

EXPLORE OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM. LEARN INSIDE OUR STATE.

---

**Spruce Tree House**  
**Mesa Verde National Park**

**Background:** Established in 1906, Mesa Verde preserves and interprets the heritage of the Ancestral Pueblo people who made their home in the area for over 700 years. The park protects almost 5,000 sites, including 600 cliff dwellings. In 1978 Mesa Verde was designated a World Heritage site, one of the first in the United States.

Spruce Tree House, one of the best-preserved cliff dwellings in the park, is located behind the back porch of the Chief Ranger's House. By the late 1270's between 60 and 80 people lived here in 120 rooms and eight kivas. Spruce Tree House is the third largest cliff dwelling in the park.

**Activity:** Look for the informational kiosk called "Growth of a Village" located behind the ranger's cabin. Read the information panels to learn about the cliff dwellings features archaeologists have discovered. Then complete the following activity. There are two activity options, one for kindergarten through 2nd grade, and another for 3rd through 5th grade.

**Word Alert:**

**Mesa Verde**—Spanish for green table

**Kiva**—a round multipurpose room built underground with a roof

**Ancestral Puebloans**—the people that lived here from about A. D. 550 to about A. D. 1300. They are the ancestors to the modern Pueblo tribes, including Zuni, Acoma, Laguna, and Hopi.

**Archaeologist**—a person who studies human history and prehistory through excavation of sites and studies the artifacts.

**Artifacts**—an object made by a human of cultural or historical interest.

**Plaza**—open spaces used for daily spaces. Most of the time, this is where the kiva roofs were.

**Plaster**—a pasty substance that is used for coating walls.

**Alcove**—large arched places in a cliff wall.

**Soot**—black powdery substance produced by incomplete burning.

**Dwelling**—a place to live.

**Questions to Ask:**

1. What are the holes/small openings in the walls? *(most of the time these are doorways; very small ones may be windows)*
2. What different building shapes do you see? *(Some are square/rectangular, and some are round. Some are one story, while others are two stories)*
3. What are the dwellings made of? *(local sandstone, with some wood; some walls are covered with plaster.*
4. Why is there wood poking up in the courtyard? *(these are the tops of ladders and are how people got in and out of the kivas).*

**K-2nd Grade Activity**

From your vantage point at the information kiosk, locate the features listed below at Spruce Tree House. After you find a feature, place a checkmark in the I found it section. See how many you can find!

<b>Feature</b>	<b>I found it</b>
<b>Kiva (look for the ladder)</b>	
<b>Soot</b>	
<b>Door</b>	
<b>ladder</b>	
<b>plaster</b>	
<b>plaza</b>	
<b>A one-story building</b>	
<b>A two-story building</b>	
<b>alcove</b>	
<b>A round building</b>	
<b>A square/rectangular building</b>	

### 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> Grade Activity

From your vantage point at the information kiosk, locate the features listed below at Spruce Tree House. Write what each feature can tell us about life at Spruce Tree House.

<b>Feature</b>	<b>What we can tell about life here.</b>
<b>Kiva (look for the ladder)</b>	
<b>Soot</b>	
<b>Door</b>	
<b>ladder</b>	
<b>plaster</b>	
<b>plaza</b>	
<b>A one-story building</b>	
<b>A two-story building</b>	
<b>alcove</b>	
<b>A round building</b>	
<b>A square/rectangular building</b>	

[Answer Key for 3rd to 5th grade activity](#)

#### Interested in Learning More?

[Download the Jr. Ranger book](#) or pick one up at the Visitors Center for more activities.