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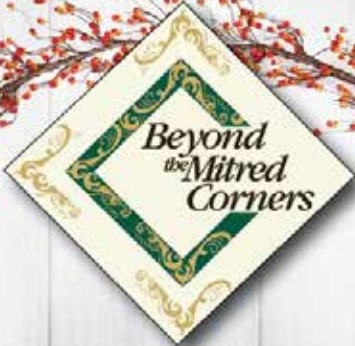
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BY ED PAWLENTY



**OTC**  
Otter Tail County  
**Fall 2024**

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Cover Photo by Olga Yefimova

**OTC**  
Otter Tail County  
Magazine

Fall 2024  
Volume 11—Issue 3

**Publisher:** Ed Pawlenty  
**Designer:** Joy Minion  
**Ad Designer:** Janet Widness  
**Marketing Representative:**  
Ed Pawlenty: 651-270-3991

**OTC'S STATEMENT:**

*Sharing great stories about interesting people and events in Otter Tail County. Published three times a year with a readership of 25,000. Also distributed to area stores and resorts for our visitors to enjoy.*

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# Otter Tales



**Dog owners sometimes** wonder if our dogs can understand us especially when you say "Stop eating that, you knucklehead!". Then there are those times just sitting on the deck and asking them "What ya thinking there boy?" Yeah, we dog owners get bored a lot and our dogs are the victims of these conversations. I especially love the head tilt. They just keep rocking their head left and right like they are trying to listen or understand you. We would like to think so but most likely they are saying, "Why is goof ball making weird noises?"

My favorite season is upon us...Fall! The cooling temps, all the colors, and the crystal blue skies just make for really nice days to enjoy. It also means the holiday seasons are almost here. It starts with deer hunting (haha), leads into Thanksgiving, then Christmas and New Year's. A lot fun events crammed into a couple months. Setting the stresses aside, it is the most enjoyable time to spend with family and friends. If you are like me, you just don't see them much and it is good that the holidays hold us accountable for making that happen.

Deer hunting aside, Thanksgiving is by far the best holiday since it is just all about great food, family and fun. Missy Hermes from the Historical Society researched a piece about the way folks celebrated Thanksgiving back in the day. I didn't know that Otter Tail County was once the largest producer of

turkeys for the big day! Pam Larson takes us along for a ride through the Colorado National Parks. As always, great pics make it feel like you are there. The National Parks are a gem for sure. It is nice they will be around forever to enjoy. We have another great recipe for you from Sandra Thimgan: pumpkin pancakes. Pumpkin

anything is always a signature of Fall. With the recent drought conditions, Evan Amundson reminds us: A little TLC now will go a long way to keep them healthy through the winter. And Lake Region Healthcare has a timely and informative article on cancer screening.

As prescribed, cozy up with a nice hot cup of coffee or tea and enjoy reading this issue of OTC. Happy Fall and Happy Holidays!

— Ed Pawlenty, **OTC** Publisher

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# A Tale of Turkeys

## Past Times in Otter Tail County

BY MISSY HERMES, EDUCATION COORDINATOR, OTTER TAIL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE OTTER TAIL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY (OTCHS) AND MAY NOT BE REPRINTED WITHOUT PERMISSION

**The plentiful rains** this summer have led to bountiful crops. My brother-in-law's garden has provided our family with an abundance of vegetables. Our friend Kris has shared gorgeous pears from her parents' tree. Facebook friends show off photos of full freezers and pantries. The variety and quality of produce at the many Otter Tail County farmers markets is breathtaking. Now, as the harvest draws to a close, the hunters prepare for their favorite season.

All of that weeding, gathering, drying, canning, freezing, baking and fishing is a good reminder of what our ancestors had to plan to get through a long winter. Thankfulness and a fall feast after a good harvest has a long tradition here.

