, Cliff Palace will close on September 25. As a tangible connection to a people's past and a significant place to millions of people who have walked its ancient pathways, essential preservation work today will make it possible for future generations to continue to be inspired by this magnificent ancient site.

For additional information on the history and current efforts to preserve Cliff Palace, visit the park website at [and look for "Preserving Cliff Palace."](#)

Bee Rich



Sweat bee on evening primrose

Pollinators are an important part of healthy ecosystems, providing pollination services to many native plants and agricultural crops. But they are declining. Many plants at Mesa Verde, including rare species, require a pollinator to exchange pollen (genetic material) from one flower to another in order to develop viable seed. Native pollinators at Mesa Verde include bees, butterflies, bats, hummingbirds, flies, and beetles. Honeybees are not native to North America, so many native wildflowers

depend on native bees. Mesa Verde is located within the Colorado Plateau, a region which hosts a rich diversity of bees including bumble bees, sweat bees and solitary bees, many of which nest in the ground. Most native bees do not form social colonies but create their own ground nest or loosely aggregate nests together, while other species may share duties of nest building and food gathering. Other native bees build nests in holes in stems, dead wood and rock crevices. Flower shape, color, fragrance,

and the reward provided, play an important role in attracting specific pollinators. For example, red flowers with long tubular shapes that provide copious nectar attract hummingbirds, whereas bees like to visit flowers with nectar and pollen that are yellow or blue and are fragrant. Pollinators need a diversity of wildflowers to visit throughout the year so a healthy, intact plant community is important for both abundant wildflowers and their pollinators.

Mesa Verde Museum Association

Providing Memories, Inspiring Stewardship

Mesa Verde Museum Association (MVMA) is the innovative educational nonprofit partner that inspires life-long stewardship of Mesa Verde's cultural and natural heritage. Since 1930, MVMA has supported education and research in the park through an active publishing program, membership program, in-depth learning opportunities, and retail stores. Proceeds from all our programs generate hundreds of thousands of dollars in park support each year.

You Can Make a Difference!

You can help preserve and protect the park for future generations by becoming a Mesa Verde Association member today!

Your tax-deductible membership dues will support the work of both MVMA and the Mesa Verde Foundation, the park's capital fundraising partner. Members receive a discount in MVMA stores and online, periodic e-newsletters, a year-end gift, and discounts at most cooperating association bookstores in national parks and other public lands across the country. To ask about membership at MVMA stores, call us at 970-529-4445, or visit our website at www.mesaverde.org/membership.



Enhance Your Visit

You'll find an outstanding selection of Mesa Verde publications and products at our stores that will help you further explore and appreciate this park's incomparable cultural and natural resources. MVMA stores are located in the Visitor and Research Center, Morefield Ranger Station, Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum, Wetherill Mesa Information Kiosk, and Colorado Welcome Center at 928 East Main Street in Cortez, and online at www.mesaverde.org.



Museum Store

Mesa Verde Museum Association

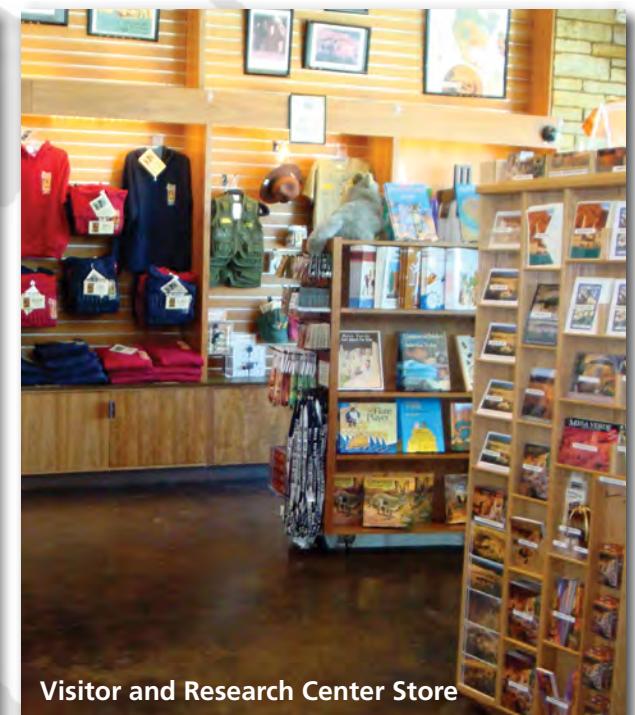
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Present this coupon at the register.

