

Lower Colorado River



Black Canyon Water Trail



Lake Mead National Recreation Area—Black Canyon National Water Trail

The 26-mile long Black Canyon Water Trail is located along a rugged and remote portions of the Colorado River in Nevada and Arizona within the Lake Mead National Recreation Area. The trail begins at the base of the Hoover Dam and meanders through Black Canyon along 26 miles of the Colorado River. The trail ends at Eldorado Canyon, a historic mining area on Lake Mohave.

This spectacular river setting provides unique paddling and rafting opportunities alongside wilderness. Visitors can stop at sandy beaches, colorful caves, plentiful coves and active hot springs. Desert Bighorn Sheep and other wildlife such as bald eagles, peregrine falcons, red-tailed hawks, osprey, cormorants and waterfowl are often seen along the route. There is a great deal of history associated



Desert Bighorn Sheep



Kayaking is Very Popular

with the Hoover Dam including the sauna cave, gauging stations, catwalks, trails and building foundations.

The National Water Trail System established in 2002, is a national network of water trails cooperatively supported and sustained for the public to explore and enjoy. Designated water trails incorporate recreation opportunities, education about the value of the resource, conservation, community support, public information, and trail maintenance and planning. There are 16 within the National Water Trails System. Black Canyon Water Trail is the first water trail in the Southwest and the only water trail that traverses through a desert. (1)

Users of the trail going downriver can either take out at Willow Beach or go an additional 14 miles and take-out at Eldorado Canyon. Both sections are outstanding sections of river to canoe, kayak, and boat or you can take the commercial raft trip down the first 12-mile section. The water is exceptionally clear. On Sundays and Mondays, the 12-mile upper segment is only available to paddlecraft which allows those paddling downriver to enjoy the pristine atmosphere without interference from motor craft.

Boaters, canoers, and kayakers going upstream can launch at Willow Beach, Eldorado Canyon, or Placer Cove.



Willow Beach Area

General Information

Trip planning is recommended to get the most out of your Black Canyon River Water Trail experience. For trip planning information, go to blackcanyonwatertrail.org or contact Lake Mead National Recreation Area at 702-293-8990.

Paddle craft launch permits must be purchased before launching a canoe or kayak from the site below Hoover Dam as this is a security zone. Permits are on a first served basis and are limited to 30 boats per day. Reservations are required, and may be made up to six months in advance. Therefore, if you have personal paddle craft that you want to take down the river, you must make arrangements and reservations with one of the authorized outfitters to transport your craft to the launch site. Most outfitters can also provide rental craft if desired. Launch fees are \$17 per person (non-refundable) plus a \$5 National Park Service entrance fee for adults age 16 and older. Additional shuttle service fees are determined by the individual outfitters. A list of providers can be obtained at: www.usbr.gov/lc/hoverdam/paddlecraft/livery.html.



Tours, rentals, and shuttle service may also be arranged through these providers. Launch times 7am, 8am and 9am with a limit of 15 vessels per launch by permit only (2)



Forever Resorts (Black Canyon River Adventures) offer raft trips down the Colorado River through Black Canyon. This is a great floating experience as the canyon is very scenic and one can almost always see Desert Bighorn Sheep on the steep canyon walls along the way. To book tour, contact Black Canyon Adventures at: www.blackcanyonadventures.com or by telephone at: (702) 294-1414. The Black Canyon/Willow Beach River Adventures Office is located in the Hoover Dam Lodge (previously named Hacienda Resort) on Highway 93 between Boulder City and Hoover Dam.

Primitive Camping is permitted anywhere along the shoreline of Black Canyon. Ground fires are not permitted. A fishing license from one state (Arizona or Nevada) is required, as well as a “use stamp” from the other



(1)



state. Additionally, a trout stamp is required if you intend to catch and keep trout. No license is required for persons under the age of 14. A license may be purchased from the concessioner at the Willow Beach Marina. For more information on fishing, visit www.nps.gov/lame/fishing.html, the Arizona Game and Fish Department (www.gf.state.az.us, 928-692-7700), or the Nevada Department of Wildlife (www.dcnr.nv.gov, 702-486-5127).



