

# GRAND CANYON SOUTH RIM TRIP PLANNER





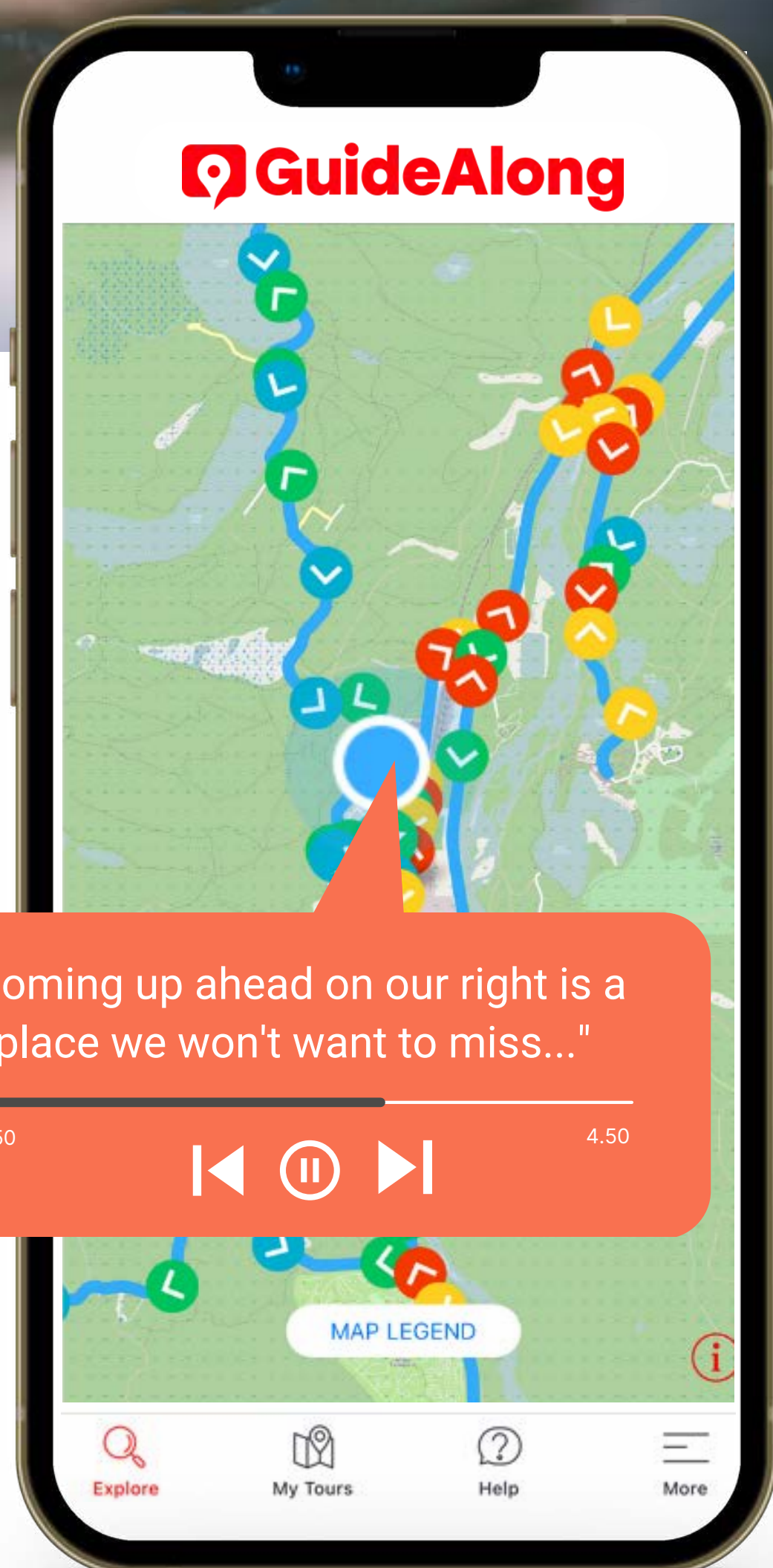
# It's like a tour guide along for the drive

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# GRAND CANYON SOUTH TRIP PLANNER

