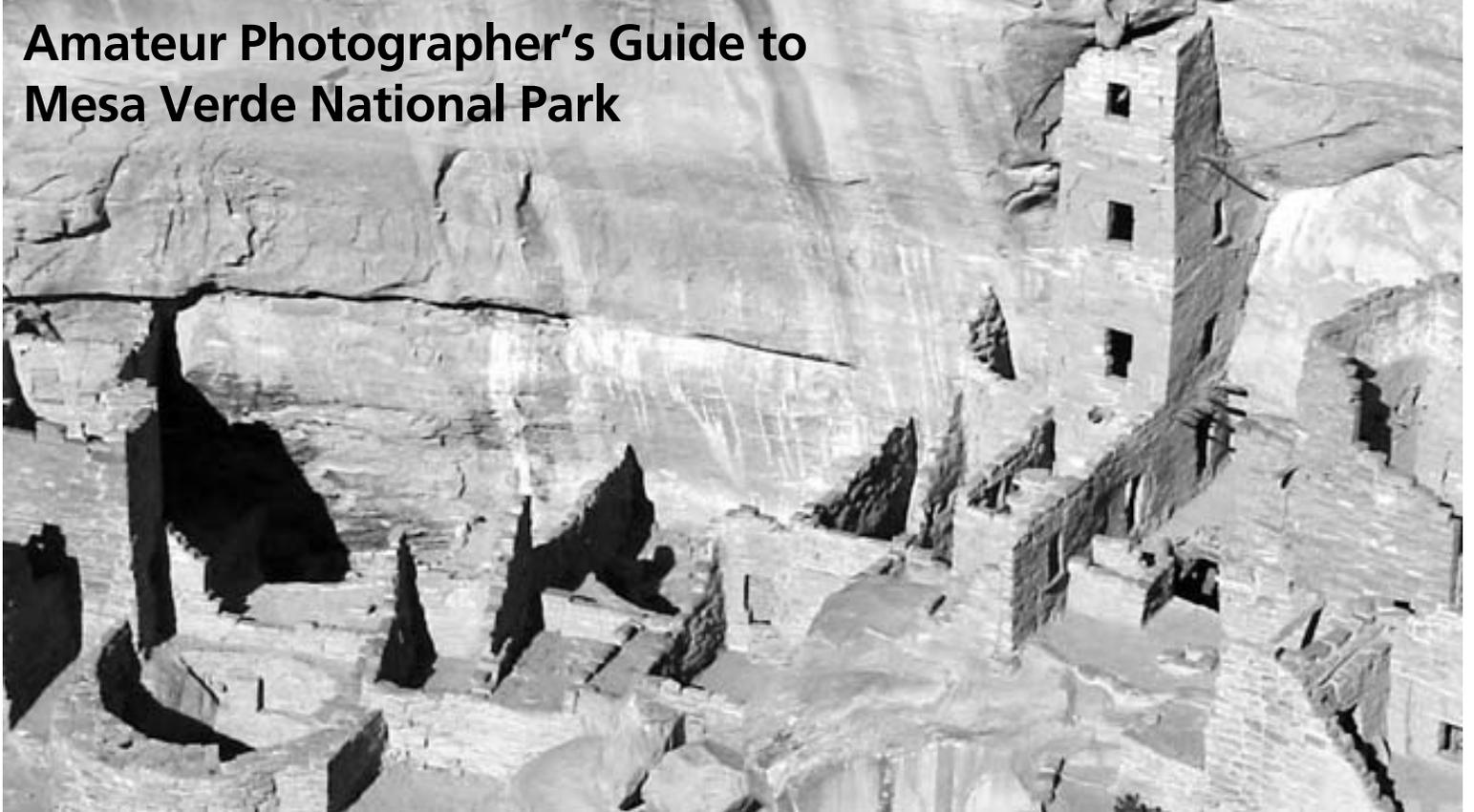




## Amateur Photographer's Guide to Mesa Verde National Park



Many visitors agree that Mesa Verde is a particularly photogenic park. The scenery is spectacular and the cultural resources, magnificent. Aside from memories, some of your best souvenirs can be the photographs you take home with you. And of course, you want them to be the best photographs possible. Rangers are often asked for advice to find the best photographic shots, favorite locations from which to photograph particular subjects, and the ideal time to take the pictures. If you are looking for some pointers to help make your snapshots look like a professional's, read on.

### Mesa Verde Tips

The table below is for summer use. It identifies the most photographed areas, the light at different times of day, and suggested locations for shooting. A telephoto lens is needed for some overlook locations. Please note that high contrast will cause some parts of your picture to be overexposed and some to be underexposed. It is best to zoom in on either a dark or light area.

Remember, when you are on a ranger-guided tour (such as at Cliff Palace, Balcony House, or Long House), you must remain with the group. Please stay on established trails at all times.

