

Visitor Activities

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Mesa Verde National Park



November 11, 2007 to March 1, 2008



Winter is a special time to visit Mesa Verde National Park. Visit the Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum; join a free ranger-guided tour of Spruce Tree House; drive the Mesa Top Loop Road; and explore a variety of cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and hiking opportunities. All activities depend on weather conditions. Please check with a ranger for trail and road conditions before beginning any of the listed activities.

You can still view many of the Chapin Mesa cliff dwellings. However, due to winter road conditions, you might have to hike or ski to overlooks. Interpretive trail and site guide booklets are sold at Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum and at sites on the Mesa Top Loop. For additional park information, tune your radio to AM 1610.

There are no overnight accommodations in the park. Far View Lodge and Morefield Campground are closed for the winter season. Roadside camping and overnight parking are not permitted. Overnight accommodations are available in nearby communities.

Free Ranger-Guided Tour

Spruce Tree House, the one cliff dwelling open this time of year, can only be entered on a ranger-guided tour. This tour is strenuous and the path can be icy. Dress warmly for the one-hour, outdoor tour which begins at the Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum.

SPRUCE TREE HOUSE

The tour requires a 100ft (30m) descent and ascent on a winding, paved path. Total walking distance is ½-mile (1km) round trip. Meet the ranger at the museum desk five minutes before the tour time. Tours are offered daily at 10:00 a.m., 1:00 p.m., and 3:30 p.m.

Mesa Verde's Best-Preserved Cliff Dwelling

A chance to see wildlife...



If you think you won't see much in Mesa Verde in winter, think again. Winter is the best time to see signs of wildlife in Mesa Verde National Park. These mountain lion prints were found in the snow near Spruce Tree House. Mountain lion tracks are unusual, but keep your eye out for elk, deer, bobcats, and turkeys. Blue grouse, golden eagles, and coyotes are commonly seen along the road between Park Point and Geologic Overlook. Please drive carefully; it is common for rabbits to run across the road with little warning.

On Your Own



Snowy winter day near the Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum

CHAPIN MESA ARCHEOLOGICAL MUSEUM

Artifacts of the Ancestral Puebloans

Information, dioramas, and exhibits are available in this historic building. A 25-minute video is shown every half hour. The museum bookstore specializes in books, videos, and other items about Mesa Verde National Park and the Southwest. Restrooms and picnic area are located nearby. The museum is open daily, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. A full service post office, across from the Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum, is open Monday to Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

MESA TOP LOOP ROAD

Auto Tour - 600 Years of Mesa Verde History

This 6-mile (10km) driving tour includes short, paved trails to twelve easily-accessible surface villages and cliff dwelling overlooks. Highlights include Sun Point Overlook, Square Tower House, and views of Cliff Palace from Sun Point and Sun Temple stops. Open daily, 8:00 a.m. to sunset, weather permitting.

CLIFF PALACE LOOP ROAD

Cross-country Skiing, Snowshoeing or Hiking

This 6-mile (10km) road is not plowed in winter. Park outside the gate and walk or ski this road to trails and cliff dwelling overlooks. Highlights include Cliff Palace Overlook and Soda Canyon Overlook trail (provides the only view of Balcony House). Open daily, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., weather permitting.

FAR VIEW SITES

Five Mesa Top Villages & Reservoir

Four miles (6.4km) north of the Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum, Far View House and four other villages can be explored on a $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile (1.2km) unpaved trail (muddy in winter). Road is not plowed in the winter. Park outside gate and walk to sites. Open daily 8:00 a.m. to sunset.

PETROGLYPH POINT TRAIL

Hike to a Petroglyph Panel

The 2.4 mile (3.9km) trail to Petroglyph Point (round-trip) begins near the museum and leads to a panel of petroglyphs. In clear weather, the trail can be hiked as a loop. However, due to ice and snow, you might be directed to access and return via the mesa top section of the trail. Registration is required at the museum. Ask the ranger at the museum desk about trail conditions.

Winter Facilities in the Park

SPRUCE TREE TERRACE RESTAURANT AND GIFT SHOP

Located near the Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum, food, restrooms and gifts are available daily, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

For Your Safety

- Consider your physical health BEFORE hiking or going on tours.
- Carry and DRINK plenty of water during your visit. Hiking in Mesa Verde National Park is restricted and allowed only on designated trails. Hiking is done at your own risk, especially if icy or snowy conditions exist.
- No fuel is available in the park. Contact the ranger at the museum desk for assistance.
- Pets must be physically restrained at all times and are not allowed in public buildings or on trails.
- Feeding, capturing, or teasing wildlife is prohibited.
- Please do not sit, climb or walk on fragile archeological structures.

In case of park emergency, call 911. For information on winter road conditions (major highways) call: Colorado 1-303-639-1111, New Mexico 1-800-432-4269, Utah 1-866-511-UTAH, or Arizona 1-888-411-ROAD.