Homesteaders in the county didn't make much mention of Thanksgiving dinners in their diaries and writings. Perhaps they were just thankful to keep body and soul together during the first years. The Cutlerites at Clitherall learned from their Anishinabe neighbors how to pick local cranberries, and documented a first winter so cold that bread froze overnight and had to be cut with an ax.

The German Catholics in Otto Township wrote of surviving on a diet of rutabagas and fish from Rush Lake. In *Ever the Land* by Reuben Parsons, his Swedish immigrant ancestors celebrated Christmas, not Thanksgiving, with prairie chickens, but quickly grew tired of the plentiful bird.



*The Old Town on Clitherall Lake, log building, 1865,  
1st church and 2nd school, the lake on the right. © OTCHS [4729]*





*Harold, Dagny and Henry Peterson of the Peterson Turkey Farm, Battle Lake. © OTCHS [9982]*



*1907 Thanksgiving gathering at the home of Abner Tucker  
at Tucker's Point, Clitherall Lake. © OTCHS [12640]*





*Hannah J. Kempfer holding a live turkey she raised on her farm.  
© OTCHS [36486]*

Of course, the plentiful bird and – in my husband’s opinion – the best guest at Thanksgiving is the turkey. This delicious feathered friend continues to play a huge role in the economy of Otter Tail County.

Thirty box cars of turkeys raised here in 1930 were shipped, with each carload “equivalent to 20,000 pounds” of turkey. In 1936, the county topped all others in the state in turkey production, bringing in \$2 million – worth \$45 million in today’s money. While Stearns County may claim the title

of largest turkey producer today, our local turkey farmers played a significant role in the rise of the great gobbler in Minnesota.

One of the prize artifacts on display at the Otter Tail County Museum is Eddie Velo’s original skid-steer Bobcat™, designed nearly 75 years ago to aid in cleaning his Trondhjem township turkey barns. Velo and fellow grower Melvin Trosvik served as the first officers of West Central Turkeys built in Pelican



*Turkeys (and sheep) on the Clarence K. Olson farm in Folden township, c. 1930. © OTCHS [15139]*



Rapids in 1956, and now part of the Jennie-O Corporation.

Other prominent turkey producers include Hannah Kempfer of Friberg, the first woman legislator from rural Minnesota; Mrs. B.M. Skrove of Dalton, whose flock of 100 turkeys won 1st prize at the North West Show in St. Paul in 1928; and the Petersons of Battle Lake.

In 1983, Darrel Carlson of Parkers Prairie was elected President of the MN Turkey Growers Association and in 2005, President George W. Bush pardoned "Marshmallow", a turkey raised by the Trites family in Henning.

Unfortunately, the success of our Otter Tail County farmers and their



*Eddie Velo with the original skid loader now on display at the Otter Tail County Museum. Photo courtesy of OTCHS.*



*Velo turkeys rural Rothsay, December 1968. © OTCHS [#1533]*





*Pelican Rapids, West Central Turkeys, Inc. Building, 1958 © OTCHS [#41749]*



*West Central Turkeys in Pelican Rapids, 1982. © OTCHS [#7977]*



stock of plentiful poultry enticed a gang of turkey thieves who preyed on producers between 1928-1931. The turkey takers hit every corner of the county, stealing birds from the Ernest Halbakken farm in Trondhjem, Martin Johnson's place in Dane Prairie, and the Zuehlsdorff farm in Aurdal. One farmer in Woodside Township lost 66 turkeys! A trio of culprits eluded capture until 1932, when they attempted to sell contraband turkeys in Detroit Lakes.

Need some inspiration planning for your upcoming Thanksgiving feast? Let me wow you with a mouth-watering description of the feast served at the Fergus Falls State Hospital in 1966.

