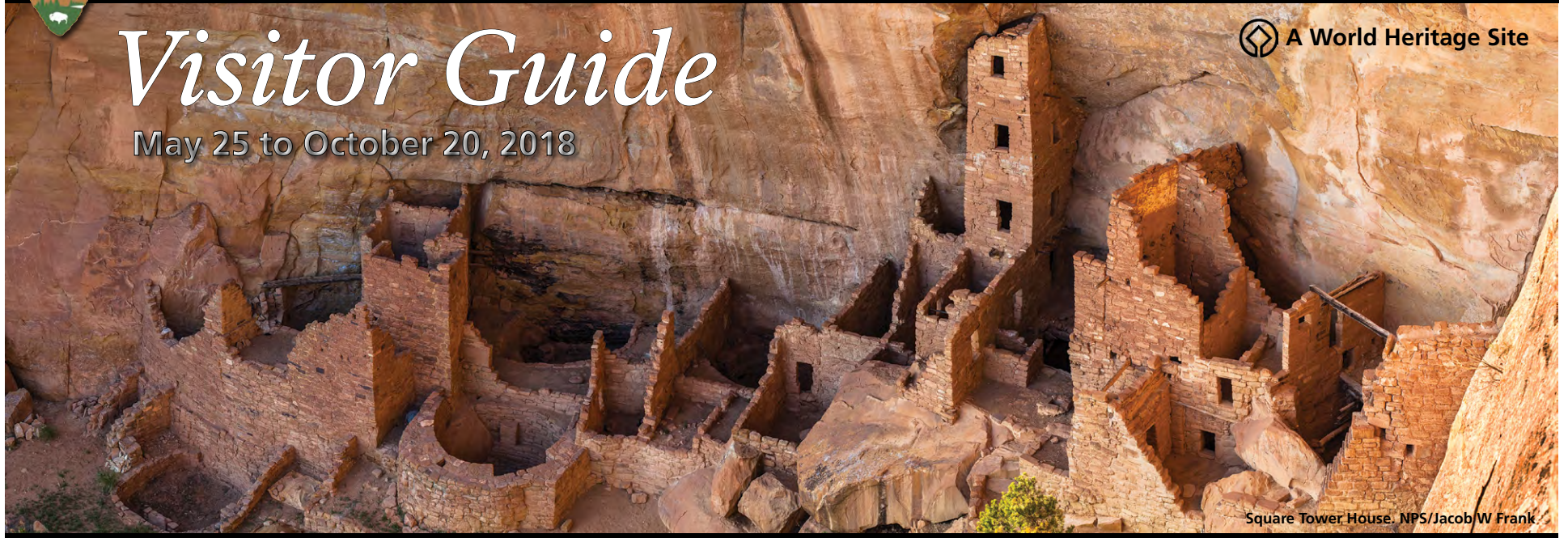




Visitor Guide

May 25 to October 20, 2018



Square Tower House. NPS/Jacob W Frank

Welcome

Mesa Verde preserves an extraordinary record of the Ancestral Pueblo people who made this place their home for more than 750 years. With over 52,000 acres, Mesa Verde protects nearly 5,000 archeological sites, including nearly 600 cliff dwellings to share with you and future generations. We hope you enjoy your visit!

As you explore the park, we hope you connect this place to the descendants of the Ancestral Pueblo people—the 19 Pueblos in New Mexico, the Hopi in Arizona, and Ysleta del Sur in Texas. Understanding this relationship will help you gain an appreciation for the continued diversity and continuity of both the past and present.

