

## This week's dream: hiking across the Grand Canyon

It is one of America's most popular national parks, celebrating its 100th anniversary this year and visited by more than five million people annually. But while the main tourist area at the Grand Canyon – the South Rim – is a “circus” of crowds, restaurants and hotels, scarcely 1% of visitors venture further to reach the canyon floor. The rim-to-rim walk is “one of America's most spectacular but little-tackled adventures”, says Aaron Millar in *The Times* – a “dreamlike” hike through “a land of myths and giants, too vast to be real”. The path is 24 miles long, the canyon is 1,850 metres deep and the heat can be intense, so a good level of fitness is needed. Some people do it unaided in two days (sleeping at the 1920s Phantom Ranch); others make it easier by hiring tents and mules.

The canyon is 277 miles long and up to 18 miles wide, and it takes four-and-a-half hours to drive from the South Rim to the other end of the path. There, you'll find a lush and wilder



*The canyon: “a land of myths and giants”*

landscape, with “fields of aspen and elk”, and the “superb” North Rim Lodge. As you walk down into the canyon from there, pyramidal crags, soaring towers and rocky buttes – “imperceptible from the vastness of the rim” – slowly emerge like “enormous temples”. The Colorado River carved out the canyon more than six million years ago, and its walls are the most complete geological record on Earth, encompassing a third of the planet's lifespan, from 250 million-year-old limestone at the top to 1.8 billion-year-old schist at the bottom.

Along the way are “exquisite” hidden spots like the Ribbon Falls (great for swimming) and the “lush forests” of the Indian Garden plateau. The whole canyon feels like a “fortress”, and yet “fragile and ever-changing” too; as the author J.B. Priestley put it, it is “not a beauty spot, but a revelation”. *Arizona Outback Adventures* ([aoa-adventures.com](http://aoa-adventures.com)) has a three-day trip from \$1,595pp, excluding flights.

### Hotel of the week



#### Wanås Restaurant Hotel Skåne, Sweden

Set in the “lush” southern Swedish region of Skåne, the Wachtmeister family estate is known for its wonderful sculpture park, with works by Antony Gormley, Jenny Holzer and others. The family has now opened an “immaculately chic” hotel in the 18th century stables next to their castle, says Tatler. The 11 rooms have wooden floors and minimal furnishings, but are very comfortable, with great beds, deep tubs and fragrant L: A Bruket products. The restaurant serves excellent modern Swedish cuisine, using organic produce from the family farm. Only two hours from Copenhagen, Wanås makes for a fine rural add-on to a city break. *Doubles from £280 b&b. 00 46 44 253 1582, [wanasrh.se](http://wanasrh.se).*

### Getting the flavour of...

#### Africa's first high-speed railway

At a cost of £2bn and after nearly ten years' construction work, Africa now has its first high-speed railway, running from Tangier to Casablanca. It has slashed the journey time between the Moroccan cities from eight hours to two, which means it is now easy to combine them in “an intriguing short break”, says Jeremy Head in *The Times*. Fly into Tangier and out of Casablanca, perhaps stopping at Rabat, the country's “tranquil” capital, in-between. The “hash smoke” may have receded in Tangier since the days when members of the beat generation hung out here, but the city's labyrinthine medina is still a wildly atmospheric time warp. Casablanca offers contrasting delights – the early 20th century architecture of its old colonial core, mingling Islamic and European styles in “striking” art deco-art nouveau hybrids.

#### A daring drive across the Balkans

Based in Budapest, the Travel Scientists say they run “gonzo” rallies, including a race through India in auto-rickshaws and now the demanding, non-competitive Great Balkan Ride, says Jamie Lafferty in the FT. Taking place, says the organiser, “where few people dare to come, on roads where locals aren't brave enough to drive”, it lasts a week and the route is from Sarajevo in Bosnia to Thessaloniki in Greece, via Montenegro, Kosovo and Albania. Vehicles are usually

very battered, in keeping with the rally's “ragtag” spirit, and teams are given a road book and fixed accommodation each night, but can otherwise do as they please. The scenery is wild and “dramatic” (especially in Albania), the sense of achievement at the end is intense, but it's the bonding with other drivers in the face of shared challenges that offers the biggest reward. The next Balkan rally is in August. *Visit [travelscientists.com](http://travelscientists.com).*

#### Healthy highs in north Devon

If you want a quick mental and physical lift, but can't stand the idea of a “boot camp”, then check out Yeotown in north Devon, says Mariella Frostrup in *Porter* magazine. Owned by a yoga-instructing, surfing and art-dealing couple, Mercedes and Simon Sieff, this “health retreat” based in a beautiful farmhouse, offers flexible wellness programmes that leave guests with “abundant energy and vitality”, and plenty of useful new skills and habits. There are yoga classes and daily hikes along the breathtaking coast, and a range of optional extras, from cycling, surfing and archery to meditation sessions and nutrition classes. You might well lose weight, but the “pescatarian” cuisine (free of meat, dairy, gluten, sugar and caffeine) is filling and tasty, and each day ends with an “amazing” candlelit massage. Five days cost from £1,950, all-inclusive. *Visit [yeotown.com](http://yeotown.com).*

### Last-minute offers from top travel companies

#### French capital escape

Spend 4 nights at the Novotel Paris 14 Porte d'Orléans, which is close to the centre of the city, from £416pp b&cb, including Liverpool flights. 020-3897 1152, [loveholidays.com](http://loveholidays.com). Depart 18 April.

#### Short stay in Iceland

Located in the city centre, the Reykjavík Centrum Hotel offers 4 nights b&cb from £510pp, including Manchester flights. 020-8974 7200, [travelrepublic.co.uk](http://travelrepublic.co.uk). Depart 17 April.

#### Sampling Buenos Aires

The chic Mine Hotel Boutique in the Palermo district is offering six nights b&cb from £720pp (based on two sharing), including London flights. 020-3788 4844, [ebookers.com](http://ebookers.com). Depart 22 May.

#### 11-day Thai adventure

Combine the historical and the cultural with stays in Bangkok, Chiang Mai and Phuket. From £1,099pp b&cb, including Edinburgh flights. 020-3011 1520, [citrusolidays.co.uk](http://citrusolidays.co.uk). Depart 27 April.