



The Grand Canyon: The History of America's Most Famous Natural Wonder

Charles River Editors

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"The wonders of the Grand Canyon cannot be adequately represented in symbols of speech, nor by speech itself. The resources of the graphic art are taxed beyond their powers in attempting to portray its features. Language and illustration combined must fail.... You cannot see the Grand Canyon in one view, as if it were a changeless spectacle from which a curtain might be lifted, but to see it, you have to toil from month to month through its labyrinths." (John Wesley Powell Even)

For those who have never seen it, the Grand Canyon is perhaps the most appreciated and remarkable feature of the American landscape. Indeed, the Grand Canyon has been amazing Americans since explorers first started venturing into the area in the mid-19th century. On one expedition, May Humphreys Stacey wrote in his journal of, "[A] wonderful canyon 4,000 feet deep. Everyone (in the party) admitted that he never before saw anything to match or equal this astonishing natural curiosity."

Cut through by the Colorado River over the course of millions of years, the Grand Canyon is a popular destination spot that attracts millions of tourists annually, and what they come to see can be found nowhere else on the planet. Whether they ride donkeys across steep ledges or visit old Pueblo settlements in the area, which the natives themselves considered a holy site, awe-inspiring spectacles abound. As Jack Schmitt put it, "It's like trying to describe what you feel when you're standing on the rim of the Grand Canyon or remembering your first love or the birth of your child. You have to be there to really know what it's like." Of course, while most people marvel at its beauty, the Grand Canyon is an invaluable scientific boon for researchers.

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