

The Grand Canyon Skywalk



An adventurous life is, at some point or the other, dreamt of by most people. A dormant desire for thrill and excitement lies within all of us. Ever imagined standing on a platform of **glass** 4,000 feet above a river? If you have, then try the Grand Canyon Skywalk. Constructed over the Colorado River at the edge of the Grand Canyon in Arizona State, USA, this skywalk is a dream comes true for adventure lovers. Walking on this massive glass platform gives one the feeling of floating on air.

This stunning structure was built by none other than French multinational **Saint-Gobain** and was funded by the Hualapai Indian tribe in partnership with Chinese-American businessman David Jin. The construction of the skywalk began in mid 2006, and it was ready for public use on 28th march 2007. The cost of construction exceeded \$30 million.

This engineering marvel is horse-shoe shaped and extends to 70 feet from the cliff edge of the Grand Canyon at the western rim. The skywalk stands at a height of twice that of the world's tallest skyscraper. It can accommodate 120 people and a weight of 72 million pounds at a time. It can also withstand winds speeding at 100 miles per hour and coming in from 8 different directions; and even an earthquake measuring up to 8.0 on the Richter scale.

The floors and the sidewalls of the skywalk are made up of four inch thick glass. The floors are of specially-made German glass which bequeaths durability and beauty to the structure. 1 million lbs of steel have gone into the making of this construct, each 2" thick, in a design that allows control on heat, cold and wind. The steel is in the form of frames that are affixed to the Grand Canyon with the help of caseins and micro piles measuring 46 feet down into the solid bedrock.

Each of the 46 **panes** forming the skyway were constructed using five layers of glass bonded together and laminated, weighing about 1,200 lbs apiece. This makes the glass extremely strong and provides a crystal-clear view of the canyon below. The structure also includes dampeners that help minimize vibration.

Skywalk is an 80-yard leisure walk around a semi-circular glass path which juts out of the canyon rim. The facility includes a 6,000-sqft visitors' center on three levels, a museum, a movie theatre, a VIP lounge and several restaurants including The Skywalk Café, which offers an outdoor setting on the edge of Canyon.

Visitors have to pay \$25 to use the gangway, in addition to the entrance fee for the National Park. Visitors have to wear special shoe covers for protection from slips and scratches. This bridge offers a chance to explore the wonder that is the Grand Canyon.