



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Frequently Asked Questions

Canyons of the Ancients National Monument

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For the most recent information regarding Covid and building restrictions, please call the visitor center at 970-882-5600.

TRAVEL

Can I hike in the Monument? Is the entire Monument open to hiking?

Yes. Hiking, both on designated routes and cross-country, is allowed most anywhere within the Monument except it is restricted to designated routes (on trail only) in the Sand Canyon/Rock Creek Recreation Management Area. Be mindful of desert hiking dangers, bring lots of water, and have your 10 essentials with you.

Can I drive a motorized vehicle in the Monument? Can I ride a bike in the Monument?

Yes. Motorized and mechanized travel (like bicycles) are *restricted to designated routes* in all areas within the Monument. Bicycles are allowed on designated routes within the Sand Canyon/Rock Creek Recreation Management Area. Phil's World, located off L and M roads, offers a world class mountain biking trail system (highly recommend).

Are horses allowed in the Monument?

Yes. Horseback riding, both on designated routes and cross-country, is allowed most anywhere in the Monument except it is restricted to designated routes (on trail only) in the Sand Canyon/Rock Creek Recreation Management Area. There is a corral located off County Road 10, just northeast of BLM Road 4525.

How can I make sure that I don't trespass on private inholdings in the backcountry?

How will I know if I'm on a public road or private driveway?

It is your responsibility to make sure you do not trespass on private land. Gates, and/or signs will help in determining your location; however, you cannot rely solely on these markers. Obtaining a detailed map (USGS topographic, USDI BLM, etc.) in addition to a travel map specific to the Monument will assist you. Some older maps may not display the private land parcels that have been recently acquired by the Monument, so it is best to visit the Canyons of the Ancients National Museum and Visitor Center to get the most current landownership map.

Are all legal roads marked as such?

No. The best way to stay on designated routes and use appropriate methods of transportation is to obtain a transportation map for the Monument. Appropriate maps and other information are available at the Canyons of the Ancients National Museum and Visitor Center.

If a road is gated, can I still access that road?

No. A locked, gated route means its use is restricted. A locked, gated route is not open to the general public for motorized access, but may be open to horseback riding and hiking, and in some cases, bicycling, depending on its travel designation. Obtaining a transportation map will assist in determining which routes are open to your mode of travel.

Do I need a four-wheel drive vehicle to visit the Monument?

Which roads are paved, and what is the condition of the other roads?

That depends... several county roads leading to the Monument are either paved (CR 10) or graveled. Most roads within the Monument have dirt surfaces. The need for a four-wheel drive vehicle varies according to the road surface and weather conditions. A sudden rainstorm can turn a dry road into slippery mud, making travel difficult and dangerous. In the winter, roads can be covered with snow, ice, or mud. During dry conditions, generally a two-wheel drive vehicle with high clearance is enough on most roads.

Can I ride an OHV (Off Highway Vehicle) in the Monument? Are there OHV maps/ trails?

Yes. All OHVs (like ATVs and side-by-sides) are restricted to designated routes only. No cross-country (off-road) travel is allowed. Obtain a map of the transportation system for the Monument to see which routes are open to the various forms of motorized travel. There are OHV trails located off N road (marked as green on the map). Parking is located just east of BLM Road 4526F.

Which routes are RV-accessible? RV size limits?

RV parking (day use only) is available at the Canyons of the Ancients National Museum and Visitor Center, at Lowry Pueblo, and at the Sand Canyon East and West Trailhead parking areas. Parking at other trailheads is limited and may require access across a high-clearance dirt road.

What is the most detailed map available?

Not all maps provide all the information you may require. There are several maps available that cover the Monument: USGS topographic maps are the most detailed showing elevations, topographic contours, routes, sections, etc. The USDI BLM maps show topographic contours, routes and land ownership. The above maps, however, do not show designated routes within the Monument. To know the designated transportation system in the Monument you must obtain a transportation map which is available on our website (below) and at the Visitor Center and Museum.

<https://www.blm.gov/programs/national-conservation-lands/colorado/canyons-of-the-ancients>

Where can I get GPS reference points for hiking/driving?

The BLM does not have this information, but it may be available with private entities.

How far is it to the following places in the Monument from the Canyons of the Ancients Visitor Center & Museum?

