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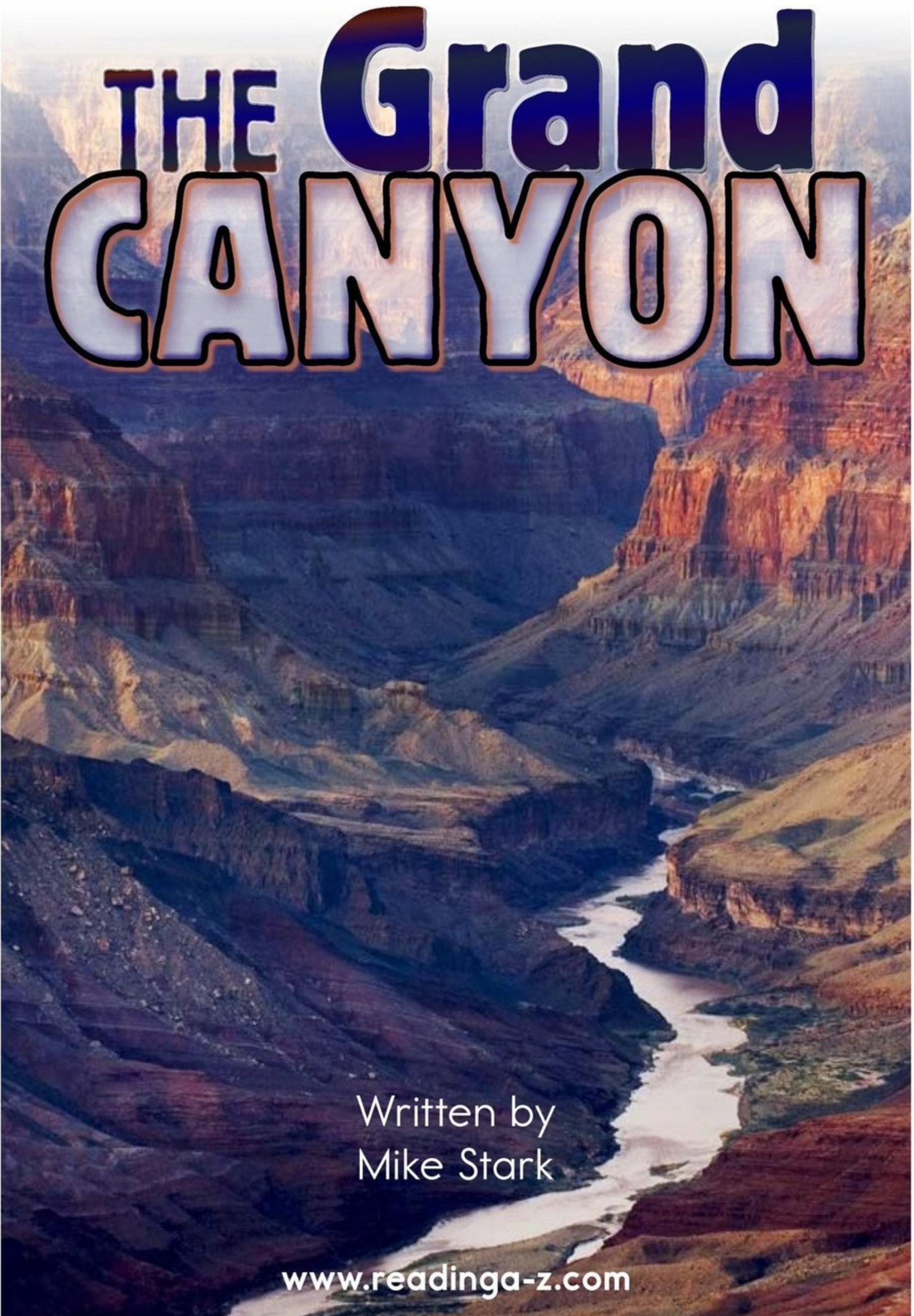
THE Grand CANYON

MULTI
level
H•K•N

Written by Mike Stark

www.readinga-z.com

THE Grand CANYON

A wide-angle photograph of the Grand Canyon at sunset. The sky is filled with warm, orange, and yellow hues. The canyon walls are layered rock, with deep shadows in the crevices and bright highlights where the sun hits the edges. The Colorado River flows through the bottom of the canyon, appearing as a light blue-grey ribbon against the reddish-brown earth.

