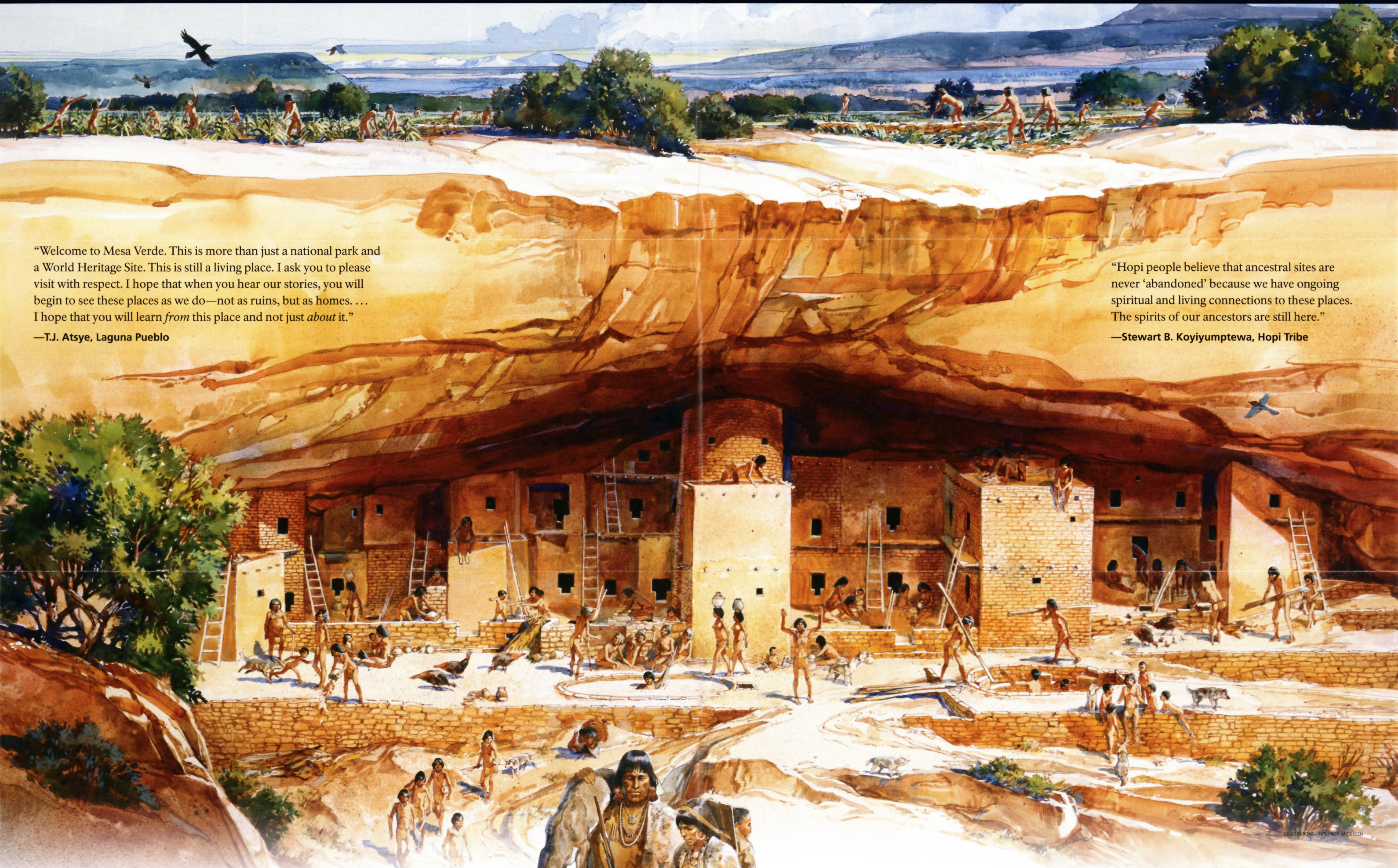




“Welcome to Mesa Verde. This is more than just a national park and a World Heritage Site. This is still a living place. I ask you to please visit with respect. I hope that when you hear our stories, you will begin to see these places as we do—not as ruins, but as homes. . . . I hope that you will learn *from* this place and not just *about* it.”

