

What did you do for your job today? This is what I did! 20070801 – Pink Jeep Tours – Grand Canyon West Rim Severe Flooding and Weather

Over the past two years I have been guiding tours for [Pink Jeep Tours](#) to areas around Las Vegas of which most of the trips are to the [Grand Canyon West Rim](#) (GCW) that is owned and controlled by the Hualapai Indians. I have heard stories from many other guides about the potential of flash flooding on Diamond Bar Rd which is the dirt road leading to GCW. I have been highly interested in experiencing severe flooding and weather at GCW. Today was such a day for my 212th trip to GCW. I enjoyed the trip so much I had to ensure the experience was well documented. The pictorial and video diary can be found at http://www.kcmeyer.com/Grand_Canyon/20070801-Pink_Jeep_Tours-GCW-severe_flooding_and_weather.

The day started by picking up two couples from the [Bellagio](#) at 07:30 am and another couple at [Monte Carlo](#). We left Las Vegas about 07:45 am. We make a short stop at the [Hoover Dam](#) for some pictures, and then continued through the [Lake Mead National Recreation Area](#) along Hwy 93 south stopping in [Dolan Springs](#) for a bathroom break.

Our company had nine vehicles (Pinks) going to CGW today. I happened to be second in the first wave of three vehicles. Jean was in front with a rental vehicle since a couple of our vehicles were down for maintenance requiring the fleet to be supplemented with a rental. Dave was just behind me as we started on the dirt road around 09:50 am. We noticed a rain cloud ahead of us, but it didn't look bad at all. Although, the storm strengthened quickly. We encountered heavy rain within about 15 minutes into the dirt road below Rattlesnake Hill and before Diamond Bar Ranch. A few minutes after that we began driving through small rivers. As we continued, the water was starting to get about 3 to 4 inches deep in a few spots, but it wasn't bad. We then encountered small hail at 10:10 am. About three-quarters of the way along the 14-mile dirt road the rain let up. We were then on the pavement indicating the Hualapai Indian Reservation.

As we arrived at the welcome terminal at 10:30 am we noticed an ominous dark cloud over the area of the dirt road. The guides behind us are getting hit hard. The three of us had people flying on helicopters to view the canyon from the air while descending to the river to float on a boat. All our guests left on the helicopters by about 11:15 am. The storm clouds were getting even darker and bigger. Afterwards, I realized I should have truly given my guests an option as to whether they wanted to continue with the helicopters or not since if the weather gets too bad they can be trapped in the canyon. I had two umbrellas in my vehicle and another two personal ones I brought along with me if needed. My guests requested two of the umbrellas. Since this is the monsoon season I bring along a raincoat and a waterproof hat for myself.

At this time Dave and I began to realize there are no other Pinks here, as they should have arrived by now. We thus realized they must be stuck on the dirt road. (I later discovered from one of the guides that at 10:20 am, they were stuck in the middle of the dirt road with over 3 feet of water flowing down the road. They witnessed a large rock hauler truck being pushed by the water and a couple buses getting stuck. The guide had to quickly move up the side of the road to get out of the worst of the flood still with water flowing under the vehicle. He was trapped for 45 minutes until the flood waters receded enough so he can travel down the road to more level ground). I tried to contact the office with the company issued satellite phone assigned to me (lucky for the three of us, one of us had a satellite phone as they are randomly distributed to some of the guides for remote trips) to let them know none of the other Pinks have arrived. The signal would not go through due to the dense cloud cover. I then borrowed the satellite phone system for another tour company inside the terminal to speak with the office discovering three Pinks never made it down Rattlesnake Hill while three others were stuck at the Diamond Bar Ranch halfway through the dirt road. The three Pinks above the hill later realized the flood damage was too great deciding to return back to Las Vegas. The three Pinks at the ranch are not able to go in either direction as they are trapped between extensive flood damage areas.

The storm was starting to engulf the terminal area. The last group of helicopters arrived at 11:56 am including Jean's group. The helicopters left right away to retrieve more guests from the canyon floor. Although, the helicopters returned at 12:08 pm as they were unable to penetrate the cloud layer covering the canyon. Dave and I's guests along with another 15 people or so were stuck on the canyon floor with minimal cover. The last plane I saw take off was at 12:03 pm. All flights are now grounded. Surprisingly, the Indians were still shuttling people to the Skywalk on buses even though the weather in that direction looked very bad.

