Predicting the spring wildflower bloom in the Mojave Desert is nearly impossible until it begins. With the right temperatures and moisture the desert floor can explode into a riotous carpet of color.

Wildflower blooms may vary from small colorful patches along the edge of roads to huge fields of vibrant purples, yellows, pinks, oranges and white. The really spectacular flower displays are a rarity, possibly only occurring every 10 to 20 years. What will the spring of 2015 bring?

Annual plants (a plant which completes its life cycle and dies within a year) must germinate in the fall to flower in the spring. The ideal time differs according to the species, but it is usually between late September and early December. Temperatures and rain are the controlling environmental factors for the plant to germinate.

Perennial plants (a plant that lives more than two years) are a little heartier than annual plants and can produce a good display, though it’s the annuals that are famous for blanketing the desert in color.

To assure the future of desert wildflowers and to protect the delicate balance between animal and plant life in the Mojave Desert, please don’t pick the flowers or gather seed. Instead, bring your camera to capture the spectacular desert in bloom.

Experience Lake Mead and Lake Mohave Wilderness

When people think of wilderness, they seldom think of houseboats, cars or four-wheelers, but at Lake Mead National Recreation Area (NRA), there is a way for visitors to experience the park’s wilderness areas using all of these modes of transportation.

Lake Mead NRA is home to nine wilderness areas, all located in Nevada. They were designated in 2002 to preserve the undeveloped land, so each one retains its primitive character and influence. Part of that designation means that motorized vehicles and bicycles aren’t allowed in the wilderness areas.

Fortunately for enthusiasts who appreciate nature and a good four-wheel-drive experience or the comforts of home, most of Lake Mead NRA’s wilderness areas are bordered by roads and waterways where the restrictions don’t apply.

The park has just released six self-guided adventures that range from quick trips by car, to peaceful raft trips down the river to a four-wheel-drive backcountry experience at Lake Mead NRA. All locations are just one to two hours from Las Vegas. Each Explore Map highlights a wilderness area in the park and describes what makes it unique, including its flora, fauna and geologic features. The maps also include seven Leave No Trace principles as guidelines to help protect the resource.

All of the Explore Maps can be downloaded from the park’s website at nps.gov/lake/planyourvisit/explore.htm

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Grapevine Canyon; A Unique Perspective of the Mojave Desert

To many first time visitors, the Mojave Desert seems barren and desolate, but a walk through Grapevine Canyon in the Bridge Canyon Wilderness Area, at the south end of the park, offers another perspective. A fresh water spring flows out of the canyon floor in non-drought years. This desert spring provides life-giving water to a variety of plants and animals. The presence of the water and the abundance of plants and animals attracted the local Indian tribes to this area, as well. Evidence of the Indian tribes who lived in this area for thousands of years can be found by following the trail from the parking area to the mouth of the canyon, an easy ¼-mile walk. Rock drawings known as petroglyphs are etched on the large boulders on the mountain sides at the entrance to the canyon. They are believed to have been created by these early people.

These sites are sacred and have spiritual significance for the Indian tribes in the area. In addition, they are cultural treasures for all Americans. Please be respectful of these areas. Even the simple act of touching the petroglyphs with your hands can leave oils behind that can alter the chemical makeup of the rock surface and cause the petroglyphs to degrade. Leave only footprints and take only pictures and your memories of these irreplaceable resources home with you. Lake Mead National Recreation Area’s archeological resources are protected by federal law and regulation. On lands administered by the National Park Service, it is unlawful to excavate, remove, disturb, deface or destroy any historic or prehistoric building, structure, ruin, site, or in-place exhibit, artifact or object, or to collect, appropriate, excavate, damage, disturb or destroy artifacts, pictographs, petroglyphs, objects of antiquity, fossils or scientific specimens. Criminal penalties can include a year in jail and/or a $100,000 fine. Violators may also be responsible for restitution and reimbursement of costs associated with mitigation and restoration.

