

Lake Mead

Lake Mead National Recreation Area
Nevada/Arizona
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Lake Mead National Recreation Area exhibits a startling contrast of desert and water, mountains and canyons, primitive backcountry and modern technology. Two powerful, uncompromising forces created this fantastic place. Nature, working slowly over millions of years, built

the foundation. Man, working feverishly over just the last few decades, remodeled and built a landscape that better suited his needs, desires, and senses. In one of the hottest, driest regions on Earth two huge lakes were created. Lake Mead and Lake Mohave emerged as the center

of the country's first national recreation area. Suddenly people were flocking to the desert for boating, fishing, swimming, and waterskiing. Today thousands of visitors share in enjoying the cool, refreshing manmade lakes. Drawn by water, they find many other unexpected re-

wards. There is the quiet and the stark, desolate beauty of the desert. There are imposing scenes of the ancient, twisted mountains of the Basin and Range province and the colorful vertical walls and high plateaus of the Grand Canyon. There is raw, untouched backcountry,

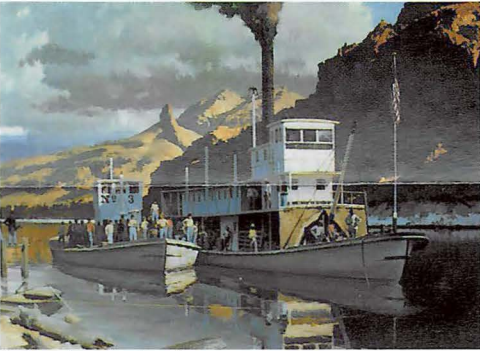
and there is Hoover Dam, a towering symbol of what human genius can achieve. The range of experiences is as broad as the lakes and the land are big.

A History of Challenge and Change

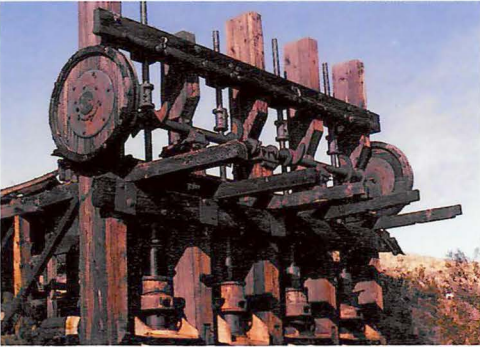
Before the creation of Lake Mead few people set foot in this region. Those who did quickly became aware of the hostile, unforgiving character of this dry, brutally hot, rugged land. Some left; others stayed to meet the challenge. The first to remain were ancient Indians. Fur trappers, Mormon settlers, prospectors, and riverboat captains followed. Explorers like John Wesley Powell penetrated deep into the uncharted territory of the Grand Canyon and other remote areas. And then came the 20th century, and modern-day pioneers built a 726-foot high dam on the Colorado River—higher than any built before. Hoover Dam changed the nature of this country forever. It created an abundance of water and power for the Southwest, it calmed the floodwaters of the Colorado, and it turned a once uninviting landscape into one that today attracts thousands of visitors year after year.

Up the Colorado Steam-powered boats resembling Mississippi riverboats navigated the Colorado River upstream from its mouth in the late 1900s. These cargo-passenger vessels traveled as far north as the Mormon settlement of Callville, now long gone. One of the most difficult obstacles of the 600-mile trip was the Black Canyon rapids. Crews had to pull their boats through using a system of winches and cables strung through ring bolts anchored in the canyon walls.

Rush to Riches The discovery of gold brought a stampede of fortune-seekers in the late 1800s and early 1900s. A single mine in Eldorado Canyon yielded \$1.7 million worth. Prospectors unearthed other precious minerals in the desert mountains, including silver and copper. When the miners moved on, their mines, ore-processing mills, and camps became ghost towns.



Colorado steamboating



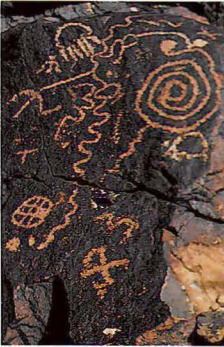
Mining ruins

Taming a Wild River Completed in 1935, Hoover Dam turned the muddy, sometimes violent Colorado River into the still, clear waters of Lake Mead. More than 5,000 men worked night and day for five years to erect the giant concrete structure between the deep, rugged walls of Black Canyon. President Franklin D. Roosevelt heralded the dam's successful completion as an "engineering victory." Davis Dam, downstream from Hoover Dam, was completed in 1953. This rock-and-earth wall controls the flow of water from Lake Mohave. The Bureau of Reclamation, which operates both dams, offers guided tours of Hoover Dam and self-guiding tours of Davis Dam.