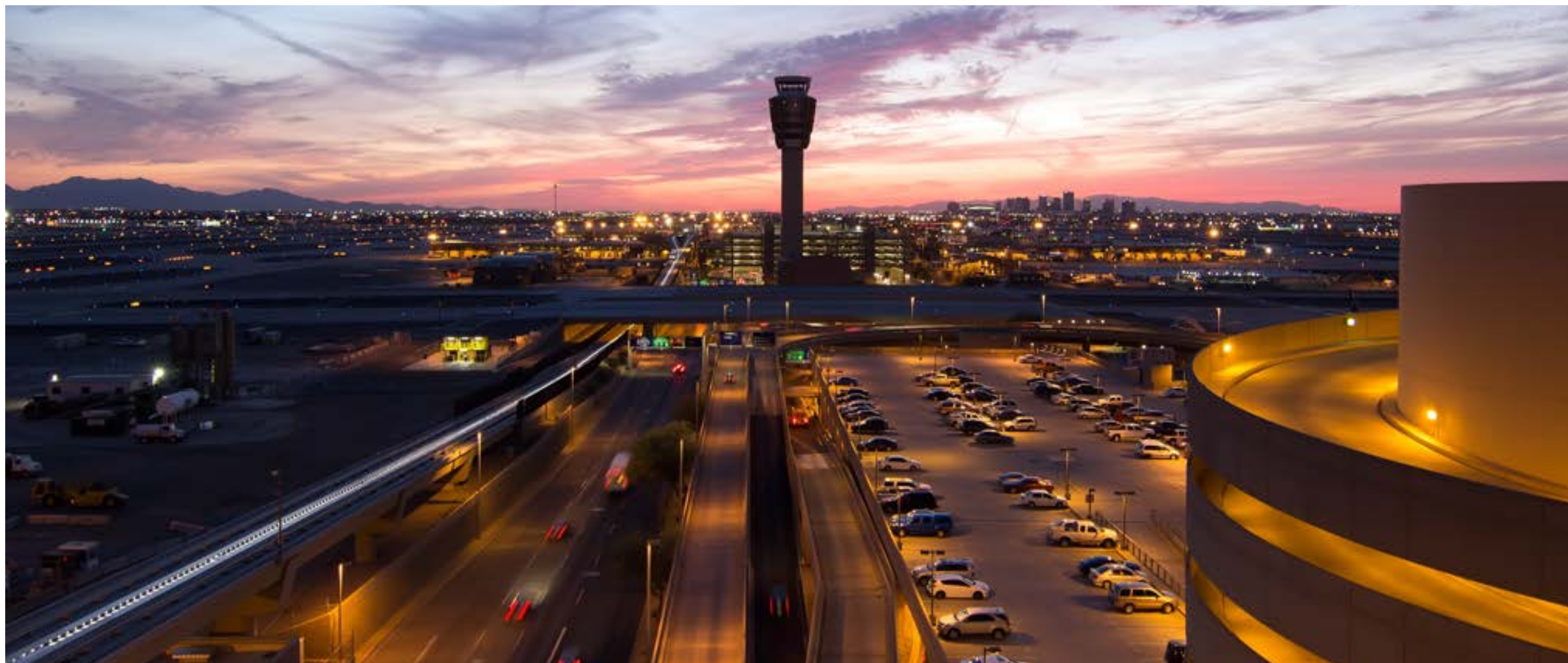
Incredibly vast and unbelievably beautiful, gazing into the Grand Canyon for the first time is sure to be one of the most memorable moments of your life. Carved over millions of years by the erosive forces of wind, water, and yet to be fully understood geological events, no one knows exactly how the Grand Canyon was created and how old it is.

Grand Canyon National Park is divided into both the South Rim and North Rim. Considering the South Rim has more trails, more viewpoints, a wider variety of services, and is more accessible than the North Rim, ninety percent of all Grand Canyon visitors head straight to the South Rim. Despite being about 10 miles as the crow flies across the Colorado River from each other, it can take five hours to drive between the two sections of the park.

Given the Grand Canyon's immense popularity, planning is key to enjoying this incredible natural wonder. Here, you'll find everything you need for planning a trip to the Grand Canyon South Rim.



# HOW TO GET HERE



## BY PLANE

### PHOENIX

Many Grand Canyon visitors fly into the Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport considering it's the closest major airport to the South Rim of Grand Canyon National Park. The airport is serviced by most major airlines including American Airlines, Delta, United Airlines, British Airways, WestJet and Air Canada.

The South Entrance is around a 3.5-hour drive or 223 miles (359 kilometers) from the Phoenix Airport and there's plentiful rental car options available here. If arriving or leaving through Phoenix, try to budget at least 3/4 of a day to explore the Sedona region – an overnight stay is best.

### FLAGSTAFF

Flagstaff Pulliam Airport is the closest commercial airport to the South Rim, but commercial flights are limited. From the Flagstaff airport, it's only 90 miles (145 kilometers) to the Grand Canyon's Main Entrance.



# HOW TO GET HERE

## BY PLANE

### LAS VEGAS

If you're also planning to visit the North Rim of Grand Canyon National Park and Utah National Parks such as Bryce Canyon or Zion, Las Vegas McCarran International Airport can be a great option and is serviced by most major airlines. It's 278 miles (447 kilometers) to the South Rim from Las Vegas (expect 4.5 hours one-way), and you can easily loop back to the airport and visit several other national parks. This is a fantastic multi-day or week (or longer) itinerary.



## BY CAR

Most visitors arrive at the South Rim of Grand Canyon National Park by car from Phoenix, Flagstaff, Sedona, Las Vegas, and beyond. Once inside the park, leaving your car behind and jumping on the park shuttle is the easiest and most convenient way to see the sights along the South Rim. Bike rentals are also available in the park and many of the park roads are accessible to bikes.



## BY TRAIN

A fun alternative for reaching the South Rim of the Grand Canyon is via the Grand Canyon Railway from the town of Williams, Arizona. This 64 mile (103 kilometer) rail line was built in 1901 and shuttled the Grand Canyon's first tourists to its rim. The Grand Canyon Railway sets off several times a day and guests can choose between basic seats or luxury cars including a special glass-enclosed observation dome.

Amtrak trains stop in Flagstaff on the Southwest Chief route which connects Chicago with Los Angeles. Shuttles depart from the Flagstaff Amtrak station to the Grand Canyon daily and car rental offices are also located nearby.







