

Lake Mead

Lake Mead
National Recreation Area
Nevada/Arizona

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Lake Mead Country

Lake Mead National Recreation Area encompasses 177 kilometers (110 miles) long Lake Mead, 108-kilometer (67-mile) Lake Mohave, the surrounding desert, and the isolated Shivwits Plateau in Arizona. The Shivwits (shown at left) can be reached only by unpaved roads from the north. Check with rangers about roads to the Shivwits and nearby regions.

Time Changes Be aware of time changes when traveling in the area. Nevada is in the Pacific Time Zone and Arizona is in the Mountain Time Zone.

Climate In this desert climate summer temperatures rise above 38°C (100°F) daily. From October through May temperatures are less extreme. Winter highs average a cool 10°C (50°F); nighttime lows seldom drop below 0°C (32°F).

Accommodations and Services

In the Recreation Area Nine developed areas on Lake Mead and Lake Mohave offer a wide range of accommodations and services year-round. The chart at right highlights the major ones at each site. All lodges, trailer villages, and marinas are run by concessioners. For a list of concessioners and addresses contact the recreation area. Each developed area is easily accessible by car and boat. Six motels are recommended. Overnight camping, with hookups for water, sewer, and electricity, is offered at all concession trailer villages. All villages take reservations.

All developed sites but Willow Beach have campgrounds. Sites are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Each area has picnic tables, fire grills, water, restrooms, and a trailer sewage dump. Overnight fees are charged. No utility hookups are provided.

Naturalists give evening programs at amphitheatres—Boulder Beach on Lake Mead and Katherine on Lake Mohave—from April to October. Backcountry camping is allowed along shores on both lakes and in designated sites along unpaved backcountry roads. Stay in campgrounds or in the backcountry are limited to between 30 and 90 days, depending on the site.

Near the Recreation Area Motels, hotels, restaurants, groceries, and gasoline stations are available in Las Vegas, Boulder City, Henderson, Laughlin, Searchlight, and Overton in Nevada, and in Bullhead City and Kingman in Arizona.

LAKE MEAD

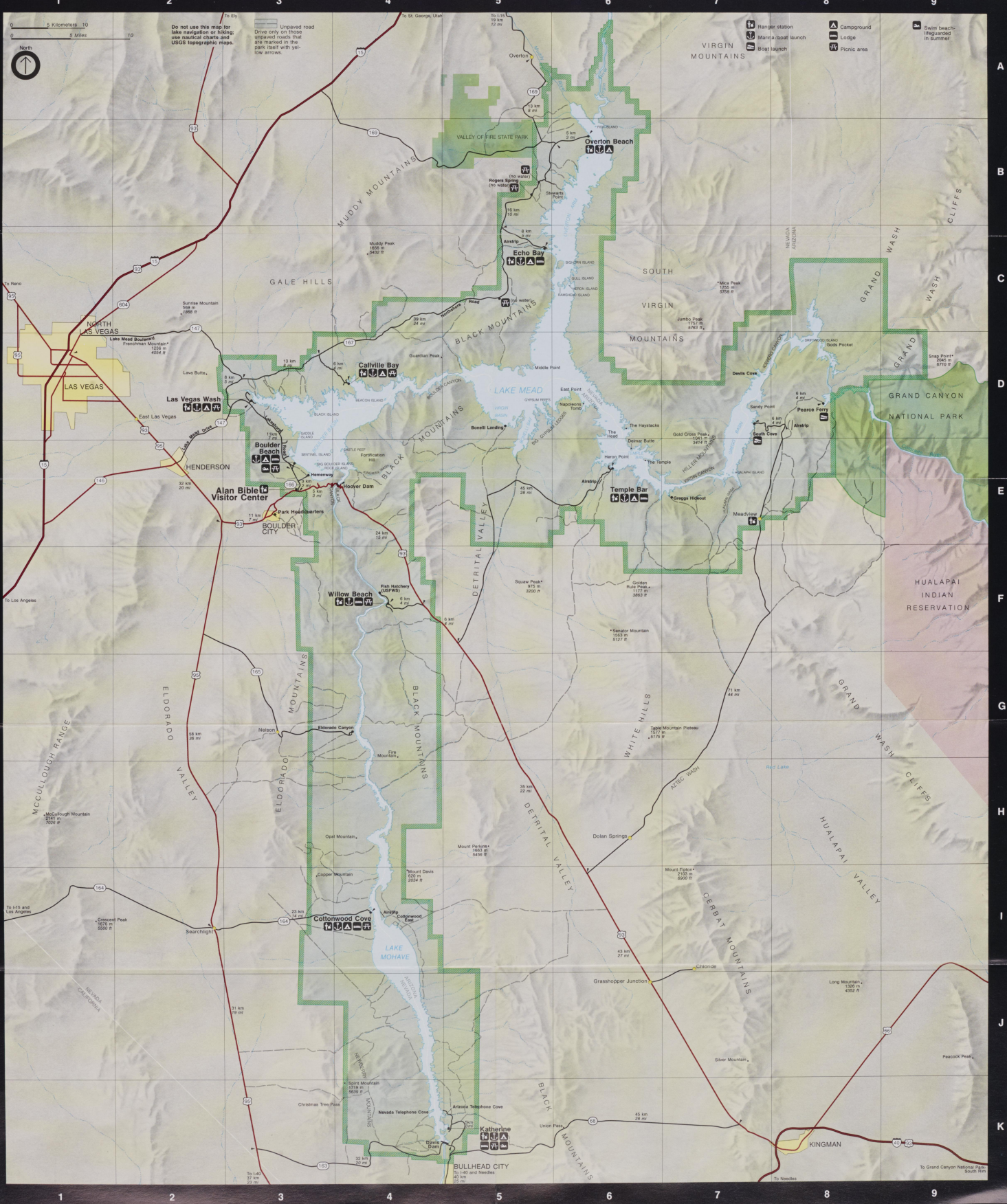
- Boulder Beach (3 km/2 mi)
- Las Vegas Wash (16 km/10 mi)
- Calville Bay (43 km/27 mi)
- Echo Bay (19 km/12 mi)
- Overton Beach (101 km/63 mi)
- Temple Bar (81 km/50 mi)

