



Spring wildflowers at Greggs Hideout, Arizona David Muench

Blue Lakes, Desert, Rugged Mountains—Come Join in the Adventure

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

over the last few decades, remodeled and built a landscape that better suited their modern needs and desires. These efforts created two huge lakes in one of the hottest, driest regions on Earth. Lake Mead and Lake Mohave emerged as the center of the country's first national recreation area. People flocked to the

desert for boating, fishing, swimming, and waterskiing. Today thousands of visitors enjoy the cool, refreshing lakes. Attracted at first by the water, visitors find other unexpected rewards. There is the quiet and stark 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 unspoiled 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 as big as the land.

A Formidable Desert

Before the creation of Lake Mead this part of the desert was sparsely populated. The people who did live here quickly became aware of the hostile, unforgiving character of this dry, brutally hot, rugged land. Many Native American groups, which have been here for at least 10,000 years, stayed to meet the challenge. Fur trappers, Mormon settlers, prospectors, and riverboat captains followed. Explorer John Wesley Powell penetrated into the uncharted territory of the Colorado River. Then, in the 20th century, modern-day pioneers built a 726-foot high dam on the Colorado River—higher than any dam built before. (Today, it remains the highest concrete dam in the Western Hemisphere.) 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 turned a forbidding landscape into one that attracts millions of visitors every year.



Rock art here is sacred to Native Americans.

The First People Here Petroglyphs, remnants of an ancient city, and other traces of prehistoric people found in Lake Mead country suggest how Native Americans survived here ages ago. The desert tribes

hunted bighorn sheep and smaller game and collected plants such as yucca and mesquite beans. They also fished the Colorado and grew maize, squash, and beans in the river's floodplain.

Steamboats on the River From the mid-1850s until the early 1900s steam-powered boats plied the Colorado River, supplying military outposts, mining towns, and other settlements. The typical vessel

in this "Arizona Fleet" was a sturdy flat-bottomed paddlewheeler that could navigate across shallow stretches and sandbars. The steamers traveling upstream made only about five or six miles per hour. It was slow going but easier than transport-

ing cargo and passengers across the desert by mule train. Difficult rapids, such as those in Black Canyon, forced boats to use cables and winches for safe navigation. To get upstream crews threaded cables through iron ringbolts

anchored in the canyon walls. A winch on deck quickly reeled in the cables, pulling the vessel across the treacherous distance. On the return trip crews braked the boat's descent through the rapids by letting the cables out slowly.

The railroads arrived here in 1905, reducing steamboat use to local shuttles. Dam construction, which began in the early 1930s, sealed the river, and the fleet sailed no more.



In 1858 the Explorer was the first steamboat to navigate the river into Black Canyon.

Living in the Desert Animals and plants living here have evolved traits that help them cope with the extreme environment. Most adaptations center around avoiding heat, conserving water, and surviving on a meager food supply. Many animals and plants, such as the yucca moth and the Joshua tree, form symbiotic communities, meaning they depend on each

other for survival. Yucca moths pollinate Joshua trees while laying eggs in the plant's flowers, and hatching moth larvae feed on the flower's seeds. Without the moth's help with pollination, the Joshua tree could not reproduce; without seeds from the Joshua tree, moths could not survive.



Joshua Tree

Nature is All Around Us The mountains, canyons, and plains surrounding the lakes and desert can seem as lifeless as the moon. A keen eye and a sense of how wildlife survives in this wild land will improve your chances of seeing some of the area's common and more extraordinary animals and plants. Watch for bighorn sheep descending what seem to be impossi-

ble steep rocky ridges along the shores of Lake Mead or Lake Mohave for a mid-day drink. Rams (males) have deeply curled horns, and ewes (females) have straighter horns. Lambs are born in May or June. More than 1,000 bighorn live in the recreation area. They are one of the few desert animals active during the extreme heat of the day.



