



Cedar Mesa Trip Planner

Bears Ears National Monument



Welcome to Cedar Mesa!

Bears Ears National Monument protects one of the most significant cultural landscapes in the United States, and is the first national monument to be established at the request of federally recognized Tribes. Abundant rock art, ancient cliff dwellings, surface structures, and countless artifacts provide an extraordinary archaeological and cultural record, surrounded by deep sandstone canyons and high mesas. Rare perennial springs and streams sustain vigorous riparian ecosystems and the wildlife that depend on them.

The Bureau of Land Management and Manti-La Sal National Forest manage approximately 1.36 million acres of land as Bears Ears National Monument. Within the Monument, more than 400,000 acres of land on Cedar Mesa is managed as a Special Recreation Management Area. This includes 210,370 acres of roadless Wilderness Study Areas. The area is sacred to members of many Native American tribes, including the Hopi, Navajo, Ute, Zuni, and others who visit their ancestral homelands for ceremonies and to collect medicinal and edible plants.

Visit with Respect

Ancestral Puebloans inhabited these canyons and mesa tops between 700 and 2,500 years ago. Many of their dwellings, farming areas, and sacred sites remain in excellent condition. The structures, stone and bone tools, pottery pieces, and other artifacts give us a peek into the lifestyles of these people and are protected by law. Cultural sites are sacred to Indigenous peoples and integral to American history, so it is essential to treat everything you find with care and respect. Leave all artifacts where you find them and refrain from touching walls or rock imagery. Remnants of past cultures are more fragile than they appear so don't enter dwellings or historic buildings. Join us in protecting this special place!



View Sites from a Distance

This act honors Tribal beliefs and protects cultural resources.



Leave All Artifacts Where You Find Them

Don't take artifacts or add them to "Display Rocks."



Don't Touch or Damage Rock Imagery

Don't add anything to panels you see.



Steer Clear of Walls

Structures can be easily damaged.



Leave the Grinding in the Past

Don't touch or use grinding slicks.



Go to the Bathroom Away from Sites

Pack out all toilet paper - Do not burn it!



Enjoy Archaeology without Ropes

Using climbing gear to access sites is illegal.



Know Where Pets (on leash) are Allowed

Pets are never allowed in archaeological sites or springs.



GPS Reveals Too Much

Remove location data before posting photos online.



Don't Disturb Fossils or Bones

Leave fossil remains where you find them.



Camp and Eat Away from Archaeology

Food attracts animals to fragile sites.



Historic Artifacts Aren't Trash

Leave artifacts like rusted cans in place.



Stay on Designated Routes

Driving off-road can damage sites.



Pay Your Fees

Your small fee supports protecting this area.



No Fires in the Canyons of Cedar Mesa

Use existing fire rings when on the rims.

Do Your Part to Protect Cedar Mesa and Bears Ears National Monument



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

Monticello Field Office
365 North Main; PO Box 7
Monticello, Utah 84535

Cedar Mesa Permit Desk
Open Monday - Friday
from 8 a.m. - 12 noon
phone: (435) 587-1510
email: blm_ut_mt_cedarmesa@blm.gov

Visit the [Cedar Mesa website](#)



For more information, follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Flickr](#) @BLMUtah and at @UtahPublicLands on Instagram.

Permits

A permit is required to hike and backpack in the canyons of Cedar Mesa and in parts of Bears Ears National Monument. A special permit is required to visit Moon House. There is no fee for mesa-top camping.

Advanced reservations for overnight trips and Moon House day use may be obtained on the [Recreation.gov](#) website by searching for "Cedar Mesa Permits". Day use permits for locations other than Moon House can be reserved in advance on the [Recreation.gov](#) website or purchased at trailheads with exact change. America the Beautiful Passes are not valid.

All commercial and organized groups (including universities, schools, and clubs) must contact the BLM Monticello Field Office for information on additional Special Recreation Permit requirements.

IN AN EMERGENCY CALL 911

Planning ahead and recreating responsibly can help prevent many emergencies. Cell phone service is unreliable in this area. You may need to walk or drive to a high point in order to get reception. Service may only be available where Navajo Mountain or the Rocky Mountains are visible. Tows from remote locations may be expensive. Rescued parties may be financially responsible for helicopter flights.



General Information

Information Centers

The Kane Gulch Ranger Station and the visitor center at Natural Bridges National Monument are the only information centers on Cedar Mesa. Kane Gulch Ranger Station is open seasonally from March 1 - June 15 and Sept. 1 - Oct. 31 from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. The visitor center at Natural Bridges is typically open daily from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. except on major holidays. Many neighboring communities have information centers with knowledgeable staff, bookstores, and maps.