From the *Fergus Falls Daily Journal*:

### **Biggest turkey dinner in town**

*Thanksgiving Dinner will be served to about 1,100 patients and employees at the Fergus Falls State Hospital. Chef Ed Jackson listed quantities involved. The dinner requires 1,000 pounds of tom turkey, 400 pounds of potatoes, 300 pounds of sweet potatoes, 50 loaves of bread for dressing, 20 gallons of giblet gravy, 80 gallons of peas, 200 dozen rolls, 100 pounds of cranberries, 225 pumpkin pies and 8 gallons of whipping cream.*



*Fergus Falls State Hospital dining hall, 1899. © OTCHS [34577]*





Salvation Army Thanksgiving Dinner, November 23, 1984. © OTCHS [38668]





left: Children at School District No. 174 in Girard Township in costume for a Thanksgiving play, c. 1951.

front row, l-r: Margie Kimber, Linda Severson, Bette Smith, Dean Peterson, Alan Kimber.

back row, l-r: Muriel Arneson, Ernie Iverson, Dale Iverson, Donnie Peterson, Howard Hanson.

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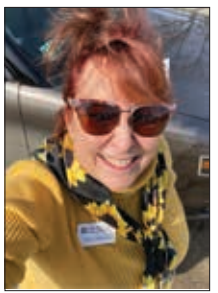


left: Dr. Bill Morgan, dentist at the Fergus Falls State Hospital and one of the famous WWII Tuskegee airmen, with a guest and his daughter, Susan. Thanksgiving 2007. © OTCHS [34369]

Wishing all OTC Magazine readers a fabulous fall and a plentiful feast!



Missy Hermes has specialized in Otter Tail County history and museum education since moving to Minnesota in 1991. She is a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer, writer, scrapbooker, avid reader and mom. Missy and her husband Paul live in Fergus Falls with their ginger rescue cat.







# The Lakeside Gourmet

BY SANDRA THIMGAN  
PHOTO BY DAN THIMGAN

## Fluffy Pumpkin Pancakes

### Fluffy Pumpkin Pancakes

Makes 16-18 pancakes

2 cups buttermilk  
1 cup pumpkin puree (NOT pie filling)  
2 eggs  
3 T. butter, melted and cooled  
2 tsp. vanilla  
1½ cups all-purpose flour  
1 T. baking powder  
⅓ cup granulated sugar  
½ tsp. baking soda  
2 tsp. pumpkin pie spice blend\*  
½ tsp. salt  
Butter and maple syrup for serving

In a large bowl, combine buttermilk, pumpkin, eggs, butter, and vanilla and stir with a whisk to combine. In a medium bowl, stir together the flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, spices, and salt. Pour the dry ingredients into the wet and mix just until incorporated. Do not over mix. Let batter rest for about 5 minutes.

Heat a nonstick griddle to 325 degrees or set large frying pan over medium heat. Melt a little butter on the cooking surface, spreading it evenly. Using a ⅓ cup measure, pour the batter onto the griddle or frying pan. The pancakes are ready to flip when they look a little dry around the edges and start to form little bubbles, 1 to 2 minutes. Flip and cook on the other side until golden brown and completely cooked through, 1 to 2 more minutes.

Serve topped with butter, maple syrup, or whipped cream w/cinnamon.

#### \*Pumpkin pie spice (mix your own)

1½ tsp. cinnamon  
½ tsp. nutmeg  
¼ tsp. ground cloves  
Scant ½ tsp. ground ginger

Pancakes, to me, are always a “special breakfast” item, but these will bring your idea of pancakes to an entirely new level. Incredibly fluffy and filled with the tastes of autumn, a real treat awaits you. Bonus: Let any leftovers cool completely, layer between waxed paper, bag them, and pop into the freezer. When ready to use, remove from bag, defrost slightly and reheat in the toaster until warmed and crisped.

Note: Makes yummy waffles also, especially with applesauce and maple syrup!



If Cinderella’s chariot can turn into a pumpkin at midnight, then you can certainly turn the pumpkin into a royal treat for your breakfast table!

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“Sharing recipes is part of our culture, enriching each one of us and binding us together.”