Peregrine Falcon

The water in the canyon below Hoover Dam is 53 degrees Fahrenheit year-round. The water warms as it goes downriver and by the time it reaches Eldorado Canyon, it is warm enough for swimming in the summer.

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

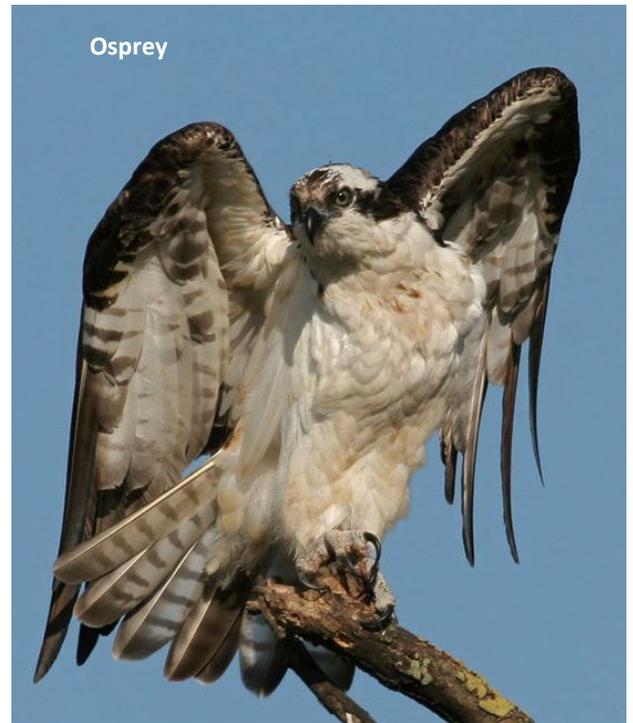
Davis Dam up to Hoover Dam.

The water level can fluctuate considerably during the day, sometimes as much as 3-6 vertical feet. When stopping to camp, picnic or explore, canoes and kayaks should be pulled well out of the water and secured.

In case of emergency on the Black Canyon Water Trail, dial 911 or the National Park Service 24-hour Communications



Near Cranes Nest Canyon



Osprey

Center at (702) 293-8932.

The Trip:

Your trip will begin as you are escorted to the Portal Road. This area is not open to the public, other than controlled access for canoe or kayak launching or the National Park Service concession-operated raft tours. The Portal Road is a very deep, narrow and winding road, approximately two miles long. At the launch site, you get a spectacular view looking back at Hoover Dam and the Mike O’Callaghan-Pat Tillman Memorial Bridge. Here are some of the “Points of Interest” along the water trail.

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.

Nevada Hot Springs – Just downstream from the Sauna in a protected lagoon is a small, very hot spring (144° Fahrenheit) waterfall and pool with multi-colored rocks. Various algae are responsible for the vivid green and orange colors on the rocks.

Goldstrike Canyon – The mouth of Goldstrike Canyon is fifty yards below the entrance to the lagoon on the Nevada side. The rock formations

at Goldstrike Canyon are spectacular and there are many hot pools. The rocks and pebbles in the hot stream are sharp and tennis shoes are advised. A short walk up this canyon leads to warm pools and a warm waterfall.

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. (2)



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.

Lone Palm Canyon – Just downstream from the waterfall is Lone Palm Canyon, a lush environment with palm trees and seeping water.

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.



