

Lee's Ferry to Diamond Creek – Non-commercial Colorado River Trip Orientation Video

Chapter One: Introduction

Grand Canyon National Park – Round House Productions- <http://www.rhpmedia.com/>

GC Ranger, Pam Cox:

"Hello, We hope the information in this video will answer some of the questions you may have about running the Colorado river through the Grand Canyon. As users of this river corridor, we all have a vested interest in preserving it for future Generations. On behalf of the Park Service I'd like to thank you for watching this video."

"If there is magic on this planet, it is contained in water."

-Loren Eiseley

Narration:

Ever since humans took their first peek over the edge of the Grand Canyon, it has influenced a tangible respect from anyone who's seen it. No matter what their background or motivation, none could discount the power of its sheer scale or the extremes in temperature, geology, and beauty that make up its personality. To this day, people come from all over the world just to see it first hand.

There's a certain group of visitors that seek a more intense journey into the core of the Canyon; to be part of the dance of water on the Colorado River as it drops almost 2000 feet on its way to Lake Mead. It's what the Hualapai tribe calls the Ha'yitad, or the "backbone" and running its length through Grand Canyon National Park is surely one of the prime outdoor experiences available anywhere in the world.

Many of those who run the river have little in common except their passion for these giant waves and the nomadic experience of floating down these corridors of time. Most people on private trips who venture down Grand Canyon are already accomplished whitewater boaters, even so, the challenges and adventures of the next days will prove to be at times both awe inspiring and challenging.

This section of the Colorado River is one of the top ten of the world's whitewater runs. It also provides for the rare experience of drifting through one of the 7 natural wonders of the world.

No doubt you've committed time and resources to support your intention to go on this trip. Now that your opportunity has arrived, we hope that the river users who have gone before you have traveled lightly, so that your experience can be as enjoyable as theirs was.

Not only is it your turn to run the canyon, but it's your turn to be a steward in a continuous team approach to protecting the cultural and natural resources of the canyon ecosystem.

The Grand Canyon is a world of extremes and contradictions. It's tough to truly understand the contrast between its geologic power and the fragile resources that exist here.

While this stretch of the Colorado River was known to indigenous tribes for more than 10,000 years, the two hundred and seventy seven mile section through what is now the Grand Canyon National Park hadn't been navigated until John Wesley Powell's 1869 expedition set out to document the run. Powell and his team wrote about their first-person accounts of the journey and helped focus national attention on the area.

What his group experienced was a wild river with no dams controlling its flow and no other river runners to compete with for camp spots.

Today's reality is a bit different. The river is dam controlled and the run has become so popular that today roughly 29,000 boaters float the Colorado River each year. Modern boaters face some of the same challenges that Powell's team did, but with the advantage of modern equipment and detailed maps. The **new** challenge is to minimize our collective impact.

While the Colorado River and Grand Canyon may affect you physically and mentally, **you** will affect the canyon just by your presence there.

And since there are so many of us now, we've learned a few tips over the years to both protect the resources and help make your trip successful. It's a delicate balancing act for the park service, and one that we continually improve upon.

Lees Ferry, located some 15 miles below Glen Canyon dam, marks the starting point for all trips through Grand Canyon. Before you arrive at Lees Ferry, be sure to check all your equipment, especially the required equipment as listed in your permit packet. The Lee's Ferry ranger will be checking your equipment before you start your trip, so make sure it's accessible. Remember, there are no river equipment suppliers or repair facilities near Lee's Ferry, so be sure your equipment is in working order before you leave home.

With the launching of some 150 to 200 people a day the launch ramp becomes a very busy and potentially dangerous place. Due to constantly arriving and departing vehicles, mountains of baggage, ropes, and equipment, extra caution needs to be exercised to make sure your trip doesn't end before it starts. We recommend that private trips arrive a day before their launch to rig and camp at the private river camp to get an early start on launch day.

Look for check-in instructions on the bulletin board on the downstream side of the ramp. From the mouth of the Paria River you will enter Grand Canyon National Park and the start of your journey.

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Chapter Two: Water Temperature and Flow Variations
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Until 1963 and the construction of Glen Canyon Dam, the Colorado *river's* summer water temperature was a warm 75 degrees and the river level fluctuated on a seasonal basis.

