Destination: Grand Canyon National Park

Hermit Loop Tour

“The glories and the beauties of form, color, and sound unite in the Grand Canyon - forms unrivaled even by the mountains, colors that vie with sunsets, and sounds that span the diapason from tempest to tinkling raindrop, from cataract to bubbling fountain.”

- John Wesley Powell.

The Wildland Trekking Company, LLC

The Wildland Trekking Company is committed to delivering outstanding hiking adventures to the best desert and mountain regions of North America. Our commitment to this is reflected in our mission statement: To provide exceptional hiking adventures in North America’s most beautiful and wild landscapes, and to contribute significantly to the conservation of these special places.

We have over 25 years experience leading unique journeys that have lasting positive impact on people’s lives and, as importantly, on the regions and cultures we visit.

- Brad, Steve & Scott
Hermit Loop Tour

Introduction

This deservedly popular, point-to-point hike off the South Rim descends the Bright Angel Trail and then heads across the Tonto Plateau and up the historic Hermit Trail. It allows fantastic views, historic ruins, a canyon narrows section, and time at both Hermit and Granite Rapids, two of the larger and more photographed rapids on the Colorado River. This is probably the most scenic route we lead, and offers tremendous natural and cultural diversity. Please note we sometimes run the below itinerary in reverse due to permit availability.

Day 1

Shuttle to the South Rim: 1.5-hour drive from Flagstaff
Mileage: 6.9 miles (+ optional 2 mile side hike to Plateau Point)
Elevation Loss: 3,060 feet
This memorable Grand Canyon backpacking tour begins with a 4.9-mile downhill hike on the Bright Angel Trail to Indian Garden, a Havasupai spring site that watered seasonal garden plots for centuries. At Indian Garden we'll relax in the shade of the Cottonwood trees, dip our feet in the ice cold spring water of Garden Creek, and enjoy a peaceful picnic lunch. If time and conditions allow, we'll add a side hike to Plateau Point - one of the most stunning views in all of Grand Canyon - before continuing to our first night's camp at Horn Creek. Horn Creek is a beautiful creek-side camp with wonderful solitude, where we're guaranteed to be the only group since only one group is allowed per night.

Day 2

Mileage: 8.9 miles
Elevation Gain: 800 feet
We'll get an early start and begin our westward trek along the Tonto Plateau to Monument Creek. This is a long hike of almost 9 miles, but most of the route is on a well-groomed, relatively flat trail. Our hike takes us around the head of two large drainages: Salt and Horn Creek, and offers an abundance of classic, expansive views of the Grand Canyon, inner gorge, and Colorado River. Our destination for the night is Monument Creek, a cozy camp nestled beneath towering Redwall Limestone cliffs next to a trickling, spring-fed creek.

Day 3 (On 5 Day Itinerary Only)

Day Hike Mileage: 3 miles
Day Hike Elevation Gain/Loss: 1,000 feet
This is a layover day (if a 5 day trip) to sleep in, relax, read, bathe, explore, or do nothing at all. For the willing, we'll hike down Monument Creek to the Colorado River and Granite Rapids. This is a great day hike, and we often see bighorn sheep as a small population inhabits the area. At our leisure, we'll eventually head back to camp to enjoy a quiet evening.

Day 4

Mileage: 3.5 miles (plus an optional 3-mile day hike)
Elevation Gain/Loss: 1,200 feet (includes day hike)
We'll get up reasonably early, eat and pack up. We'll hike west to our camp on Hermit Creek. We'll set up camp and have lunch, then hike approximately 1.5 miles one-way to Hermit Rapids, where we'll take a few hours to explore this breathtaking section of the Colorado River. If we're lucky we'll get to watch a rafting party brave these impressive rapids! We'll return to camp and enjoy a tasty dinner beneath one of the clearest night skies you've ever seen before turning in for the night.
Day 5

Mileage: 8 miles
Elevation Gain: 3,400 feet
Shuttle to Flagstaff: 1.5-hour drive from the South Rim

The first mile of hiking takes us back past the Hermit Resort ruins on the Tonto Trail to the junction with the Hermit Trail. At the junction we begin our ascent out of the Grand Canyon on the Hermit Trail. We’ll switchback through the immense Redwall, then contour a series of shelves high above Hermit Creek. This section of hiking features increasingly stunning views of the Grand Canyon behind us. The last bit of hiking is on beautifully constructed, hand-fitted rock slabs - a true work of masonry art - and takes us past 250+ million year old footprint fossils that are some of the best in the Canyon. Once we reach the South Rim, we’ll shuttle back to the South Rim Village where our shuttle awaits us.

