



# Foundation Document Overview

## Grand Canyon National Park

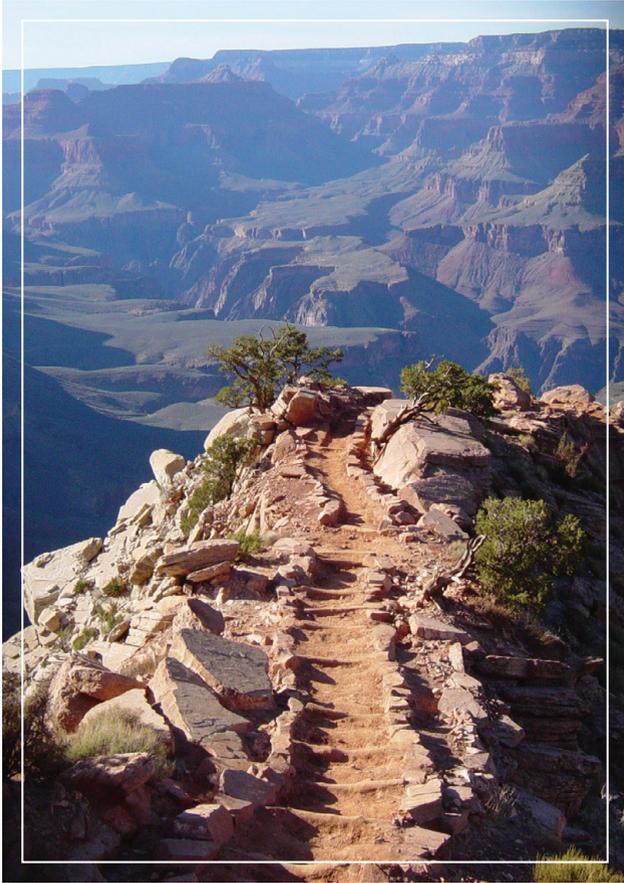
Arizona



### Contact Information

For more information about the *Grand Canyon National Park Foundation Document*, contact: [grca\\_superintendent@nps.gov](mailto:grca_superintendent@nps.gov) or (928) 638-7888 or write to: Superintendent, Grand Canyon National Park, PO Box 129, Grand Canyon, AZ 86023

## Purpose



*GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK preserves and protects the natural and cultural resources and ecological and physical processes of the Grand Canyon along with its scenic, aesthetic, and scientific values for the benefit and enjoyment of the public.*



## Significance

Significance statements express why Grand Canyon National Park resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- Grand Canyon, with its immense size, dramatic color, and extensive geologic record exposures, is one of the planet's most iconic landscapes.
- Grand Canyon National Park includes 277 miles of the Colorado River, which flows through and helped create the Grand Canyon. The Colorado River and its tributaries have shaped the complex natural and cultural histories of the park and surrounding region.
- More than 1.1 million acres, or 94%, of Grand Canyon National Park is managed as wilderness and, when combined with contiguous public lands, represents one of the largest undeveloped areas in the United States.
- The park's dramatic topography and range in elevations provide diverse habitats for a vast array of life, including rare, endangered, and endemic species.
- The human–Grand Canyon relationship has existed for at least 12,000 years, and the park contains thousands of cultural resources that reflect the long-term human use and occupation of the area.
- Eleven federally recognized tribes maintain strong historical, cultural, and spiritual connections to the area in and around the park.



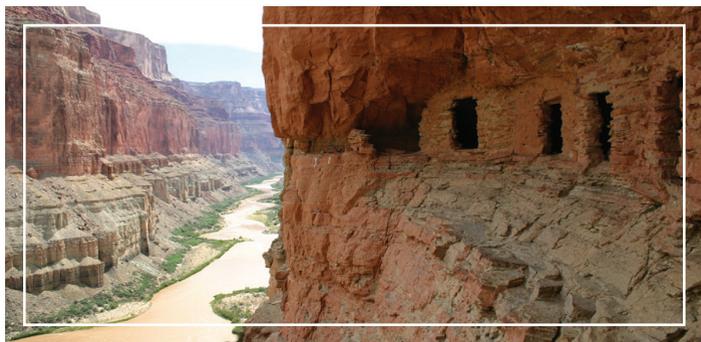
## Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Inspirational Scenic Landscapes**
- **Geologic Features and Processes**
- **Biodiversity and Natural Processes**
- **Diverse Recreational and Experiential Opportunities**
- **Water Resources**
- **Cultural Resources and Tribal Values**

Grand Canyon National Park contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **Research**
- **Partnerships**
- **Wilderness**



## Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- **Inspiration**
- **American Indian Connections**
- **Pioneer History and Park Development**
- **Water**
- **Geology**
- **Biology**
- **Stewardship and Preservation**



# Description

Located on the southern end of the Colorado Plateau in northern Arizona, Grand Canyon National Park is a globally significant resource containing scenic vistas known throughout the world. The 1,218,375-acre park is dominated by the spectacular Grand Canyon, a twisting 277-mile-long gorge with thousands of miles of side canyons that formed during six million years of geological activity and erosion by the Colorado River and its tributaries. Exposed geologic strata rising for more than a mile above the river represent one of the most complete geological records seen anywhere on Earth. The park's several major ecosystems range from the lower canyon's Sonoran Desert to the North Rim's coniferous forest and contribute to the park's outstanding biological diversity, which includes many rare, endangered, and endemic species. A significant concentration of cultural resources in the park reflects 12,000 years of human use and occupation. Eleven American Indian tribes attach substantial cultural significance to the canyon, the Colorado River, and various sites and resources within Grand Canyon's landscape. Of these tribes, the Navajo, Havasupai, and Hualapai reservations share a boundary with the park.

Grand Canyon is one of the earliest additions to the national park system. On January 11, 1908, President Theodore Roosevelt issued a proclamation setting aside 818,560 acres as Grand Canyon National Monument. In 1919, Congress established the area as Grand Canyon National Park, and, in 1927, the park was enlarged. In 1975, Congress passed the Grand Canyon National Park Enlargement Act, which added two adjacent national monuments, parts of Glen Canyon and Lake Mead National Recreational Areas, and other federal and state lands to the existing Grand Canyon National Park.

In recognition of its significant values, Grand Canyon National Park was designated as a World Heritage Site on October 26, 1979. As a World Heritage Site, the Grand Canyon is recognized as a place of universal value containing superlative natural and cultural features that should be preserved as part of the heritage of all the world's peoples.

Grand Canyon's spectacular scenery attracts visitors from all over the world. Visitation to the park has averaged around 4.5 million people per year and was 6 million people in 2016. Grand Canyon provides opportunities for a range of recreational experiences, from a paved-path walk to a strenuous hike, backcountry expedition, or technical river trip. The park also provides a broad spectrum of activities including rafting, hiking, sightseeing, and bicycling, to name a few. Boundless opportunities exist to experience solitude and truly dark night skies in the backcountry of Grand Canyon National Park. From the native peoples who have called these canyons home to early European explorers, and modern-day outdoor enthusiasts, philosophers, artists, poets, musicians, and photographers, the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River is spoken of as a sublime place of wonder, inspiration, and spiritual power.