Water is now released from 200' feet below the top of the dam. This water is very cold, ranging from forty-five to sixty degrees and only warms 1 degree every 20 miles you travel down river. The water temperature is also dependant on Lake Powell's water level and time of year.

The extremely cold water is one of the prime reasons for Grand Canyon's life jacket regulation. Simply, if you are on your boat and it is not tied to the shore you will wear a properly fitted life jacket 100% of the time.

At 47 degrees even in flat water you have about 5 to 10 minutes of muscle activity to rescue yourself. In ten minutes your muscles stop working and your chances of rescue are very poor. While death is the ultimate penalty for not wearing a PFD, there are also significant fines for being caught not wearing them.

Some people will experience hypothermia after a long period in the cold water. These people must be warmed up. This can be done by stripping the person and putting them in a sleeping bag. Skin to skin contact greatly facilitates warming and the victim will need yours since they won't have much of their own.

Much like the ocean the Colorado River experiences tidal changes. These fluctuations are controlled by water releases from Glen Canyon Dam.

Since the water flows at about 5 miles per hour, releases from the dam will take varying times to reach different areas. A dam release will take 12 hours to reach the Little Colorado and about 18 hours to reach Phantom Ranch. Tables are available that will help you calculate when the river will rise and fall in specific areas. The fluctuations have certain side benefits for the ecosystem.

As the water rises then recedes it removes any human impacts below the high water mark. To have as little personal impact as possible on the environment use the low water areas for activities such as bathing, dish washing or eating a meal. Any impact above the high water mark will last a very long time.

The water levels will also effect your daily planning. At low water there will plenty of beach to conduct your activities in camp. But remember this is low water , when it rises later anything left in the low water zone will he washed away and headed for Lake Mead without you.

The water levels will also effect where and how you tether your boat at night. If you don't adjust the position of your boat periodically during the night you may find yourself high and dry when the water goes down, possibly sitting on a rock that was several feet underwater the day before.

Be sure to check with the Lee's Ferry ranger for predicted river flow patterns that may occur during your trip.

Chapter Three: Low Impact Camping

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After you beach the boats at the end of the day, camps along the river offer a chance to relax with friends and get a better understanding of the canyon.

As roughly 29,000 people camp in the inner canyon each year the impact on the camping beaches can be severe. There's nothing better than arriving on a pristine beach after a day on the river and nothing worse than finding that inconsiderate groups before you have left the beach covered in trash, which has attracted unwanted animals and insects, and the smell of human waste.

A few simple protocols will help preserve the beaches for the next person.

GC Ranger, Pam Cox

"Where you camp on any beach helps determine how long that beach will remain undamaged. Choose a site within the post dam era flood zone, where you find willows and Tamarisk. This area recovers faster than the area above where you will find Mesquite and other native plants. If the groups before you have done their job you'll find a pristine beach with no evidence of previous camping."

This beach is pristine because everyone's required to remove all organic waste including garbage, human waste and even ashes. This waste is to be carried out and disposed of outside of the Grand Canyon. There is no provision for trash pick up at either Phantom Ranch, Diamond Creek, or Lake Mead. Just remember to remove everything you bring with you.

Since not everyone cares as much as you about the canyon you'll occasionally find trash on the beach. If you have an extra garbage bag and room please carry it out.

Large pieces of trash are of course an obvious eyesore but even small pieces of micro trash can create a major impact if allowed to accumulate on the edges. Candy wrappers, napkins, paper towels and cigarette butts, all impact the look of a beach. It can also create a serious nuisance.

Normally red ants live in the bushes and eat vegetation but over time have been habituated to human food and have moved down onto the beaches. While the ants are a problem for you when cooking and eating, they also deliver a vicious bite that will hurt for days. You will find the cleaner the beach the fewer ants are attracted.

A tarp located under your kitchen, and dishwashing station will catch any food that might fall off the table. Simply removing the tarp when you break camp, putting large food chunks in the garbage then shaking what is left into the river. Less food equals fewer pests.

The glow and warmth of a campfire blazing then dying away as your group wanders off to sleep is a fond memory of most camping experiences.

