

Lake Mead

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
National Recreation Area



Black Canyon River Trip

Spectacular scenery, steep cliffs, narrow river and swift currents give you the feel of the Colorado River, but, technically you are in upper Lake Mohave.

To enjoy a rafting or canoe/kayaking adventure you will need to make reservations through Black Canyon River Adventures or one of the many permitted outfitters. Please go to <http://www.nps.gov/lake/parkmgmt/cuadirect.htm> for names, phone numbers and websites. Life jackets must be worn while underway.

The water in the canyons below the dam is 53° Fahrenheit year-round. Navigational markers (day boards) are posted on the shores of the river; red triangles with even numbers on the Arizona side (left as you are going downriver), green squares with odd numbers on the Nevada side. These markers indicate the approximate distance in miles from Davis Dam up to Hoover Dam.

The water level can fluctuate considerably during the day, sometimes as much as 4-6 vertical feet. When stopping to camp, picnic or explore, canoes or kayaks should be pulled well up out of the water and secured.

Sauna Cave – A few hundred yards below the launch site, on the Nevada side of the river is a long gravel spit with tamarisk bushes growing on it. Up a lagoon just past the spit are some rain caves on the west wall (Nevada side). Some drips of water are hot, while others are cold.

The Sauna Cave is located at the end of the lagoon. During the construction of Hoover Dam, workers started to drill a tunnel at this site; however, they encountered hot water measuring 122° F. and had to abandon the site.

Goldstrike Canyon – At the entrance to the lagoon on the left is a small, very hot spring (144° Fahrenheit) with orange algae. The mouth of Goldstrike Canyon is fifty yards below the entrance to the lagoon on the Nevada side. A short walk up this canyon leads to warm pools and a warm waterfall.

Various algae are responsible for the vivid green colors on the rocks. The rock formations are spectacular and there are many hot pools. The rocks and pebbles in the hot stream are sharp and tennis shoes are advised.

Use caution in the hot springs as *Naegleria fowleri*, an amoeba common to thermal pools around the world, can enter the human body through the nose and cause a rare infection and possible death. Do not allow water from the hot springs or associated streams to enter your nose. Do not dive into or submerge your head in any of the thermal waters in the recreation area.

Leaving Goldstrike Canyon, inexperienced canoeists and kayakers should paddle the boats past the rock reef, or paddle upstream far enough to get over to the Arizona side, where the water is less turbulent. A warm waterfall is located within a few feet of the river about one hundred yards below Goldstrike Canyon, on the Arizona side. This waterfall is larger and not as hot as the one in Goldstrike Canyon.

Boy Scout Canyon – about a third of a mile south of the mile marker 62 is a sandy beach at the mouth of a large canyon on the Nevada side. This is Boy Scout Canyon with hot springs and warm pools about ½ mile up the canyon. The stream usually goes underground before it reaches the river.

Ringbolt Rapids – Approaching Ringbolt Rapids, watch for a large iron ring set into the rock on the Arizona side, about 50 yards above the rapids (marker 60) and 15-20 feet above the high water mark. This is one of many ringbolts that were placed in the canyon walls and used to winch steamboats up through the rapids from 1865 to 1890.

The construction of Davis Dam, 60 miles downstream, and the resulting Lake Mohave significantly tamed these rapids which at one time were one of the most challenging on the Colorado River. The rapids are adjacent to White Rock Canyon.

Arizona Hot Springs – Just below the rapids at mile 59-3/4, is Arizona Canyon. Another beautiful warm waterfall and series of pools are located about ¼-mile walk up the canyon. A steel ladder at the waterfall allows access to an upper pool. Please use extreme caution when climbing (use at your own risk).

Desert bighorn sheep are often seen on the cliffs along the river throughout Black Canyon. Sighting them provides the sharp-eyed observer a special opportunity to see these majestic animals in their natural environment. Look for the white rump patch, as their buff color blends in with the environment.

Volcanic Dike – A volcanic dike high on the Arizona canyon wall between mile 56 and 55 is a remnant of past volcanic activity that took place deep beneath the earth's surface. It is known locally as the Dragon's Back.

