

# Global Geotourism Perspectives

12

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## **The Grand Canyon, USA**

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 Published by Goodfellow Publishers Limited, Woodeaton, Oxford, OX3 9TJ  
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# 12

## The Grand Canyon, USA: the experience of managing a world-class geotourism destination

Stephen Martin

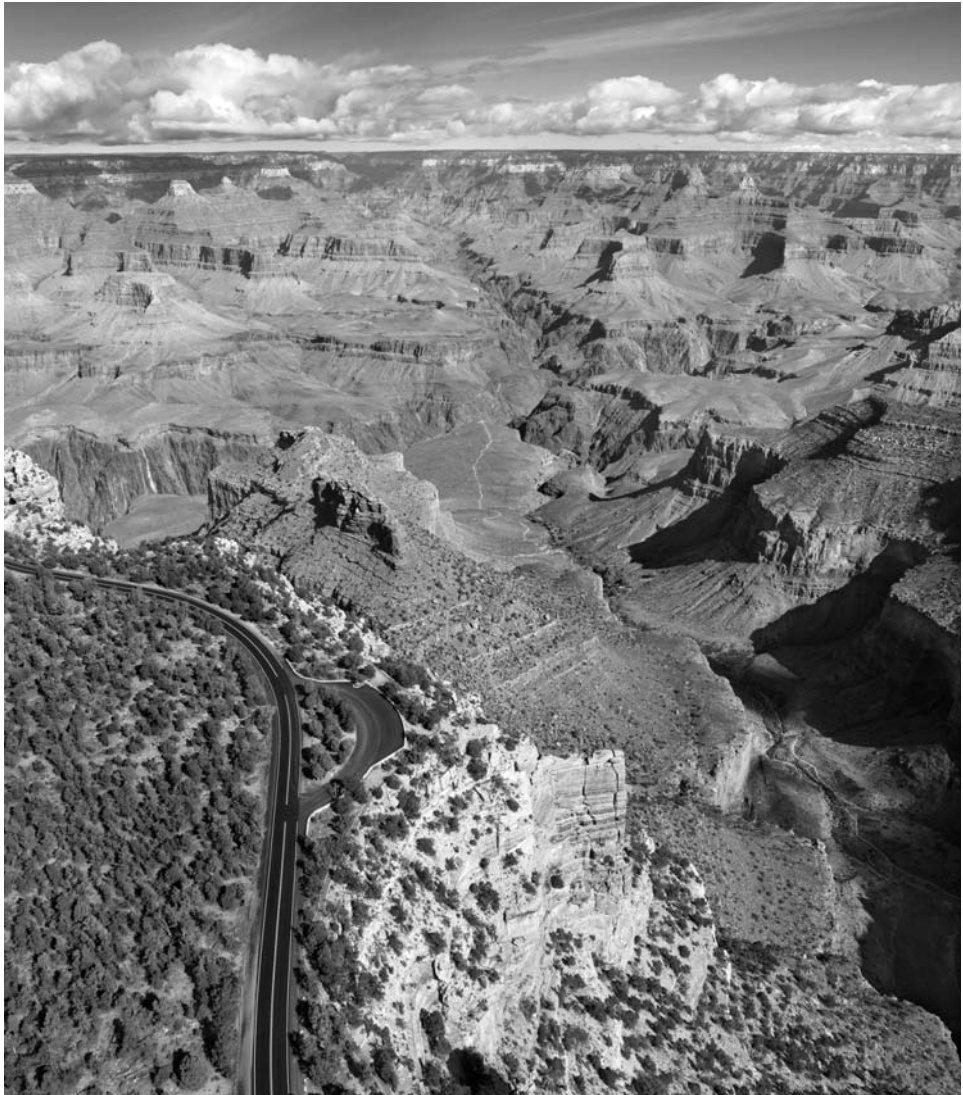
### Introduction

This chapter will discuss the management of the Grand Canyon and provide information to park and protected area managers on sustainable tourism, relations with communities and indigenous tribes, commercial services, education and partnerships. The premise of the chapter is the importance of the broad view of management perspectives that are required for successful management. This spectrum includes concepts of sustainability/cooperation/opportunities/resources and education (SCORE). Grand Canyon National Park's management history illustrates principles that could benefit any geopark or protected area.

The geology and unparalleled landscape present a myriad of values—both natural and cultural and provide a platform for sustainable economic development (Figure 12.1). Grand Canyon National Park (NP) and its tourism infrastructure evolved over time, beginning in the late 19th century. It manages diverse resources and infrastructure that vary from large-scale intensive visitor accommodation and transportation to remote 'ecotourism' centers. This challenge has led the National Park Service to create a system of evaluation and communication that helps Grand Canyon NP keep its management programs on track and allows others to learn from this experience. For any program to thrive, managers must attain success in a spectrum of areas. Success in any one area can be perceived as positive but may not result in long-term viability of program management.

Grand Canyon National Park has attracted visitors and scientists for more than a century. Today, over 4 million visitors a year from all over the globe visit the park in order to see it, learn from it, recreate in it, and to be inspired by the spectacular landscape. The tourism business generated by the park directly contributes over US\$200 million a year to local economies and as much as US\$800 million dollars to the region.

**Figure 12.1:**  
The Grand  
Canyon, an  
unparalleled  
landscape



## The geologic foundation

The geologic setting of the Grand Canyon sets the stage for the remarkable landscape. The early Indians referred to the canyon and the plateau country as 'mountain lying down'. Unlike many canyons of the world this is not a mountain landscape where the sense of the river running from the peaks to the oceans is immediately evident. The Colorado River springs from mountains 1600 river km away. The plateau that the river cuts through represents 160,934 square km of notable geologic features that the Grand Canyon is at the center of. The top of the plateau is relatively flat, reaching a height of 2438 m as the river runs through

**Chapter extract**

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