

Grand Canyon

*Photographs by Rolf Brauch
May 1982, Sep 1989, Jun 1991, Sep 1997*





The Grand Canyon extends 277 miles from Lee's Ferry to Lake Mead. At the South Rim, the canyon is a mile deep. At the North Rim, the canyon rises a sheer 6,000 feet to an elevation of 8,803 feet. At Grand Canyon Village it is 10 miles wide, although at other points it gets as wide as 18 miles.





The spectacular beauty of the Grand Canyon defies description. Over a period of millions of years the Colorado river carved a deep trench through layers of a variety of rock - sandstone, shale, granite - exposing a rainbow of colour. Some of the layers bear testimony to long periods of volcanic activity and periods when the entire region was covered by vast oceans.

Grand Canyon National Park, which includes most of the canyon and much of the surrounding land, covers over one million acres. Depending on the time of day, the clouds and your vantage point, the canyon will surprise you with strikingly different vistas. To do this magnificent world wonder justice, one needs to spend several days each exploring the south and north rim.





The National Park Services conducts guided rim walks, but the more adventurous and energetic can descent into the Canyon along a trail system. This is an extremely strenuous 17 mile hike only recommended for those in top physical condition. It's easy to underestimate the extra weight of camera gear, food and several liters of drinking water (the latter is the most important as one dehydrates at a phenomenal rate). You're also required to carry out what you carry in — that is, there is no garbage disposal within the canyon.

Another popular and less energetic way to see the canyon is to ride on a mule (guided tour) and overnight at Phantom Ranch. Riders must be able to understand enough English to be able to follow instructions, must be taller than 4 feet 7 inches and weigh less than 200 pounds ~ they really are thinking of the poor mules.





*Breathtaking view,
and so was the rock on which I was perched.*





Cranking up the telephoto lens for a closer look.





Personally, I like late afternoons and evenings the best - the air is warm and the colour of the rocks appear richer and softer.

Above is one of my favourite photos - taken just after the sun had gone down - from Desert View Point on the South Rim. I consider this one of the best spots from which to observe sunsets at the Grand Canyon.



*Shadows from clouds
frequently add to the
beauty of the scenery*



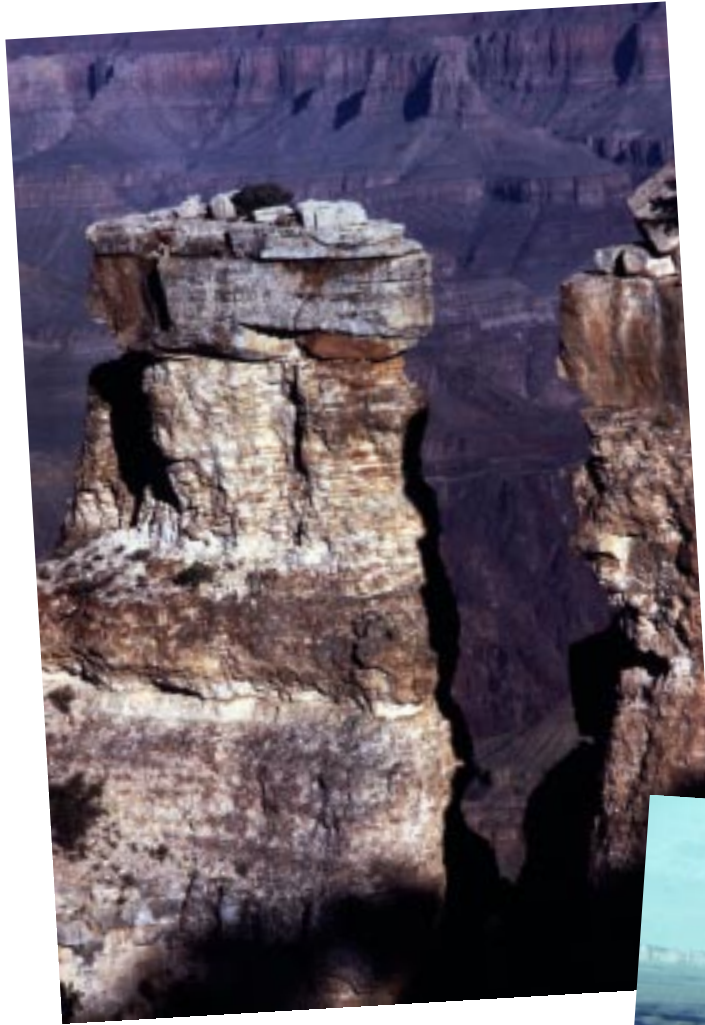
*Desert View Point
moments after sunset*





Sculptures by mother nature





More rock sculptures ~ the fissure that produced this rock pillar is easily 500 feet deep.