The horns of bighorn sheep grow throughout their lifetime. You can tell a sheep's age by counting the growth rings on its horns—one for each year.

Lizards, squirrels, jackrabbits, and other animals usually come out of their shaded resting places only in the cool hours of morning, late afternoon, evening, or at night.

Spectacular displays of desert plant life can be just as elusive. Plants in the desert bloom year-round, but many of the blossoms are so tiny you have to lie on your stom-



Desert tortoise



You can identify a red-tailed hawk (above) by its broad russet tail and by its shrill, rasping call as it circles overhead. Illustration: John Dawson

Having Fun at Your National Park



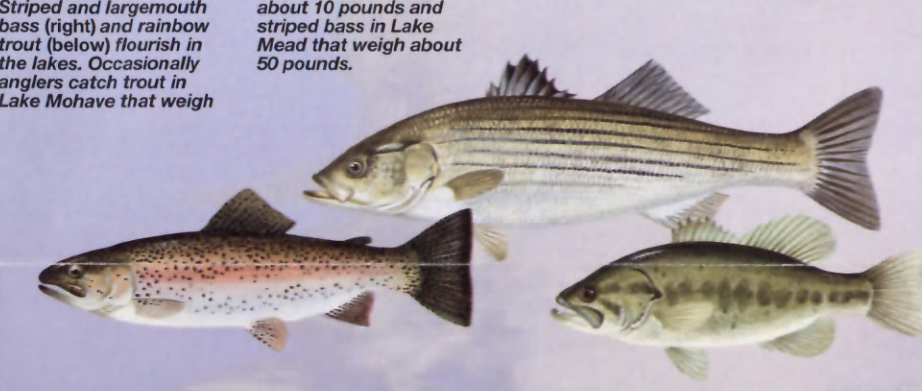
Experience the adventure of sailing on a desert lake.



Boat tours give you a closer look at Hoover dam.



Children love dabbling in Lake Mead's refreshing water.



Striped and largemouth bass (right) and rainbow trout (below) flourish in the lakes. Occasionally anglers catch trout in Lake Mohave that weigh about 50 pounds.



Black Canyon has the feel of the old Colorado River.

What to See and Do

Visitor Center The Alan Bible Visitor Center, four miles from Boulder City, Nev., on U.S. 93, has information, a film, exhibits, books, maps, nautical charts, and a native-plant garden. You can get information at park headquarters, at the intersection of Nevada Highway and Wyoming Street in Boulder City, and at ranger stations.

Planning Your Visit? Use the free park newspaper: *Desert Lake View*. It has maps, phone numbers, and information about boating, fishing, hiking, camping, concessioners, marinas, and more. You can find out about fees, weather, safety, regulations, and educational programs. Contact the park to get the newspaper or get one at the visitor center and ranger stations. Or, visit the park's web site: www.nps.gov/lame.

Boating Lake Mead and Lake Mohave often appear as empty as the desert. Sailboats, fishing boats, and houseboats all share the lakes' 290 square miles without crowding one another. Boaters can explore scenic areas, such as the gorge of Iceberg Canyon near Gregg Basin, spectacular Black Canyon in Lake Mohave, and secluded coves formed by fingers of the desert that jut into the water. Many coves are bordered by sandy beaches where you can picnic or camp. If taking a long trip, let a friend or park ranger know your plans. Leave a description of your boat, boat trailer, and vehicle.

Marinas and Tours Concessioner-operated marinas offer boating services, rentals, and supplies year-round. Free public launch ramps and parking areas are at marinas; parking is limited to seven days per stay. Concessioners offer many tours, including paddlewheel vessels and raft trips. Check the park newspaper for details.

Fishing Lake Mead and Lake Mohave offer some of the nation's best sport fishing. Largemouth bass, rainbow trout, striped bass, channel catfish, black crappie, and bluegill are popular catches. In Lake Mead one of the most sought after is striped bass. In Lake Mohave rainbow trout is the popular catch. Check at a ranger station to find the "hot spots" for the fish you are angling for, or check the online fishing report: www.nps.gov/lame/visit/fishrpt.html.