Water

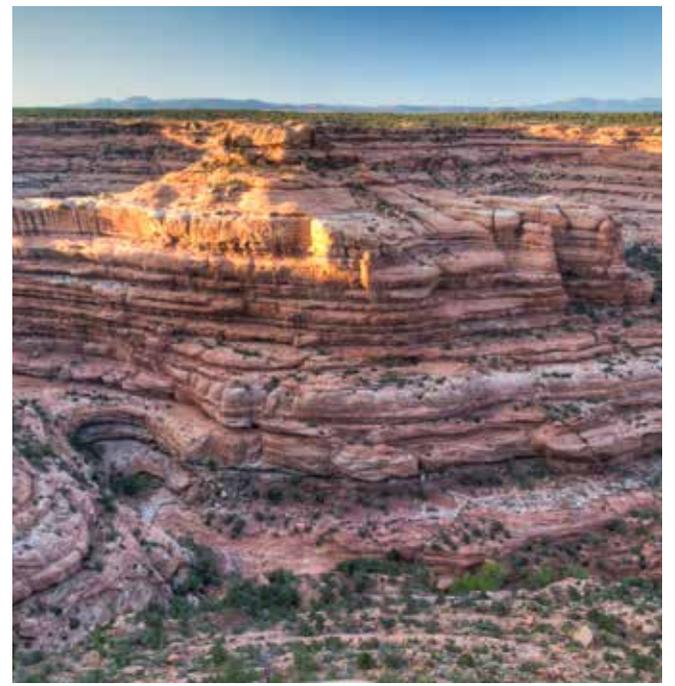
It is easy to become dehydrated in the high desert, even in the winter. Bring all the water you need for your trip. Plan to drink at least one gallon (4 liters) of water per day. Drinking water may be available in limited quantities from the visitor center at Natural Bridges National Monument. Springs in the backcountry often dry up. Check conditions before backpacking and bring enough water for your hike.

Gas, Food & Other Services

Gas, food, lodging, and other services are not available in Bears Ears National Monument but can be found in the nearby towns of Bluff, Blanding, Mexican Hat, and Monticello. From Kane Gulch Ranger Station, Blanding is 38 minutes (36 mi/58 km), Mexican Hat is 41 minutes (33 mi/53 km), Bluff is 59 minutes (50-54 mi/80-87 km) and Monticello is one hour (57 mi/92 km).

Pets

Dogs are allowed on a leash in some, but not all areas. Pets are prohibited in Grand Gulch and its tributaries (Kane, Bullet, Collins, Government, Step, Pine, etc.), Slickhorn Canyon, Point Lookout Canyon, and McLoyd Canyon/Moon House. To protect archaeological sites, pets are not allowed in alcoves and cultural sites. Pets are not allowed to swim or play in springs, potholes, or other natural water sources. All pet waste must be packed out or buried six inches deep, at least 200 feet away from cultural sites, trails, and water sources.



Weather

Temperatures vary from the top of the mesa into the canyons. Summer temperatures often exceed 100° F, with rainstorms common from July to September, bringing flash floods. Seek high ground in the event of heavy rain. Winter temperatures can dip below freezing with the added challenge of snow and ice. Weather forecasts may be found at [www.weather.gov](#) by entering Kane Gulch (KAGU1) as the search location.

Average Seasonal Temperatures (Fahrenheit/Celsius)

Season	Low (F°/C°)	High (F°/C°)
Spring	26° / -3°	68° / 20°
Summer	49° / 9°	86° / 30°
Fall	35° / 2°	77° / 25°
Winter	16° / -9°	45° / 7°

Accessibility

Kane Gulch Ranger Station is accessible for those with mobility impairments. Some interpretive sites are also accessible. Contact the Monticello Field Office if you have particular needs.

