Canyons of the Ancients National Monument is accessible via county-maintained paved and gravel roads. For More Information, visit www.co.blm.gov/canm or www.co.blm.gov/ahc.

Road G eventually destroys these remnants of past lives. To reach Painted Hand, turn west off Highway 491 at Oil and dirt from hands will be obvious. Respect these fragile paintings! On a boulder (such paintings were built against the cliff face), there are over 300 petroglyphs. The site has never been excavated, but stone rubble shows where rooms were built against the cliff face. Painted Hand is a beautiful sign and kiosk, then turn left. Follow dirt road 1 mile to Painted Hand Trailhead. To get there, you should have a good map and a high-clearance vehicle. There are no services or facilities.

Hand Trail is the entrance to the Lowry Pueblo area, toilet and trail are all wheelchair accessible. The area does not allow overnight camping. In the Lowry Pueblo also has interpretive signs and brochures, and the picnic area, toilet and trail are all wheelchair accessible. The area does not allow overnight camping. Lowry Pueblo was a major center for the Ancestral Puebloans. The site has stabilized standing walls, 40 rooms, eight kivas and 3,000 years of Ancestral Puebloan life. Artifacts excavated from sites in Canyons of the Ancients National Monument are preserved at the Anasazi Heritage Center (monument headquarters). This museum explains Ancestral Puebloan life on the Great Mesa Verde. Other sites with standing walls, are obvious, and other sites consist of rubble and thousands more await documentation and study. Some, such as Lowry Pueblo and Painted Hand Pueblo, are obvious, and other sites consist of rubble and thousands more await documentation and study. If you have ½ day, visit the Anasazi Heritage Center, Canyons of the Ancients National Monument.

Thousands of archaeological sites have been recorded in the monument, but not all are open to the public or open to the public. The monument is managed to protect the beauty and archaeological integrity of the landscape. If you have a day, visit the Anasazi Heritage Center, Canyons of the Ancients National Monument. If you have a day, visit the Anasazi Heritage Center, Canyons of the Ancients National Monument. If you have a day, visit the Anasazi Heritage Center, Canyons of the Ancients National Monument.

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Welcome to the Anasazi Heritage Center, Canyons of the Ancients National Monument
Exploring Canyons of the Ancients

If you have a second day, visit Sand Canyon Pueblo...

Sand Canyon Pueblo includes the remains of about 420 rooms, 100 kivas and 14 towers. Researchers from the Crow Canyon Archaeological Center excavated several rooms from 1983 to 1993, then backfilled them to protect standing walls and preserve the site. Interpretive signs provide Native American insights and archaeological perspectives, show how the site was laid out, and display drawings of what Sand Canyon Pueblo might have looked like in the mid-1200s.

Sand Canyon is located at the north trailhead to the Sand Canyon trail. To reach Sand Canyon turn west off Highway 491 onto County Road P and follow Sand Canyon Pueblo is located at the north trailhead to the Sand Canyon trail. To reach Sand Canyon turn west off Highway 491 onto County Road P and follow Sand Canyon trail. To reach Sand Canyon turn west off Highway 491 onto County Road P and follow Sand Canyon trail.

Whether accessing the area from the south trailhead or the north trailhead, parking is extremely limited. Please avoid parking within the county road right-of-way.

Please stay out of all archaeological sites. The 800-year-old walls and preserve the site. Interpretive signs provide Native American insights and archaeological perspectives, show how the site was laid out, and display drawings of what Sand Canyon Pueblo might have looked like in the mid-1200s.

Be Safe

- Canyon of the Ancients National Monument is a remote, rugged and harsh desert environment. Summer temperatures may exceed 100 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius), and elevation ranges from 4,875 ft (1,500 m) above sea level to 6,825 ft (2,100 m) above sea level.
- Carry and drink at least one gallon (four liters) of water per person per day.
- Use sunscreen.
- Have ample fuel for your vehicle.
- Always carry a good map, water, food and first aid kit. Avoid traveling alone. Tell someone your plans and expected route.
- Wear a hat, long-sleeved shirt, long pants, sturdy footwear and good socks.
- Use insect repellent. Expect biting gnats in May and June.
- Watch for rattlesnakes, scorpions, mountain lions and other potentially dangerous wildlife.

A Rich Cultural History

Humans have been part of this landscape for at least 12,000 years. Changes in cultural life over time ranged from hunting and gathering to farming. By about A.D. 750 farmers, now known as Ancestral Puebloans, occupied a widespread area that included Canyons of the Ancients and much of south-western Colorado. Their semi-permanent villages began as sheltered pit houses. Over time, these ancestors of the modern-day Pueblo Indians developed larger masonry homes with connecting walls above ground. Some of these homes were built at canyon heads where there was a spring to supply water. Other homes were cliff dwellings. In time, factors such as population growth, soil exhaustion and changing weather compromised the area’s natural resources. By about A.D. 1300, these Pueblo ancestors migrated to New Mexico’s Rio Grande Valley or further west to where the Acoma, Laguna, Zuni and Hopi people live today.

Use and Navajo people also used the Monument’s mesas and canyons for hunting and gathering. Remains of horsehair, brush shelters and wickiups tell their story.

In the 1700’s, Europeans explored the area, often led by Use guides. Today, many descendant peoples still live in or near their ancestor’s homelands.

Please Respect Ancestral Puebloan Homes

The remnants of Ancestral Puebloan homes are found throughout Canyons of the Ancients National Monument. They are an irreplaceable link to history, and are especially important to contemporary Native Americans. The biggest threat to these places comes from careless visitors. Please preserve this legacy for future generations.

Walk carefully to avoid stepping on fragile walls. Archaeological sites are extremely delicate. It’s easy to destroy walls and artifacts. Never burn wood from archaeological sites or build fires in them.

Touching painted and plastered walls or petroglyphs leaves skin oils that damage artwork.

Picnics in archaeological sites attract rodents, which tunnel and nest in the site. Eat elsewhere, collect and carry out your trash.

Leave artifacts exactly where found for others to enjoy; it is illegal to remove them. Displaced artifacts mean little to the archaeologists who rely on location as a part of their analysis; artifacts should be left for others to discover.

Leave No Trace

- Camping and campfires in archaeological sites are prohibited.
- Human waste left at archaeological sites is unsightly and unsanitary.
- Stay on existing roads and trails. Scars on the desert landscape heal slowly and speed up soil erosion.
- Do not leave “offerings” at any archaeological site. They confuse the original story.
- Keep animals under control and do not feed them. North American desert wildlife is wild and dangerous.
- Please do not litter.
- Treat these places with respect. They represent our shared cultural heritage, and many hold special importance for contemporary Native Americans.