This view of Desert View Point on the right takes in over 2,000 feet of vertical. North Rim's Point Imperial in the distance rises another 2,800 feet above the South Rim.





The Colorado River is a powerhouse ditch digger. Even though it is now dammed before (Glen Canyon) and after (Lake Mead), the Colorado river continues to gouge down deeper.



The canyon's wall shelters some 90 species of mammals and 290 species of birds.

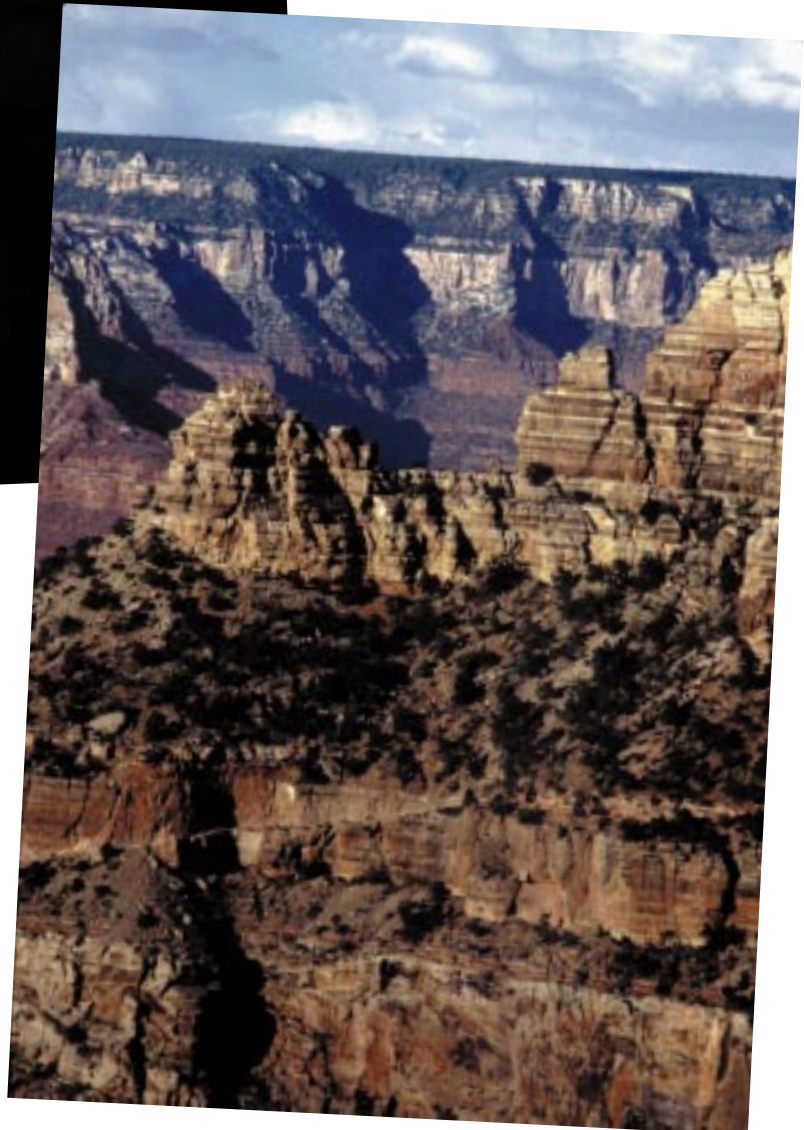
Because of the canyon's isolation, some species have evolved distinctive forms: a pink rattlesnake made to order to match the canyon's pink sandstone; and at the North Rim, the Kaibab squirrel, black with a bushy white tail. Very elegant.





On two occasions we have seen deer grazing several hundred feet down the steep limestone rock formations of the South Rim.

