

Visitor Activities

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



April 14 to May 24, 2019



Ranger-guided tour of Cliff Palace

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 Mesa Verde. **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 Museum to plan your visit.

Spruce Tree House Overlook

[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 points near the Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum.



Spruce Tree House

Cliff Palace (ticket required)

[Cliff Palace](#) is the park's largest cliff dwelling. Ranger-guided tours are one hour in length, with a walking distance of 1/4 mile (400 m). You will climb four, 8- to 10-foot (2.6-3 m) ladders, for a 100-foot (30 m) overall vertical ascent.

Tours begin at the Cliff Palace Overlook, a 23-mile (37 km), 1-hour drive from the Visitor Center.

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

• **April 14 to May 24, 2019**
Tour times: 10:00 am to 4:00 pm; every hour

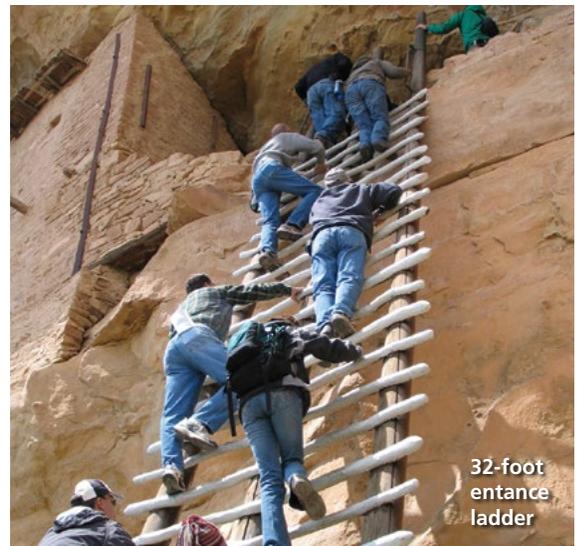
Balcony House (ticket required)

[Balcony House](#) is the most adventurous cliff dwelling tour. This one-hour tour involves climbing a 32-foot (10 m) ladder; crawling through a 12-foot (3.7 m) long by 18-inch (46 cm) wide tunnel, and climbing 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.

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

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

• **May 19 to May 24, 2019**
Tour times: 10:00 am to 5:00 pm; every hour



32-foot entrance ladder

Long House (ticket required)

[Long House](#) on Wetherill Mesa offers the most in-depth tour. The 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). Tours begin at the Wetherill Mesa Information Kiosk, a 27-mile (43.5 km), 1-1/4 hour drive from the Visitor Center.

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

• **May 19 to May 24, 2019**
Tour times: 9:30 am, 12:30 pm, and 2:00 pm

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 28 or as soon as weather and road conditions permit. Wetherill Mesa is a 45-minute drive from the turn-off near milepost 15. (*Vehicles must be less than 25 feet long to drive this road. Vehicles over 8,000 lbs GVW are prohibited. Bicycles are not allowed on the Wetherill Mesa Road.*)

While on Wetherill Mesa, explore the 5-mile Long House Loop by foot or bicycle, stopping at cliff dwelling overlooks such as Long House and Kodak House. Walk or bicycle the Badger House Community to see early mesa top sites. Starting May 19, [Step House](#) will be available for self-guided walking tours. Pick up a *Wetherill Mesa Visitor Guide* for details.

[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 14 to May 24 8:00 am to 5:00 pm

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

Durango Welcome Center, Tour Tickets
(802 Main Ave, Durango)
April 14 to May 24 10:00 am to 6:00 pm

U.S. Postal Service
April 14 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 14 to May 22 10:00 am to 5:00 pm
May 23 to May 24 9:00 am to 6:30 pm

Far View Terrace, Café and Gift Shop
April 14 to May 1
A la cart Breakfast 7:00 am to 10:00 am
May 2 to May 24
Breakfast 7:00 am to 10:00 am
Lunch 11:00 am to 3:00 pm
Dinner (starting May 13) 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm

Far View Lodge, Gift Shop, and Restaurant
April 14 to May 24
Dinner 5:00 pm to 9:30 pm

Morefield Campground and Camp Store
Opens April 18

Aramark Bus Tours begin April 14. The 4-hour *700 Years Tour* is offered in the morning and afternoon. 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 km) elevation to 8,572 feet (2,613 km) 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.