

Amistad

RECREATION AREA
TEXAS



Amistad is an international recreation area on the United States-Mexican border that provides outstanding opportunities for boating, other water sports, fishing, limited hunting, and general outdoor enjoyment.

The principal attraction here is Lake Amistad—the reservoir building up behind Amistad Dam on the Rio Grande. Under the bright southwest sun, the sparkling blue water in the lake and its four main “arms” and numerous coves is pleasantly warm for swimming and water sports 9 months of the year. December, January, and February will occasionally have low temperatures near 0° Celsius (in the low 30’s F).

WHAT YOU CAN DO AT AMISTAD

The International Boundary and Water Commission (I.B.W.C) Visitor Center, which is near the customs station on the dam, is operated in the summer by the National Park Service in cooperation with the I.B.W.C. The Park Service is responsible for the recreation facilities and programs on the U.S. side of the reservoir.

Inquire at the center or at park headquarters if you have any questions about the following activities.

Boating. There are three major boat ramps—Pecos, Diablo East, and Rough Canyon. Pecos ramp is 71 kilometers (44 miles) from Del Rio; the nearest gasoline and store facilities are at Comstock, 19 kilometers (12 miles) east of the site. Diablo East is 16 kilometers (10 miles) from Del Rio along a surfaced road from U.S. 90. A concessioner provides boat rentals, rental slips, fuel, bait, ice, snacks, and beverages. Rough Canyon, 36.8 kilometers (23 miles) from Del Rio on Recreation Road No. 2 off U.S. 277, has similar concessioner facilities. You can drive to the water’s edge only at designated sites, and launching a boat from a vehicle must be done at such sites. Boat registration at launch ramps is requested.

> **Boat Requirements.** All boats must meet U.S. Coast Guard requirements including these:

Boats must be numbered according to State law; lights must be used from sunset to sunrise; and

anchor lights are required when outside of special anchorage areas.

All vessels must carry, for each person onboard, a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life-saving device in serviceable condition that is readily accessible. Motorboats, except those of open construction less than 7.9 meters (26 feet) long and propelled by outboard motors, must carry U.S. Coast Guard-approved fire extinguishers.

Vessels less than 7.9 meters (26 feet) must be equipped with paddles or oars. Ventilators are required for enclosed compartments. All vessels must carry a suitable bailing bucket. No vessel, while underway, shall carry more than a safe capacity load.

> **Boating and Water-skiing Regulations.** Reckless, negligent boat operation or operation of a vessel while under the influence of intoxicants or narcotics is not allowed. Water-skiing is permitted only during daylight hours, and there must be both an operator and a competent observer in the towing vessel. Water skiers must wear an approved life-saving device. Skiing is not permitted in channels, within 152 meters (500 feet) of harbors, swimming beaches, or mooring areas, or within 30 meters (100 feet) of any person in the water.

Vessels must maintain a flat wake within designated harbors and must proceed slowly and with due caution when in the vicinity of any diver’s marker or person in the water. You are responsible for any damage caused by your wake. In case of accidents, operators shall render such assistance as is practical and necessary for the injured. Accidents must be reported to a park ranger as soon as possible and at least within 24 hours.

> **Rules of the Road.** Statutory rules of the road, which have been enacted by Congress to prevent collision of vessels, must be observed by operators of vessels on this lake. In narrow channels, when safe and practicable, every vessel must keep to the right of midchannel.

You can get a copy of boating rules and regulations at park headquarters and during the summer at the visitor center on the dam.

Seminole Canyon stretches off into the distance on the U.S. side of the lake. Near the entrance to the canyon is a rock shelter where early man painted many pictographs. There you can see a pictograph of a panther (mountain lion) that was painted some 10,000 years ago.

The shelter is called Panther Cave, and although just outside the park boundary, it may be visited by boaters. For your convenience, the National Park Service has built a small dock nearby.

> **Sanitation.** Please help keep Amistad Lake clean. Carry and use litter bags on your boat. Refuse receptacles are available at the boat ramps. All boats with sanitation facilities must be equipped with a chemical toilet or other suitable device with a holding tank. The dumping of sewage or other waste material into the lake is prohibited.

> **Inspections.** Park rangers, as well as representatives of other State and Federal agencies, may board vessels at any time to examine documents, licenses and/or permits, and sanitation devices or to inspect the vessels.

Swimming. Swimming is not permitted in harbor areas. All designated swim beaches are unsupervised.

Fishing. There is no closed season on fishing. The principal sport fishes are bass, channel catfish, yellow catfish, crappie, and sunfish. A Texas fishing license is required and State regulations apply. For safety reasons fishing is not permitted in the harbor. A MEXICAN fishing license is required for fishing in Mexican waters. Commercial fishing is prohibited in U.S. waters.