# GETTING AROUND

## SOUTH RIM SHUTTLE SERVICE

Thanks to the free South Rim shuttle system, you can explore much of the South Rim without using your vehicle. Shuttles arrive at bus stops around the South Rim every 15-30 minutes from sunup to sundown, some even operate as early as 4:00am to shuttle visitors to trailheads and viewpoints for sunrise. Visitors can hop-on or hop-off wherever they like and tickets aren't required – plus there's even space on the bus for bikes.



# GETTING AROUND

## BY CAR

Private vehicles are only allowed in the Grand Canyon Village, on Desert View Drive year-round, and along the Hermit Rest Road from December through February (Hermit Road is closed to private vehicles March 1 through November 30 and so you'll need to take the free shuttle while the road is closed).

Parking can be limited at canyon rim viewpoints on busy days, so on those days, it's a good option to park in the lots at Grand Canyon Village and take the shuttle bus for sightseeing.



## DESERT VIEW DRIVE

Desert View Drive is a 23-mile (37-kilometer) scenic road between the East Entrance of the park at Desert View and Grand Canyon Village and it's open to all vehicles year-round.

Along Desert View Drive is where you'll find the trailheads for the South Kaibab Trail and Grandview Trail as well as several scenic overlooks including Moran Point, Navajo Point, and Desert View. Cultural stops along this route are also highly worthwhile at the Tusayan Museum and Desert View Watchtower.



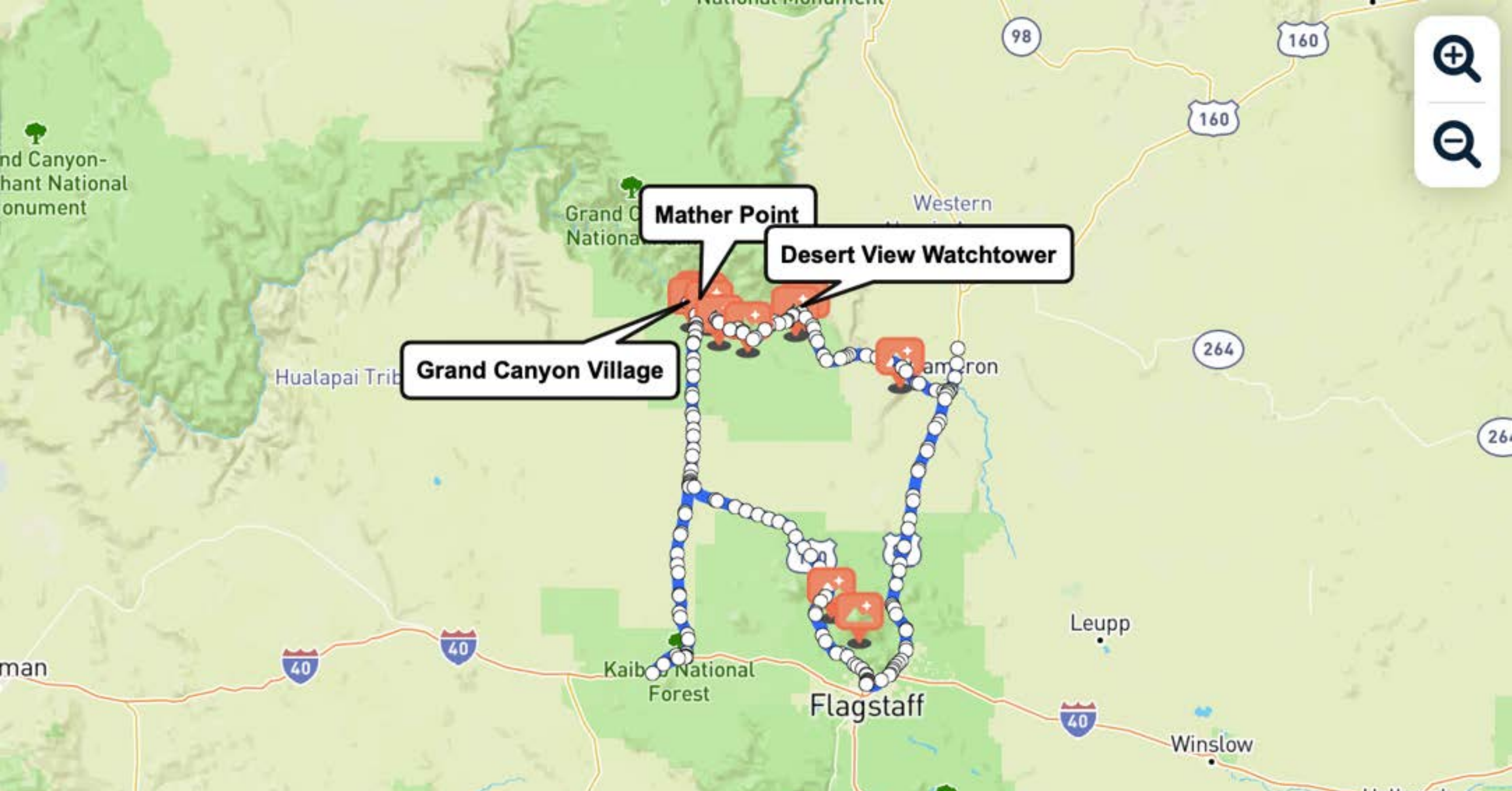


## ENTRANCE FEES

Like most U.S. national parks, an entrance fee is required to visit Grand Canyon National Park. Grand Canyon National Park passes are good for seven days and include entrance to both the South and North rims. Discounted passes are available for current U.S. military members and veterans, seniors, and U.S. fourth-graders and their families.