LAKE MOHAVE

- Willow Beach (35 km/22 mi)
- Cottonwood Cove (57 km/35 mi)
- Katherine (130 km/81 mi)

Recreation Area	Restrooms	Boat Launch	Marina	Picnic Area	Campground	Lodge	Swim Beach
Boulder Beach	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Las Vegas Wash	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Calville Bay	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Echo Bay	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Overton Beach	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Temple Bar	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Willow Beach	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Cottonwood Cove	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Katherine	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

The chart at left details what you can find at each developed area in the park. Distances are from the visitor center. ● Marine fuel only ● Reserved for trailer village occupants



Lake Mead

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

the foundation. Man, working feverishly over just the last few decades, remodeled and built a landscape that better suited his needs, desires, and senses. In one of the hottest, driest regions on Earth two huge lakes were created. Lake Mead and Lake Mohave emerged as the center

of the country's first national recreation area. The sudden people were flocking to the desert for boating, fishing, swimming, and waterskiing. Today thousands of visitors share in enjoying the cool, refreshing man-made lakes. Drawn by water, they find many other unexpected rewards.

There is the quiet and the stark, desolate 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 raw, untouched backcountry, and there is

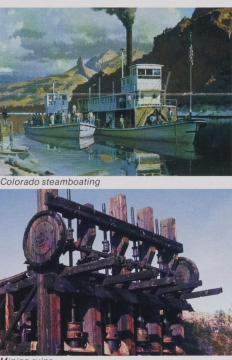
Hoover Dam, a towering symbol of what human genius can achieve. The range of experiences is as broad as the lakes and the land are big.

A History of Challenge and Change

Before the creation of Lake Mead few people set foot in this region. Those who did quickly became aware of the hostile, unforgiving character of this dry, brutally hot, rugged land. Some left; others stayed to meet the challenge. The first to remain were ancient Indians. Fur trappers, Mormon settlers, prospectors, and riverboat captains followed. Explorers like John Wesley Powell penetrated deep into the uncharted territory of the Grand Canyon and other remote areas. And then came the 20th century, and modern-day pioneers built a 221-meter (726-foot) high dam on the Colorado River—higher than any built before. 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 it turned a once uninviting landscape into one that today attracts thousands of visitors year after year.