Sandra Thimgan lives on Silver Lake with her husband/photographer/taster, Daniel.







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# Back to School Quiz: CANCER SCREENING —

*When, what and how?*

by **Dr. Michael Hessenauer,**  
HEMATOLOGY AND ONCOLOGY  
Lake Region Healthcare Cancer Center  
Photos courtesy of Lake Region Healthcare

**As the kids** head back to school this fall, it's a great time for us adults to brush up on our knowledge and make sure our routines for cancer screening are passing the grade. Here's a quick tutorial to prepare you for a quiz on when screening is recommended, what warning signs to watch for, and how to access the screening & preventive tools you need.

## **When do I need to be screened?**

Screening tests are designed to detect cancer early, before any symptoms are present, to help us find cancer early, when it is small, hasn't spread and usually easiest and most effective to treat. Screening tests also can lead to detection of pre-cancerous conditions.

The American Cancer Society offers a handy chart of **screening recommendations by age**. At a glance, depending on your age, you can get a quick picture of the screenings you may want to consider. These recommendations are for people at average risk and more in-depth recommendations by age are also available on their website.

These recommendations will vary depending on any personal or family history of cancer. Of course, it's best to talk with a doctor about which tests you might need and the screening schedule that's right based on your individual risk factors.

## **How do I access the preventive screenings and resources I need?**

Your doctor can help you know which screenings are right for you, where you can get the tests, and how to schedule them. If you don't have a doctor, you can call your local hospital or public health department for help.

How to pay for screening is another common question and the good news is that most screenings are covered by insurance or are available at no cost. It's best to call your insurance company to ask exactly what is covered and what any out-of-pocket costs might be for screening tests, doctor visits, or follow-up exams that might be necessary.

If you don't have health insurance, public health is again a good resource. They can help you find free or low costs programs available for people who are uninsured. Cervical and breast cancer screening is made available to people without health insurance for free or very low cost through the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program.

You can find out more about this program by calling the CDC at 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636) or on the website at: [www.cdc.gov/cancer/nbccedp](http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/nbccedp).

Finally, how to access other resources for cancer prevention is another important question. There is a lot each of us can do every day to reduce our cancer risk. Making healthy choices such as eating well, staying active, and not smoking play a significant role in reducing cancer risk. Don't underestimate the impact of small daily steps you can take

## CANCER SCREENING RECOMMENDATIONS

Age 25-39	Age 40-49	Age 50+
<p><b>Cervical</b> cancer screening recommended for people with a cervix beginning at age 25*.</p> <p>* Cervical cancer screening can also begin at age 21.</p> <p><b>Sources:</b> American Cancer Society U.S. Preventive Services Task Force</p>	<p><b>Breast</b> cancer screening recommended beginning at age 45, with the option to begin at age 40.</p> <p><b>Cervical</b> cancer screening recommended for people with a cervix.</p> <p><b>Colorectal</b> cancer screening recommended for everyone beginning at age 45.</p> <p>At age 45, African Americans should discuss <b>prostate</b> cancer screening with a doctor.</p>	<p><b>Breast</b> cancer screening recommended.</p> <p><b>Cervical</b> cancer screening recommended.</p> <p><b>Colorectal</b> cancer screening recommended.</p> <p>People who currently smoke or formerly smoked should discuss <b>lung</b> cancer screening with a doctor.</p> <p>Discussing <b>prostate</b> cancer screening with a doctor recommended.</p>



to help reduce your cancer risk, including these recommendations from the American Cancer Society:

- Stay away from all forms of tobacco.
- Get to and stay at a healthy weight.
- Get moving with regular physical activity.
- Eat healthy with plenty of fruits and vegetables.
- Limit alcohol consumption. If you do drink, have no more than 1 drink per day for women or 2 per day for men.
- Protect your skin.
- Know yourself, your family history, and your risks.
- Get regular check-ups and cancer screening tests.

