Campus Life

Crow Canyon Archaeological Center is located at 6200 feet in the high desert of southwestern Colorado. Our safe, rural setting is about 4 miles from the town of Cortez, 15 miles west of Mesa Verde National Park, and 40 miles northeast of the Four Corners, where Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah meet.

Our 170-acre campus features spectacular views of Mesa Verde and Sleeping Ute Mountain. Our archaeological excavation site is a short drive away. On campus, you can watch wildlife, walk through the pinyon and juniper woods, and enjoy panoramic views from the lodge deck.

All services, including medical care, are readily accessible in Cortez. Students and chaperones are housed in new, sustainably designed, accessible cabins. Each cabin accommodates up to 24 students as well as chaperones.

All rooms have bunk beds. Housing is also available in Navajo-style cabins (“Hogans”). Students and chaperones must bring their own towel and bedding.

Three delicious meals are served each day in our lodge; off-campus meals are served picnic style. You and your students will be treated to hearty entrées, fresh fruits and vegetables, and a salad bar. Most special diets can be accommodated.

About Crow Canyon

Founded in 1983, the mission of the Crow Canyon Archaeological Center is to empower present and future generations by making the human past accessible and relevant through archaeological research, experiential education, and American Indian knowledge.

The Crow Canyon Archaeological Center is a 501(c) (3) not-for-profit organization. The Center’s programs and admission practices are open to applicants of any race, color, nationality, ethnic origin, gender, or sexual orientation.

Registration as a seller of travel does not constitute approval by the State of California – CST 2059347-50.

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Activities

At the Crow Canyon Archaeological Center, we believe that the goal of education is to give students the intellectual tools they need to explore the world and think critically. We also believe that the optimal educational environment encourages students to actively participate in the learning process through hands-on activities and group discussion. Our programs are designed for students in grades 4–12. Core activities teach students about archaeology, ancestral Pueblo history, the scientific process, and the complex interactions between people and their environments. Program modules vary depending on grade level, program length, and group size.

Windows/Inquiries into the Past
Students explore the concepts of cultural continuity and change by examining artifact replicas and other archaeological evidence representing different periods in Pueblo history. Through group discussion of their observations and inferences, students construct a chronology spanning thousands of years. (Windows: elementary students, Inquiries: middle and high school students.)

Basketmaker Lifestyles
At the Pithouse Learning Center, students explore a replica of a 9th-century Basketmaker pithouse and engage in hands-on activities, including fire-starting (with a bow drill), making fiber cordage, and “hunting” with spears and atlatls.

Pueblo Lifestyles
At the Pueblo Learning Center, students investigate a replica of a masonry pueblo. They discuss natural resources and farming practices; learn Pueblo games, and “hunt” with spears and atlatls.

Simulated Excavation*
Students get “hands-on” with the practical skills of field archaeology as they excavate and map site replicas representing different Pueblo time periods. Using the scientific method, they develop research questions and draw conclusions on the basis of their observations.

Field Excavation
Under the careful supervision of staff archaeologists and educators, students excavate at Crow Canyon’s current site, contributing to the Center’s ongoing research into ancestral Pueblo culture.

Site Tour*
Students tour a current or recent Crow Canyon excavation site. Students learn about site etiquette, ongoing fieldwork, and the results of previous excavations at other sites in the area.

Lab*
Students wash, analyze, and catalog real artifacts from recent excavations. They also visit the curing room to see and discuss artifacts recovered from earlier excavations.

Ancient Technology
Students discuss the importance of ancient technologies to archaeologists as well as to the ancestral Pueblo people, and they use ancient techniques to make their own replica artifacts.

Canyons of the Ancients Visitor Center and Museum Tour
Interactive exhibits on artifacts, analyses, and modern Pueblo perspectives enhance students’ understanding of local archaeology. A short hike behind the museum to Escalante Pueblo affords a panoramic view of the landscape that was home to the ancestral Pueblo people.

Mesa Verde National Park Tour
Students typically visit this UNESCO World Heritage site at the culmination of their program. They tour several excavated sites (including the famous cliff dwellings), visit the museum, and review the concepts they learned throughout the week.

*Required for students who will excavate in the field. Activities can be modified to accommodate the cultural concerns of American Indian students.

The Amazing Atlatl
Grades: 6–12
Students explore the archaeology, ethnology, physics, and social implications of the spear thrower that predates the bow and arrow.

Indigenous Displacement
Grades: 6–12
An introduction to the history and lasting effects of colonization as experienced by the Ute tribes in Colorado. Students learn concepts associated with land reduction, indigenous displacement, and the resulting sociocultural and environmental impacts that led to the formation of the Ute reservations. Participants engage in an activity that challenges them to survive by collecting simulated resources in a diminishing land.