—T.J. Atsye, Laguna Pueblo

“Hopi people believe that ancestral sites are never ‘abandoned’ because we have ongoing spiritual and living connections to these places. The spirits of our ancestors are still here.”

—Stewart B. Koyiyumptewa, Hopi Tribe

Continuing Connections

Mesa Verde’s cliff dwellings evoke images of bustling communities, but they are only part of the picture.

Most ancestors of today’s Pueblos and Tribes lived in mesa-top villages near their farm fields. Others, who came before and after, left few signs of their presence.

Fertile soils and abundant resources have always drawn people to this place. As the people developed strategies to farm in this arid environment, communities grew.

Granaries held a surplus. Wild plants provided medicines and helped create a varied diet. People wove baskets and made beautiful pottery for daily use, ceremonies, and trade. Trade networks brought goods and ideas from as far as Mexico and California.

At its peak in the 1200s the Mesa Verde region was home to about 40,000 people, more than who live in the area today. Around that time people began constructing the cliff dwellings.

The alcoves provided natural shelter, and many had a convenient water source from seep springs. People lived in the alcoves for several generations before moving from the area.

Ancestral homes that still stand today are testaments to the skills of the engineers who built them. Many Indigenous people feel the presence of their ancestors in the dwellings of Mesa Verde.

We hope you find your own meaning and connection to this sacred place. Please visit with respect.



People hunted deer and raised turkeys. Yucca fibers were woven into twine to make turkey-feather blankets, ropes, and sandals.

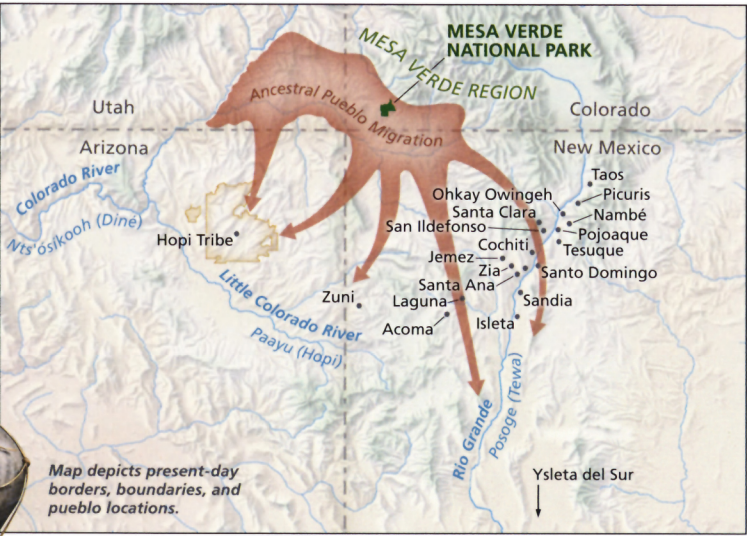
ILLUSTRATIONS—NPS / ROY ANDERSON

Changing Communities

In the late 1200s people began to move from the Mesa Verde area. Oral history teaches that the ancestors of Pueblos and Tribes were meant to be here for a time, and once they learned what they needed, they continued their journey.

They spread south, eventually settling in their present-day communities from the Hopi Mesas in Arizona to the Rio Grande River Valley (map).

Today, Pueblos and Tribes maintain many traditions from their time here. They live in different communities and speak multiple languages but still share an enduring connection to Mesa Verde.



Ollas (wide-mouthed jars) were used to collect water.

NPS



“I’m a Pueblo person. . . . I want you to know that there are still descendants of the people who lived here, that we are still here on this world and we didn’t mysteriously disappear. We still do a lot of the same things that our forefathers did when they were living here . . . carrying on the tradition, culture, songs, dances, languages.”

—Peter Pino, Zia Pueblo



NPS / SPENCER BURKE

Current Cultures

The park protects the rich cultural heritage of 27 Pueblos and Tribes. The Pueblo, Hopi, Ute (*Nuuchiu*), Navajo (*Noka’a Diné*), and Apache have connections to this land. Ancestral villages are called “memory pieces” in Zuni Pueblo. The Hopi Tribe consider them *itaakuku*—“footprints left behind by the ancestors.”

Mesa Verde was part of the Ute Tribe’s traditional hunting and gathering grounds. Many Navajo songs, prayers, and ceremonies reflect their people’s ties to this sacred place. Families continue to make pilgrimages to Mesa Verde to reconnect with their ancestors, share knowledge, and gather medicines.