### **What warning signs should I look out for?**

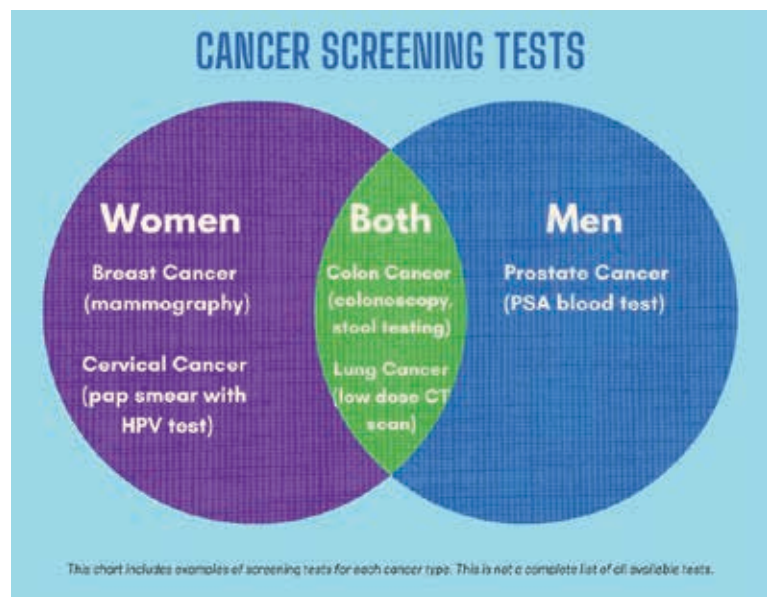
While screening is used to find cancer in people before they have any symptoms, being aware of signs & symptoms is another proactive way to detect cancer early, when it's easiest to treat. You know your body best, and being in tune to what's normal for you is important. If you notice something wrong with your body or how you feel and it doesn't go away, that's something to bring to the attention of a primary care provider. Some examples might include severe pain that doesn't go away, unintentional weight loss, or worsening shortness of breath. Those are some of the examples of things not to ignore if they last more than a few weeks.

Other signals that might be caused by cancer and shouldn't be ignored include:

- Fatigue or tiredness that doesn't improve with rest.
- Changes in your appetite, trouble swallowing, nausea or vomiting.
- Swelling or lumps anywhere in the body.
- Skin changes.
- Unexplained bleeding or bruising.
- Bladder or bowel changes.
- Fevers, headaches, or vision problems.

These are just a few of the more common signs and symptoms seen with cancer, but they can be caused by other problems as well. Again, you know your body best, and if a noticeable change occurs it's best to let your primary care provider know. Perhaps it has nothing to do with cancer and can be easily treated, but if it is cancer, early detection gives you the chance at early treatment which improves chances for success.

**Ready for your quiz?** You can find a **Cancer Prevention Quiz** at [www.lrhc.org](http://www.lrhc.org) and a **Cancer Screening Quiz** at [Cancer.org](http://Cancer.org).



Dr. Hessenauer received his medical degree from SUNY Upstate Medical University College of Medicine in Syracuse, NY. He then completed residency in Internal Medicine at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN and completed a fellowship in Hematology and Medical Oncology at the Mayo Clinic as well.

He is Board Certified in Internal Medicine, Hematology, and Medical Oncology. Most recently he has served as a Medical Oncologist and Hematologist at

Intermountain Cancer Center in Northern Utah.

His clinical interests include the entire scope of both Medical Oncology and Hematology, and he feels called and privileged to guide patients through challenging times.

When asked about choosing to join the team at LRH he said, "Working at a small-town cancer center is my dream job. While in medical training, I saw patients from all over the country traveling incredible distances to receive cancer care. I saw that excellent care can be delivered in relatively small communities, and I wanted to be a part of helping patients stay close to home during the most difficult times in their lives. The staff at Lake Region Cancer Center impressed me because of their dedication to providing quality care to the people of Fergus Falls and the surrounding area. I love the Midwest and could not wait to come back to Minnesota."

