



In the Heart of the Canyon

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From the author of "The Abortionist's Daughter," a gripping new novel about a rafting trip through the Grand Canyon that changes the lives of everyone on board.

Meet Peter, twenty-seven, single, and looking for a quick hookup; Evelyn, a fifty-year-old Harvard professor; and Ruth and Lloyd, river veterans in their seventies. There's Mitchell, an overeager history buff with no qualms about upstaging the guides with his knowledge. There's Jill from Salt Lake City, wanting desperately to spark some sense of adventure in her staid Mormon family; and seventeen-year-old Amy, so woefully overweight that she can barely fit into a pup tent, let alone into a life jacket.

Guiding them all is JT Maroney, who loves the river with all his heart and who, having made 124 previous trips down the Colorado, thinks he has seen everything. But on their first night, a stray dog wanders into their campsite, upsetting the tentative equilibrium of this makeshift family. Over the next thirteen days, as various decisions are second-guessed and sometimes regretted, both passengers and guides find that sometimes the most daunting adventures on a Colorado River trip have nothing to do with white-water rapids, and everything to do with reconfiguring the rocky canyons of the heart.

In the Heart of the Canyon Details

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Brian says

This book was surely going to be a five star book when it was reading it, but upon finishing it, I took it down a notch or two. The book started out with a LOT of characters, so many in fact it needed a character guide, which came in handy as I read through it. The premise is that a group of mostly strangers is taking a trip through the Grand Canyons on the rapids. They range from an elderly couple, to a single 27 year old, to a heavy girl and her mom, along with some river guides. Some of the characters were more fleshed out than others. I enjoyed learning about the Grand Canyon, and always felt the sense of danger the characters probably felt. Therein lies my issue with this book, nothing really AWFUL happened. As morbid as that sounds, I kind of was waiting for something horrible to befall the characters. And while I don't want to spoil the story, things DO happen, just not what I was expecting to. All in all, this was a good, well written book.

Robyn S. Martin says

Review title: The River Trip From Hell.

Actually, it was a good premise, and anyone who hasn't been a professional river guide on the Grand will probably like it. For me (former river guide) I took exception to her many mistakes--no trip leader would ever act like JT, who struck me as rather spineless and weak at times; guests (passengers) sleep on cots, not on the sand on mats, guides (all) would be aware of allergies to nuts, and the female guide's behavior--argumentative and witnessed by passengers-- would have gotten her fired or at least written up, etc, etc, trip leaders wouldn't jump off hundred foot cliffs nor let a child do it, and the ending felt like a *deus ex machina* gesture rather than avoiding what could have been a really cool gesture--to let the passenger-characters learn something about themselves, all of them.

Although author says she has gone on professional river trips, it was clear she didn't have quite the right handle on seeing a professional trip through a river guide's eyes. It read like a mismanaged, dysfunctional private Grand Canyon trip--which I've also experienced.

I don't know. It was easy to read but pretty shallow. The premise with the disappearing-reappearing stray dog was distracting and quite frankly made me more fearful about his fate than I ever cared about the actual human characters. I finally, after 3/4 way through, began skimming only to find out what happened to the dog.

Cait S says

I would be lying if I didn't tell say up front that *In The Heart of the Canyon* worried me going in. Here we have a book that's not overly long but somehow it is meant to include a massive scope. Two weeks in the Grand Canyon. Fifteen different characters. There's so much that could have gone wrong here that I opened the first chapter already believing I might not even finish the book.

I was wrong.

In every place that the writing could have gotten bogged down in flowering prose, Elisabeth Hyde simply but powerful describes the beauty of the Canyon so that I, someone who has never seen it before, could picture it perfectly in my mind. From the cliffs to the water, even the different kinds of heat, the world was built in detail from the ground up. With so much time spent in such a large and constantly changing environment, this is no small accomplishment and one I wish I saw more of in other books.