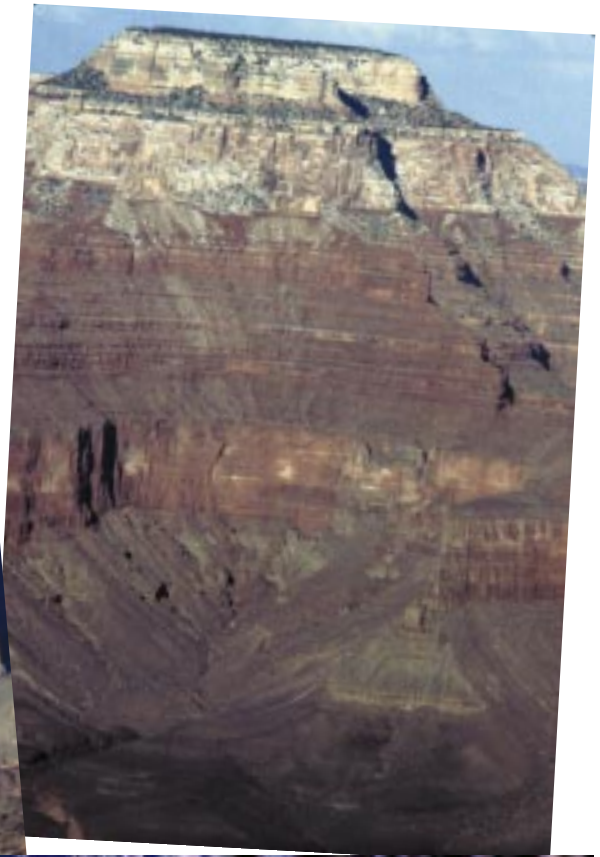
If you wander off the foot paths along the rim, watch that you don't accidentally step on a rattlesnake warming itself in the afternoon sun.





*Upper part of the Bright Angel Trail
2,000 feet below, as seen from the South Rim.*





Ready to board our Canyon Flight at Las Vegas airport (May 1982). Since a crash of a similar plane in 1984, flights through the Canyon have been banned.



Below: Hoover Dam and Lake Mead from 11,000 feet





*Lake Mead from 11,000 feet
Approaching the Canyon (below)*





Getting set to go in deep ~ the strong updrafts caused by the heat, forces pilots to 'dive' the plane into the canyon.





Flying at about 4,500 feet, we're 3,000 feet below the South Rim yet 2,500 feet above the Colorado river.

Heavy spring floods bring loads of silt giving the Colorado a muddy look.





The canyon has been home to humans for well over 25,000 years. Archaeologists estimate that there may be 50,000 sites below the rim.

The Anasazi, who were not the first people to live in the canyon, built granaries, houses and temples. The Spanish first ventured into this area in 1540, and after spending three unsuccessful days trying to find a path into the canyon, gave up.

Today, five million visitors a year make the Grand Canyon one of the world's grand destinations, and the hardest of these make the 17 mile trek down and back up on foot - a hike guaranteed to loose you some serious weight.





Door and stairway to the past





The immense, awesome Grand Canyon

The Grand Canyon is located in the northern part of Arizona, sandwiched between lake Meade and lake Powell. If you're staying in Flagstaff head north (80 miles) on Route 180. Grand Canyon Railway also runs a passenger service in restored 1923 coaches. You can also take a bus tour from Phoenix or Flagstaff.

For a treat, book a room at the Cameron Motel, in Cameron.

Run by Navajo Indians, the food is excellent (mixture of Mexican and Navajo), their silver and pottery shop is immense and features many unusual pottery items. The rooms are great with a view into the Little Colorado River Gorge.

Grand Canyon National Park encompasses 1,904 square miles, and is a popular vacation destination for people from around the world. The South Rim has an elevation of nearly 7,000 feet with



summer temperatures ranging from 50 to 80° F at the rim, to above 100° F at the Colorado River 5,000 feet below.

Winter temperatures can be as low as the 20's during the day. Unlike the North Rim which closes from mid-October to mid-May, the South Rim is open year round. The North Rim of the canyon has an elevation of 8,803 feet. The South Rim is more popular mainly because it's far easier to access. To avoid crowds, consider planning your trip during March-April or September-October.

For more info about the Grand Canyon see:

<http://www.canyon-country.com/>

