

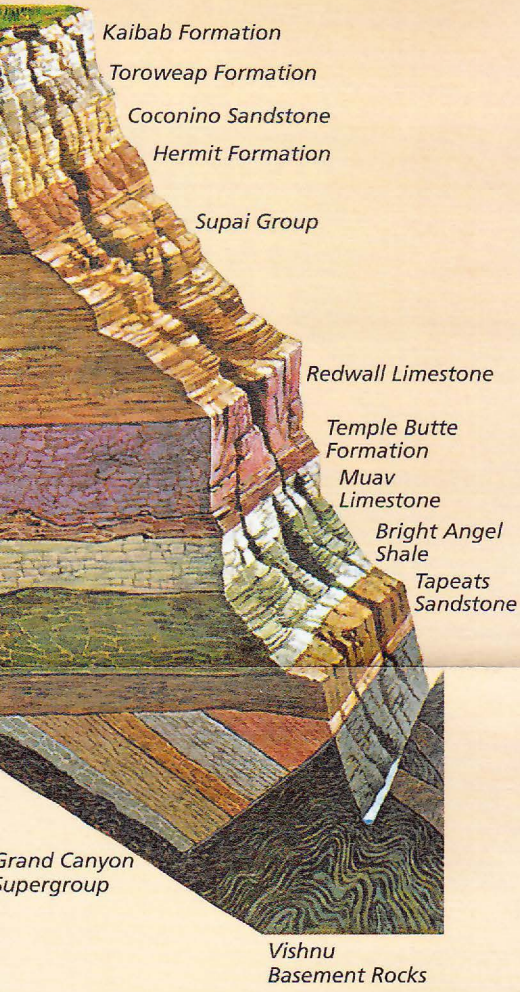
A Land To Inspire Our Spirit

Grand Canyon—one of Earth’s most powerful, inspiring landscapes—overwhelms our senses. Its story tells of geologic processes played out over unimaginable time spans as a unique combination of size, color, and dazzling erosional forms: 277 river miles (446 km) long, up to 18 miles (29 km) wide, and a mile (1.6 km) deep. Its rugged landscape hosts a fascinating variety of plant and animal communities, from the desert next to the Colorado River deep in the canyon to montane forests atop its North Rim.

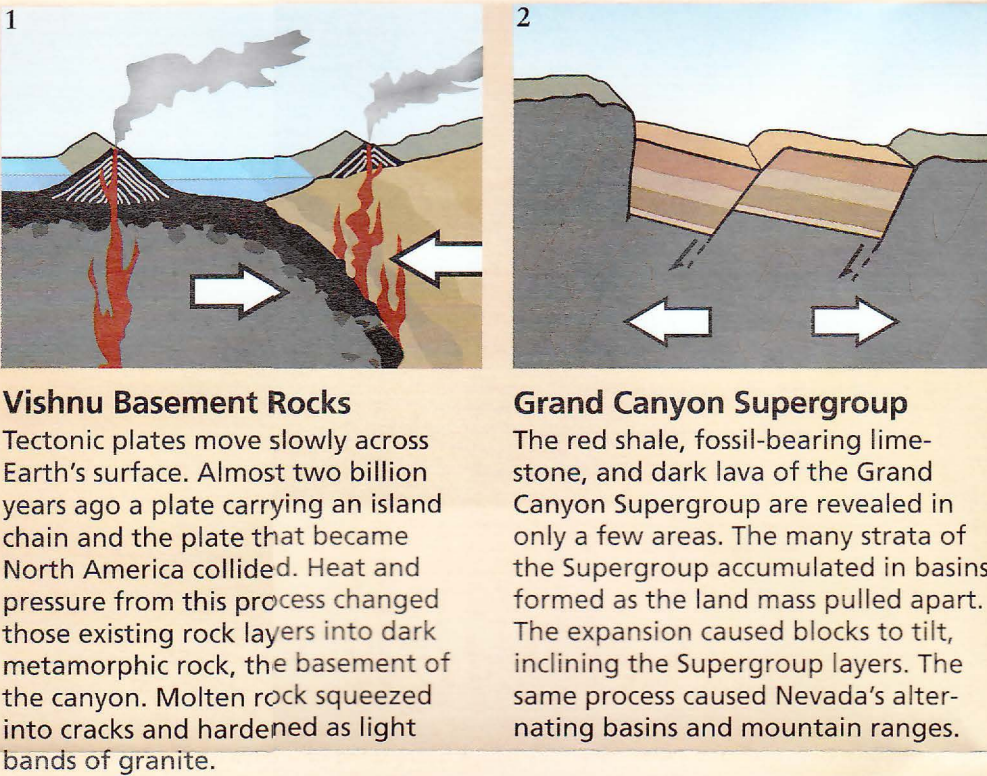
Humans have played parts in the story for thousands of years. Broken spear points, enigmatic split-twig figurines, decorated pots, abandoned mines, and historic hotels suggest some who have called the canyon home. Enjoy the views, discover the history, and learn about the plant and animal stories. Today is just the latest page in a history still being written. Grand Canyon National Park is a gift presented to us. Our responsibility as good stewards is to pass on this gift, pristine and preserved, to future generations.



