



HOUSTON PARADE STEERS STRAIGHT INTO FUN AFTER A TURN TO WHIMSY / **D16**

APRIL 29, 2007

GOING PLACES

Portugal beckons

Try a milho frito in Madeira, contemplate the Age of Exploration in Belem, stay in a king's villa, and consider the potential of empty space at an architecture event in Lisbon. These are some of the possibilities that a visit to Portugal offers this season. The architecture festival, called the First Lisbon Architecture Triennial, will focus on "Urban Voids" when it takes place May 31-June 2. Exhibits, seminars and competitions will be themed on the possibilities of regenerating empty urban spaces; www.trienalidelisboa.com. The Lisbon Village Festival, June 7-24, will showcase digital cinema; lisbon.villagefestival.net. Other events include the Estoril Craft Fair, beginning June 21; and the Tour of Portugal bicycle race (Volta a Portugal), Aug. 5-15, www.volta-portugal.com/.

—The Associated Press

THIS & THAT

Bad English

On the floor at Beijing's Capital Airport, a sign reads: "Careful Landslip Attention Security." On a billboard, this mysterious message: "Shangri-La is in you mind, but your Buffalo is not." In an elevator, parents are warned: "Please lead your child to tare the life." Beijing officials have promised to crack down on bad English in preparation for the 2008 Olympics and they've asked the public to help police bad grammar and faulty syntax. With 500,000 foreigners expected for the Olympics, taxi drivers who can't speak English — or signs that mangle the language — could be an embarrassment and distract from the \$40 billion being poured into rebuilding the city for the games.

—The Associated Press

CLOSE TO HOME

Cuisine in Vegas

If only what happens in Vegas really stays in Vegas!

That's what you'll be thinking after overindulging in Bon Appétit magazine's Culinary and Wine Focus May 17-20 in Las Vegas at Bellagio, Caesar's Palace, Lake Las Vegas and Wynn Las Vegas. Editor-in-chief Barbara Fairchild, executive chef Cat Cora and other celebrity chefs are hosting a weekend of culinary events, including gourmet meals, workshops and demonstrations by master chefs, the first-ever Nevada wine auction and an alfresco dinner featuring the music of Grammy Award-winning singer and pianist John Legend.

After four days of nonstop Maytag Bleu Cheese Soufflé and Fabrique Delices Truffle Mousse Pâté, there's no way you'll be able to hide what you did in Vegas.

Tickets are \$55-\$350; packages are available. For more information, call 866-211-1631 or go to www.bonappetitfocus.com.

—Charlotte Boechler

FROM RIM TO RIVER

Condor colony, new Skywalk among the surprises at the Grand Canyon

By **ANNE Z. COOKE**
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NEWS-PRESS CORRESPONDENTS

The new glass-bottomed Skywalk — which extends 70 feet beyond the rocky edge — and the sheer panic you may feel when looking down aren't the only surprises awaiting you on a trip to the Grand Canyon. Head to the South Rim, where you'll find all kinds of them.

The oldest exposed rocks in this mighty gorge — with an elevation of 6,860 feet at the rim and a more than 4,000-foot drop to Phantom Ranch on the Colorado River — are 2 billion years old. As the plateau rose and the river cut a path down through the softer rock, the hard layers remained, leaving a fabulous sculpted forest of shapes: temples, spires, spikes, mesas and hanging cliffs.

The views from Grand Canyon Village, on the South Rim, are among the world's best known and most often photographed. So why do some travelers, arriving for their first visit, approach the rim in excited anticipation, look out over the spectacle and find that they feel — surprise! — disappointed?

My guess is that documentary films, shot over days or weeks by professionals with top-flight equipment, have spoiled us. The look of the Grand Canyon, subtle though it is, varies from hour to hour and day to day. In early morning, dark shadows hide the deepest ancient layers, rock formed in the Precambrian era. By noon, the harsh hot Arizona sun washes out the most vivid reds and golds. Late afternoon haze, spreading through the gorge, creates a flat, two-dimensional look.

Getting to know the Grand Canyon takes sharp eyes and time. Stay a couple of days, keep looking, wait for good light and walk a mile or so down the Bright Angel Trail. With patience, your expectations will be rewarded.