Redeemable at MVMA stores in the Visitor and Research Center, Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum, Wetherill Mesa Kiosk, Morefield Ranger Station, and Colorado Welcome Center in Cortez.

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

Expiration date: 12/31/2016



Visitor and Research Center Store

Just for Mesa Verde Junior Rangers!



Kids who present their completed Mesa Verde Junior Ranger booklet and their badge at any MVMA store will receive a 15% discount on their entire purchase!

We've designed a special colorful logo to recognize Mesa Verde Junior Rangers! It features the tower from 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.

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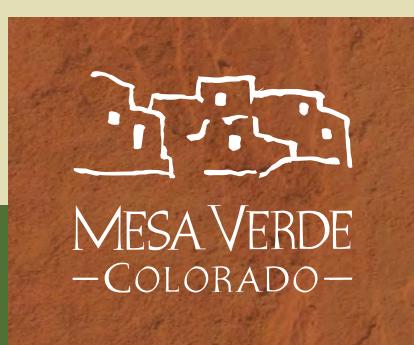
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MESA VERDE
—COLORADO—

Touring a Cliff Dwelling

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 \$4.00 per tour, per person, regardless of age. (Pass discounts do not apply.)

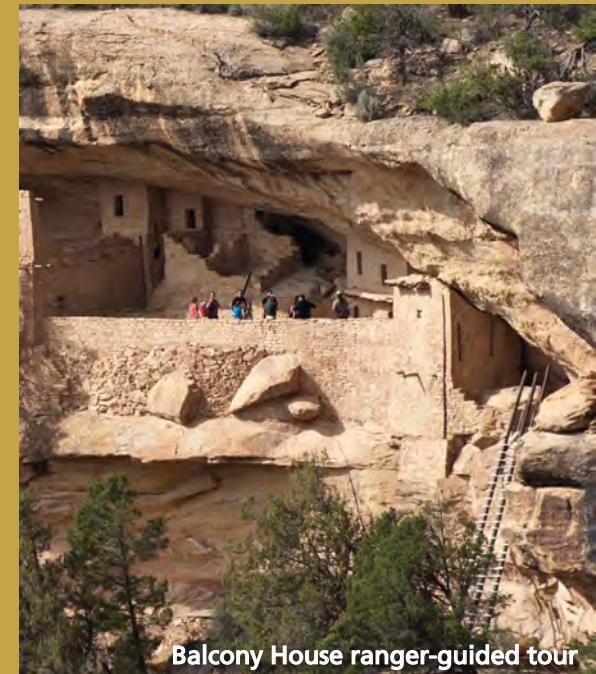
Purchase tour tickets at:

- Visitor and Research Center
- Morefield Ranger Station
- Colorado Welcome Center, Cortez
- Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum (limited hours, see hint below)**

For hours of operation, see Visitor Services section on page 1.

Hint: You'll get the best selection of times for ranger-guided tours at the **Visitor and Research Center, **Morefield Ranger Station**, or the **Colorado Welcome Center**. Options may be more limited at the Museum.

Tickets will be sold at the Museum from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm through September 5. (After September 5, ticket sales hours will be reduced. Ask a ranger for times.)