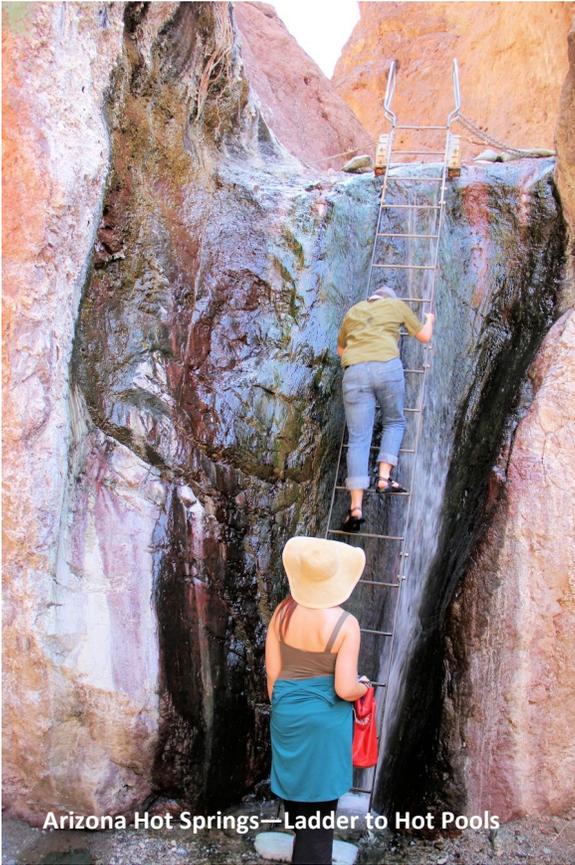
The Ear – On the Nevada side near Gold Strike Canyon is another hot springs grotto called “The Ear” because of its resemblance to the shape of a human ear.



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. (1) 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 water fall and series of pools are located about ¼-mile walk up the canyon. A steel ladder at the waterfall allows access to four hot pools. 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.

White Rock Canyon - White Rock Canyon is a strikingly beautiful volcanic area. There is a popular trail in White Rock Canyon which is how hikers assess the Arizona Hot Springs by

land. The route runs down a deep, narrow, geologically interesting canyon for 2.75 miles to the Colorado River, turns to run downstream for 0.5 miles.



There is a wide variety of desert plants to be found, including indigo bush, ground cherry, rush-milkweed, rabbit brush, Mormon tea, desert fir, cheesebush, globemallow, desert tobacco, desert



trumpet, rock nettle, rock daisy, and windmills. Rocks encountered during the hike are primarily volcanic, including flow and tuff (ash) deposits, with some granite boulders washed down from the Black Canyon.

Cranes Nest Canyon - This is a narrow, geologically stunning canyon. There is a trail that follows the wash bottom with some scrambling in places but not difficult. The trail is mostly in the Black Canyon Wilderness Area and the scenery is outstanding throughout the hike.