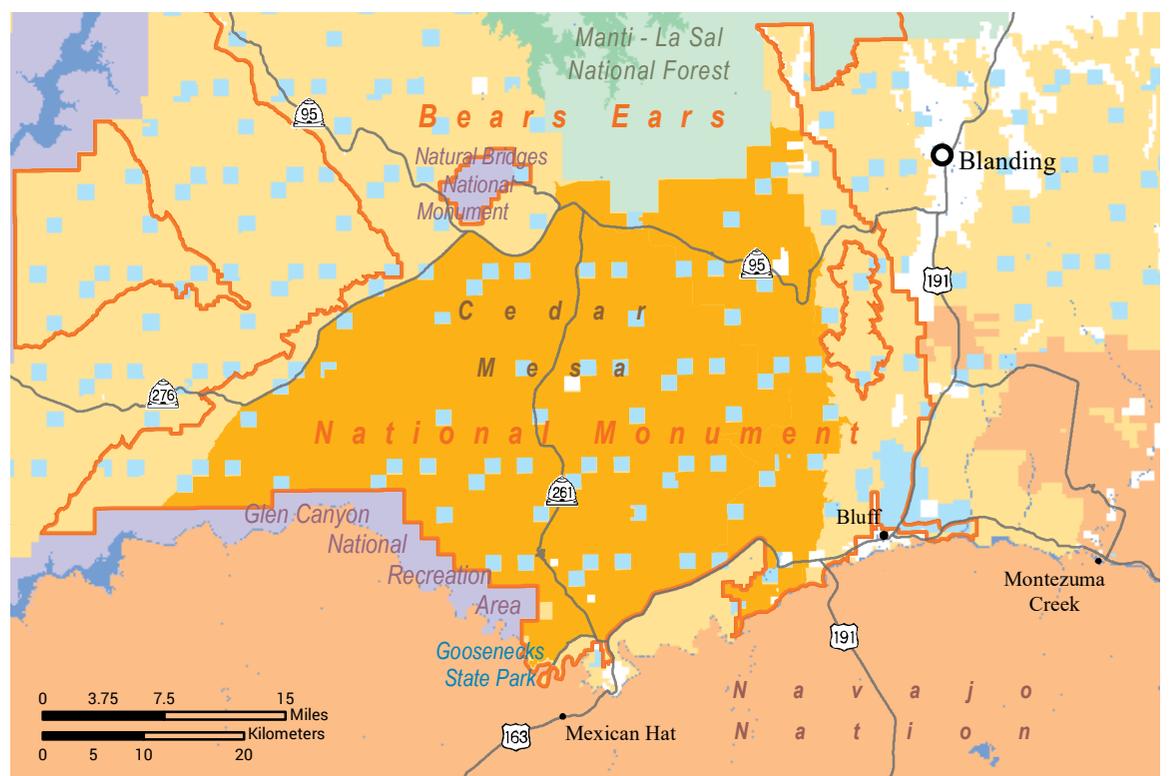
Service animals, dogs trained to perform specific tasks for a person with a disability, are allowed on all trails and in the backcountry. Emotional support "therapy" animals are not considered service animals by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Motorized Vehicles and Bicycles

All motorized vehicle and bicycle travel is limited to designated roads. Bicycles are not allowed on hiking trails. Current [Monticello Travel Management Plan \(TMP\) maps](#) showing designated roads are available on the BLM website.

Visiting Cedar Mesa

Bears Ears National Monument, Natural Bridges National Monument, Goosenecks State Park, and the Manti-La Sal National Forest are primitive, remote areas that offer unlimited opportunities for exploration. From hiking and backpacking to bike packing, horseback riding, car camping, and scenic drives, the possibilities are endless. Due to the remoteness of the area, however, visitors must expect a few challenges. Cell service is unreliable. Gas, groceries, and trash receptacles are only available in surrounding towns. Emergency assistance may take many hours or days. Trails are often unmarked and require orientation skills. Please plan ahead and prepare for these challenges. Do your research and bring everything you will need for your trip.



Scenic Drives

A drive across Cedar Mesa will place you in a marvelous pinyon and juniper forest, with a view of the Bears Ears Buttes in the distance. For a more expansive view of the area, try one of these scenic drives:

- **The Trail of the Ancients**, State Route 95 from State Route 261 to Blanding, provides several opportunities for short stops at Mule Canyon Interpretive site, Butler Wash Interpretive Trail, and the Butler Wash Dinosaur Tracksite.
- **The Valley of the Gods** sits one-thousand, one hundred feet below Cedar Mesa and is accessed off of State Route 261 below the Moki Dugway and off of State Route 163. The 17-mile primitive dirt road passes through a colorful valley full of sandstone monoliths. It is a popular destination for cyclists, campers, and sight-seers. The road is typically two-wheel drive except after storms. Campfires are not allowed in Valley of the Gods.
- **Natural Bridges National Monument** boasts a nine-mile scenic drive from which visitors may view three natural bridges. The scenic drive is paved and open year-round. A fee is required to visit the monument.

