

Visitor Activities

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
Mesa Verde National Park



April 8 to May 24, 2018



View of Balcony House from Mesa Canyon Overlook

Welcome to Mesa Verde National Park! Mesa Verde offers a spectacular look into the lives of the Ancestral Pueblo people who made it their home for over 700 years, from 550 to 1300. Today, the park protects nearly 5,000 known archeological sites, including 600 cliff dwellings. These sites are some of the most notable and best preserved in the United States. From the many sites located here and in the surrounding Four Corners area, archeologists have compiled one of the most significant chapters in the story of ancient America.

Visiting the Park

Spring is a lovely time to visit. Many opportunities are available to help you experience this fascinating place, but **most activities depend on weather and road conditions**. So please check with a ranger before beginning any of the described activities. Guide booklets are available at the [Mesa Verde Visitor Center](#), [Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum](#), and at sites along the Mesa Top Loop Road. Stop at the Visitor Center or Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum to plan your visit.

Spruce Tree House

[Spruce Tree House](#) is the park's third largest and best-preserved cliff dwelling. Constructed between 1211 and 1278, it was built into a natural alcove. It contains 130 rooms, eight kivas, and may have housed 60 to 80 people.

You can observe Spruce Tree House from viewpoints near the Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum.



Spruce Tree House

Balcony House

[Balcony House](#) is the most adventurous cliff dwelling tour. This one-hour tour involves climbing a 32-foot (10 m) ladder to enter the site. You will also crawl through a 12-foot (3.7 m) long by 18-inch (46 cm) wide tunnel, and climb 60 feet (20 m) up an exposed cliff face, using two 10- to 12-foot (3.0 - 3.7 m) ladders and a series of stone steps.

Tickets are required. Purchase tickets at the Visitor Center near the park entrance or at the Durango Welcome Center at 802 Main Avenue.

April 15 to May 5

Tour times: 10:00 am to 4:00 pm; every hour

May 6 to May 24

Tour times: 10:00 am to 5:00 pm; every hour,
and 9:30 am and 3:30 pm

Tours begin at the north end of the Balcony House parking lot, a 25-mile (40 km), 1-hour drive from the Visitor Center.



32-foot ladder

Preservation and Stabilization Work in Spruce Tree House and Cliff Palace

Maintaining the Spruce Tree House Alcove

Although alcoves naturally and continually form through erosion, the alcove surrounding Spruce Tree House has become particularly unstable. Currently, there is a significant danger of rock-falls along pathways into and within the site. A geotechnical firm has been conducting a detailed evaluation of the alcove and surrounding rock. Stabilization treatment based on their results, should occur in 2019. Until work can be done to reduce the rockfall threat, the site remains closed.

Preserving Cliff Palace

Cliff Palace, the park's most famous cliff dwelling, is continuing to receive essential preservation work this spring. There are a number of overlooks from which to observe this remarkable cliff dwelling, as well as witness the work being done by archeologists and stabilization crews. Viewpoints include the Sun Point View and Sun Temple stops on the Mesa Top Loop Road; and the Cliff Palace overlook on the Cliff Palace Loop Road.

Explore On Your Own

Exhibits at the [Visitor Center](#) and [Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum](#) provide insights into the lives of the Ancestral Pueblo people. The Visitor Center is located just off U.S. Highway 160, near the park entrance. The museum is located 22 miles (35 km) from the Visitor Center, on Chapin Mesa. A 25-minute video is shown at the museum every half hour. See Visitor Services below for visitor center, museum, and store hours.

[Petroglyph Point Trail](#) begins near the museum. This 2.4-mile (3.9 km) moderately strenuous trail leads to a large petroglyph panel. If there is snow or ice, you may be directed to hike via the mesa top section of the trail. If dry, it can be hiked as a full loop. Check with a ranger at the museum for trail conditions and to sign the register.

[Mesa Top Loop Road](#) is a 6-mile (10 km) drive with short paved trails to view twelve easily-accessible archeological sites, including surface sites and cliff dwelling overlooks. 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.