Up the Colorado Steam-powered boats resembling Mississippi riverboats navigated the Colorado River upstream from its mouth in the late 1800s. These cargo-passenger vessels traveled as far north as the Mormon settlement of Callville, now long gone. One of the most difficult stretches of the 960-kilometer (600-mile) trip was the Black Canyon rapids. Crews had to pull their boats through using a system of winches and cables strung through ring bolts anchored in the canyon walls.

Rush to Riches The discovery of gold brought a stampede of fortune-seekers in the late 1800s and early 1900s. A single mine in Eldorado Canyon yielded \$1.7 million worth. Prospectors unearthed other precious minerals in the desert mountains, including silver and copper. When the miners moved on, their mines, ore-processing mills, and camps became ghost towns.



Colorado steamboating

Mining ruins

Taming a Wild River Completed in 1935, Hoover Dam turned the muddy, sometimes violent Colorado River into the still, clear waters of Lake Mead. More than 5,000 men worked night and day for five years to erect the giant concrete structure between the deep, rugged walls of Black Canyon. President Franklin D. Roosevelt heralded the dam's successful completion as an engineering victory. Davis Dam, downstream from Hoover Dam, was completed in 1953. This rock-and-earth wall controls the flow of water from Lake Mohave. The Bureau of Reclamation, which operates both dams, offers guided tours of Davis Dam and self-guiding tours of Davis Dam.

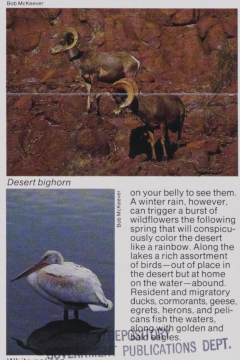


Hoover Dam
Prehistoric petroglyphs

Survival in the Natural World

To survive in Lake Mead country animals and plants generally have adopted one of two lifestyles. Desert dwellers like bighorn sheep, roadrunners, Joshua trees, and cactuses are adapted to living under a set of grueling conditions. They endure temperatures above 43°C (110°F), an annual rainfall of less than 15 centimeters (6 inches) and a meager food supply. The others, including waterbirds and many aquatic plants and animals, live in relative ease, attracted to the man-made environment of Lake Mead and Lake Mohave, where freshwater and food are plentiful year-round.

Second Impressions The lakes and the surrounding desert mountains, canyons, and plains can look 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. Bighorn sheep commonly descend the steep rocky ridges along Lake Mead or Lake Mohave's shores for a mid-day drink. More than 1,000 inhabit the recreation area. Bighorns are one of the few desert animals active during the extreme heat of day. Lizards, snakes, jackrabbits, and other creatures usually come out of their shaded resting places only in the cooler hours of morning, late afternoon, evening, or night. Spectacular displays of desert plant life can be just as elusive. The desert herb blooms year-round, but many of the blossoms are so tiny you have to

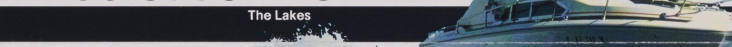


Desert bighorn

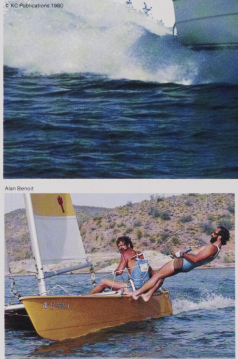
White pelican

on your belly to see them. A winter rain, however, can trigger a burst of wildflowers the following spring that will conspicuously color the desert like a rainbow. Along the lake's rich assortment of birds—out of place in the desert but at home on the water—abound. Resident and migratory ducks, cormorants, pelicans, egrets, herons, and peacocks fish the waters, along with golden and black tilapia.

