

2027 Rim to Rim (North to South)



CLASS INFORMATION AND SYLLABUS

This class is designed for those who have backpacked before and are ready for the ultimate canyon hike -- North Rim to South Rim. Starting in the North Rim's aspen, fir, and spruce forest, we will descend into the depths of the canyon where we will explore some of the most geologically significant areas of the canyon, with views and access to points that are exceptional illustrations of varied geologic principles and processes.

We will have an opportunity to explore everything: from the very ancient inner-canyon basement rocks to recent sands and silts deposited by the Colorado River and her tributaries. This route also affords views of some rock layers that are visible in only a very few places in the canyon. Along the way, we'll explore plants, wildlife, and the human history of this amazing place.

DAY 1 – ORIENTATION AND SHUTTLE TO THE NORTH RIM

We meet at the [Community Building](#) at 8:00 a.m. (MST) sharp on the South Rim. This orientation is devoted to introductions, an equipment check, trip overview, and orientation.

After orientation we will shuttle to the North Rim to Camp for the evening at North Rim Campground.

Note: Please bring all your gear with you to the orientation.

DAY 2 – NORTH RIM TO COTTONWOOD

We head the short distance to the North Kaibab Trailhead and begin our 7-mile hike to Cottonwood Campground. We will hike slowly, stopping occasionally to discuss the rock layers through which we are passing. We will focus on the top four or five strata of Paleozoic rocks, which range in age from about 270 million to 350 million years old. You will learn how to identify and interpret sedimentary strata based on the

structures and fossils found within the rocks. We will keep our eyes and ears open for birds and wildflowers along the way. Plenty of snack breaks until we have lunch at Manzanita and a soak in the creek! Then on to Cottonwood for camp.

Cottonwood Campground is a breezy oasis along Bright Angel Creek on the canyon floor. As with the remaining campgrounds we will stay at during our journey, we will have creek access, fresh drinking water, picnic tables and toilets nearby.

DAY 3 – COTTONWOOD TO PHANTOM RANCH

Seven more (lightly downhill) miles take us down to the Colorado River and Bright Angel Campground, our camp for the night. After setting up camp, we will visit historic Phantom Ranch, which is the destination for overnight mule riders from the South Rim. Be sure to bring money (cash or card) if you wish to purchase cold drinks (can't miss out on the famous lemonade!) or souvenirs at Phantom Ranch. There are prehistoric pueblo dwellings near the river to explore as well.

DAY 4 – LAYOVER AT PHANTOM RANCH

Today will be a layover day which will allow our muscles to recover along with further exploration of Phantom Ranch, the river, and other hidden gems.

Options abound:

- Walk the River Trail between the Black and Silver Bridges
- Head 1-2 miles up the Clear Creek Trail to overlooks of the river and ranch
- Explore Phantom Creek and frolic in a waterfall
- Sit on Boat Beach with some lemonade and soak up the essence of the canyon
- The possibilities are endless!

DAY 5 – PHANTOM RANCH TO HAVASUPAI GARDENS

www.grandcanyon.org, or by calling 800-858-2808. GCC members receive a 15% discount.

We cross the Colorado River and ascend 1500 feet in 4.5 miles to our final campsite on the trip, Havasupai Gardens. This lushly vegetated stopover is roughly half way out of the canyon along the Bright Angel Trail . Our final sunset below the rim is spent near Plateau Point, a cliff overlooking the billion-year-old Vishnu Schist and much younger Colorado River. It is a fantastic spot for a final geology talk and wrap up our canyon experience.

DAY 6 – HAVASUPAI GARDENS TO THE RIM

Getting an early start, we hike out to the rim. The distance is 4.5 miles with an elevation gain of about 3,200 feet. We should be out of the canyon by lunchtime or shortly thereafter.

RECOMMENDED READING

Beus, Stanley S. and Michael Morales. Grand Canyon Geology.

Billingsley, George, et al. Quest for the Pillar of Gold: The Mines and Miners of the Grand Canyon.

Price, Greer. An Introduction to Grand Canyon Geology.

Ranney, Wayne. Carving Grand Canyon

Ron Blakey and Wayne Ranney. Ancient Landscapes of the Colorado Plateau

Sadler, Christa. Life in Stone.

Whitney, Stephen R. A Field Guide to the Grand Canyon

Most of these books and other interpretive aids can be purchased at Grand Canyon Conservancy bookstores on the north and south rims, online at