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Focus Question

What is the Grand Canyon, and why is it special?

Words to Know

erosion

national park

landscape

protected

marvel

sediment

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Correlation

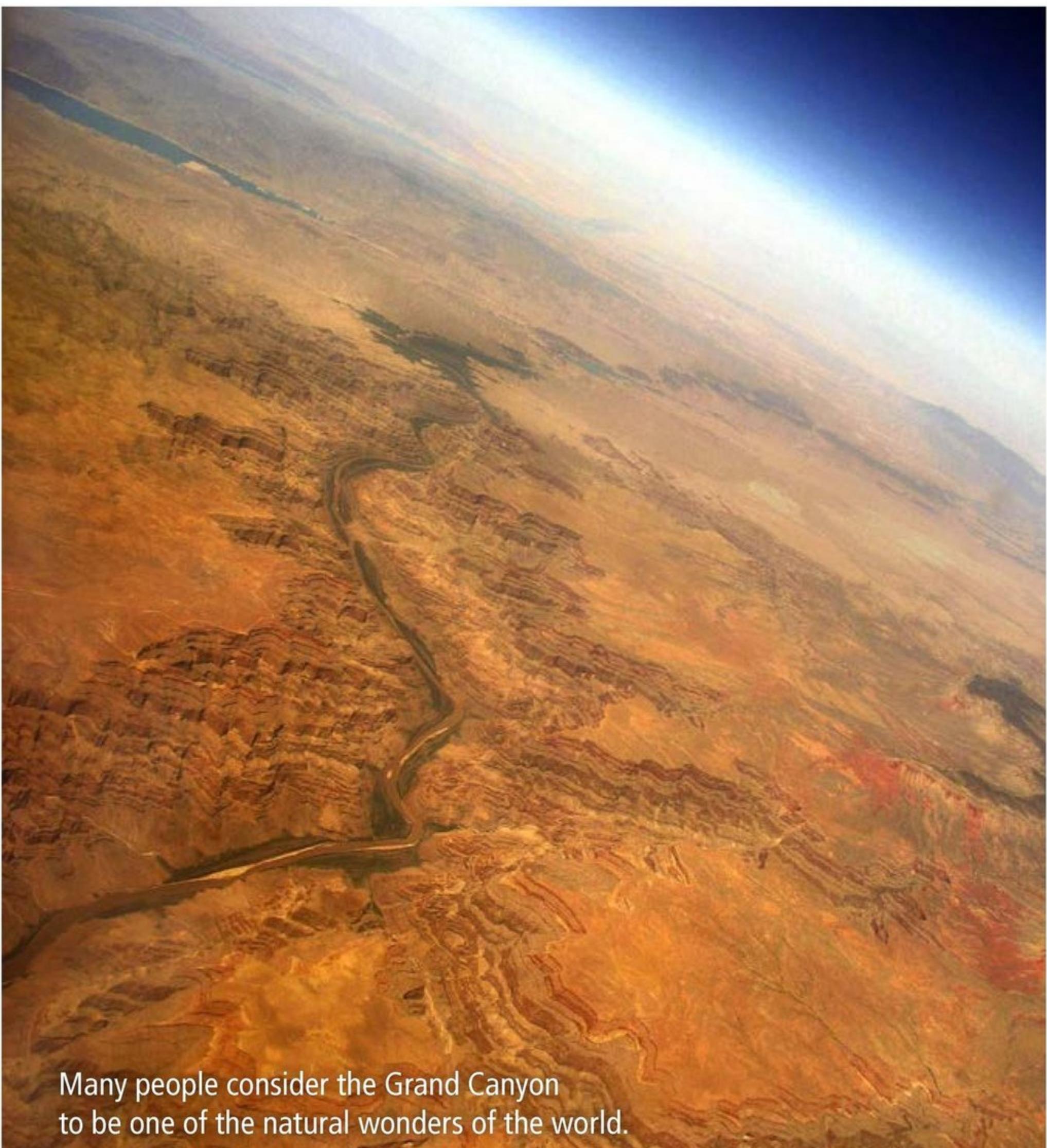
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Location of the Grand Canyon



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Many people consider the Grand Canyon
to be one of the natural wonders of the world.

