



CAUGHRAN ASSOCIATES LLC

Achieving Your Goals Lessons from the Bright Angel Trail

How do we make our big goals happen? On a recent trip to the Grand Canyon, I completed an eight-hour hike into the Canyon and back out and had lots of time to think about how we can accomplish big things in our lives. The beauty of the Grand Canyon and the companionship of my husband and of the new friends we met along the Bright Angel Trail, along with a stretch of time uninterrupted by cell phone or email, all let me concentrate on the things we can do to achieve our goals. The Bright Angel Trail begins at the South Rim, in Grand Canyon Village, and goes about 5 miles on a rocky, bumpy, switchback trail to Indian Gardens, a beautiful oasis, with shade and a cool stream. From there, the Trail continues another 7 miles or so to the Colorado River. Many visitors, seeking an in-Canyon experience, make the round-trip hike to Indian Gardens in one day. (Going all the way to the Colorado River requires an overnight stay at the Phantom Ranch at the bottom of the Canyon.) It's an exhilarating adventure that provides wonderful views of the Canyon and a terrific sense of accomplishment. And, it's not easy. So, here are a few things I came up with that gorgeous October day that we can all do to make our goals a reality.

Prepare. Talk to others, read books, get the right equipment. Practice key skills. Find someone who's done it already and humbly listen to their suggestions, advice, and cautions.

Carefully assess the risks. Plan how to mitigate them, and then go.

Check and double-check your plans—and then move forward. Take the first step!

Believe you will succeed. Think only positive thoughts. If doubts start to creep into your consciousness—breathe. Remember that others have gone before

you and have succeeded in similar endeavors.

If you can, find a partner, and listen to him or her. Allow your partner to lift you up if you get discouraged.

Enjoy the view. Take time to look around you. Don't get so focused on the goal that you forget to notice what's right in front of you.

Periodically check to make sure you're on the right path. Look up.

Help others you meet along the way. Offer an encouraging word or something more tangible. On the Bright Angel Trail, we of course had to bring all our food and water. We shared snacks with new hiking partners we met along the way.

Recognize the size of the task and pace yourself. Figure out how much you can reasonably accomplish in a given time period. On the Bright Angel Trail, we figured that we could hike down to Indian Gardens in two to three hours. Coming back, we had been counseled, could take up to six hours! Whatever you've set out to do, start early. We took just a few breaks on the way down—every 20 minutes or so. Coming back up—and it was all uphill, for over 4 hours—we started out with breaks every 20 minutes. That gradually increased to every 15 minutes, then every 12, and by the last mile, it seemed we were taking breaks every 5 minutes. As you get closer to your goal, the road may get more difficult!

Celebrate your victory! When you reach your goal, allow the exhilaration to wash over you and seep into every exhausted pore. Have that special dinner. Share your accomplishment with everyone who helped you along the way.

Maureen Caughran
October 8, 2010.
Grand Canyon, Arizona



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