- **Lowry Pueblo = 25 miles**
- **Painted Hand Pueblo = 32.8 miles (road access is pending)**
- **Sand Canyon Pueblo = 19.8 miles**
- **Sand Canyon G Road Trailhead = 26.2 miles**

How far off the roadway should I pull a camp vehicle?

Vehicles should not be more than 20 feet, at maximum from the edge of the route surface (road). Motorized and mechanized vehicles (like bicycles) must park parallel to the designated route's disturbed surface with a minimum distance necessary for safety. Park in areas where disturbance has already occurred rather than create new disturbance. New disturbance is cumulative, will add to resource impacts, is expensive to reclaim, and may be prosecuted.

RECREATION

Can I camp in the Monument? Can I have a campfire?

Yes. However, camping and campfires (dependent upon current fire restrictions) are prohibited in the front-country recreation areas (like the Pueblo Sites and Sand Canyon/Rock Creek). While camping and campfires are allowed in backcountry areas throughout the Monument, they are prohibited in archaeological sites; within 300 feet of water sources (ponds, springs, streams, etc.), and developed areas (trails, roads, kiosks, parking areas, etc.). Campfires cause lasting impacts to delicate soils and leave a mess. *Campfires require the use of firepans.* As an option, use a lightweight stove for cooking and enjoy a candle lantern for light. It is recommended to use existing fire rings to prevent additional disturbance. *Ensure you are aware of current fire restrictions.*

Are dogs allowed in the Monument?

Yes. Dogs should be controlled within voice command. Anticipate small children, other dogs, horses, mountain bikes, cacti and even venomous snakes. Keep dogs out of archaeological sites and springs and bring a plastic bag to scoop the poop.

Can I use marijuana products in the Monument?

No. Although recreational and medical use in the state of Colorado is legal, in private residences, use of illegal drugs is prohibited on all federally managed lands and buildings (including rentable cabins) and can be prosecuted.

Can I hunt in the Monument?

Yes. However, it is regulated by the state of Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) and is only allowed in the Monument according to their laws and regulations. Hunting is not permitted in any developed area (roads, trails, campgrounds, Lowry and Sand Canyon Pueblos, Sand Canyon and Rock Creek Recreation Management area, etc.). Be aware of your backdrop and be safe!

Can I target shoot in the Monument?

No. Target/practice shooting is prohibited in the Monument.

What is the extent of cell phone coverage in the Monument?

Cell phone coverage can be unreliable in the Monument, particularly in the canyons. A Verizon tower is located on top of Sleeping Ute Mountain across from the Sand Canyon/East Rock Creek hiking system and provides good coverage on most of the trail. Tip... Google maps works the best for finding locations within the Monument when first used in a cellular coverage area.

Are there guided tours? Are there tour operators that offer tours of the Monument?

Yes. Contact the Canyons of the Ancients National Museum and Visitor Center for a list of permitted guides. Non-permitted guides are not allowed; report non-permitted guiding operations by calling BLM law enforcement at 833-660-5771 or TRFOtpline@blm.gov.

Can my organization go hiking in the Monument and will we need a special permit?

Yes and maybe. There are specific requirements based on group size, whether the organization is commercial or not for profit, and the proposed location of the hike. Contact the Dolores Public Lands Office at 970-882-7296 or the Canyons of the Ancients National Museum and Visitor Center well in advance of the event to determine whether a permit is required.

Is geocaching allowed?

No. Geocaching is prohibited in the Monument.

Is rock climbing allowed and in what areas?

Yes. Climbing (rock climbing, repelling, and/or bouldering) is allowed only in designated areas in the Mockingbird Mesa Recreation Management Area.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

How can I learn more about Ancestral Puebloan culture?

Visit the Canyons of the Ancients National Museum and Visitor Center.

Can I collect artifacts? Can I collect arrowheads?

No. Some researchers with special permits are authorized. Collecting artifacts (i.e. non-renewable archaeological and cultural resources) without a permit from federal public lands or American Indian tribal lands is a federal crime and is prohibited under multiple federal laws and regulations. The Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 (ARPA) was passed by Congress to ensure that present and future generations have an opportunity to view and learn from our country's archaeological resources. Violating the ARPA can result in misdemeanor or felony charges, punishable by a prison sentence of up to two years and a \$20,000 fine for the first offense.

