



## Sunrise & Sunset

*At sunset the pageant closes amid splendors that seem more than earthly. ...the sun draws near the horizon, the great drama ... begins. The western sky is all aflame. The climax has now come. The blaze of sunlight ... so rich, so strong, so pure that it makes the heart ache and the throat tighten. ...the sun sinks.... But its glory mounts upward and diffuses itself in the sky above.*

Clarence Dutton, *Tertiary History of the Grand Canon District*, 1882

We are drawn to sunrise and sunset, the beginning and climax of each day. The sun illuminating from a lower angle highlights color, texture, and silhouettes. The warm yellows, golds, and reds contrast with the deep, dancing shadows, unlike the flat, blue lighting of midday.

### Where are the best views?

There is no one *best* place for watching sunrise or sunset, just good places and *better* places. Look for a viewpoint that juts into the canyon with views both east and west.



- While Hopi Point is unquestionably a desirable viewpoint for sunset, it attracts crowds of people and buses, especially in the summer.
- Yaki and Pima Points offer spectacular views of the canyon, are less congested, and may allow you to hear the sound of the Colorado River a mile below!
- Other points offering great east and west panoramas include Mohave, Navajo, and Desert View.
- Lipan Point, near Desert View, offers incredible views of the canyon with the San Francisco Peaks to the south, the distant Painted Desert, and extensive stretches of the river below.
- For a memorable sunrise, try Mather or Yaki Points.

### When should I plan to arrive?



Correct times for sunrise and sunset are listed in the current *The Guide* newspaper and posted at all park visitor facilities. Remember, most of Arizona including Grand Canyon National Park stays on Mountain Standard Time year 'round.

For sunrise arrive 30 minutes before the sun clears the horizon and stay an hour or longer after. Dress warmly; even summer dawns can be quite chilly.

Plan to arrive at your viewpoint as much as 90 minutes before sunset and stay at least 10 minutes after. After the sun has set and no longer illuminates the buttes and pinnacles in the canyon, don't rush off — the sky may light up red, pink or orange.

Better yet, stay around as the sky grows dark. Grand Canyon offers some of the blackest skies and brightest stars found anywhere.

### Which is best?

**Sunrise:** If the night has been calm and clear, sunrise may offer great clarity before breezes stir dust into the atmosphere. Colder morning temperatures and the difficulty of rising early frequently result in fewer people at canyon viewpoints.

**Sunset:** During the summer viewpoints can be crowded. Late summer may bring dramatic thunderstorms, but too many clouds could mean no sunlight in the canyon. Just the right amount of dust or smoke can make a sunset more colorful.

### What can I expect?

Predicting the quality of a sunset at Grand Canyon is as uncertain as predicting the weather. Air quality, clouds, time of the day, and season will all contribute to your view. Early geologist Clarence Dutton observed that at sunset "the colossal buttes expand in every dimension." How do you visualize the changes of daybreak or sunset?

Changes in the position of the sun and variations in the sky transform colors, shadows, and shapes in the canyon. Storm clouds may break to reveal a sunlight

flooded sky or perhaps a rainbow. John Wesley Powell described clouds playing in the canyon as if they were "the children of the heavens."

Thunderstorms are common in July, August, and early September. An exposed, rocky point is not where you want to be during a thunderstorm. A gap of less than 30 seconds between the flash of lightning and the rumble of thunder indicates that it is time to retreat to shelter. Stay away from solitary or tall trees.

## How do I get to the viewpoints?

The key to getting around the Grand Canyon Village area is to use the extensive shuttle bus system. It's free, convenient, and the drivers never get lost! Shuttle buses run from approximately one hour before sunrise to one hour after sunset, even later on the Village Route. Check the center pages of *The Guide* for routes, stops, and times. Park your vehicle and ride the free shuttle buses.

**For points along Hermit Road including Maricopa, Hopi, and Pima:** From March 1 to November 30 access to Hermit Road is by shuttle bus only. Catch the shuttle at the Village Route Transfer stop. During the winter months, December – February, Hermit Road is open to all vehicles, but may be temporarily closed due to snow.

**For points in the Grand Canyon Village area including Yavapai, Mather, and Yaki:** The free shuttle bus is still your best alternative. While you can drive your vehicle to Yavapai and Mather Points, these parking lots are frequently full during the busy months. Ride the shuttle and save yourself some frustration. Mather Point is a short walk from Canyon View Information Plaza. Yaki Point is reachable only by shuttle bus from March 1 – November 30 and by either shuttle or private vehicle during the winter months.

**For points along Desert View Drive (Highway 64) heading east towards Desert View including Grand View, Moran, Lipan, Navajo, and Desert View** and numerous other turnouts, you must drive your car. It is 26 miles (42 km) from Grand Canyon Village to Desert View and takes about one hour of driving time.

## Accessibility

For visitors with mobility concerns, getting out on many of these points may be a challenge. Distance from parking to viewing area, uneven rocky surfaces, and stairs may hinder access. Points that offer windshield views or a short walk to the rim include: Hopi, Yaki, and Lipan. Many unnamed turnouts also provide views into the canyon.

An accessibility pass that allows use of Hermit Road and Yaki Point Road at all times of the year is available at the Visitor Center at Canyon View Information Plaza, Park Headquarters, entrance stations, Yavapai Observation Station, and the travel desks in Maswik, Bright Angel, and Yavapai Lodges.

## What facilities are available?

**Restrooms:** Restroom facilities are located at Yavapai and Desert View Points and Canyon View Information Plaza. Chemical toilets are placed at Hopi, Yaki and Grandview Points.

**Water:** Drinking fountains can be found near Yavapai and Desert View Points and at Canyon View Information Plaza. You may want to bring your own water, if you plan to spend some time at other viewpoints.

## Looking for something special?

**Walk the Rim Trail** As you follow the level, winding trail along the rim of the canyon in the late afternoon, you experience the changing light and shadows in the canyon from changing viewpoints. The paved portion of Rim Trail extends several miles from Maricopa Point to Pipe Creek Vista. It can be reached at many points, making strolls of various lengths possible. See the map in *The Guide* for more details.

**Ooh Aah Point** The strenuous 1.5 mile (2.4 km) round-trip hike to Ooh Aah Point on the South Kaibab Trail offers the intimacy of the inner canyon, tranquility, an expansive view of the canyon, and few people. Ride the free shuttle bus to the trailhead near Yaki Point. Bring warm clothes, water, snacks, and a flashlight. Remember, it is much easier walking down than back up to the rim. The Kaibab Trail Route shuttle bus runs until one hour after sunset. The trail may be extremely icy during the winter.

*Now Nature holds her breath  
To see the vital flood of radiance leap  
Across the chasm; and crest the farthest rim...  
Until the cataract of colour breaks  
Upon the blackness of the granite floor.*

Henry Van Dyke,  
*The Grand Canyon, Daybreak, 1914*

