

BE SAFE

- Canyons of the Ancients National Monument is a remote, rugged and harsh desert environment. Summer temperatures may exceed 100 degrees Fahrenheit (30 degrees Celsius and elevations range from 4,875 ft. (1500 m) to 6,825 ft. (1500 m) above sea level.
- Carry and drink at least one gallon (four liters) of water per person per day.
- Always carry a map, water, food, sunscreen, and first aid kit. Avoid traveling alone.
- Wear a hat, long-sleeved shirt, long pants, sturdy footwear and good socks.
- Use insect repellent. Biting gnats are present in May and June.
- Watch for rattlesnakes, scorpions, mountain lions and other potentially dangerous wildlife.
- There are no formal campgrounds. Primitive, dispersed camping is allowed, but vehicles must not be more than 20 ft. from the edge of a route surface.
- Private property is scattered throughout the monument. Please avoid trespassing or blocking driveways.
- Bicycles are allowed only on existing county roads and designated routes.
- Three BLM Wilderness Study Areas (Cross Canyon, Sejo Lily, and Cahone Canyon) are only open to non-motorized travel.
- Cross-country motorized travel is not allowed. If a route is not signed, it is not open.
- In the Sand Canyon and Rock Creek Special Recreation Management Area, please stay on designated routes. The rest of the monument is open to foot and horseback travel.



Escalante Pueblo, BLM Photo by Bob Wick

PUEBLOS AT THE MUSEUM AND VISITOR CENTER

The Dominguez and Escalante Pueblos were both built and occupied by the Ancestral Pueblo people during the AD 1120s.

DOMINGUEZ PUEBLO

Tree-ring dates in wood from the site tell us the pueblo was built about AD 1123 – close to the same time as the Escalante Pueblo. This four-room structure was a typical family unit for four to eight people. Traces of 18 similar household sites have been found on the hill surrounding the Escalante Pueblo.

Dominguez Pueblo is an example of the common household style of the North San Juan Tradition: a row of small rooms facing a kiva or circular underground chamber. The kiva, no longer visible, was about 11 feet (3.3 m) in diameter. It was not possible to stabilize the earthen walls of the kiva, so it was backfilled after excavation in the 1970s.

ESCALANTE PUEBLO

Escalante Pueblo's original construction reflects the architectural style of Chaco Canyon, New Mexico.

Archaeologists from the University of Colorado excavated about one-third of the Escalante Pueblo in 1975-1976. Based on the age of wood used in its construction, archaeologists believe the pueblo was built or remodeled in three episodes.

The pueblo's founders built the original structure in AD 1129. Most of the pottery found here is not Chaco-style but Northern San Juan (local) types. This first occupation ended about nine years later. Another group of Northern San Juan people briefly occupied the pueblo around AD 1150. A third and final occupation, involving only a few rooms, took place around AD 1200.

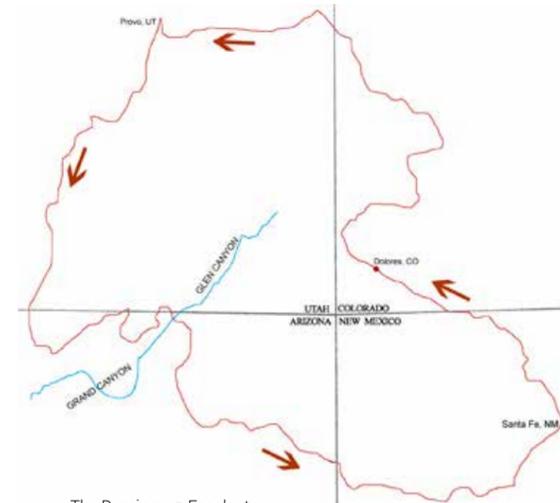
The Dominguez-Escalante Expedition

In July 1776, a party of Spanish explorers – Father Silverstre Velez de Escalante with his superior Francisco Dominguez and eight others – set out from Santa Fe, New Mexico to find a safe route to California and avoid the Mohave Desert and Grand Canyon.

