

Throughout history humans have adapted their surroundings to better suit their needs. Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, established in 1972, provides a dramatic example of one of nature’s most inspiring settings combined with an ambitious human project. Impounded behind the Bureau of Reclamation’s Glen Canyon Dam, waters of the Colorado River and tributaries are backed up about 185 miles, forming Lake Powell. The lake and over one million acres of desert-and-canyon country offer leisure-time activities for American and international visitors. Fishing and water sports are dominant activities. The park’s back-

country offers intimate opportunities for solitude, quiet, and the thrill of exploration. Traces of ancient cultures, hallmarks of early exploration and settlement, pristine night skies, the amazingly adaptive plants and animals, and a landscape that has been forged by powerful and primeval forces and holds the bones of prehistoric creatures all await the inquisitive.

Major John Wesley Powell led the first organized expedition down the Colorado River in 1869. Powell named many features along the river, including Glen Canyon. An early

writer about water issues and limits in this arid country, Powell was eventually honored by having the lake named for him. Glen Canyon Dam was born amid compromise and controversy. While compromise allowed the completion of the dam, the continuing controversy eventually gave birth to the modern-day environmental movement.

Construction of the concrete arch dam began in 1956, and the first two generating units began providing power in 1966. The lake first reached full pool (3,700 feet) in 1980. The dam fulfills its goals of water storage and power gener-

ation, as well as providing recreational opportunities. Recently the issue of drought has become prominent in the Southwest and around the world. In previous years water stored in Lake Powell has been released during droughts to ensure that downstream cities and agricultural land receive the water they need. As drought continues, the lake and surrounding desert graphically illustrate how important water is in the desert—and the need to conserve it as a precious resource.

Sunset at Padre Bay (above)  
© GARY LADD

“A curious ensemble of wonderful features . . .” John Wesley Powell, 1869

**The First People** Archeologists believe small groups migrated into North America from Asia about 15,000 to 12,000 years ago and dispersed throughout North and South America, living in isolation for thousands of years. Tribes we call Desert Archaic people were hunters and gatherers. About 2,000 years ago a major cultural change—from causes about which we can only speculate—transformed these nomads into more stationary farmers called Basketmakers. As they incorporated new ideas, including above-ground houses, the Basketmaker people



**Ancestral Pueblos** These Indians are ancestors of modern Puebloan tribes like the Hopi. They built stone complexes (pueblos) on the Colorado Plateau until leaving the area in the 1300s. Why did they leave? Today we think it was because of climate change, but only they knew the reasons.

evolved into the culture we call Ancestral Puebloans (see above). Today many Indian cultures, including Navajo, Hopi, Ute, Paiute, and Pueblo, call this country home. Tribes explain their histories and the past through traditional beliefs, stories, and images, which often differ from the academic perspective.

**Exploration** In 1776 two Spanish priests began an expedition that provided the first written record of Glen Canyon. Fathers Dominguez and Escalante and their party set out from Santa Fe in July to pioneer an overland route to a military garrison on the California coast. After three months they reached the Great Basin in Utah, where they turned back before the onset of winter. At the Colorado River they were unable to find a safe crossing for days. Finally, on November 7, they chopped steps into the sandstone wall at Padre Creek and led their pack animals to the banks of the Colorado, fording the river at a popular Indian crossing. Today Crossing of the Fathers lies beneath Padre Bay (see

map on other side of this brochure). In the 1800s Hispanic traders adopted a portion of this route through Glen Canyon as one arm of the Old Spanish Trail.

In May 1869 geologist John Wesley Powell set out to map the region and record its natural history. Powell and his crew of nine men left Green River, Wyoming Territory, and on July 28, entered Glen Canyon and found its waters calm compared to rapids in Cataract Canyon (see map). Their trip finally took them through the Grand Canyon to the mouth of the Virgin River in Nevada. In later writings Powell promoted responsible settlement for the Southwest based on available water supplies.

**Pioneer Settlements** Explorations in the late 1700s and early 1800s led to some settlements in canyon country. One of the earliest was Lees Ferry, named for John D. Lee, a Mormon who in 1873 was sent there by the church to build and operate a ferry. Mormons colonizing the San Juan Valley made a river crossing at Hole-in-the-Rock, below the confluence of the Colorado and Escalante rivers. They blasted and fabricated a road 0.75 mile long that descended nearly 1,000 feet.

