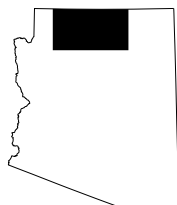


# Grand Canyon Region



The world may chide America for its supersized ways, but when it comes to the Grand Canyon, the more-is-better approach is clearly the right way to go. Just take a peek over the edge. The canyon captivates us because of its immensity; it's a tableau that reveals the earth's history, layer by dramatic layer. Mother Nature adds artistic details – rugged plateaus, crumbly spires, lush oases, shadowed ridges – that flirt and catch our eye as the sun crosses the uninterrupted sky.

The 1.2 million acre Grand Canyon National Park includes huge swaths of the canyon's North, South and east rims. The Colorado River carves its way west for 277 miles through the canyon; the Vishnu schist, at the bottom, is two billion years old – half the earth's age.

The South Rim sees the bulk of the park's five million annual travelers. Grand Canyon Village, with its bustling lodges, free shuttles, station-filled cafeterias and accessible viewpoints, offers the most convenient and traveler-friendly canyon experience. The Hualapai and Havasupai tribes live on reservations west of the park's South Rim.

For those seeking solitude, the North Rim is an attractive alternative. Though it has fewer and less-dramatic viewpoints, its charms are no less abundant. Its cooler temperatures support wildflower meadows and thick stands of aspen and spruce. The North Rim is flanked by the Kaibab Plateau, the Arizona Strip and Lake Powell and Glen Canyon National Recreation Area.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- **Best Patio for a Grand Canyon Cocktail**  
The stone verandah behind the **Grand Canyon Lodge** (p191) on the North Rim
- **Best Outdoor Thrill**  
Grasping tight to cliffside chains while scrambling down the trail beside **Mooney Falls** (p179) in Havasu Canyon
- **Most Memorable Meal**  
The communal steak dinner at the **Phantom Ranch** (p172) cantina; it's worth the hike to get there
- **Best Land of the Lost Experience**  
Driving past the **Vermilion Cliffs** (p194) between Lees Ferry and the Kaibab Plateau on the Arizona Strip
- **Best Low-Key Adventure**  
Climbing the circular stone steps at the historic **Watchtower** (p156) to discover Hopi-inspired murals inside and sweeping views outside



# GRAND CANYON SOUTH RIM

elev 7200ft

Every summer, camera-toting travelers jostle for position on viewpoints lining the Grand Canyon's South Rim. Why do they converge here? In addition to the gorgeous views, which are more expansive here than on the North Rim, easy access is the most obvious answer: it's a mere 60 miles north of I-40. Abundant infrastructure is another. This is where you'll find an entire village worth of lodging, restaurants, bookstores, libraries, a supermarket and a deli. Shuttles ply two scenic drives, and the flat and paved Rim Trail allows the mobility-impaired, and stroller-pushing parents to take in the dramatic sweeping canyon views. If you want to venture into the inner gorge, you'll have several trails to choose from or you can just let a mule do the walking. Several museums and historic stone buildings illuminate the park's human history, and rangers lead a host of daily programs on subjects from geology to resurgent condors.

## TIME

The park is on Mountain Standard Time. Like most of the rest of the state, it does not observe daylight saving time (DST). This means that during DST months (mid-March to October), it's the same time in Arizona as it is in California and Nevada. The rest of the year, Arizona observes the same hours as Colorado, New Mexico and Utah.

## CLIMATE

On average, temperatures are 20°F cooler on the South Rim than at the bottom of the Grand Canyon. In summer, expect highs in the 80s and lows around 50°F. Weather is cooler and more changeable in fall, and snow and freezing overnight temperatures are likely by November. January has average overnight lows in the teens and daytime highs around 40°F. Winter weather can be beautifully clear, but be prepared for snowstorms that can cause havoc.

The inner canyon is much drier, with about 8in of rain annually, around half that of the South Rim. During summer, temperatures inside the canyon soar above 100°F almost daily, often accompanied by strong hot winds. Even in midwinter, the mercury rarely drops

to freezing, with average temperatures hovering between 37°F and 58°F.

## WHEN YOU ARRIVE

The \$25-per-vehicle entrance fee at **Grand Canyon National Park** (☎ 928-638-7888; [www.nps.gov/grca](http://www.nps.gov/grca)) permits unlimited visits to both rims within seven days of purchase. Those entering by bicycle, motorcycle or on foot pay just \$12. (Be prepared to show your receipt if you leave and re-enter the park.) The entrance gate is always open although it may not be staffed late at night. If there's no ranger, you can pay the next day. Entrance fees cannot be paid at the visitor centers. As you enter, you'll receive a map and a copy of the *Guide*, a National Park Service (NPS) newspaper with additional maps, current park news and information on ranger programs, hikes, accommodations and park services. There's a separate version for each rim, and each is available in English, Chinese, French, Italian, Japanese, Korean and Spanish.

## ORIENTATION

Most GPS units cannot pinpoint specific locations within the park because many buildings do not have addresses. At the time of research, park officials were working to formalize the names and locations of park roads and were also assigning addresses to the lodges.

## Entrances

Unlike the Spanish explorers led by García López de Cárdenas in 1540, when you arrive at the South Rim you'll have some idea of the awesome, expansive views awaiting you. What you might not expect are long lines at the South Entrance, with waits of 30 minutes or more in the summer.

One of two entrances to the South Rim, the South Entrance (where most visitors enter the park) leads to busy Grand Canyon Village, 80 miles northwest of Flagstaff on Hwy 180. From here, the recently re-routed South Entrance Rd swings just south of the still-expanding Canyon View Information Plaza. Cars are no longer allowed to park next to Mather Point; you must park at the visitor center and walk to the overlook. The South Entrance Rd continues into the heart of Grand Canyon Village, where you'll find lodges, restaurants, two of the three developed campgrounds, the backcountry office, the clinic, bank, grocery store and other services.