



Spring wildflowers at Gregg's 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 river-boat 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 paddlewheel-er that could navigate across shallow stretches and sandbars. Steamers traveling upstream made only about five or six miles per hour. It was slow going but easier

than transporting 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 thread-

ed 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.



Hoover Dam's 45-foot-thick crest and 660-foot-thick base hold back Lake Mead.

Taming a Wild River Completed in 1935, Hoover Dam turned the sometimes violent Colorado River into the still waters of Lake Mead. More than 5,000 men worked for five years to erect the massive struc-

ture between the steep walls of Black Canyon. When finished the dam contained enough concrete to pave a road 16 feet wide and eight inches thick from San Francisco to New York City. Hoover Dam, managed

by the Bureau of Reclamation, has tours daily except Thanksgiving and December 25. Davis Dam, downstream from Hoover Dam, was finished in 1953. This rock-and-earth wall controls the flow of water from Lake Mohave.

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

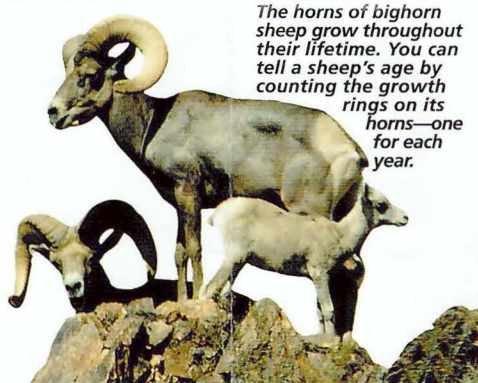
they depend on each other for survival. Yucca moths pollinate Joshua trees while laying eggs in the plant's flowers, and hatching moth larvae feed on the flower's seeds. Without the moth's help with pollination, the Joshua tree could not reproduce; without seeds from the Joshua tree, moths could not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

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. Lizards, squirrels, jack-



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.

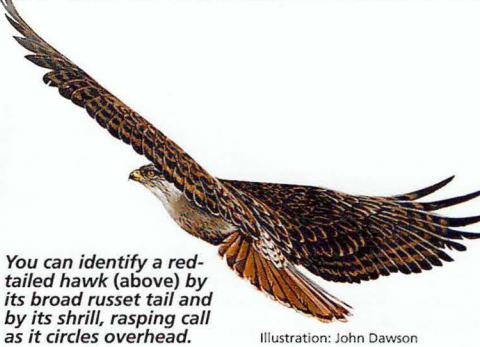
rabbits, and other animals usually come out of their shaded resting places only in the cool hours of morning, late afternoon, evening, or at night.

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 stomach to see them. A win-

ter rain can trigger a burst of wildflowers the following spring that 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, golden eagles, and red-tailed hawks.



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.



Mountain biking on the River Mountains Loop Trail.



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 10 pounds and striped bass in Lake Mead that weigh about 50 pounds.



Illustration: NPS/Dan Feaser



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 Way 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: www.nps.gov/lame/newsp.html

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/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 recreation area usually requires cross-country 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. Lake Mead National Recreation Area has no lifeguards. Swim at your own risk. Never swim alone.

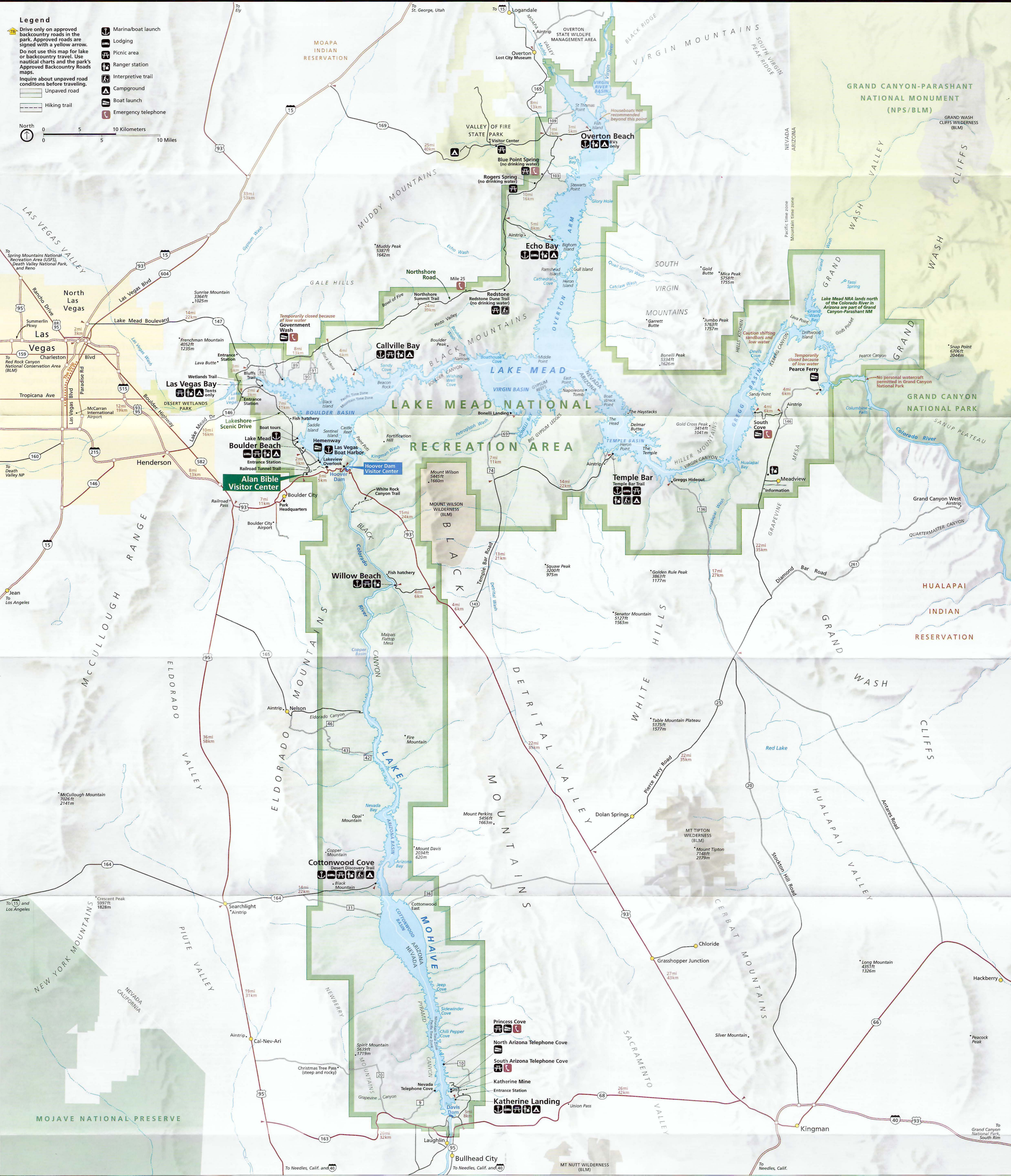
Picnicking Shaded picnic areas with tables, water, fire grills, and restrooms are at Callville Bay, Las Vegas Bay, Boulder Beach, Willow Beach, Cottonwood Cove, and Katherine Landing. There are picnic areas at Temple Bar, Princess Cove, South Arizona Telephone Cove, and along Northshore Road, including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