Golden eagle

ADOBEE STOCK / BERNIE DUHAMEL

Centered on a Cuesta

“Our lifeways, our beliefs, the things that were set in motion for us, are all centered on relationships, to each other, to the environment, to plants and animals, to the movement of the heavens.”

—Theresa Pasqual, Acoma Pueblo



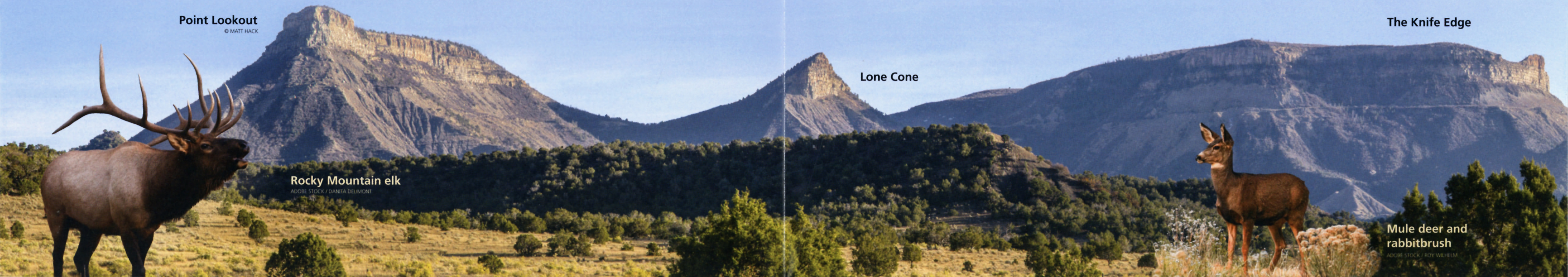
American kestrel

ADOBEE STOCK / BERNIE DUHAMEL

LAND The uplift of geologic layers and a southward slope create ideal conditions for farming. Erosion creates the natural sandstone alcoves.

ANIMALS Mesa Verde provides habitat for species including black bears, mountain lions, and coyotes. Observe wildlife from a safe and respectful distance.

PLANTS Rugged terrain creates microhabitats that support a diversity of plants. Pinyon-juniper woodland is the most common ecosystem in the park.



Point Lookout

© MATT HACK

Rocky Mountain elk

ADOBEE STOCK / JENNIFER DELANEY

Lone Cone

The Knife Edge

Mule deer and rabbitbrush

ADOBEE STOCK / BERNIE DUHAMEL

Visiting This Sacred Landscape



Spruce Tree House behind snowy Douglas firs
NPS / SPENCER BURKE



Lomayestewa Family Hopi Dancers
NPS / BRADY RICHARDS



Spiral petroglyph at Far View Sites
NPS / JUNE SCHWOCHOW



Inside Balcony House
© LAURENCE PARENT



Milky Way over Point Lookout
NPS / JACOB W. FRANK



Hiking Petroglyph Point Trail
NPS / SPENCER BURKE

This varied landscape of deep canyons and expansive vistas is home to over 1,000 plant and animal species, including several that live nowhere else on Earth.

For thousands of years people have traveled through and built thriving communities on the mesas and in the cliffs. Today, the park protects the rich cultural heritage of 27 Pueblos and Tribes and offers a window into the past. This is a sacred place, a national park, a World Heritage Site, and an International Dark Sky Park.

Visit with Respect This is a sacred ancestral home. Federal laws protect all cultural and natural features in the park, including fragile ancestral sites and objects. Do not touch, climb, sit, or lean on ancient walls. Leave things where you find them. Stay on designated paths.

Hours The park is always open except under emergency conditions. Ancestral sites and picnic areas are open 8 am to sunset.

Visitor and Research Center Near the park entrance off US 160. Start here for exhibits, information, and a bookstore. Open year-round. Parking lot is gated nightly.

Tour Reservations You may access cliff dwellings only on a ranger-led tour. To reserve tours, call 877-444-6777 or visit www.recreation.gov.

Hiking For thousands of years people have crossed this landscape of expansive vistas, sloping mesas, and rugged canyons. Follow in their footsteps along 30 miles of trails. Ask a ranger for a hiking brochure.