In his spare time, Dr. Hessenauer enjoys watching his toddler explore the world, exploring Minnesota state parks and bike trails, and keeping up with his favorite sports teams.





# Fall Tree Care Tips

BY EVAN AMUNDSON,  
CARR'S TREE SERVICE

**Our trees in** Minnesota enjoyed a great spring and summer with all the rainfall we've experienced. That changed in September, with some areas experiencing near record lows in rainfall. It may show more in a dry lawn than in the trees, but this lack in precipitation has many trees stressed.

With the change in temperature and the coming winter months, it's essential to give your trees the best chance to stay healthy and strong. Below are some tips to help your trees recover from a dry start to autumn and prepare them for the colder months ahead.

## **Deep Watering**

After a dry September, deep watering can help replenish their water reserves before the ground freezes. Water deeply and slowly, soaking the soil to a depth of 12-18 inches around the tree's drip line (the area under the tree's outermost branches).

**Tip:** Water early in the morning or late in the evening to reduce evaporation. Continue watering until the ground starts to freeze.

## **Mulching**

Mulch helps to conserve soil moisture and regulate soil temperature. A 2-3 inch layer of organic mulch, such as shredded bark or wood chips, spread evenly around the tree's base (but not touching the trunk) will help retain moisture and protect the roots from sudden temperature fluctuations.

**Tip:** Keep mulch a few inches away from the trunk to avoid rot and pests. It should look like a doughnut, not a volcano.

## **Pruning Dead or Damaged Branches**

Fall-winter is a good time to prune dead, or damaged branches. Removing these will reduce the chance of branches breaking during winter storms and will help the tree focus its energy on staying healthy through the winter.

## **Aerate Compacted Soil**

If the soil around your trees is compacted, it may be difficult for water and nutrients to reach the roots. Consider aerating the soil in the fall to improve water infiltration and root growth. Aeration helps loosen compacted areas, making it easier for your tree to absorb nutrients.

## **Prepare for Winter**

Wrap the trunks of young or thin-barked trees to protect them from sunscald and extreme temperature fluctuations. This is especially important if the tree has been stressed by drought conditions. You can use a commercial tree wrap or burlap to protect the trunk during the winter months. Be sure to remove them once the chance of freezing is gone.

## **Have valuable trees inspected by a Certified Arborist.**

Early winter is a great time to have your trees inspected. Most species are leafless, so the canopy is much easier to view. Based on your trees, goals and budget, an arborist can help you make a tree care plan that will allow you to have the healthiest trees possible. Be proactive about tree care for the best results!

By following these fall tree care tips, especially after a dry start, you'll help your trees stay healthy through the winter and emerge strong in the spring.



Evan Amundson is a Tree Safety Professional and ISA Certified Arborist at Carr's Tree Service based in Ottertail, MN. When not working, he enjoys spending time with his wife and children, and enjoying the lakes area fishing and boating.





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Travel Destination:

# Colorado's National Parks

BY PAM LARSON

PHOTOS BY PAM & LARRY LARSON

Rocky Mountain National Park

From rolling sand dunes and historic cliff dwellings to steep canyons and alpine tundra, Colorado's four national parks feature exceptional destinations for adventurous travelers. **Great Sand Dunes, Mesa Verde, Black Canyon of the Gunnison** and **Rocky Mountain** National Parks are some of the state's biggest recreational gems.

As our journey southwest to visit these national treasures progressed, the scenery changed from the lakes and trees of Minnesota to a more mountainous and dry landscape, often accented by smaller shrubs. When arriving at the campsite in **San Luis Lakes State Park** in south central Colorado, there were shade structures over the picnic tables and no tall shade trees. It was late in the season, so there were only two occupied sites in the whole campground!