Gauging Station – An old gauging station can be seen clinging to the Nevada canyon wall at mile 54-1/4. The gauging station was used prior to and during the construction of Hoover Dam for monitoring water levels, flow rate and silt content of the Colorado River. The cable car provided access to the gauging station from the Arizona side, where the gauger's house was located.

Treat all of the remains of the historical structures and items located in the area with respect. Look, wonder, and imagine, but do not climb on any of the structures. Leave them intact so that other people can enjoy them too. They are a part of everyone's heritage and are easily damaged or destroyed.

The buildings on the Arizona bank, just before mile 52, are a part of the Willow Beach National Fish Hatchery. The buoys floating on the Arizona shore mark an area that is closed to all watercraft including canoes and kayaks. The public is welcome to visit the hatchery and take a self-guided tour. Please moor your vessel south of the closure when visiting the hatchery.

The Willow Beach developed area extends for about a half-mile along the Arizona shore. If you are terminating your trip at Willow Beach, please boat to the south end of the harbor, past the marinas and bring your vessel to shore at the south end of the parking lot.

Willow Beach is also a launch site for canoes and kayaks paddling south to Eldorado Canyon, Cottonwood Cove, Katherine Landing or

upstream to Hoover Dam. Strong consideration should be given to having a powerboat accompany any trips south of this point. This will add to the safety of the trip should unexpected weather or any other emergency conditions be encountered.

South of Willow Beach the river is still narrow, cold and flowing through a deep canyon for about 3-1/2 miles.

Burrow Wash – The river begins to widen about mile 49. On the Nevada side is a large canyon named Burrow Wash.

Monkey Hole – This point, where the river widens is known as Monkey Hole. With a bit of imagination, the rock formation high on the Arizona shore may resemble a monkey. Just below Monkey Hole and mile 48, the Mead-Liberty powerlines cross the river.

Windy Canyon – The stretch of the river between mile 45 and 44 is known as Windy Canyon. Sometimes up-river winds become quite strong in this area and this stretch of river may well earn its name.

Below mile 44, the river spreads out into Copper Basin and several canyons open out in this area providing camping opportunities.

Chalk Cliffs – Below Windy Canyon, on the Nevada side are the Chalk Cliffs. A navigational light and marker 43 high on the Nevada side mark the mouth of Black Canyon.

Eldorado Canyon – Eldorado Canyon is on the Nevada side at about mile 39. The take-out point used is a 1/4-mile long, uphill portage to the road. This was the site of a large flash flood in 1974. There are no longer any facilities at Eldorado Canyon.

For those that continue south from Eldorado Canyon, be prepared for

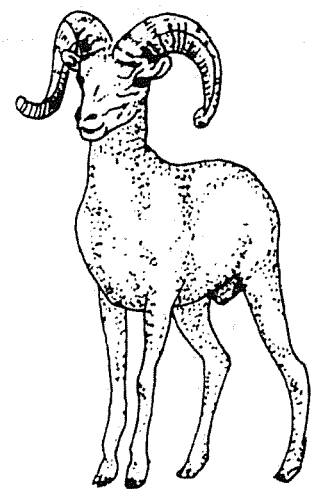
open water, possible windy conditions and extreme temperature ranges. Cottonwood Cove is 17 miles distant and Katherine Landing is 40 miles.

There are few visible signs of prehistoric occupation, although several different peoples utilized this area. Petroglyphs (drawings scratched or pecked into the rock) are one of the few features that are left to remind us of these desert people. They are scattered throughout the recreation area.

If you should come across a petroglyph, please just look and don't touch. Do not damage or remove them. They are an important archeological resource and are protected by law. If you see anyone else damaging them, please contact a ranger as soon as possible.

Please have a safe and enjoyable rafting, canoeing or kayaking experience. Contact a park ranger for further information or assistance.

24-hour emergency phone number (800) 680-5851 or call 911 (cell phone reception is minimal in the canyon).



Desert Bighorn Sheep
(*Ovis Canadensis Canadensis*)

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