4-day Variation... this route is often done in 4 days. For a 4-day itinerary we’ll skip or shorten the day hike described here for day 3.

Important permit information... trip dates are not guaranteed until we’ve secured the permit for a particular departure. We secure all permits on the first of the month four months in advance of the trip date (e.g. December 1 for all April permits, January 1 for all May permits, etc.). Unless told otherwise by our staff it is imperative for you to reserve your spot at least five months in advance of the trip date. A 5% discount will be applied to your trip rate for doing so.

Trip itinerary note... all trips are subject to itinerary changes based on a variety of circumstances, including but not limited to permit availability, extreme weather, and forest fires. Payments are not refundable based on itinerary changes. We strongly recommend securing trip insurance to cover your travel plans (page 8).
Travel, Transportation, Meeting & Lodging

Travel

Arrival & Departure Dates

Travel to and from the trip orientation location is not included in the cost of our trips. Please plan on arriving in time for the orientation meeting the day before the trip leaves and departing the day after getting back from the field.

Gateway Cities: Phoenix or Flagstaff, Arizona.

All Grand Canyon trips begin and end from Flagstaff, Arizona. Flagstaff has a small airport served by Horizon and US Airways Express. From the Flagstaff Airport one can take a taxi into town. One can also fly into Phoenix and rent a car or take a shuttle to Flagstaff. This is often your cheapest option. It is a 2.5-hour drive from Phoenix to Flagstaff.

Shuttle

From Phoenix Airport... Groome Transportation and Arizona Executive Transport run daily vans to Flagstaff:

Groome Transportation
Arizona Executive Transport
1-602-475-1125


Meeting Time & Place

We will meet in Flagstaff for an orientation at 5 p.m. the day before the trip starts at the Little America Hotel. We'll give you a ride to the Little America Hotel from your hotel if you are staying at one of the recommended hotels.

The orientation includes introductions, a briefing on the trip itinerary, a checking of personal gear, the dividing up of group gear and food and a pack packing class.

Important note: Please bring all gear you plan on backpacking with to this meeting.

Directions to Little America Hotel for the Orientation Meeting

- From downtown Flagstaff travel south on Beaver St. or Milton Rd. to Butler Ave. (just south of the railroad tracks)
- Turn left (east) on Butler Ave.
- Drive 1.7 miles east of Beaver St.
- The Little America Hotel is on your right immediately after driving under Interstate 40.

See map on last page of this trip packet.

Transportation To & From The Trailhead

We will pick you up at your hotel room in Flagstaff at 6 a.m. on the morning of the first day of the trip, and provide transportation back to your hotel in Flagstaff on the final day.

Storage of Personal Items & Vehicles

Many guests choose to store their luggage with the hotel they’ll be using before and after the trip. You are also welcome to leave your luggage with us for storage while you’re in the backcountry- just inform your guide. We also recommend storing your vehicle at your hotel.

Pre & Post-Trip Recommended Lodging

We recommend the below-listed lodging establishments while in town. Additional options are numerous however it is best to avoid historic Route 66 because of train noise and in all cases book early as Flagstaff is a tourist community. Rates for the hotels adjust based on a variety of factors and are between $100 - 200/night. Links below from the hotel provide discounts for Wildland Guests:

The Little America Hotel
Great location and atmosphere. 25-60% discount for Wildland guests! Click here to redeem your discount.
Phone: 928-779-2741

Drury Inn & Suites
Located downtown. Click here to redeem discount or call 928-773-4900 with this Corporate ID: 322635

Sonesta ES Suites
Corporate rate for Wildland guests: Call Debbie Howell: 1-928-526-5555 or 1-800-766-3782
Hiker Notes & Equipment List

The following information includes conditioning recommendations as well as clothing and equipment requirements to help ensure a satisfying experience. All items are designed to better prepare you for your trip and need to be carefully read.

If you have any questions after reviewing this information please feel free to contact our office. Also, please pay special attention to any item marked “Important note.”

Training

The enjoyment received from any physical activity is largely dependent on the shape you’re in. The physical demands of hiking the canyon are in sharp contrast to those found in mountain climbing or hiking on relatively flat terrain. The first part of your hike will be a knee-jarring descent, and the climb out will come when your legs are most tired.

We cannot stress enough that the fitter you are the more fun you’ll have. A combination of cardiovascular fitness, strength in all muscle groups and flexibility will help ensure an enjoyable experience. As such, we recommend you prepare for your trip with a moderate training program focused on walking and hiking, ideally in hilly terrain.

Important note: Always consult with your physician before commencing with a workout program.

Training by Hiking

If you have access to hiking trails and a schedule to accommodate it begin walking and hiking in hilly/stEEP terrain. Nothing prepares you for a backpacking trip better than the activity itself!