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Visitor Services and Facilities

*all times subject to change without notice

	May 25 to September 3	September 4 to 15	September 16 to 29	Sept. 30 to Oct. 20
Mesa Verde Visitor and Research Center, Tour Tickets	7:30 am to 7:00 pm	8:00 am to 5:00 pm	8:00 am to 5:00 pm	8:00 am to 5:00 pm
Morefield Campground Ranger Station, Tour Tickets	<i>Opens May 27</i> 5:00 pm to 8:30 pm	Closed	Closed	Closed
Lodging, Food, and Shopping	See page 6 for hours	See page 6 for hours	See page 6 for hours	See page 6 for hours
Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum	8:00 am to 6:30 pm	8:00 am to 6:30 pm	8:00 am to 6:30 pm	8:00 am to 5:00 pm
Chief Ranger's Office (Chapin Mesa), First Aid	8:00 am to 5:00 pm	8:00 am to 5:00 pm	8:00 am to 5:00 pm	8:00 am to 5:00 pm
U.S. Post Office (Chapin Mesa) Monday through Friday Saturday	9:00 am to 3:00 pm 10:00 am to 2:00 pm	9:00 am to 3:00 pm 10:00 am to 2:00 pm	9:00 am to 3:00 pm 10:00 am to 2:00 pm	9:00 am to 3:00 pm 10:00 am to 2:00 pm
Wetherill Mesa Information Kiosk	9:00 am to 6:30 pm	9:00 am to 6:30 pm	9:00 am to 4:30 pm	9:00 am to 4:30 pm
Durango Welcome Center, Tour Tickets (802 Main Avenue, Durango) Sunday through Thursday Friday and Saturday	9:00 am to 7:00 pm 9:00 am to 8:00 pm	9:00 am to 7:00 pm 9:00 am to 8:00 pm	<i>Hours go through October 13</i> 9:00 am to 7:00 pm 9:00 am to 8:00 pm	<i>Hours start October 14</i> 9:00 am to 6:00 pm 9:00 am to 6:00 pm

Park Entrance Fees

The park entry fee is \$20.00 per private car, \$15.00 per motorcycle, or \$10.00 per person on foot or bicycle. For commercial vehicle fees, call 970-529-4465 or visit

www.nps.gov/meve. Federal Interagency annual access, military, senior, and 4th grade passes are available at the park entrance gate. For details, visit go.nps.gov/mvfee.



Protect the Park, Protect Yourself



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

Park Headquarters
970-529-4465
Fax 970-529-4637

Chief Ranger's Office
First aid
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
email: mevelostfound@nps.gov

Website
www.nps.gov/meve

Social Media
Facebook/mesaverdenps
Instagram.com/mesaverdenps

This partial list of regulations is designed to help you have a safe and enjoyable visit, and to protect Mesa Verde's natural ecosystems and fragile archeological sites. For more on how to respectfully enjoy the park, please visit go.nps.gov/mvpolices or ask a park employee.

Rockfall 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.

Share the Road

Park roads are steep, narrow, and winding. Pullouts are available for slower traffic to use so others may pass. *Trailers and towed vehicles are not allowed beyond Morefield Campground, but trailer parking is available near the park entrance.*



Mule deer on roadway

Watch for wildlife, obey all traffic signs, and do not stop on the roadway.

Bicyclists, use caution! The road is steep with few shoulders. Ride single file and stay to the right. Bicyclists must comply with all traffic regulations. Bicycle group size is limited to six on roads.

Camping

Camping is available at Morefield Campground, four miles from the park entrance. See page 6. Other campgrounds are located in Cortez and Mancos.

Don't Rely on GPS or Cell Phone Coverage

GPS is not reliable in the area and cell service is limited once you drive past the park entrance. Wi-Fi service is available at Morefield Campground Store, Far View Terrace and Lodge, and Spruce Tree Terrace.

Do You Need Gas?

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

Stewardship

Leave the rocks as you see them and don't add more. Graffiti—carving, scratching, chalking, or any type of marking—is illegal and unsightly.

Archeological sites are fragile. See page 7 for ways to protect them as you visit.

Firearms

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

Marijuana on Federal Lands

As federal land, 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 within the park is illegal.

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



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

Be Prepared and Have a Safe Visit

Plan ahead

Before taking any tour or trail, plan ahead and consider your limits. At 7,000 feet (2135 m) elevation, you may feel short of breath, nauseated, or tire easily.

Wear sturdy shoes or boots. Bring and drink plenty of water. Shade is limited throughout much of the park, so bring a hat and sunscreen.