*Campsite at San Luis Lakes State Park near Great Sand Dunes National Park*



Nowhere else in the United States do mountains of sand rise higher than in the **Great Sand Dunes National Park**. The tallest dune towers 750 feet high at an elevation of 8,700 feet above sea level. The entire dune field itself, located near the town of Alamosa, encompasses 30 square miles within the 150,000-acre park. Nestled in a spot where the Sangre de Cristo Mountains buckle inward, the dunes within the borders of the park have been building and sifting for eons — the result of the San Luis Valley's unique wind patterns.

Other than a designated **Nature Trail** near the Visitor Center, visitors are free to explore. In addition to ranger-led programs, picnicking, four-wheeling, horseback riding and hiking, a favorite activity in the park is sledding down the dunes on skis, snowboards and sleds. As an **International Dark Sky Park**, it offers pristine stargazing opportunities. In May and June, the Medano Creek is usually at its highest flow, providing a nice place to cool off from a day spent in the hot sands.





above: Dunes in Great Sand Dunes National Park

right: Mule doe and fawns at Great Sand Dunes

left: Adonis Blazingstar Wildflower



right:  
Western  
Bluebird on  
Nature walk



right: Rocky  
Mountain Bee  
Plant



below:  
Great Sand  
Dunes National  
Park



Driving the Scamp through the winding mountainous roads actually went pretty well, in spite of the warning signs along the way.



Driving from Great Sand Dunes to Mesa Verde





*Chimney Rock as seen driving from Great Sand Dunes to Mesa Verde*



As one of the richest and most well-preserved archeological areas in the U.S., **Mesa Verde National Park** is home to more than 5,000 archeological sites, 600 of which are cliff dwellings that visitors can explore. In recognition of its historic and archeological significance, the park was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1978. The park's main attraction is the many cliff dwellings that still stand after hundreds of years. Ancestral Puebloans built their homes beneath the overhanging cliffs in the late 1190s. The structures range from small one-bedroom homes to villages of more than 150 rooms, both on the mesas and in the cliffs.



*Rubber Rabbitbrush*



*"The Ancient Ones" sculpture*

A sculpture in front of the Mesa Verde National Park Visitor Center, created by Edward J. Fraughton in 2012, depicts an ancestral Puebloan climbing a cliff face using hand and toe holds.

Visitors can participate in a one-hour, ranger-led walking tour of **Cliff Palace**, the largest cliff dwelling in North America and home to multiple living enclaves and buildings.

Tours are given May through October, with a bit of mild climbing and walking, as the route first descends roughly 100 feet over uneven steps and ascends a series of eight-foot ladders to access the site. The sandstone dwellings and religious and ceremonial sites teach about what life was like for this native community.

One can also drive the **Mesa Top Loop Road** for a chance to view the cliffs from the rim, and step back even further in time with a visit to the **Far View Sites** – where the Ancestral Puebloans lived and farmed before they moved to the cliffs.



*Point Lookout Formation at Mesa Verde National Park*



The **Spruce House**, located near the Visitor Center is easily accessed and also includes a ranger-led tour.

*right: Spruce House cliff dwelling in Mesa Verde National Park*



*below: Spruce House cliff dwelling behind the museum*



*above: Stone carved steps to a cliff dwelling  
below: Far View Farming Community on the mesa*



*Ladder on hike to a cliff dwelling*





The core administrative buildings at Mesa Verde, including the **1923 Post Office** (right), are the first National Park Service structures to experiment with architectural designs based on local cultural traditions. The buildings are excellent examples of the Pueblo Revival style, in this instance modified to reflect and enhance the interpretation of the prehistoric structures of the surrounding area.

The piñon pine tree (below) grows in this area of North America. The trees yield edible nuts (inset), which are a staple food of Native Americans, and now widely eaten as a snack, commonly referred to as pine nuts. Harvesting techniques of the prehistoric

American Indians are still used today to collect the piñon seeds for personal use or for commercialization.