Campfires are allowed in the canyon but only in a fire pan. By raising the fire pan off the beach with legs or cans you'll avoid scarring the beach, leaving it in good shape for the next group.

In the summer season, the collecting of any wood is prohibited. You may bring your own if you wish.

In the winter season driftwood may be burned but only driftwood. Dead and down wood in the bushes is off limits, this wood is left to rot naturally to provide nutrients for the soils.

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Chapter Four: Personal Hygiene
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A trip down the river lasts days for some, weeks for others but the last thing anyone wants is to get sick on the river or become very unpopular by spreading an illness.

One of the most effective and easiest ways of preventing an illness from ruining a trip is for all members of the group to wash their hands often.

Anytime you set up a table, wash your hands with soap and water.

Anytime you prepare a meal, wash your hands.

Anytime you eat a meal wash your hands.

After setup/breakdown or use of the toilet wash your hands.

You may have guessed by now it is really important to wash your hands.

You are conveniently located next to a giant hand washing system. Always have soap handy both in the kitchen and at the toilet facilities. Hand washing should be done with treated water. So if you wash your hands with untreated river water you should then use hand sanitizer afterwards.

The river water running next to camp will be useful for all sorts of activities.

One the most important of these will happen when you get the call of nature. Peeing in the river is essential for a healthy beach. The Grand Canyon desert ecosystem gets little rain and has limited amounts of organic material in the soil to process your urine. The river on the other hand does an excellent job of diluting and processing it. Plus the view is terrific.

At night, peeing in the river can be dangerous, so always wear a headlamp, and consider using a “pee-bucket”.

While the river will process the pee well, the wet sands in the tide area will not. A consequence of not “hitting the water” is an ugly green algae that grows on the beaches.

When going hiking plan ahead. Do you have to go before leaving camp and the river?

You should not pee in a creek or drainage. Since most of the hikes are in drainages, your opportunity to pee off river will be limited. If you didn't plan ahead you need to get 100 feet from the drainage which unfortunately may prove impossible in a narrow slot canyon.

If you have to defecate while away from the river and your toilet system you need to bury the waste at least six inches deep and at least one hundred feet from any water source or trail, and carry the used toilet paper back to your toilet.

Chapter Five: The Kitchen

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The kitchen will become the major hub of activity once you get off the river for the day. It can also be the most likely place for illness to be spread. You guessed it. Wash your hands before doing anything in the kitchen.

Try to set up in the low tide zone. This will wash away any spilled food. Use a tarp under your table in any area. Setting up in the low tide zone will also make straining dirty dish water into the river more convenient. Remember to use a screen to remove the large food chunks and only return water to the river.

One of the most important areas of the kitchen will be the dish washing station. We recommend a set up that has worked well in the past: The Four Bucket System.

The first bucket is a pre-wash or “slop bucket” with just cold water.

The middle two buckets need to be hot water. One is for washing, one for rinsing.

The fourth will be cold water, sterilized with a capful of bleach and the dishes will soak in the bleach water for several minutes. Air drying is the best final step as the dishes will stay in connect with the bleach longer. It's a good idea to put your dishes away at night to reduce mice and the effects of blowing sand.

As with most activities, remember to crush cans and scrub pots in or at the water's edge in the low tide zone.

Bathing

The dishes are washed and the trash has been sealed away, but a distinct odor still hangs over camp.

This odor is probably you and your companions.

The Colorado River offers a convenient bath tub, soap up in the low tide area and go into the river feet first, no diving. There are large hard rocks just under the surface. If you're like most people you'll make short work of it in the cool water.

When the river turns brown after a rain bathing in a clear side stream will look mighty tempting. But please don't. The rule is no soap in any side stream.

After bathing several times in the river, you may become a firm believer in the solar shower. The warm water will feel great. Just set it up so it drops into the river water so the soap doesn't end up in wet or dry sand in your camp.

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Chapter Six: Food and Hydration
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The Grand Canyon offers a variety of temperature extremes from the very cold river to extremely hot and dry days. Since you'll be traveling through a desert, the summer temperatures will be very hot. They're equal to Phoenix or Las Vegas. It can and often does get up around 120 degrees.

When you're hot you really don't feel like eating much, but food is just as important as water to keep you going. Simply munching on food throughout the day is one of the best things you can do.

