



Winter in Mesa Verde National Park offers a wonderful opportunity for Nordic skiing, snowshoeing and walking. Winter trails will be available once there is an appreciable amount of snow and the park has begun to groom the trails for snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. (Please check the park's [Hiking](#) page for trails that are available before the snow falls and the winter trails are open.) To find out if winter trails are open, call:

- Chief Ranger's Office (Monday to Friday, 8:00 am to 4:00 pm)
970-529-4622
- Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum (7 days a week, 9:00 am to 4:30 pm)
970-529-4631

When engaging in winter activities follow these safety guidelines to ensure a great experience:

- Bring adequate gear, food and water.
- Sign in at the Trail Register so rangers will know you are out there.
- Stay on marked trails so you do not get lost.
- Follow all park rules and regulations.
- Emergency contact information: 970-529-4622, Chief Ranger's office, Monday to Friday, 8:00 am to 4:00 pm, 911 during all other times. Be aware that cell coverage is very spotty throughout the park.

Pedestrian traffic is not allowed on any groomed trail; see below for places to enjoy a nice walk.

Nordic skiing locations:

Four trail systems are groomed for skate and classic skiing. Available groomed trails (if snow permits) totals 21-miles.

Cliff Palace Loop Trail: Park at the north end of the Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum parking lot. Follow the groomed trail to the Mesa Top Road and Cliff Palace Road intersection. Cross the Mesa Top Road and follow the Cliff Palace Loop road which will eventually loop back to the Mesa Top Road and Cliff Palace Road intersection. Lastly follow the groomed trail back to the museum parking lot. Due to its distance this trail is rated as moderate but the terrain is relatively flat. Numerous cliff dwelling viewpoints are available along the way. Total roundtrip distance is 6.5 miles.

Wetherill Mesa Road Trail: Park at the Far View Visitor Center parking lot to access this trail. This trail is groomed for two miles making it a four mile out and back ski. Beyond the groomed two miles, there is an opportunity to ski four additional miles of ungroomed surface to mile marker 6. Skiing beyond the turnaround point is not permitted. Due to steep hills and ungroomed surface this trail is rated as difficult. Total available distance is 12 miles.

Prater Canyon: Park at the Montezuma Overlook parking area. This loop trail is groomed for 3 miles where it will make a u-turn and return to the parking area. Due to the distance this trail is rated as moderate. Total available distance is 5.5 miles.

Morefield Trails: Park at the Morefield Campground Store for access to the following trails. The groomed trail begins between the store and the laundry mat, look for the trailhead register.

The **Morefield Campground Trail** follows the established campground road loops for a total distance of 4.1 miles. Due to length and a number of short hills this trail is rated as moderate.

The **Meadow Bliss Trail** winds through the meadows just south of the campground. Due to a few steep hills and the distance this trail is rated as moderate. Total distance is 3 miles.

Snowshoeing trail locations:

Snowshoers must travel on the fresh snow (ungroomed surface) or on the groomed skate portion of the trails. As a courtesy to skiers do not snowshoe on the classic ski tracks. Classic ski tracks are set to the edge of the groomed trail and will have two parallel tracks about 8 inches apart running parallel with the groomed trail. Walking without snowshoes is not permitted on any groomed trails. All snowshoe trails will be marked with orange diamond markers on posts or trees.

Morefield Trails: Park at the Morefield Campground Store for access to the following trails. The groomed trail begins between the store and the laundry mat, look for the trailhead register. Distances noted are after branching off the groomed ski trail.

Prater Ridge Trail: Follow the groomed ski trail to the Prater Ridge Trailhead. This trail ascends steeply for the first mile until the top of the mesa is reached. On top follow a large loop and return to the mile long decent. Due to distance and elevation gain this trail is rated as difficult. Total distance is 8 miles.

Knife Edge Trail: Follow the groomed ski trail to the Knife Edge Trailhead. This trail is rated as easy and offers great views of the valley below. Total distance is 2 miles.

Point Lookout Trail: Follow the groomed ski trail to the Lookout Point Trailhead. From there the trail ascends steeply to the top of the mesa. The trail continues along the mesa top until it reaches an excellent view of the La Plata Mountains. Due to the elevation gain this trail is rated as difficult. Total distance is 2.2 miles.

Park Point: Park in front of the Park Point gate just off the main park road. Parking is limited. The trail follows the road up to the fire lookout. This trail is rated as easy to moderate. Total distance is 1.5 miles round trip.

Far View Sites Community: Park in front of the Far View Sites gate. Parking is limited. The trail follows the road to and around the various mesa top archaeological sites. This meandering trail is rated easy. Total available distance is up to 1 mile.

Spruce Canyon Trail: Park in the Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum parking lot. This trail starts near the museum and follows the plowed paved path down to Spruce Tree House cliff dwelling. Access to the trailhead is only available when the gate is open for a ranger-guided tour at 10:00 am, 1:00 pm and 3:30 pm. From the plowed paved path, the unplowed trail continues one-way along Spruce Canyon where it loops back to the mesa top returning to the museum. Due to elevation gain and distance this trail is rated as difficult. Total distance is 2.4 miles.

Soda Canyon Overlook Trail: Park at the north end of the Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum parking lot. Follow the groomed trail to the Mesa Top Road and Cliff Palace Road intersection. Cross the Mesa Top Road and follow the groomed Cliff Palace Loop trail to a Y-intersection. Take the left path to the Soda Canyon Overlook Trailhead just north of the Balcony House parking lot. Due to the distance this trail is rated as moderate. Groomed trail from parking lot to trailhead is 1.75 miles. Ungroomed Soda Canyon Overlook Trail from groomed trail to overlook is .75 mile. Total distance, round trip is about 5 miles.

Walking trail locations (without snowshoes)

Petroglyph Trail (mesa top portion): Park in the Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum parking lot. This trail starts just behind the museum on the paved path to Spruce Tree House. The trail ends with a view into Navajo Canyon. The end of the trail is marked with a sign; travel past that point is not permitted. Unfortunately due to ice and snow dangers the petroglyph panel cannot be accessed. Total round trip distance is 3 miles.

Spruce Canyon Trail: See description above.

Chapin Mesa Rim Trail: Park in the Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum parking lot. This path leaves from the museum and goes along the canyon rim with views of Spruce Canyon. The trail includes a stop at the historic Chapin Mesa amphitheater before it exits at the Spruce Canyon Trail and returns to the museum. Total distance is 1.5 miles if only walking from the museum to the exit of Spruce Canyon Trail and back.