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Camping with a Car in the Grand Canyon Area

This chapter focuses on camping with a car—that is, camping done in or near RVs and automobiles. Most car campgrounds have individual pullouts for parking, grassy spots for tents, picnic tables, fire rings or grills, toilets, and drinking water. A few so-called “primitive” campgrounds lack running water. Located in remote areas, these often consist of little more than open space and a pit toilet. In addition to car campgrounds, the Grand Canyon area is home to a handful of RV parks—places where recreational vehicles can tap into water and electricity during overnight stays.

Numerous car campgrounds and RV parks can be found in and near the developed areas of Grand Canyon National Park (as well as one primitive car campground near the western canyon). In addition to the campgrounds listed in this chapter, you’ll find many other car campgrounds and RV parks farther from the canyon, in the gateway communities of Flagstaff, Williams, and Kanab.

For more information, see “Backcountry Campgrounds,” in chapter 4.

1 Camping Inside the Park

NEAR THE SOUTH RIM

Desert View Campground ★ At dusk, the yips of coyotes drift over this campground in piñon-juniper woodland at the eastern edge of the park. Elevated, cool, and breezy, the peaceful surroundings offer no clue that the bustling Desert View Overlook is within walking distance. The floor of the woodland makes for smooth tent sites, the most secluded being on the outside of the loop drive. The only drawback: The nearest showers are 28 miles away at Camper Services in Grand Canyon Village. During high season, this first-come, first-served campground usually fills up by noon. To secure a site, swing through in midmorning and see what’s open. Backcountry permits are not required for this site.

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28 miles east of Grand Canyon Village on Hwy. 64. No phone, no advance reservations. 50 sites. \$10 per site. 7-day limit. No credit cards. Open mid-May to mid-Oct.

Mather Campground ⚡ Despite having 319 campsites in a relatively small area, this remains a pleasant place. Piñon and juniper trees shade the sites, which are spaced far enough apart to afford privacy to most campers. The Aspen and Maple loops are especially roomy. Also, it's good to be near, but not too near, the showers (\$1 for 5 min.) located in the Camper Services building next to the campground. If you're too close, hundreds of campers tramp past.

Because Mather is the only campground in Grand Canyon Village, it tends to fill up before the others. You can make reservations up to 5 months in advance by calling the 800 number listed below. For same-day reservations, check at the campground entrance. Even when the campground is booked, sites sometimes become available when campers leave early or cancel. There's no waiting list, however, and no set time for the new spaces to be given away. By coming in the morning, however, you can avoid waiting in line at the campground entrance.

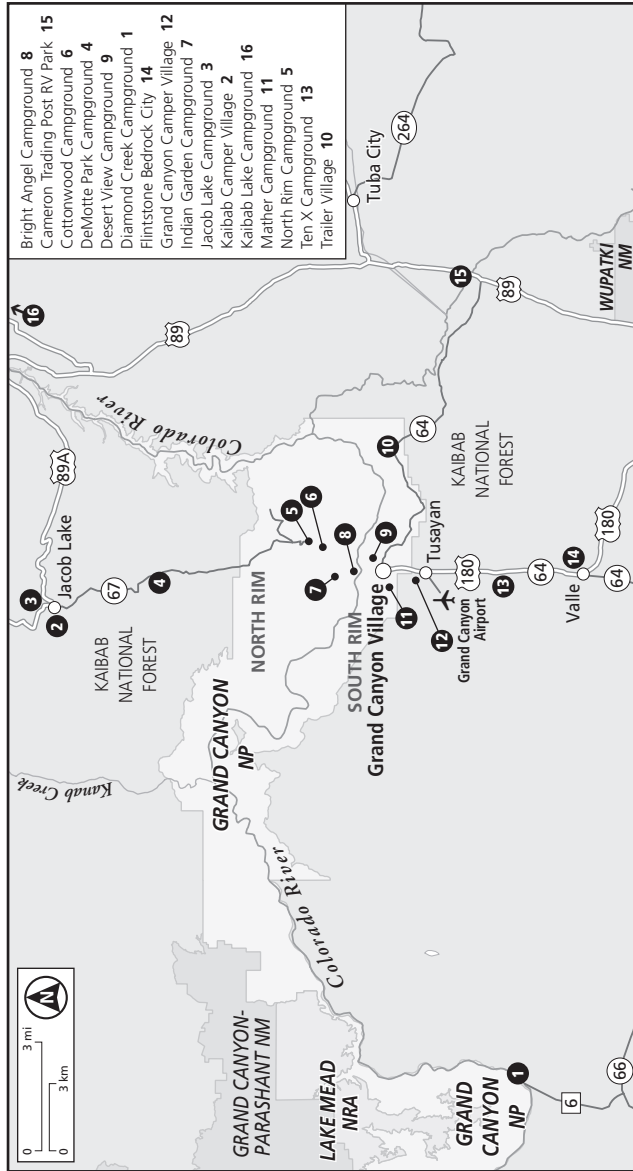
From December 1 to March 1, the campground is open on a first-come, first-served basis. No reservations are taken for these months, but sites are easy to obtain.

