



Grandview Trail and Horseshoe Mesa

Impressions of the dazzling topography of Grand Canyon have changed and shifted since that day in the summer of 1540 when Garcia Lopez de Cardenas gazed out from the South Rim. The conquistador saw a worthless desert wasteland, nothing more than a barrier to political expansion. At the opposite extreme, the modern view tends toward the romantic, reveling in what we today perceive as the remarkable spirituality of the gorge. Products of the age in which they lived, American pioneers arriving in the 1890s were more practical and utilitarian: they assumed with so much exposed bedrock inevitably there had to be mineral riches waiting to be claimed by those willing to go below and look. Would-be miners fanned out across the inner canyon, probing everywhere, and at a place called Horseshoe Mesa found what they sought. Rich copper deposits initially averaging 30% pure promised wealth, but only if transported from the depths. Optimism reigned supreme, a route was scratched out, and in February 1893 an endless succession of mule trains began moving raw ore to the rim along a rough canyon track originally known as the Berry Trail, more recently as the Grandview Trail. More than any other canyon trail, the Grandview is steeped in the legacy of the mining days at Grand Canyon. Numerous small artifacts associated with these halcyon days are scattered across the top of Horseshoe Mesa, providing a link across the years. Hikers can inspect the physical remains of this bygone era while enjoying canyon scenery at its finest.

Locations/Elevations

Grandview trailhead (7400 ft / 2256 m) to Horseshoe Mesa, BF5 (4900 ft / 1494 m):
Horseshoe Mesa to Cottonwood Creek, BG9 (3900 ft / 1189 m):
Horseshoe Mesa to Page Spring (4400 ft / 1341 m):
Horseshoe Mesa to Hance Creek, BE9 (3700 ft / 1146 m):
Horseshoe Mesa to Hance Rapids, BD9 (2608 ft / 795 m):

Mileages

3 mi (5 km)
1.5 mi (2.4 km)
0.8 mi (1.2 km)
3.5 mi (5.6 km)
9.9 mi (15.9 km)

Maps

7.5 Minute Cape Royal and Grandview Point Quads (USGS)
Sky Terrain Trails Map, Grand Canyon (Grand Canyon Association)
Trails Illustrated Map, Grand Canyon National Park (National Geographic)

Water Sources

Hance Creek and Page Spring (aka Miners Spring) are permanent, year-round water sources. The southernmost spring in Cottonwood Creek is reliable during cooler seasons but occasionally runs dry during hot weather. O'Neill Spring and the northern spring in Cottonwood are undependable at best. There is no water available between the rim and Horseshoe Mesa, nor between Hance Creek and Hance Rapids.

Campsites

Backpackers camping on Horseshoe Mesa (BF5) must camp in the designated campsites. Three small group sites are located east of the standing masonry structure. The large group site is further north, east of the little butte that caps Horseshoe Mesa. Toilet facilities are located at both areas. Camping is not allowed in or near the historic mines or structures. Camping in the Cottonwood (BG9) and Hance Creek (BE9) Use Areas is "at-large". All hikers should bring animal proof food containers; mice and ravens are especially adept at stealing food and opening packs and bags in this area.

Trailhead Access

The Grandview Trail leaves the rim at Grandview Point, located about 12 miles east of Grand Canyon Village via the Desert View Drive. Please use the upper parking lot for overnight parking.

Trail Description

The original Grandview Trail was created to connect the rim with the copper mines on Horseshoe Mesa. The well built trail eventually provided access to more tourists than miners, as the Grandview trail provided one of the best access routes into the canyon for its time. The undamaged segments of the

pioneer trail in the upper half of the canyon testify to the engineering prowess of the builders as they devised solution after creative solution to the problems posed by the landscape.

Start off the rim from the established Grandview Point overlook. The Kaibab/Toroweap section traverses steep ground and the old trail is eroded so attention to the problems at hand is essential. Vertical steps were surmounted by construction of log "cribs" that were chained or pinned to the cliff face to provide a foundation for the trail where nature provided none. The exposure here impresses some hikers as hazardous. Unfortunately, several of the historic cribs were swept away by landslides during the winter of 2005. Trail crews restored the trail, but not the historical context of the old logs. A series of sloping ledges at the top of the Coconino cliff demands caution especially when icy or wet. Be careful throughout the Kaibab and Toroweap - a fall here could have catastrophic consequences.

Original "cobblestone riprap" trail construction shows throughout most of the Coconino. Large slabs of sandstone placed edgewise provided a durable (albeit labor intensive) walking surface. The trail comes to the top of a dramatic east-facing gully at Coconino/Hermit contact (known locally as Coconino Saddle) that offers tantalizing views into the upper valley of Hance Creek. Steep cobblestone switchbacks below Coconino Saddle dispense with most of the Supai Formation before the walking moderates and the trail begins a gradually descending traverse across the slope to Horseshoe Mesa.

Horseshoe Mesa offers a myriad of attractions. The campsites are located east of the historic masonry structure. Remnants of mining operations, including rusty cans, nails, tools and structures are protected as archeological resources. Please leave these objects as you found them, where you found them. Backpackers headed deeper into the canyon can choose between three trails that link the rim of Horseshoe Mesa and the Tonto Trail. The northernmost trail that descends the east side of the western arm of the "horseshoe" is the most civilized of these options. Most of the original switchbacks have survived so this route is relatively straightforward, intersecting the Tonto Trail north of Horseshoe Mesa. Hikers can continue along the Tonto about 1.5 miles west to Cottonwood Creek or about 2.2 miles east to Hance Creek. The trail down the west side of the mesa is more demanding, severely washed out in the Tonto Group above the bed of Cottonwood Creek. The path off the east side to Page Spring and Hance Creek is probably the most difficult and exposed. Recent trail work has rendered the hardest place a bit easier, but the potential for a nasty fall exists throughout the Redwall descent. Watch for the spur trail to Page (aka Miners) Spring near the bottom of the Redwall.

Modern backpackers use the Tonto Trail to connect the Grandview Trail with points beyond. An established trail follows the bed of Cottonwood Creek to the top of the Tapeats Formation where the Tonto heads west toward the South Kaibab Trail. Hikers walking east from Hance Creek can follow the Tonto Trail toward Mineral Canyon. The Tonto Platform starts breaking down near the west rim of Mineral Canyon causing the trail to drop below the Tapeats Sandstone to descend Supergroup slopes to the bed of Mineral Canyon. Exiting at the mouth of Mineral Canyon on the east side is a bit tricky. The trail splits as it rounds the point before starting down the slope to Hance Rapids. The upper trail is straightforward, but the lower option requires walkers to bend low and traverse a narrow and exposed ledge. There are a couple of ways across the talus to the shoreline at Hance Rapids and the foot of the New Hance Trail.

Important Notes

THE GRANDVIEW TRAIL IS DANGEROUS IN WINTER. HARD ICE OFTEN SHEATHES POTENTIALLY HAZARDOUS PASSAGES MAKING SOME SORT OF TRACTION DEVICE (I.E. INSTEP CRAMPONS) MANDATORY.

Use extra caution around mines. The rim of the open pits is often unstable. Rotting support timbers in the tunnels pose an obvious hazard. The many artifacts scattered about are protected by federal law. Enjoy what you find but leave it as found.

With the exception of "Cave of the Domes", permits are required to enter caves in Grand Canyon National Park due to the extremely sensitive nature of cultural and natural resources inside. Contact the Backcountry Information Center for further information.