

The Grand Canyon

A Wonderful Place to visit



Last year, about 6.5 million people visited the United States from overseas. Most visitors entered the country through one of the largest cities – New York, Boston, Miami, Los Angeles, San Francisco. Then, having landed in a city, the newcomers simply “stayed put,” not realizing that the interior of the country offered travel opportunities of unusual beauty and interest. Did you know that between Maine and California there are 41 national parks? Some parks cover thousands of acres. Each has its own distinctive scenery and character. If you like nature study, hiking, camping, bird-watching, clean air, quiet, or just getting away from the city, you will love the national parks. On the East Coast, for example, there is Acadia NATIONAL Park, Maine. It faces the Atlantic Ocean and has a long, rocky coastline. On the West Coast, in California, there are Yosemite, with majestic mountains, forests, and rivers; and Death Valley, with desert plants and animals. In between are enough national and state parks to satisfy every taste and interest: Cape Hatteras, North Carolina; Great Smoky Mountains, Tennessee; Shenandoah, Virginia. Above all, there is the Grand Canyon, Arizona, that mighty chasm carved in the earth by the Colorado River. Visiting a national park need not to be expensive for the overseas visitors, but does require advance information and careful planning.

Visiting the Grand Canyon

(1) The Grand Canyon is an impressive sight. It is 277 miles long, between 4 and 18 miles wide, and more than a mile deep. No one knows for sure how the canyon was made, but geologist generally agree that over millions of years, the Colorado River, which runs down the center of the canyon, gradually cut through the sand and rock to carve this mighty chasm. This wearing-down process is called erosion. The wind and natural land movements did the rest. Today the Grand Canyon is a geologist's dream. The rock layers in the sides of the canyon are exposed to view. Each layer is a record of all the natural events that happened to the land through the eons of time. In one layer, there is dust from an ancient volcano. In another layer, there is sand from a lake that once covered the area. In a third layer, there are the bones of prehistoric animals. The canyon is like a storybook. If you had enough knowledge, you could unravel the history of the earth.

(2) But studying geology is not the only interesting thing to do there. It is an ideal place to hike, to ride a bike, to take a boat ride down the river, to camp out overnight, to take photographs and see beautiful scenery. To add further interest, the canyon has six different climate zones, and many kinds of plants, trees and animals.

(3) "We've got to see the Grand Canyon," said José to his friend Ibrahim. José is from Colombia, South America, and speaks Spanish. Ibrahim is from Egypt, and speaks Arabic. To communicate, they have to speak English.

(4) "Let's go," said Ibrahim. "School doesn't start for three weeks. We'll just have time. I saved some money from my summer job, but how will we get there? We don't have a car."

(5) "There are three ways," José said. "We could fly or go by train, but that would be expensive, so let's take the bus. It explains how in this booklet. There are two major interurban bus lines in the U.S. – Greyhound and Trailways," said José, reading from the booklet. "These two companies operate 6700 busses and carry over 350,000,000 passengers each year – more than the railroads and the airline combined. Best of all, bus travel is relatively cheap."

(6) This sounds like a great trip, and practical, too. When do we start?" asked Ibrahim.

(7) "What about Monday? That would give us plenty of time to pack."

(8) "Monday is okay with me," Ibrahim said. "I'm taking one suitcase, some casual clothes, and my hiking boots."

(9) "Travel light." That's my motto," José said. "And carry traveler's checks. They are safer than cash."

(10) Monday rolled around in no time. The two friends caught the bust at the depot. Next morning, they were in Flagstaff, Arizona, gateway city to the Grand Canyon. A local bus took them the rest of the way, about 80 miles, and dropped them at the Park entrance.

(11) Now their excitement began to rise. They could hardly wait to view the canyon itself. But they were in for a surprise. At first there was nothing special to see. Dark green

pine trees surrounded the boys on every side. They seemed to be in the middle of a forest. Fortunately, the trail to the canyon was well marked. "Grand Canyon this way," read a sign.

(12) It took ten minutes of rapid walking to reach the canyon. The boys stumbled on it, really, for there was no preparation, no gradual slope, just flat, wooded country that suddenly disappeared into the mile-deep abyss.

