



# SMALL GROUP ADVENTURES ACROSS NORTH, SOUTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA

## TRIP DOSSIER

### Best of the West



#### Tour Overview

After departing San Francisco, and having strolled across the Golden Gate Bridge, we head east through Gold Country to the gates of Yosemite National Park. Enjoy an afternoon under the mighty Sequoias and the towering granite cliffs of Yosemite Valley before setting up camp for the night. Your next day will be filled with a variety of hiking and sightseeing options. Tackle the seventeen mile hike to Half Dome or stroll under Yosemite Falls and El Capitan. From Yosemite we then continue on to shimmering Lake Tahoe's wooded trails and then in stark contrast, the vast Nevada desert.

Enjoy a full day exploring the wilderness and wildlife of Yellowstone National Park. The first national park in the United States and the world, Yellowstone is home to Old Faithful Geyser and to most of the continent's big mammals, including permanent populations of buffalo, elk, wolves and bear. Leaving the park, past the Grand Teton range, we reach Jackson, Wyoming - a lovely mountain town that offers high trails, rafting and even cowboys!

After a visit to Salt Lake City we continue south to Moab, the perfect base for three days of adventure in the nearby Canyonlands and Arches National Parks. Endless opportunity awaits; take a sunset stroll to Delicate Arch or bike down the famous 'Slick Rock Trail', float down the Colorado on a scenic rafting trip or tackle the terrain high above on a guided 4x4 tour.

We then travel out of Utah and on to the Navajo Reservation. Met by our Navajo guide, we will be taken on an included 4x4 tour of the Monument Valley Tribal Lands. Learn about the history and culture of the Navajo, hear how Native Americans have embraced this harsh environment, and how their relationship with the world constantly changes and evolves. Such a day could only be topped by a spectacular desert sunset.

Words, even pictures, cannot describe the awe and beauty you will experience on catching your first view of the Grand Canyon. Once again, you will have plenty of opportunities to explore the park at your own pace. Venture down the Bright Angel Trail to Plateau Point, or just stroll along the more leisurely West Rim Trail and shuttle bus out to Hermit's Rest. Finish the day with a scenic flight above the Colorado River or take in the I-MAX film, "The Grand Canyon Experience".

Then, on to one of the Southwest's best kept secret, Zion National Park. With spectacular scenery and diverse backdrops, there is a great variety of hiking trails available. Visit the cedar ridge high above the canyon floor or venture deep into The Narrows as you make your way up the Virgin River Gorge. Take the challenge and hike up to Angel's Landing or take a leisurely horse ride in the valley. Leaving Zion National Park we cruise into Las Vegas to finish this trip of a lifetime!

#### Tour Itinerary

- 1-2 San Francisco >> Yosemite NP
- 3 Lake Tahoe
- 4 Nevada
- 5-6 Yellowstone NP
- 7-8 Jackson, Wyoming
- 9 Salt Lake City (HP)
- 10-11 Moab/Arches NP
- 12 Moab/Canyonlands NP
- 13 Monument Valley
- 14-15 Grand Canyon NP
- 16-17 Zion NP
- 18 Zion NP >> Las Vegas

HP = Hotel night included in price

#### Included Highlights

- ✓ Navajo Indian guided 4x4 tour of Monument Valley
- ✓ Grand Canyon sunrise or sunset
- ✓ Walk the Golden Gate Bridge
- ✓ Scenic walks and hikes
- ✓ National parks and monuments - Yosemite, Yellowstone, Arches, Canyonlands, Monument Valley, Grand Canyon and Zion
- ✓ All meals whilst camping
- ✓ Professional tour leader, camping fees/equipment & private transportation

#### Is This Tour For Me?

This tour takes in the real 'Jewels in the Crown' of America's National Parks. From the heights of the Sierra Nevada to the depths of the Grand Canyon, this tour takes you to six states with several two-night stops along the way, maximizing your sightseeing and activity opportunities.



# Best of the West Tour Information

## TOUR MATRIX

Please find below our Tour Matrix, designed to rate the focus of this tour. We hope this will help you to choose the tour that is right for you.

