

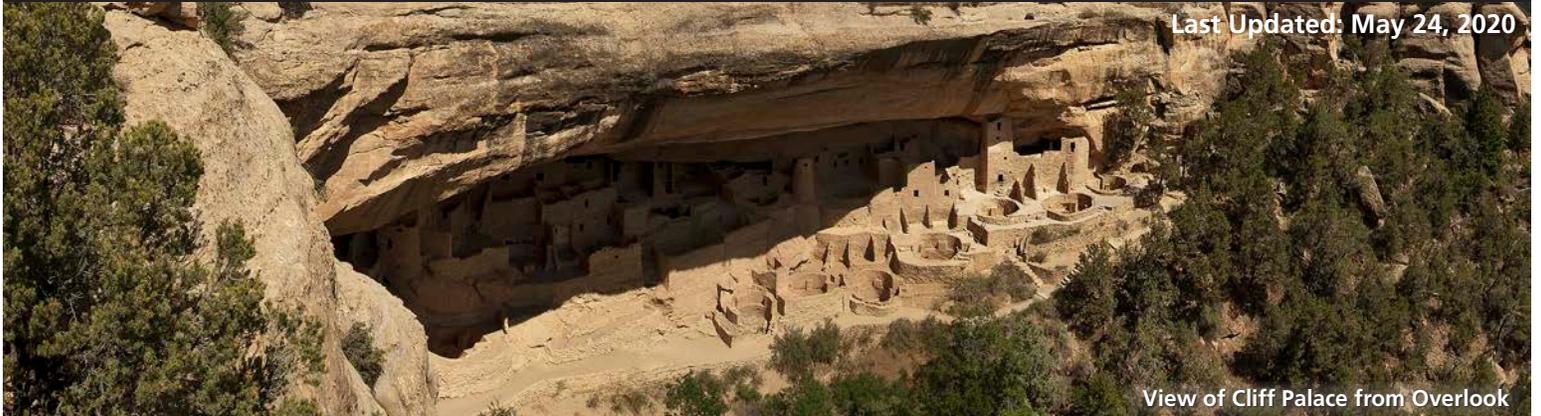
# Visitor Activities

## Summer, 2020

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



Last Updated: May 24, 2020



View of Cliff Palace from 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.

### Message from the Superintendent Cliff Spencer

Welcome to Mesa Verde National Park. This year our operation looks a little different. We thank you for your understanding as we work hard to keep you, our staff, and the resources we protect safe. We encourage you to practice good health measures throughout your stay.

- Please keep six feet (2 m) distance between you and other visitors to reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- Thoroughly wash your hands or use hand sanitizer after touching railings, door handles, and other objects.
- Please consider wearing a mask as a courtesy to others. Wearing a mask can help prevent transmission of the virus even if you or others do not feel sick.

### Virtual Ranger Station

The park is opened under limited operation due to COVID-19, so much of your visit will be self-guided. The cliff dwellings are closed, but there is still plenty to see and do, including magnificent cliff dwelling views. If you haven't used our new [Online Virtual Ranger Station](#) to plan your visit, please make sure to stop at the Visitor & Research Center, near the park entrance. A Virtual Ranger Station has been set up just outside. There, you can scan codes using your cell phone or other mobile device to learn what self-guided opportunities there are for you to enjoy while in the park. (*Cell service is extremely limited beyond this point.*) Restrooms are available and rangers will be roving the station to answer questions.

### 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 Overlooks

[Cliff Palace](#) is the park's largest cliff dwelling. You will find several views from overlooks; all from different angles and all worthwhile.

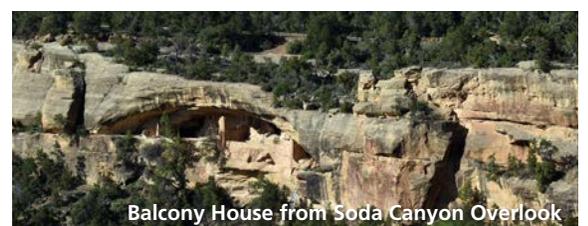
On the Mesa Top Loop Drive, we recommend stopping at Sun Point View to see it and several other cliff dwellings along the canyon walls.

A much closer view is available from Sun Temple, the last stop on the Mesa Top Loop.