Dendrochronology
Grades: 6–12
Learn how trees grow—and what archaeological secrets are revealed in their wood. Students learn the basic principles of dendrochronology, or tree-ring dating, in this hands-on, interactive program.

More than a Spoonful of Dirt!
Grades: 7–12
What can you learn from a spoonful of dirt? Lots! Students use geoarchaeology tests to analyze a sediment sample, and study microremains that provide clues to how people lived in the past. This program incorporates geology, biology, and the analysis of archaeological microremains.

Agricultural Strategies
Grades: 9–12
In an interactive game of chance, students compare the success of different agricultural strategies in a range of environments and under different climatic and social conditions. Their discoveries serve as the basis for a discussion about the relevance of archaeology in modern life.

The Story of Corn
Grades: 8–12
Explore the history and cultural implications of corn. This program focuses on the evolution and spread of corn in the American Southwest and the importance of this grain in the development of Pueblo cultures and the modern agricultural industry.

Limited to groups of 48 or fewer students at a time.

Migration
Grades: 7–12
Students learn about the practical and social challenges that ancestral Pueblo people may have faced when they left the area in the late A.D. 1200s.
Evening Programs

When your school group stays on campus for at least two nights, one or more evening programs are included with your program. Additional programs can be purchased for $6 per student, per program. The availability of specific evening programs is dependent on staff availability, but, given enough advance notice, we will do our best to accommodate your requests. All evening programs last about one hour.

ALL GRADES

Wash Lab
Grades: 4–12
Students learn how and why archaeologists keep track of artifacts from their excavations—then get their hands wet washing real artifacts from our current excavation project!

Introduction to Artifacts
Grades: 5–12
Identify and classify different kinds of artifacts found on archaeological sites—flaked stone, ground stone, pottery, and animal bones—in this hands-on lesson. Find out what archaeologists can learn about ancient peoples by studying artifacts.

Ute History
Grades: 4–12
A member of the Ute Mountain Ute tribe talks about the history and culture of the Ute peoples of the Four Corners area, past and present. Learn from a Native American perspective!

Ute Place-Names
Grades: 4–12
American Indian names and language are probably the largest single source of modern U.S. place-names. In this program, developed with the assistance of Ute elders, students gain an understanding of the importance of Ute culture and history in Colorado.

Rock Art
Grades: 4–12
Explore the use of sign and symbolism in this presentation of images preserved in and on stone. Learn how archaeologists date rock art, and learn how rock art styles changed through time. Students have the opportunity to create their own “rock art”.

Elementary School Level

Stories
Grades: 4–6
Stories are used in many cultures to teach, guide, and entertain. In this program, staff storytellers offer a sample from a variety of cultural traditions.

Wildlife Then and Now
Grades: 4–6
Students connect faunal remains found on a site with archaeological interpretation, research, and an understanding of cultural practices of the past.

Name That Question
Grades: 4–7
Students review what they have learned during their stay at Crow Canyon in an interactive activity based on a popular TV game show.

Art Timeline
Grades: 4–8
Students create a book that helps integrate the understanding of culture, chronology, art elements, and principles of design into a balanced composition.

Zuni Dragonflies
Grades: 4–8
Dragonflies play several important roles in the culture of various American Indian tribes. The people of Zuni Pueblo tell a story about a young boy who created the first dragonfly. Students will listen to the story and then construct a dragonfly out of corn husks.

Program Schedules*

*Activities and schedules are subject to change, depending on group size, weather conditions, and other factors.

APRIL–AUGUST | SEPTEMBER–OCTOBER

Choose from one-day field trips or overnight programs. Overnight programs run until August 31st. After August 31st, Crow Canyon will be offering field trip programs for school groups.

Please call our sales and enrollment specialist for assistance in developing your trip or information about custom programs.

OUR CURRICULUM

• Articulates with national education standards in social science, history, science, geography, and math.
• Allows students to “experience the past” through hands-on activities at our Pithouse and Pueblo Learning Centers.
• Was developed in consultation with Pueblo communities and other indigenous peoples to ensure that what we teach is accurate and mindful of the connections between past and present.

First Impressions
Field Trip • Grades 4–12
• Pueblo History and Lifestyles
Activities may include Windows or Inquiries into the Past, Basketmaker and/or Pueblo Lifestyles. Arrive on campus between 8:30 and 9 a.m.; bring sack lunches.

Cultural Contact
One Day • Grades 4–12
Activities may include Windows or Inquiries into the Past, Basketmaker and/or Pueblo Lifestyles.