Best of the West	Mild Focus	Moderate Focus	High Focus
National Parks Visited			
City Sights			
Activities			
Hiking Opportunities			
Native American Culture			
Adventure Level			
Fun, Freedom & Flexibility			

## DESTINATIONS

Please find below more detailed information on the destinations this tour visits. In alphabetical order:

**Arches National Park** - Arches NP is located just a few miles outside the town of Moab, Utah. Stunning red sandstone arches have been created by a million years of wind whipping down the west slope of the Rocky Mountains. Here you will have the opportunity to hike to many of these incredible arches which are known by descriptive names such as, Landscape Arch and the famous Delicate Arch.

**Canyonlands National Park** - There is a little known place in eastern Utah where the mighty Colorado and Green Rivers meet - these are the Canyonlands. This amazing landscape is a Mecca for mountain bikers and whitewater rafters. Whatever you choose to do, make sure you explore all it offers from natural bridges and arches to towering cliffs and bottomless canyons.

**Grand Canyon National Park** - This incredible spectacle is difficult to comprehend, even as you stand at the rim or hike down into the canyon. Carved over millennia, this massive wonder of nature is 277 miles long, up to 16 miles wide and 1 mile deep. We highly recommend a scenic flight over the canyon and the IMAX film to obtain perspectives you cannot achieve on foot.

**Jackson** - Once a hideout for outlaws and rustlers, Jackson is now a 4-season getaway for today's rich and famous. Jackson is a great base for exploring the Teton Mountains. This area is well known as a "playground" for adventure seekers. Surrounded by beautiful scenery, you can spend your days hiking, mountain biking, rafting and more!

**Las Vegas** - Las Vegas is the fastest growing city in the United States and the "tacky capital of the world", home to pirates and pyramids, weddings and waterfalls. If it is gambling you want, you have come to the right place. Nowhere else in the world will you find as many casinos. But if you really want to try your luck, stop in at one of its countless wedding chapels.

**Moab** - Located in the heart of the Canyonlands, Moab offers a great base for exploring Arches National Park and the less visited Canyonlands National Park. You might try rafting on the Colorado, a Hummer ride into the backcountry, or mountain biking down the Gemini Bridges Trail, a 13-mile downhill experience.

**Monument Valley** - In the heart of the Navajo Nation, Monument Valley is sacred land to those who call it home. The red sandstone monoliths have been the backdrop to countless 'westerns' featuring cowboys riding off into the sunset. Explore the incredible array of rock formations on an included Jeep tour and learn the magic and myth of the rich Native American culture.

**Yellowstone National Park** - This NP is so large its boundaries cross into three states. Yellowstone has one of the highest concentrations of geothermal activity on the planet. Buffalo roam amongst the erupting geysers and steam rises from various rivers running through the park. A fire in the 1980s ravaged much of the park, which is now a living monument to nature's power of regeneration.

**Yosemite National Park** - Yosemite NP sits nestled in the Sierra Nevada Mountain range of Northern California. Here green forest meets granite walls measuring several thousand feet in height. Rock climbers come from all over the world to scale rocks named Half Dome and El Capitan. Hike to the base of some of the largest waterfalls in the world or rest on the banks of the Merced River.

**Zion National Park** - Just a few hours northeast of Las Vegas, lies Zion Canyon, named by the early Mormon settlers of Utah. Some of the best hiking in the desert southwest can be found here in the fertile Virgin River Gorge. Ascend 2500 feet to experience unbeatable views from atop Angels Landing, take a short hike from the valley floor to view the Emerald Pools, or cool off from the summer sun by exploring the Narrows section of the Virgin River.

## ARRIVAL / DEPARTURE HOTELS

Our arrival and departure hotels are conveniently located and serve as your tour's start and end points. Rooms are comfortable and spacious, with two double beds and en-suite facilities. They make good bases for sightseeing and offer an opportunity to informally meet with your fellow trekkers.

The tour begins at 07:30hrs in the hotel lobby, where you will meet your group and tour guide. You should have packed your bags and eaten breakfast so that you are fresh and ready to start the journey.

The tour ends between 17:00-18:00hrs on the final day. Please do not reserve flights until at least 21:00hrs or the following day.

If you would like to reserve additional nights in our hotel before or after the holiday, or if you would prefer to have your own room throughout, please contact our sales team for additional information and associated costs.