But there's a newer, even more exciting surprise at the South Rim these days. A colony of 60-some California condors, black with 10-foot wingspans, bald heads and distinctive white markings, have taken up residence in the canyon's solitary reaches.

A decade ago, six (or fewer) of these birds remained in the wild, destined for extinction as biologists debated the best way to save them. Eventually, all were captured and bred in captivity, producing a starter group of healthy chicks.

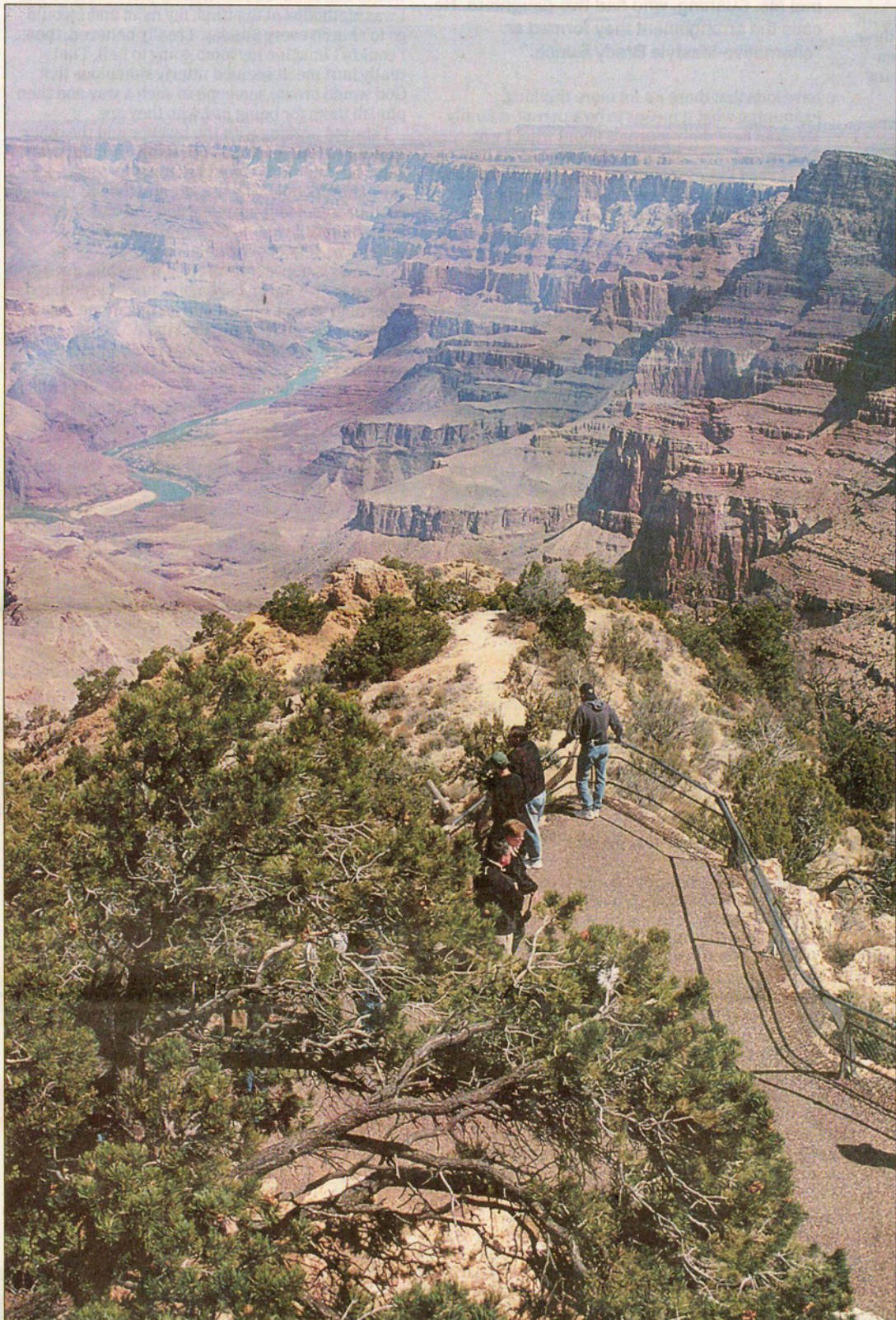
Please see **CANYON** on **D15**

IF YOU GO

Grand Canyon National Park's South Rim is 90 miles north of Flagstaff, Ariz., via Highway 180, or State Route 64. The park is open year-round.

