The remains of ancient civilizations are just some of the things you can discover from the air.

A visit to Grand Canyon can be more than just a peek into the great abyss. Here are some ideas for your next trip.

Flying M Air’s chief pilot shares some observations about aerial photography in Arizona and beyond.

Exploring Arizona by Helicopter

www.FlyingMAir.com

January 2010
Another new year is upon us. In this month’s issue of Exploring Arizona by Helicopter, we offer some insight on more of the places we visit and things we do in Arizona.

In “Ruins of Ancient Civilizations,” we tell you about some of the prehistoric Native American ruins we routinely spot from the air. Finding traces of ancient civilizations is just part of what exploring Arizona by helicopter is all about.

In “Destination Grand Canyon,” we tell you about some of the things you can do at the Grand Canyon’s South Rim—once you’re finished staring into that big hole in the ground. As you’ll learn, there’s a lot to see and do—and you can leave your backpack at home.

In “On Aerial Photography,” I share some of my insight about the aerial photography flights I’ve been doing for Flying M Air since 2001.

As usual, this month’s issue includes special offers available to newsletter readers and subscribers to our e-mail notifications list.

We’re also looking for first person accounts with photographs from current and past clients. Have something to share with our readers? Use the Contact Form on our Web site to let me know.

New Phoenix Phone Number
Flying M Air now has a local Phoenix phone number. You can reach us at 602/633-HELI (4354). If our office is closed, this will ring through to the Chief Pilot’s cell phone for service.

Please be advised that our normal office hours are 7 AM through 7 PM.

Flying M Air 2010 Wall Calendar Now Available
This year, we’ve created our first ever wall calendar, with 12 full-page images of the places we fly throughout the west. The calendar was created as a gift for our regular clients, but it is also available for sale. Visit flyingmair.magcloud.com to purchase your copy. That’s also where you can order back issues of this newsletter.

Now Accepting Advertising
Starting with the February issue, we’ll be accepting a limited number of advertisements per issue for products and services that complement Flying M Air’s services. We want to expand each addition to 12 pages and you can help!

Do you offer ground transportation in Sedona? Tours at the Grand Canyon? Cultural experiences at Monument Valley? This is your chance to reach travelers who are looking for the services you offer. Call us at 928/231-0196 to learn more.

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Ruins of Ancient Civilizations

Traces of prehistoric Native American Cultures...from the air.

Throughout the years of flying in Arizona, we’ve come across many traces of ancient Native American civilizations, from rock fortifications to complex cliff dwellings.

Although we don’t offer a tour dedicated to revealing these sites to the public, we often fly past or over them on our other tours.

Rock Fortifications in Peeples Valley

When we operated out of Wickenburg, AZ, we offered a tour of the Hassayampa River Canyon that looped around through Peeples Valley. There, on the edge of the open range, you can find the traces of a mile-long stone wall erected by prehistoric Indians that may have been the ancestors of modern day Yavapai.

Ruins on Indian Mesa

Northeast of Lake Pleasant, just off the Agua Fria arm of the lake, you’ll find Indian Mesa. Atop the relatively small mesa overlooking the river is an extensive network of rock foundations, including ruins of a kiva, storehouses, and what were likely residences. Our trips to Sedona and the Grand Canyon include an overflight with a good look at these ruins.

Unknown Cliff Dwelling

On a recent flight up the Verde River, we caught sight of a cliff dwelling far from roads or trails.

Although we’re certain that someone must have information about these ruins, we don’t. You can see this cliff dwelling on the first day of our Southwest Circle Helicopter Adventure, when we fly from the Phoenix area to Sedona.

Montezuma’s Castle

This National Monument is perched high on a cliff side over Oak Creek. We fly past on many of our flights in the area, including tours and day trips of Sedona and the Grand Canyon. Because this is a National Monument, we can’t get very close.

More to Explore

One of the best things about exploring Arizona by helicopter is discovering places you didn’t know existed. We’ve flown thousands of hours over Arizona and still find new things on every flight.

Right: Montezuma’s Castle is one of the more distinctive ruins we fly by on some of our flights. Photo by Michael Chilingerian.

Left: This map offers a general idea of the locations of the ruins discussed here.
Arizona is known as the “Grand Canyon State” and many of the state’s tourists come just to see what the forces of nature have carved through the high desert, far from any city. Although the average visitor spends less than two hours in the park, there’s a lot more to see and do if you make a full day of it.

