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First Time Guide to Boating at Lake Powell

When is the Best Time to Visit Lake Powell?

The best time to visit Lake Powell is in the early summer or early fall. Particularly, from mid-May to mid-June, and late September to mid-October.

The water and air temperatures slowly begin warming up around May, and the crowds begin coming in June.

The summer days are long and hot and perfect for passing the time on the water. However, the temperature gets uncomfortably hot in late summer, even at night.

The monsoon season is active from mid-June through late September and the storms can be quite dangerous if you are caught in one on the water.

By October the weather is beautiful and the crowds have thinned out.

Where is the Best Place to Stay at Lake Powell?

Lake Powell is often associated with houseboating. While staying on a houseboat is amazing, it's nice to know that there are other great options available as well.

Rent a Houseboat

Even if you don't have a timeshare on a houseboat, you can still rent a houseboat through the marina.

However, it is important that you have experience driving a houseboat, or invite someone to go with you who does. Otherwise, I would recommend keeping the boat docked at the marina.

This way you can still sleep on the water, but then just take a ski boat out to explore the lake.

There is a huge learning curve that comes with driving a houseboat and securely anchoring it, so you don't want to attempt it unless you are with someone who has had experience doing it before.

Book a Hotel in Page

If the idea of renting a houseboat seems daunting, consider booking a hotel.

The Lake Powell Resort is conveniently located at the Wahweap Marina and is the closest hotel with access to the lake.

The rooms are a little dated and rates are high during peak season, but you can't beat the location. It is situated at the top of the hill above the marina and delivers stunning views.

The resort also boasts swimming pools and fire pits overlooking the water.

If you do book a room, be sure to make dinner reservations at the Rainbow Room for beautiful sunset views from the large picture windows.

There are also more hotel options in Page, which is about 15 minutes from the Wahweap Marina.

We have stayed at the Hampton Inn & Suites several times and have always had a great experience.

The rooms are clean and modern and the hotel is also centrally located in town near shopping and restaurants.

They also have suites available that are large enough for a family of six with two queens, a pull-out sofa, and a rollaway bed.

If you do stay in a hotel, you'll want to reserve a boat slip at the Wahweap Marina. There are a limited number of overnight slips that you can reserve for the duration of your stay.

You'll want to make reservations as far in advance as possible, especially in the summer, in order to secure a spot.

Reserving a slip is helpful if you're staying at a hotel because you will not need to launch your boat and get it off the water each day of your stay.

You will need to park at the parking lot above the marina and walk down to the slips each morning of your stay.

The path down to the marina is pretty steep, and it is quite the workout hiking back up in the evening. However, there are complimentary golf cart rides available, but bring cash for a tip.

You'll also find a cafe, a small convenience store, restrooms, and a gas station at the marina.

Tent Camping at Lake Powell

The most budget-friendly option when staying at Lake Powell is to camp on the beach.

Lone Rock Beach is the most popular place to camp and is the only sandy beach you can access without a boat.

If you have a boat, there are so many amazing secluded beaches that you can camp at that can only be accessed by water.

You are free to camp on any of Lake Powell's shorelines as long as you have a portable toilet.

Just keep in mind that Lake Powell is notorious for its harsh winds and sandstorms that can make tent camping on the beach quite miserable.

If you want to tent camp away from the sand, I would recommend reserving a spot at one of the four developed campgrounds like the Wahweap Marina RV Park and Campground.

Here you'll have access to electricity, free Wi-Fi, showers, restrooms, picnic tables, and barbecue grills.

Campgrounds are also available at Bullfrog Marina and Halls Crossing Marina.

Rent an RV and Camp at Lone Rock Beach

Another option that you may want to consider is renting an RV.

In the past, we have rented an RV from Cruise America in Flagstaff and then set up camp at Lone Rock Beach.

There are no designated campsites and no reservations at Lone Rock Beach. I would recommend arriving as early as you can, preferably on a weekday, to ensure

that you get a spot.

There is a fee of $10 per vehicle per night. Flush toilets and rinse showers are located at the campground information center. Outhouse toilets are also located on the beach.

If you do decide to tent camp, be sure to bring a portable toilet if you are camping more than a few hundred feet away from the outhouses. Rangers regularly patrol the area and enforce this rule.

We love that you can drive right up on the sand and have the lake right out your front door.

However, 4-wheel drive is mandatory since it is easy to get stuck in the sand. We had no problem driving the RV on the sand, but there were a few cars without 4WD that needed help getting out.

When you arrive, launch your boat from Wahweap Marina then head to Lone Rock Beach where you'll anchor it right on the beach by your campsite.

Nothing beats waking up early to get the first run on that glassy water or soaking in the last of the summer sunset on the lake.

If you have kids, be sure to bring sand toys to keep them entertained when you aren't on the water.

For added ambiance, bring some inexpensive tiki torches to set up around camp.

Campfires are also allowed on the beach, as long as there are no fire bans in place. Spend the evening roasting hot dogs and s'mores, or even cook a Dutch oven peach cobbler over the campfire.

Where are the Best Places to Go at Lake Powell?