Visit a cliff dwelling safely

Trails into cliff dwellings are uneven and steep, with steps, ladders, cliff edges, 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 all park facilities, including Cliff Palace and Wetherill Mesa Kiosk.

Wildlife

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

Wildfire

Help us prevent human-caused fires by being very careful with matches, cigarettes, and campfires. Fireworks are prohibited.

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.

Pets need protection 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. A kennel at Morefield Campground is available through October 17.

Leaving pets alone tied to any object is illegal. *Pets are not allowed in buildings or on most trails.* Leashed pets may join you on paved roads, parking lots, and in the campground. There are some pet-friendly trails on Wetherill Mesa and the Mesa Top Loop, but please clean up after your pet. *Service animals* are always welcome; *therapy animals* are subject to pet restrictions.

Make the Most of Your Visit



Pithouse Archeological Shelter, Mesa Top Loop

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 for over 750 years.

Here are a few suggestions for making the most of your time in the park. Use the map in the park brochure for locations.

If You Have a Half-Day...

- **Mesa Verde Visitor and Research Center**
First, stop by the Visitor Center at the park entrance where park staff will help plan your visit. While there, enjoy the exhibits and browse through the store for a selection of books and trail guides. This is also a good place to purchase tour tickets for Cliff Palace, Balcony House, or Long House tours. See page 1 for facility hours. See page 8 for tours.
- **Mesa Top Loop Road (6 miles/10 km)**
Twenty miles (32.2 km) beyond the Visitor Center is the Mesa Top Loop. This scenic, 45-minute to one-hour drive includes six stops covering 700 years of Ancestral Pueblo history. See page 6 for details.



Sun Point View, Mesa Top Loop

- **Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum**
Twenty-one miles (33.8 km) beyond the Visitor Center is the Museum. Here, exhibits and dioramas trace the lives of the Ancestral Pueblo people. See page 6 for details. See page 1 for facility hours.
- **Spruce Tree House**
Spruce Tree House is closed due to recent rockfalls (see page 7), but you can view the park's third largest and best-preserved cliff dwelling from overlooks located adjacent to the Museum. Information booklets are available.

If You Have One Full Day...

You'll have time for all half-day activities, plus:

- **Ranger-Guided Tour of a Cliff Dwelling**
Join a one-hour, ranger-guided tour of either Balcony House or Cliff Palace. Tickets are required. See page 8.
- **Far View Sites**
Four miles (6.4 km) north of the Museum, enjoy this self-guided walk through ancient mesa top communities. See page 6.

If You Have Two Full Days...

Enjoy full-day activities and **Wetherill Mesa**:

- **Hike or Bicycle Trails**
Hike or bicycle the Badger House Community Trail, or the five-mile Long House Loop to overlooks of cliff dwellings. Pick up a *Wetherill Mesa Visitor Guide* for details.
- **Ranger-Guided Tour of Long House**
Enjoy a two-hour, 2.25 mile (3.6 km) ranger-guided hiking tour of Long House. Tickets are required. See page 8.
- **Step House**
Wander through Step House to see different periods of architecture: early Basketmaker pithouses and a later masonry pueblo in the same alcove. Allow 45 to 60 minutes. Pick up a *Wetherill Mesa Visitor Guide* for details.



Step House, Wetherill Mesa

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:

- **Go for a Hike**
Hike the Prater Ridge Trail at Morefield, try to decipher the art on the Petroglyph Trail, or discover the lushness of Spruce Canyon. Ask for a *trail guide* and take a hike to see some of the park's hidden gems.



Spruce Canyon Trail

- **Attend an evening program**
The free Morefield Campground Evening Program offers a variety of topics on both natural and cultural history. See page 4 for details and times.

Accessibility



Due to elevation and the nature of 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.

Ask for an *Accessibility* handout.



Before starting any tour, trail, or activity, please remember to...