Charles Hall later found a better crossing about 35 miles upstream. He ferried travelers at Halls Crossing until Cass Hite developed a more accessible crossing. The ferry and the town of Hite were active until flooded by the waters of Lake Powell.



Houseboats anchor in Labyrinth Canyon, a southern arm of Padre Bay. Sunrise illuminates Tower Butte on the Navajo Nation.

**Glen Canyon Dam** Concrete for the arch dam and powerplant was poured around the clock for over three years. The dam’s crest is 1,560 feet long. It lies 710 feet above bedrock and 583 feet above the original river channel. At its full-pool elevation of 3,700 feet, Lake Powell is 560 feet deep at the dam.



Largemouth and striped bass (left) flourish in Lake Powell. Rainbow trout (above) thrive in the Colorado River below Glen Canyon Dam.

Nature’s Bold Work

**Geology** The spectacular landscape dominating this canyon country is the product of eons of geologic activity: shifting continents, global rising and falling of sea levels, and creation of highlands now worn and redeposited. At times, desert dominated the landscape; other times, freshwater or saltwater seas invaded, leaving rivers to erode recently deposited layers. Prevailing winds abetted the process. Periods of erosion account for the missing rock strata and layers appearing elsewhere in sequence. The last uplift of the Colorado Plateau began about 10 million years ago. Uplift made meandering streams of the Colorado River run faster and cut the canyons that are Lake Powell’s basin. Navajo sandstone, the dominant formation, is made of sand dunes hardened by ground water minerals.

**Paleontology** Glen Canyon National Recreation Area and neighboring Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument contain some of the most outstanding specimens of prehistoric life found anywhere on Earth. Recent discoveries include rare or unusual dinosaur skeletons and many dinosaur tracks.



A student carefully exposes a dinosaur skeleton.

**Ecology** Plants and animals here are typical high desert species. Spring or summer moisture prompts lupine and Indian paintbrush to bloom. Pinyon and juniper trees grow at higher elevations. Animals include coyotes, foxes, and insects. Spring-fed alcoves in side canyons provide habitat for deer and beaver, ferns and sedges, reeds and cattails, cottonwoods and willows. Watch for eagles and listen for canyon wrens.

Places to Explore

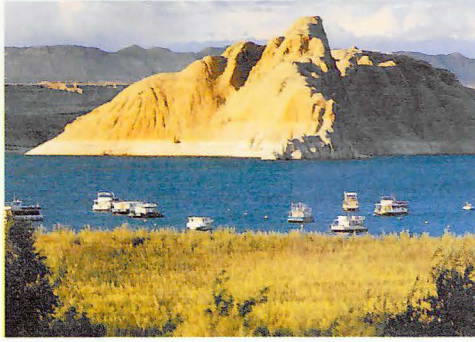


Lees Ferry Fort was built in 1874.

**LEES FERRY** Lees Ferry lies in the break between Glen, Marble, and Paria canyons, downriver from Glen Canyon Dam. This natural corridor was the only place a wagon road could be built to connect Utah and northeastern Arizona. Lees Ferry was settled by John D. Lee, who established the first Colorado River crossing here. A stone fort, built in 1874 in anticipation of conflict between the Navajo and settlers, served briefly as a trading post. Trails at the fort, along the Colorado River, and at Lonely Dell Ranch in nearby Paria River Valley offer glimpses of what life was like for miners and Mormon pioneers.

Today Lees Ferry has a ranger station, campground, launch ramp, dock, fish-cleaning station, and access to 15 miles of the Colorado River (upriver only). Navajo Bridge Interpretive Center at Marble Canyon on Highway 89A has information, a bookstore, exhibits, and a walkway over the Colorado River; open April through October. Spring is the best time to see the California condors that flock to this area.

Grand Canyon river trips begin at Lees Ferry. Permits are required. Contact Grand Canyon National Park, Grand Canyon, AZ 86023-0129; www.nps.gov/grca.



Evening at Wahweap Bay and Wahweap Marina.

**CARL HAYDEN VISITOR CENTER, WAHWEAP, ANTELOPE POINT, AND PAGE** Carl Hayden Visitor Center, next to Glen Canyon Dam and bridge, is open daily except Thanksgiving, December 25, and January 1. Here you will find information, dam tours, exhibits, video programs, a relief map, an endangered fish aquarium, and a bookstore. Rangers can answer questions.

