

Mesa Verde National Park — 7 Days

Best base: Cortez, CO or inside the park

Trip style: Scenic, historic, and moderately active

Day 1 — Arrival + Orientation

Morning

- Arrive near Cortez or Mesa Verde.
- Get breakfast and drive into the park.

Afternoon

- Stop at the visitor center.
- Pick up maps and check tour availability.
- Drive to a few easy overlooks.

Evening

- Dinner in Cortez or at the lodge.
- Early rest.

Day 2 — Cliff Palace + Balcony House

Morning

- Start early with a reserved Cliff Palace tour.
- Arrive ahead of time for check-in.

Afternoon

- Take the Balcony House tour if you booked it.
- Expect ladders, narrow passages, and a more adventurous route.
- Have a relaxed lunch between tours.

Evening

- Sunset at a scenic overlook.
- Quiet dinner and downtime.

Day 3 — Mesa Top Loop

Morning

- Drive Mesa Top Loop Road slowly.
- Stop at the main viewpoints and pullouts.

Afternoon

- Visit interpretive stops and short walks.
- Spend time reading the signs and learning the history.

Evening

- Return to your base.
- Light dinner and an early night.

Day 4 — Spruce Tree House Area + Easy Exploration

Morning

- Visit the Spruce Tree House area if access is available.
- Take in nearby viewpoints.

Afternoon

- Choose a slower pace today.
- Use this time for photos, lunch, and rest.

Evening

- Dinner in Cortez.
- Optional stargazing if conditions are clear.

Day 5 — Petroglyph Point Trail

Morning

- Hike Petroglyph Point Trail if you want a moderate challenge.
- Bring plenty of water and sun protection.

Afternoon

- Picnic lunch.
- Explore another scenic overlook or return to a favorite site.

Evening

- Relax at your lodge or hotel.
- Review tomorrow's route.

Day 6 — Second Ruin / Scenic Day

Morning

- Try a second guided tour if available.
- Or revisit the Mesa Top area at a slower pace.

Afternoon

- Drive scenic roads outside the park if you want a break.
- Keep the afternoon flexible.

Evening

- Final dinner in Cortez.
- Pack for departure.

Day 7 — Departure

Morning

- One last overlook or short stop.
- Breakfast and check out.

Afternoon

- Begin your drive home or to your next stop.

Packing list

- Hiking shoes.
- Sun hat.
- Water bottles.
- Light jacket.
- Snacks.
- Camera.
- Small backpack.

Reservations to know

- Cliff Palace and Balcony House tours are the big ones.
- Check seasonal access before your trip.
- Some routes or tours may change based on weather.