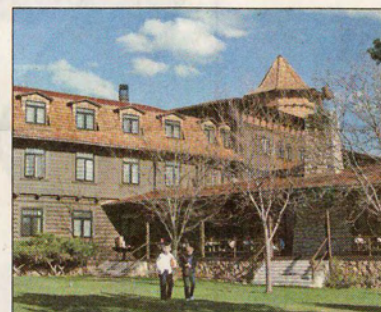
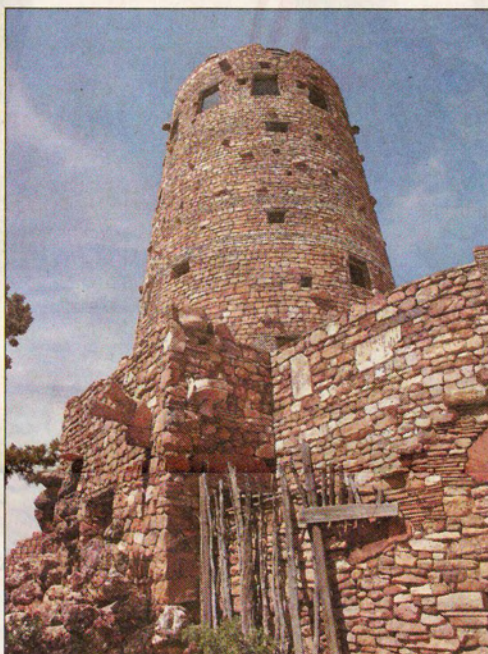
A variety of lodging is available. For advance reservations, contact Xanterra Parks & Resorts, the concessionaire that manages the properties, at 888-297-2757. For same-day reservations, call 928-638-2631. You can also check out the Web sites at www.grandcanyonlodges.com and www.xanterra.com.

Double rooms in low season at the El Tovar start at \$134; \$125 at Kachina and Thunderbird; \$96 at Yavapai; \$89 at the Bright Angel Lodge; and \$76 at Maswik.



STEVE HAGGERTY PHOTOS

From the Desert View overlook, on the South Rim, visitors can see the Colorado River and the Palisades of the Desert in the Grand Canyon.



Clockwise, from far left, the Desert View Watchtower now houses a gift store and kiva room. California condor number 27 is one of 50 in the Arizona Game and Fish Department recovery program. The El Tovar Hotel, styled as a European hunting lodge by Charles F. Whittlesey, opened in 1905.

Planning a summer trip? Make reservations now

■ CANYON

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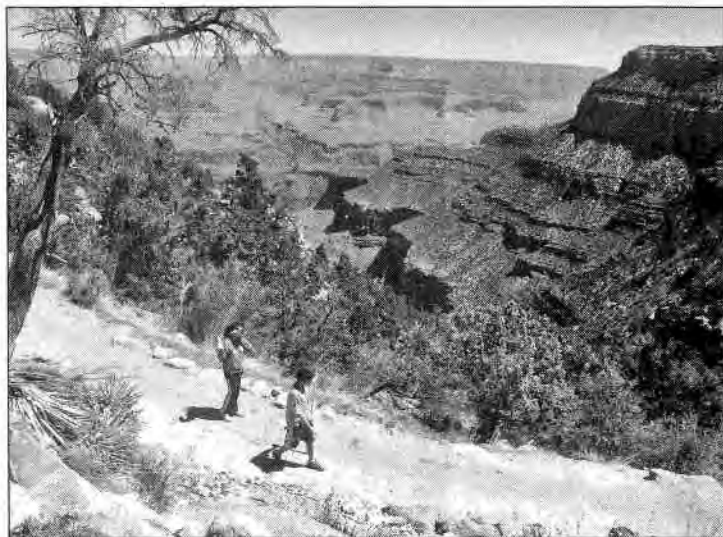
Released first in California (unsuccessfully) and then in the Grand Canyon, where they're beyond the reach of man, the birds — carrion eaters, like vultures — have made an amazing comeback.

You'll see them perched near the rim, sunning themselves and looking for discarded ham sandwiches, or circling overhead, soaring on the updrafts. The shuttle bus drivers invariably stop traffic to show them off, pointing out their characteristic white breast feathers.