If you plan to visit more than one national park in a year, it's most likely a better deal to purchase the America the Beautiful National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass, which covers entrance fees to all national parks and other federally managed lands for an entire year.





# GRAND CANYON ROAD TRIP

 *interactive map*





# WHERE TO STAY

## GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK LODGING

The South Rim of the Grand Canyon also has six historic lodges: El Tovar, Bright Angel Lodge, Kachina Lodge, Thunderbird Lodge, Maswik Lodge, and Yavapai Lodge. Accommodations include elegant suites with Grand Canyon views, historic cabins, and basic hotel rooms. Lodges are open year-round and many are within walking distance of the canyon rim. Lodging reservations often fill months in advance, so you'll want to plan ahead.



# WHERE TO STAY

## GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK CAMPING

Open year-round, the Mather Campground is the South Rim's largest campground. It's the only campground in Grand Canyon Village and it's within walking distance of Market Plaza and the Mather Campground Shuttle Stop. There are 327 campsites, each with a campfire ring, picnic table, and enough room for three tents. Reservations are available up to six months in advance and are highly recommended from March through November.

Located near the park's East Entrance, the Desert View Campground is a smaller, quieter option. The campground is typically open from late April through mid-October and campsites are only available with a reservation, although same-day reservations may be available. Desert View campsites are more suitable for tents and smaller RVs.

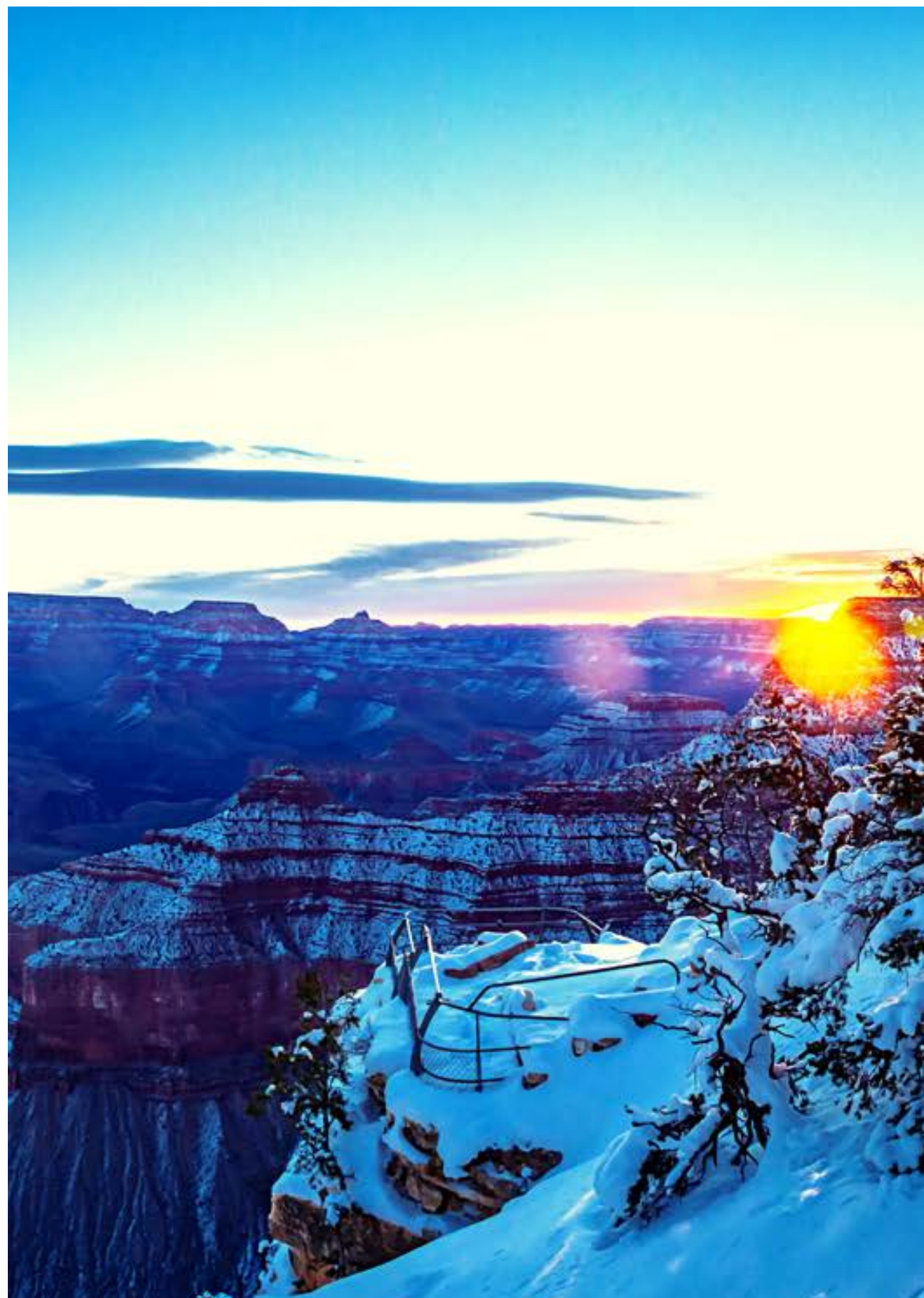
Trailer Village RV Park is the only in-park RV park with full hookups. Trailer Village is operated by a private concessionaire and reservations can be made up to 13 months in advance.