Hoover Dam

The First Peoples Petroglyphs, ruins of an ancient city, and other traces of prehistoric life found in Lake Mead country suggest how Indians survived here ages ago. Nomadic desert tribes hunted bighorn sheep and smaller game and collected wild plants such as yucca and pinyon pine nuts. River tribes, living in pit dwellings or stone houses, fished the Colorado and grew irrigated crops of maize, squash, and beans.



Prehistoric petroglyphs

Survival in the Natural World

To survive in Lake Mead country animals and plants generally have adopted one of two lifestyles. Desert dwellers like bighorn sheep, roadrunners, Joshua trees, and cactuses are adapted to living under a set of grueling conditions. They endure temperatures above 110°F, an annual rainfall of less than 6 inches and a meager food supply. The others, including waterbirds and many aquatic plants and animals, live in relative ease, attracted to the manmade environment of Lake Mead and Lake Mohave, where freshwater and food are plentiful year-round.



Desert bighorn



White pelican

have to lie on your belly to see them. A winter rain, however, can trigger a burst of wildflowers the following spring that will conspicuously color the desert like a rainbow. Along the lakes a rich assortment of birds—out of place in the desert but at home on the water—abound. Resident and migratory ducks, cormorants, geese, egrets, herons, and pelicans fish the waters, along with ospreys and bald eagles.

A Recreation Bonanza

The Lakes

Lake Mead National Recreation Area offers a wealth of things to do and places to go year-round. Twice the size of Rhode Island, its huge lakes cater to boaters, swimmers, sunbathers, and fishermen while its desert rewards hikers, wildlife photographers, and roadside sightseers. A good place to start your visit is the Alan Bible Visitor Center, 4 miles northeast of Boulder City, Nev., on U.S. 93. The park staff can help plan your stay and give you up-to-date information on park activities and services. An introductory movie, exhibits, books, brochures, and topographic maps and nautical charts are available. An outdoor botanical garden displays some of the area's interesting desert trees, shrubs, and cactuses. Other places to stop for information are park headquarters, located at the intersection of Nevada Highway and Wyoming Street in Boulder City, or at any park ranger station. You also can write: Superintendent, Lake Mead National Recreation Area, 601 Nevada Highway, Boulder City, NV 89005-2426; or call (702) 293-8907.



Sailing on Lake Mead



Boating on Lake Mohave



Boating on Lake Mohave

Boating Although Lake Mead and Lake Mohave are the prime attractions for visitors, both lakes often appear as empty as the desert. Sailboats, fishing boats, ski boats, and houseboats all share the lakes' 274 square miles without crowding one another. On these spacious open waters opportunities for sight-seeing and other boating activities are varied.

Boaters will find that they can see and reach many scenic areas that are inaccessible to those traveling by car. For example, boats can easily travel up the narrow, steep-walled gorge of Iceberg Canyon in Lake Mead or up the equally spectacular Black Canyon in Lake Mohave, which retains much of the character of the Col-

orado. Boaters can also investigate the numerous secluded coves formed by fingers of the desert jutting out into the water. Many of these coves are bordered by sandy beaches where you can picnic or camp. The beaches are particularly popular camping spots during the hotter months. If you plan on taking a long trip let a friend, family member, or park ranger know where you are going and when you plan to return. Also leave a description of your boat, boat trailer, and vehicle.

For those who want hours of uninterrupted waterskiing, the lakes' wide basins are perfect, especially when winds are light. Sailboarders will prefer near-shore areas and stronger breezes for

their unconventional craft. Six concession-operated marinas along Lake Mead and three on Lake Mohave offer a full range of boating services and supplies year-round (see chart on opposite side of this folder). Free public launching ramps and parking areas are located at each. Parking is limited to seven days per stay. Marinas rent fishing boats, ski boats and waterskiing equipment, and houseboats.

