



**3** *The Grand Falls of the Little Colorado River resembles flowing chocolate during spring thaws and summer flash floods.*



**4** *Breathtaking views of water-filled canyons are among the wonders visible from the air at the Colorado-San Juan Confluence.*



**6** *Agathla Peak — widely known as “El Capitan” — stands like a sentinel at the southern entrance to Monument Valley.*

NEWS, STORIES, PHOTOS, AND SPECIAL OFFERS FROM FLYING M AIR, LLC

*Exploring*

# ARIZONA BY HELICOPTER

[www.FlyingMAir.com](http://www.FlyingMAir.com)

February 2010





**A**s the economy improves and the Arizona's winter season goes into full swing, Flying M Air is getting busy with Phoenix area tours and day trips. We're also preparing for our multi-day excursion schedule, which begins next month.

In this month's issue of *Exploring Arizona by Helicopter*, we offer a look at some of the less known places we visit in Northern Arizona on our Southwest Circle Helicopter Adventure. All of these destinations can be found on the vast Navajo Reservation.

In "The Chocolate Falls," we tell you what you can expect — or not expect — during an overflight of the Grand Falls of the Little Colorado River. As you'll learn, they're not always "grand."

In "The Meeting of the Rivers," we show you some of the magnificent scenery in the area where the Colorado and San Juan Rivers meet on Lake

Powell. If you plan to visit this area by car, you're out of luck; it's only accessible by air or water.

In "Monument Valley's Sentinel," we give you a close look at Agathla Peak, the remnants of an ancient volcano standing tall at the southern entrance to Monument Valley.

As usual, this month's issue also 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.

### ON THE COVER...

Flying M Air's helicopter waits for passengers on the helipad at Goulding's Lodge in Monument Valley in this photo by Maria Langer.

## FLYING M AIR NEWS

### NOW CONTRACTING FOR CHERRY DRYING IN CALIFORNIA, OREGON, AND WASHINGTON

Flying M Air spends its summers in Central Washington State, offering cherry drying and related standby services. Last year, we served orchardists in Quincy and Wenatchee, WA for a total of nine weeks, providing coverage for approximately 200 acres.

This year, in an effort to extend the early part of our season, we're looking for contracts as far south as California. We offer reasonable rates and reliable service with an experienced pilot. We can also bring up to four helicopters on site to handle the requirements of large orchards.

Don't wait until the last minute to protect your crop! Call us now at 928/231-0196 to sign up for this season.

### FLYING M AIR UPGRADES ONSITE LIVING QUARTERS

In preparation for its work in the northwest, Flying M Air has upgraded its mobile living quarters. Our new fifth wheel RV can be parked at an orchard or other facility to keep our pilot close to the aircraft, reducing response time to better serve clients.

## EXPLORING ARIZONA BY HELICOPTER

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# THE CHOCOLATE FALLS

WHERE THE LITTLE COLORADO RIVER CUTS THROUGH THE DESERT FLOOR.

**A**lthough only 30 miles from the city of Flagstaff, AZ, the Grand Falls of the Little Colorado River remains one of the least visited natural wonders in the state. Part of the reason for this is its remote location in the southwest corner of the vast Navajo Reservation. You'll drive miles on unpaved and unmarked roads to find the falls, which seldom appear on road maps.

The Grand Falls is an interesting feature in that its appearance varies greatly depending on the amount of water flowing from upstream along the Little Colorado River. The river, which flows northwest from St. Johns, AZ, drains an immense area of high desert. After a heavy rain or during spring snow melts, the river's flow is heavy, carrying dark reddish-brown silt. It's the color that gives the falls their nickname: "Chocolate Falls."

During an extremely heavy flow, the falls are visible from the air from 10 or more miles out, as mist rising above the flat desert floor. But when water is scarce the falls merely trickle down the lowest point on the far eastern end—or are bone dry.

Overlooks along the south side of the canyon downstream from the falls offer a good look at the falls from the ground. The view from the air, however, is far superior.

The Little Colorado River's meandering path cuts deep gorges in the Colorado Plateau west of the falls. The quarter mile deep Little Colorado River Gorge is the last of these before the river reaches the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon, just downstream from Marble Canyon.