A Canyon So Grand

In the high desert of northern Arizona is a canyon so big that we can see it from space. This dazzling place is called the Grand Canyon, and for good reason.

A canyon is a deep valley with steep sides, usually formed by a river.

The Grand Canyon National Park stretches across about 1,900 square miles (4,921 sq km). In some places, the canyon is more than a mile (1.6 km) deep. It can take two weeks to pass through on a river raft.

The canyon walls are rusty red and yellow, and are made from rocks that are millions of years old.



At its widest point, the canyon stretches 18 miles (29 km) across.

The Grand Canyon became a national park in 1919. National parks are special places. The land and the animals that live there are **protected**. More than four million people visit Grand Canyon National Park every year.



Theodore Roosevelt was the first president to make steps toward protecting the Grand Canyon.

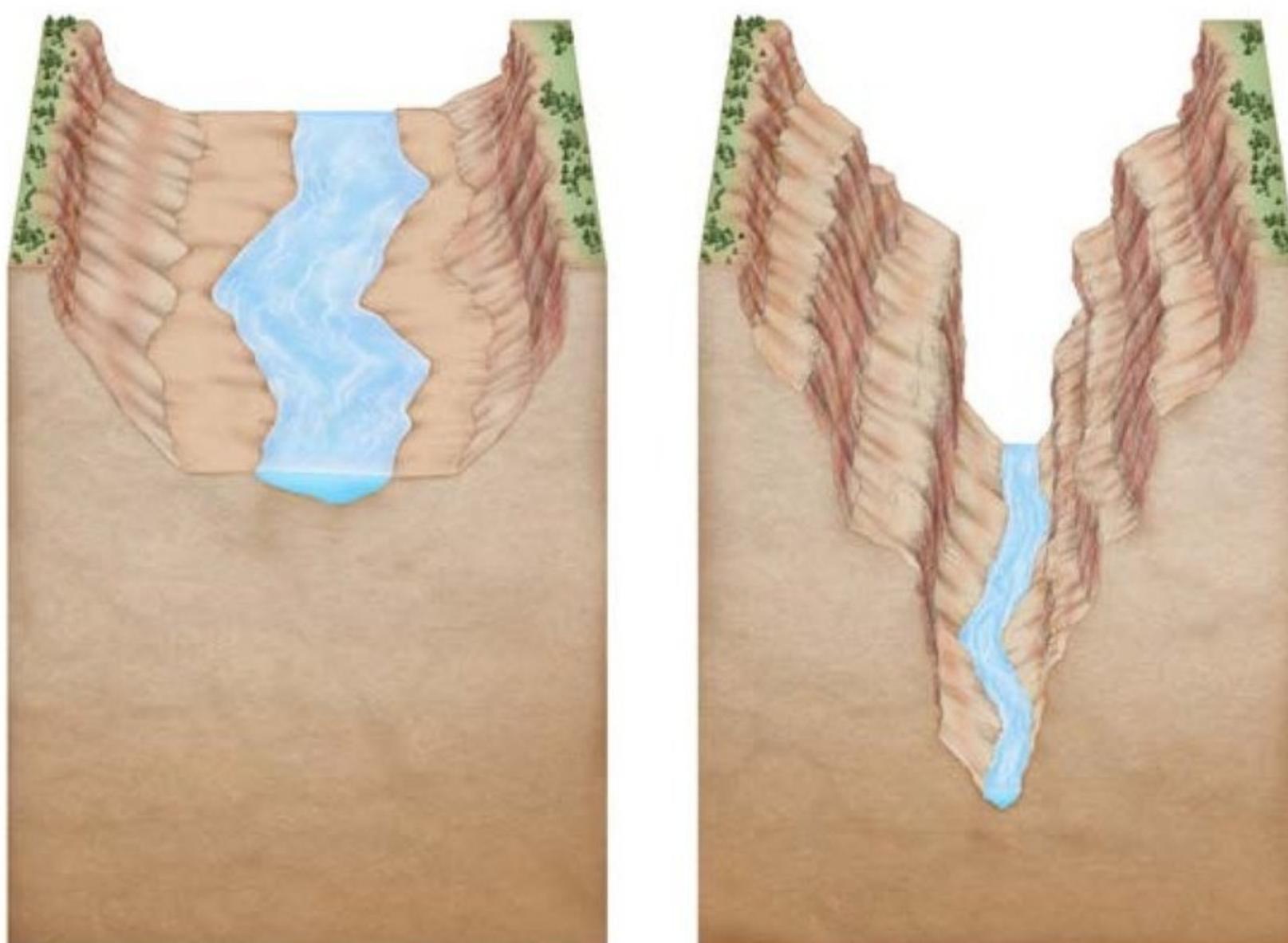
Incredible Condors

Don't forget to look overhead! The canyon is home to giant, rare birds called California condors. California condors almost went extinct. There were just twenty-two left in the world in 1982. They were captured so they could breed in safety. Today there are about four hundred living in the wild. California condors frequent the Grand Canyon during the summer, and several of them were raised in caves within or near the canyon.



Formation

Time and **erosion** helped shape the Grand Canyon into what it is today. Erosion happens when bits of the ground are worn away by wind or water. For millions of years, the Colorado River ran over the land and wore away the earth. At first the river water made only a shallow channel in the ground. Over time, it formed an amazing canyon.