I tried to contact our office several times to provide an update, but no satellite communication was successful due to the dense cloud cover. Jean took her people to the [Hualapai Western Ranch](#) for lunch intending to remain there. Dave and I remained in our Pinks waiting for the weather to clear. Dave and I were able to communicate with each other using the radios

in our vehicles, but Jean does not have a radio since she is in a rental. I decided to go to the ranch to give Jean one of my personal walkie-talkies I usually bring on trips if they are needed. While on the way, I took pictures of that journey. There were small rivers in the area of the ranch, but not bad. I then returned back to the terminal. The weather started to clear so we tried to communicate with the office again. We discovered from a Hualapai representative that a helicopter was taken to survey the damage on the dirt road discovered several sections were wiped out with heavy damage and debris covering the road. We thus realized we are trapped here for quite a while. By this time, the Skywalk at Eagle Point was closed and the next viewpoint, Guano Point, was also closed. The lowest temperature experienced was 64 degrees. Quite amazing when over two weeks ago the temps were over 105.

Jean checked to see if any of the plane flights already at the terminal had any seats available in case anyone needed to fly back quickly. No such availability existed. While I was trying to contact our office, I discovered my guests were brought up on a helicopter about 01:30 pm. I also asked the office to contact my wife so she is aware of the situation. My guests indicated the tent covering at the bottom leaked so they were unfortunately all wet. I told them I am going to drive them to the Hualapai Ranch for lunch and to wait there for further word as to what we will do. Dave's people have not returned yet. I showed my people what they needed for the ranch, then intended to return to the terminal to relieve Dave so he can get something to eat while I looked after his guests. Thankfully Dave arrived at the ranch at that time with his guests about 02:00 pm.

I again tried satellite communicate with the office to let them know everyone is now together. The office let me know that they are trying to work out an arrangement with Vision Airlines to charter a special flight to GCW to fly our guests back to Las Vegas. I was told "to check back in", but the connection died and I was not able to clarify. I tried to reconnect, but again the cloud cover would not permit me to do so. I ensured the guests were made aware of the situation and that the road may not open for maybe one to two hours. We will unfortunately not be able to go anywhere until that time and thus to made due the best you can with the situation. Most of the guests were in great spirits, but a few people were upset intending to complain to our office accordingly. I understood and apologized, but explained we unfortunately cannot control the weather.

I then realized further down the road from the ranch is the Quartermaster Viewpoint of which we used to take all our tours before the Skywalk opened. Although, all contracts were changed to ensure all visitor volume is funneled to the Skywalk. I asked permission from the Hualapai manager for the area for our Pinks to drive to Quartermaster at 02:50 pm. The permission was granted. We then took our guests to Quartermaster to enjoy the silence, solitude, and serenity offered by the Grand Canyon. The other viewpoints would have been very busy so this was a pleasant surprise. None of us have been to this viewpoint since the Skywalk opened four months ago. We were very happy to enjoy the view once again. We even went on a little hike like we have done in the past. Since a couple helicopters were in operation to bring people back to the surface we were able to hear a large waterfall and water flowing through the large wash through one of the side canyons. One of my guests continued to hike further into the canyon way ahead of me even though I indicated such was not the intention. In the end I was very happy to hike down further as I was able to view the waterfall that was a few hundred feet tall. I took a lot of great pictures and videos. The low cloud cover provided for very amazing scenery. The experience was wonderful for all of us. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed this opportunity. Even one of my guests who were quite upset with the experience so far stated Pink Jeep redeemed them and they felt their Grand Canyon experience was fulfilled. Although, that same guest still complained to their hotel indicating they should have been informed about the 50% chance of rain, I was very unprofessional during the tour with all the pictures I took, I talked too much about personal things, and I provided my website to share the pictures I took of the experience. Pink Jeep cannot control the weather. This was an amazing event that required pictures to be kept and to be shared. Also, what else am I going to talk about when I'm with the same guests for over 13 hours? The guest managed to receive a full refund eventhough they received the entire Grand Canyon experience and more than intended and I have pictures of that guest very happy at the canyon's edge. My other guests expressed more than once how happy they were with the tour and with me. Simply can't please everyone.