- Plan ahead and know your limits. The park is at 7,000 ft (2135 m) in elevation, so you may feel short of breath, nauseated, or tire easily.
- Bring and drink plenty of water, but please do not bring food or drinks other than water into a cliff dwelling.
- Hike only on designated trails and stay away from cliff edges as undercut overhangs are dangerous.
- Wear sturdy shoes or boots. Bring a hat and sunscreen; shade is limited throughout much of the park.

Exploring on Your Own - No Fee

Mesa Top Loop Road

The Mesa Top Loop Road is a 6-mile (10 km) drive that is a tour through time. Along the road, you'll find short, easily-accessible paved trails to view twelve archeological sites, including surface sites and overlooks of cliff dwellings — the ancient homes and villages of the Ancestral Pueblo people who lived here for more than 700 years.

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

Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum

Dioramas, artifacts, and exhibits 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. See page 1 for hours.



Spruce Tree House

Mesa Verde's best-preserved and third largest cliff dwelling was constructed between 1211 and 1278. Built into a natural alcove, it has 130 rooms, eight kivas, and may have housed 60 to 80 people.

Although *Spruce Tree House* is closed due to recent rockfalls (see page 7), you can observe the cliff dwelling from viewpoints near the Museum.



Please Practice Stewardship

- Archeological sites are fragile. Do not sit, stand, lean on, climb into or on, these ancient fragile structures. This includes mesa top sites, like those at Far View.
- Graffiti is destructive and illegal in a national park. If you must leave your mark, take a selfie instead!

Far View Sites

This mesa top community includes Far View House, four other villages, and a dry reservoir. In ancient times, the 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 CE 900 to 1300.

The level, unpaved ¾-mile trail (1.2 km) is open 8:00 am to sunset. *Parking is limited to vehicles under 25 feet.*



Far View Sites

Visiting Wetherill Mesa

Less crowded than Chapin Mesa with only biking and hiking trails, Wetherill Mesa offers a quieter setting to appreciate the archeological sites and scenery. The 27-mile (43.5 km), 1¼-hour drive from the Visitor Center offers spectacular views of the surrounding valleys. *Vehicles must be less than 25 feet long to drive this road.* Vehicles over 8,000 lbs GVW are prohibited. Pick up a *Wetherill Mesa Visitor Guide* for more information.

For a ranger-guided hike to Long House, see page 8 for tour details and how to purchase tickets.



Long House Loop, Wetherill Mesa

Other Opportunities

Morefield Campground Evening Program

Enjoy a National Park Service tradition! Join a ranger in the amphitheater to learn about Mesa Verde's fascinating natural and cultural history. There is no fee. Bring a flashlight.

- May 26 to July 21 9:00 pm
- July 22 to August 18 8:30 pm
- August 19 to September 2 8:15 pm

Four Corners Lecture Series

This annual series takes place at various Four Corners locations throughout the year. It features programs on archeology, history, Native American culture, and natural resources of the Four Corners region. Visit go.nps.gov/4cls for dates and times.

Hopi Dancers

The Lomayestewa family invite you to view traditional Hopi dances this summer at the Mesa Verde Visitor and Research Center.

- June 30 and July 1
- 11:00 am, noon, 2:00 pm, and 4:00 pm.



Special Backcountry Tours

Each year, Mesa Verde offers unique visitor opportunities to explore the park's backcountry. Due to the popularity of these tours, they sell out quickly, often months in advance. Before your next visit, go to www.recreation.gov to find out what's available and reserve online.

Digital Experiences

- **Mesa Verde National Park Mobile App**
Here is an opportunity to help you plan your visit or explore the park in a new way. Free from the App Store and Google Play.
- **Mesa Verde Voices**
A new podcast series exploring the lives of Ancestral Pueblo people, connecting the experiences of people from the past with people of today. Visit mesaverdevoices.org.

Other Destinations

The Ancestral Pueblo culture covered the entire Four Corners Region, not just Mesa Verde. Want to learn more? Here are other Pueblo-related destinations to visit.