Balcony House ranger-guided tour

Cliff Palace

Mesa Verde's Largest Cliff Dwelling

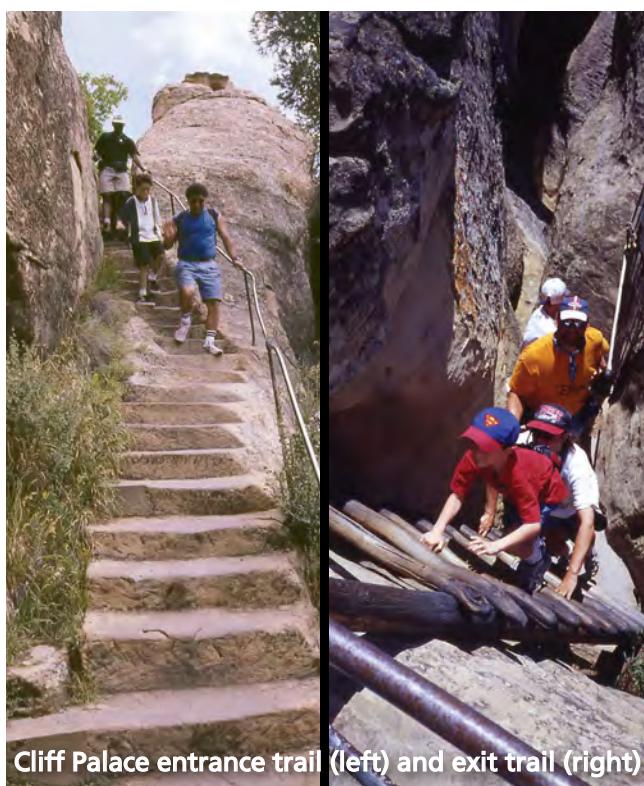
On this one-hour tour you will descend uneven stone steps and climb four ladders, with an elevation change of 100 feet (30 m). Total walking distance is $\frac{1}{4}$ mile (0.4 km). Tour begins near the Cliff Palace overlook, a 23-mile (37 km) one-hour drive from the Visitor and Research Center.

May 27 to September 25

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

September 26: Closed for season*

*See page 9 for details on preservation work in Cliff Palace this fall.



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

Balcony House

Most Adventurous Cliff Dwelling Tour

On this one-hour, $\frac{1}{4}$ -mile (0.4 km) tour you will climb a 32-foot (9.8 m) ladder, crawl through an 18-inch wide (45 cm) and 12-foot (3.7 m) long tunnel, and climb up a 60-foot (20 m) open cliff face with stone steps and two 10-foot (3 m) ladders to exit. The tour begins at the north end of the Balcony House parking lot, a 25-mile (40.2 km), $1\frac{1}{4}$ hours drive from the Visitor and Research Center.

May 27 to August 20

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

August 21 to October 15

Every hour: 10:00 am to 5:00 pm, and 9:30 am and 3:30 pm

October 16 to October 29

Every hour: 10:00 am to 4:00 pm

October 30: Closed for season



Balcony House entrance ladder

Long House

Most In-Depth Tour

This two-hour tour involves hiking about 2.25 miles (3.6 km) round-trip, and climbing two 15-foot (4.5 m) ladders within the site. Elevation gain is about 130 feet (40 m). The tour ends at the Long House trailhead, giving you the option of exploring more of Wetherill Mesa on your own. The tour begins at the Wetherill Mesa Information Kiosk, a 27-mile (43.5 km) drive from the Visitor and Research Center. Allow $1\frac{1}{4}$ hours for this drive. Vehicles over 25 feet (8 m) long are not allowed on the Wetherill Mesa Road.

May 27 to September 11

9:00 am, 10:00 am, 11:00 am, 2:00 pm, 3:00 pm and 4:00 pm

September 12 to October 15

9:30 am, 12:30 pm, and 2:00 pm

October 16: Closed for season



One of the 15-foot (4.6 m) ladders

See page 7 for information on additional ranger-guided hikes and how to purchase tickets for them.