Bicycling Bike the six-mile Mesa Top Loop Road on Chapin Mesa and five-mile Long House Loop Road on Wetherill Mesa. Bikes are prohibited on Wetherill Mesa Road. **Caution!** Roads have narrow shoulders, sharp turns, and large vehicles.

Lodging and Services Far View Lodge (closed in winter) has lodging and a restaurant. Chapin Mesa bus tours leave from the lodge. A cafeteria and gift shop are nearby. Reserve lodging at 800-449-2288 or www.visitmesaverde.com.

Camping You may camp only at Morefield Campground (14-day stay limit). Open seasonally, it has 267 sites with tables and firepits with grills. Some sites have utility hookups. Services include an RV dump

station, groceries, showers, firewood, and laundromat. Reserve sites at the campground store or www.visitmesaverde.com.

Accessibility We strive to make facilities, services, and programs accessible to all. For information go to a visitor center, ask a ranger, call, or check the park website.

Overlooks, most Far View walkways, and the Badger House Community trail are wheelchair-accessible with help. Wide-rim wheels are recommended. Trails might not meet grade requirements.

Wetherill Mesa Open seasonally. Please visit the park website or ask a ranger for more information.

Chapin Mesa The road to Chapin Mesa is open year-round. Explore:

- **Balcony House** Visible from the end of Soda Canyon Overlook Trail. Ranger-led tours are offered seasonally.
- **Cliff Palace** Largest cliff dwelling in North America. Visible from three overlooks on Cliff Palace and Mesa Top Loop roads. Ranger-led tours are offered seasonally.
- **Far View Sites** Self-guiding trail through a mesa-top farming community with a reservoir and five villages.

- **Mesa Top Loop** A six-mile driving tour of excavated mesa-top villages and overlooks of cliff dwellings. Download the Mesa Top Loop audio tour to learn more about Ancestral Pueblo history along the drive.
- **Mesa Verde Museum** The museum features exhibits, a film, and a bookstore.
- **Spruce Canyon and Petroglyph Point** Loop trails lead through scenic wildlife habitats and to a petroglyph panel.
- **Spruce Tree House Overlook** Views of the park's best-preserved cliff dwelling.

Regulations

- Hike only on designated trails. Off-trail hiking is prohibited.
- Do not smoke on trails. This area is subject to devastating wildfires.
- Leashed pets are allowed on parking lots, roads, and paved areas including Mesa Top Loop, Long House Loop, Park Point, and Nordenskiöld Site #16 Trail. Not allowed on unpaved trails, in ancestral sites, or in buildings. Do not leave pets unattended.
- Do not approach or feed wildlife.
- Marijuana is illegal in the park.
- Using remotely piloted aircraft like drones is prohibited.
- For firearms and other regulations check the park website. Firearms are prohibited in federal facilities, including cliff dwellings.

For a Safe Visit Visiting the cliff dwellings can be strenuous and is not recommended if you have heart or respiratory problems. Trails can be steep and uneven and may have steps or ladders. Consider viewing the cliff dwellings from overlooks.

- This is a hot, dry climate at high elevation. Dehydration and altitude sickness may cause medical emergencies. Consider your health. Know your limits. Bring and drink plenty of water. Eat salty snacks.
- Be careful near canyon rims. Do not throw anything into canyons.
- Roads may have sharp turns, steep grades, large vehicles, and bicyclists. Watch out for wildlife and falling rocks. Do not park on roads. Use pullouts.
- Roads and trails may be hazardous or closed in winter; ask about road status at the park entrance station.
- Monitor your vehicle's fuel level. Gas is available only at Morefield Campground.
- Cell service and Wi-Fi are limited.

Emergencies call 911 or contact a ranger

More Information
Mesa Verde National Park
PO Box 8
Mesa Verde National Park, CO 81330
970-529-4465
www.nps.gov/meve

Mesa Verde National Park is one of over 425 parks in the National Park System. Learn more at www.nps.gov.