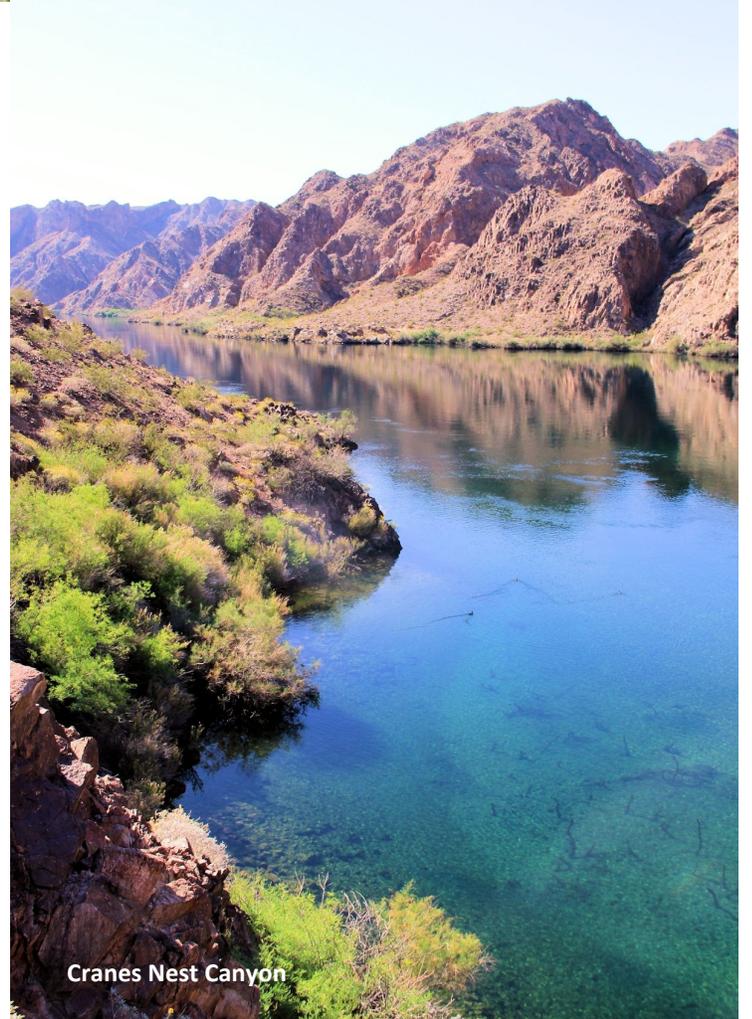
Desert Bighorn Sheep Ram



Cranes Nest Canyon



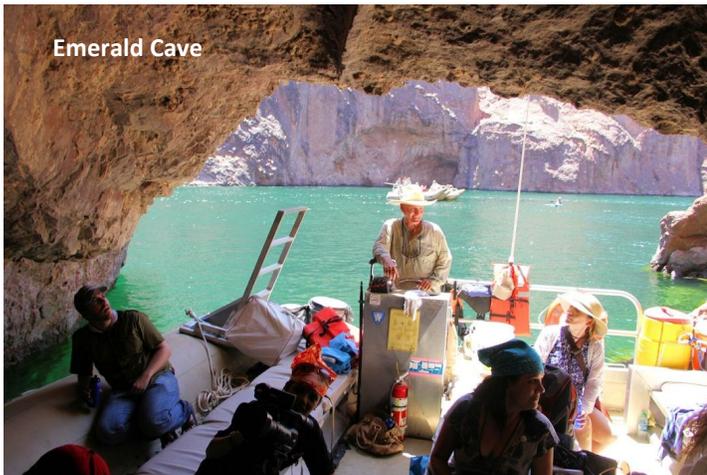
Cranes Nest Canyon



Cranes Nest Canyon

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.

Emerald Cave - On the Arizona side is a cave that you can actually get your paddlecraft into. The color of the water when the sun is shining at the right angle is an intense emerald green and quite spectacular.



Emerald Cave



Cranes Nest Canyon

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.



Willow Brach Gauging Station



Dragon's Back Ridge

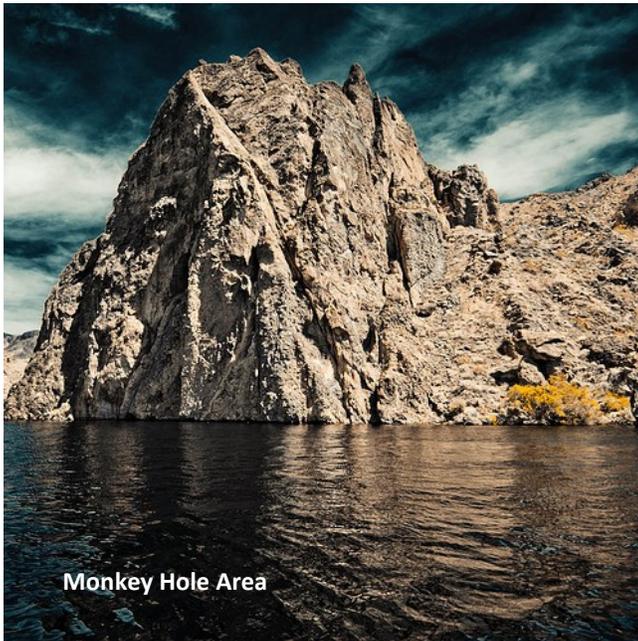
Willow Beach - The buildings on the Arizona bank, just before mile 52, are a part of the Willow Beach National Fish Hatchery. The buoys floating on the Arizona shore mark an area that is closed to all watercraft including canoes and kayaks. The public is welcome to visit the hatchery and take a self-guided 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, and 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 ¼-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.

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).



1. Black Canyon Water Trail Website: www.blackcanyonwatertrail.org
 2. Lake Mead NRA Website: www.nps.gov/lake/planyourvisit/black-canyon-water-trail.htm
 3. Lower Colorado River Water Trail Alliance: www.lcrwatertrailalliance.com/black-canyon-water-trail
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Youth Group Learning to Kayak



Black Canyon Adventures Raft Trips



Kayaking with her dog



Paddelboarding



Willow Beach Launch & Take-out site