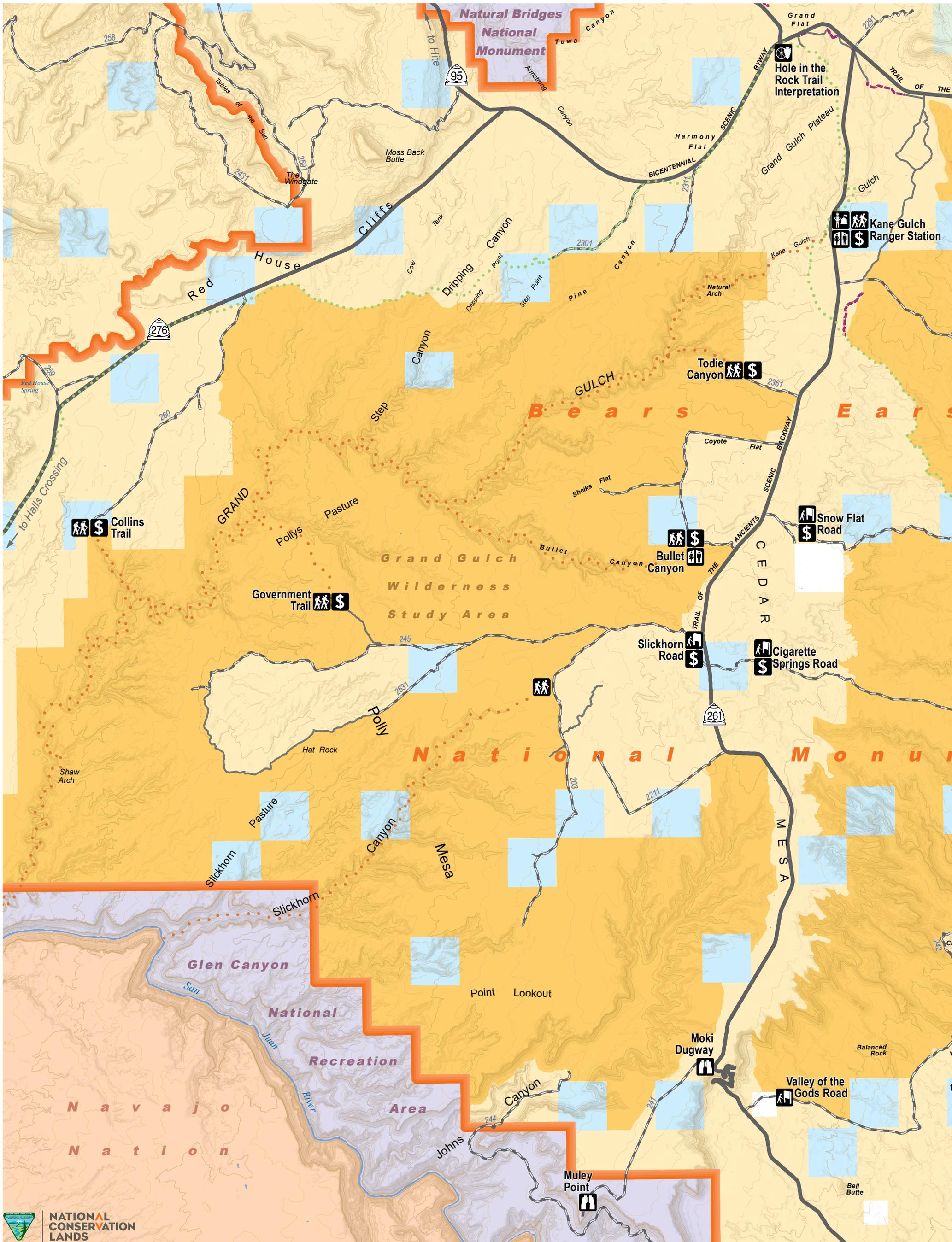
Car Camping

Car camping on top of Cedar Mesa and in many of the surrounding areas is a great way to experience the high desert. Cedar Mesa has plenty of primitive, dispersed campsites. No fee is required to park and camp along dirt roads managed by the Bureau of Land Management on Cedar Mesa, Comb Wash, Arch Canyon, or in Butler Wash. There is a 14-day limit at all campgrounds and at dispersed camping sites. Camping is only allowed in well-established campsites. No new campsites may be created. Visitors must practice Leave No Trace techniques and Visit with Respect. All trash (including toilet paper) must be packed out. Human waste must be packed out or buried six to eight inches deep, 200 feet from all water sources. Bring all the water you will need for your trip. Outside of seasonal and local fire restrictions, campfires are allowed but must be contained in a metal fire pan. Camping inside the canyons of Cedar Mesa requires a backpacking permit. For visitors hoping for more camping comforts, campgrounds at Goosenecks State Park, Natural Bridges National Monument, and on US Forest Service land generally have pit toilets, tables, and fire rings. Private campgrounds may be available in surrounding towns.

