



# Colorado River

## Includes ➔

Upper Section:  
Lees Ferry to  
Phantom Ranch .....177

Middle Section:  
Phantom Ranch to  
Whitmore Wash .....178

Lower Section:  
Whitmore Wash to  
South Cove .....180

## Best Hikes

- ➔ Tapeats Creek to Thunder Spring (p179)
- ➔ Deer Creek (p179)
- ➔ Matkatamiba (p179)
- ➔ Elves Chasm (p178)
- ➔ Beaver Falls (p180)

## Best Rafting Companies

- ➔ Arizona Raft Adventures (p174)
- ➔ OARS (p174)
- ➔ Canyon Explorations/Expeditions (p175)
- ➔ Outdoors Unlimited (p175)
- ➔ Hatch River Expeditions (p175)

## Why Go?

As one park ranger recently said, 'rafting the Colorado is absolute bliss punctuated by moments of pure terror.' Indeed, a journey down the river is a once-in-a-lifetime experience – a virtual all-access pass to the Grand Canyon, in all its wildness, peace and ancient, mighty glory. There's the rush of running world-class rapids with spectacular canyon walls towering above, and the solitude of floating down sections of smooth water. Rafters have the exclusive privilege of hiking to beautiful side canyons, hidden waterfalls, petroglyphs and ruins. As you fall asleep on a sandy beach, under the stars, you'll feel connected to the people who lived here long before – and inspired by the tales of intrepid explorers who ran the river when it was still uncharted. Here at the bottom of the Grand Canyon, the depth and beauty of the gorge will take your breath away.

## Road Distances (miles)

South Rim Entrance	15				
North Rim Entrance	25	205			
Lees Ferry	90	140	65		
Phantom Ranch	1	15	25	85	
Whitmore Wash	180	300	155	155	175

Colorado River  
(Silver Suspension Bridge)

South Rim Entrance

North Rim Entrance

Lees Ferry

Phantom Ranch

Note: Distances are approximate

## Entrance & Exit Points

Though boats must ply the full course, rafters may join, leave or rejoin a river excursion at several points.

- ➔ Put in at Lees Ferry (river Mile 0), 15 miles below Glen Canyon Dam.
- ➔ Rafters can take out at Phantom Ranch (Mile 87.5) and hike up to the South Rim on the Bright Angel Trail.
- ➔ Rafters can also take out at Whitmore Wash (Mile 187.5), fly to the rim via helicopter and transfer to a plane bound for Las Vegas.
- ➔ The last takeout points are at Diamond Creek (Mile 226), or Pearce Ferry (Mile 279.5) or South Cove (Mile 296.5), both on Lake Mead.

### DON'T MISS

Despite their thrills, walloping river rapids aren't the only attraction on this ride. One of the great rewards of floating the river is the opportunity to hike to places that are difficult to access from the rim – such as the Ancient Puebloan granaries at **Nankoweap** (p178), where you'll also discover gorgeous views of the river and inner gorge. Side canyons reveal cool, verdant grottos such as **Elves Chasm** (p178) and swirling rock formations such as **North Canyon** (p177). Set aside your pride and strap your personal flotation device (PFD) to your bum to bump down the warm, turquoise waters of the **Little Colorado** (p180), a tributary sourced from mineral springs.

Be sure to stop for a cold lemonade and scribble a postcard at **Phantom Ranch** (p177), your one brush with civilization. And don't miss the otherworldly blue-green waters of **Havasupai Creek** (p180).

### PLANNING TIP

Plan as far ahead as possible: many commercial trips book out a year in advance. Spring and fall trips mean pleasantly milder temperatures, but bring warm and waterproof gear; read the recommended packing list. Many outfitters supply travelers with large waterproof bags.

## Fast Facts

- ➔ River miles: 277
- ➔ Major rapids: 160
- ➔ River drop: 1900ft
- ➔ Phantom Ranch elevation: 2400ft

## Private Trip Permits

Apply for a permit through the **Grand Canyon River Permits Office** (☎800-959-9164, 928-638-7843; <https://npspermits.us>; application fee \$25). Successful applicants are charged an automatic, nonrefundable \$400 deposit to reserve a spot.

## When You Arrive

- ➔ Arrangements for river trips are usually made well in advance. By the time you arrive, you'll already have received plenty of information from your outfitter about the kind of trip you'll be taking, what to expect and what to pack.
- ➔ Generally speaking, travelers access the Colorado River through a commercial rafting trip that runs between three and 18 days, and runs part of the river from Lees Ferry to Diamond Creek.
- ➔ Boat options include large motorized rafts, oared rafts, paddle rafts and dories.
- ➔ Self-guided raft trips, or private river trips, are possible only with a permit that's available through a special weighted lottery.

## Resources

- ➔ **National Park Service** ([www.nps.gov/grca/](http://www.nps.gov/grca/) [planyourvisit/whitewater-rafting.htm](http://planyourvisit/whitewater-rafting.htm))
- ➔ **Grand Canyon River podcasts** ([www.nps.gov/grca/learn/photosmultimedia/podcasts](http://www.nps.gov/grca/learn/photosmultimedia/podcasts))
- ➔ **Grand Canyon River Outfitters Association** ([www.gcrao.org](http://www.gcrao.org))
- ➔ **Hualapai River Runners** ([www.grandcanyonwest.com](http://www.grandcanyonwest.com)) One-day motorized trips on the Colorado.