But there’s more to Grand Canyon than the stunning views into the abyss. Here are some suggestions for your next trip to the Canyon.

Walk the Rim
You don’t have to hike into the canyon to enjoy a hike with great views. Just follow the rim trail, which winds 19 miles from Hermit’s Rest on the west end of the park through Grand Canyon Village to Pipe Creek Vista.

Not only is the trail an easy hike with great views into the canyon at every turn, but most of it is paved, making it accessible by wheelchairs and strollers. There’s parking and shuttle bus service at multiple points along the way. Download a trail map from www.nps.gov/grca/planyourvisit/upload/RimTrail.pdf.

Enjoy a Good Lunch
There are several restaurants in Grand Canyon Village, three of which are right on the Rim:

- El Tovar’s dining room offers fine dining. Don’t worry about a dress code; it’s casual.
- Arizona Steakhouse on the east end of Bright Angel Lodge is open seasonally for lunch and nightly for dinner.
- Bright Angel Lodge’s dining room is a popular place for a quick meal.

Tour Historical Buildings
Grand Canyon has been developed since the late 1890s. It is home to nine historical buildings. Among our favorites are:

- Kolb Studio (see Exploring Arizona by Helicopter, December 2009) is the photographic studio and home of the Kolb Brothers.
- Lookout Studio is one of several buildings on the South Rim designed by Mary Jane Colter for the Fred Harvey Company.
- El Tovar is a grand hotel on the west side of Grand Canyon Village, designed by Charles Whittlesey.
- Desert View Watchtower, which was also designed by Mary Jane Colter, is on the far east side of the park.
And if you have a few minutes while in Grand Canyon Village, be sure to check out the Bright Angel Lodge History Room. This tiny museum contains a wealth of artifacts from the early days of tourism at the Grand Canyon—including Harvey Girls memorabilia.

**Drive the Rim Roads**

Although most visitors spend just about all of their time at the Canyon in the vicinity of Grand Canyon Village or the Visitor’s Center, there are two roads that wind along the Rim.

- **Hermit Road** starts in Grand Canyon Village and heads seven miles west to Hermit’s Rest. It’s closed to auto traffic during the summer months, but can be traveled by free shuttle. In the winter, it’s open to visitor autos.

- **Desert View Drive** connects Grand Canyon Village with the east end of the park. It’s 26 miles long and ends at the Desert View lookout point. Continuing east past this point exits the park and continues to Cameron.

Both drives offer multiple places to stop and take in the view. Interpretive signs help you learn more about the human and natural history of the area. You’ll also find picnic areas and other points of interest along the way.

**Take a Mule Ride**

Mule skinners have been leading trips down into the Canyon along Bright Angel Trail since the late 1890s. Today, mules remain the primary means of transporting supplies, mail, and trash in or out of the Canyon.

Although mule rides to Plateau point are no longer offered, the outfitters at the Grand Canyon’s South Rim offer an alternative: a three-hour ride through the forest to the Abyss, a cliff at the edge of the Canyon. This is a great way to take in the beauty of the forest while getting a taste of mule riding.

If you have more time to spend at the canyon, consider an overnight trip to Phantom Ranch by mule.

You can learn more about mule trips at [www.nps.gov/grca/planyourvisit/mule_trips.htm](http://www.nps.gov/grca/planyourvisit/mule_trips.htm).

**Flying M Air Can Take You There**

If you only have a day to spend at the Canyon and want to make the most of that day, let Flying M Air take you from Phoenix to the Canyon by Helicopter. Not only will we turn a six-hour drive into a three-hour scenic adventure, but you’ll get more time to spend on the ground at the canyon.

Our Grand Canyon Day Trip includes transportation from the Grand Canyon Airport into the park, park entrance fees, and up to five hours on your own to explore. When you’re ready to go back to the Phoenix area, relax in your seat and enjoy a red rocks tour of Sedona on the return flight.

Want to spend the night to have more time to explore? Overnight options are available. And the Grand Canyon is just one of five popular Arizona destinations on our Southwest Circle Helicopter Adventure.
On Aerial Photography

Some observations by Flying M Air Chief pilot Maria Langer.

I do a lot of flying for Flying M Air with photographers and videographers on board. A lot of it is “fine art” photography in places like Lake Powell and Sedona. There’s also some commercial photography of bridges, highways, buildings, golf courses, and other places. And lots of “action” photos and video of racing boats and off-road trucks.