Hydration on this trip is a primary goal every day. Good liquids like water, Gatorade and fruit juices will keep you hydrated. Everyone needs to drink at least a gallon of these every day. More if its really hot.

Other drinks like coffee, soda, and alcohol are diuretics and actually lead to dehydration. If you're going to consume diuretics, please do so in moderation.

Eating frequently and drinking good liquids every 15 to 30 minutes will keep you in good shape to enjoy the trip.

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Chapter Seven: Accidents

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One overall safety precaution each of us need to carry with us relates to our own egos. We need to consider our location when taking chances and realize that if we take personal risks, deep in the canyon, the outcome can affect everyone else in the group.

GC Ranger Pam Cox

"You know that running the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon has its risks. Some of those risks might surprise you. For instance: most injuries don't happen in thundering rapids like these. In fact 90% of all accidents happen off the river. For example: getting on or off the boats or hiking up one of the many side canyons. You need to be careful and plan ahead whenever you venture away from the river. We recommend hiking with a buddy or in a group. One of the leading contributors to injuries in the back country is hiking alone."

Statistically, given time...accidents do happen.

If for any reason you find yourself in an emergency situation you can't handle yourself the Park Service is here to lend a hand. But first you need to contact us. There are many different ways to do so. Hiking out is the least desirable method in that it subjects you to the rigors of the canyon.

If you are anywhere near Phantom Ranch, a ranger is usually on duty and there is a pay phone to contact 9-1-1.

All commercial river trips are required to carry satellite phones. So if you can find a commercial trip, or another private with a satellite phone, they might be able to help you with communications. SAT phones with fresh batteries are the best of all contact tools. Call the Park Service dispatch number that is in your permit packet.

However you communicate, what the Park Service needs to know is:

- Exact location of the incident including river mile and side of river.*
- Whether the patient is stable or critical.*
- If the problem is trauma or medical.*
- Whether the incident involves a: private river trip, commercial river trip, or a hiker.*

If the problem is serious it may require a helicopter evacuation. If this is the case there are certain things you'll need to do to keep yourself and the helicopter crew safe.

The orange panels you carry are used to mark a landing zone. First, wet the landing zone down with buckets of water, the more you wet the area, the less the sand blows. Place a landing marker on the beach so that the helicopter crew can find you. A safe landing area is 75 feet across. Before the pilot lands, remove the marker panels. Be sure to secure

anything that might blow away when the helicopter lands.. Keep your group together and at least 100 feet from the landing zone.

The pilot may or may not use your particular landing zone. That's up to the pilot's discretion.

When the helicopter lands, don't approach it. A crew member will come to you. They'll help you go through the next steps to get the situation in hand. In an emergency its always best to respond with aggressive self rescue first, but sometimes the circumstances become too great to deal with alone, and that's when we can try to assist.

Lists of rules won't really ensure a safe trip. Your good judgment will. Its one of the best tools you can bring along.

Chapter Eight: Wildlife

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You'll be traveling through what to most of you will be a remote and unfamiliar environment, but there are many inhabitants of the canyon that call it home.

For the most part the wildlife of the canyon are tolerant of your presence.

Two of the animals to be aware of are scorpions and rattlesnakes.

While these creatures are not particularly dangerous while left alone, they can deliver a vicious sting or bite if provoked.

Scorpions like dark, damp and cool environments. Clothes left on the beach or the underside of table tops are favorite resting places. Be sure to shake out clothing, sleeping bags and life jackets and look before you reach for anything.

Rattlesnakes are for the most part very docile and would rather avoid you. Snake bites usually occur when people try to pick up the snake.

Keep in mind that all wildlife in the canyon is protected by law. Even if the more prickly types may get your skin crawling, that doesn't mean you should harm them in any way. The only ones to make note of are Africanized bees. If you happen to see abnormally aggressive bee behavior, please report the location to the Park Service.

You'll become aware of the birds that inhabit the canyon. Sightings of Osprey, blue heron, and Peregrine Falcons may become daily occurrences.

If you are extremely lucky you may see one of the California Condor that were released near the Grand Canyon. These birds are endangered species and you should keep your distance even if they visit you in camp. Keep going downstream if you encounter them along a shoreline while on the river. These birds are easily habituated to humans and their food. This is one reason for their near extinction.

