

Grand Canyon

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Grand Canyon National Park
Arizona



Cape Solitude

Locations/Elevations

Desert View (7438 ft / 2268 m) to Cape Solitude trailhead (6641 ft / 2250 m):

Cape Solitude trailhead (6641 ft / 2250 m) to Cape Solitude (6146 ft / 1874 m):

Mileages

2.7 mi (4.3 km)

14.2 mi (22.9 km)

Trailhead Access

Start at the Desert View Ranger Station and follow the east dirt road (E14). Walk or drive down the slope heading north and east toward Cedar Mountain. Driving requires a high-clearance, low-range equipped, 4-wheel drive vehicle. The rough going makes it almost as fast to walk as drive. About 3 miles brings one to the Cape Solitude trailhead west of Cedar Mountain. A sign denoting "No Motor Vehicles Beyond" marks the start of the hiking trail. An alternate route may be possible via Navajo lands; consult maps and contact the Navajo Nation for permission and permit.

Water Sources

No water is available anywhere along this route. Water sufficient for two or three days and 30 miles of rough desert hiking must be carried from Desert View. This hike is to be avoided during hot weather.

Campsites

Camping is "at-large" in use areas SA9 and SB9. There are many suitable camping areas.

Important Notes

With the construction of Glen Canyon Dam, the Little Colorado River has become the primary source of sediments for the main stem of the Colorado below the dam. These sands and silts are critical to the natural maintenance of beaches, sand bars, and backwater lagoons and the wildlife habitats revolving around these riverside features. In the same vein, the comparatively warm water of the Little Colorado River today provides refuge for native species of fish unable to prosper in the cold, post-dam Colorado.

Comanche Point, perched at the apex of the Palisades of the Desert, is another of those "very best" canyon viewpoints. It is possible to climb Comanche Point starting from the Cape Solitude route but there's no trail of any sort, so well-developed route-finding skills are essential.

The ruins of old Navajo hogans can be seen along the way to Cape Solitude. Please leave these archaeological sites as you find them.

Trail Description

It is 2.7 miles from the Desert View Ranger Station to the trailhead, where the path to Cape Solitude forks north off Cedar Mountain Road. Given a competent backcountry vehicle, one could drive to the trail. Still, the marvelously eroded condition of the switchbacks is enough to encourage most hikers to spare their machines and walk. The trail drops into Straight Canyon then crosses to the north side and generally wanders north across the expansive slope falling east from Palisades of the Desert.

About 5.7 miles north of the trailhead, the route hits the NPS boundary fence, passes through a gate, and comes to a fork in the old road. The right-hand option continues east on Navajo Nation Tribal lands. Go left and follow the old jeep road uphill to a second gate in the boundary fence where you will re-

enter the Park. Walk the former jeep track 6.7 miles across an immense expanse of the open country cut by shallow drainages to the point at Cape Solitude. The view is startlingly steep. The rim seems to almost overhang the confluence of the rivers leaving nothing but 4000' of clear canyon air between you and the world of the inner canyon.

General Information & History

Grand Canyon Rangers would agree one of the most frequent questions is: "What's the best canyon viewpoint?" Of course, beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and countless points along the rim might qualify for that honor. Still, any Grand Canyon aficionado will tell you the view from Cape Solitude is one of the very finest.

Remote and accessible only by foot, Cape Solitude overlooks the confluence of the main stem Colorado River with a noted tributary, the Little Colorado River (LCR). This joining of the waters at river mile 61.5 marks the formal inception of the Grand Canyon, one of those pivotal locations that define this special place. The Little Colorado drains the majority of northeastern Arizona and has the potential to produce sediment-laden floods of magnificent proportions. When the LCR is unstained by floods, the water in the lower Little Colorado River is the color of the sky - supernaturally blue.

The scale of the Little Colorado Gorge rivals the Grand Canyon at the confluence, two grand canyon's consolidating into one, out in the middle of nowhere. It's a challenging, dry walk to get there and back, but the late afternoon view at Cape Solitude will, perhaps, provide an answer to that most common of questions.

Maps

Cape Solitude and Desert View 7.5' Quads (USGS)
Sky Terrain Trails Map, Grand Canyon (Sky Terrain)
Trails Illustrated Map, Grand Canyon National Park (National Geographic)

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