I love this kind of work—especially the high-speed chase flying. It gives me an opportunity to get “in the zone” with the aircraft. I usually sit the photographer in the seat behind me so we get the same view. This makes it easy to stay on the target. With years of practice and demanding clients, I’ve gotten good at keeping close to the vehicles we’re chasing and putting the photographer where he needs to be to get the “money shots.”

It gets challenging when slow flight is required—especially if it’s windy or if we’re in high density altitude. I’ve gotten to the point where I know when to expect a settling with power situation and can recover from it quickly, with the minimum loss of altitude. I’m also smart enough to avoid it any time I’m flying low-level.

The fine art photographers’ work depends on lighting and where we’re taking the photos. The southwest U.S. landscape is amazing, but early in the morning, just after dawn, or late in the afternoon, just before sunset, I really think it’s impossible to take a bad photo.

You can tell the experienced aerial photographers from the newbies by the equipment they bring—mostly lenses. I’ve had people show up with zoom lenses that not only forced me to fly far from the subject matter to get it to “fit” in the lens, but let in so little light that shutter speed was an issue.

On the other end of the spectrum is a photographer who always mounts his camera on a hand-held gyro stabilizer to minimize the vibrations coming in from the helicopter. While this shouldn’t be necessary at shutter speeds of at least 1/500 second, the gyro does add flexibility.

Because I’m usually the one doing the flying, I seldom get to try my own hand at aerial photography. The photos you see here are from my rare opportunities to be in the photographer’s seat while someone else is flying.

Flying M Air offers aerial photography fight services throughout the west. Races, commercial and residential development, fine art—we’ve flown it all. To learn more about capabilities and rates, visit our Web site or give us a call at 602/633-HELI.
**January Specials**

Special offers from Flying M Air.

Flying M Air is pleased to offer a number of special offers for the month of January, including deals on flights to help celebrate special events in the Phoenix area.

**Fiesta Bowl Specials**

Coming in to the Phoenix area for the Fiesta Bowl? Why not round off your trip to Arizona with a visit to Sedona or the Grand Canyon?

With our Fiesta Bowl special, you can save 15% off the price of a Sedona Tour, Sedona Day Trip, or Grand Canyon Day Trip. This special pricing is good for flights conducted between January 1 and January 5, 2010. To take advantage of this special offer, you must mention this newsletter and book your flight at least 2 days in advance.

And yes, you can visit either destination on game day and still get back in time for the game. Call us for details: 602-633-HELI.

**Robbie Book Special Pricing Held Over through January**

Flying M Air is pleased to offer Jon Davison’s coffee-table book, *Robbie: The Robinson Helicopter Experience*, to newsletter readers at 20% off the retail price. This richly illustrated, hardcover book makes an excellent gift for anyone interested in helicopters. It features Robinson helicopters flying real-world missions throughout the world.

The book normally sells for $55; from now until January month-end, you can buy the book for only $44. To sweeten the deal, we’ll pay shipping for books shipped to addresses within the United States. All books are shipped via Media Mail.


**Get a Free Flying M Air 2010 Wall Calendar**

Book a flight any time in January 2010 and get a free Flying M Air 2010 Wall Calendar featuring photos of Flying M Air destinations throughout the west. Just mention this offer when booking your flight.

Not ready to book a flight but still want a calendar? You can buy a calendar online for $9.95 plus shipping at [flyingmair.magcloud.com](http://flyingmair.magcloud.com).

**Important Note about Special Offers**

The special offers in this month’s newsletter are good through the month of January and are available to newsletter readers only. You must mention this newsletter when calling to take advantage of any of these offers.

Discounts may not be combined with any other offer. Discounts do not apply to flights booked by travel agents, hotel concierges, or other third-party agents.
Here’s what’s currently on our calendar for the month of January 2010. Availability on this calendar does not guarantee flight availability. All flights are by appointment only. Please call at least 24 hours in advance to book a flight.

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In Next month’s issue...

What’s coming up in February:

Next month, we’ll travel to northern Arizona and show off some places you might not know about:

- The Grand Falls of the Little Colorado River. Nicknamed “chocolate falls,” it’s a treat when they’re running.
- The Confluence of the Colorado and San Juan Rivers is a sight to behold—but only from the air.
- Agathla Peak, better known as El Capitan, stands like a sentinel at the southern entrance to Monument Valley.

It’s all a part of Exploring Arizona by Helicopter!