- Anasazi Heritage Center/Canyons of the Ancients NM - 20 miles
- Aztec Ruins NM - 75 miles
- Canyon de Chelly NM - 152 miles
- Chimney Rock NM - 81 miles
- Chaco Culture NHP - 141 miles
- Hovenweep NM - 46 miles

Exploring on Your Own - No Fee

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 ages 4 and up can pick up a Junior Ranger booklet at the Visitor Center, Morefield Ranger Station, or Museum. Explore the park, complete the activities, then take the booklet to a ranger for review. You'll earn a Junior Ranger badge for a job well done. Exploring parks and learning how to care for them is what Junior Rangers do!

Junior Ranger Station

Visit the Junior Ranger Station, located in the courtyard of the Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum. Enjoy the kid's activities, pick up a Junior Ranger booklet, or if you've finished, get sworn in and receive your Junior Ranger badge.

Junior Ranger Station

Open June 11 to August 11
3:00 pm to 6:00 pm*

*Open longer as staffing allows

Kids who present their completed booklet and badge at any Mesa Verde Museum Association store will receive a 15% discount on their entire purchase! (See below for locations.)

Exploring Morefield Campground

Camping offers many opportunities to discover the natural side of Mesa Verde. For a fun, family-oriented way to explore the trails, check out a Discovery Pack from the Morefield Ranger Station (or Junior Ranger station). Use the field guides and other items to learn about plants, rocks, and wildlife. Complete the Junior Naturalist Activity booklet to learn even more!



Morefield Campground Ranger Station

Open May 27 to September 3
5:00 pm to 8:30 pm

Mesa Verde Museum Association

Mesa Verde Museum Association Stores

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 publications, a membership program, and retail stores. Proceeds from all programs generate support for the park each year.



Visitor Center Store

Enhance Your Visit

You'll find an outstanding selection of Mesa Verde publications and products at MVMA stores, that will help you further explore and appreciate this park's incomparable cultural and natural resources. MVMA stores are located in the Visitor Center, Museum, Wetherill Mesa Information Kiosk, Durango Welcome Center (802 Main Avenue, Durango) and online at www.mesaverde.org.



Museum Store

You Can Make a Difference!

You can help preserve and protect the park for future generations by becoming a MVMA member today! Your tax-deductible membership dues will support the work of MVMA. Members receive periodic e-newsletters, a discount in MVMA stores and online, and discounts at most cooperating association bookstores in public lands across the country. For details, call us at 970-529-4445 or visit www.mesaverde.org/membership.

Visit our new
Mesa Verde Museum Association
store located in the
Durango Welcome Center



Durango Welcome Center, located at 802 Main Avenue.
(At the corner of Main and 8th Street)

Purchase tour tickets for Cliff Palace, Balcony House, and Long House at the Durango Welcome Center. While there, learn about the Durango area's many attractions including its shops, galleries, restaurants, and outdoor recreation opportunities. See page 1 for hours.

Parking available at the Durango Transit Center, 205 W. 8th Street.

Mesa Verde Museum Association

*Present this coupon at any
MVMA store for*

10% off your purchase

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

Expiration date: 12/31/2018

Food, Shopping, and Lodging

Aramark is the authorized concessioner for Mesa Verde National Park. Call 800-449-2288, 970-529-4422 locally, or visit and book online at visitmesaverde.com.



Far View Area



Far View Lodge (Open through October 24, 2018)

Far View Lodge is located at milepoint 15 and includes the Metate Room Restaurant and Far View Lounge. The lodge has 150 rooms in two room types; Kiva and Kiva Deluxe View. Enjoy a peaceful retreat that provides breathtaking views, wildlife watching, and stargazing opportunities.

Metate Room Restaurant

The Metate Room is an award winner for sustainable cuisine. Walk-ins are welcome, but reservations are strongly recommended. Call 970-529-4422 within 24 hours of your stay.

