



Insider's Look at Grand Canyon

Webisode #37 Youth Camps at Grand Canyon - Transcript

Ranger Patrick Gamman: On this Webisode of Insider's Look at Grand Canyon, my guest is Megan Kohli, the Camp Coordinator here at Grand Canyon for the education division. Megan, welcome to the show.

Ranger Megan Kohli: Thanks! It's good to be here.

Patrick: So, I thought the folks out there in webland would like to know about the camps that we offer. First of all, why did you decide to offer a camp and when did they get started?

Megan: Well, yeah, the camp programs are really new. We've been doing them for two seasons now. We piloted a camp in 2008 and part of it was just that it's hard for youth to get out into the backcountry. Sometimes, it's a time thing. And sometimes at Grand Canyon it can be a financial thing. It can be kind of expensive to buy all the equipment to get out there or to pay for an outfitter to help you with those things. And so we started working with our non-profit partner Grand Canyon Youth to offer the first one. And, so, camp is an opportunity for kids to get out there and experience the backcountry and ride on the river rapids without spending an arm and a leg. And it's a great, unique opportunity for them.

Patrick: So you mentioned youth. I was wondering who, specifically, can come to camp and what will they do once they get there?

Megan: So we have a few different types of camps, but most of them are offered for high school students. And the camps are generally two weeks long. And, so, they'll go through a registration process with Grand Canyon Youth and the cool part about it is that anybody can do it. Any high school youth anywhere. So, last year we had kids from inner-city Chicago, inner-city New Orleans. We had people from Colorado and Utah. We had Canadians. We even had an Indonesian student take part in camp. So anybody can come. We've had campers with that have come with disabilities, even. People at all levels of capability and experience have come to take part in the camp. So it's a great program and Grand Canyon Youth offers scholarships for the high school programs, so that's an opportunity for kids to take advantage of really great offerings through them. And then you asked about what kids do when they get there and all kinds of stuff. Camps all include some sort of service component. And the service component is a really neat opportunity for the kids to sort of see behind the scenes the Park Service. So, you walk into a park and you might see the visitor center, you might peak over the edge of Grand Canyon and take a short little hike. But when they do the service projects, they really get hands-on with the resource and understand what's involved in preserving Grand Canyon. So, the campers in the past have worked with planting projects or getting rid of invasive species. We've done sound recordings and collected sound data to record the spaces where you can find natural quiet in the park, or where you're going to see lots of interference by helicopters and things like that. Kids have worked on construction projects. So, building fences to keep non-native wildlife out of delicate plant areas or rehabilitating historic ranger cabins is one of our projects that is still underway. Kids have worked on archaeology projects and things like that. So there's a huge array of service projects that the kids do when they're part of the camps. And then the other part is all kinds of fun and exciting camp stuff. So the kids are out hiking and they're seeing a lot of trails that most visitors don't get to see because they're starting in unusual and unique places in the Canyon. So they're out in the backcountry, they're trying new trails. A lot of the camps, they're going to get a chance to do river rafting. Everybody is part of the team when they're at the camp, so the kids have cook crews they're part of. So they're learning how to use all the cooking equipment that you use when you're camping. And they really develop a sense of team when they're out there because they've got the same three or four kids they're working with to do their daily things, whether it's cooking or getting the campsite set up and things like that. And then we do team-building activities and some ranger-led educational stuff and a lot of the kids will present their own educational things. So maybe before they get to camp they'll research the California condor, which is one of our endangered species, and teach the other kids a little something about a really unique animal that's living here in the park. So that's just a sampling of some of the things that are happening when the kids are at camp.

Patrick: That sounds, well kind of overwhelming! I mean, it sounds like there are plenty of things for these high schoolers to do. One thing I wanted to get out there to the folks is do these kids need to have an experience in backpacking and boating before, or is this something we teach them? How does that work?

Megan: That's a great question. And, in fact, lots of the kids have no experience with it. So that's part of the camp, it's just to get you out there and comfortable with some of these new activities. So you don't have to own your own gear. You don't have to have tried river rafting or backcountry hiking before. The rangers and volunteers and co-leaders are going to help out with all those things.

Patrick: Sounds amazing! So we got all this stuff to do, really unique experiences, and we're going to teach them a lot of things. But now here's the last, and I think most important, question: how can these kids enroll in this?

Megan: Very simple. They can go to our website or they can go to Grand Canyon Youth's website, which is gcyouth.org and they'll actually do the paper work through Grand Canyon Youth and they download a few forms off the website, send them in, and then Grand Canyon Youth will help them through the rest of the process.

Patrick: Sounds not too hard.

Megan: It's not bad at all!

Patrick: Hey, well, Megan, thanks for coming on the show and sharing this with our visitors and maybe we'll get some more high school kids out there with you this summer.

Megan: Great! That'll be good. We'll be looking forward to seeing all the new faces.

Patrick: We'll catch you folks next time on Insider's Look at Grand Canyon.