Another fantastic viewpoint is just a short walk along a paved trail from the Cliff Palace parking lot. This is located along the Cliff Palace/Balcony House Loop Drive. (See map on page 2)

### Balcony House Overlook

[Balcony House](#) is medium-sized cliff dwelling with 40 rooms, including two kivas. Although not visible from the roadway, you can view Balcony House from the Soda Canyon Overlook Trail, a 1.25 mile (1.9 km) roundtrip hike. (See map on page 2)



Balcony House from Soda Canyon Overlook

## Explore On Your Own

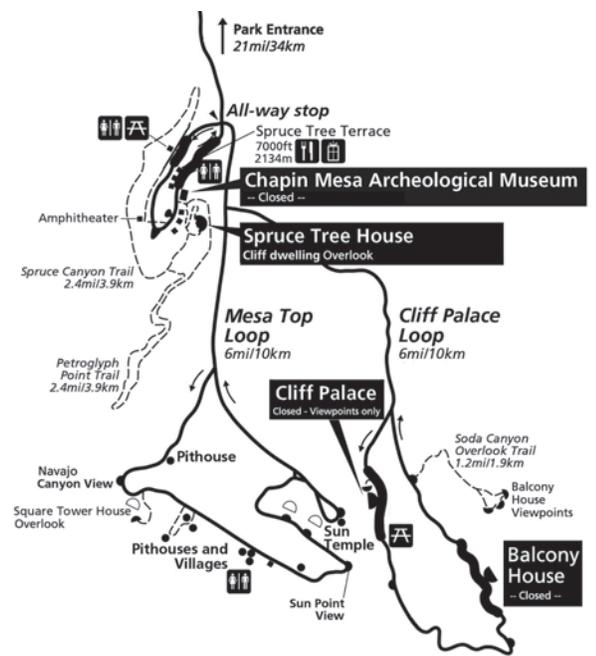
**Mesa Top Loop Road** is a 6-mile (10 km) drive with short paved trails to view twelve easily-accessible archeological sites, including surface sites and cliff dwelling overlooks. Highlights include Square Tower House Overlook, and views of Cliff Palace from Sun Point View and Sun Temple. The Mesa Top Loop Road is open daily, 8:00 am to sunset.

**Cliff Palace Loop Road** is open daily, 8:00 am to sunset. Highlights include a spectacular view of Cliff Palace and the 1.2 mile (1.9 km) Soda Canyon Overlook Trail with views of Balcony House.

**Petroglyph Point Trail** begins near the museum. This adventurous trail winds below the edge of Chapin Mesa and leads to a large petroglyph panel located 1.4 miles (2.3 km) from the trailhead. The trail is rugged and rocky along the canyon wall to the panel. After the panel, you'll scramble up a large stone staircase to the top, and enjoy an easy return through forest to complete the loop. Register at the trailhead. Bring plenty of water!

**Spruce Canyon Trail** starts from the top of Chapin Mesa and follows along the bottom of Spruce Canyon. This scenic trail winds through excellent wildlife habitat. A steep climb leads out of the canyon and then passes through the picnic area before returning to the museum. Register at the trailhead. Bring plenty of water!

Additional hiking trails are located throughout the park. You can download a hiking guide on our [hiking page](#).



**Far View Sites Complex** is a mesa top community that was a place of modest homes interspersed with small farm fields between 900 and 1300. Follow the woodland trail among six sites to learn about Ancestral Pueblo life in the surrounding landscape. The level, unpaved ¾-mile trail (1.2 km) is open 8:00 am to sunset. *Parking is limited to vehicles under 25 feet.*



## Visitor Services

**National Park Service**  
970-529-4465, [www.nps.gov/meve](http://www.nps.gov/meve)

**Mesa Verde Museum Association, Park Partner**  
970-529-4445, [www.mesaverde.org](http://www.mesaverde.org)

**Information**  
*Virtual Ranger Station\* and Restrooms*  
Located just outside the Visitor & Research Center  
9:00 am to 4:00 pm  
\*Note: You can also visit the [Online Virtual Ranger Station](#) before you arrive.

**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](http://www.visitmesaverde.com)  
Concession facilities are also reopening in phases, so please see their [website](#) for operating hours and dining menus.

*Morefield Campground and Camp Store*  
Open

*Far View Terrace, Café and Gift Shop*  
Open

*Far View Lodge, Gift Shop, and Restaurant*  
Open

*Spruce Tree Terrace Café*  
Open

## 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
- Please follow CDC recommendations on page 1 and also found on their [website at CDC.gov](#).

**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.