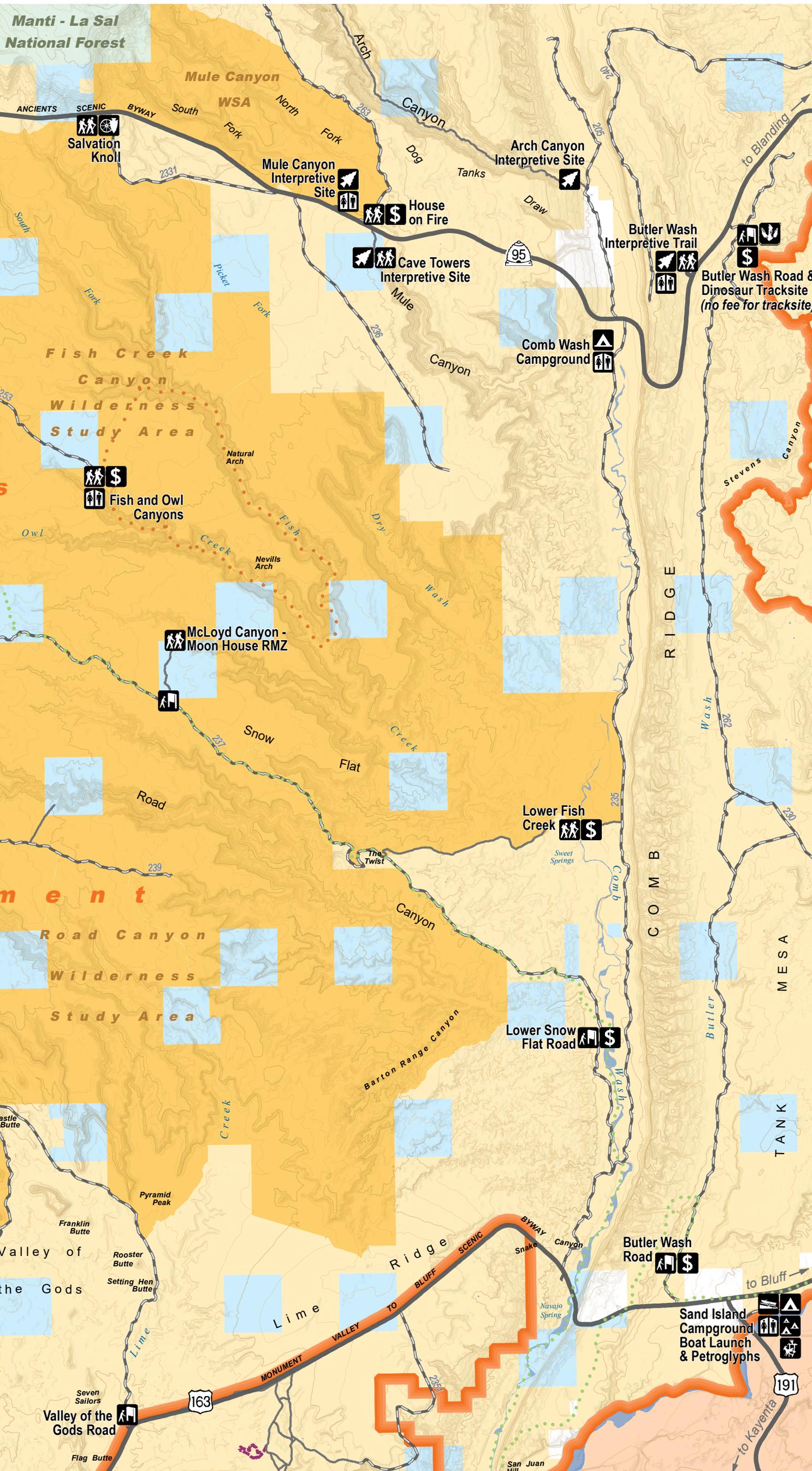
Stock Use

Horseback riding offers a unique way to experience the canyons, but special permits, limits and rules apply. Where stock is allowed, advanced reservations are required.