•Open 5:00 pm to 9:30 pm

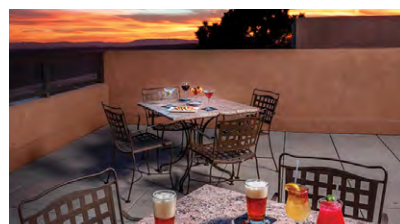


Metate Room

Far View Lounge

The Far View Lounge serves pub fare, appetizers and snacks, plus a wide variety of specialty cocktails, beer, and wine. Offers both indoor or outdoor seating.

•Open 4:00 pm to 10:00 pm



Far View Lounge Patio

Far View Terrace Cafe and Gift Shop

Located near the Lodge, the Far View Terrace Cafe is a casual food-court setting featuring breakfast burritos, an omelet station, and signature Navajo tacos, sandwiches, and salad station. The Mesa Mocha Espresso Bar also offers snacks, and Grab & Go breakfasts and lunches.

	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Espresso Bar
May 25 to May 31	7am -10am	11am - 3pm	5pm - 7pm	7am - 7pm
June 1 to September 3	7am -10am	11am - 3pm	5pm - 8pm	7am - 8pm
September 4 to October 9	7am -10am	11am - 3pm	5pm - 7pm	7am - 7pm
October 10 to October 25	7am -10am	Closed	Closed	7am - 11am
October 26	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed

Chapin Mesa



Spruce Tree Terrace Cafe and Gift Shop (Open Year-Round)

Convenient cafeteria service with indoor and outdoor patio dining offering American classics and Southwest specialties and a seasonally updated menu filled with fresh, delicious appetizers, salads, entrees, and desserts.

•May 25 to August 15
9:00 am to 6:30 pm

•August 16 to October 31
10:00 am to 5:00 pm



Native Handcrafts from Eight Tribes

Wetherill Mesa



Wetherill Mesa Snack Bar

Located at the Wetherill Mesa Information Kiosk, the snack bar offers items such as water, soda, chips, and crackers.

•May 25 to September 4
10:00 am to 4:00 pm



Morefield Campground

Nestled in a grove of oak trees four miles inside the park entrance, Morefield Campground has tent, RV, and group sites, each with picnic tables and fire pit/barbeque grills. The camp store offers registration, food, and camp supplies. Enjoy an all-you-can-eat pancake breakfast at the Knife Edge Café. Firewood, gasoline, showers, a coin operated laundromat, and a kennel are all conveniently located nearby.

•Open through October 17, 2018

•Off Season Limited Camping
October 18 to November 2, 2018



Morefield Campground

Help Us Protect Park Black Bears



Black bears have a natural curiosity, but are usually wary enough of humans to keep their distance. But over time, a bear's natural behavior can be altered and increase the chance of a human-bear encounter. Why? Because intentionally or unintentionally, people feeding bears can lead bears to become habituated to people and their food. They may become aggressive as they return looking for more food, threatening humans and property.

What attracts them? Food or drinks; toiletries or other scented items; trash and recycling; and even empty coolers or water containers.

Keep wildlife wild. Please don't be one of the reasons a wildlife biologist must do the last thing in the world they want to do—put down a habituated bear.

Here's What You Should Do



- Store all food, trash, toiletries, or other scented items out-of-sight in a hard-sided, locked vehicle, camper, or food locker. Do not store these items in a tent or soft-sided pop-up trailer.
- Help bears maintain a healthy fear of humans. Stay at least 100 yards (91 m) away to watch or photograph them. If you see a bear close, yell at it, and make as much noise as possible to scare it away (but do not chase it).
- Secure all trash in a park trash can and ensure the lid is locked.
- Report all bear sightings to the camp store, lodge staff, or park ranger.

Why We Are Here: Preserving Your National Park



While visiting the park, you may see people working in archeological sites or out on the park's landscape. We are members of Mesa Verde's resource staff, or one of our many cooperating scientists, researchers, or volunteers. The significance of Mesa Verde National Park lies in the number and remarkable state of preservation of its archeological resources, as well as its diverse array of natural resources including its plants and animals. Ensuring these resources are protected for you and future generations to enjoy is why we are here.