## OUTSIDE THE PARK

Just outside the park, you'll find several hotels and campgrounds in the town of Tusayan. Tusayan is only a mile from the South Rim entrance and a free park shuttle is available from Tusayan area hotels to the Grand Canyon Visitor Center and canyon rim viewpoints. You can also find additional lodging for all budgets in Grand Canyon Junction, Williams, Flagstaff, and beyond.







## WHEN TO VISIT

Summertime is peak season in the Grand Canyon and you can expect constant crowds from Memorial Day through to Labor Day weekend. With fewer visitors and cooler temperatures, spring and fall are generally the best times to visit. April tends to be the best time for wildflower viewing and fall colors usually peak in early October.

Winter can also be an excellent time to visit - the Grand Canyon is gorgeous when blanketed with fresh snow.



# HOW TO AVOID THE CROWDS

Don't worry if summer is the only time you have to visit the Grand Canyon, there's plenty of ways to escape the crowds.

Head straight to the most popular viewpoints first thing in the morning and pack a picnic lunch to avoid the long lines at the restaurants.

Hike less popular trails such as the Grandview Trail.

If you have the time, include a visit to the lesser-visited North Rim of the Grand Canyon.







# HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU NEED?

The typical Grand Canyon visitor only stays for half a day, but two or three days is necessary to really appreciate the magnitude of the place. The Grand Canyon is especially magical at sunrise and sunset so you'll want to plan on the time to capture at least one sunrise or sunset, if not both.

## HALF A DAY AT THE GRAND CANYON SOUTH RIM

If you're tight on time and only have two hours, visit Mather Point and the Grand Canyon Village Rim area buildings: Lookout Studio, Kolb Studio and Hopi House. In particular, art and history lovers will enjoy a visit to the Hopi House, a Native American arts and crafts gallery, and the Kolb Studio, the former home and photography studio of pioneering photographers Ellsworth and Emery Kolb. If you have a full half a day (five hours), then you'll also have time to drive the length of Desert View Drive to the Desert View Watchtower.



# HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU NEED?

## ONE DAY AT THE GRAND CANYON SOUTH RIM

If you have a full day to explore the South Rim, start with the sunrise at Mather Point and then wander along the Rim Trail to Yavapai Point and the Yavapai Geology Museum. Then walk along the Trail of Time before hopping on the shuttle bus to explore the sights along Hermit Road making sure not to miss the views from Hopi Point. Lastly, visit some of the viewpoints along Desert View Drive and climb to the top of the Desert View Watchtower.

## TWO DAYS AT THE GRAND CANYON SOUTH RIM

With two full days, you'll have time to visit Mather and Yavapai Points and the Grand Canyon Village Rim area buildings: Lookout Studio, Kolb Studio and Hopi House. In particular, art and history lovers will enjoy a visit to the Hopi House, a Native American arts and crafts gallery, and the Kolb Studio, the former home and photography studio of pioneering photographers Ellsworth and Emery Kolb. Then, use the shuttle or hike one way along the Rim to access Hermits Rest and/or Yaki Point (you can catch the shuttle back when your legs get tired). And enjoy a drive down the length of Desert View Drive to the Desert View Watchtower.

If you have more time, add on a mule ride, hike the South Kaibab Trail down to Ooh-Aah Point, or take a helicopter tour of the canyon. Also, you won't want to miss a peek inside the lobby of the historic El Tovar Hotel.





# WHAT TO SEE AND DO

## MATHER POINT

If you're arriving at the Grand Canyon via the park's South Main Entrance, Mather Point often provides visitors with their first view of the Grand Canyon. It may not offer the best panoramic view of the canyon but it is the closest to the entrance station and just a short walk from the visitors center. It will set the tone for how awe-inspiring the Grand Canyon is and shouldn't be missed.



# WHAT TO SEE AND DO

## YAVAPAI POINT & YAVAPAI GEOLOGY MUSEUM

From Mather Point, take a short walk along the rim to Yavapai Point for an even more impressive view. Perched on the rim of the canyon at Yavapai Point, the Yavapai Geology Museum is a great place to learn how the Grand Canyon was formed. Here, you'll find all sorts of exhibits that explain the different rock layers found in the canyon and a huge topographical model of the canyon.



## HERMITS REST

Hermits Rest is an interesting stone structure constructed in 1914 at the western end of Hermit Road. It was designed by Mary Colter, one of the very few female architects of her time, and served as a resting stop for tourists in the early 1900s. It was constructed out of local boulders and timber to blend into the landscape and is now home to a gift shop and a snack bar.