After several weeks, they camped by a river called El Rio de Nuestra Señora de Los Dolores (The River of Our Lady of Sorrows). Father Escalante found the remains of a village overlooking the river, and wrote in his journal that it resembled the living Pueblo villages of New Mexico. It was the first record of an archaeological site in present-day Colorado and later named Escalante Pueblo. Two hundred years later, the Dominguez Pueblo was excavated and named.

In the Dolores area, the Spaniards first encountered Ute hunters, who fed them and guided the party for several months. Due to the lack of food and the approach of winter, the explorers abandoned their goal and returned to Santa Fe.

Though unsuccessful, the expedition established part of the Old Spanish Trail for later trade between the United States and Mexican territories.



The Dominguez-Escalante Expedition Route.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Information and exhibits on Canyons of the Ancients National Monument, the Trail of the Ancients Scenic and Historic Byway, the Dolores River Valley, and Ancestral Puebloan life on the Great Sage Plain can be found at the Canyons of the Ancients Museum and Visitor Center.

Canyons of the Ancients
National Monument and Visitor Center
27501 Highway 184
Dolores, CO 81323
970-882-5600

www.blm.gov/programs/national-conservation-lands/colorado/canyons-of-the-ancients

The monument is accessible via county-maintained paved and gravel roads.



NATIONAL
CONSERVATION
LANDS

Canyons of the Ancients National Monument

Canyons of the Ancients National Monument encompasses more than 170,000 acres of high desert. Part of the Bureau of Land Management's National Conservation Lands, the monument is managed to protect its rich landscapes and cultural and natural resources.

The monument contains the highest recorded density of prehistoric and historic sites in North America. Thousands of archaeological sites have been recorded in the monument, and thousands more await documentation and study. Sites with standing walls are more obvious, while other sites are rubble mounds or depressions in the earth. As you explore the monument, please do your part to protect the beauty and archaeological integrity of the landscape.

Multiple uses such as hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, hunting, grazing, research and oil and gas development are allowed in the monument, but not every use is allowed on every acre.



THE GREAT SAGE PLAIN

Canyons of the Ancients National Monument is located in the Great Sage Plain – more than 1,500 square miles of high, dry plateau, scored by canyons. The wind-deposited soil supports sagebrush and pinon/juniper forests and have been used for dryland farming for thousands of years. On the southern horizon is the Ute Mountain, sacred to the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, and the mesas of Mesa Verde National Park. The Abajo and La Sal mountains rise to the northwest in Utah. To the east, you can see Lone Cone and the San Juan Mountains.

» Discover for Yourself «

Map & Guide

ANCESTRAL PUEBLOANS

Ancestral Puebloans farmed corn, beans, and squash; supplemented their diet with small game; and made tools from stones and animal bones. The average height of an Ancestral Puebloan was about 5'1" (156 cm) for females and 5'3" (163 cm) for males. The average life span was 30 years. Ancestral Puebloan villages have stone masonry, underground structures, round rooms, rectangular rooms, towers and plazas. These villages sometimes include natural cliffs and rock shelters. Descendants of the people who lived long ago in the San Juan region still maintain ties to the area and live in modern villages in New Mexico and Arizona.



"The name for this area, including Mesa Verde and the Great Sage Plain, is kaach-ta kaact meaning wide area of dwellings. All of our cultural and traditional beliefs originated here a long time ago before the final migration took place."

Ernest M. Vallo
Eagle Clan, Pueblo of Acoma

"Tuwalanki is the Hopi word for lookout tower for enemies. The highest point of the village - tupatsa - is the look-out for everything including placement and movement of the sun, sky-watching for planting, and for watching the stars, moon, and sun in general."