The Colorado River erodes soil, rock, and other materials, making the Grand Canyon deeper every day.

The Grand Canyon's walls have stripes of different colors. The stripes are layers of **sediment** that stacked on top of each other over millions of years. Each layer shows a different time in Earth's history. The layers are much like the layers of a cake. The river is like a knife that cuts into the cake and shows the layers inside.



Nearly forty rock layers form the walls of the Grand Canyon.



Scientists study rock formations in the canyon and other clues from the past, such as footprints left by animals millions of years ago.

The canyon's layers give us a peek into the past and help scientists understand how Earth has changed over time. Scientists say the rocks at the bottom of the canyon are nearly two billion years old.



Visitors may spot ruins of Native American cliff dwellings in some areas in the Grand Canyon.

Exploration

People have been coming to the Grand Canyon for at least twelve thousand years. Groups of Native Americans camped, hunted, made tools, and grew food in the area.

The region was home to many tribes. They built homes and other structures into the sides of the canyon.

By the 1850s, the Grand Canyon was still mostly unexplored by Americans. They sometimes called the area “the great unknown.”

In 1869, John Wesley Powell led a dangerous trip through the canyon. The group traveled on the Colorado River. It was the first recorded trip of its kind.



In 1871, Powell led a second trip down the river and helped make maps of the area.