## DESERT VIEW WATCHTOWER

Also designed by Mary Colter, the Desert View Watchtower is a 70-foot (21-meter) stone tower balanced on the edge of the South Rim of the Grand Canyon near the Desert View Campground off Desert View Drive. The tower was designed to resemble the architecture of the ancestral Pueblo people and was patterned off of similar buildings found at Hovenweep and Mesa Verde. The bottom floor of the tower now houses a gift shop and an observation deck is on the top floor.





# WHAT TO SEE AND DO

## LITTLE COLORADO RIVER GORGE

Although it is formally outside the boundaries of Grand Canyon National Park, the Little Colorado River Gorge is well worth a visit. The Little Colorado River is one of the largest tributaries of the Grand Canyon and it carves a steep, narrow gorge across the Navajo Indian Reservation. The confluence of Little Colorado and the Colorado Rivers holds deep spiritual meaning for the Native people of the Grand Canyon and the Navajo Tribal Park operates an interpretive site here.



## SUNSET CRATER VOLCANO NATIONAL MONUMENT

Also outside the park, the Sunset Crater Volcano National Monument is a fascinating natural wonder that makes for a great side trip. The Sunset Crater is a huge cinder cone and experts believe it last erupted around 900 years ago. Visitors can hike to the base of the Sunset Crater or wander along the Bonito Lava Flow.



## WILLIAMS ROUTE 66

Situated about one hour south of the South Entrance of the park is the town of Williams. As well as being considered the unofficial gateway town of the Grand Canyon, Williams is also one of the most well-preserved stretches of Route 66. This once happening highway provided the quickest route to California from the Midwest and several motels, gas stations, and cafes along Route 66 in Williams are relatively unchanged since the early days of cross-country automobile travel.







# BEST HIKES

## RIM TRAIL

The 13-mile (21-kilometer) mostly paved, and also mostly horizontal, Rim Trail hugs the South Rim of the Grand Canyon from Hermits Rest to the South Kaibab Trailhead. With 14 shuttle stops spread out across the length of the trail, you can hike as far or as little as you like and then hop on the shuttle bus for a ride back to where you started. The trail between the Yavapai Geology Museum and Verkamp's Visitor Center is called the Trail of Time, and offers several interpretive panels that help visitors understand the geological focus that carved this incredible canyon.



# BEST HIKES

## BRIGHT ANGEL TRAIL

The Bright Angel Trail is the South Rim's most iconic trail. This well-maintained trail begins just west of the Bright Angel Lodge and travels 9.5 miles (15.3 kilometers) down to the Colorado River. Day hikers have several options for turning around such as Three-Mile Rest House or Indian Gardens, and backpackers can stay at the Indian Garden or Bright Angel campgrounds. Attempting to hike to the river and back in one day is not recommended, especially from May through September.



## SOUTH KAIBAB TRAIL TO OOH-AAH POINT

The 7-mile (11.2-kilometer) South Kaibab Trail descends very steeply to the Colorado River and offers fantastic views in every direction. It's also not recommended to hike to the river and back in one day, but the 1.8-mile (2.9-kilometer) round-trip hike to Ooh-Aah Point, a gorgeous panoramic view of the greater Grand Canyon, makes for a wonderful day hike. Those looking to stretch their legs a bit longer can continue to Cedar Ridge, a nice shady picnic area, or Skeleton Point, where you'll catch your first glimpse of the Colorado River.





# REVIEWS



★★★★★

Excellent and informative  
Well worth the money! Everyone in the car ages 19-82 found the narrative informative and entertaining. Highly recommend this download.