With fifteen characters to get to know and a handful of point of views to read, it seems an intimidating story. How could you possibly learn enough about them all to tell them apart, let alone actually care about them? But somehow, again, the author manages with her straightforward yet subtle way of telling everyone's story. There is character growth across the board, some of which left me feeling incredibly proud of these people who only exist within these pages. From a twelve year old boy taking his first trip down the river, to an elderly couple taking their last, every point of view gives a different view of the Canyon and the people they experienced it with. Calling it memorable is an understatement.

There is something for everyone within this book. Action, adventure, humor, family drama, romance, nature... It's a journey all on it's own.

Ali says

I love a good character study. This is not my usual genre as it is adult contemporary, but I thoroughly enjoyed it. I loved the setting and getting to know the characters and seeing them evolve.

Amandajane says

Not amazing literature by any means, but a easy, fun read. Though this particular trip down the Colorado had some (a lot) of mishaps, it's still a trip on my bucket list! The character study was interesting, and I definitely know people that fit most of these roles.

Chelsea says

The following statements from the book emphasize what the story meant to me:

"The fact that there was no turning back, that they could not go forward--that they were committed to the [river] run, like it or not--suddenly seemed profound...."

"'You can do it', said Don, 'because you have to do it.'"

A very powerful story, with adult themes, that I highly recommend especially if you enjoy stories set in the Grand Canyon, the American West, river runs, or outdoor adventures. I thoroughly enjoyed the story whose themes and ideas are very much present in my life.

Annabelle says

Surprisingly this book, telling a story about sth that is totally foreign to me, held my interest from beginning to end more than any other books.

Fifteen strangers went on a 2-week rafting trip down the Grand Canyon. Can't say there were any life/ death incidents throughout, but the mere group dynamics made the story more gripping than many so-called thrillers.

Much to the writer's credit I could easily tell all those characters apart.

Knew absolutely nothing about rafting before. Literally had to look up the difference between rowing and paddling. Ended up watching tons of YouTube videos about rafting on the Colorado River at 1am.

It's a great book. Fun and well written. Wish more people know about it.

Jennifer says

Group dynamics always fascinate me. I remember when I was a teenager, my friends and I would go to the airport just to people watch. It's one of the best places for it! Sometimes it's boring, sometimes it's exciting, but it's always fun learning a bit about human behavior.

Elisabeth Hyde definitely gives us some people watching to do in *In the Heart of the Canyon*. The setting is a rafting trip through the Grand Canyon, and the "people watching" is done through the perspectives of multiple characters, six to be exact, who are each sharing their thoughts about each other as well as their rafting experience in general. The individuals and families who have embarked on this trip all come from a variety backgrounds and they all have their own reasons for being there. Sometimes, the content was fairly humdrum and sometimes it was OMG! What??? But overall, I liked it and found it to be a worthwhile reading experience.

One thing I took away from reading *In the Heart of the Canyon* was a lesson about judging others based on appearances and the life you think they have lead. People always have a way of surprising you in life and I love that. Remember, *"There's no such thing as a stranger, just people we haven't met."* Maybe you will take something else away from your reading experience. Read it and find out!

Note: I love learning about an author's inspiration for the stories they write. If you're the same, click [HERE](#) to read an interview with the author. (Scroll down to *frequently asked questions*.)

My favorite quote:

"...in his heart, he'd like to think that beneath the surface of every pain in the ass was a well intentioned individual who could probably shed light on some topic that he'd always been wondering about."

Here are a few rafting gifs I had to include in this review just for the hell of it...

Candace says

I loved this book! The Grand Canyon and the Colorado River have fascinated me for a long time, and I have been given an opportunity to go on a raft trip there this summer. So the book was of special interest to me. The author, Elisabeth Hyde, writes with compelling simplicity, and her characters cover a wide range of personalities and life-styles, which she describes with insight. The book is definitely an adventure tale with a dash of inspiration about how people overcome their fears and conquer obstacles they never thought they could. But it's never heavy or preachy, just an exciting and very interesting page-turner.

Unfortunately for me, the tale reinforced my reservations about taking on the challenges of such a trip, which requires both strength of heart AND strength of body. I don't think I'd be up to its physical rigors or the possible helicopter evacuation in case of accident. But I was able to enjoy the excursion anyway by reading the book. If you are at all interested in one of America's national treasures or just the physical challenge of a grand adventure, I urge you to read this book.