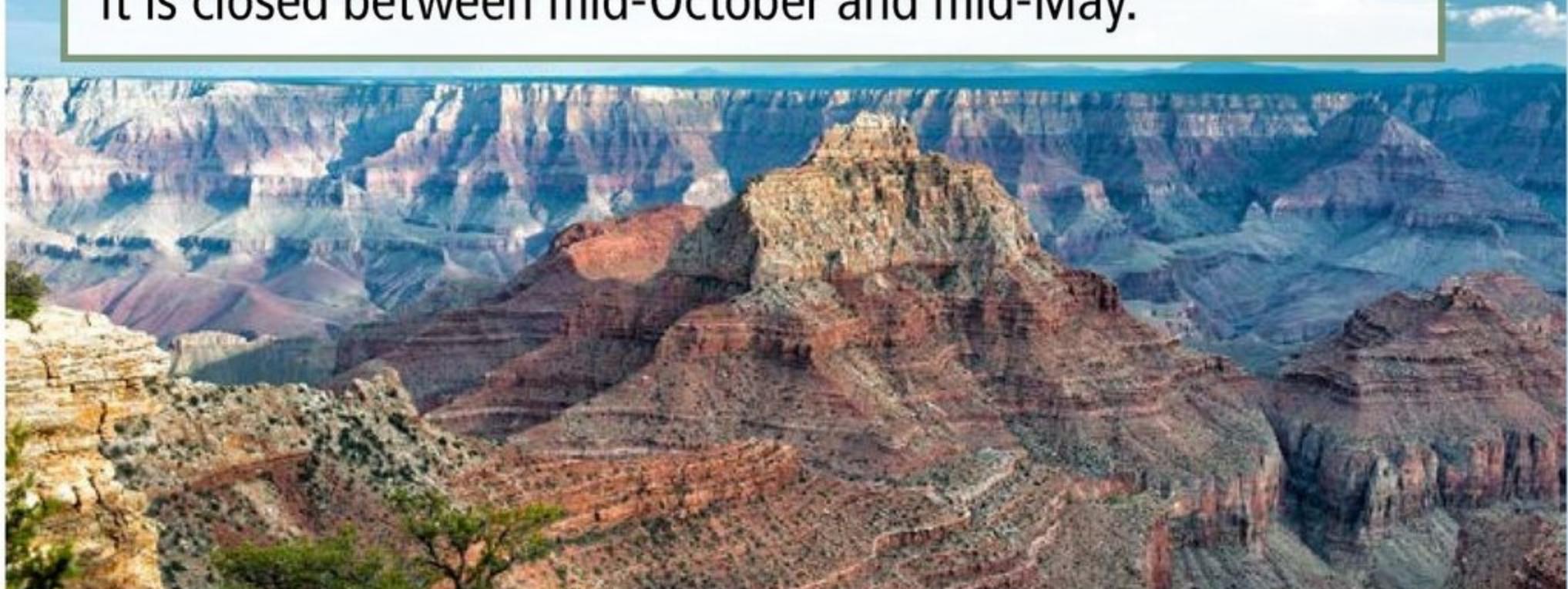


The South Rim has many popular viewing points.

Over time, more people came to the Grand Canyon to explore, photograph its **landscape**, and ride the river. The canyon became even more popular after it was made a national park.