Gaining Insights
Overnight • Grades 4–12
Day 1 Windows or Inquiries into the Past • Basketmaker Lifestyles
Day 2 Simulated Excavation • Pueblo Lifestyles
Day 3 Mesa Verde National Park Tour

Mesa Visions
Three days • Grades 4–12
Day 1 Windows or Inquiries into the Past • Basketmaker Lifestyles
Day 2 Simulated Excavation • Pueblo Lifestyles
Day 3 Mesa Verde National Park Tour

Cultural Voyages
Four days • Grades 4–12
Day 1 Windows or Inquiries into the Past • Basketmaker Lifestyles
Day 2 Simulated Excavation • Pueblo Lifestyles
Day 3 Canyons of the Ancients Visitor Center and Museum Tour • Lab • Site Tour or Ancient Technology
Day 4 Mesa Verde National Park Tour
Arrive Sunday or Monday evening, depart Friday or Saturday morning (five nights on campus)

Discovering Stories
Five Days
Middle & High School*
Day 1 Inquiries into the Past • Simulated Excavation
Day 2 Site Tour • Basketmaker Lifestyles
Day 3 Lab • Ancient Technology
Day 4 Pueblo Lifestyles • Canyons of the Ancients Visitor Center and Museum Tour
Day 5 Mesa Verde National Park Tour
*Program can be modified for elementary school students. Arrive Sunday evening, depart Saturday morning (six nights on campus)

Breaking Ground
Five days with Field Excavation
Middle & High School*
Day 1 Inquiries into the Past • Simulated Excavation
Day 2 Lab • Canyons of the Ancients Visitor Center and Museum Tour
Day 3 Field Excavation* • Basketmaker Lifestyles
Day 4 Field Excavation • Pueblo Lifestyles
Day 5 Mesa Verde National Park Tour
*High school students spend the entire day in the field.

*Program can be modified for elementary school students. Arrive Sunday evening, depart Saturday morning (six nights on campus)

*Activities and schedules are subject to change, depending on group size, weather conditions, and other factors.
2020 Tuition & Fees

First Impressions
Field Trip
$45 per student
No charge for chaperones

Cultural Contact
Overnight
$185 per student
$95 per required chaperone

Gaining Insights
Two Days (three nights)
$315 per student
$170 per required chaperone

Mesa Visions
Three days (four nights)
$455 per student
$245 per required chaperone

Cultural Voyages
Four days (five nights)
$600 per student
$320 per required chaperone

Discovering Stories
Five Days (six nights)
$715 per student
$395 per required chaperone

Breaking Ground
Five days with Field Excavation (six nights)
$780 per student
$395 per required chaperone

Custom Programs
Contact our sales and enrollment specialist for information.

Scholarships are available for schools serving local and Native American students.

Tuition and fees cover lodging based on shared accommodations, meals as agreed upon in the final contract, entry fees, and permits. Transportation to and from Cortez, Colorado, is the school's responsibility. We provide transportation from Durango if needed. Tuition rates are based on a minimum of 10 students. Groups with fewer than 10 students will be charged for the minimum of 10.

CHAPERONES
Schools are required to provide their own chaperones, which may include teachers and parents. We adhere to the following chaperone-to-student ratios:

- Children age 8–10 (grades 4–5): 1 adult chaperone to every 8 children
- Children age 11–13 (grades 6–7): 1 adult chaperone to every 10 children
- Children age 14–18 (grades 8–12): 1 adult chaperone to every 12 children

Contingent upon available space, schools may bring more than the required number of chaperones. Additional chaperones pay the student rate.

Grant Funding

You can apply for grant funding to help defray the cost of an educational trip to Crow Canyon. K–12 education is a priority for many private foundations and government agencies, and they often support activities that match their areas of interest and geographic focuses. It does take time—often up to a year—to prepare a proposal, have it reviewed, and receive funding (if your request is granted). But, if you give yourself plenty of time and/or think you might bring your students to Crow Canyon annually, this can be a very effective way of underwriting some of the investment.

YOU CAN DO IT!

Begin by identifying foundations and agencies that would be interested in funding your trip. You can find many potential funders, as well as grant-writing tips and sample proposals, by searching online. You can also go to your public library and talk with the reference librarian; most states have a “Grants Guide” that provides information about funders.

Research prospective funders carefully. Some focus on certain kinds of educational experiences, some are available only to schools located in certain states or regions, and all have their own philanthropic focus. Funders will want to know how you will be helping them fulfill their mission and goals.

Once you have identified a funding prospect, follow that organization’s guidelines and formats when preparing your grant proposal. Check the funder’s website for the most up-to-date information about format, required attachments, and deadlines.

Also, be sure to talk with your principal and administrative office as you begin the process of applying for grant funding. Most foundations require that a senior administrative officer from your school approve and sign the proposal.