

November 25 - 29, 2010

The **Grand Canyon**. Just the name evokes wide-eyed vistas, red sunsets, and - for backpackers - both awe-inspiring memories and groans of anguish at remembrances of those hikes back up to the rim. Please join me for this four-day, three-night Thanksgiving trip into the Grand Canyon.

The Plan



We'll start relatively early on Thursday, making the 350-mile-drive to the Grand Canyon. We'll either stay overnight at a hotel on the rim - perhaps Maswik Lodge - or camp near the trailhead. Either way, we'll start our hike down into the canyon on Friday morning. I have my reservation for a room at [Maswik Lodge South](#). There are still rooms available there. Make your reservations soon!

As we start down the Hermit Trail, we'll pass the Waldron and Dripping Springs Trails then continue past Santa Maria Spring onto the flat section of the Hermit Trail. We'll cruise past the springs and eventually drop down a few hundred feet, level out for another mile or so past Breezy Point, then

cascade down the Cathedral Stairs and the west side of Cope Butte as we make our way to the Tonto Plateau and Hermit Creek Camp. The first day's hike covers about 7.8 miles and loses over 3,600 feet of elevation along the way.

On Saturday, we'll pack up our camp and head east across the Tonto Plateau. We'll pass Monument Creek - named for an immense pillar of sandstone rising more than a hundred feet above the creek bed - then pass Cedar Spring and The Alligator, and make our way to Salt Creek for the night. We'd better hope for relatively cool temperatures while we're there. The name of the section of canyon just above Salt Creek is The Inferno! We'll have to be sure to check at the permit office *before we head into the canyon* about the availability of water at Salt Creek. The area can be dry, but there is often water available.

After our night at Salt Creek - which is the halfway point between Hermit Camp and Indian Garden - we have just about six miles to hike for the entire next day. We can certainly take our time. As we hike eastward, we pass around Horn Creek, with its signs warning of radiation hazard. There's an old

uranium mine in the area, and the water has been contaminated. From Horn Creek, it's a short, flat hike to Indian Garden, where we'll spend our last night in the canyon.

We'll have to fight our way through the crowds of day hikers at Indian Garden, but we may want to get there before noon to secure our choice of campsites. There are quite a number of sites available, but they'll most likely all be full. It's better to have a choice than to be left with whatever no one else wanted! We may walk out to Plateau Point to have dinner out on the rocks.

Our last hike in the canyon will be the toughest. From Indian Garden, the Bright Angel Trail leads straight up the south wall of the canyon. Four-and-a-half miles of climbing 3,000 feet will deposit us on the rim. Once we all make it to the rim, we will gather together for lunch, then head out for the long drive back to Tucson.

This trip is planned for a limited number of only four people.

You'll need food for three dinners, three breakfasts, and three lunches. We'll definitely stop for food on the way there and on the return trip.

Water and Weather Rim Plateau

There will be plenty of water at both Hermit Camp and Indian Garden. *We'll have to inquire at the permit station about the availability of water at Salt Creek.*

The weather on the Tonto Plateau should be fine, as it's warmer there than on the rim. High temperatures should be in the mid-60s, with lows in the mid-40s. Temperatures on the rim will be about ten degrees *cooler*. There will be a slight chance of ice or snow near the rim. *Instep crampons or YakTrax may be required.* That, of course, will depend on the weather in the few days or weeks prior to our trip.

The Hike

day	miles	elev gain	destination
Friday	0.0 / 0.0	0 ft / 0 ft	Hermit Trail Trailhead
Friday	2.5 / 2.5	-1850 ft / 0 ft	Santa Maria Spring
Friday	5.2 / 7.7	-2000 ft / 0 ft	Hermit Camp
Saturday	3.3 / 11.0	400 ft / 400 ft	Monument Creek
Saturday	3.3 / 14.3	400 ft / 800 ft	Salt Creek
Sunday	3.5 / 17.8	200 ft / 1000 ft	Horn Creek
Sunday	2.5 / 20.3	200 ft / 1200 ft	Indian Garden
Sunday	3.0 / 23.3	200 ft / 1400 ft	Plateau Point RT
Monday	1.5 / 24.8	900 ft / 2300 ft	3 Mile Resthouse
Monday	1.5 / 26.3	1000 ft / 3300 ft	1.5 Mile Resthouse
Monday	1.5 / 27.8	1100 ft / 4400 ft	South Rim at Bright Angel Trailhead