Arizona and Nevada share jurisdiction over both lakes. To fish from shore you must have a state fishing license. To fish from a boat you must have a license from one state and a special-use stamp from the other (available at most marinas). Anglers should be familiar with catch limits and legal methods of capture.

Hiking Short desert hikes lead you to places you will never see from a boat or car, such as the colorful sandstone formations near Redstone Picnic Area along Northshore Road. Hiking in the recre-

ation area usually requires crosscountry travel; few maintained trails exist. The best hiking months are October through May. You can explore on your own or join a ranger-led hike. Longer hikes demand careful planning—consult a ranger and use a topographic map. Let someone know where you are going and when you will return. If you get lost, rangers will have a difficult time finding you if they don't know where to begin looking. Always carry enough water—at least one gallon per day per person. Long hikes are discouraged from June through September when the desert heats up like a furnace.

Camping Backcountry camping is allowed along the shores of the lakes and in designated sites along unpaved backcountry roads. There are limits to the length of time campers may stay in campgrounds and in the backcountry. Ask for details.

Scenic Drives Paved roads wind through mountains, desert basins, and canyons. From Lakeshore Scenic Drive and Northshore Road you can see panoramic views of the blue lake set against a backdrop of the browns, blacks, reds, and grays of the mountains. Northshore Road leads through areas of brilliant red boulders and rock formations. The road to Pearce Ferry crosses one of the world's finest Joshua-tree forests. Unpaved backcountry roads penetrate remote regions. Check on road conditions before traveling these routes. Take water for your vehicle and tools for emergency repairs. Drive only on paved roads or unpaved roads signed with yellow arrows. Take drinking water.

Historic Sites Scattered throughout the recreation area are structures representing Mormon migrations, logging and ranching, homesteading, hardrock mining and milling, the construction of Hoover Dam, and the management of water and power in the Southwest. Sawmills, log buildings, ranches, irrigation ditches, railroad tunnels, and gauging stations are reminders of the rich history you can experience in the park. Many sites are on

the National Register of Historic Places. Do not remove or damage any cultural artifacts; all are protected by federal law.

Swimming Both lakes are 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 cooler. In the northern reaches of Lake Mohave cold temperatures prevail, discouraging most swimmers. Some beach areas, including Boulder Beach, are designated swimming beaches and are marked with buoys to restrict boats. These areas provide good swimming, but no lifeguards are present. Never swim alone.