Near Grand Canyon Village on South Rim. ☎ **800/365-2267** (301/722-1257 outside the U.S.) for advance reservations, or 928/638-7851 for campground-specific information. <http://reservations.nps.gov>. 319 campsites, 4 group sites. No hookups. \$15 Apr 1–Nov 30; \$10 Dec 1–Mar 31. \$4 tent only (no car). DISC, MC, V. Open year-round.

Trailer Village The neighbors are close, the showers far (about ½-mile away), and the vegetation sparse. In surroundings like this, you might want to draw the curtains and stay in your RV. The beauty of a hookup is that it lets you do that. If, however, you'd like to venture outside during your stay, scout the property before taking a site. A few sites at the north end of the numbered drives have grass, shade trees, room for a tent, and one neighbor-free side. If you'd like to leave your RV altogether, you can catch a shuttle bus at a stop near the campground.

Like the lodges inside Grand Canyon National Park, Trailer Village is overseen by Xanterra—and therefore subject to the same rules as the lodges (except pets are allowed here). That means reservations can be made in advance. If you don't have reservations, check at the campground entrance even if the sign says no openings exist. A few spots open up in the late mornings when campers depart early.

Grand Canyon Area Campgrounds



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(Because reservations are guaranteed by credit card, few additional spots come open at night.)

Grand Canyon Village, P.O. Box 699, Grand Canyon, AZ 86023. ☎ **888/297-2757** advance reservations or 928/638-2631 same-day reservations, campground questions. Fax 928/638-9247. 84 sites with full hookups. \$25 per site for 2 people, plus \$2 for each additional adult (17 and over) after the first 2. AE, DISC, MC, V. Dump station located nearby (closed in the winter). Open year-round.

NEAR THE NORTH RIM

North Rim Campground ★★ Shaded by ponderosa pines and situated alongside Transept Canyon (part of Grand Canyon), this is a delightful place to pass a few days. The pines, which shade a soft, smooth, forest floor, are spaced just far enough apart to allow for a vigorous game of Wiffle ball, among other activities.

But there's more here than a field of dreams. The 1.5-mile-long Transept Trail links the campground to Grand Canyon Lodge. The North Rim General Store, a laundromat, and showers (\$1.25 for 5 min.) are all within walking distance. The most spectacular sites are the rim sites, which open onto the canyon. These cost an extra \$5 but are worth it, being some of the prettiest anywhere.

With only 87 sites, the North Rim Campground fills up for much of the summer. You can book a spot up to 5 months in advance. If you show up without a reservation only to find the "Sorry, campground full" sign on the entry booth, don't be afraid to ask what seems a stupid question. The gatekeepers often neglect to remove the sign after receiving cancellations, and you may just end up with a campsite. The best time to show up and ask about openings is at 8am. That's when sites made available by the previous night's cancellations go up for sale.

The campground sometimes stays open on a limited basis after October 15 until snow closes Highway 67, but few services are available in the park.

On Grand Canyon North Rim (44 miles south of Jacob Lake on Hwy. 67). ☎ **800/365-2267** advance reservations, or 928/638-9389 same-day reservations. <http://reservations.nps.gov>. 83 sites, 4 group sites. No hookups. \$15–\$20 per site and \$40 per group site (group sites have a capacity to accommodate up to 25 persons per site); \$4 for tent only (no car). DISC, MC, V. Open May 15–Oct 15.