# Best of the West Tour Information

## CAMPING ACCOMMODATION

Camping allows us to stay in the heart of the most breathtaking natural scenery, away from fast food outlets and the encroaching development; and Grand American Adventure's experienced tour leaders and top quality equipment will surely enhance your experience.

Your comfort is important to us and we know that starts with using high quality camping gear. We only use top of the range, spacious two-person tents and thick (air/foam-filled) sleeping pads to ensure your evenings are comfortable and restful. Sturdy camp chairs are always available for those evening chats as the group prepares delicious meals (using state of the art camping stoves). All you need to bring is a warm sleeping bag and a sense of adventure and you will be sure to enjoy the trip of a lifetime!

Nearly all of our local campgrounds provide modern conveniences and amenities such as hot showers (paid locally approx \$2) and flush toilets; whilst others will have swimming pools, shops and launderettes. On special occasions, our groups may utilize rustic, wilderness sites in order to fully appreciate more remote areas' natural surroundings. That said, waking up at camp to the smell of fresh brewed coffee provides a truly intimate natural experience and one that eludes conventional tourists.

**A sleeping bag is required for this tour.** Make sure your sleeping bag is warm enough for the time of year you are travelling.

## FOOD & DRINK

Grand American Adventures include all meals while camping (alcohol/drinks purchased locally) and you will be sure to create and enjoy regular international dinner parties on the road. Incidentally, our professional guides are great in the kitchen and they will assist the group in preparing delicious, healthy meals so that you can take the path less travelled... with a full stomach.

We prepare plenty of good fresh food on our camping trips and anticipate hearty eaters. Breakfasts often include fresh fruits and cereal, toast, juice, coffee or tea. Fried bacon or sausage, pancakes or eggs may also be available on more leisurely mornings. Lunches are typically picnic style and consist of a selection of delicatessen meats, cheeses and salads. Dinners are filling and main dishes include pastas, grilled meats/chicken/fish, as well as regional specialties such as Mexican fajitas or BBQ's and are accompanied with cooked vegetables or fresh salads.

Meals consist of a variety of balanced dishes and, aiming for universal appeal, we avoid highly spiced foods. Vegetarians are certainly welcome and are always accommodated. Please let us know of any dietary concerns at the time of booking.

On occasion, meals are taken in local restaurants where passengers pay individually for food and drinks en route. Average breakfasts cost from \$6-\$12, lunches from \$8-15 and dinners from \$13-\$30; this does not include alcoholic beverages. Wine costs approximately \$5 per glass and beer \$4 per bottle. Please be aware that a tip of approximately 20% is added to group meals in restaurants in North America and applicable taxes will also be added to all listed menu prices.

## GROUP PARTICIPATION

An essential part of a Grand American Adventures camping holiday is helping out around the campsite. Our tents are easy to set up and with guidance from your tour leader, everyone will assist with the setting up and packing of the campsite. As a team, it only takes approximately 20 minutes before setting up your "home with a view" in the great outdoors!

Your tour leaders will organize daily activities and guided hikes, as well as coordinate and assist the group when shopping for food, preparing the daily meals and washing up.

As this is a participatory trip, group members will assist with the preparation of meals and with the washing. That said, often the best meals on the road are created when individuals offer to cook up one of their specialties from home!

## GROUPS

The maximum group size is 13 passengers.

Passengers come from a range of countries worldwide (average of 4 nationalities per group) and many will be solo travellers. You will find you have many things in common with your fellow trekkers, including a passion for adventure and a strong interest in exploring the national parks.

Grand American Adventures tours are designed for adults over 18 years old. While most passengers are aged 25-55, every year we get many people both above and below this age range. All travellers over the age of 55 will be requested to complete a self-declaration of fitness.

## OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES/SPENDING MONEY

There are many opportunities for optional activities during the holiday. Your tour guide will organize these on your behalf and you will pay locally in cash. Featured activities and approximate prices are listed below:

★ Backcountry Hummer tour	US \$60-145
★ Hiking opportunities	Included
★ IMAX theater - Grand Canyon	US \$12
★ Mountain biking	US \$55-100
★ River rafting (seasonal)	US \$50-100
★ Scenic flight over Grand Canyon	US \$100-275

ATM/Cash points are widely available in all major cities and small towns. Please ensure that your credit or debit cards have international access and a PIN number to access your funds.

