

# Mesa Verde Trip Checklist

A first-timer's planning list for the cliff dwellings

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## Before you leave home

- Book ranger-guided tour tickets on Recreation.gov (release 14 days out, 8 a.m. Mountain time)
- Reserve your campsite (full-hookup sites near the park book out in summer)
- Set a phone alarm for the 14-day tour-release window
- Save a screenshot or printout of tour tickets (cell service is spotty at trailheads)
- Bring a credit or debit card (the park is fully cashless)

## Pack for high desert (7,000 to 7,500 ft)

- At least 2 liters of water per person, per day (more for Wetherill Mesa hikes)
- Sun protection: hat, sunscreen, sunglasses (little shade on the trails)
- Sturdy closed-toe shoes for ladder climbs and steep trails
- A light rain layer for fast afternoon thunderstorms
- Snacks and a full tank of gas before the drive in

## Know before you go (2026 season)

- Entrance fee: \$30 per vehicle in peak season (May 1 to Oct 22), valid 7 days
- Guided tours run about \$8 per person, ages 3 and up
- Full tour season: May 4 to Oct 21; Wetherill Mesa opens May 22
- Wetherill Mesa Road bans vehicles over 25 ft or 8,000 lbs (take the tow vehicle)
- Spruce Tree House is closed; view it from the overlook
- Expect road construction on the first few miles of park road this summer

## A realistic 2-day plan

- Day 1: Visitor center, Mesa Top Loop, an afternoon Cliff Palace tour
- Day 2: Balcony House or quieter Wetherill Mesa, back to camp before storms
- Day 3 (optional): Durango or a stretch of the San Juan Skyway

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Base camp within an easy drive of the entrance

**Cortez RV Resort**

Cortez, CO · ~15 min to the entrance  
(970) 837-7057  
[rjourney.com/park/co/cortez](http://rjourney.com/park/co/cortez)

**Dolores River RV Resort**

Dolores, CO · ~30 min, riverside  
(970) 821-9188  
[rjourney.com/park/co/dolores-river](http://rjourney.com/park/co/dolores-river)

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