Try to get out at least 3 days a week. Start with short hikes (1-hour in length) with a light daypack. From week to week build the length and difficulty of your hikes and gradually increase your pack weight until you’re comfortably able to hike 6-8 hours a day carrying the weight you’ll have on your trip (refer to your trip packet for exact pack weight). Unless you’re in great shape it is ideal to begin your training at least 12 weeks prior to your trip. Also be sure to use the boots you’ll have on your trip to break them in. Following is how a moderate program may look:

First week of training
Tuesday: 1-hour hike with daypack
Thursday: 1-hour hike with daypack
Sunday: 2-hour hike with daypack

Gradually build to:
Two weeks before trip
Monday: 3.5-hour hike with 20-pound pack
Wednesday: 2-hour hike with daypack
Thursday: 3.5-hour hike with 20-pound pack
Sunday: 7-hour hike with the weight you’ll have on your trip

Supplemental Training Ideas
There are many other activities that are easily incorporated into your daily life to build your overall fitness. Cross training is also important to strengthen opposing muscle groups and it helps to avoid overuse injuries. Supplemental training ideas include:

- Climb the stairs at your office, house, park, or neighborhood with a backpack. Stair climbing is a fantastic way to simulate backpacking in hilly or steep terrain.
- Bike to work or when running errands. Bike around town or on country roads outside of your town/city. Cycling is a great way to build endurance and strength in your legs.
- Gym activities including step aerobics, treadmill, bicycling, or elliptical trainers to name a few. A modest weight training program focusing on the muscles that support the ankles, knees, back, and shoulders is also beneficial.
- Swimming is a great way to build endurance and cardiovascular fitness and is easy on the joints.
- Walk to work instead of driving. Run your errands by walking and carry your groceries home in a backpack.
- Yoga and/or Pilates classes can build strength throughout your body while also improving your flexibility.
- Intramural sports
- Jogging is another option, however if you are not a regular runner it can easily lead to injuries that backpacking may then exacerbate. Undertake a jogging routine with care.

Other Training Considerations
Flexibility is an important part of training, remember to stretch before and after your workouts. For the two weeks leading up to your trip cut your workouts in half to avoid arriving fatigued. Also for a 72-hour period before your trip commences, ensure that you are consuming sufficient amounts of sodium and fluids. Doctors agree that hikers increase the likelihood of experiencing problems if they are sodium depleted (e.g., follow a low sodium diet) or are dehydrated (due to travel or using diuretics such as coffee or alcohol). If you have any questions at all about your training feel free to give us a call at the number below.
What You Need To Bring

Clothing Checklist

The following items are required for your trip. They are a must for your safety and comfort. When packing, think layered clothing systems that work together.

- **Sturdy hiking boots**, mid-weight, lug-soled, above the ankle, and ideally well broken in
  
  **Important note:** Buy your boots ½ to one-size larger than your street shoes to allow for feet swelling and thicker socks

- **Brimmed sunhat and bandana**

- **Rain shell**, waterproof/breathable jacket

- **Warm top**, such as a long-sleeved sweater or fleece jacket

- **One or two breathable hiking t-shirts** (may be long-sleeved) for protection from the sun, light colors are nice because they’re cooler than dark colors
  
  **Important note:** Between May 15 - Sept 15th please bring a cotton shirt (long or short sleeve). It will stay wet longer during high temperature months. Outside of this time frame, no items should be cotton except a bandana.

- **Long pants**, one pair of leggings or lightweight trousers to block sun and give warmth at night

- **Shorts**, one pair, nylon is nice for light weight and to substitute as a bathing suit

- **Underwear**

- **Sport sandals** like Tevas®, or lightweight flip-flops or tennis shoes for camp comfort

- **Hiking socks**, one pair for every two days of your trip. Recommended brands include Bridgedale®, Smartwool®, or similar padded socks (wearing a thin liner sock under your hiking socks is highly recommended). No cotton socks!!

Additional Clothing October - April

In addition to the clothing list above, these items are needed if your trip is occurring between **October 15 and April 15**.

- **Warm hat and gloves**

- **Long underwear**, one pair of wicking tops and bottoms that are lightweight to midweight, example wicking materials include capilene, polypropylene, etc.

