

September 13, 2010

Thom, could you please forward this to the GC7 group?

Thanks!

Lee

Congratulations to all of you for a terrific performance this weekend! I was really sorry that I couldn't be out there hiking with all of you because of my knee injury back in April (BTW, it's finally doing much better -- I can't do huge distances like you guys, but I can get around without my crutch now, so that's an improvement!!). I was really happy to at least be able to offer my services to Ron this weekend and help out at the checkpoints, because it reaffirmed my belief that people can do amazing things if they only put their minds to it! Think about it... many of you walked more than 27 miles IN ONE DAY, and others walked more than 16 or 21 miles IN ONE DAY!!!! What an amazing accomplishment!!! I've done that hike in past years, and I know that it's not like just walking 21 miles along a city street somewhere... that was a challenging 16 or 21 or 27 miles, and it's a huge accomplishment --no matter if you've done it before or not! So, forget how much your legs may hurt today... or tomorrow morning... and think about how far you've come since February, when 6 miles seemed impossible!



We're going out to the Canyon in 3 weeks, and it's going to be an amazing adventure. We start at Sedona with an easy (but gorgeous) hike around Bell Rock, then on to the canyon. For those of you doing the South to South hike (AKA Rim to River to Rim hike), remember that you have to do it fairly quickly. A couple of years ago we had folks who took their time taking a lot of pictures and hanging out at Phantom Ranch for almost an hour and relaxing by the Colorado River -- and then they hit the Devil's Corkscrew section of the Bright Angel Trail in the heat of the day, where there is no coverage from the sun. It took them a LOT longer to get out than it should have, and it was not very much fun, which kind of defeats the purpose! So please try to get down in a timely fashion -- go ahead and take pictures, because it is OMG spectacular going down -- but keep moving!



Plan to spend no more than 20 minutes at Phantom Ranch to get water, eat a bit, visit the restroom, and you have to buy a T-shirt (take your credit card), put your feet up for maybe 5 minutes -- then keep going! Devil's Corkscrew (the series of switchbacks after the River path) has no protection, unless you hit it before about 11:00 and can get the shade of the cliffs. So remember to keep moving! Indian Garden on the way up will be Heaven-Sent, with water and bathrooms and shade, and from there you can climb out slowly but surely. And when you make that last turn close to the top and finally see the dark brown Kolb Studio, you will be filled with a sense of accomplishment that will virtually push you out the last little bit! The feeling you have the first time you finish that hike is really indescribable, but one you will remember for years!



If you're going to Plateau Point, you'll be going halfway down the Bright Angel Trail to Indian Garden, then taking a "left turn" out to Plateau Point, where I understand you can get a 360 degree view of the canyon that is incredible. Tricia Kurtz and Chris Cullison did it last year, and their pictures are pretty amazing! Then you go back to Indian Garden and back up Bright Angel Trail, finishing on the same trail as the South-to-South folks, only without Devil's Corkscrew to contend with!

And for those of us who choose not to do that, there's the Rim Hike, "God's Half Marathon" as Ron calls it. The path goes along 13 miles of the South Rim, partially paved and partially dirt, with spectacular views all along the way. There's a shuttle that goes along that path, so if you get tired (or if my stupid knee starts hurting again!), you can just stop at the next shuttle stop and get a ride back to El Tovar and the village.

But wait, there's more... after the South Rim, we go to the North Rim, which gives you a whole new perspective on the canyon. And after that there's a shorter stop at Bryce Canyon, then 3 blissful days at Zion. We'll park at the Majestic Lodge in Zion (which is really nice!), and be free to explore at will. There's a free shuttle that goes the length of the street through town, then at the top is Zion National Park which has its own shuttle through the park.

There will be bigger Zion hikes to choose ahead of time: The East Rim, the West Rim, and the Narrows. Both the Rim hikes are where you start outside the park and hike over and down into it. I did the East Rim last year (about 10 miles), and it was amazing... we went through some sand, climbed down rock cliffs, walked through a meadow of heather, and ended up going through the rocks of echo canyon, which was really spectacular. Larry and Jay did the West Rim the day before, and they liked it even more than the East Rim, although they also mentioned that there was one place where you went up a bit, as opposed to the mostly down of the East Rim hike. The Narrows hike is where you walk about 16 miles down in the river, with towering rocks on either side of you -- scenery that you'll never see in this area! You rent special boots and poles the day before, so preparation is necessary!



Or you can choose to just do hikes on your own, exploring the Falls hikes (really cool!) and others. For the really adventurous, you can go up to Angel's Landing, where only the intrepid -- or crazy doctors whose wives don't know they're going there and who only tell them afterward that that they went there -- fear to tread! Supposedly the best view of Zion, but you have to be nuts -- I mean, really determined -- to go there! :) BTW, at one point, you have to hold onto chains to keep you from falling off the cliff on either side -- need I say more? And if you're just zonked from the week's activities, you can hang out by the pool at the Majestic and lounge the day away!

No matter what, this will be an amazing vacation, unlike any you've done before! I can't wait to see you all again in 3 weeks and tell you all to FIRE UP!!!

Take care, and Congratulations to all of you!

Lee