Geologic Layers of Grand Canyon



Rocks Form

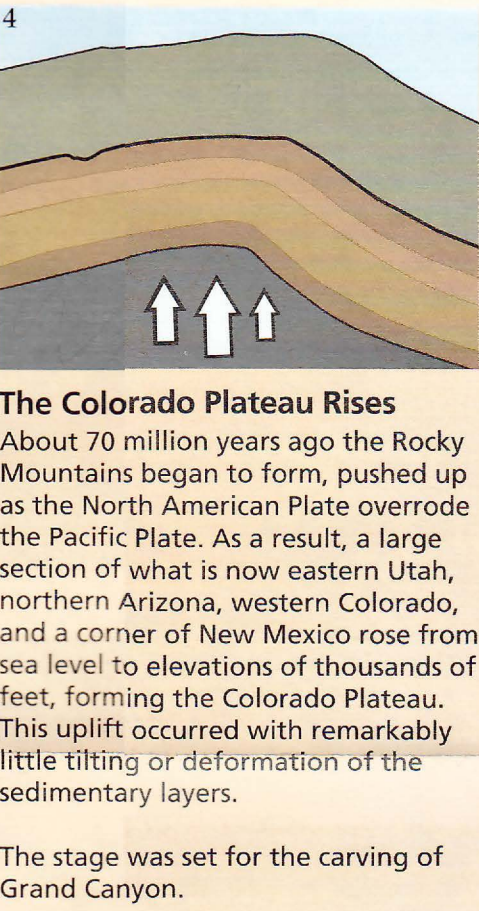


Deep Time, Changing Landscapes

Grand Canyon reveals a beautiful sequence of rock layers that serve as windows into time. The carving of the canyon is only the most recent chapter, a geologic blink of an eye, in a long story. That long story includes rock nearly two billion (2,000,000,000) years old in the bottom of the canyon, land masses colliding and drifting apart, mountains forming and eroding away, sea levels rising and falling, and relentless forces of moving

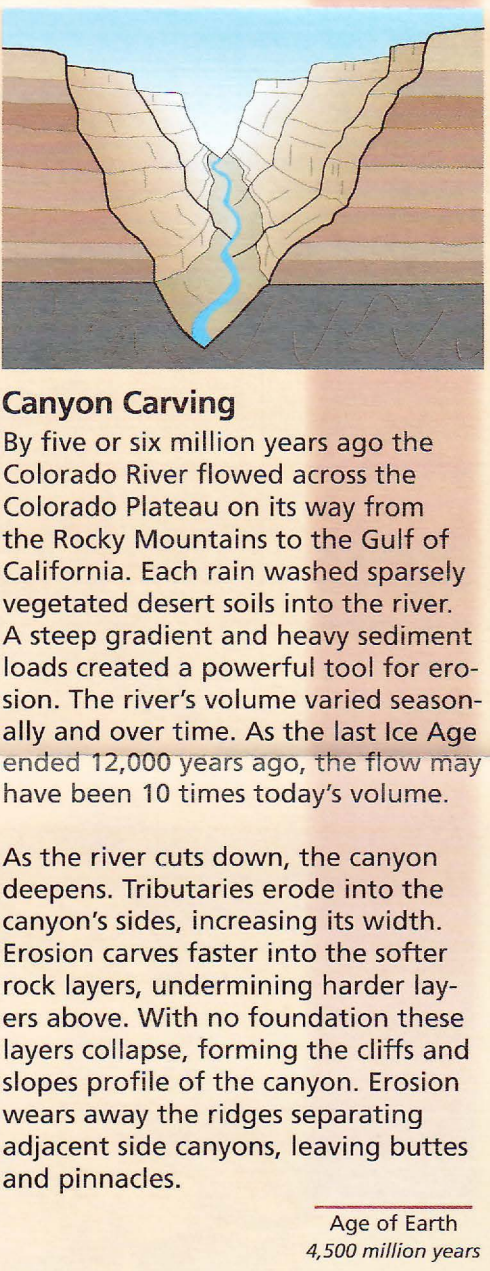
water. Several factors make Grand Canyon’s geology remarkable. Many canyons form as rivers cascade among mountain peaks, but Grand Canyon sits incised into an elevated plateau. The desert landscape exposes the geology to view. It is not hidden under a cloak of vegetation. The strata revealed preserve a lengthy, although incomplete, record of Earth’s history. Take time to pause on the rim and enjoy this work of the ages.