In addition to laws prohibiting the collection of archaeological resources under the ARPA, it is also illegal to collect arrowheads, even from the surface. Under Title 43 Code of Federal Regulations 8365.1-5(a)(1), the Antiquities Act of 1906 and Title 18 of the

United States Criminal Code, violators who remove arrowheads from public lands may face vigorous prosecution and prison sentences of up to one year or more and/or possible fines in the tens of thousands of dollars.

What should I do if I witness suspicious behavior in the backcountry? Who do I call to report vandalism?

Reach BLM Law Enforcement at 833-660-5771 (toll free) or email: TRFOtpline@blm.gov. If you can, record license plate numbers, take pictures, provide geographic location (GPS coordinates, latitude and longitude, etc.) and provide them to law enforcement. For your safety, do not approach individuals on your own.

How many undiscovered archaeological sites are on the Monument?

We don't know how many "undiscovered" sites are in the Monument—they are undiscovered. We estimate that there may be 20,000 - 30,000 sites total. There are over 8,400 recorded sites in the Monument.

What is the proper way to explore a backcountry site?

- **Walk carefully and avoid stepping on walls and trash middens. Archaeological sites are very old and fragile.**
- **Never touch or write on artwork in archaeological sites. Oils from skin damage pictographs (rock paintings) and petroglyphs (rock carvings).**
- **Avoid picnicking in archaeological sites. Crumbs attract rodents which can cause damage by tunneling and nesting in the site. Make sure that you pick up and carry out all your trash.**
- **Leave artifacts right where you find them for others to enjoy. Out of context, artifacts offer no information about the history of a site. It is illegal to remove them.**
- **Never dig in archeological sites. If you pick up a piece of pottery, put it back where you found it. Artifacts in their original context tell stories about the past.**
- **Avoid camping in archaeological sites. It's easy to destroy walls and artifacts in the dark. Smoke from campfires stains walls and cliffs, and charcoal leaves a mess.**
- **Fire pans are mandatory. Never use wood from archaeological sites in campfires.**
- **Solid human waste should be buried about 6 inches deep and well away from archaeological sites.**
- **Liquid human waste should be well away from archaeological sites.**
- **Solid animal waste should be collected and disposed of in trash cans.**
- **Liquid animal waste should be well away from archaeological sites.**
- **Stay on existing roads and trails. Even foot traffic can create scars that heal slowly and increase soil erosion of the desert landscape.**
- **Do not stand or sit on walls, move rocks, or climb through doorways. Doing so can cause irreparable damage to archeological structures and may destabilize the structure causing serious injury or death and may be prosecuted.**
- **Please do not add trinkets or other objects to a site.**
- **Many sites hold spiritual value for Native Americans. Please treat these areas with respect. 26 Native American tribes have cultural and historical associations with the land and features now encompassed by Canyons of the Ancients N.M.**

What is the outdoor museum concept?

It is a concept where Monument visitors can experience cultural and natural resources through self-discovery. The Monument is managed primarily through a backcountry management strategy where minimal development occurs. The lack of facilities and interpretive materials on the Monument makes it important to start your visit at the Canyons of the Ancients National Museum and Visitor Center.

MULTIPLE USE MANAGEMENT

What kind of wildlife lives in the Monument?

A variety of wildlife live in the Monument including large animals (black bear, mountain lion, elk, deer, etc.), small animals (rabbits, squirrels, bats, foxes, etc.), birds (various raptors, grouse, owls, flycatchers, etc.), reptiles (lizards, snakes-including rattle snakes), amphibians (frogs, toads, salamanders) and fish (minnows, suckers, sunfish etc.)

Are there oil and gas leases in the Monument?

Yes. Nearly 80% of the Monument is leased for mineral production with most leases producing oil, gas or CO2. There are over 100 producing wells in the Monument.

Is livestock grazing allowed in the Monument?

Yes. Livestock grazing is one of many multiple uses permitted in the Monument. It is also a historical use which has occurred since the late 1800's. Approximately 98% of the Monument is grazed by livestock. Livestock grazing is not permitted around the Sand Canyon and Rock Creek Recreation Management Areas.

Can I cut a Christmas tree in the Monument?

Yes, by permit only. Contact the Tres Rios Field Office at 970-882-7296.

Can I cut firewood in the Monument?

No. Personal-use firewood cutting is not allowed in the Monument. Commercial fuelwood cutting requires a permit.

How can I help?

Contact the Canyons of the Ancients Visitor Center & Museum Visitor Services Supervisor at 970-822-5621 about volunteering with visitor services, library, docent tours, gardening, and curation.