Several different boat tours are operated by concessioners. On Lake Mead, a variety of tours, including trips on a paddlewheel vessel depart daily from Lake Mead Marina. During the summer a boat tour through Boul-

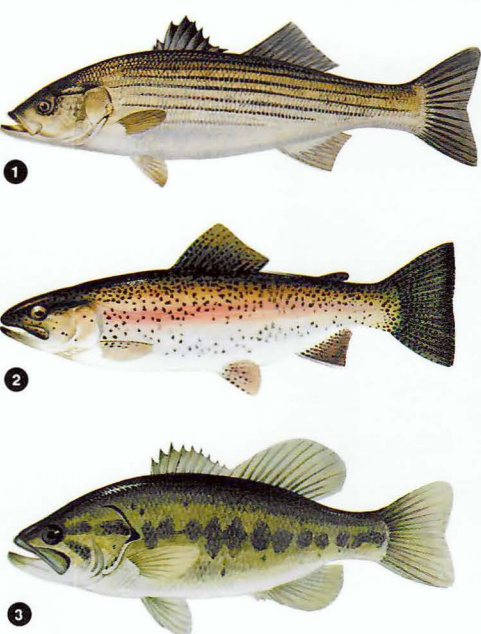
der Canyon departs from Callville Bay every day. Tickets are sold at the two marinas. On Lake Mohave one-day raft trips are offered through the slow-moving waters of Black Canyon from Hoover Dam to Willow Beach. Contact the recreation area for more information on boat tours.

Fishing Fishermen are drawn to Lake Mead and Lake Mohave like gamblers to Las Vegas. The lakes offer some of the best sport fishing in the country. Unlike some lakes, these two offer an open season on all species of fish year-round.

Largemouth bass, rainbow trout, striped bass, channel catfish, black crappie, and bluegill are all popular catches. There are differences between the lakes in the abundance of different species. In Lake Mead one of the most common and sought after fish is striped bass; specimens weighing 50 pounds and more have been caught. In Lake Mohave—especially in its upper reaches in Black Canyon—rainbow trout are the most popular catch; some very large ones have been hooked there. Before you go out you may want to stop by a ranger station and find out the current "hot spots" for the fish you are angling for.

Nevada and Arizona share jurisdiction over Lake Mead and Lake Mohave. To fish from shore you must have a state fishing license. If you fish from a boat you are required to have a license from one state and a special use stamp from the other. Most marinas sell licenses and stamps. They also sell bait, tackle, and other fishing supplies and operate charter fishing boats. Fishermen should become familiar with catch limits and legal methods of capture.

Swimming Both desert lakes are clear, clean, and ideal for swimming, snorkeling, and diving. The best seasons for swimming are spring, summer, and fall, when temperatures in Lake Mead and much of Lake Mohave average 78°F or a little cooler. In the



1 Striped bass
2 Rainbow trout
3 Largemouth bass



Beach break

northern reaches of Lake Mohave, extremely cold temperatures prevail, discouraging most swimmers.

Life guards may be on duty at designated beaches at Boulder

Beach on Lake Mead and at Katherine on Lake Mohave in summer. Be extra careful when swimming outside guarded areas. Never swim alone.

Scenic Drives Several paved roads wind through the dramatic desert scenery of Lake Mead country. Towering stark mountains, plateaus, desert basins of cactuses and creosotebush, and vertical-walled canyons are some of the sights motorists can discover. One popular tour follows the Lakeshore and Northshore Scenic Drives along the edge of Lake Mead. From these roads there are panoramic views of the blue lake set against a backdrop of the browns, blacks, reds, and grays of the desert mountains. Northshore Scenic Drive also leads through areas of brilliant red boulders and rock formations.

Other scenic roads pass through other wild landscapes. For example, the road to Pearce Ferry crosses one of the world's finest Joshua-tree forests. Unpaved backcountry roads penetrate even more remote regions. Check on road conditions before traveling these routes. Bring extra water for your vehicle and tools for emergency repairs. Driving off designated roads is prohibited. Drive only on paved roads or on unpaved roads that are marked with yellow arrows.

Several commercial bus companies in Las Vegas operate guided tours of the Lake Mead area. Some include a motor tour of the recreation area, a boat trip on Lake Mead, and a tour of Hoover Dam.

Picnicking Shaded picnic areas with tables, water, fire grills, and restrooms are located at Callville Bay, Las Vegas Wash, Boulder Beach, Willow Beach, Cottonwood Cove, and Katherine. There are also picnic areas along Northshore Road, including one at Rogers Spring; these do not have drinking water.