NEAR THE EASTERN ENTRANCE & THE WESTERN CANYON

Diamond Creek Campground ★ This primitive campground at the confluence of Diamond Creek and the Colorado River at the western end of the canyon is the only place where you can drive to

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the river inside the Grand Canyon. The gravel road, descending from 4,600 feet in Peach Springs to 1,350 feet at the campground, sometimes gets washed out, but high-clearance vehicles can negotiate it during dry weather. (Don't risk it during monsoon season.) Surrounded by cliffs of granite and schist, the campground is at a lovely spot. People who couldn't otherwise make it to the inner canyon will probably appreciate it most.

But there are some real drawbacks. You probably won't be alone; the beach serves as a popular pullout for raft trips, and the Hualapai River Runners begin their trips in the far western canyon here. If you don't commandeer one of the three metal ramadas, you could end up broiling in the midday sun. (Located just above the canyon's lowest point, this is one of its hottest places.) You'll need to bring your own drinking water and pack out your own garbage. Seldom pumped, the lone portable toilet tests the will.

Hualapai Indian Reservation (18.1 miles from Peach Springs, 19 miles from Hwy. 66 on the Diamond Creek Rd.). & 928/769-2210. Open tent camping. \$10 per person for camping; \$6.00 for sightseeing only. AE, DISC, MC, V. Open Mar–Sept. Pay and register before entering at the Hualapai River Trips Office, open daily 6am–6pm at Hualapai Lodge in Peach Springs. Closed in winter.

2 Camping Outside the Park

NEAR THE SOUTH RIM

Flintstone Bedrock City *Kids* Cartoon lovers will be curious about this Flintstones-themed campground, restaurant, and store, whose multihued, faux-stone buildings cling like putty to the windswept land at the intersection of highways 64 and 180. In addition to peddling the ubiquitous Grand Canyon T-shirts and dead-scorpion paperweights, the gift shop sells all manner of Flintstones paraphernalia, including bibs, sweatshirts, T-shirts, key chains, and magnets. Fred's Diner serves up dishes such as the "Chickasaurus Sandwich" and the "Bronto Burger" for under \$3.

One advantage to having a prehistoric theme is that no one can tell whether your campground is run-down. The buildings here seem about as old as caves. So nothing looks out of character. One problem, however, is obvious: the proximity of some tent sites to Highway 64. Services here include a small store, volleyball court, coin-op laundry, TV, and game room.

In Vallé (at junctions of Hwy. 180 and 64). HCR 34 Box A, Williams, AZ 86046. ☎ 928/635-2600. Unlimited tent sites, 27 hookups. \$12 2-person tent; \$14 electric hookup; \$16 water/electric hookup; \$2 each additional person after the first 2. AE, DISC, MC, V. Open year-round.

Campgrounds in the Grand Canyon Area

Campground	Rim	Total Sites	RV Hookups	Dump Station	Toilets	Drinking Water	Showers	Fire Pits/Grills	Laundry	Public Phones	Reserve	Fees	Open
Cameron Trading Post RV Park	South	48	48	yes	no	yes	no	no	no	yes	yes	\$15	year-round
DeMotte Park Campground	North	23	no	no	yes	yes	no	yes	no	no	no	\$12	mid-June to mid-Sept
Desert View Campground	South	50	no	no	yes	no	yes	no	no	no	no	\$10 per site	mid-May to mid-Oct
Diamond Creek Campground	South	open tent camping	no	no	yes	no	no	yes	no	no	no	\$10 per person	except winter
Flintstone Bedrock City	South	unlimited tent sites	27	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	\$12 two-person tent, \$14 electric hookup, \$16 water/electric, \$22 each additional person	year-round
Grand Canyon Camper Village	South	300	250	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	\$26 full hookup, \$24 water/electric, \$22 electric, \$18 tent sites, \$20 teepees	year-round

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Jacob Lake Campground	North	53	no	no	yes	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	no	no	\$12	mid- May to mid-Oct
Kaibab Camper Village	North	130	70	yes	yes	yes			yes	yes	yes	yes	no	\$22 hookups, \$12 dry sites, \$12 tent sites, cabin style rooms \$ 65	May 15– Oct 15
Kaibab Lake Campground	South	72	no	no	yes	yes	yes	no	no	yes	no	no	no	\$12	May–Oct
Mather Campground	South	323	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	no	Mar– Nov	yes	\$15 Apr– Nov, \$10 rest of year	year-round
North Rim Campground	North	87	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	nearby	nearby	yes	yes	yes	yes	\$15–\$20 site, \$4 tent only, no car	May 15– Oct 15
Ten X Campground	South	70	no	no	yes	yes	yes	no	no	yes	no	no	no	\$10	May–Sept
Trailer Village	South	84	84	nearby	yes	yes	yes	nearby	nearby	yes	nearby	yes	yes	\$25 plus \$1.75 each additional person	year-round

