



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Mesa Verde Country's Summer Travel Season Sees a Return to "Normal"  
According to Local Businesses & Tourism Officials**

**Cortez, Colo.** – According to local business owners and tourism officials, the 2023 summer travel season saw a return to "normal" in [Mesa Verde Country](#), which encompasses the towns of Cortez, Mancos, and Dolores.

"Travelers from all parts of the world came to Mesa Verde Country this summer to escape the heat and enjoy the vibrant culture, history, and hospitality that our area offers," says Brian Bartlett, Mesa Verde Country Tourism Director. Bartlett adds that the Annular Eclipse was also a big draw for visitors, which resulted in early bookings for lodging establishments that were sold out for months before the event.

According to Kim Campbell, Executive Director of the Mancos Valley Chamber of Commerce, visits to the Mancos Visitors Center increased 31 percent during the key summer months this year as compared to 2022. "In addition to being a great homebase for Mesa Verde tours, Mancos has become a destination for our signature summer events like BurroFest and Mancos Days," Campbell explains. "Tourists also seek out our Creative Arts District and hope that they'll stumble onto a cattle drive. We were delighted to see visitors from all over the world, with a concentration of folks trying to beat the heat in their home states." She adds, "We are getting a lot of inquiries about what it's like to live in Mancos full time."

Sally Dziedzic, owner and operator at Mesa Verde Motel in Mancos says they saw significant growth in occupancy and length of stays this summer. "We have seen an increase in stays longer than two nights, and we believe this shows that the Four Corners area is becoming more of a destination rather than a pass-through," she reports. "I think this is especially true for Mancos." She notes that her company's marketing efforts, combined with the work of the Mancos Chamber, Creative District, and others are paying off. "Mesa Verde National Park is obviously a natural attraction that gets people here initially, but by focusing on the wider area, outdoor recreation and other businesses and events, we are showing that travelers can spend longer here," she concludes.

Dziedzic has noticed that more people are pre-booking their rooms than they did last year. "A bigger majority of our guests were planning ahead and booking further out than last year. We definitely still get a lot of last minute walk-ins, but overall less than last year." She says they have also seen a higher amount of returning guests. "Not all of these are tourists, quite a few are trades people here to work on construction, and also there are a lot more returning family members of locals, and those who are finding Durango too busy for their liking now." Looking ahead, Dziedzic says more people are pre-booking their holiday travel than they did last year, as well.

In Dolores, the release of water from McPhee Reservoir to the lower Dolores River bolstered boating and rafting season, says Susan Lisak, the Executive Director of the Dolores Chamber of Commerce. "Dolores is a hunting and fishing destination, and this year did not disappoint with fly fishermen and record-breaking trout being caught in our lakes and rivers," Lisak reports. She says the Dolores Visitor Center also saw an increase in international visitors, many of whom come to see Mesa Verde National Park, the Four Corners, and Canyon of the Ancients National Monument. Lisak adds that the summer events – like Dolores RiverFest, Dolores Summerfest and the Boggy Draw Beat Down Mountain Bike Race – were really successful. "We are looking forward to a busy snow biking and cross country ski season in

Boggy Draw and Chicken Creek Recreation Areas this winter. We tend to see more traffic to/from Telluride when we have good snowpack in the San Juans, and they are forecasting a great snowfall season.”

Elizabeth Philbrick, co-founder of award-winning EsoTerra Ciderworks in Dolores, which opened its doors just prior to the start of the pandemic and has developed a strong reputation for producing fine ciders and wines, says the summer season was dramatically different from recent years. “We saw a return to 'normal': the Europeans who rent the iconic American muscle cars and drive the San Juan Skyway, the Texan trying to get out of the heat, and the families rolling in for their annual camping trip.”

She adds that Eso Terra is also evolving, thanks to its international acclaim. “We are finding quite a few visitors coming out of the woodwork specifically to visit us. This is a huge change from past years, where people mostly stumbled across us.” Philbrick says when people make EsoTerra a destination, they spend the day engaging her team to learn about the rich history of apples in southwest Colorado, the mining history of the region, and the history of cider prior to prohibition. “When we have tourists like that, our team really shines,” Philbrick says. “We LOVE telling a good story, and each of our ciders has a great one!”

Lone Heron Antiques in Dolores offers unique and vintage items (no reproduction inventory). One of the few retail stores for this type of shopping in the Four Corners area, Lone Heron’s antiques include a range of unique finds from vintage clothing to vintage farm and garden antiques, old pawn and antique native silver and turquoise jewelry, handwoven rugs, coins, furniture and décor, and other treasures that change on a daily basis.

Since opening at its current location (202 4th St, Dolores) in January of 2021, the store has expanded twice. In the last expansion, they added a Collectors Corner, which is home to collectable adult action figures, a huge collection of rare and collectable comic books, and sports cards.

“This has been a very busy and productive season for us,” says store owner Debbie Higman. “We served some wonderful customers from more than 17 countries and the U.S.” She adds, “We want to make this a memorable experience, and we have a growing number of repeat customers who come in each time they are the area. Our local customers have become friends and visit often so we keep our store fresh and well stocked make our customers happy!”

For more information on planning a trip to Mesa Verde Country, call 970-565-8227 or visit [www.mesaverdecountry.com](http://www.mesaverdecountry.com).

#### **About Mesa Verde Country ([www.mesaverdecountry.com](http://www.mesaverdecountry.com))**

Mesa Verde Country is in southwest Colorado near the entrance to Mesa Verde National Park. Named the “Number One Historic Monument in the World” by *Conde Nast Traveler* and one of the “50 Places of a Lifetime-The World's Greatest Destinations” by *National Geographic*, the park is one of the nation’s first World Heritage sites and the largest archaeological preserve in the country. In addition, Mesa Verde Country is loaded with other archaeological attractions, including: Hovenweep National Monument, Canyons of the Ancients Visitor Center & Museum, Ute Mountain Tribal Park, Crow Canyon Archaeological Center, and the Cortez Cultural Center. Mountain biking enthusiasts have recognized Mesa Verde Country as one of the next great mountain biking destinations. The towns of Cortez, Dolores and Mancos provide accommodations, dining, outdoor fun and visitor services. Two national byways pass through Mesa Verde Country. Additionally, Mesa Verde Country has two podcasts that offer an introduction to Southwest Colorado and all its wonders. Download the Ancient Voices Podcast here: <https://mesaverdecountry.com/blog/podcasts/ancient-voices-podcast/> or listen to the Mesa Verde Voices Podcast here: <https://mesaverdecountry.com/blog/podcasts/mesa-verde-voices-podcast/>.

**Tips for Responsible Travel to Mesa Verde Country**

Just as traveling to Mesa Verde Country will leave a positive impact on you, there are many ways you can leave a positive impact on the places you visit. Please do this by: limiting your water usage, practicing fire safety, leaving archaeological artifacts where you find them, [leaving no trace](#) by disposing of waste properly and being considerate of wildlife, and finally being respectful of the local people and cultures you encounter. To learn more about responsible travel tips, click [here](#).

(end)

Contact:

Christy Nielson

Ore Communications, on behalf of Mesa Verde Country

[christy@orecommunications.com](mailto:christy@orecommunications.com)

206-399-1914