- In Grand Gulch, only one stock trip is allowed at any time for day or overnight trips.
- Stock are allowed on the Collins and Government Trails up to the confluence with Bullet Canyon, but not beyond the confluence with Bullet or downstream of Collins Canyon.
- In Fish and Owl Canyons, stock may enter Lower Fish Canyon and ride in Fish up to two miles upstream of the confluence with Owl, up to Nevills Arch in Owl Canyon, and into McLoyd Canyon. No overnight use is allowed in Fish, Owl, or McLoyd Canyons.
- Stock are not permitted in Slickhorn Canyon or any of the side canyons.
- In Arch Canyon and lower Johns Canyon, stock are allowed in the canyon and tributaries, on an overnight and a day use basis, without a fee.



Cedar Mesa



Legend



Facilities

- Ranger Station/Visitor Center
- Trailhead
- Toilet
- Campground
- Group Campsite
- Boat Ramp
- Fee Payment Station

Interpretive Sites and Scenic Viewpoints (No Fee)

- Prehistoric Structure(s)
- Rock Writing
- Historic Site
- Paleontological Site
- Scenic Viewpoint

Designations

- Bears Ears National Monument
- BLM Wilderness Study Area (WSA)
- Hole in the Rock Trail

Travel & Transportation

- State Routes
- US Highways
- Class B Roads (maintained)*
- Class D Roads (not maintained)*
- ATV Trail
- Hiking Route

Surface Management

- Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
- National Park Service (NPS)
- Indian Reservation
- Private
- School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA)
- United States Forest Service (USFS)

0 0.5 1 2 3 Miles

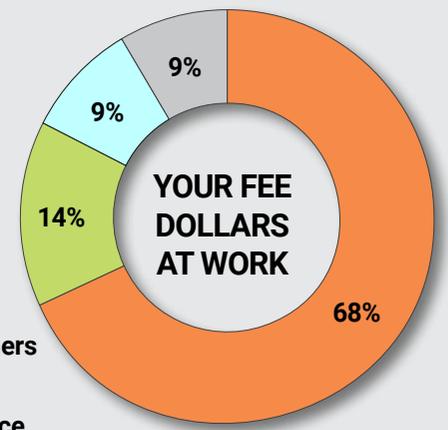
0 0.5 1 2 3 4 5 Kilometers

*Not all designated routes are displayed. For a complete representation of open routes within the Monticello Field Office, check the [Monticello Travel Management Plan \(TMP\) maps](#) available online.

Class B and D roads may be impassable for many vehicles, especially after rain or snow. It is the driver's responsibility to check route conditions before the trip.

Permits and Fees

Fees collected at Cedar Mesa and Bears Ears National Monument are used to enhance visitor services here. Your fees support daily patrols to educate visitors and monitor cultural resources, ranger programs, facility maintenance such as stocking and cleaning toilets, law enforcement to protect sensitive resources, and the printing and distribution of interpretive materials like this trip planner. Thank you for supporting our programs!



On-season and Off-season Permits

The Bureau of Land Management limits the number of permits available during the busy season (on-season periods) of March 1 to June 15 and September 1 to October 31 in an effort to protect resources and to reduce crowding. During this period, some permits have been made available online. During the off-season, June 16 to August 31 and November 1 to February 28, all permits with the exception of Moon House are available at self-serve envelopes at the trailheads. Public lands passes are not valid for fees on Cedar Mesa.

Day Use Permits

A permit is required to visit the canyons of Cedar Mesa and Butler Wash. Group size for day use is limited to 12 people. Day use permits and seven-day passes are available in fee tubes located at prominent trailheads and access points or at Kane Gulch Ranger Station during business hours. The tear-off receipt from the envelope must be displayed on the dashboard with permit number and dates visible. The fee is \$5 per person, per day or \$10 per person, per week.

Annual day use hangtags are available at www.recreation.gov, at Kane Gulch Ranger Station and at the Monticello Field Office. Online customers must show their receipt to receive a hangtag. Hangtags cover the day use fee for all occupants of a single vehicle and must be displayed on the rear-view mirror. Annual passes are valid one year from the date of purchase and are not valid for overnight backcountry use. The fee for an annual pass is \$40. Not valid for Moon House.

Overnight/Backpacking

All overnight backcountry use in the canyons of Cedar Mesa requires a permit. During the busy season from March 1 to June 15 and September 1 to October 31, entry is limited to 20 people at each trailhead per day for the following canyons and their tributaries: Grand Gulch, Slickhorn, Fish, Owl, North and South forks of Mule Canyon, Road, and Lime Creek. 12 of the 20 permits for the busy seasons are available online from 90 days in advance to 3 days prior to the start of the trip, at www.recreation.gov. Walk-in permits are available at Kane Gulch Ranger Station on a first come, first-served basis. No walk-in permits are issued in advance of the start date. Off-season permits are available at each trailhead by fee envelopes. A \$15 fee per person, per trip, is charged year-round. Group sizes are limited to 12 people. All advanced reservation permits must be picked up at the Kane Gulch Ranger Station between 8 AM and noon on the start date of the trip. No fires are allowed in the canyons of Cedar Mesa. Visitors must follow Leave No Trace standards and Visit with Respect.



