



Insider's Look at Grand Canyon

Webisode #50 – Phantom Creek Transcript

Ranger Emily Davis: Hi there and welcome to another webisode of Insider's Look at the Grand Canyon. I'm Ranger Emily and I'm down at the bottom of the Canyon alongside a wonderful little creek in what's called Phantom Canyon.

Every year, many hikers and mule riders have the opportunity to make the strenuous trek down the Canyon's trails to a place called Phantom Ranch. The Ranch is a rare and rustic respite at the Canyon floor. It is also visible for non-hikers from viewpoints along the South Rim, such as Yavapai Point and Mather Point. But the name 'Phantom Ranch' often makes visitors curious. How and why did it get its name? That's why I'm standing here beside Phantom Creek.

In 1922, the Santa Fe Railroad and the Fred Harvey Company announced the construction of a new hotel at the bottom of the Grand Canyon. Mary Colter, already known on the South Rim for working on the El Tovar Hotel, Hopi House, Lookout Studio, and Hermit's Rest, would design something called "Roosevelt Chalet," in honor of President Teddy Roosevelt. After construction, however, Colter decided to rename the place "Phantom Ranch" after this small creek and canyon I hiked to today. For Colter, the name evoked romantic images of ghouls and ghosts. According to a 1927 newspaper article, "Phantom Ranch is so called for the excellent reason that it has a phantom...The phantom appears at night on the face of the mountain. It is white as all phantoms are and has something of the shape of a veiled human figure."

Other tales tell of John Wesley Powell's ghost wandering the canyon at night or of a mystical mist that covers Phantom Canyon's mouth.

In humdrum reality, however, Phantom Canyon may have been named for the unromantic reason that early cartographers found the canyon so narrow that its convolutions would suddenly appear and disappear on their topographic maps- just like a phantom.

Whatever the story behind its naming, Phantom Creek is just a short hike from the developed Ranch area that is well worth the effort. Hikers should expect to get wet- but when it's 100 degrees or more down here, that's a good thing! Hikers will be rewarded with waterfalls, moss, ferns, and other riparian plants, frogs and toads and dragonflies. And perhaps a 'ghost' story of their own.

Thanks for watching and we'll see you next time on Insider's Look at the Grand Canyon.



