Ages ago, Mount Mazama was probably a 12,000-foot volcano in the Cascade Range. Successive flows of molten rock, eruptions of ash, cinder, and pumice gave the mountain its present form. Howel Williams, in Crater Lake. The Story of Its Origin, described the tremendous explosion that created the crater. Lava in the form of a frothy super-heated pumice was blown out in great quantities, and fine dust was carried hundreds of miles to the north and east by the prevailing winds. Other, but smaller, eruptions spewed out lava in a series of glowing avalanches, cracks opened beneath the volcano, and several cubic miles of molten rock drained away. These ejections and drainings left a vast cavity beneath the cone which now could not support its own weight and collapsed into the void. Thus was Mount Mazama destroyed 6,600 years ago.

After destruction, additional volcanic activity with the caldera produced the cinder cone known as Wizard Island.

Over the centuries the great caldera has accumulated water from rain and snow; today evaporation and seepage are balanced with precipitation, and the water level remains fairly constant.

The lake was discovered on June 12, 1853, by John Wesley Hillmen, a young prospector and member of a party in search of a rumored “Lost Cabin Mine.” He named it Deep Blue Lake. Sixteen years later, visitors from Jacksonville, Oregon, gave the lake its present name.

Only six lakes in the world are deeper than Crater Lake. In the Western Hemisphere, only Great Slave Lake in Canada is deeper—by 83 feet. A sonic depth finder has measured the greatest depth of Crater Lake at 1,922 feet.

FOR YOUR SAFETY

Stay on the trails - especially along the caldera rim. Fossiting can be treacherous on this volcanic rock and soil. Descent to the lake is permitted only on the Cleetwood Trail. In winter, stay off snow cornices on the caldera rim!

Please drive slowly—and see more.

Wildlife. Do not get near wild animals even though they may appear tame. Some have become accustomed to humans, but they are still wild and may seriously injure you if you approach them. In camp, keep food sealed in containers to reduce odors so as not to attract animals. Bears especially are hazards to sloppy campers and campers with pets.

PLANTS AND ANIMALS

Many animals can be seen in the park. Birds along the rim include Clark’s nutcrackers, gray jays, and the blue Steller’s jay. Eagles and hawks are often seen. Chipmunks and golden-haired ground squirrels are common.

Remember, these animals are wild; wild animals are dangerous. They may bite — and a small nip can be serious. Park regulations emphatically forbid feeding and molesting wildlife.

At a distance or from the safety of your car, be on the lookout for deer and bears. Seldom seen are the Cascade red fox, coyote, pine marten, porcupine, bobcat, elk, and very rarely, the cougar.

Early visitors reported that Crater Lake originally contained no fish; but several species have been introduced. Recently the practice of stocking has been discontinued, but rainbow trout, brown trout in small numbers, and kokanee salmon are known to be reproducing. The limited fish population is due to lack of adequate food and suitable spawning grounds. The amazingly pure lake water supports comparatively little life, but an aquatic moss has been found at a record depth of 425 feet.

Wildflowers and coniferous forests of the park are typical of the Cascades. Principal trees surrounding the lake include mountain hemlock, Shasta and subalpine fir, lodgepole and whitebark pine, and in lower elevations beautiful stands of Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine. Wildflowers of the high mountains appear late and disappear early, but displays of phlox, meadow larkspur, and monkeyflowers are brilliant.

HOW TO REACH THE PARK

The south and west entrance roads are open all year. The north entrance road and Rim Drive are closed from approximately mid-October to early July, depending on snow conditions.

From mid-June to mid-September, buses of Crater Lake Lodge are operated daily from Klamath Falls to Crater Lake. Klamath Falls and Medford have airlines and transcontinental bus service, and Klamath Falls is served by railroad.

CAMPING AND LODGING

Mazama Campground, near the Annie Spring entrance, is open from about mid-June to the end of September, also depending on snow conditions. Trailers and motor homes can be accommodated, but there are no utility connections. A sanitary dumping station is available. Entrance and campground fees are collected from mid-June through Labor Day, until such time as weather permits.

Lodge and cabins at Rim Village are open from mid-June to mid-September. For information and reservations, write to Crater Lake Lodge, Inc., Crater Lake, OR 97604. Other accommodations are available near the park.

NATURALIST PROGRAMS

The National Park Service offers naturalist services in summer to help visitors gain a greater appreciation of the park. Programs of current interpretive activities are posted. You are invited to attend the campfire programs held each evening. On weekend and holidays from mid-September to mid-June, light refreshments and souvenirs are available at the coffee shop in Rim Village. There are overnight accommodations near the park. Carry tow rope, shovel, and tire chains, which may be necessary at any time.

PROTECT YOUR PARK

Uniformed park rangers are responsible for the management of park resources and for enforcing park regulations for your safety. Ask them for information, direction, or assistance. Help preserve and protect the park by observing the regulations and by keeping the park tree of litter. A permit is necessary if you plan an extended back-country trail trip.

Camp only in designated areas. Use only dead and down material for your campfire. Build fires in campground fireplaces only, and never leave them unattended. Douse them with water before you leave. Be careful while smoking on trails; and when you drive, use your ashtray. Please report any uncontrolled fire immediately to the nearest park ranger.

Keep pets on a leash or in your car, to protect wildlife and in consideration for others. Pets are not permitted in public buildings, on trails, or beyond plowed roads in winter. Be sure they do not venture onto the rim wall, where there is loose pumice soil and a 1,000-foot drop.

Fishing is permitted in park streams and in Crater Lake, and no fishing license is required. Regulations are available at park headquarters or from park rangers.

It is unlawful to hunt, trap, or have loaded firearms in your possession on park lands. The use of a camp in the park as a base for hunting outside the park is prohibited.

Park regulations, as well as good outdoor manners, call for leaving rocks, flowers, and wildlife undisturbed for others to enjoy.
HOW TO SEE THE PARK

The most popular lake overlook is the Rim Village area. A park naturalist is on duty in the Exhibit Building along the rim wall; here you can buy literature concerning the park.

In front of and below the Exhibit Building, on the caldera wall, is the Sinnott Memorial Overlook Building, with a broad terrace presenting a magnificent panorama. Here, talks explaining the origin of Crater Lake are presented throughout the day in summer.

Two nearby trails afford breathtaking vistas from precipitous vantage points: 1.7-mile Garfield Peak Trail runs east along the rim wall beginning behind the lodge and ending at the peak, 1,900 feet above the lake; 1.5-mile Discovery Point Trail begins at the opposite end of Rim Village and leads to the point where prospector John Wesley Hillman discovered the lake in 1853. This is an easy walk to the Discovery Point Rim Drive turnout.

Rim Drive, a 33-mile route circling the caldera's edge, offers unexcelled observation points. Picnic areas along the way are available for short stops. Fires are prohibited. This drive is one-way clockwise beyond Cleetwood Cove parking area.

The Watchman, the first prominent peak along the Rim Drive beyond Discovery Point, looms 1,800 feet above the lake. An 0.8-mile trail from the parking area leads to the summit and a fire lookout station. Exhibit signs at the lookout base locate notable park features. There are exceptional views in all directions, including 14,000-foot Mount Shasta, about 100 miles away.

Neighboring Hillman Peak, named for the discoverer of the lake, at 8,156 feet is the highest point along the rim.

At North Junction the north entrance road joins Rim Drive. The area was devastated by glowing avalanches of frothy pumice that spewed from the volcano and only now is gradually being reclaimed by lodgepole pines.