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Grand Canyon Camper Village This campground's advantage is its location: Just a mile south of the park entrance, it lies within easy walking distance of stores and restaurants on one side and of Kaibab National Forest on the other. Its disadvantages are its relatively narrow (average width: 27 ft.) campsites and the noise from the nearby Grand Canyon National Park Airport, whose constant daytime helicopter takeoffs, together with the throngs of people at the campground itself, may bring back memories of Woodstock. At least the restrooms are clean, and the showers (75¢ for 6 min.) hot. There's also a playground and a gravel basketball court.

In Tusayan (1 mile south of the park on Hwy. 64), P.O. Box 490, Grand Canyon, AZ 86023-0490. ☎ 928/638-2887. 50 tent sites, 250 hookups. \$18 tent sites; \$20 teepees; \$22 electric; \$24 water/electric; \$26 full hookups. AE, DISC, MC, V. Open year-round. Pets admitted under condition they are kept on a leash.

Kaibab Lake Campground ★★ The campsites at this Forest Service campground are on a forested hillside above the reddish waters of Williams Lake. There's no swimming in the lake, a reservoir for Williams, but the fishing for bottom-feeders isn't bad. Grand Canyon is only 60 miles away from the camping grounds. An Arizona fishing license is required for anyone over 14.

4 miles north of Williams on Hwy. 64. ☎ 928/699-1239. 72 sites, 2 campsites accessible for people with disabilities; no hookups. \$12 per site. No credit cards. Open May 15–Oct 31. Remains open winter in no-fee status, depending on road accessibility.

Ten X Campground ★★ Large, wooded campsites make this Forest Service campground the most peaceful open-air accommodations within 20 miles of the South Rim. With plenty of distance between you and your neighbors, this is a great place to linger over a fire. All sites have fire pits and grills, and the campground host sells wood. Later, you'll find the soft, needle-covered floor perfect for sleeping. Showers are located in the Grand Canyon Park Village. This first-come, first-served campground does sell out. If you're driving up from Flagstaff or Williams, consider snagging a site before going to the canyon for the day.

2 miles south of Tusayan on Hwy. 64. ☎ 928/638-2443. 70 sites, no hookups. \$10 per site. No credit cards. Open May–Sept.

NEAR THE NORTH RIM

DeMotte Park Campground ★★ Bundle up for the nights at this Forest Service campground. It's 8,760 feet high (10 ft. higher than Telluride, CO), in spruce-fir forest, so you're sure to be cool. It's so cool, in fact, that it closes in mid-October because the pipes

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freeze. The road through the campground curves sharply and some of the spaces are small, so this place may not work for large RVs. Because this campground is relatively small and located just outside the park entrance, it tends to fill up early. Try to get a site on your way *into* the park, instead of on your way out. Guided hikes and horseback rides are available at nearby concessions. Drinking water, toilets, cooking grills are available on the campground.

5 miles north of the park boundary on Hwy. 67. ☎ 928/643-7298. 23 sites, no hookups. \$12 per site. Open mid-May to mid-Oct.

Jacob Lake Campground ★★ Nestled into rolling hills covered with ponderosa pine forest, this is a beauty of a Forest Service campground. Towering pines shade sites only a short drive from the services at Jacob Lake Lodge. This first-come, first-served campground offers regular naturalist programs.

U.S. 89A, just north of Jacob Lake. No phone. 53 sites, no hookups. \$12 per vehicle, second vehicle \$6. Open mid-May to mid-Oct.

Kaibab Camper Village ★★ Compared to the South Rim RV parks, where sagebrush is often the largest plant in sight, this North Rim RV park is like a fairy tale. Everywhere inside the campground, ponderosa pines dust the sky like Jack's mythical beanstalk. Some campers even have a view past the trees to the puddle known as Jacob Lake. The setting makes this easily the prettiest RV park in the Grand Canyon area.

Tent campers will also be comfortable here, especially if they pay the extra \$3 for one of the improved sites, which have sand rings and views of Jacob Lake. The use of generators is forbidden, so everyone can enjoy the quiet.