Two other birds, the Common Raven and the Boat-tailed Grackle will be constant visitors to your camp as they see humans as two legged vending machines. Any food left unattended on your boats as well as in camp will quickly vanish.

Chapter Nine: Location Restrictions

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Because of the fragile desert ecosystem of the inner canyon, minimum impact camping practices are a must. Around 800 people a day will be camping along the river on any given night during peak season. There's significant potential for damage to everyone's favorite camps.

But if we all work together, we can help preserve the camps for future visitors.

Humans have left their mark in the canyon, long before we started running the rapids. These pre-historic and historic resource areas are all a part of the canyon record, from ancestral Puebloans to the miners and explorers. Each site is a protected area and every thing from the smallest flake of stone, to pieces of pottery; even more recent historic artifacts are a significant part of the canyons history. All are protected by law and should be left as they're found.

Remember when you hike on river left, you may be entering the Navajo, Havasupai, or Hualapi Indian Reservations. This includes the Diamond Creek Takeout. If you are planning on visiting these areas, please apply for permits well in advance before entering reservation lands. Consult with the main park office for the specific boundaries of these reservations and any applicable fees.

While exploring areas off the river you'll discover a wealth of archeological sites. They're all fragile and serve as a connection to the Canyon's past as well as a valuable study resource.

Native Americans have been in the canyon for over ten thousand years. Because of the dry desert environment many of the artifacts they left are still intact throughout the canyon. Many are of significant religious importance to today's tribal people.

Archeological sites come in many varieties from walls and foundations to granaries to large areas dotted with ruins and roasting pits.

These sites have endured decades and sometimes centuries but with one misstep an area can be damaged or eliminated over time. Always stay on established trails and don't enter any of the sites.

Most of them are very delicate and can be degraded or destroyed very easily. Something as simple as leaning against a wall can cause it to collapse.

Grand Canyon covers over 1.2 million acres, most of this space is open for you to explore.

There are certain areas though where you will need to show caution or simply avoid.

Stanton's Cave is at river mile 30. You can hike to the cave opening but are restricted from entering the cave by a gate. This gate was constructed to preserve the archeological

site inside and allow a colony of bats to fly in and out of the cave. The artifacts that once were here were excavated by archeologists long ago.

Just down river and in view of Stanton's Cave is Vasey's Paradise. Vasey's is home to the Kanab Amber Snail that live in the vegetation. It's best to stay 5 feet from any plants for the protection of the snail and yourself; poison ivy abounds at this site. Due to the fragile nature of the remnants of Anasazi Bridge on the cliff face at river mile 42, this archaeological site is closed to all stopping or visitation.

Another area off limits to all stopping is the Sacred Salt Mine just below the confluence of the Little Colorado River. This is a religious site of great value to Hopi and other tribes of the Four Corners and out of respect we ask you not to stop here.

At River Mile 52 you will see the Nankoweap Granaries in a small alcove in the cliff face. Hiking up the stabilized trail is permitted but please stay on the ledge below the actual granaries.

The Furnace Flats area is located at river mile 71 and half. The site has undergone severe erosion, and is closed to any visitation. While the park tries to stabilize the area please don't stop there.

At river mile 72 is one of the largest archeological sites in the canyon, Unkar Delta is perched on a large shelf above Unkar Rapid. This area covers many acres and was inhabited some 1000 years ago. There are dozens of structures, foundations as well as pottery pieces and other artifacts.

Unkar Delta is the only exception to the rule, where you will be permitted to enter the structures so take some time to explore this unique area.

If you want to examine an artifact more closely you may pick it up but please return it to the exact spot where you picked it up. You'll notice collector's piles throughout the site where visitors have stacked artifacts for display. It's far more rewarding for you and those who will follow to make their own discoveries. Please don't pile artifacts on rocks or walls.

The canyon has been host to several eras of human occupation and activities. The late 1800's saw a flurry of mining activity. One of the richest minerals taken from the canyon was asbestos, because of the potential health hazard both Hance and Bass mines sites are closed to visitation.

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Chapter Ten: Day Use Areas

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In addition to outright closures there are certain heavily visited areas that are restricted to day use only.