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



Lake Mead Marina ©Laurence Parent

Enjoying a Safe Visit at Lake Mead



Real dangers exist on the lakes and in the desert. Deaths result every year from simple mistakes made in an unfamiliar environment. See safety tips in the park newspaper; get regulations at a visitor center or ranger station. Know the hazards. Learn how to protect yourself from danger. In an emergency call: 702-293-8932 or 800-680-5851.

Safety on the Lakes Weather Check forecasts and look for storm warning flags at marinas. If a storm breaks

while you are out, seek shelter in a cove and wait for the storm to pass. Winds can spring up quickly, creating waves as high as eight feet. Lightning is a hazard on open water.

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

Alcohol and Drugs Alcohol and drugs are a factor in many deaths and injuries at Lake Mead National Recreation Area. Chances of an accident increase as your ability to react is impaired.

Safety for Boaters Water levels in the lakes change throughout the year. Approach the shore with caution; watch for shallows and submerged debris. • Never let a passenger ride on the bow. • Wear a life preserver. • Operating a boat while drinking alcohol is illegal.

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 and

buoys and across coves are easily misjudged; do not overestimate your abilities. • Inflatable can blow away leaving you stranded; don't use one if you can't swim. • Wear a lifejacket. • Watch your children. • There are no lifeguards. Swim at your own risk. Never swim alone.

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

Safety in the Desert Flash Floods/Lightning Thunderstorms carry the double threat of flash floods and lightning.

Distant downpours can cause flash flooding in areas untouched by rain. Never camp in a wash or a low-lying area or drive across a flooded road. Stay out of open areas where lightning may strike. Check ranger stations for weather updates.

Climate/Heat Summer temperatures rise above 100°F daily causing conditions for heat stroke to occur. Avoid strenuous activities during the day. From October through May temperatures are less extreme. The winter highs average 50°F;

nighttime lows seldom drop below 32°F. Drink water even if you are not thirsty; your body can lose fluids quickly.

Wildlife and Plant Advisory • Scorpions and rattlesnakes are poisonous but will leave you alone unless disturbed or cornered. • Wear sturdy boots, and do not put your hands or feet into a place you can't see. • A microscopic amoeba common to some hot springs can cause infection and sometimes death; do not dive or put your head into springs or

streams. • Oleander is a toxic plant common to developed areas; you or your pet should not eat plant parts or drink water from ditches. Do not use wood of the oleander for cooking.

Mines and Tunnels Avoid old mines and tunnels; shafts and rotten timbers are dangerous.

Hunting Hunting is allowed in season. Developed areas and many areas around the lakes are closed to shooting and to the possession of loaded firearms.

Driving Off-road driving is prohibited. Get the free Approved Backcountry Roads maps at ranger stations and at the visitor center, or download them from our website.

Pets Keep pets on a leash (six-foot maximum length). Pets are prohibited from designated beaches, public eating places, and public buildings. Never leave a pet alone, especially in a vehicle. Temperatures inside can climb to 160°F; a pet can die quickly.

Time Changes Nevada is in the Pacific Time

Zone; Arizona is in the Mountain Time Zone. Except on the Navajo Reservation, Arizona does not observe daylight-saving time.

Protected Features Do not damage or remove plants, animals, Native American artifacts, or natural and historical features; all are protected by federal law.

Administration Lake Mead National Recreation Area is one of more than 380 parks in the National Park System. The National Park Service cares for these

special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage. To learn more about national parks and National Park Service programs in America's communities, visit www.nps.gov.

For More Information Lake Mead National Recreation Area 601 Nevada Way Boulder City, NV 89005 702-293-8907 www.nps.gov/lame



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