Spring wildflowers



Roadside view

Hiking Short desert hikes lead to places you will never see from a boat or car. One such place is the area of colorful sandstone formations near Redstone Picnic Area along Northshore Road. Another is a canyon where Indian petroglyphs were carved in a rock wall hundreds of years ago. Hiking in the recreation area almost always requires crosscountry travel; few maintained trails exist. The best hiking months are October through May. You can explore on your own during this time, or with park naturalists, who lead hikes on weekends. Longer hikes demand careful planning; consult a topographic map and a park ranger. Let someone know where you are going and when you will

return. Rangers will have a difficult time finding you if you get lost in this expanse and they don't know where to begin looking. Always carry water; 1 gallon per day per person is advised. Long crosscountry hikes are discouraged from June through September, when the desert heats up like a furnace.

For Safety's Sake

Very real dangers to your health and safety exist both in the desert and on the lakes. People unaware or unheeding of warnings have suffered serious injuries—some fatal. Know the hazards and how to avoid them. Protect yourself and the recreation area from harm.

Flash floods and Lightning Desert thunderstorms carry the double threat of flash floods and lightning. They occur most often in summer and early fall. Be wary of nearby storms; violent downpours can cause flash flooding in distant areas untouched by rain. Never camp in a wash or other low-lying area or drive across a flooded road. Stay out of open areas where lightning may strike. Weather information is posted daily at ranger stations.

Heat The punishing heat of summer can cause heat exhaustion or even heat stroke. Avoid strenuous activities during

the day. Drink plenty of fluids, even when you are not thirsty; you can lose large amounts of water without knowing it.

Mines and Tunnels Abandoned mines and tunnels, with their deep shafts and old, rotten supporting timbers, should be avoided.

Poisonous Wildlife Rattlesnakes, a scorpion, and a lizard—the Gila monster—are poisonous, but will leave you alone unless disturbed or cornered. To protect yourself, wear sturdy boots and watch your step. A microscopic amoeba common to some hot springs can cause a rare infection and sometimes death; do not dive or submerge your head in springs or associated streams. Oleander is a toxic plant common to developed areas; neither you nor your pet should eat any plant part or drink water from nearby ditches.

Protected Features Natural and historical features such as animals, plants, and Indian artifacts are protected. Do not disturb, damage, or take them from the recreation area. Hunting of game species is allowed in season. Developed areas, as well as many other areas around the lakes, are closed to shooting and to the possession of loaded firearms. Check with a ranger before using firearms. Driving off designated roads is prohibited.

Pets Pets are prohibited from designated beaches, public eating places, and other public buildings. They must always be leashed. Never leave a pet in a car; temperatures inside can climb to 160°F.

Safeguarding Your Belongings Thefts do occur. Unattended belongings invite thieves. Lock valuables in the trunk or out of sight in your car or take them with you when you leave.

In any emergency, contact a ranger or call the 24-hour emergency number, (702) 293-8932.

Safety in the Water

Aids to Navigation

Channel Buoys (traveling up lake)

Port (left) buoy odd-numbered	Mid-Channel buoy	Starboard (right) buoy even-numbered
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Lighted buoys shine white at night

Regulatory Markers

Danger	Boats keep out	Area controlled "as indicated"
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Storm Warning Flags

Small craft advisory	Gale warning
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Diver's Flag

Diver in water

Before going out on the water check weather forecasts and look for storm warning flags at marinas. Call (702) 736-3854 or monitor marine radio channel 162.55 for up-to-date National Weather Service forecasts. If a storm breaks while you are out, seek shelter in a protected cove immediately and wait until the storm passes. High winds can spring up quickly, creating waves as high as 6 feet. Lightning is a hazard on open water, too.

Alcohol, drugs, and water don't mix. The chance of an accident increases as your ability to react—both mentally and physically—are impaired. Most water-related deaths at Lake Mead result from alcohol or drug use.

Safety for Boaters Water levels in Lakes Mead and Mohave change throughout the year. Always approach the shore with caution and watch for shallows and sub-

merged debris. ● Never let a passenger ride on the bow. Fatalities have occurred when passengers fell overboard and were hit by the propeller. ● Many persons who drown never intended to enter the water. Always wear a life preserver.

Safety for Waterskiers Skiers must wear life preservers. ● An observer must accompany the boat operator. ● Display a ski flag when a skier is in the water.

Safety for Swimmers Distances to islands, buoys, and across coves are easily underestimated; don't overestimate your abilities. ● Air mattresses and other inflatables can blow away, leaving you stranded far from shore. Never rely on an inflatable device if you cannot swim.

Safety for Divers Scuba divers must fly a diver's flag.

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