Cultural Resources

Mesa Verde is best known for its cliff dwellings, but it also offers evidence of rich cultural traditions extending back many centuries before the Ancestral Pueblo built these magnificent structures. The cultural resource program at Mesa Verde focuses on the preservation of these archeological resources. They identify and document the attributes of each artifact, feature, and site. If needed, they then determine and implement the best preservation treatment.



Cultural resource staff perform the preservation treatments needed to preserve the park's heritage resources in perpetuity. Here, a resource specialist rappels down a cliff face to lay silicon driplines. The driplines will direct runoff away from fragile architecture.

Current preservation projects include stabilizing the cliff face above the currently closed *Spruce Tree House* to mitigate the danger of rockfalls into the site and onto the trails below. This multi-year project's final stage, scheduled for 2019, will include the installation of 78 rockbolts deep into the cliff face. *Cliff Palace* has been the focus of ongoing structural stabilization work since 2011, due to extensive cracking and wall deformation at the southern half of the site. Although you may see cultural resource specialists in the dwelling during the summer, much of this work is done in the spring and fall when the cliff dwelling is closed to tours. These and other cultural resource projects ensure that park resources are maintained for the enjoyment and education of the public and for contemporary Native American peoples who hold these places as sacred.

Natural Resources

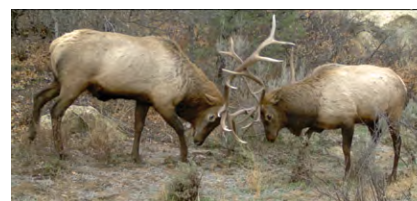
Although the park's archeology is world renowned, less well known are the park's natural resources. Mesa Verde is a hot spot for rare endemic plant species that grow nowhere else in the world. Many of these rare plants, such as the Chapin Mesa milkvetch, are associated with old-growth pinyon-juniper woodlands that dominate much of the park's natural communities. Multiple springs and seeps dot the landscape and provide water to support a diversity of plants and wildlife in an arid environment.

These important natural resources are inventoried, documented, assessed and monitored by natural resources staff. When the condition of these resources deteriorates or natural processes are altered such as from introduction of invasive species or more frequent wildfires associated with climate change, then the park's natural resource staff work to restore natural conditions and processes.



Mesa Verde's natural resource staff control invasive weeds, restore degraded and disturbed areas, recover rare plant populations and work to create resilient natural communities. Here, invasive musk thistle seedlings are choking out a rare, Chapin Mesa milkvetch.

The park is a slice of the Rocky Mountains when it comes to wildlife species. The park sits on the edge of the Rockies and the high desert Colorado Plateau. Its diverse vegetation communities provide habitat for healthy populations of elk, black bear, mule deer, mountain lions, golden eagles, peregrine falcons, and over 100 other bird species.



Because of the park's popularity and its relatively small size, natural resource staff continually examine ways to maintain park wildlife, reduce human-wildlife conflicts, and examine opportunities to restore native wildlife to the park. Here, one of the park's motion-detecting wildlife cameras caught two bull elk in action.

Current and possible future projects to restore native species to Mesa Verde include species such as sharp-tail grouse, beavers, round-tail chub, and bighorn sheep.



Tread Lightly!

You can play an important role in the continued preservation of Mesa Verde's remarkable resources.

- Do not sit, stand, lean, or climb on the walls of the fragile, ancient structures, or enter any of the rooms.
- Stay on marked trails to avoid trampling plants or unseen archeological features beneath your feet.
- Leave all natural objects and artifacts as you find them. Please do not create or add to artifact collection piles.
- Observe wildlife from a distance. For your own safety and theirs, do not follow or approach them.
- Do not mark on architectural or natural stone surfaces. Graffiti is destructive, inappropriate, and illegal in a national park.
- Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience.

Touring a Cliff Dwelling - Fee

Cliff Palace and Balcony House are popular ranger-guided cliff dwelling tours. A tour of Long House, on Wetherill Mesa, can be taken on the same day as a Cliff Palace or Balcony House tour.

There are no height or age restrictions for tours, but children must be capable of climbing ladders by themselves. If not, they must be carried in a backpack while on a tour.