Even though I would have liked to have stayed at Quartermaster Viewpoint for much longer, I needed to find out if perhaps the dirt road was open or not. We were told another larger storm might be approaching so our window of opportunity might be narrow. At 03:30 pm, I left Quartermaster arriving at the ranch discovering everyone was gone. The dirt road is now open. I quickly returned back to the viewpoint telling everyone we need to leave right away. I would take the lead with Dave in the rear since Jean has a rental. I would communicate with Dave via the radios in the vehicle and I would communicate with Jean via the walkie-talkies. We started on the dirt road at 04:05 pm with 4-wheel drive engaged. I tried to contact the office again using the satellite phone, but what a surprise no connection.

The damage along the dirt road was extensive. Construction graders have been working on the dirt road for the past couple months to level the road and rock haulers have been delivering dirt and gravel for the graders to smooth the road. Most of that work has been destroyed by this storm's flash flood. We passed a couple graders working on the road since they

were already in place above the worst of the flooding. At 04:20 pm, we were stopped about 5.8 miles into the 14-mile dirt road behind a long line of vehicles and buses. Further up the road the graders and rock haulers were working on the road, as it was impassable. At this time, we were in cell phone range so I called the office to provide an update. We could not go anywhere so we enjoyed the scenery. My guests were getting hungry so I offered them extra snack-packs I carry along with me left over from one of our other tours in case any of my guests need them. They were happy to eat those snacks.

The area we were all waiting showed evidence of 3 to 4 feet of water running down the road. Thankfully the graders were already in the area to begin working on that section. If not, then we would have most likely been trapped at GCW for the night. I contacted my wife and Mom to let them know my situation. I also contacted Neal on his cell phone to determine his location, as he was one of the guides stuck at the Diamond Bar Ranch in the middle of the dirt road. Surprisingly, he was in the process of dropping off his guests. I didn't realize his wave of three were able to leave the ranch a couple hours ago.

The road was finally repaired enough for vehicles to pass through at 17:40 pm. The amount of damage was very extensive. Entire sections of the road were removed. The graders did a great job getting the road back into minimal condition so everyone can leave. The worst part of the road was before entering the property for the ranch, but the road was impassable through the section on the edge of the ranch itself. Therefore, all traffic had to travel slowly through the Diamond Bar Ranch.

We finally got off the dirt road at 06:00 pm. I then called the office to let them know everyone was safe. While traveling on the paved portion, Pierce Ferry Rd, we saw there were a lot more flash floods flowing across the road. Lots of low-scale dirt debris was on the road in many areas. I would imagine graders moved the worse earlier. A dry lakebed, Red Lake, in the distance was full. The surrounding mountains had very pretty wispy-like clouds surrounding them. Very pretty sights in the late afternoon sun. We stopped in Dolan Springs for our final bathroom break, and then headed back to Las Vegas.

I finally arrived at the Bellagio at 08:00 pm finishing my drop-offs at Monte Carlo at 08:15 pm. The office informed me not to fuel the car like normal and to simply return directly to the office. I finished the day at 08:30 pm finally getting home at 09:00 pm.

Since all GCW tours were cancelled the next day and I was tired, I decided not to work the next day. It turns out tours to Red Rock and Mt. Charleston were also cancelled the same day and reschedule for the next day due to flooding problems in those areas. I don't know when the GCW tours will resume. The next time I lead a GCW tour, I'll have an interesting story to tell my guests.

At this time, I checked to see how I had done for tips from my guests. To my amazement considering the vast amount of work I put forth for this trip my cumulative tip was one of the worst I have ever received for a GCW tour (received \$20 – my average for this trip is \$85). I asked the other two guides who told me they did exceptionally well for the tour. I will receive extra overtime pay for this trip, but surprisingly my overtime will be more than my tip. Ironically I have received very good tips from guests who do not speak any English and as such I put forth very little effort for the entire trip. How demoralizing! My reward for this trip was a very memorable experience that will probably never occur again.