

A hotel staffer suggested we contact Papillon Grand Canyon Helicopters. A day later we were picked up by luxury limo at our hotel entrance and then whisked on a quick drive through Las Vegas and suburbs to Boulder City.

There we boarded and were strapped into the sleek EcoStar EC-130 helicopter. The craft had huge windows, and we could see almost 360 degrees of views. As we lifted off, with our video and cellphone cameras buzzing, we could almost immediately see the magnificent Boulder Dam and surrounding blue expanse of Lake Mead getting smaller and smaller.

We then headed over the Nevada-Arizona border, above the desert about an hour to the Grand Canyon. The pilot gave us great views as we circled the famous multi-colored rock formation artwork that took Mother Nature millions of years to carve. Then, gradually we descended among the rocks a mile down to a landing site on the shore of the Colorado River.

We piled out of the helicopter, and walked along the sandy beach. While we and our cameras admired the spectacular scenery, a lunch was prepared for us, topped off with a champagne toast. We felt like royalty, surrounded by our endlessly magnificent nature-carved palace walls.

The entire experience lasted four too-quickly-passing hours. We could have spent four fascinating weeks or more at the Grand Canyon, and never see the same colorful sight twice.

For anyone celebrating an anniversary, birthday or just to enjoy the experience of a lifetime, we recommend the Las Vegas to Boulder Dam to the Grand Canyon helicopter excursion. Papillon helicopter tours are well named. We felt like butterflies flapping over the beautiful landscapes.

Prices are from \$300 per person. Papillon Grand Canyon Helicopters, www.papillon.com