

# GRAND CANYON GOING QUIET?



The National Park Service recently released an Environmental Impact Statement featuring detailed plans to limit the noise from airborne tours over the Grand Canyon.

Most visitors who come to explore the diversity of the United States long to see the Grand Canyon. This spectacular natural phenomenon is closely associated with the top national treasures and hundreds of thousands of tourists come there every year to admire its beauty. An increasingly popular way of exploring the meandering canyon is from the birds-eye view. **Helicopter and small-aircraft tours carry as much as 400,000 tourists annually, and that has become a problem.** The National Park Service (NPS) has recently published a plan of how to reduce noise created by the over-park flights.

First contingency plans were in fact considered as early as in 1987. However, only this month did a more specific proposal of action become available. The NPS claims that the Grand Canyon deserves its peace and quiet so visitors trekking through get to hear the natural sounds rather than the ever-present humming of aircraft engines. **The NPS would like to maintain natural quiet for at least 75% of the day in at least 50% of the park every day.**

**The draft also aims to limit the height of daily flights and proposes a cap on daily airborne tours.** Tour operators are sceptical especially about the suggested conversion to quiet technology within a decade, which for most is financially out of reach. Many critics fear this will significantly limit the number of visitors and the park will end up suffering.

The NPS encourages the public to participate in a series of public debates on this topic and express their opinion by 6th June. There are overall four different plans as to how to fight the noise over the canyon and having the public participate should help the NPS get a broader and more objective idea about the general preference.

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