(13) "Wow," said José. "Look at that!"

(14) "Wow," repeated Ibrahim, unable to find better words.

(15) It was a thrilling sight. The rocky precipice at the top fell straight down the canyon floor, which was very uneven and covered with rocks. Cutting down the middle was the wild Colorado River, although from this distance it looked like a harmless stream. The other side of the canyon was clearly visible. Overhead, a hawk flew lazily in a cloudless sky. The boys could see for a hundred miles in every direction.

(16) "What will we do first?" José asked

(17) Just at that moment, the boys noticed a park ranger standing beside a big picture of the canyon. "Right now, we're standing on the south rim, or edge, of the canyon, just about here," the ranger said, indicating a place on the picture. "That's the north rim over there," he said, pointing across the canyon. "Did you notice how the rocks and earth are arranged like layers in a cake, and that each layer has a different color? The layer at the bottom of the canyon is the oldest. It is called Early Precambrian," the ranger said, giving the scientific name. "These rocks must be about 1.7 billion years old. The rocks on the top are younger. Each layer has a different age, and has characteristic deposits that correspond to the geological and natural events occurring at the time. We find evidence of animal life at this level," said the ranger, pointing to a layer near the top. "Probably dinosaurs, extinct animals that lived millions of years ago."

(18) "Isn't this interesting," said Ibrahim. "When I get back to school, I'm going to do some research in geology and write a paper for my science class."

(19) Yes, it is interesting, "said José, "but I'm getting hungry. Isn't it time for supper?"

(20) There were several places to eat. The boys could get fast food at a lunch stand or dinner in the restaurant.

(21) "Let's go to the restaurant," said Ibrahim. "I'm starved."

(22) After a short wait, they were seated at a table. The waiter arrived to take their order.

(23) "I am so hungry, I could eat a dinosaur," said José, glancing at the menu. "I'm going to have vegetable soup, steak, mashed potatoes, lettuce salad, and ice cream for dessert."

(24) Ibrahim ordered mushroom soup, veal stew with rice, tomato salad, and apple pie.

(25) When the boys had finished eating, they glanced out the windows. The sun was just setting. If they hurried, they could just get outside in time to watch the sun drop below the canyon rim, which it did with a burst of many colors.

(26) "Wasn't this a great day?" José said. "What'll we do tomorrow?"

Exercises

1. Reading comprehension

On the basis of the story, decide if the following statements are true (T) or false (F).

1. ____ The national parks in the States have similar sceneries and character.
2. ____ Death Valley is famous for its mountains, and forests.
3. ____ National parks must be expensive for the local visitors.
4. ____ Geologists suggest that the Colorado River carved this chasm.
5. ____ There are several ways to have fun in the Grand Canyon.
6. ____ Interurban busses transport less people than railroads and airlines combined.
7. ____ When you arrive at the canyon, you see nothing special but pine trees.
8. ____ The boys approached the canyon from the bottom, near the river.
9. ____ The Colorado River looked very scary in the distance.
10. ____ Some layers of the canyon have the same age.
11. ____ Neither of the boys were hungry at dinner time.
12. ____ The boys missed the sunset.

2. Scanning for information

Answer these questions according to the text.

1. What does Yosemite National Park offer for its visitors?
2. What do the layers of the canyon show?
3. What can you do in the canyon?
4. Why don't the two boys speak with each other in Spanish?
5. Where does Ibrahim have money from for this trip?
6. How many ways are there to reach the Grand Canyon?
7. Does José like to travel with a lot of luggage?
8. How long does it take to reach the canyon from the park entrance?
9. What kind of bird did the boy see flying?
10. Who was standing beside a bid picture of the canyon?
11. What does the ranger compare the layers of the canyon to?
12. What does Ibrahim want to research?
13. What did José have for dessert?
14. What was Ibrahim's main dish?
15. Did José find their day great?