Area	Early Morning	Mid Day	Late Afternoon	Photograph From
<b>Spruce Tree House</b>	In shadows	High contrast	<b>In bright sunlight</b> In shadows	Chief Ranger's Office <b>Overlook on trail</b> <b>Self-guided: close-ups</b>
<b>Cliff Palace</b>	In shadows	High contrast	<b>In bright sunlight</b>	<b>Cliff Palace Overlook</b> Sun Temple Overlook <b>Close-ups on tour</b>
<b>Balcony House</b>	<b>In bright sunlight</b>	High contrast	In shadows	<b>Soda Canyon Overlook</b> <b>Close-ups on tour</b>
<b>Square Tower House</b>	In shadows	High contrast	<b>In bright sunlight</b>	<b>Square Tower House Overlook</b>
<b>Oak Tree House</b> <b>New Fire House</b>	In shadows	High contrast	<b>In bright sunlight</b>	<b>Mesa Tops overlooks</b>
<b>Far View Sites</b>	<b>Depends on the direction of shot</b>	High contrast	Depends on the direction of shot	Many possibilities from trail
<b>Cedar Tree Tower</b>	In bright sunlight from east side	High contrast	In bright sunlight from west side	<b>Many possibilities from trail</b>
<b>Long House</b>	High contrast	Less contrast	<b>In shadows</b>	Tram overlook <b>Close-ups on tour</b>
<b>Step House</b>	In bright sunlight	Mostly in shadows	In shadows	<b>Self-guided: close-ups</b>

\*Best times and locations are bolded

## Composition

*It is not the camera,  
but the composition  
that makes a great  
photo!*

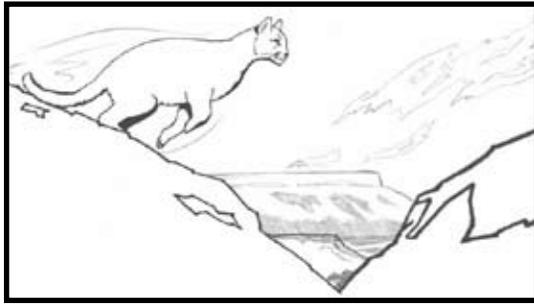


Illustration by DJ Webb

Action shots should move toward the center.



Illustration by DJ Webb

Keep the main object slightly off center.

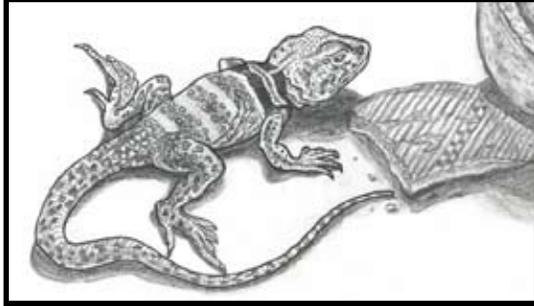


Illustration by DJ Webb

Fill the entire frame.

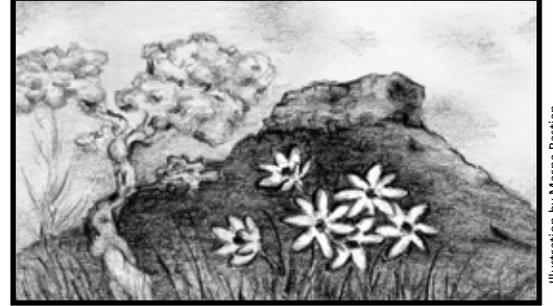


Illustration by Marina Bastian

Bright color in one area brings attention to that area of the picture.



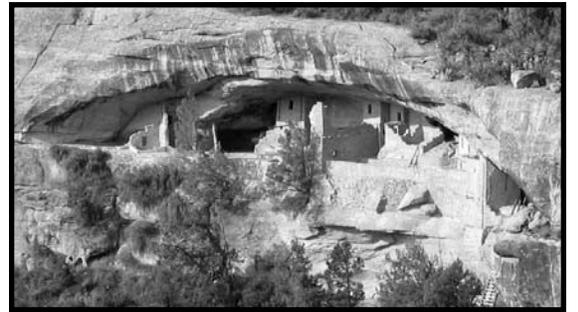
Illustration by DJ Webb

Frame a distant object with something in the foreground.

## Light and Shadows

*It is not the object, but  
the light that is falling on  
the object that makes an  
interesting photo.*

Late afternoon and early morning produce the most interesting shadows for those great telephoto shots.



Morning Balcony House from Soda Canyon Overlook.

With shadows, you can generally get good details in close-up pictures, but with bright sunlight, you can get better detail with more distant shots.



Pipe Shrine Spiral at Far View Sites Complex.

With manual cameras, you may wish to stop down 1/2 f-stop when taking photos on bright sunny days.



Petroglyph Point panel, automatic exposure.



Petroglyph Point panel, down 1/2 f-stop.