Morgan Saufkle
Bear Clan, The Hopi Tribe

PAINTED HAND PUEBLO

Built in the AD 1200s, Painted Hand Pueblo was a small village of about 20 rooms that still include faint rock paintings and petroglyphs. The designs of the ancient images have special meaning to Tribal descendants. In 2014, the Painted Hand Pueblo was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Painted Hand Pueblo, BLM Photo

LOWRY PUEBLO

Lowry Pueblo is a 1,000-year-old Ancestral Puebloan village named after George Lowry, an early 20th century homesteader. Lowry Pueblo was built on top of the houses of an earlier community around AD 1060, and inhabited for about 165 years. Lowry Pueblo began as a small village with a few rooms and a kiva. Several more rooms, the Great Kiva, and Kiva B (the painted kiva) were added between AD 1085 and 1170. By the time the last families left and migrated south and east, the pueblo had 40 rooms, eight kivas, and a Great Kiva.



At 47 feet in diameter, the Lowry Great Kiva is one of the largest kivas in this area. BLM Photo by Bob Wick



Lowry Pueblo, BLM Photo by Bob Wick

Dr. Paul S. Martin of the Chicago Field Museum of Natural History excavated Lowry Pueblo in the 1930s. In 1965, the BLM and the University of Colorado stabilized the masonry walls. In 1967, Lowry Pueblo was dedicated as a National Historic Landmark. Although the masonry was repaired for preservation and safety, Lowry looks much as it did when it was originally excavated.

SAND CANYON PUEBLO

About AD 1250, families came together around the head of Sand Canyon to build a large and compact village. A thick, one-story tall, U-shaped wall surrounded hundreds of squarerooms, round kivas, and community structures including a plaza, a large D-shaped structure, and a great kiva.

The village seems designed for defense—perhaps due to regional strife over dwindling resources. A spring was at the heart of the village, giving residents exclusive access to their all-important water source. The thick stone outer wall had small, angled peepholes and few doorways. The towers built against the outside face of the wall also provided good lookouts that could only be entered from inside the village.

By AD 1275, Sand Canyon Pueblo was about three times the size of Cliff Palace (the largest pueblo in Mesa Verde National Park).



Sand Canyon Pueblo, Photo by ©Jerry Sintz

PLEASE RESPECT ANCESTRAL PUEBLOAN HOMES

The remnants of Ancestral Puebloan homes are scattered throughout the Canyons of the Ancients National Monument.

Keep Your Feet Off the Furniture
Archaeological sites are old and fragile. Walk carefully and avoid stepping on walls.

