

**Sent:** Sunday, September 21, 2025 9:28 PM  
**Subject:** Postcard

We left Chinle and drove, once again, across The Rez with Mesa Verde in our sites. Sheila had picked a guided tour of Balcony House ruin as our grand finale for the trip. It featured a 32 ft. ladder at the entrance, a 12 ft. tunnel with an 18 in. opening to crawl through on your hands and knees, followed by two 18 ft. ladders with 31 steep uneven steps between them. Sheila?

We made our way to the Balcony House overlook. Except you can't see the ruin from here you can only wait for your tour guide and watch all the frustrated people stopping to view it. And there were bunches of them.



We were an hour early. That was way too long. This is Sheila contemplating 32 foot vertical ladders and claustrophobic 12 foot tunnels. She's smiling but only for the camera.



At last. "Hi, I'm Brian and I'll be your tour guide. I have three history degrees."

Now we were really juiced.



Like sheep to the slaughter. He would assign someone from the group to lead the way so he could follow behind and stop anyone from sneaking back.



Brian picked some 12 year old kid to go up first. That's because a 12-yr old is agile and fearless and we'd see how easy it was. Uh no, been around too long, Brian. But up we all went. Sheila and I started side-by-side. But she went up like that kid while I was just willing my feet to move. Guess she got over her apprehension. Me? I'm OK now, thanks.



"This is Balcony House. I'm still Brian your tour guide. And I still have three history degrees."



They didn't tell us about this one. There is a somewhat taller tunnel between the two halves of the ruin.



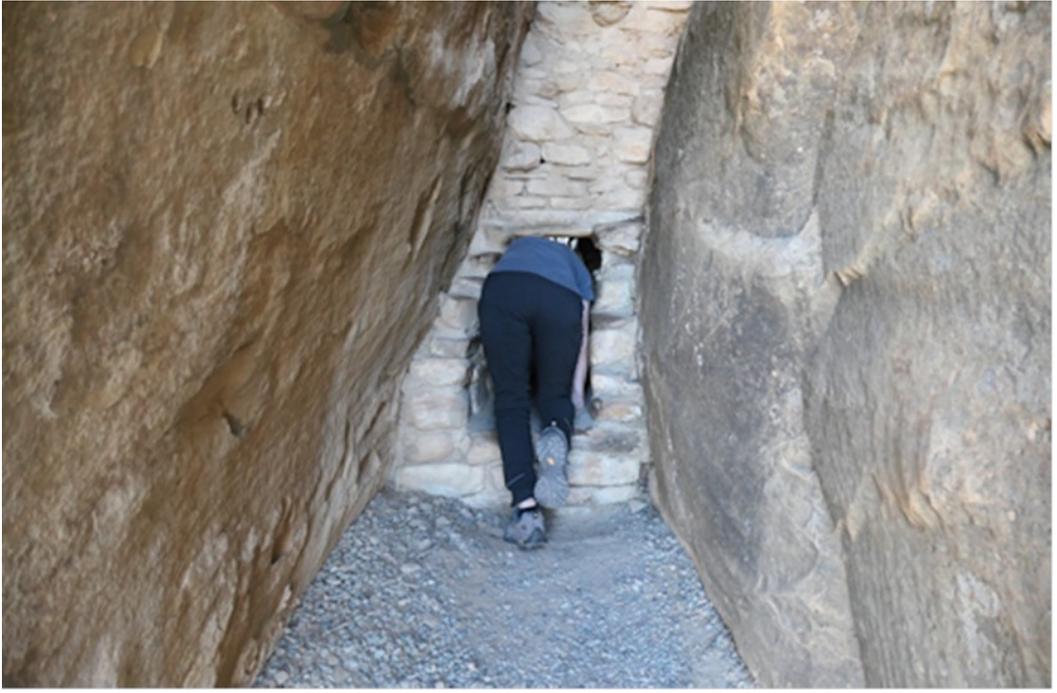
She straightened up without my help. What a girl.



Once you get inside Balcony House there is all this, like, ruin stuff. Rooms that the ancient Puebloans might have slept in and rooms that could have held corn and black marks on the rocks that surely meant they had discovered fire and round kivas where they almost certainly did secret stuff.



"I'm still Brian and I'm still your tour guide. I'm standing really close to the edge but that's because I'm a ranger and don't you do it. And by the way, most of the stuff I'm telling you is a best guess by experts. But I go along with it because" [you all say it with me] "I have three history degrees!"



The tunnel.



The way out! We found it and we were first! But not before Brian scolded Sheila for stepping into an unauthorized area. Unmarked, no sign, and she was following me. But hey, this was her day and of course it happened that way.



Two 18 ft. ladders with 31 steep uneven steps between them and we were out there.

Well then we hopped in the car, high fived, and sped away. Down the main Mesa Verde road.

“Why are you stopping?”

“Get the camera!”





D&S