3. Vocabulary development 1

a, Underline the following words in the text, numbered accordingly to the paragraph where each occurs then write them into the correct places.

canyon (1) geologist (1) erosion (1) layer (1) volcano (1)

interurban (5) motto (9) traveler's check (9) rim (17) lunch stand (20)

1. _____ is a process that changes the earth's surface through the action of natural forces.
2. A _____ is a deep valley or crack in the earth, often with steep sides.
3. A _____ is a small restaurant, usually out of doors, serving mainly fast food.
4. A _____ studies the history and structure of the earth by analyzing rocks.
5. The _____ is the upper edge of the canyon.
6. A _____ is a check issued by a bank or travel agency for the convenience of travellers.
7. A _____ is one thousand thousands.
8. A _____ is a thickness of material, usually one of several, that forms a distinct division.
9. A _____ is a mountain that releases steam and molten rock from beneath the earth's surface.
10. _____ refers to a bus or other system that connects two or more cities.

b, Now, use the words above to fill in the blank places.

1. The rocks in the canyon wall are arranged in horizontal _____.
2. I only carry _____ when I travel because it's safer than cash.
3. The process of the wind blowing away the soil is called _____.
4. When you are in a hurry, you might prefer eating at a _____.
5. The Grand _____ is a very famous national park.
6. Why don't we take the _____ bus from London to Bristol?
7. My _____ is: "Never give up anything."
8. My nephew is a _____. He studies minerals and rocks.
9. Etna is a famous _____ in Italy.
10. Don't go too close to the _____! It is very dangerous.

4. Vocabulary development 2

Select the words from the list below to complete the sentences. Do not use any word more than once.

deposits research major booklet boat ride
trail abyss hawk park ranger suitcase

1. Why don't we take a _____ down the river?
2. The girls walked along a _____ to reach the Canyon.
4. A _____ contains useful information for visitors.
5. The Canyon is a mile-deep _____.
6. Geologists study rock _____ in the Canyon walls.
7. If you want to have more information on a subject, do some _____ in the library.
8. A _____ flew lazily overhead.
9. The _____ tells interesting facts to the tourists.
10. If you want to travel light, you should take only one _____ with you.

5. Synonyms

Rewrite the following sentences by replacing the word or phrase in italics with the best synonym from the word list. Use each synonym only once.

one billion rapidly flat casual cheap trail
interurban glanced rim chasm barely burst
gateway dinosaurs major a million scientific Arizona
extinct ice cream

1. The *canyon* was deep and very wide. It was beautiful.
2. The boys decided to wear *informal* clothes for their trip.
3. There are two main *between-cities* bus lines in the U.S.
4. Travelling by bus is quite *inexpensive*.
5. The bones of *ancient reptiles* were found at the site.
6. You can have the best view from the *edge* of the canyon.
7. The Spanish boy ordered *frozen milk* for dessert.

8. The sun set in an *explosion* of color.
9. One of the boys *looked quickly* at the menu.
10. Dinosaurs are *no longer living*.
11. Early Precambrian is a *technical* word.
12. The boys could *hardly* wait to see the canyon.
13. The land was *level*.
14. They walked very *quickly* in order to arrive as soon as possible.
15. These rocks are *1,000,000* years old.

6. Word-form chart

Study the following words then fill in the blank spaces with the correct form of the words in the same order as it given in the chart. So you must use a form of the word *nature* in the first sentence, *geology* in the second, *impression* in the third, etc.)

PARTICIPLE	NOUN	VERB	ADJECTIVE	ADVERBS
	nature		natural	naturally
	geology geologist		geological	geologically
	impression	impress	impressive	impressively
studied studying	study student	study	studious	studiously
	knowledge	know	knowledgeable	knowledgeably
	history		historic	historically
	expense		expensive	expensively
	visibility		visible	visibly
	hunger	hunger	hungry	hungrily
	distance		distant	distantly

1. People like walking in the _____ at weekends.
2. Several studies of the rocks were made _____.
3. Her knowledge was very _____.
4. My girlfriend is very _____ but she is very pretty at the same time.
5. The park ranger was very _____. He knew everything about the park.
6. These facts are very _____ so you can learn a lot from them.
7. Keep a record of your _____ so you can check how much you spend.
8. There were no clouds so the _____ was perfect.
9. _____ is a serious problem in the Third World.
10. We could see a beautiful hawk flying in the _____.

Well done!