Hunting. Certain areas are designated as public hunting areas. Small game birds and waterfowl may be hunted only with shotgun. Game animals may be hunted only with bow and arrow. A Texas hunting license is required. Information on bag limits and seasons is available at park headquarters.

Camping. Primitive camping facilities are available at designated sites. Camping from boats is permitted on the shore below contour 348.7 meters (1,144.3 feet) *except in restricted areas such as the immediate vicinity of marinas and designated swim beaches.* Camping is limited to 15 days in any calendar year. Living on a boat for extended periods of time is not permitted. Commercial campgrounds are available near Diablo East, Rough Canyon, and Pecos River.

OTHER FACILITIES AND ACCOMMODATIONS

Facilities in Mexico: A designated swimming beach with picnic ramadas and a launching ramp and marina are near the west end of the dam.

Outside the park: Motels, travel trailer parks, hotels, restaurants, and service stations are in Del Rio and along U.S. 90.

PLANTS AND ANIMALS AT AMISTAD

This is chaparral country, and the plants and animals here are mostly those of the Edwards Plateau in southwest Texas. There is, however, an intermingling of species from the Chihuahuan Desert.

The most obvious plants are blackbrush, guajillo,

ceniza, yucca, sotol, mesquite, creosotebush, leatherplant, and various cactuses.

The diverse fauna includes whitetail deer, the collared peccary, raccoons, jackrabbits and cottontails, and rock squirrels. Reptiles in the area are kingsnakes, rattlesnakes, racers, turtles, tortoises, and many species of lizards.

You might see some of the more common birds, such as vultures, ravens, quail, doves, sparrows, hawks, wrens, and cardinals.

AMISTAD DAM AND RESERVOIR

Amistad Dam on the Rio Grande, 19.2 kilometers (12 miles) upstream from Del Rio, Tex., and Ciudad Acuna, Coahuila, Mexico, is a cooperative undertaking of the United States and Mexican sections of the International Boundary and Water Commission. An international monument at the center of the dam—bronze eagles 2.1 meters (7 feet) high—symbolizes the spirit of cooperation between the two nations.

The storing of water started on May 31, 1968, and the dam was dedicated by Presidents Richard Nixon and Diaz Ordaz on Sept. 8, 1969.

The primary functions of Amistad Dam are flood control and water conservation, and these make possible the water-oriented recreational opportunities. The dam consists of a 77.4-meter (254-foot) high gravity concrete section in the Rio Grande channel with flanking earth embankments at each end. The whole structure is approximately 9.6 kilometers (6 miles) long.

The reservoir behind the dam will have its maximum flood stage at contour elevation 348.7 meters (1,144.3 feet). At that contour, the lake will have 35,280 surface hectares (88,200 surface acres) with 22,000 surface hectares (55,000 surface acres) in the United States.

Past flow records indicate Amistad will be maintained at the 340.4-meter (1,117-foot) contour a little less than 50 percent of the time, and at this level will have a surface area of about 26,800 hectares (67,000 acres), of which some 17,600 hectares (44,000 acres) will be within the United States. There will be a shoreline of about 1,360 kilometers (850 miles), approximately 864 kilometers (540 miles) in Texas. At the above level, impounded water will extend, in the United States, about 40 kilometers (25 miles) up the Devils River, 22 kilometers (14 miles) up the Pecos, and 118 kilometers (74 miles) up the Rio Grande.

HELP US PROTECT THIS AREA

All Indian sites, pictographs, and artifacts are protected by Federal law, and removal, defacement, or disturbance of them is prohibited. All such features not on Federal lands are protected by the Texas Antiquities Code.

ADMINISTRATION

Amistad National Recreation Area, established under a National Park Service-International Boundary and Water Commission agreement, is administered by the National Park Service. For information, write: Superintendent, Amistad Recreation Area, P.O. Box 420367, Del Rio, TX 78842-0367.

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FOR YOUR SAFETY

Strong winds can make boating extremely hazardous—and in a very short time. Do not try to buck the weather. Get to shore as soon as possible.

Tell someone where you are going and when you expect to return. Be sure you have enough fuel for your trip.

If your boat is disabled, stay with it as long as it will float.

Do not swim from an unanchored boat.

As the Nation’s principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

National Park Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR



AMISTAD RECREATION AREA



- Nature Trail
- Amphitheater
- Fishing
- Picnic area
- Marine fuel
- Telephone
- Groceries
- Ranger Station
- Marina
- Channel buoys
- International buoys
- Campground
- Boat ramp
- Swimming