We recommend you take at least US \$35 dollars per day to cover local expenses, but it's better to bring more than you need rather than run short on tour. Your spending money needs to cover optional activities, film, souvenirs and snacks along the way.

Additionally, tipping is a way of life in North America and, whilst not compulsory, it is expected. We recommend a tip of approximately US \$5 per passenger / per day to be given in cash to your tour leader at the end of your holiday.



# Best of the West Tour Information

## CLIMATE & CLOTHING

Keep in mind that our dress tends to be informal. Take a practical selection of clothes for both warm and cool climates to suit the season. You may encounter a wide variety of temperatures en route due to altitude and unforeseen weather conditions - so be prepared! Make sure to pack a warm fleece and a waterproof jacket/coat in case of rain.

Approximate year-round temperatures are listed below.

## TRANSPORTATION

All of our private vehicles are designed to ensure your safety, comfort and enjoyment of the tour. In North America, our new 15-seater Fords feature raised ceilings for more headroom, individual captain seats for more comfort and an open centre aisle floor plan, making it easier when getting in and out at those many photo opportunities. All our vehicles are equipped with CD stereo systems, often iPod-compatible, and air-conditioning, to make travelling a pleasure.

## PASSPORTS & VISAS

This tour visits the USA only and it is your responsibility to obtain the proper passport and visa(s). More details are provided in our Trek Tips pre-departure information at

[http://www.grandamericanadventures.com/tour\\_info\\_online.html](http://www.grandamericanadventures.com/tour_info_online.html)

## HOW TO BOOK YOUR TOUR

Contact Grand American Adventures by telephone, email or via our website to check availability on the tour you want to join. We can normally hold you a seat on 'option' for up to 3 days to allow you time to finalise your flight arrangements and send us your booking form with a deposit payment.

If you are ready to book and pay your deposit, we have a secure, online booking facility where you can pay in most major currencies with a credit or debit card. Check availability early to avoid disappointment.

Check Availability at:

<http://www.grandamericanadventures.com/>

## PAST PASSENGERS SAY?

When asked, "what was the best part of the tour", passengers said:

*"Being in an international group, sharing experiences with each other, helping and encouraging. Seeing many places in a short time."* - Anke from Holland

*"The fact that I had the opportunities to challenge myself, physically and mentally."* - Yen-Ni from Singapore

*"Not having to worry about driving. The beautiful landscape and getting to know other people."* - Lutgarde from Belgium

## ALTERNATIVE TOURS

If you would prefer to join a different Grand American Adventures tour, we have several other camping tours and a variety of lodging, walking and specialty tours as well as family adventures for you to choose from. Click on the link below for more information.

<http://www.grandamericanadventures.com/>

## ADVENTURE TRAVEL

All details are provided in good faith. Due to the nature of travel, this information can change and should therefore be taken as an indication only and not as a contractual obligation on the part of Grand American Adventures. If you have any questions, please contact us.

Average High / Low Temperatures in Celsius (°C)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Grand Canyon NP	5/-8	7/-6	10/-4	15/0	21/4	27/8	29/12	27/12	24/8	18/2	11/-3	6/-7
Las Vegas	13/1	17/3	20/7	25/10	31/15	37/20	40/24	39/23	34/19	27/12	19/6	14/1
San Francisco	13/8	15/9	16/9	17/10	18/10	19/12	19/12	19/12	21/13	20/13	18/10	14/8
Yellowstone	-2/-13	1/-10	3/-9	10/-4	16/1	20/4	26/7	25/7	19/3	13/-2	4/-7	-1/-10
Yosemite NP	8/-3	13/-2	15/-1	19/2	23/6	28/9	32/12	32/11	29/8	23/4	14/-1	8/-3
Zion NP	11/-2	14/1	17/3	22/6	28/11	34/16	37/20	35/19	31/15	25/9	17/3	12/-1

Celsius / Fahrenheit Conversions: -10°C = 14°F 0°C = 32°F 10°C = 50°F 20°C = 68°F 30°C = 86°F 40°C = 104°F