Flying M Air overflies the Grand Falls on its Southwest Circle Helicopter Adventure multi-day excursion. When there's a good chance that the falls will be running, we'll detour to overfly them as part of our Meteor Crater/La Posada Day Trip.



Left: The Grand Falls of the Little Colorado River after a rainfall upstream on the Colorado Plateau.



# THE MEETING OF THE RIVERS

**MIND-BOGGLING BEAUTY AT THE CONFLUENCE OF THE COLORADO AND SAN JUAN.**

**L**ake Powell is, by far, our favorite destination. This man-made wonder of water in the desert boasts the longest shoreline of any lake in the United States. Clear blue water meets red rock cliffs under a bright desert sun.

While several tour operators offer airplane tours of the lake from the airport at Page, AZ, none of the lake tour operators venture farther upriver than Rainbow Bridge. Yet only 10 or so miles farther upstream, are aerial views that can take your breath away.

## EXPLORING LAKE POWELL AND ITS TRIBUTARIES

Three rivers flow into the Colorado at Lake Powell. The Dirty Devil comes in from the north near Hite at the top end of the lake. The Escalante also comes in from the north, about halfway between Page and Hite. The San Juan joins the Colorado halfway between the Escalante and Rainbow Bridge, about sixty river miles uplake from Page.

Below: The San Juan River zigs and zags through deep canyons to join the Colorado. The City of Page is out of sight in this photo, beyond the horizon.

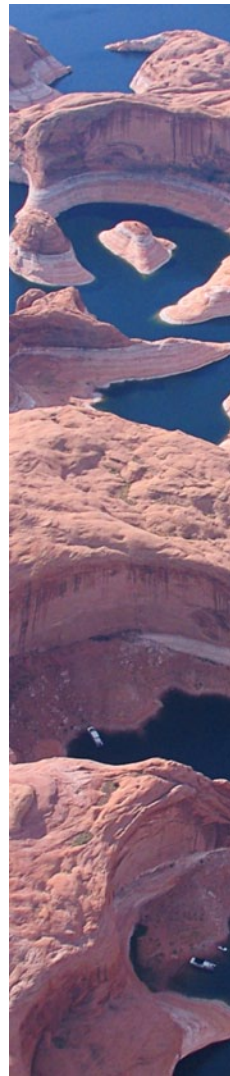
Over the years, Flying M Air has had many opportunities to explore all of Lake Powell, from the Glen Canyon Dam at Page which holds back its waters to the marina at Hite and beyond. Few views are as magnificent as those around the Confluence of the Colorado River and San Juan River. It's here that the river narrowed and flowed in deep canyons. Now water-filled, these canyons wind back and forth, forming narrow waterways for pleasure boats to explore.

## A FAVORITE DESTINATION FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS

The photos here show two of the most requested destinations for aerial photographers flying over Lake Powell.:

- ❖ The final few miles of the San Juan River's flow is a series of sweeping arcs that meander through the rock between Nasja and Wilson Mesas. For each straight line mile, a boat can travel five miles or more by water here.
- ❖ Reflection Canyon is one of dozens of named canyons along the length of Lake Powell. Its curves, swirls, and islands make it a must-visit destination for aerial photographers exploring the lake.

Reflections in the clear blue water are a major goal of pho-



tographers visiting the area. On a cool day, when winds are calm, the smooth lake water is mirror-like, reflecting canyon walls and clouds overhead.

The lake is magnificent in this area from any altitude. Down low, you can see the details of rock formations and boaters waving up at the helicopter. From higher up, you can see the grand scheme of things—the shapes of the canyons in relation to the lake itself. Climb high enough in this area and you can see Monument Valley off in the distance.

The scale of the lake and its canyons is hard to imagine. Look closely in these photos. The white dots you see aren't just boats—they're big *houseboats*. The rock walls rise 50, 100, 200, or more feet above the water. Even the white "bathtub ring" you can see in these photos is 50 or more feet tall.

