



## *An American Tour: 29*



### **Utah's Rainbow Bridge**

Rainbow Bridge is the world's largest known natural bridge. The span has undoubtedly inspired people throughout time--from the neighboring American Indian tribes who consider Rainbow Bridge sacred, to the 300,000 people from around the world who visit it each year.

By its wondrous size, to say nothing of its majesty and mystery, Rainbow Bridge has inspired humans throughout time. From the time the bridge became known to the outside world in the early twentieth century, thousands of people from around the world have visited each year. From its base to the top of the arch, it is 290 feet-nearly the height of the Statue of Liberty-and spans 275 feet across the river; the top of the arch is 42 feet thick and 33 feet wide.

Tucked among the rugged, isolated canyons at the base of Navajo Mountain, Rainbow Bridge was known for centuries by the Native Americans who lived in the area. Native Americans living in the region have long held the bridge sacred. Ancestral Puebloan residents were followed much later by Paiute and Navajo groups. Several Paiute and Navajo families, in fact, still reside nearby.

By 1993, a National Park Service General Management Plan, involving much public input, was adopted.

It offered a long-term plan for mitigating visitor impacts and preserving the resources of Rainbow Bridge National Monument. As part of the planning process, the National Park Service consulted with the five Native American nations affiliated with Rainbow Bridge. Chief among their concerns was that Rainbow Bridge-a religious and sacred place-be protected and visited in a respectful manner. Additionally, the tribes expressed concerns about visitors approaching or walking under the bridge. Today, the National Park Service simply asks that you visit this site in a manner respectful of its significance. unit, Glen Canyon National Recreation Area. [<http://www.nps.gov/rabr/historyculture/index.htm>]