Moon House Permits

Visiting Moon House requires a special permit. The McLoyd Canyon-Moon House Recreation Management Zone was established to protect unique and fragile archaeological sites in the area. Only 20 people may access the site per day, with a group size limit of 12 people. Pets and overnight use are not allowed. From March 1 to June 15 and September 1 to October 31, 8 walk-up permits are available during business hours at the Kane Gulch Ranger Station while 12 permits are available in advance at www.recreation.gov. All 20 permits are available in advance at www.recreation.gov during the off-season. General Cedar Mesa day use, seven-day, and annual passes do not apply. Moon House permits are not available at the trailhead.

NEW! Use [Recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov) to Get Your Day Use Permits Online and Ahead of Time

Visit www.recreation.gov and search for "Cedar Mesa" or use this QR code to obtain a 1-day pass (\$5 per person), 7-day pass (\$10 per person), or annual pass (\$40 per vehicle) in advance of your visit. Place [Recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov) receipt on dashboard as proof of purchase.



Commercial and Organized Group Permits

All commercial and organized groups (including universities, schools, and clubs) must contact the BLM Monticello Field Office for information on additional Special Recreation Permit requirements. Outfitters and organized groups must contact the office by December 1 for trips for the following spring, or by June 1 for fall trips.

Fee Summary	
Single Day (per person)	\$5
Seven Day (per person)	\$10
Annual Hangtag (per vehicle)	\$40
Overnight (per person)	\$15
Moon House (per person / day use only)	\$5
Mesa Top (Vehicle) Camping	no fee

Hiking

Bears Ears National Monument offers incredible opportunities for exploration. Some popular hikes in the Cedar Mesa area are listed below. Conditions are primitive. Trails are marked with cairns (balanced piles of rock) and there are few signs. More challenging trails require steep downclimbs with hundreds of feet of elevation loss/gain, deep sand, and navigating sandstone ledges. Water in the backcountry is scarce and unreliable. Carry all the water you will need. Please help protect biological soil crusts by hiking only on trails, rock, or in washes (where water flows during floods). Do not disturb cairns or build new ones.

Trail	Round Trip Distance	Average Time	Description:  Fee Required  Pit Toilet  Equestrians  Accessibility  Interpretive Exhibit  Dogs Allowed
Easy			
Butler Wash Dinosaur Tracksite	.25 miles (0.4 km)	1 hour	A short hike leads past an interpretive sign to a set of Megalosauripus tracks set down 160 million years ago. No shade.  
Butler Wash Interpretive Trail	1 mile (1.6 km)	1 hour	The trail winds across small washes and over slickrock to reach an overlook of a cliff dwelling. Native plants are identified along the way.   
Cave Towers	1 mile (1.6 km)	1-2 hours	This short trail stays on top of the mesa with great views of Elk Ridge and the Rocky Mountains, on a clear day. The hike ends at seven ancient towers built near the edge of a cliff.  
Mule Canyon Interpretive Site	0.5 miles (0.8 km)	30 minutes	A wheelchair accessible paved trail leads to a restored kiva and an interpretive exhibit.    
Salvation Knoll	0.5 miles (0.8 km)	1 hour	An interpretive sign can be accessed directly south of State Route 95. Hikers may retrace the steps of pioneers on a short, steep hike that begins near the sign.  
Moderate			
Arch Canyon	1/2-12 miles (0.8-19.3 km)	1 hour to overnight	Hike on the road or follow the wash as far up Arch Canyon as you wish. The canyon is 12 miles long. Arches and cliff dwellings may be seen from the creek bottom.  
House on Fire	2 miles (3.2 km)	2-3 hours	This short hike has minimal elevation change and leads to a popular set of granaries in the South Fork of Mule Canyon. A small sign points to the archaeological site one mile up the trail. Hikers may continue upstream for up to seven miles.  
Kane Gulch	8 miles (12.8 km)	6-8 hours	The trail begins at the Kane Gulch Ranger Station parking lot and gradually descends 600 feet in 4 miles to the Grand Gulch. The trail passes through a stunning canyon and reaches Junction Village at the confluence of Grand Gulch.   
Moon House	2 miles (3.2 km)	3-4 hours	The trail contours into a canyon and up the other side, ending at Moon House, though visitors may explore up and down canyon. The trail requires down-climbing a 5 foot tall ledge. Twenty visitors are allowed each day by a special permit.  
Natural Bridges National Monument	Varied Distances	30 min-6 hours	Many hiking options exist at Natural Bridges National Monument, from easy to difficult in varying lengths. Visit the monument visitor center to find a trail that is right for you.   