### MORE ABOUT THE SAN JUAN RIVER

The San Juan River flows southwest from its source in Colorado through New Mexico, back into Colorado, and into Utah before empty-

ing into Lake Powell. In New Mexico, just past the Navajo Dam, it offers some of the best trout fishing in the west. Before reaching the lake, its silty waters flow swiftly, offering river running opportunities from communities such as Mexican Hat, UT.

The river has also carved deep, sweeping canyons downstream from Mexican Hat. Known as the Goosenecks of the San Juan, they are vis-

ible from an overlook you can reach by car as well as from the air.

### FLY THE SAN JUAN WITH US

A flight along the San Juan from Shiprock, NM to its confluence with the Colorado is a study in geology, with views of volcanic formations, shifting tectonic plates, tall cliffs, and eroded canyons. It's also a look back into history: there was once a thriving marina along its southern shore, not far from Monument Valley.

Flying M Air overflies the Confluence of the Colorado and San Juan Rivers on its Southwest Circle Helicopter Adventure multi-day excursion. It's a highlight of the fourth day's flight, which follows the southern shore of Lake Powell from Page to the San Juan River before turning south to Monument Valley. Flying M Air also offers aerial photography flights and excursions along Lake Powell's entire length. With more than 100 hours of flight time over the lake, we know Lake Powell better than any other helicopter operator.

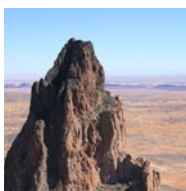
If you'd like to see where the rivers meet, don't try to drive there—there are no roads! Instead, give us a call and let us show you our favorite spot on Lake Powell from the air.

Left and below: Two aerial views of Reflection Canyon, just downriver from the Confluence.



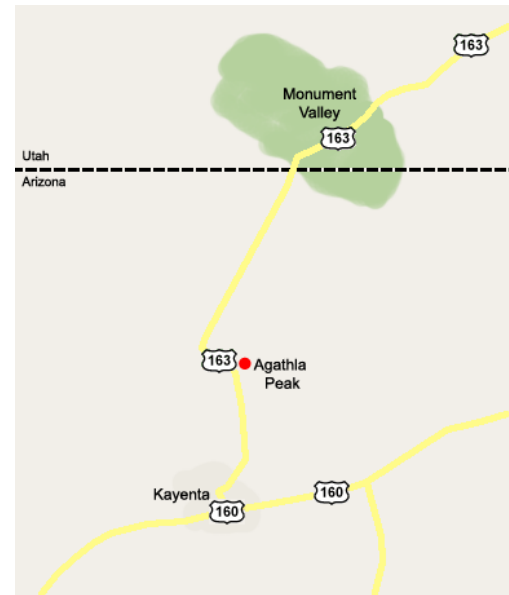
# MONUMENT VALLEY'S SENTINEL

THE REMAINS OF AN ANCIENT VOLCANO, AGATHLA PEAK STANDS TALL.



Out in the high desert north of Kayenta, AZ, deep within the boundaries of the Navajo Reservation, stands what some people call “El Capitan,” the remnants of a volcanic plug or neck. The Navajo people call the peak *Agathla* and it’s that name that appears on U.S.G.S. topographic charts. Its dark rock is a sharp contrast to the mostly reddish sandstone around it. But what’s more noticeable is its extraordinary height: Agathla Peak rises 1,500 feet (457 m) from the desert floor, topping out at 7,096 feet (2,163 m) above sea level, with sheer rock walls fringed by talus slopes.

Below: A view from the air of Agathla Peak.



Agathla Peak stands almost halfway between the Navajo city of Kayenta and Monument Valley, right on Highway 163. Because of its height, it’s an obvious landmark for anyone driving up the highway from the south to Monument Valley.

From the ground, it appears as a ragged column of dark rock. But a closer look, when flying by in a helicopter, reveals the details of the volcanic breccia and minette rock dikes. It also offers views of Chaistla Butte, a smaller formation several miles southeast, that lies in line with the same volcanic activity that formed Agathla. A look to the west offers views of another interesting formation: Owl Rock.

Although large and impressive, Agathla is smaller than Shiprock, a similar formation farther to the east, just over the border of New Mexico. Both peaks are part of the now dormant Navajo Volcanic Field and are considered sacred by the Navajo people.

