

Grand wonder

With more than one million acres of awe-inspiring landscape to explore, there are plenty of opportunities to go on an epic adventure in the Grand Canyon

The Grand Canyon is a vast ancient landscape that has been sculpted and shaped by Mother Nature. Considered as one of the Natural Wonders of the World, the Grand Canyon, 440 kilometres long and 8-15 kilometres wide, presents an arid but flourishing environment, carved by the Colorado River.

While there are several ways to explore this magnificent phenomenon, helicopter tours, fixed-wing airplane rides, and

luxury boat tours offer unique perspectives and unforgettable adventures. Each mode of transportation provides a different vantage point and enables complete immersion in the awe-inspiring grandeur of the Canyon.

Helicopter tours are a popular choice for visitors seeking an exhilarating bird's-eye view of the Grand Canyon. From the moment you lift off the ground, you'll be treated to a jaw-dropping panorama of the canyon's immense scale, jagged cliffs,

and vibrant colours. As the helicopter hovers over the deep gorges and ancient rock formations, you'll gain a new appreciation for the sheer magnitude and geological history of this natural wonder. It is only outmatched by the mammoth Valles Marineris on Mars at 4,000 kilometres long and 200 kilometres wide. However, no one needs to worry about that at the Grand Canyon here on Earth.

The helicopter's ability to hover and manoeuvre in tight spaces

allows for intimate glimpses of hidden waterfalls, narrow canyons, and secluded pockets of wilderness that are inaccessible by any other means.

Another option is fixed-wing airplane tours that offer a broader perspective and a chance to cover more ground in a shorter time. These tours allow you to witness the vastness of the Grand Canyon and its surrounding landscapes, including the towering cliffs, the meandering Colorado River, and the sprawling forests. As the plane glides through the skies, you'll have an unobstructed view from large windows, ensuring that

Right: View from a helicopter flight where the sheer magnitude of the whole Grand Canyon comes into view
Right bottom: The exhilaration of hiking the South Rim



every passenger gets a fantastic experience of the canyon below. The pilot's narration provides valuable insights into the canyon's history, geology, and the Native American cultures that have called this region home for more than 10,000 years.

The Canyon is a place of immeasurable importance to the indigenous people in the Southwest; the park shares boundaries with three federally recognised tribes, while a total of 11 federally recognised tribes are traditionally associated with what is now Grand Canyon National Park. Park staff have been working with tribal people for more than 40 years, developing numerous innovative and



collaborative tribal partnerships during that time; ensuring that every tour and visitor gratefully acknowledges the Native peoples on whose ancestral homelands they gather, as well as the diverse and vibrant Native communities who make their home there today. The Arizona American Indian Tourism Association promotes the development of Indian Tourism

while respecting the cultural integrity of tribes, and multiple conservation groups (including EcoFlight – ecoflight.org – who monitor mining and excavation), seek to protect the ancient landmark.

Visits from power celebrities, such as Beyoncé and Jay-Z, David and Victoria Beckham, Cindy Crawford and Kourtney

Kardashian, to musicians like Justin Bieber and Miley Cyrus all raise the profile of Canyon, with Britney Spears filming *I'm Not A Girl Not Yet A Woman* there. Will Smith bungee jumped from a helicopter, saying "It goes from pure terror to pure bliss!" while dangling after the jump he made on his 50th birthday to raise awareness of the charity Global Citizen, which aims to end extreme poverty by 2030.

Helicopter and fixed-wing airplanes provide an unforgettable experience and perspective of one of Earth's astonishing and precious land features, ranging from around US\$200 (fixed-wing airplane) to US\$550 (helicopter), with proposal, wedding and funeral services also available. ➤



For those who prefer to explore the Grand Canyon from a different perspective, guided boat tours along the Colorado River offer a unique and tranquil experience. These tours allow you to navigate through the deep canyons, where towering cliffs rise majestically on either side. As you cruise along the calm waters, you'll witness the canyon's walls in all their glory, revealing layers of ancient rock and vibrant hues.

Boat guides provide fascinating information about the geological formations and the river's role in shaping the landscape over millions of years. Along the way, you will spot wildlife, such as bighorn sheep or majestic bald eagles, adding

Above: Rafting on the Colorado River provides an opportunity to appreciate the true scale of the rock faces Right: Enjoying a view of the Canyon's South Rim in summer

to the natural beauty surrounding you. Boat tours offer a serene escape into the heart of the canyon, providing an up-close encounter with its remarkable natural features. If visitors of the Grand Canyon choose to immerse themselves further into nature, then why not a rafting tour. Rafting trips in the Grand Canyon are typically multi-day expeditions

that cover significant stretches of the river. These trips can last anywhere from several days to a few weeks, providing ample time to explore the vastness of the canyon and soak in its unparalleled beauty.

Whether it's by helicopter, fixed-wing airplane, boat, raft – or hiking – the Grand Canyon's awe-inspiring natural beauty

presents a true bucket-list experience. Each approach offers a unique perspective, enabling a deep appreciation of the grandeur, scale; a close up of the intricate details of this awe-inspiring natural wonder. They provide an opportunity to witness the geological wonders, hidden treasures, and breathtaking beauty that make the Grand Canyon a marvel to behold.

Tour Radar (tourradar.com/1/v-luxury-national-park-grand-canyon) runs hiking, biking and boat tours to Bryce Canyon National Park and Zion National Park destinations, while Maverick Helicopters (maverickhelicopter.com/) and Papillon Helicopters (papillon.com/private-tours/private-grand-celebration-with-vegas-strip) offer great aerial options from Las Vegas, 130 miles east (45 minute flight) from the Canyon's West Rim. nps.gov/grca/index.htm ■