Uplift Occurs



Top photo: Grand Canyon and the North Rim as seen from Grand Canyon Village, South Rim. NPS/MICHAEL QUINN
GEOLOGY ILLUSTRATIONS: BRONZE BLACK © GRAND CANYON ASSOCIATION

Erosion Sculpts



Communities of Life

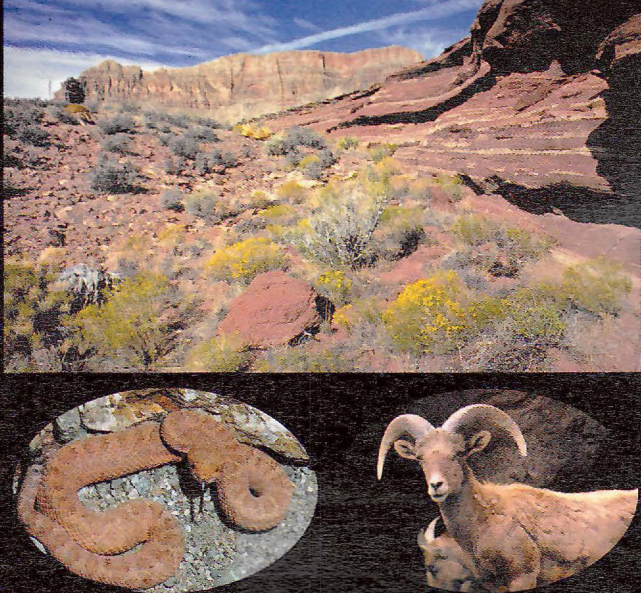
Extreme changes in elevation, exposure, and climate support a remarkable range of plant and animal communities unusually close together.

Riparian Areas



Water is the lifeblood of Grand Canyon. Nowhere does water so transform landscapes as in the desert. A small seep, a cascading tributary, or the ever-flowing Colorado River supports an abundance of life fostered by the presence of water.

Deserts



Three of the four North American deserts come together in low elevations of the park. Mesquite trees from the Sonoran Desert line portions of the river. Blackbrush sparsely cloaks the inner canyon in typical Great Basin Desert fashion. Joshua trees represent the Mojave Desert.

Pinyon-Juniper



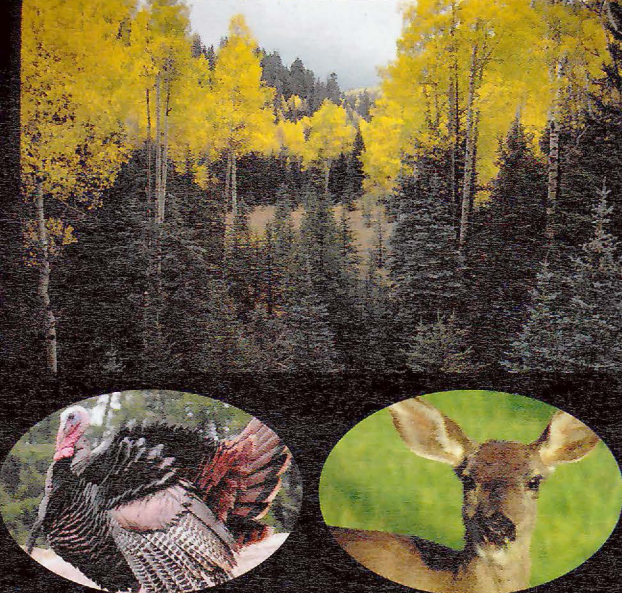
A dwarf forest of pinyon pine and juniper covers vast stretches of the mid-elevation Southwest. The scale-like, wax-coated leaves of the juniper and the short, two-needled clusters of the pinyon conserve water in a dry land.

Ponderosa Pine



Ponderosa pines thrive with more rainfall and deeper soils. Smell the bark—vanilla or butterscotch? Tassel-eared squirrels depend on the ponderosa for food and shelter. North Rim’s Kaibab squirrel, now isolated for generations, sports different colors than South Rim’s Abert’s squirrel.

Montane Forest



The higher elevation of the North Rim captures more precipitation and supports a diverse forest of fir, spruce, and Douglas fir. Aspen trees shimmer golden in the fall. Watch for mule deer and wild turkeys in meadows that interrupt the thick forest.

People of the Canyon

The whole canyon and everything in it is sacred to us, all around, up and down.
— Rex Tilousi, Havasupai elder

Grand Canyon has sustained people both materially and spiritually for thousands of years. Clovis hunters found a wetter, more verdant area, with large mammals that are now extinct. Ancestral Puebloan people relied on agriculture, living off the land in a different way. Visitors today come from a world these earlier groups could never imagine. This special landscape offers an opportunity to consider the powerful ties between people and place.





Exploring Grand Canyon