AdiTurbo says

Elisabeth Hyde is one of those natural storytellers, who know how to tell a story simply and compellingly, without interrupting and ruining it with too many embellishments and literary tricks. This one is about a group of strangers coming together for a trip down the Colorado river. As you can expect, they gradually come to know each other better, and the dynamics between them are developing and changing all the time. There are surprises (which I really wasn't too surprised about) and dramatic moments, but that's not what this book is about. It is about how people are multi-dimensional, paradoxical at times, changing every moment, discovering new talents and powers in themselves that they never knew they had. No one is perfect here, everyone is complex, but that's what makes this story so engrossing, just like life, of course. No black and white here, it's too real for that.

Alex says

I was drawn to this book because I am yearning for an outdoor adventure, but lack the travel budget. What could be better than an armchair adventure down the Colorado River? Elisabeth Hyde creates an assortment of characters, then has them run the river, with a few surprises along the way. The author does a pretty good job of putting you there, with selective detail. Still I was left wanting more. Even small explanations would have helped. For instance, how is it they're grilling steaks and drinking margaritas on this trip? Sounds pretty elaborate. I'd like to have known more about how you transport food and such.

The real weakness of the book, though, is some of the characterization. I was particularly offended by the Amy character. Peter was pretty broad too.

All in all, this was a middle of the pack effort. I'd give it a solid four stars for the river adventure, slightly lower than that for the rest of it.

Kathy Stauffer says

I chose Elisabeth Hyde's *IN THE HEART OF THE CANYON* at random while perusing the bookshelves. I often do this and am often disappointed with my randomness. This book was not a disappointment. The intermix of personalities while rafting the river is a microcosm in a sense of society. There is one surprise after another and most "surprises" are not due to the river's current or the weather on any particular day.

Hyde includes the thought processes of the head guide (JT) and the other rafters. I felt Dixie and another assistant guide's personalities could have been further developed.

Tattered Cover Book Store says

Linda says:

For those of us who can't afford a rafting trip down the Grand Canyon, or perhaps might have more qualms than a desire to do so, along comes "In the Heart of the Canyon" by Elisabeth Hyde. For 12 passengers and their 3 guides this rafting trip will become 13 days that they will never forget.

Elisabeth Hyde's characters are ones you know. They're not all strapping 20 somethings out on a lark, but rather regular folks who, for their own personal reasons, have decided to take this time to make this white-water trek.

They may not all be people you would choose to take a vacation with, but they all turn out to have something that they bring and something that they hope to get out of this adventure.

I was with them every twist and turn of the way. I loved the ride! When it was finished, I wanted to start it all over again with another group. An adventure awaits you within the covers of this book.

Erik says

Extremely satisfying read. Yes, there were a lot of characters to keep straight, but this adventure story of a whitewater raft trip fleshed out each of the separate characters nicely. Also, the story was so interesting that I was always looking forward to next time that I could carve out a few more minutes so I could read more!

Julia says

I read this in one day--almost in one sitting--so yeah, I'm giving it five stars.

Would I love it as much if I didn't grown up in Arizona and later take a week-long rafting trip down the Grand Canyon? Maybe not. But anyone can appreciate this novel's mix of soapy page-turning and contemplative literary qualities. Not many books can truly capture what it's like to have a transformative experience in the great outdoors (particularly in one of the most beautiful places in the world), and Hyde does an excellent job of describing the wonder without getting too cheesy.

On the downside, I guessed the book's biggest plot twist about forty pages in, and if you've ever read an issue

of Seventeen Magazine, circa 1998, you probably will, too.

Finally, for both better and worse, this book has a lot in common with Carolyn Parkhurst's *Lost and Found* (another book that I read in one day--the day before I took that rafting trip, actually). Both the plot and the characters will feel very familiar (particularly the mother/daughter pair and the Mormon couple), but hey: I really enjoyed *Lost and Found*. There are worse things to emulate.