The first five miles from Lee's Ferry to Navajo bridge are for day use, the first easy place for you to camp is at river mile 6.

John Wesley Powell describes in his journals a large red wall cavern big enough to fit 50,000 people. A closer estimate may be 5000. Its still quite big and a popular spot. You are welcome to have lunch at the cavern but you need to move downstream before camping.

Nankoweep is known for the granaries located on the cliff above the river at mile 52 and has three campsites.

The first area along the beach is not a camp and should be used for day use only.

Just below the rapid is the first camp.

If you plan to camp at Nankoweep it's a good idea to pull into camp #1 and scout the other campsites below to see if they're available. Once you commit to go down it is difficult to return the boats to the upstream camp.

At the confluence of the Little Colorado River the two beaches on river right are available for camping, but river left and the island at the mouth of the little Colorado are for day use only.

No fishing is allowed in the LCR. Fishing is also restricted in this section of the Colorado from 1/2 mile up and downstream of the confluence to protect the endangered Humpback Chub.

Boats are not allowed to enter or park in the Little Colorado river. Please check with the Lee's Ferry ranger for seasonal swimming restrictions at the LCR as well.

Planning camp sites ahead of time is vital especially around the Phantom Ranch area.

There is only one useable campsite between mile 77 and 81.

At mile 81 is Grapevine. This is a huge campsite with plenty of room for several trips. Be aware that you may have neighbors before spreading out too far. For that matter, be open to the possibility of sharing almost any camp on your trip with others. Most times its not necessary, especially if small groups use small camps and leave larger areas for larger groups. But as beach sizes change, we sometimes need to get along in tighter quarters, doubling up at a campsite is a last resort, but when it does happen in a pinch, try to make

the best of it. When passing other commercial or private trips during the day, be open to discussing camp plans with the trip leaders for the next part of the trip. The more we keep communication lines open, the better off everyone will be. An awareness of other's plans can alleviate congestion.

(Boaters meet on water)

“Where are you guys planning on camping tonight?”

“Oh, we’re headed down to Galloway or Stone area.”

“Sounds good. We’re looking at Owl Eyes and setting up for Deer Creek tomorrow, so that sounds like that will work.”

After several days on the river a little bit of civilization is sometimes welcome. Phantom Ranch will appear on river right, marked by the black bridge. Straight ahead is Boat Beach. You may tie up there and enjoy the conveniences of the ranch area.

However you are not allowed to camp in the ranch area. There are campsites in the Cremation Camp area on river left but these 2 campsites are only to be used by trips with passenger exchanges at Phantom Ranch.

Mile 91 will be the next campsite below Phantom Ranch.

In general, avoid camping in the Hance to Phantom corridor if you don’t have a passenger exchange.

There are many day use sites throughout the canyon. Each of the sites is unique in its scenery and activities. Shinumo Creek, Royal Arch Creek, Tapeats Creek, Deer Creek, Kanab Creek, Matkatamiba, and Havasu Canyon are all considered day use sites.

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Chapter Eleven: Conclusion and Credits
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Most trips end at Diamond Creek on the Hualapai Indian Reservation. Diamond creek can become very congested if several trips are de-rigging at the same time, so try to keep your equipment consolidated. The best time to arrive is after 9:30 A.M. You should plan your take out for early in the day as Diamond Creek and Diamond Creek Road are one in the same. Flash floods do occur, and the road may close for days.

Planning, rules, regulations, that's not primarily what you came here for, but they are important for your comfort and safety as well as for the preservation of this unique resource. Following these basic guidelines has helped us all minimize our collective footprint on the river corridor.

There's no practical need for people to travel the river through the Grand Canyon. You could drive a car to both ends. It's all about the journey. It's the intangible rewards of doing it, the personal challenge and excitement of it that brings people here and that's important to remember. No matter who you meet down here, we're all in it for similar reasons. This experience is powerful because it takes us outside the pattern of our daily lives and creates a feeling of renewal, discovery, and achievement. Its one of the key benefits of a National Park. Once you've run a boat through here you'll understand why people are held in its trance until they return again. Thanks for helping us keep that experience alive.

If you have any questions, you'll find many of the answers on the other sections of this DVD and on our website. Thanks for listening and enjoy your trip.