

**Grand Canyon National Park Backcountry Information Center
September 2009 Backcountry Conditions Audiocast 10m:29s
by Park Rangers Lon Ayers and Patrick Gamman**

Hello again from the Backcountry Office on the South Rim of the Grand Canyon. It's September 17, 2009. There are no special road or trail closures in effect that require specific discussion, but for those looking for a little more information I'll offer a few additional comments. Most importantly, we'll talk about the summer heat that continues to dominate the lower sections of the Canyon and the last few weeks of the summer monsoon. Then I'll go on to cover current conditions along the heavily used cross Canyon corridor trail system and situation in the more remote sections of the park.

Late summer brings a time of transition to the world of the inner Canyon as the days become shorter and hints of fall show themselves along the rim. Generalizations about potential weather conditions are unreliable at best—the reality is you might be confronted with a late blast of summer heat or, just as easily, a cold front could bring cloud cover and comfortable hiking or even rain and chilly weather. During such time it's doubly important for hikers to keep abreast of the current weather forecast as their start date approaches. The National Weather Service website, "weather.gov" offers daily 7 day forecasts for both rims and the Canyon floor so put it on your favorites list and check it often

On a sunny cloudless day highs on the Canyon floor are currently ranging into the upper 90s and there is still a chance for triple digits so full hot weather hiker precautions remain in order: start early, arrive at your destination by late morning, avoid hiking during the hot hours of the afternoon, and plenty of food and water. The summer monsoon is still hanging on with each day bringing a slight chance of thunderstorms, but as summer grades into fall the chance will decrease so, once again, keep up with the weather forecast and pick your gear accordingly.

During the volatile late summer season we encourage hikers to contact the Backcountry Office to check on current trail and weather conditions prior to starting down Canyon trails.

Next we'd like to bring everyone up to date on the current situation out there below the rim in the ultimate world of Grand Canyon backcountry. I'll take the commonly used cross Canyon corridor trail system first, then we'll turn our attention to the more remote sections of the Canyon.

All three corridor trails, that is the Bright Angel and the South and North Kaibab trails, are open and in reasonable condition, but, as always, caution is certainly indicated. Steep rocky descents and big step downs at the water bars mean constant attention to your footing is required. If you want to admire the view, stop walking. Trying to walk and look at the same time is a sure way to a nasty fall. Trekking poles increase security significantly. Purified drinking water is currently available at the following locations along the cross Canyon corridor: The 1.5 Mile and 3 Mile resthouses and at Indian Garden campground along the Bright Angel trail, at Bright Angel campground on the Canyon floor, and at Cottonwood campground, Roaring Springs picnic area and Supai Tunnel on the North Kaibab Trail. Water is available at Bright Angel campground and Indian Garden campground year round, the seasonal sources will be shut down for the winter sometime around the middle of October,

the actual date being determined by the onset of freezing temperatures. The water pipeline is subject to breaks that might interrupt the supply for a few hours or a few days so hikers should make a last minute check on the current situation before starting. The South Kaibab trail is, as always, bone dry-no water of any kind along the South Kaibab. Even with the availability of piped in drinking water corridor hikers still need to carry extra water and during hot weather we recommend one gallon per person per day. This should be adequate to get you between the water sources and allow a little extra against the unforeseen. Hikers are encouraged to carry some form of water purification as a back up system against the possibility of water pipeline problems or in case the natural water from the creek between Cottonwood and Bright Angel campgrounds or below Indian Garden is needed to supplement the supply in your pack. On a different note, hikers camping at Indian Garden, Bright Angel or Cottonwood campgrounds should be sure to use the provided food storage boxes. Each campsite will have a couple of these boxes and it's essential that campers use them. Nylon poses no barrier at all to the local animal population so it's use the boxes or incur damage to your gear and the loss of your food.

The South Kaibab Trail is currently closed to stock use to allow much needed trail maintenance work. All horse and mule traffic in and out of the Canyon is being routed along the Bright Angel Trail so hikers using the Bright Angel should be prepared to yield the right of way mule operations are encountered.

I'll shift your attention now to the more remote part of the Canyon.

As of this date all wilderness trails are open and passable. Backcountry roads to remote trailheads on both Canyon rims are currently passable for competent backcountry vehicle. These conditions could easily change for the worst if we receive significant precipitation so feel free to contact the North Kaibab Ranger District of the Kaibab National Forest at 928 643 7395 or the Backcountry Office for current conditions.

One new development: The Nankoweap Trail has, once again, been damaged by significant rockfall in the Supai traverse west of Marion Point. The affected area is passable but hikers will need to exercise extra caution when crossing a jumble of rocks that has covered the original trail for a short distance.

Next, we'll say a few words about Water Availability At Springs Outside the Corridor Area..

Water flows permanently in Boucher Creek, Hermit Creek, Monument Creek, Pipe Creek, Grapevine Creek, Hance Creek and Clear Creek. Other seasonal sources such as Lone Tree Canyon, Cottonwood Creek, or the drainages between the South Bass and Boucher trails have not yet started to flow and remain completely unreliable, probably until some time late this fall. Anyone expecting to take water from such sources should make every effort to obtain recent confirmation of availability before starting the hike.

And finally today I'll mention a couple of other factors that might influence your visit to the Grand Canyon.

The Havasupai Reservation and the remarkable waterfalls has reopened to tourist visitation. No permit is required, but hikers will need to contact the Tribal Offices for reservations. Call 928 448 2121 or visit www.havasupai-nsn.gov/ .

The Hermit Road and it's spectacular viewpoints are accessible by shuttle bus only. The Hermit Shuttle operates throughout the day and it's free-you can see the Guide Newspaper or the park website for the current schedule. Hikers holding valid overnight camping permits involving the Hermit or Boucher trails can obtain a combination to the access gate from the Backcountry Office which will allow private vehicle access the Hermit Trailhead.

Hikers using the South Kaibab Trail can access the trailhead by two different shuttle systems. The most efficient way is to use the Hiker Express bus. The Hiker Express departs the Bright Angel Lodge at 5, 6, and 7 AM . The Hiker Express picks up passengers at the Backcountry Office about 5 minutes after leaving the Bright Angel Lodge before going on the South Kaibab Trailhead. Hikers can also get to the South Kaibab trailhead via the regularly scheduled Kaibab Trail shuttle that departs the Canyonview Information Center every 15 minutes throughout the day.

If you want to hit the trail before the shuttle routes began service you can arrange taxi transportation 24-7. Call 928 638 2631.

We normally update this message only as significant changes occur. If you need more immediate information the best source is the park website: www.nps.gov/grca. Look for the "Backcountry Updates and Closures" section in the Backcountry Hiking section marked by a red exclamation point. You can phone the Backcountry Office directly at 928 638 7875, Mon-Fri, 1-5pm local time, but be forewarned: you may have to try more than once to get through. Or contact by email at grca_bic@nps.gov . A response to emails may require a few days.

And, as always, the Backcountry Office staffs extends an open invitation to visit our office to chat about your Canyon hiking experience when you arrive.