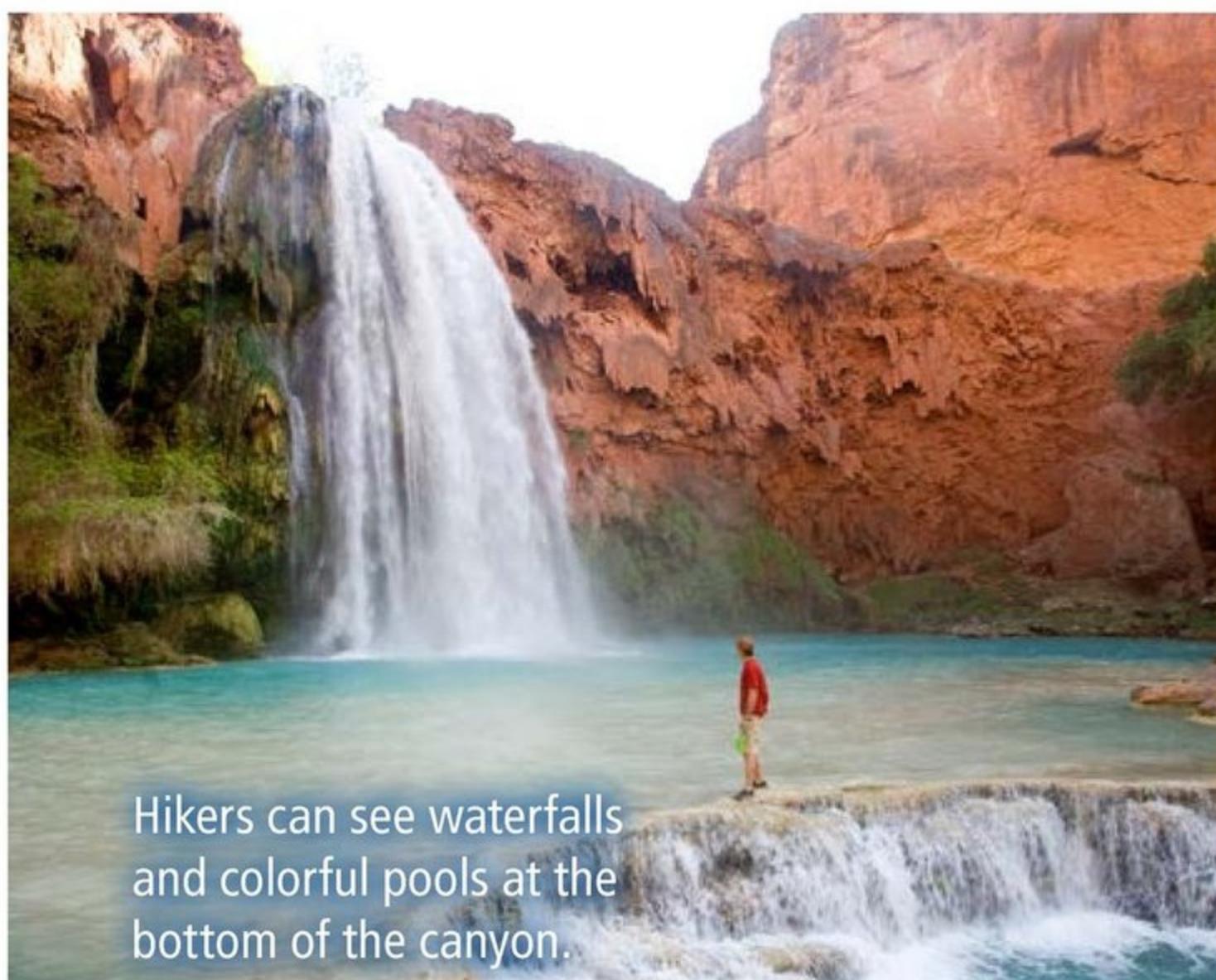
A Tale of Two Rims

The South Rim of the Grand Canyon is the most popular and is open every day of the year. Across the canyon is the North Rim, which is a 212-mile (342 km) drive away. Fewer people visit because it takes longer to reach for most. The North Rim is at a higher elevation so it gets more snow. It is closed between mid-October and mid-May.



Make Your Own Adventure

Today millions of visitors go to Grand Canyon National Park. Some hikers explore the far reaches of the canyon for weeks. There are even cabins at the bottom where visitors can stay.



Hikers can see waterfalls and colorful pools at the bottom of the canyon.



Some visitors ride mules into the canyon.

Rafting on the Colorado River is also popular. The Grand Canyon includes about 277 miles (446 km) of twisting river. The water can be rough, fast, and rocky in some places, making for a grand adventure.

People also love to walk on trails along the rim of the canyon. They **marvel** at miles of colorful walls and watch as sunlight and shadows move across the landscape.



Many visitors raft with the help of a tour guide.



The Skywalk is a glass bridge that stretches over the canyon for an amazing view.



Big horn sheep are one of many kinds
of animals that are protected in the Grand Canyon

A Natural Wonder

The Grand Canyon is one of the most incredible sights in nature. Its land, animals, and history will always be protected. Everyone who visits this national park is rewarded with an adventure—and a view—unlike anything else on Earth.



The national park is a beautiful sight in winter.

Glossary

erosion (<i>n.</i>)	the natural removal of rock or soil by water, wind, or ice (p. 7)
landscape (<i>n.</i>)	the visible features of an area of land, seen as a whole (p. 12)
marvel (<i>v.</i>)	to feel wonder and surprise (p. 14)
national park (<i>n.</i>)	an area of government-owned land protected for its historic importance or natural landscape and wildlife (p. 5)
protected (<i>adj.</i>)	guarded or defended from harm or danger (p. 6)
sediment (<i>n.</i>)	particles of dirt and rock that are carried by water, wind, or ice and deposited elsewhere (p. 8)

The Grand Canyon

A Reading A-Z Level N Leveled Book

Word Count: 563

Connections

Writing and Art

What would you like to do at the Grand Canyon? Why?

Draw a picture and write five or more sentences about it.

Social Studies

Trace the Colorado River on a map.

List which states it flows through or between.

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