Flying M Air flies by Agathla Peak on its Southwest Circle Helicopter Adventure multi-day excursion. An all-day or overnight trip to Monument Valley from Phoenix, which would include a ground tour of Monument Valley, is available as a custom charter.



Top: Agathla Peak lies roughly halfway between Monument Valley and Kayenta in northern Arizona.

Bottom: Chaistla Butte is a much smaller formation southeast of Agathla.

# FEBRUARY SPECIALS

## SPECIAL OFFERS FROM FLYING M AIR.

**F**lying M Air is pleased to offer a number of special offers for the month of February, including deals on flights to help celebrate a certain romantic date.

### VALENTINE'S DAY SPECIALS

Want to sweep your sweetheart off her feet? We can help! Flying M Air is offering three specials for Valentine's Day:

- ❖ **Northwest Phoenix tour:** A special, shorter version of our Phoenix tour that's a bit more affordable for folks on a budget. This 25-30 minute tour may be booked with a departure time between 12 pm and 5 pm on Valentine's Day. Your cost: \$250 per couple.
- ❖ **Phoenix Tour:** Take \$100 off a full-length Phoenix Tour booked with a departure time between 12 pm and 4:30 pm on Valentine's day. Your cost: \$395 per couple.
- ❖ **Moonlight Dinner Tour:** Take \$150 off the cost of this ultimate romantic evening out: a sunset flight, dinner at Anzio Landing, and nighttime return flight. Available on Friday, Saturday, or Sunday (February 12 through 14) with a departure time of 6 PM sharp. Your cost: \$645 per couple; dinner is included but alcoholic beverages are not.

### WEDNESDAY SPECIALS

We're offering two specials for Wednesdays in February:

- ❖ **Northwest Phoenix Tour:** A special, shorter version of our Phoenix tour that's more affordable for folks on a budget. This 25-30 minute tour may be booked with a departure time between 1 pm and 5 pm. Your cost: \$295 per flight for up to 3 people.
- ❖ **Sedona Tour:** Take \$300 off the cost of a scenic flight to Sedona and back with an aerial tour of the famous red rocks. This 2-hour tour may be booked with a departure time between 1 PM and 4 PM. Your cost: \$995 per flight for up to 3 people.

### HELICOPTER RIDES AT THE BUCKEYE AIR FAIR

For the fifth year in a row, Flying M Air will be offering helicopter rides at the annual Buckeye Air Fair at Buckeye Airport. This family-friendly event is a great opportunity to take your kids for their first helicopter flight.

We normally price our rides at \$35 per person at this event. Mention this newsletter when buying your ticket and pay only \$30 per person.

### IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT SPECIAL OFFERS

The special offers in this month's newsletter are good on the dates and times listed only. All flights (except those at the Buckeye event) depart from Deer Valley Airport (DVT) in North Phoenix. You must mention this newsletter when calling to take advantage of any of these offers.

Prices do not include sales tax. 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.

Left: Flying M Air's helicopter waits outside Anzio Landing restaurant during a moonlight dinner tour.



## FEBRUARY CALENDAR

**H**ere's what's currently on our calendar for the month of February 2010. Availability on this calendar does not guarantee flight availability. Advance reservations are required for all flights. Please call at least 24 hours before your desired flight time.



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3 Wednesday Specials	4	5	6 Parker 425
7	8	9	10 Wednesday Specials	11	12	13
14 Valentine's Day Specials	15	16	17 Wednesday Specials	18	19	20 Helicopter Rides at Buckeye Air Fair
21	22	23	24 Wednesday Specials	25	26	27
28						



## IN THE NEXT ISSUE...

### WHAT'S COMING UP IN THE MARCH/APRIL ISSUE:

Our next issue will show off some places that are near and dear to us only a short flight from the Phoenix area:

- ❖ A flight up the Salt River reveals one desert lake after another.
- ❖ The Vulture City Ghost Town is one of the historic points of interest on our Henry Wickenburg's Legacy day trip.
- ❖ Sky Harbor's helipad makes an air-taxi to or from the airport quick and convenient.

It's all a part of *Exploring Arizona by Helicopter!*