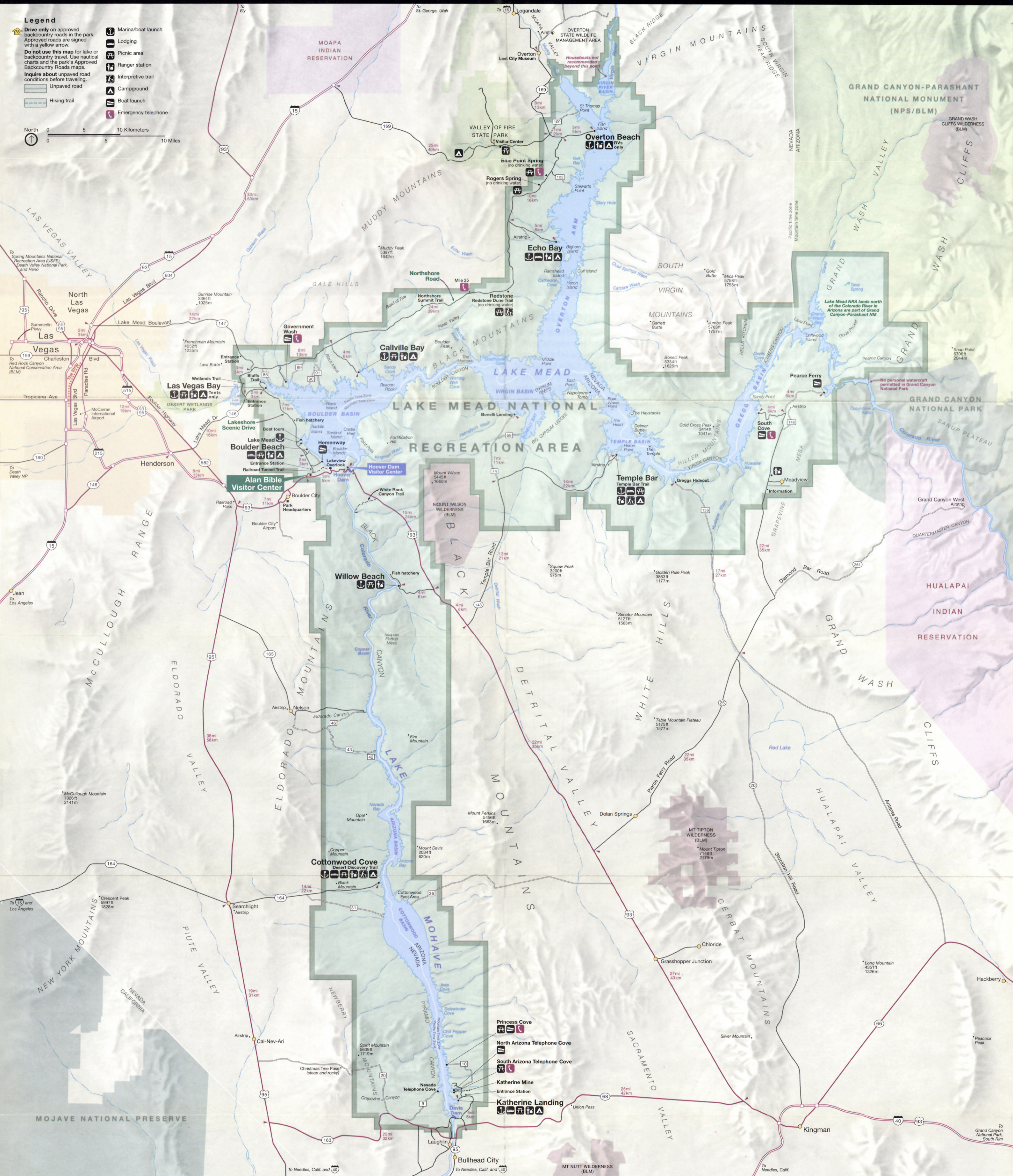
Picnicking Shaded picnic areas with tables, water, fire grills, and restrooms are at Calville Bay, Las Vegas Bay, Boulder Beach, Willow Beach, Cottonwood Cove, and Katherine Landing. There are picnic areas at Temple Bar, Princess Cove, South Arizona Telephone Cove, and along Northshore Road, including one at Rogers Spring; these do not have drinking water.

Lake Mead National Recreation Area
601 Nevada Highway
Boulder City, NV 89005
702-293-8907
www.nps.gov

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Lake Mead Marina: Laurence Parent



**In an emergency call:
702-293-8932 or 800-
680-5851.**

National Weather Service
Monitor the marine radio
channel 162.55. Call 702-
736-3854.

year. Approach the shore with caution; watch for shallows and submerged debris. •Never let a passenger ride on the bow.

- Wear a lifejacket.
- Keep an eye on your children.

Never camp in a wash or a low-lying area or drive across a flooded road. Stay out of open areas where lightning may

water even if you are not thirsty; your body can lose fluids quickly.

Wildlife Advisory

toxic plant common to developed areas; you or your pet should not eat plant parts or drink water from ditches.

Driving Off-road driving is prohibited. Get the free Approved Backcountry Roads maps at ranger

Time Changes Nevada is in the Pacific Time Zone. Arizona is in the Mountain Time Zone. Except on the Navajo Reservation, Ari-

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