The owners recently added two public showers (\$1.50 for 5 min.). Now the only thing missing is flush toilets. Several signs stress the fact that the current toilets are hooked up to a larger septic system. Still, they resemble portable toilets in every other conceivable way, including the fact that they're dark as caves at night.

½-mile west of Hwy. 67, just south of Jacob Lake. P.O. Box 3331, Flagstaff, AZ 86003. ☎ 928/643-7804 (when open); 800/525-0924 (Mon–Fri 8am–5pm) or 928/526-0924 (when closed). www.canyoneers.com. 50 tent sites, 80 RV sites (70 hookups, 10 dry sites). \$22 for hookups (up to 4 people); \$12 for dry sites (up to 4 people); \$12 for tent sites (up to 2 people), plus \$2 for each additional person. Cabin style rooms are available at \$65 per room. MC, V. Open mid-May to mid-Oct (weather permitting).

NEAR THE EASTERN ENTRANCE

Cameron Trading Post RV Park This is no-frills RV camping near the eastern entrance of the park: Hookups are in a field, with

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no showers available and only a few cottonwood trees for shade. A few sites at the north end of the campground overlook the Little Colorado River gorge—especially scenic when the river is flowing. Although there's nothing in the way of recreation at the campground, the Cameron Trading Post, with its restaurant and Native American art, is across the street.

U.S. 89 across from Cameron Trading Post (P.O. Box 339), Cameron, AZ 86020. ☎ 800/338-7385 or 928/679-2231. No tent sites, 48 full hookups. \$15 per site. AE, DISC, MC, V. Open year-round.

DISPERSED CAMPING IN KAIBAB NATIONAL FOREST

Park visitors can camp for free simply by driving out of the park and into the **Kaibab National Forest** 🌲. The Forest Service's rules are simple: Camp at least a quarter mile from paved roads, campgrounds, and water, but never in meadows. (No camping is allowed near Hull Cabin or Red Butte.) Pack out your garbage, including used toilet paper, and remove any signs that you've been there. Bury human waste in holes 4 inches deep, 6 inches across, and at least 100 yards from water or creek beds. Completely douse campfires before leaving. If the forest seems dry, check with a local Forest Service office about burn restrictions.

The dispersed camping in the National Forest on the North Rim is among the best anywhere. Here, a number of Forest Service roads lead to canyon overlooks where you're free to spend the night. The most accessible of these used to be the East Rim Overlook, just 4.4 miles off of Highway 67 on FS Road 611. But the Forest Service, citing overuse, closed the rim area to motorized vehicles. Visitors can still park nearby and walk to the overlook, which opens onto views of the Marble Platform and the eastern Grand Canyon. Other overlooks, such as Crazy Jug Point and Parissawampitts Point, remain open to vehicles and have lovely views of the central Grand Canyon, but they require long, bumpy drives. For maps and information on dispersed camping on the North Rim, visit the **Kaibab Plateau Visitor Center** (☎ 928/643-7298) in Jacob Lake.

3 Picnic & Camping Supplies

If possible, stock up on your camping items at a large grocery store in a larger city such as Flagstaff. In general, prices are lowest in Flagstaff and rise steadily as you near the canyon, peaking at The Canyon Village Marketplace inside the park.

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SOUTH RIM

The Canyon Village Marketplace ★ Located in the business district of Grand Canyon Village, the general store on the South Rim is the largest and most complete retailer in the park, selling groceries, canyon souvenirs, liquor, electronic and automotive goods, provisions for camping, and hiking and backpacking gear. Some of the camping equipment can be rented for overnight use.

In Grand Canyon Village. ☎ 928/638-2262. June–Sept 8am–8pm; Oct–May 8am–7pm.

Desert View Store The Desert View Store has souvenirs, beer and wine, and a limited selection of groceries.

At Desert View (off Hwy. 64). ☎ 928/638-2393. Summer 8am–7pm; rest of year 9am–5pm.

NORTH RIM

North Rim General Store The North Rim General Store is small but well supplied with groceries, beer and wine, and a very limited supply of camping equipment. Unlike the General Store on the South Rim, the North Rim general store cannot outfit aspiring backpackers.

Adjacent to North Rim Campground. ☎ 928/638-2611, ext. 270. 8am–8pm daily (may vary).