[Cliff Palace Loop Road](#) is open daily, 8:00 am to sunset. Highlights include Balcony House (see page 1 for information on tours and tickets), views of Cliff Palace, and the 1.2 mile (1.9 km) Soda Canyon Overlook Trail.

[Far View Sites Complex](#) includes Far View House, four other villages, and a dry reservoir. This 3/4-mile (1.2 km) trail is located four miles (6.4 km) north of the museum. Open from 8:00 am to sunset; wheelchair accessible with assistance.



[Wetherill Mesa](#) will open April 29 or as soon as weather and road conditions permit. Explore the 5-mile Long House Loop by foot or bicycle, stopping at cliff dwelling overlooks such as Long House, Nordenskiöld #16, and Kodak House. Walk through or bicycle the Badger House Community to see early mesa top sites. Wetherill Mesa is a 45-minute drive from the turn-off near milepost 15. (Bicycles are not allowed on the Wetherill Mesa Road. Vehicles must be less than 25 feet long to drive this road. Vehicles over 8,000 lbs GVW are prohibited.)

[Hiking Trails](#) are scattered throughout the park. The most popular are the Petroglyph Point and Spruce Canyon trails near the museum. For details and trail conditions, ask a ranger.

Visitor Services

National Park Service
970-529-4465, www.nps.gov/meve

Mesa Verde Museum Association, Park Partner
970-529-4445, www.mesaverde.org

Information

Visitor Center, Store, Tour Tickets, and ATM
April 8 to April 14 8:30 am to 4:30 pm
April 15 to May 24 8:00 am to 5:00 pm

Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum and Store
April 8 to April 14 9:00 am to 4:30 pm
April 15 to May 24 8:00 am to 6:30 pm

Durango Welcome Center, Tour Tickets
(802 Main Ave, Durango)
April 15 to May 10 9:00 am to 6:00 pm
May 11 to May 24 9:00 am to 7:00 pm (Sun-Th)
9:00 am to 8:00 pm (Fr-Sat)

U.S. Postal Service
April 9 to May 24 9:00 am to 3:00 pm (M-F)
10:00 am to 2:00 pm (Sat)

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

Aramark, Park Partner
800-449-2288, www.visitmesaverde.com

Spruce Tree Terrace, Café, and Gift Shop
April 8 to April 11 11:00 am to 4:30 pm
April 12 to May 23 10:00 am to 5:00 pm
May 24 9:00 am to 6:30 pm

Far View Terrace, Café and Gift Shop
Opens April 13
Breakfast 7:00 am to 10:00 am
Lunch (starting April 30) 11:00 am to 3:00 pm
Dinner (starting May 14) 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm

Far View Lodge, Gift Shop, and Restaurant
Opens April 12
Dinner 5:00 pm to 9:30 pm

Morefield Campground and Camp Store
Off Season Camping, Limited Services
April 12 to April 18
Campground services opens April 19

Aramark Bus Tours begin April 13. The 4-hour *700 Years Tour* is offered in the morning and afternoon, and includes short walks to archeological sites on the Mesa Top Loop Road. Purchase tickets from Aramark at the Visitor Center, Morefield Camp Store, and Far View Lodge.

Know the Rules of the Park

We want you to have a safe and enjoyable visit. Follow park rules, not only to protect yourself, but also to preserve Mesa Verde's archeological sites and natural environment.

- Archeological structures are fragile. Take care not to touch, sit, stand, climb, or lean on walls.
- Leashed pets can be walked along paved roads and in parking lots. Pets are not allowed on trails, in archeological sites, or in buildings. Do not leave pets unattended.
- Help us keep wildlife wild. It is illegal to feed, stalk, capture, or tease wildlife.



For Your Safety

In case of emergency, call 911

Park Road Advisory

- Follow all traffic signs
- Beware of rocks and wildlife on the road
- Watch for snowplows during spring storms

High Elevation

- Mesa Verde ranges from 7,000 feet (2,134 m) elevation to 8,572 feet (2,613 m) at Park Point. The air is thin and very dry. Stay hydrated!
- Consider your physical health BEFORE hiking or going on tours.
- Carry and DRINK plenty of water.