Wahweap Marina is 5.5 miles from the visitor center along Lakeshore Drive. The concessioner provides lodging, food services, gift shops, a campground for tent and RV camping, laundry, showers, service station, and full marina services.

Antelope Point Marina has boat rentals, fuel dock, marina store, an on-water restaurant, cyber cafe, slips, and boat repair. More facilities are planned. The area also has drinking water, restrooms, two dump/pumpout stations, picnic area with grills, and a fish-cleaning station.

Page, Ariz., near the dam and visitor center, has stores, lodging, food, a hospital, and museum. A concessioner offers commercial half-day and specialty trips on the river between the dam and Lees Ferry. Call 1-888-522-6644.



Rainbow Bridge. Navajo Mountain is in the distance.

**DANGLING ROPE AND RAINBOW BRIDGE** Dangling Rope Marina, between buoys 40 and 43—accessible only by boat—has a ranger station, restrooms, boat pumpout station, boat fuel, minor boat repairs, a marina store, and snack bar. Marina services may not be available in winter months.

Rainbow Bridge National Monument is 15 miles uplake of Dangling Rope Marina and about 50 miles by water from Wahweap, Bullfrog, or Halls Crossing. Rainbow Bridge, 275 feet across and 290 feet high, is the world’s largest natural bridge—nearly as tall as the Statue of Liberty. Rainbow Bridge may also be reached by trails across the Navajo Nation; permits are required. Contact: Navajo Nation, Parks and Recreation Department, Box 9000, Window Rock, AZ 86515. Call 520-871-6647 or Navajo Mountain Chapter 928-672-2915.

*Note:* Rainbow Bridge is sacred to at least five American Indian tribes. We ask that visitors respect the religious significance of Rainbow Bridge to neighboring tribes and view Rainbow Bridge from the viewing area rather than walking up to or under the bridge. You may take the trail from the courtesy dock to the viewing area. Please respect these long-standing beliefs.



Explorers can experience true solitude in these canyons.

**CANYONS OF THE ESCALANTE** The Escalante Canyons include some of the most remote, wild, and beautiful country in the Southwest. The Escalante River meanders slowly between towering canyon walls. Its tributaries, deeply entrenched in sandstone, contain arches, natural bridges, and waterfalls. The area—reminiscent of Glen Canyon before the creation of Lake Powell—offers some of the finest opportunities for desert hiking on the Colorado Plateau. The mouth of Escalante Canyon meets Lake Powell about 70 miles uplake from Glen Canyon Dam. Some of its canyons can be explored from small boats.

Hikers can reach the backcountry on foot by trails from the unpaved Hole-in-the-Rock road. Narrow canyons and dwellings of prehistoric inhabitants are some of the region’s attractions. In recognition of their value, portions of the Escalante Canyons region have been recommended as, and are managed as, wilderness areas. A permit (free) is required for all backcountry camping in the Escalante area. An interagency visitor center in the town of Escalante, Utah, can provide permits and up-to-date trail and road information. Call 435-826-5499.



Hikers climb slickrock near Balanced Rock Canyon.

**HALLS CROSSING AND BULLFROG BAY** Halls Crossing, reached from Blanding, Utah, via state highways, offers a ranger station, boat pumpout station, and launch ramp. The concessioner provides lodging (housekeeping units), two campgrounds (one with hookups), laundry, showers, store, a service station, and marina services. Cal Black Memorial Airport is east of Halls Crossing.

Bullfrog Bay can be reached by paved state highways from Hanksville, Utah. A visitor center has information, exhibits, a full-scale slot-canyon model, and bookstore. In summer there are an emergency medical clinic and limited ranger programs. Year-round facilities include a launch ramp, boat pumpout station, fish-cleaning station, picnic area, and paved aircraft landing strip. A concessioner provides lodging, food services, gift shop, stores, two campgrounds (one with hookups), laundry, showers, service station, and full marina services. A ferry (fee) runs between Halls Crossing and Bullfrog Bay. Call 435-684-3088 for a schedule.



The area is renowned for its dramatic rock formations.

**HITE** Cass Hite originally named this country Dandy Crossing because it was the best ford in the Colorado River above Lees Ferry. Prehistoric people also used the crossing. During the 1880s and 1890s, gold miners rendezvoused here because Hite had the only post office in Glen Canyon.

