

ARIZONA

BERT SAGARA/GETTY IMAGES

Millions of people visit the Grand Canyon each year, but only a few thousand see it from the Colorado River.

## GRANDEUR OF THE RAPIDS

Seeing the Canyon from the bottom up

BY KATE SIBER | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

**G**RAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK — On a cool morning in March, between a pair of thousand-foot cliffs flanking the Colorado River, my friend Donna Dignan and I sat listening in the bow of a tulip-red raft. In the Grand Canyon, rafters hear rapids long before they see them.

The sound of our first big one started as a low rumble, growing slowly into a menacing growl. As we rounded a bend, the river dropped off the horizon into House Rock Rapids, and the sound became a thundering roar echoing off the canyon walls.

Our friend Jay Daniel sat in the middle of the raft, an oar in each hand, as the current swept us toward the rapid. Donna and I tightened our life jackets, gripped the raft's straps, and tried to settle our flip-flopping stomachs. The raft plunged into the churning maelstrom of green-and-white breakers, and, thrown into the moment, we forgot all our nervousness. We bounced along and shrieked with glee as the waves tossed our raft and doused us.

"You've got a good line, Jay!" yelled Donna, scouting the waves to come. "Now pull right!" Jay looked behind and steered just left of a jumble of ragged rocks, then right of two Volkswagen-sized hydraulic holes. We rolled over the waves and slipped into the harmless riffles below the rapid — power-washed, jubilant, and still upright.

"That was awesome!" Donna yelled as Jay raised his hands for high fives.

It was day four of our 18-day, 226-mile raft journey through the Grand Canyon. For river aficionados, this is the country's marquee river trip, not only for its theme-park-ride rapids, grandiose desert scenery, and storied history, but also for its sheer length and wildness. Between Lees Ferry and Diamond Creek, rafters encounter only one sign of modern civilization: Phantom Ranch, a hike-in lodge at river mile 88; otherwise there are no roads, no convenience stores, no Starbucks.

Perhaps that explains why there was a 25-year waiting list for self-guided raft-trip permits until three years ago, when the National Park Service changed to a weighted lottery, in which priority goes to those who have never experienced the river. Now, a prospective rafter can procure a permit in a matter of months or years instead of decades. While many people circumvent the lottery by signing up for commercially guided raft trips, there are advantages to doing it oneself.

"People enjoy the challenge and adventure of piloting their own raft and making their own plans and decisions," said Steve Sullivan, permits program manager for the Grand Canyon's River Permits Office. "And that's the least expensive way to do this."

Rafting the Grand Canyon without a guide does, however, require some know-how. The Park Service requires that on each trip at least one person has rowed the Colorado or a similar river and can act as a guide for the rest of the group. Some are former guides or enthusiasts; others are graduates of raft-rowing courses.

While the Grand Canyon has a reputation for large rapids, most are not overly technical or dangerous: From among the 24,000 annual river runners, there are an average of 45 reported accidents each year, 88 percent attributed to onshore injuries and medical issues like dehydration.

My boyfriend, Andrew Charnock, an avid kayaker, had long dreamed of floating the Grand Canyon. After entering four lotteries over two years, he won a permit for March 21, which allowed 16 people up to 21 days on the river.

Five friends agreed to row the boats, including Jay, a former Class V raft guide from Colorado who brought his own raft and acted as the lead boatman, and Curtis Pattillo, who brought his wooden dory, which is modeled after the craft that the river's first explorer, John Wesley Powell, used in 1869.

To aid the many do-it-yourselfers, several companies of

CANYON, Page M4

NEW ORLEANS

## Big Easy with a baby on board? It's still easy



ANDREW RYAN/GLOBE STAFF

The author and her daughter, Clara, head down Bourbon Street in May.

By Jennifer Peter  
GLOBE STAFF

As we made our way through the French Quarter, reeling from the swampy air and the midday cacophony of Bourbon Street, we could almost taste the jambalaya.

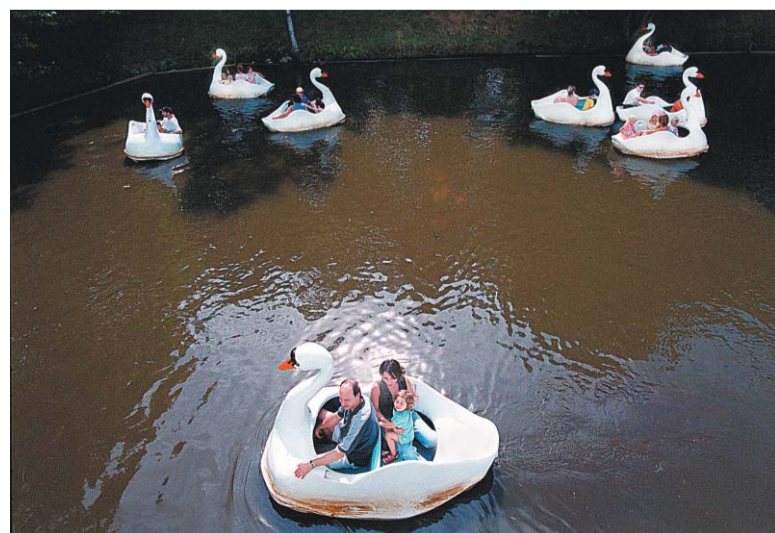
During our exhaustive research for this four-day jaunt, everyone had recommended Coop's Place, tourists and locals alike. Cheap, good, and Cajun, they said. The perfect spot for our inaugural lunch.

I opened the door, basked briefly in the icy air conditioning, and then stepped aside to let my husband roll in with the stroller. But the tattooed waitress, with a shake of her head, told us — without much Southern charm — that children were not allowed. Something about the electronic poker machines.

We reluctantly withdrew to the

NEW ORLEANS, Page M4

EXPLORE NEW ENGLAND



SUZANNE KREITER/GLOBE STAFF/FILE

**MORE THAN ENOUGH** New Haven's Little Italy. **M5**  
**COUNT TO 10** Kid stuff to do all over. **M5**

INSIDE

**HISTORICAL HAITI** Monuments to its rebellious past. **M3**