

Grand Canyon National Park's Ranger Audio Tour Stop # 3 **Trail View Overlook**

Welcome to Trail View Overlook.

You are now looking down at the Bright Angel Trail, the principle route used for centuries to enter and exit the Grand Canyon. The trail follows a natural path created by the Bright Angel Fault. This earthquake causing fault provided sufficient breaks in the major formations in the canyon to allow Native Americans to gain relatively easy access to Indian Garden and the Colorado River. With the arrival of miners in the late 19th century, this route was developed to allow for mule travel up and down the corridor.

Pioneer miner Ralph Cameron gained rights to the route and established the Cameron Toll Road. For the cost of \$1, visitors to the canyon could pass down to the trail for visits below the rim. Although a popular destination for tourists, the trail was considerably steeper than the one you see before you today.

With the arrival of the National Park Service, efforts were made to purchase the toll route and allow easier access into the canyon. To bypass this route, the Park Service decided to create another route into the canyon. The South Kaibab Trail, located five miles to the east, was built in 1924 and is still in use today. With a free route to the bottom, business for the toll road quickly dried up and Cameron sold his rights to the trail.

Let your eyes follow down the trail into the canyon. The switchbacks before you allow the Bright Angel Trail to pass through numerous geological formations. Each one has a different character. The limestone and sandstone layers tend to erode away in large chunks, making for sheer cliff walls. The redder mudstone or shale layers erode away like mud, creating much more gradual slopes.

For hikers and riders going down the Bright Angel Trail, they will experience a gradual change in weather and climate. By the time they get to the bottom, the canyon will be about 20 to 25 degrees Fahrenheit warmer than it is on the rim. The plant and animal life will also have changed considerably. As it gets dryer in the canyon, you will leave behind the ponderosa and pinyon pines you see at the top. These will be replaced by scrub oaks, service berry and a host of other bushes. As they make it down to Indian Garden, a thin ribbon of willows and cottonwoods thrive along the banks of the spring, providing much needed summertime shade. A trip all the way to the bottom recreates the landscape of northern Mexico – cacti, ocotillos, and cat's claw acacia become the dominant desert plant species. Summertime high temperatures down at Phantom Ranch usually stay above 100 degrees throughout the summer months, with an average rainfall of about 9 inches. At the top of the canyon, temperatures seldom go above 80 degrees, with annual precipitation reaches nearly 16 inches.

Thank you for your patience and enjoy your visit to Grand Canyon National Park.