“Approach the land with a respectful mindset. You will encounter interconnected natural, cultural, scientific, and spiritual spaces within Bears Ears. It is important that even before you step foot into this sacred place you recognize that these are the homelands to many Tribes today; it is a region to be treated with intention and care.”

– Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition

For more information, contact:

Monticello Field Office

The Bureau of Land Management Monticello Field Office manages 1.8 million surface acres of land and 2.5 million acres of subsurface mineral estate, including Bears Ears National Monument. The office is open Monday through Friday from 7:45 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Calls specific to Cedar Mesa may be placed at (435) 587-1510. You can contact the Monticello Field Office at (435) 587-1500 or by email at blm_ut_mt_mail@blm.gov.

Kane Gulch Ranger Station

Kane Gulch Ranger Station is operated by the Bureau of Land Management Monticello Field Office and is open on a seasonal basis to provide area information and permits to visitors. The station is open seasonally from March 1 through June 15 and September 1 through October 31, from 8 AM to 12 PM. An exhibit, small store, and outdoor restrooms may be found at the station.



Natural Bridges National Monument

Utah's first National Monument was established in 1908 to protect three large natural bridges. The Bridge View Drive, a paved 9-mile paved scenic drive, is open year-round with overlooks for each bridge. Several day hikes lead into the canyon and across the mesa. A 13-site campground is open year-round, for a fee. The Visitor Center has exhibits and a small store. A fee is charged to enter the monument. For more information call (435) 692-1234 or visit www.nps.gov/nabr.

Manti-La Sal National Forest

The United States Forest Service in Monticello, Utah manages the Manti-La Sal National Forest north of Cedar Mesa, including Bears Ears Buttes, Elk Ridge, and Dark Canyon Wilderness Area. The forest is accessed by dirt roads that are often impassable due to snow and storms. Recreation opportunities include hiking, backpacking, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, dispersed camping, and scenic drives. For more information call (435) 587-2041 or visit www.fs.usda.gov/mantilasal.

Goosenecks State Park

At the edge of a deep canyon, Goosenecks State Park affords an impressive view of the San Juan River meandering 1,000 feet below the cliff's edge. The park is open year-round. A fee is charged for day and overnight use. The campground has primitive sites along the rim with fire-rings, picnic tables, and pit toilets. No water is available. For more information, contact Edge of the Cedars State Park Museum at (435) 678-3348 or visit <https://stateparks.utah.gov/parks/goosenecks/>.



Friends of Cedar Mesa

Friends of Cedar Mesa (FCM) is a conservation-focused 501 (c3) non-profit organization based in Bluff, Utah. Since 2010 FCM has worked to protect and build respect for the cultural and natural landscapes of the greater Bears Ears region. To further this mission, FCM works to create local, regional and national support for greater protection of Cedar Mesa through education, advocating for national designations, supporting smart local policy-making, and organizing research and volunteer service activities. FCM provides visitor information at the Bears Ears Education Center in Bluff, UT, in addition to sharing the Visit with Respect tips that you find in this Trip Planner and throughout the Bears Ears region. For additional Visit with Respect tips, videos and stewardship opportunities, visit their website at <https://www.friendsofcedarmesa.org/visit-with-respect/>.

Canyonlands Natural History Association

Canyonlands Natural History Association (CNHA) is the official non-profit partner of the Bureau of Land Management, US Forest Service, and National Park Service in southeast Utah. Since 1967, CNHA has donated over \$12 million to these federal partners. Books, maps, and other interpretive information for the Cedar Mesa/Bears Ears National Monument region may be purchased online or at Kane Gulch Ranger Station, Natural Bridges National Monument, and the Blanding Information Center. Call (435) 259-6003 for more details, or visit www.cnha.org to see the online store.



CANYONLANDS Natural History Association

Supporting the Lands That You Love
www.cnha.org

Local Visitor Centers

Visitor Centers in Blanding, Bluff, and Monticello are stocked with brochures, maps, book, videos, and mementos. The centers are staffed by knowledgeable local residents who will assist with information to make your visit exceptional. For more information on locations and hours, visit the Utah's Canyon Country website at <https://www.utahscanyoncountry.com/visitor-info-plan-your-trip>.