**ZarZarL**

★★★★★

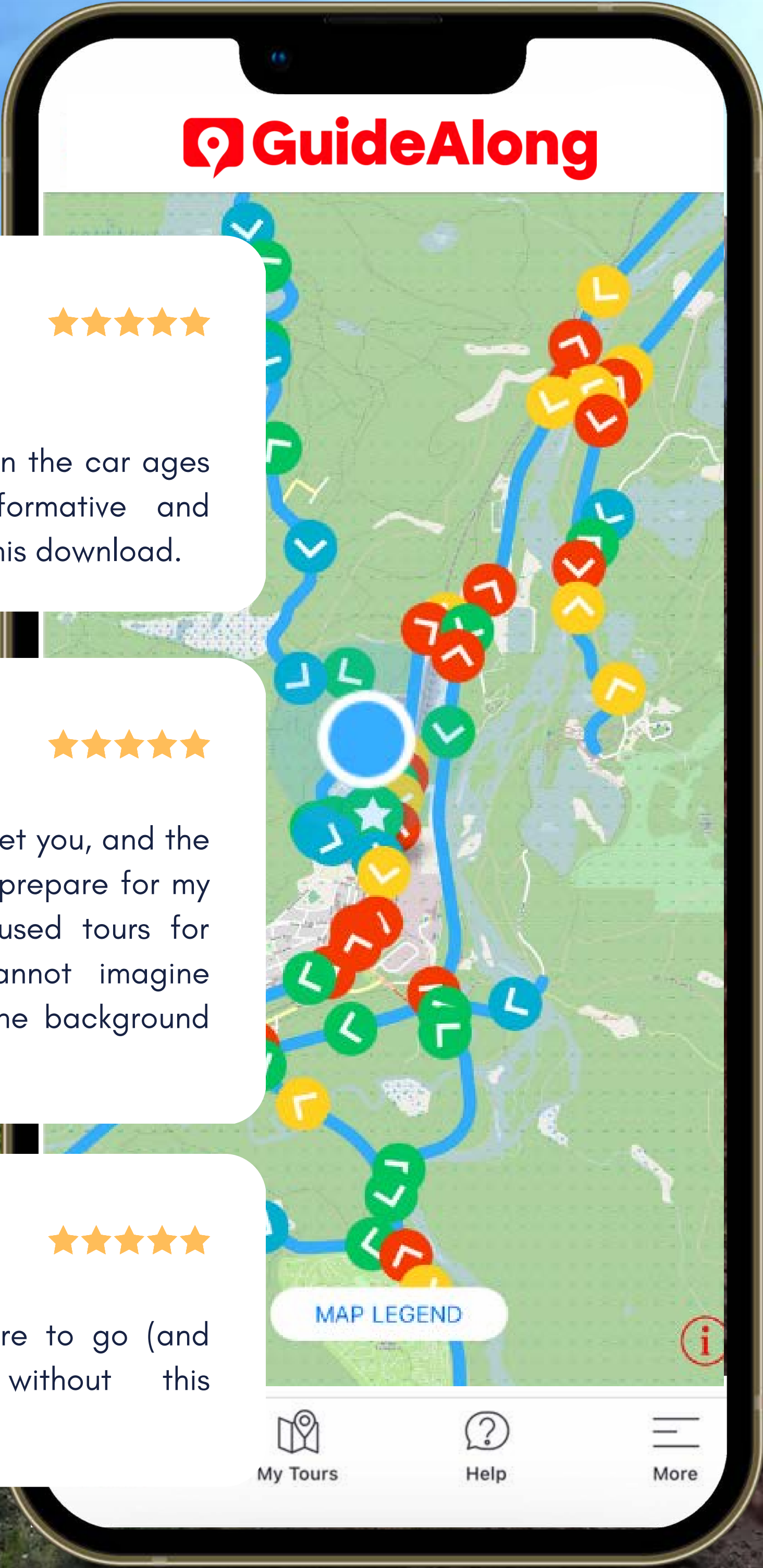
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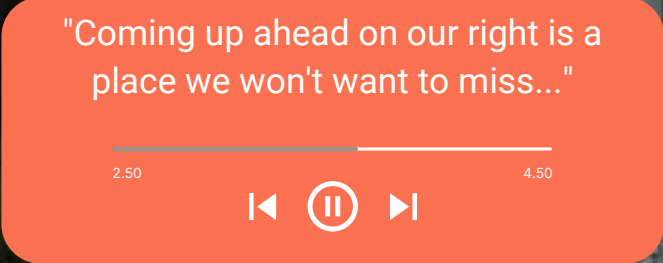
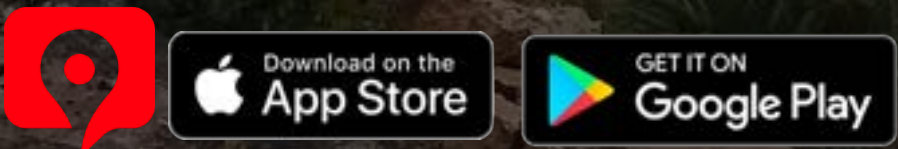
★★★★★

We would not have known where to go (and when to beat crowds) without this audio...Ridiculously great value



# AUDIO TOUR GUIDES

Stories, local tips & directions that autoplay, based on your location







# AWESOME EXPERIENCES

## BIKE ALONG THE HERMIT ROAD

Bicycling is a great way to explore the South Rim. Hermit Road hugs the South Rim for 7 miles (11 kilometers) and it's one of the best places in the park to ride. If you get tired, you can throw your bike onto one of the park's many bike-friendly shuttles and catch a ride back to your starting place.

If you didn't bring your bike, you can rent one at Bright Angel Bicycles, right next to the Grand Canyon Visitor Center. They even provide guided cycling tours of the park.

## TAKE A MULE TO THE BOTTOM OF THE GRAND CANYON

Mules have long been the animal of choice in the Grand Canyon. Their sure-footedness and stubborn determination make them well suited for carrying people and supplies into the depths of the Grand Canyon.

Choose between hour-long rides along the rim, inner canyon trips, and overnight trips to Phantom Ranch. South Rim mule rides can be booked up to 15 months in advance and often fill quickly. A waiting list is available for day-before cancellations.





## AWESOME EXPERIENCES

### SOAR ABOVE THE GRAND CANYON ON A HELICOPTER TOUR

To get a true grasp of the enormity of the Grand Canyon, consider booking a helicopter tour for a unique perspective. Tours depart from Tusayan, Arizona, the town right outside the South Entrance of the park as well as Las Vegas, Nevada, and Sedona, Arizona. Choose between quick 30-minute tours to all-day tours that also included guided hikes, off-road-vehicle rides, and champagne dinners.

### PLUNGE THROUGH THE GRAND CANYON ON A WHITEWATER RAFT

Whitewater rafting is an exciting way to experience the Grand Canyon. Trips are often a minimum of three days long and are offered by numerous area outfitters. Choose between motorized rafts or traditional oar-powered boats and different levels of “roughing it”. Rafting the full length of the Grand Canyon can take as long as 25 days.