Traveling from Mesa Verde to Black Canyon of the Gunnison, one might follow The **Million Dollar Highway** (Highway 550) stretching for about 25 miles. Although the entire stretch has been called the Million Dollar Highway, it is actually just the twelve miles south of Ouray through the **Uncompahgre Gorge** to the summit of **Red Mountain Pass** which gives the highway its name. This stretch through the gorge is challenging and potentially hazardous to drive, characterized by steep cliffs, narrow lanes, hairpin turns and a lack of guardrails (right and below).



Prickly pear cactus (above) are known for their flavorful fruit and showy flowers. They are well-adapted to a dry climate





During this ascent, the remains of the **Idarado Mine** are visible, giving the hillsides colorful hues from the tailings (right). The highway is so treacherous that the locals have made a postcard (below) for those who survive the drive.



This national park provides many outdoor activities, including scenic drives, wildlife viewing, camping, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, kayaking and stargazing. There were warning signs about a nuisance bear in the campground, but we only saw several resident mule deer. The park is home to the deepest canyon in Colorado, **The Painted Wall**, rising over 2,000 feet above the Gunnison River.

The **Black Canyon of the Gunnison** has only been a national park since 1999, but the Gunnison River's carving of the canyon began millions of years ago. The Black Canyon is named because the dark walls are often shrouded in shadows making them appear black. It also has some of the world's oldest exposed rock — Precambrian or "basement" rock that is nearly 2 billion years old. Sheer black walls plummet to 2,700 feet on this 53-mile stretch of narrow gorge near Montrose. Since its documented European discovery in the 1700s, the gorge has been well known for its dramatic scenery and recreational opportunities.



*Nuisance bear warning sign and Mule deer doe and fawn at Black Canyon campground*





As one of the nation's least-visited national parks, the Black Canyon of the Gunnison (above) is not for the faint of heart. Unlike other major national parks like Yellowstone or Zion, the Black Canyon offers minimal infrastructure and accessibility — visitors can expect fewer people, no lines, and fewer selfie sticks. The south rim has 12 canyon overlooks, so less extreme adventurers can still appreciate the magnitude and beauty of the park.



As a tribute to the grandeur of the Rocky Mountains between Estes Park and Grand Lake, **Rocky Mountain National Park** encompasses the natural beauty of the region. With high-mountain lakes and streams, towering peaks of more than 14,000 feet, thick evergreen forests and thousands of acres home to wildlife, this national park is a nature lover's paradise. With so much to see and do within its 415-square-mile boundaries, there's no wonder its popularity continues. Rocky Mountain National Park has been inspiring visitors from around the world since its founding in 1915

*right:  
Rugged trail at  
Black Canyon*



*below:  
Painted Wall at  
Black Canyon*



*Elk in Rocky Mountain National Park*







*Rocky Mountain tundra from scenic Trail Ridge Road*

Open from Memorial Day to late autumn, **Trail Ridge Road** — topping out at 12,183 feet — is the highest continuous paved road in the United States. Rocky Mountain National Park is one of our nation’s most spectacular national parks with 415 sq. miles of dramatic beauty, high rugged mountains, sparkling lakes, 350 miles of hiking trails, and abundant wildlife, including elk, bighorn sheep, moose, marmots, pika, and many other wild creatures that call this park home.

The **Alpine Visitor Center** in Rocky Mountain National Park (right) is 11,796 feet above sea level. It is the highest elevation visitor center in the National Park System, offering scenic views of mountain peaks and the land above trees. The center opened in 1965 and is operated by the National Park Service.



According to Ken Burns, “National parks are the best idea we ever had. They’re a testament to our belief in democracy and the need to preserve our wild places for future generations.”

We need to visit and cherish these wonderful places!



*Marmot by the Rocky Mountain Alpine Visitor Center*

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OTC

“The world is a book, and those who do not travel read only one page.”  
— Saint Augustine





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