



MESA VERDE NATIONAL PARK BACKGROUND

HISTORY:

Mesa Verde, which celebrated its 100th anniversary as a national park in 2006, is the largest archaeological preserve in North America and the first national park ever designated to protect and preserve works of humankind. Also recognized as a United Nations World Heritage Site, Mesa Verde is internationally known for its dramatic cliff dwellings and rock art panels.

Spanish for “Green Table,” Mesa Verde was populated from approximately A.D. 600 through A.D. 1300 with people who eventually built elaborate stone villages in the sheltered alcoves of the canyon walls. Today, most people call these sheltered villages cliff dwellings. The cliff dwellings were present in the last 75 to 100 years of human occupation at Mesa Verde. Conservative estimates show that between 30,000 to 40,000 people inhabited the area in 1100. In the late 1200s, within the span of one or two generations, the inhabitants of these dwellings left their homes and moved away from the area for unknown reasons.

The people who inhabited Mesa Verde are known today particularly for their contributions in both architecture and pottery. Some lived on the flat mesa tops, subsistence farming for hundreds of years until the late 1100s, when many chose to migrate to the cliffs below. Over the next 100 years, they constructed dwellings and houses into the sandstone canyon alcoves, producing pottery, baskets, stone and bone, tools while participating in extensive trade networks across the Southwest. European and American explorers took note of the cliff dwellings in the late 1800s and brought world attention to the area. In 1906, Mesa Verde was established as a National Park.

Today a series of ladders, stairways and paved hiking trails permits Mesa Verde National Park visitors a closer look at these heritage sites.

SIGNIFICANT SITES:

Mesa Verde National Park is open year-round for visitors to observe the ruins, which can be seen in two separate areas: Chapin Mesa and Ruins Road. Chapin Mesa is best known for Cliff Palace, a dwelling with more than 100 rooms that occupies a deep, cave-like ledge beneath the canyon rim; Balcony House, which is reachable by climbing a 32-foot ladder and crawling through a short tunnel; and Spruce Tree House, named for the Douglas Spruce tree that originally grew in the front of the dwelling to the mesa top. Ruins Road holds sites that span more than 600 years of development, including Square

Tower, Sunset, Oak Tree Houses, New Fire House and Fire Temple, and Sun Temple. A variety of seasonal, ranger-guided tours are available throughout the year.

PARK SERVICES & CONCESSIONS:

Concessions at Mesa Verde National Park are managed by ARAMARK, an authorized concessioner of the National Park Service. ARAMARK operates the overnight accommodations, food services, gift shops, and tours at Mesa Verde.

ARAMARK is a leading concessioner associated with the National Park Service. The company also operates services at Denali, Glacier Bay, Olympic, and Shenandoah National Parks, the Ellis Island National Monument, and several state parks.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS

With an extraordinary number of visitors touring Mesa Verde National Park each year, efforts to maintain the precious landscape are crucial. Consequently, ARAMARK and the National Park Service have made environmental education and awareness a priority.

ARAMARK employs many environmentally safe products and programs in the fields of electric and heating, solid waste reduction and recycling. Initiatives such as implementing bi-fuel Ford trucks help reduce both pollution and waste. ARAMARK is also committed to providing sustainable cuisine options in park restaurants. These practices, among many, have helped increase environmental awareness among Mesa Verde National Park visitors regarding the importance of keeping the environment clean.

ARAMARK Mesa Verde Company also operates a recycling collection facility for the residents of Mancos, Colorado, the National Park Service and ARAMARK's own internal recycling needs. Items recycled are glass, tin and other metals, plastic, newspaper, cardboard and other paper types. Packaging is minimized whenever possible, and Styrofoam materials have been eliminated completely from any aspect of our in-park operations. In addition, returnable delivery boxes are reused for future deliveries and the recycled content of all paper products are maximized as much as possible.

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