

2 Days at the Grand Canyon

The South Rim, properly — one day on the rim, one day below it, and the current conditions almost every other guide is getting wrong.

△ CURRENT CONDITIONS • SEPTEMBER 2026

2026 is not a normal year here. An August 29 flash flood closed the entire North Kaibab Trail, Phantom Ranch, Bright Angel Campground and both Colorado River footbridges. No reopening date. Rim-to-rim is not possible.

Water along Bright Angel is currently off — trailhead, both resthouses and Havasupai Gardens. Only the South Kaibab trailhead has water on. Check the NPS Key Hiking Messages page before you hike.

QUICK FACTS BEFORE YOU GO

- \$35 per private vehicle, valid 7 days. Entrance stations are cashless.
- No timed entry and no reservation needed to enter the park.
- Non-US residents: a \$100 surcharge per person 16+ applies in 2026.
- The shuttle is free. No ticket, no reservation.
- No fuel in Grand Canyon Village — 24-hour pay-at-pump at Desert View.
- In-park lodges book 13 months ahead. Tusayan is 7 miles south.

DAY 01

The Rim

Viewpoints, the village, and sunset over Hermit Road

1

SUNRISE

Mather Point

The closest big view to the visitor center and most people's first sight of the canyon. Arrive before first light — the crowd builds fast and parking near the visitor center fills.

2

7:30 AM

Visitor Center

Worth the stop for current trail and water conditions, which change more here than at most parks. Pick up a shuttle map.

OPEN 8 AM – 4 PM

3

8:30 AM

Rim Trail to Yavapai Point

The Rim Trail runs about 13 miles in total and you walk whatever part you like. This stretch is short, largely paved, and ends at the Yavapai Geology Museum.

MOSTLY PAVED • EASY

4

10:30 AM

Grand Canyon Village

The historic district — El Tovar, Hopi House, Lookout Studio, Kolb Studio and Bright Angel Lodge. Walk it rather than drive; parking here is the worst in the park.

5

1:30 PM

Hermit Road, by shuttle

Hermit Road is closed to private vehicles March 1 through November 30, so the red shuttle is how you get out there. Nine viewpoints along seven miles, hop off and on.

RED ROUTE • FREE

6

SUNSET

Hopi Point or Mohave Point

Both west-facing, and both among the best sunset spots on the South Rim. Check the last shuttle time before you settle in — the red route runs a final sweep about an hour after sunset.

BEST PHOTO SPOT

PRO TIP

Today is deliberately easy. The rim sits around 7,000 feet, and if you've come from sea level you'll feel it. Walking the rim rather than descending gives your body a day to adjust before tomorrow.

DAY 02

Below the Rim

South Kaibab in the morning, Desert View in the afternoon

7

PRE-DAWN

Hikers' Express to South Kaibab

The road to the South Kaibab Trailhead is closed to private vehicles. Early departures run from Bright Angel Lodge. Times shift by season — check the current schedule.

8

FIRST LIGHT

Down South Kaibab

The trail follows an exposed ridgeline, which is why the views are extraordinary and also why there's almost no shade. There is no water anywhere on this trail.

Ooh Aah Point — 1.8 mi RT, 790 ft, 1–2 hrs. Cedar Ridge — 3 mi RT, 1,120 ft, 2–4 hrs, toilets at the top.

NPS CALLS BOTH "STEEP"

9

LATE MORNING

Climb out

The climb takes roughly twice as long as the descent. In dangerous summer heat, NPS says do not hike between 10 AM and 4 PM — which is the real reason for the early start.

10

1:30 PM

Desert View Drive

25 miles east, and open to private vehicles unlike Hermit Road. Grandview Point, Moran Point and Lipan Point are the standouts, and the canyon looks completely different from this end.

11

LATE AFTERNOON

Desert View Watchtower

Mary Colter's 1932 tower at the eastern end of the park, with views down to the Colorado. Also 24-hour pay-at-pump fuel — the only fuel in the park.

SUNSET: LIPAN OR DESERT VIEW

CANYON HIKING IS BACKWARDS

Every mountain hike starts with the climb. This one starts with the descent, which feels easy right up until you have to climb out in the afternoon heat with tired legs. That's why NPS's turnaround points look conservative.

DAY HIKES

Turnaround Points

NPS distances, round trip

HIKE	DISTANCE	ELEVATION	TIME
Ooh Aah Point · S. Kaibab	1.8 mi RT	790 ft	1–2 hrs
1½-Mile Resthouse · Bright Angel	3 mi RT	1,120 ft	2–4 hrs
Cedar Ridge · S. Kaibab	3 mi RT	1,120 ft	2–4 hrs
3-Mile Resthouse · Bright Angel	6 mi RT	2,120 ft	4–6 hrs
Skeleton Point · S. Kaibab	6 mi RT	2,040 ft	4–6 hrs
Havasupai Gardens · Bright Angel	9 mi RT	3,040 ft	6–9 hrs

△ FIVE THINGS NPS WANTS YOU TO KNOW

1. Don't hike 10 AM to 4 PM in dangerous summer heat. That's NPS's wording — an instruction, not a suggestion.
2. It gets hotter as you descend. Roughly 5.5°F per 1,000 feet lost. Summer highs at the river average about 30°F hotter than the rim.
3. South Kaibab has no water at all. Bright Angel's is seasonal and currently switched off.
4. A water fountain doesn't mean there's water. The Transcanyon Waterline fails. Carry treatment regardless.
5. Drinking too much water is also dangerous. NPS warns against forcing fluids — overhydration causes hyponatremia. Drink when thirsty, and replace salt and calories too.

PLANNING NOTES

- River and back in a day is not recommended by NPS — roughly 5,000 ft of elevation change each way.
- Skeleton Point and Havasupai Gardens: NPS says consult a ranger before attempting either as a day hike.
- NPS uses “Steep” as a route description, not a difficulty rating. We've quoted it rather than converting it.
- The rims are about 10 miles apart across the canyon — and 212 to 220 miles by road, four and a half to five hours.
- Mather Campground is year-round, bookable 6 months ahead. Desert View runs April to October.

Map This Route

Scan the QR code below to open the live, interactive Google My Map with all ten stops in order, split across the two days, with driving directions built in. Tap any pin for distances, elevation and what to watch for.



SCAN WITH YOUR PHONE CAMERA

BEFORE YOU RELY ON IT

Conditions at this park change more than most. Check the NPS Key Hiking Messages page the morning you hike — water status can switch off without notice, and inner-canyon closures are ongoing.

Grand Canyon National Park — ten miles across, and five hours around

One day on the rim, one day below it.

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