

welcome to the Grand Canyon

Sublime Vistas

Although the Grand Canyon is infinitely more than the sum of its iconic views, they *are* truly sublime. We've all seen images of the canyon in print and on-screen, but there is nothing like arriving at the rim and taking it all in – the immensity, the depth, the atmosphere and the light. Views from both rims are equally beautiful, although South Rim overlooks are probably more dramatic and definitely greater in number. While there are far fewer overlooks on the North Rim, one of the most iconic Grand Canyon views is from the north side of the canyon; another is from the highest point on either rim. Wherever the overlook, it's worth finding a spot in the early morning

or late afternoon – not necessarily sunrise or sunset – to sit quietly and watch the light and shadow work their magic on the canyon features.

Hiking an Inverted Mountain

Hiking into the canyon is one of the highlights of a Grand Canyon visit. Even a short roam below the rim serves up stunning views at nearly every turn of the trail, showing glimpses now and then of the Colorado River, which carved the curvaceous gorge. Descend deeper and get a closer look at the canyon's rock layers, a beautiful and mind-boggling record of geologic time on a seemingly incomprehensible scale. On the



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The Grand Canyon warrants any hyperbolic language it inspires. Its vastness and staggering beauty are amazing, astounding and awesome – and its many-layered splendor isn't mere metaphor.

(left) The Grand Canyon from Toroweap (p138)

(below) An overnight hiker looks out over the canyon



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more recent human timeline, it's fascinating to think that one's footfalls follow the paths originally established by ancient Native Americans who lived in and near the canyon. Hiking into the gorge presents the rare chance to climb an inverted mountain, making every return trip an ascent – always a good thing to remember as you traipse down a trail.

Rocks, Tracks & Pictographs

Even non-geologists will get to wondering about the hows and whys of the Grand Canyon while staring at its fins, its buttes and the multicolored rock layers of the canyon walls. Luckily for laypeople with burn-

ing questions, the South Rim has answers, primarily at Yavapai Geology Museum, the Trail of Time installation and geology talks given by the park's knowledgeable rangers. If rock talk doesn't inspire you, daily ranger-led fossil walks explore marine fossils embedded in stone just off the busy Rim Trail. For a more DIY experience, hike down the Hermit Trail to look for fossilized marine creatures, animal tracks and ferns. And for the intriguing human touch on canyon walls, you can find pictographs along the Bright Angel Trail.