Alert rangers immediately at 702-293-8998 if you see anyone vandalizing sacred petroglyphs or anything else at the park. For visitor information, please call 702-293-8990.
Visitor Services

Lake Mead
Callville Bay Resort and Marina
702-565-8958, rentals: 800-255-5561
www.calvillenorthhaven.com
Marina/boat slip rentals
Launch ramp
Fuel (auto/boat)
Boat rental
Campgrounds
Visitor trailer village
RV park
Pump-out
Store (gift/convenience)
Dry boat storage
Boat repair
Café
Marina snack bar
Restaurant
Lounge
AIS RS (aquatic invasive species removal station)
Fish cleaner
Showers
Laundry
www.lakemeadrvvillage.com
702-293-2540
Lake Mead RV Village
food service and snack bar on floating dock.
Scenic boat tours and private charters with
www.lakemeadcruises.com
702-293-6180
www.lakemeadrvvillage.com
702-394-4000, toll free: 800-752-9669
Echo Bay
702-394-4000, toll free: 800-255-5561
www.lakemeadrvvillage.com
Launch ramp
Fuel (auto)
Campgrounds
Visitor trailer village
RV park
Pump-out
Store (gift/convenience)
Dry boat storage
Fish cleaner
Echo Bay
702-293-6180
Lake Mead Cruises
702-293-6180
www.lakemeadcruises.com
Scenic boat tours and private charters with food service and snack bar on floating dock.
Lake Mead RV Village
702-293-2540
www.lakemeadrvvillage.com
Visitor trailer village
RV park (some lake views)
Pump-out
Store (gift/convenience)
Activity center/meeting room
Las Vegas Bay
702-293-1191 Las Vegas Boat Harbor Complex
702-293-3484 Lake Mead Marina Complex
www.boatinglakemead.com
Marina/boat slip rentals
Launch ramp
Fuel (boat)
Boat rental
Pump-out
Stores (gift/convenience)
Dry boat storage
Boat repair
Café
Restaurants
Lounges
AIS RS (aquatic invasive species removal station)
Showers
Banquet/meeting room
Lake Mohave
Black Canyon/Willow Beach Adventures
702-294-1414
www.blackcanyonriveradventures.com
Scenic flat water raft trip through Black Canyon with views of Hoover Dam. Lunch is included.
Cottonwood Cove Resort and Marina
702-297-1464, rentals: 800-255-5561
www.cottonwoodcovesort.com
Marina/boat slip rentals
Launch ramp
Fuel (auto/boat)
Boat rental
Motels (beach front)
Campgrounds
Visitor trailer village
RV park
Pump-out
Store (gift/convenience)
Lake Mohave Resort, Katherine Landing
928-754-3245; reservations: 800-752-9669
www.seycrown.com
Marina/boat slip rentals
Launch ramp
Fuel (auto/boat)
Boat rental
Motels
Campgrounds
Visitor trailer village
RV park
Pump-out
Store (gift/convenience)
Willow Beach Harbor
928-267-4747
www.willowbeachharbor.com
Marina/boat slip rentals
Launch ramp
Fuel (auto/boat)
Boat rental
Campgrounds
RV park
Pump-out
Store (gift/convenience)
Lake Mohave
Plant Nursery Restores Desert
Desert dandelion, desert chicory and lupine are some of the plants Song Dog Native Plant Nursery staff have planted in the park’s new five-acre garden. The garden is located just north of Boulder Beach and has been fenced for growing native wildflowers and other plants that desert tortoise love to eat.

The plants are not grown to directly feed the tortoise, but instead to harvest the seeds in order to restore prime tortoise habitat that has been destroyed by wildfires. Native wildflowers are an important part of the desert tortoise’s diet.

The native flower garden has 12 large beds, but in 2015, after years of drought, there was only enough seed gathered to plant one of the beds. The plants are protected from rabbits and rodents by using hardware cloth and flashing on a four-foot-high chain link fence. The native plants are watered to supplement naturally occurring rain as they are already adapted to an arid environment.

The seeds had been gathered from all corners of the park and were carefully cleaned and stored until the early spring planting. The goal is to raise healthy, viable plants that will produce a robust harvest of seed for future restoration of tortoise habitat.

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The Park Store is located off Highway 93, between Boulder City and Hoover Dam and is open every day, except Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s Day, from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. See map on the back page for location or call 702-293-8990 for more information.

• Interactive Exhibits
• Outerwear
• Cinema presentation Life in the Desert
• Native American Art - Jewelry - Crafts
• Children’s Games and Toys
• Books
• Maps
• Purchases are tax free and support educational programs at Lake Mead National Recreation Area

Western National Parks Association
www.wnpa.org
Clean, Drain and Dry your vessel, trailer, equipment and anything else that came in contact with the water. Stop the spread of invasive mussels!