A Recreation Bonanza



Lake Mead National Recreation Area offers a wealth of things to do and places to go year-round. Twice the size of Rhode Island, its huge lakes cater to boaters, swimmers, sunbathers, and fishermen while its desert rewards hikers, wildlife photographers, and roadside sightseers. A good place to start your visit is the Alan Bible Visitor Center, 6 kilometers (4 miles) northeast of Boulder City, Nevada, on U.S. Highway 93. The park staff can help plan your stay and give you up-to-date information on park activities and services. An introductory movie, exhibits, books, brochures, and topographic maps and nautical charts are available. An outdoor botanical garden displays some of the area's interesting desert trees, shrubs, and cactuses. Other places to stop for information are park headquarters, located at the intersection of Nevada Highway and Wyoming Street in Boulder City, or at any park ranger station. You also can write: Superintendent, Lake Mead National Recreation Area, 601 Nevada Highway, Boulder City, NV 89005; or call (702) 293-4041.



Sailing on Lake Mead

Boating Although Lake Mead and Lake Mohave are the prime attractions for visitors, both lakes often appear as empty as the desert. Sailboats, fishing boats, and houseboats all share the lakes' 712 square kilometers (274 square miles) without crowding one another. On these spacious open waters opportunities for sightseeing and other boating activities are varied. Boaters will find that they can see and reach many scenic areas that are inaccessible to those traveling by car. For example, boats can easily travel up the narrow, steep-walled gorge of Iceberg Canyon in Lake Mead or to the equally spectacular Black Canyon in Lake Mohave, which retains much of

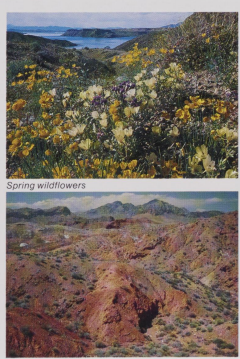
the character of the Colorado. Boaters can also investigate the numerous secluded coves formed by fingers of the desert jutting out into the water. Many of these coves are bordered by sandy beaches where you can picnic or camp. The beaches are particularly popular camping spots during the hotter months. If you plan on taking a long trip let a friend, family member, or park ranger know where you are going and when you plan to return. Also leave a description of your boat, boat trailer, and vehicle. For those who want hours of uninterrupted water-skiing, the lakes' wide basins are perfect, especially when winds are light. Sailboarders will

prefer near-shore areas and stronger breezes for their conventional craft. Six concession-operated marinas along Lake Mead and three on Lake Mohave offer a full range of boating services and supplies year-round (see chart on opposite side of this folder). Free public launching ramps and parking areas are located at each. Parking is limited to seven days per stay. Marina's rent fishing boats, ski boats and waterskiing equipment, sailboats, and houseboats. Boat tours are operated by concessioners. On Lake Mead, 1½-hour excursions to Hoover Dam run four times daily from Lake Mead Marina at Boulder Beach. Tickets



Fishing Fishermen are drawn to Lake Mead and Lake Mohave like pilgrims to Las Vegas. The lakes offer some of the best sport fishing in the country. Unlike some lakes, these two offer an open season on all species of fish year-round. Largemouth bass, rainbow trout, striped bass, channel catfish, black crappie, and bluegill are all popular catches. There are differences between the lakes in the abundance of different species. In Lake Mead one of the most sought after fish is striped bass, specimens weighing 22 kilograms (50 pounds) and more have been caught in Lake Mohave—especially in its upper reaches. Rainbow trout are the most popular catch; some very large ones have been hooked there. Before you go you may want to stop by a ranger station and find out the current "hot spots" for the fish you are angling for. Nevada and Arizona share jurisdiction over Lake Mead and Lake Mohave and you must have a state fishing license. If you fish from a boat you are required to have a license from one state and a special use stamp from the other. Most motor sail licenses and stamps. They also sell bait, tackle, and other fishing supplies and operate charter fishing boats. Fishermen should become familiar with catch limits and legal methods of capture.

Scenic Drives Several paved roads wind through the dramatic desert scenery of Lake Mead country. Towering stark mountains, plateaus, desert basins of cactuses and creosotebush, and vertical-walled canyons are some of the sights motorists can discover along the scenic Northshore Road along the edge of Lake Mead. From these roads there are panoramic views of the blue lake set against a backdrop of the browns, blacks, reds, and grays of the desert mountains. Northshore Road also leads through areas of brilliant red boulders and rock formations. Other scenic roads pass the same desert scenery. Driving off designated roads is not allowed. Drive only on paved roads that are marked with yellow arrows.