Today, Hite, the Dirty Devil River, and the upper stretches of Lake Powell are reached by paved Utah Hwy. 95. Many people find the region around Hite to be the most scenic in Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, and it is prime mountain biking country. It is the gateway to the Orange Cliffs and the Maze district of Canyonlands National Park. The National Park Service offers primitive camping in the area. The concessioner provides lodging (housekeeping units), a store, and service station.



Prickly pear blossoms  
© GARY LADD

# Enjoying Glen Canyon

### FOR A SAFE VISIT

Real dangers exist here. Every year deaths result from simple mistakes made in this unfamiliar environment. Check with a ranger, read the park newspaper and bulletin boards, or ask at visitor centers for safety information. Remember, your safety is your responsibility.

• **Personal Watercraft (PWC)** Personal watercraft are considered vessels; you are responsible for knowing and observing regulations governing their use.

- **Life jackets (PFDs)** An easy-to-reach, approved life jacket must be available for every person aboard a vessel. Children 12 and under must wear a life jacket.
- **Alcohol and Boating** Boating under the influence of alcohol is dangerous and illegal. Many boating accidents and deaths are alcohol related.
- **Waterskiing** Boats towing a skier must have both an operator and a competent observer. An orange flag must be held high when a skier is down. Kite

tubing, parasailing, and other forms of airborne delivery are prohibited.

- **Swimming** Swim at your own risk. Cliff jumping and diving is illegal. There are no lifeguards in the recreation area.
- **Boat Wakes** You are responsible for damage or injuries caused by your boat wake.
- **Bow Riding** Federal regulations prohibit riding on the bow of a boat at any time.
- **Carbon Monoxide (CO)** This colorless, odorless gas

is extremely poisonous and has caused injuries and deaths at Lake Powell. Know the danger zones on your boat, including generators, engines, and gas appliances, and learn to recognize symptoms of CO poisoning. Ensure proper ventilation. Don't swim, sit, or work near exhaust.

- **Weather** The high desert is an area of extreme and rapid weather changes. Get an accurate forecast before setting out and take precautions for all weather conditions.

### STEWARDSHIP—PROTECTING YOUR PARK

Stewardship—preserving Glen Canyon's resources—is everyone's job. Regulations and policies protect the park, our visitors, and provide for future generations. Check with a park ranger, read the park newspaper and bulletin boards, and ask at visitor centers for more information.

**Natural, Cultural Features** Do not remove, damage, or deface natural or cultural features. All plants, animals, and rocks are protected by federal law. It is illegal to

write or draw on rocks or other surfaces. Graffiti is vandalism.

**Archaeological Sites, Antiquities** Archaeological sites are protected by federal law; laws are strictly enforced! Report suspicious behavior at visitor centers, ranger stations, and marinas, or call (anonymously) the Archeological Crime Reporting Hotline at 1-800-227-7286.

**Weapons** Firearms are prohibited in federal

buildings. Use of firearms, except when legally hunting, is prohibited. Fireworks are illegal.

**Driving and Bicycling** Vehicles and bicycles must stay on roads.

**Pets** Pets must be leashed at all times. Dogs are prohibited in the Escalante backcountry.

**Human and Pet Waste** Anyone camping within ¼ mile of Lake Powell or its tributaries must carry and

use a device for containing solid human or pet waste. The use of plastic bags in such devices is prohibited. Boats capable of over-board discharge must disassemble that function when on Lake Powell.

**Zebra Mussels, Invasive Species** Zebra mussels and other aquatic nuisance species pose a threat to all inland waterways in the United States. When leaving any body of water, clean your boat thoroughly, completely drain the bilge

and other water compartments. Let the boat dry for 10 days before using it again. You must display a certificate stating that your boat is free of zebra or quagga mussels.

**Plan Ahead** To plan your visit contact the park or check our website (at right) for details about programs, activities, fees, safety, and regulations. Service animals are welcome.

**Emergencies: call 911**

**More Information**  
Glen Canyon  
National Recreation Area  
P.O. Box 1507  
Page, AZ 86040-1507  
928-608-6404  
www.nps.gov/glca

This is one of over 390 parks in the National Park System. To learn about national parks and National Park Service programs in America's communities, visit [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov).

©GPO 2011—365-615/00617 Reprint 2011  
Printed on recycled paper.