- **Fleece jacket or insulated coat**, warm, lightweight and packable fleece jacket or coat insulated with synthetic material

- **Rain pant**, waterproof/breathable pant

Gear Checklist

- **Water bottles or bladder** (3 liters total capacity)

- **Camp pillow**, lightweight, packable camp pillow

- **Contact lenses and glasses** if you wear contact lenses please also bring a pair of glasses - your contacts are likely to become dirty and may be difficult to clean

- **Sunglasses, sunscreen (30+ SPF), lip balm**

- **Headlamp**, spare batteries (preferably an L.E.D. type that works with AA or AAA batteries, spare bulb)

- **Toiletries** (such as toothpaste/toothbrush, floss, and optional body wipes / deodorant), and a small washcloth in stuff sack (bandana can serve as a washcloth)

- **Earplugs, for campground noise** (optional)

- **Notebook or paperback book** (optional)

- **Camera, spare batteries** (optional)

- **Prescription medicine** (please inform trip leader of any medications you are taking)

- **Knee braces**, if needed

- **Money**, for tipping your guide (generally 10-20% of trip cost based on your experience)

Online Store

Most of the items listed above are available in the **Wildland Trekking online store**. The store is specifically stocked to support you for your trip and is a convenient way to buy your gear since you can do it from home! 
What We Provide

Your tour will be led by a trained, experienced professional with a solid guiding background, years of personal wilderness and hiking experience, medical certifications and a passion for leading people into breathtaking landscapes.

**Important note:** Guides are required to take 8 hours of each 24 hour period to sleep, recuperate, take personal/down time/etc. In addition, as part of the 8 hours off they must sleep/rest or be in their tents uninterrupted for a minimum of 5 hours each night. We ask guests respect these requirements and to not interrupt guides’ time off and sleep time unless there is a true (life threatening) emergency.

Group Gear

We provide top-of-the-line backpacks, tents, sleeping bags, sleeping pads, trekking poles, stoves, cookware, bowls, cups and utensils. Guides carry an Emergency Satellite Phone, water treatment resources & Company issued First Aid Kit.

Food

We provide a diversity of foods containing the necessary nutrition for sustained energy output. Meals are made from staples that travel well in the backcountry - rice, pastas, lentils, beans, couscous, oatmeal, granola, etc. Meals are also supplemented with trail foods such as crackers, cheese, granola, energy bars, fresh and/or dried fruit, and energy drink mixes.

We regularly accommodate vegan, vegetarian, kosher and non-gluten diets and will make adjustments for food allergies. These and other special dietary requests may require an additional fee. **In addition to your personal belongings, you will be responsible for carrying a portion of the food.**

**Important note:** It’s critical that you include your dietary needs in your registration - it’s too late once you’ve arrived!

Fun Facts

- The Grand Canyon was established as a national monument by Teddy Roosevelt in 1908 - Congress upgraded the monument to a national park in 1919.
- It’s famous - it’s a World Heritage Site and one of the 7 natural Wonders of the World.
- It’s big - approximately 1.2 million acres, 277 miles long, 10 miles across and 1 mile deep.
- It’s old - at least according to the geologists. The Vishnu Schist rock type at the bottom is 1.4 - 1.7 billion years old.
- With each step below the rim, you travel back approximately 60,000 years in the earth’s history.
- 5 of the 7 life zones and 3 of the 4 desert types in North America are present.
- Over 1,500 plant, 355 bird, 89 mammal, 47 reptile, 9 amphibian, and 17 fish species make the park their home.
- And lastly, it’s cool because there’s no other place like it in the world!

FYI

The following are various Grand Canyon National Park regulations of interest:

- Wood or charcoal fires are prohibited in the backcountry.
- You must carry out ALL trash, including toilet paper if you do not use the campground toilets.
- Firearms, bows, and arrows are prohibited.
- Pets are prohibited below the rim. The park has kennel space available for a fee.
- Removing or disturbing plants, rocks, animals, minerals, archaeological or cultural resources, is prohibited.

Group Travel

If you’re joining a scheduled hiking tour you'll be hiking with fellow outdoor enthusiasts. Please carefully examine the trip materials and difficulty prior to registering so that you can select a trip that matches your ability level. We make every effort to match the abilities of our group members however it is inevitable that individuals will vary in this regard. Consider that the trip may be a once in a lifetime opportunity for your fellow travelers and it is important to respect each guest’s individual condition, needs, and desires. If you need assistance selecting the right trip we are happy to help.
Recommended Reading


Thank You!

The Wildland Trekking Company is dedicated to delivering an exceptional travel experience that exceeds your every expectation. We believe that travel is one of life's great joys and take seriously our role in helping you create a trip of lasting memories.

In addition to our role as your travel partner and guide, we are dedicated to the promotion of stewardship and conservation in the regions we visit. One of our primary goals is to use the business as a tool toward long-term sustainability of the environment and its people.

If there is anything we can do to further inform or help you in preparation for your upcoming adventure please do not hesitate to contact us. Thanks for the opportunity to serve you and we look forward to seeing you soon!

Directions to the Little America Hotel