Another surprise at the Grand Canyon is the crowds in July and August, the hottest and busiest time to come. Make room reservations now; if nothing's available, don't give up hope. Your next best strategy is to stay overnight in Flagstaff, Ariz., 90 miles south, and plan a day trip to the canyon rim. You can still continue to check for last-minute cancellations; they occur more often than not.

Though most people stay on the South Rim, where a dozen vista points offer varied views and new angles, you can get a better sense of the canyon and a closer look at the walls if you hike for two or three miles down the Bright Angel Trail, the best-maintained of the half-dozen trails that go from rim to river. Take a lunch, wear a hat, apply sunscreen and carry water, no matter what the weather looks like.

The last surprise? The six lodges in Grand Canyon Village have a total of only 992 rooms. And they're not expensive, just hard to book. But there's plenty of parking, restaurants, cafes, cafeterias and shops. Four lodges are at the rim: the El Tovar, the Bright Angel Lodge, the Kachina and the Thunderbird. These fill up first. The Maswik and Yavapai lodges, a quarter of a mile back from the rim, are actually more convenient for



At left, visitors take a midday hike down Bright Angel Trail, on the South Rim of the Grand Canyon. At right, Kachina Lodge's 1960s architecture is famously known as "Mission 66."

families, with less traffic and more space.

The El Tovar, on the National Register of Historic Places, first opened in 1905 as one of the famous "Harvey Houses," designed by Charles F. Whittlesey for the first wave of travelers to come to the Southwest. Recently restored, it set a pattern for what is known as National Park rustic architecture, a style that uses local stone, rough-peeled logs and bold shapes for a look that combines log cabin, mountain chalet and hunting lodge in one.

Mary Colter, who designed five other South Rim structures, did the interiors, with heavy furniture, Navajo rugs, American Indian designs, art deco fixtures and mounted trophy heads of elk, deer, moose, bison and pronghorn. The guest rooms are similarly decorated, but have been updated with private bath, better lighting, modern fixtures, telephone and television.

The hotel is always sold out months in advance, but you can tour the lobby and eat in the dining room, an experience not to be missed. Reservations are essential.

The Bright Angel Lodge, designed by Mary Colter in 1935, blends into its surroundings better. An example of her later style, it echoes local pueblo architecture, with a combination of stone, stucco and simple timbers.

It's not large; there are only 37 rooms and 49 cabins, all renovated. The restaurant is casual, with a large gift and sundries shop adjacent to it. The site is close to the head of the Bright Angel Trail and there's parking behind the lodge.

The other two hotels on the rim are the Kachina and the Thunderbird. Built in the 1960s, when thousands of American families were traveling by car and the National Park was desperate for more hotel rooms, these two hotels, plain rectangular structures, seemed like a good solution.



STEVE HAGGERTY PHOTOS

Dubbed Mission 66 architecture, they're still standing. The rooms, recently redecorated, are sparse but comfortable, with electronic key locks, tub and shower combination, mini fridge, coffee makers, clock radios and phones. Kachina guests check in at the El Tovar; Thunderbird guests check in at the Bright Angel Lodge. All four of these hotels are within five minutes of each other.

Maswik Lodge is a self-contained development with two 10-story buildings and is built a quarter-mile back from the rim in a ponderosa pine forest at the southwest end of Grand Canyon Village. The lodge has 278 motel-style rooms, renovated in 2000 and outfitted with two queen beds or a king. Each has a private bath, telephone, TV and hair dryer.

Maswik's public lounges are

especially convenient, with a family-style cafeteria, sports bar, gift shop and tour and transportation desk. Maswik is a 10-minute walk from the rim.

Yavapai Lodge, at the far east end of the South Rim, near Mather Point, is the center of its own village, served by the new Canyon View Visitors' Center. Designed to accommodate tour groups, it has 358 rooms in low-rise buildings, each room with two queen beds, private bath, telephone, hair dryer and ceiling fan. From here you can walk to the Mather Point Overlook, or take the free shuttle bus to other vista points on the rim. The village has a post office, cafeteria, gift shop, bank and tour desk. For campers, Mather Campground is adjacent, not far from the General Store. Yavapai is likely to have rooms available at the last minute.



TRAVEL
IMMUNIZATION CLINIC