It's easy to underestimate the size of Lake Powell, it is massive! The lake stretches nearly 200 miles through Arizona and Utah.Fun fact: if the 1,960 miles of shoreline were stretched out, it would be longer than the entire west coast of the US!

The nice thing about Lake Powell being so big is that it never feels crowded. With more than 80 side canyons, it also means that there are endless places to explore.

The most scenic canyons can be found between the Dangling Rope Marina and the Escalante drainage.

Lake Powell is obviously best explored by boat.

However, if you don't own a boat, chartered tours and rentals are available at the marinas. These include small boats along with jet skis, kayaks, and paddleboards.

Rentals and boat tours are available through Antelope Point Rentals out of Antelope Point Marina. Or Lake Powell Resorts and Marinas out of Wahweap and Bullfrog Marinas.

Once you're on the water, here are some of our favorite spots to explore at Lake Powell.

Wahweap Bay

Wahweap Bay is a popular spot for watersports. The large open bay has plenty of room for boats, even during the peak of summer.

This is also where you can find the iconic Lone Rock that stands as a beacon out of the water.

Lone Rock Beach is also found at this bay and is a popular spot for camping.

There are several coves and side canyons in the bay to explore that have sandy beaches, sand hills, and rock jumping cliffs.

Labyrinth Slot Canyon

Labyrinth Slot Canyon is very similar to Antelope Canyon, but you don't have to pay for a tour and you can spend as much time as you want exploring around.

Although it is not as easy to access as Antelope Canyon, getting there is half the adventure!

You can click on the link at the end of the post for a map to the Labyrinth slot canyon, but here are some visual directions.

As you come out of the channel around Antelope Island and into the open water near Gunsight Bay, look for this rock formation.

It is located just opposite of Gunsight Bay and you'll turn into the narrow canyon to the right of this rock formation.

You'll go through this small passage at Labyrinth Bay that you can see pictured below.

This is a no-wake zone, so slowly cruise through the canyon as the walls begin to narrow.

Just go slow and give yourself space behind other boats. Keep going until the canyon becomes so too narrow to go any further.

You can drop an anchor here and tie buoys on the side of the boat to avoid bumping into the canyon wall.

However, after our first visit, we learned that it is a smarter and more considerate option to anchor the boat a little farther back before it gets too narrow.

This way, others wanting to visit the canyon don't have to climb over your boat to get to it. Rookie mistake!

Depending on the water level, you can either wade or swim until you reach dry ground. Bring life jackets just in case the water is too deep.

As you near the entrance to the slot canyon, the stagnant water can be pretty dirty and smelly.

You'll walk for a short distance in the water (water shoes are recommended) until you reach dry ground.

Once you make it to dry ground, be prepared to be blown away by the beauty of this slot canyon.

The kids had the best time climbing rocks and exploring every nook and cranny.

Rainbow Bridge National Monument

Rainbow Bridge is the largest natural bridge in the world and can't be missed. It is located in Forbidding Canyon.

It is a good 90-minute boat ride at full throttle from Lone Rock Beach if the cut is open. If the cut is not open it can take about 2 1/2 hours, so set aside at least a half day to explore this area.

Of course, the boat ride out is just as enjoyable and scenic.

Just be sure you have a full tank of gas. You can also fill up at Dangling Rope Marina about 10 miles south of Rainbow Bridge if it is open. Grab a rootbeer float while you're there!

Use caution through the narrow passages, it can get busy in this area and the blind curves make it hard to see boats coming.

Once you get to the dock, the trail leading to the arch is about 1.25 miles. It does

fluctuate depending on the water level.

During the summer months, there will be a ranger on-site at the viewing area to answer questions and share the history of the area.

Just keep in mind that this is considered a sacred Native American site so be respectful.

Hole in the Roof

Hole in the Roof is a cool rock pool located in Padre Bay. It is often referred to as “The Toilet Bowl”.

When the water level is high enough to spill into the hole then it is a popular area to cliff jump and swim.

However, when the water level is low don’t attempt to jump in because there is no way to climb out.

Cookie Jar Butte is also located in Padre Bay. It is a large rock formation that looks like a cookie jar, hence the name.

Padre Bay is home to a collection of stunning mesas, buttes, and sandy coves.

There are plenty of beaches where you can tie up your boat and enjoy an afternoon relaxing in the sun and playing in the water.

Rock Creek Bay

This bay is a long boat ride away from Wahweap, but it is worth the drive. Just make sure you have enough gas to get there and back.

Here, you will find Double Arch, also known as “The Toilet Bowl”.

The opening of this cave is large enough for a boat to drive through. Once you are inside, you’ll see a massive hole in the roof. You can actually climb up the rock from the outside and jump inside the hole.

A giant rope swing can also be found at Rock Creek Bay.

It is a bit tricky to figure out how to climb up to the ledge inside of the cave where you’ll swing from, but if you manage then it is quite an adrenaline rush!

For directions to Double Arch and the rope swing, as well as other hidden gems, see our guide 9 Lake Powell Secret Spots.

I hope this guide will help you plan an unforgettable trip to Lake Powell! Keep in mind that the best part about boating at Lake Powell is just cruising around and soaking in all the beauty with no agenda at all!

For a list of things to do off the water, be sure to check out our guide for 12 Things You Must Do In Page.