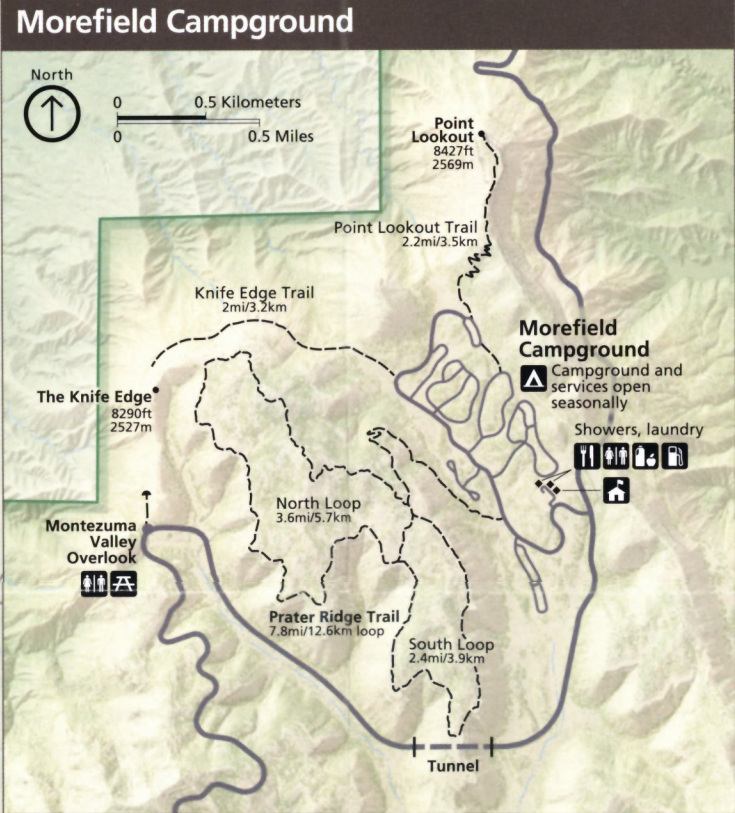
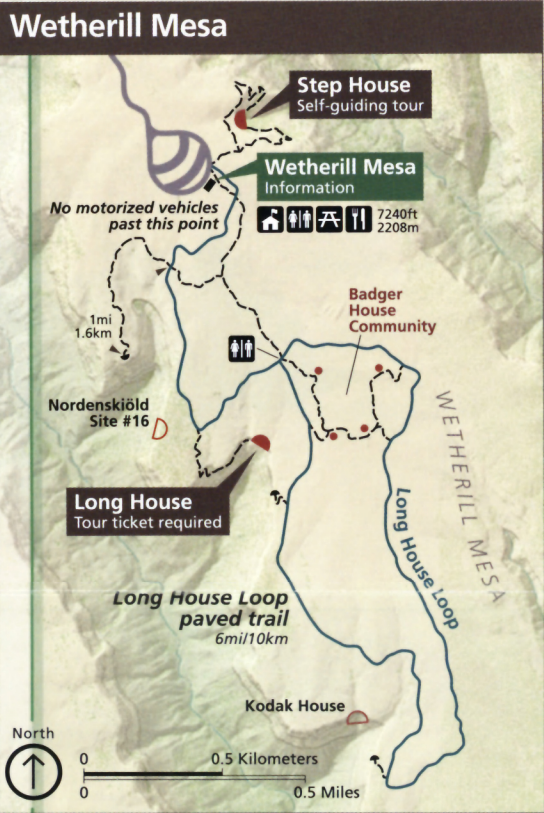
Use the official NPS App to guide your visit; select “save this park” to use offline.

Wilderness 8,500 acres of Mesa Verde National Park is managed as wilderness. Wilderness preserves large and relatively undeveloped landscapes for ecological, social, and cultural benefits. Learn more at www.nps.gov/wilderness.

Mesa Verde National Park is a World Heritage Site.

National Park Foundation
Join the park community.
www.nationalparks.org

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Driving Distances and Directions

From the park entrance:

- Morefield Campground** 4 miles (6½ km; about 10 minutes)
- Far View Lodge** 15 miles (24 km; about 30 minutes)
- Wetherill Mesa** 27 miles (43 km, about one hour). Turn right on Wetherill Road (closed in winter). Continue for 12 winding miles (19 km, about 30 minutes) to the Wetherill kiosk.
- Chapin Mesa** 20 miles (32 km). At stop sign, turn right for Spruce Tree House and Mesa Verde Museum or left for Cliff Palace Loop and Mesa Top Loop (about 45 minutes).