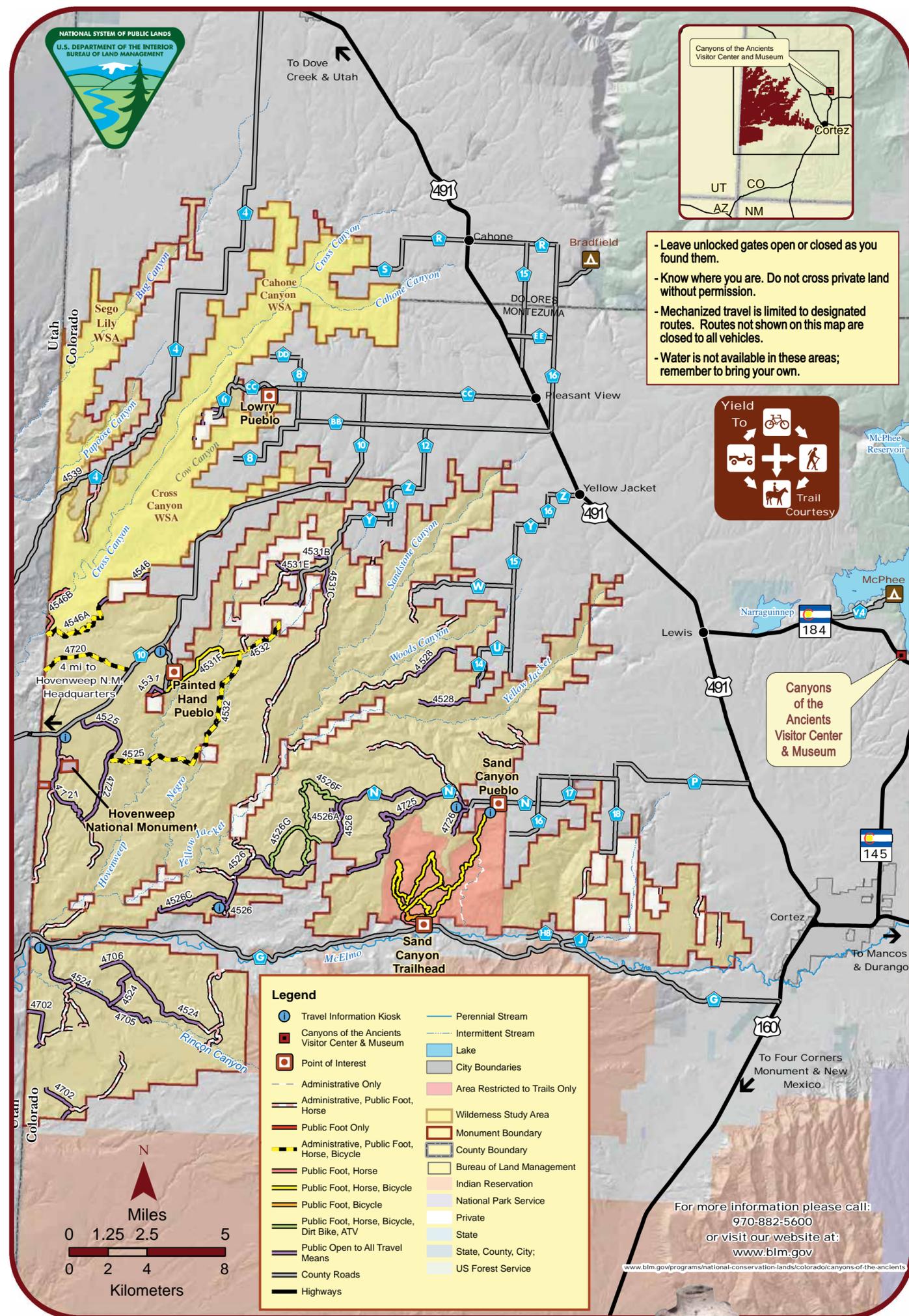
Don't Touch the Paintings
Oils from skin damage pictographs (rock paintings) and petroglyphs (rock carvings). Never deface artwork in archaeological sites.

Don't Eat in the Living Room
Avoid picnicking in archaeological sites. Crumbs attract rodents who may tunnel and nest in the site. Make sure to pick up and carry out all of your trash.

Don't Take the Knickknacks
Leave artifacts where you find them for others to enjoy. It is illegal to remove artifacts.

No Slumber Parties
Avoid camping in archaeological sites. It is easy to destroy walls and artifacts in the dark. Never use wood from sites in campfires.

Tell the Owner if You See Something Wrong
If you find archaeological sites defaced or if you witness someone removing artifacts contact the Tres Rios Field Office and Canyons of the Ancients Law Enforcement Tip Line: 833-660-5771 (toll free), TRFOtpline@blm.gov



- Leave unlocked gates open or closed as you found them.
- Know where you are. Do not cross private land without permission.
- Mechanized travel is limited to designated routes. Routes not shown on this map are closed to all vehicles.
- Water is not available in these areas; remember to bring your own.



Canyons of the Ancients Visitor Center & Museum

For more information please call: 970-882-5600 or visit our website at: www.blm.gov

The Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 and the Antiquities Act of 1906 prohibit anyone from removing artifacts or disturbing archaeological sites on federal public lands without written permission from the BLM. Please report any vandalism or damage to the historic or archaeological sites to the Tres Rios Field Office and Canyons of the Ancients Law Enforcement Tip Line: 833-660-5771 (toll free), TRFOtpline@blm.gov, or call the Montezuma County Sheriff at 970-565-8441.

