



Build Your Own Cliff Home

Overview

Mesa Verde's cliff dwellings show how Ancestral Puebloans built homes using natural rock formations for protection and community. This activity invites families to become architects, thinking like ancient builders.

Family Activity: Design a Cliff Dwelling

1. Materials (portable version): Notebook, pencils, markers, small sticks, or clay if available.

2. Sketch or Model:

- a. Draw your own tiny cliff dwelling or build a mini version using simple materials.
- b. Consider: Where will you place rooms? How will water reach your home? How do you protect your family from weather?

3. Think Like a Builder:

- a. What paths would you need to move safely in and out of the dwelling?
- b. How would sunlight affect your home?
- c. Where would you store food or water?

Quick Facts

- Mesa Verde National Park protects over 600 cliff dwellings.
- Homes were made from sandstone, wooden beams, and mortar.
- Water was collected from rainfall and nearby springs.
- Families often built communal spaces and storage areas inside cliffs.

Fun Explorer Challenges

1. Map It Out: Imagine your cliff home within a larger community. Where would neighbors live? Where are shared spaces?
2. Materials Challenge: If you could only use materials from the cliff and surrounding land, what would you choose and why?
3. Story Prompt: Pretend you are a child living in the cliff dwelling. What games or chores would you have each day?

Take-Home Prompt

- Next time you see a natural rock formation or hillside, ask: How could humans or animals make a home here? What challenges would they face?