Hiking Short desert hikes lead to places you will never see from a boat or car. One such place is the area of colorful sandstone formations near Redstone Picnic Area along Northshore Road. Another is a canyon where Indian petroglyphs were carved in a rock wall hundreds of years ago. Hiking in the recreation area almost always requires cross-country travel; few maintained trails exist. The best hiking months are October through May. You can explore on your own during this time, or with park naturalists, who lead hikes on weekends. Longer hikes demand careful planning; consult a topographic map and a park ranger. Let someone know where you are going and when you will return. Rangers will have a difficult time finding you if you get lost in this expanse and they don't carry a map. Always carry water, 4 liters (1 gallon) per day per person is advised. Long cross-country hikes are discouraged from June through September, when the desert heats up like a furnace.

For Safety's Sake

Very real dangers to your health and safety exist both in the desert and on the lakes. People unaware or unheeding of warnings have suffered serious injuries—some fatal. Know the hazards and how to avoid them. Protect yourself and the recreation area from harm.

Flashfloods and Lightning Desert thunderstorms carry the double threat of flashfloods and lightning. They occur most often in summer and early fall. Be wary of nearby storms; violent downpours can cause flashflooding in distant areas untouched by rain. Never camp in a wash or other low-lying area or drive across a flooded road. Stay out of open areas where lightning may strike. Weather information is posted daily at ranger stations.

Heat The punishing heat of summer can cause heat exhaustion or even heat stroke. Avoid strenuous activities during the day. Drink plenty

of fluids, even when you are not thirsty, you can lose large amounts of water without knowing it.

Mines and Tunnels Abandoned mines and tunnels, with their deep shafts and old, rotten supporting timbers, should be avoided.

Poisonous Wildlife Rattlesnakes, a scorpion and a lizard—the Gila monster—are poisonous, but will leave you alone unless disturbed or cornered. To protect yourself, wear sturdy boots and watch your step. One plant common to developed areas—the oleander—is toxic. Neither you nor your pet should eat any plant part or drink water from nearby ditches.

Protected Features Natural and historical features such as animals, plants, and Indian artifacts are protected. Do not disturb, damage, or take them from the recreation area. Hunting of game species is allowed in season. Developed

areas, as well as many other areas around the lakes, are closed to shooting and to the possession of loaded firearms. Check with a ranger before using firearms.

Road Travel Driving off designated roads damages backcountry areas and is prohibited.

Pets Pets are prohibited from designated beaches, public eating places, and other public buildings. They must always be leashed. Never leave a pet in a car; temperatures inside can climb to 72°C (160°F).

Safeguarding Your Belongings Theft does occur. Unattended belongings, write thieves. Lock valuables in the trunk or out of sight in your car or take them with you when you leave.

In an emergency contact a ranger or call the 24-hour emergency number (702) 293-4041.

Safety in the Water

Aids to Navigation

Mid-Channel Buoy

Day buoy Night buoy (lighted white light)

Regulatory Markers

Danger Boats keep out Area controlled as indicated

Storm Warning Flags

Small craft advisory Gale warning Diver in water

Before going out on the water check weather forecasts and look for storm warning flags at marinas. Call (702) 736-3854 or monitor marine radio channel 162.55 for up-to-date National Weather Service forecasts. If a storm breaks while you are out, seek shelter in a protected cove immediately and wait until the storm passes. High winds can spring up quickly, creating waves as high as 2 meters (6 feet). Lightning is a hazard on open water, too.

Alcohol, drugs, and water don't mix. The chance of an accidental increase as your ability to react—both mentally and physically—are impaired. Most water-related deaths at Lake Mead result from alcohol or drug use.

Safety for Boaters Water levels in Lakes Mead and Mohave change throughout the year. Always approach the shore with caution and watch for shallows and submerged debris.

Never let a passenger ride on the bow. Fatalities have occurred when passengers fell overboard and were hit by the propeller.

Many persons who drown never intended to enter the water. Always wear a life preserver.

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, buoys, and across coves are easily underestimated; don't overestimate your abilities. Air mattresses and other inflatables can blow away, leaving you stranded far from shore. Never rely on an inflatable if you cannot swim.

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