# BEST SUNSET SPOTS

## MATHER POINT

Thanks to its proximity to Grand Canyon Village and its gorgeous vantage point, Mather Point is one of the most popular spots to watch the sunset on the South Rim. Mather Point's convenient location also makes it the busiest, so arrive early to secure a prime spot on the rim. For a quieter experience, consider a less popular viewpoint.





# BEST SUNSET SPOTS

## HOPI POINT

Hopi Point is another popular sunrise and sunset spot on the Grand Canyon's South Rim. It juts out further into the canyon than any of the other viewpoints and offers a huge panoramic view from east to west. To get there, take the park's free shuttle bus or hike to it via the Rim Trail.

## ANY VIEWPOINT ALONG DESERT VIEW DRIVE

There's really no bad place to watch the sunset on the South Rim of the Grand Canyon and each viewpoint offers its own unique view. Just be sure to arrive well before sunset and linger a bit after – sometimes the best light show occurs after the sun has fallen well below the horizon.



# PACKING LIST

**Warm Layers:** Pack plenty of layers including some warm ones regardless of the time of year you visit. You can always remove layers if it's warmer than you expected and add them if you get cold. Grand Canyon weather is especially unpredictable in the spring and fall so you'll also want to make sure you have a jacket, rain gear, a hat, and even mittens.

**Sturdy Hiking Shoes:** Comfortable, sturdy shoes are a must even if you're not planning hiking. Expect to spend a lot of time on your feet waiting for the shuttle bus, walking to various viewpoints, and wandering along the Rim Trail.

**Daypack:** Having a good, comfortable daypack is necessary if you plan on hiking or using the park's shuttle system. You'll want a pack large enough to store water bottles, snacks, extra layers, sunscreen, and other personal items.

**Refillable Water Bottles:** Dehydration is a common occurrence at the Grand Canyon. The air may be drier than you are used to and you may need to drink more water than you'd expect. Refill stations are scattered across the South Rim as well as available seasonally along the Bright Angel Trail. If you're planning on hiking below the rim, a hydration bladder may be a better choice than individual water bottles.

**Salty Snacks:** Every year, many underprepared hikers get into trouble by drinking too much water. This can sound strange but drinking too much water can be just as dangerous as dehydration. To keep things balanced, eat plenty of salty snacks often and replace some of your plain water with electrolyte drinks. To be safe, avoid hiking during the hottest parts of the day and keep in mind the further down into the canyon you go, the hotter it is going to be.

**Sun Protection:** Summer temperatures are typically pleasant on the South Rim, although inner canyon temperatures can be extreme. Regardless, the desert sun can be intense and you'll want to come prepared with a wide-brimmed hat, sunscreen, and sunglasses. Consider UPF clothing if you're planning to hike below the rim.

**Binoculars:** Binoculars are great for viewing the details in distant rock formations and spying the park's famous California condors.

**Plastic Bag:** We always carry a plastic bag when we hike, so we can do our part and help keep the trails and waterways clean. If you see some trash along the way, pick it up, drop it in the bag. When you get back to the trailhead, simply drop your bag in the recycling or trash bin and voila! You've helped keep the parks beautiful for everyone who visits.



# TOP TIPS

**Explore Beyond the Viewpoint:** It can be difficult to grasp how massive the Grand Canyon is without venturing a bit below the rim. You don't even have to go far. Just remember that it's a lot easier to hike down than it is back up.

## **Book Lodging Reservations in**

**Advance:** Like most U.S. national parks, camping and lodging reservations often fill up as soon as reservations open. Book reservations as soon as you know your travel dates and be flexible with your travel planning for the best of luck. Scour the reservation system often for cancellations if you weren't able to secure reservations in advance.

## **Start Hiking First Thing in the**

**Morning:** Unless you're visiting outside the busy summer season, start hikes early in the morning. This will help you beat both the scorching midday heat and the midday crowds.

## **Enjoy the Grand Canyon After Dark:**

Grand Canyon rangers offer all sorts of evening programs including stargazing events and ranger-led hikes along the rim. Many people can no longer see the Milky Way from their home and at the Grand Canyon, you'll be stunned by how dark and wonderful the night sky can be.

**Shuttles:** Most of the free Grand Canyon South Rim shuttles operate year round, including the Village and South Kaibab Routes. These shuttles are optional and tickets aren't required. However, for most of the year (March – November) Hermit Road is only accessible by the free shuttle bus service that runs every 15–30 minutes.

**Walk the Trail of Time:** If you only have the time for one walk, make it the Trail of Time. This paved jaunt along the rim provides plenty of stunning views into the canyon as well as all sorts of fun exhibits that provide some insight into the magnitude of geologic time.

**Give Your Camera a Rest:** It's easy to snap hundreds and hundreds of photos of the Grand Canyon. Nearly every direction you look will seem like a photo-worthy view. But to truly capture an image you'll never forget, put your camera down and soak in the views.

**Pack a DC Charger:** Using location services will drain your battery faster so bring a 12V DC charger for keeping your phone charged throughout the day.



# 4 EASY STEPS TO GETTING AN AUDIO TOUR FOR THE DRIVE



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