

Tour Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado



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Tour Summary

We'll start in Cortez, Colorado and branch out to Mesa Verde National Park. Then travel to lesser-known sites, Hovenweep and Canyon of the Ancients National Monuments. We won't stop there. We're going to discover sites not in any park or public facility. Montezuma County has over 20,000 sites, many just a short drive off the highway. We'll see cliff dwellings, kivas, ancient rock faces covered with petroglyphs and learn about these brilliant ancient people who built cities using only wood and stone tools, changed from hunters and gatherers to farmers, and eventually left magnificent cities behind and moved on.

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Mesa Verde Country





Travel is more fun with a focus. Tracking Pre-Columbian and Native American sites is a dream trip. One of the best places to pursue that dream is Mesa Verde Country in Colorado. It's filled with ancient pueblos and cliff dwellings. The mysterious people who created these masterpieces of

primitive architecture, once known as Anasazi, are now called Ancestral Puebloans.



Cortez **is** the perfect base for the tour. It has a good assortment of lodging, from bargain to upscale. The variety of restaurants will please the pickiest eater. From here we can branch out to Mesa Verde, Hovenweep, and Canyon of the

Ancients - but we won't stop there. We're going to discover sites not in any park or public facility.



Montezuma County has over 20.000 sites, many just a short drive off the highway. Imagine building multi-storied cliff dwellings and perfectly round kivas deep into the ground using only wood and stone tools. What motivated them to change from

hunters and gatherers to farmers and eventually moved on, leaving these magnificent cities behind?



We will discover clues in the ancient rock faces covered with petroglyphs that may contain the story of their everyday life and piece together the puzzle of their move from mesa top to cliff alcove, and then abandon their homes.



Mesa Verde National Park is one of the most-visited archaeological sites in the United States, and is the only national park dedicated to preserving the works of man consisting of thousands of pre-Columbian sites. We'll cover the major ones and encourage you to explore the rest on your own.



We'll take a detailed trip through the two best cliff dwellings, Cliff Palace, and Balcony House. We'll step way back in time to the earliest dwellings, the pit houses, and learn about the kivas and the Ancestral Puebloans religious beliefs and culture.



Canyon of the Ancients is a relatively new national monument created in 2000 to protect the largest concentration of archaeological sites in the U. S. You may not have heard of it but it's well worth a stop.



Then we'll pass through the Navajo Nation in Utah to Cajun Ruins, part of Hovenweep National Monument. Hovenweep sites are not as well-known as the Mesa Verde ones so they are less crowded. I'll point you to an ancient petroglyph site. You'll see images and symbols carved into a boulder right along the highway.



We'll drive some back roads in the Navajo Nation to get to a particularly interesting but under-visited site, Cajun Ruins. You can judge for yourself whether this is an astronomical marvel. These people knew how to predict the movement of sun and stars.



We'll make a stop at the Hovenweep National Monument Visitor's Center and learn some more about the ancient people who built these sites. Then we'll hike down a canyon to see Canyon Overlook. We can climb down into the canyon to get a

different view of the ruins. Square Tower makes an impressive photo with the sky as a background.



Anasazi Heritage Center, the best museum of Ancestral Puebloans culture, doubles as Canyon of the Ancients visitor's center. It's far from other canyon sites so it makes sense to group it separately. The pit house and pottery exhibits alone make this

unique. The museum rotates over 3 million artifacts and has a research library for serious researchers.



Lowry Pueblo is unique in that it was built in the 10th century atop earlier pit-houses. Both the Great House and the Great Kiva there show this later, more advanced style of building.

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