Tour tickets are \$5.00 per tour, per person, regardless of age. (Pass discounts do not apply.)

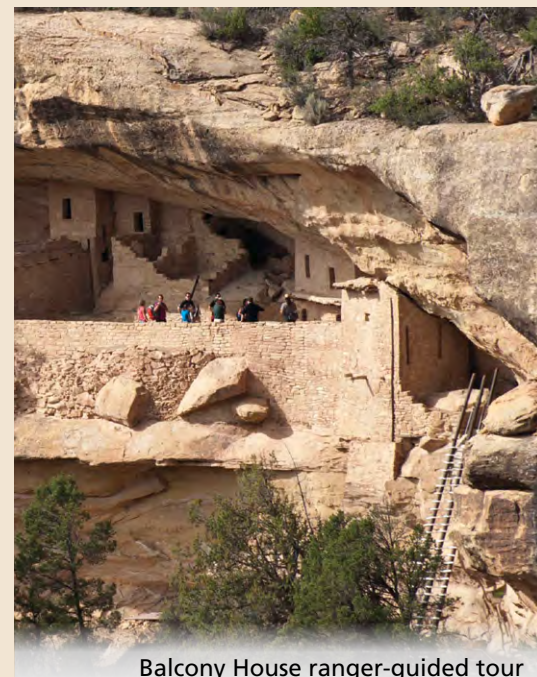
Purchase tour tickets at:

- Visitor Center
- Morefield Ranger Station
- Durango Welcome Center, 802 Main Avenue, Durango
- 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 Center, Morefield Ranger Station, or the Durango 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 4. (After September 4, ticket sales hours may 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 ¼ mile (0.4 km). Tour begins near the Cliff Palace overlook, a 23-mile (37 km), one-hour drive from the Visitor Center.

May 25 to September 8

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

September 9 to September 23

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

September 24: Closed for season*

*See page 7 for more information on the Cliff Palace preservation work.



Cliff Palace entrance trail

Cliff Palace exit trail

Balcony House

Most Adventurous Cliff Dwelling Tour

On this one-hour, ¼-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), 1¼ hours drive from the Visitor Center.

May 25 to August 18

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

August 19 to October 20

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

October 21: Closed for season



Balcony House entrance ladder

Long House

Most In-Depth Tour

This two-hour tour involves hiking 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 begins at the Wetherill Mesa Information Kiosk, a 27-mile (43.5 km), 1¼ hour drive from the Visitor Center. *Vehicles over 25 feet (8 m) long are not allowed on the Wetherill Mesa Road.* The tour will end at the Long House trailhead, giving you the option of exploring more of Wetherill Mesa on your own.

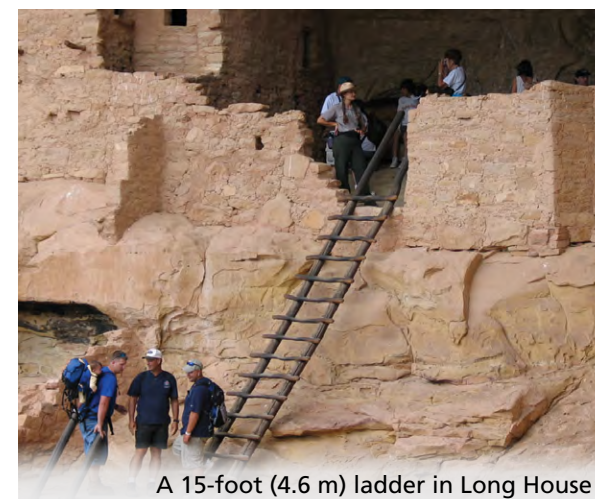
May 25 to September 15

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

September 16 to October 20

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

October 21: Closed for season



A 15-foot (4.6 m) ladder in Long House

Contact the Aramark desk at the Visitor Center or Far View Lodge to learn about escorted bus tours. Or call 800-449-2288, 970-529-4422 locally, or visit and book online at visitmesaverde.com.