

Glen Canyon/Horseshoe Bend River Trip Planning

The Colorado River exits Lake Powell and Glen Canyon Dam and flows 16 miles through Glen Canyon. This is the last remnant of Glen Canyon. The remainder was flooded and covered by Lake Powell when the gates to Glen Canyon Dam were closed in 1963. The rock formation that towers up to 1,500 feet above the river dates to an ancient desert 160,000,000 years old. What you see today in the Navajo Sandstone are fossilized sand dunes that once swept across this vast landscape. Today, each twist and turn of the river exposes a visual extravaganza unlike any other landscape on Earth.

Your trip will begin at historic Lees Ferry where you and your equipment will be loaded onto our specially modified backhaul boat for the trip upriver. Your pilot is a U.S. Coast Guard Licensed Captain who has extensive experience on this stretch of river. Lees Ferry Anglers, the parent company of Kayak Horseshoe Bend, has been in operation on this stretch of river since 1983 and has more than 50,000 days of guiding and operating boats in Glen Canyon. We are permitted by the National Park Service and licensed by the Arizona Game and Fish Department. Your safety and comfort are our primary concern.

First, you will need a boat that is suitable for this stretch of river or you can rent one from us. Any watercraft rated for a slow-moving river and rated to carry passengers on moving water will work. Please note that not all boats are rated for moving water and we will not launch any boats that are not safe or suitable for this stretch of river.

The Colorado River below the dam is a clear and cold. The water temperature averages 46 to 54-degrees year-round ...very cold water by any stretch of the imagination and always requires caution. Even short body exposure times can easily lead to hypothermia which can eventually lead to death. A short swim on a beach or a quick dunk can be exhilarating, but an unintended spill or capsize of the boat can be catastrophic. Plan accordingly and have the proper watercraft, gear, and clothing. Wear your personal floatation device whenever you are on the water.

WEATHER

The weather in Glen Canyon is relatively predictable. The summer months, **June, July** and **August**, are hot days and warm evenings. During the summer there is very little shade to be found in the canyon and it is always wise to bring your own shade in the form of a canopy or umbrella. Be prepared for temperatures that usually exceed 100-degrees on a daily basis and at times the night time temperatures will stay in the 80's or above. **June** is usually dry while **July** and **August** are monsoon season. Unpredictable and violent thunderstorms can build and strike the river with little warning. Be prepared to beach your boat and seek shelter when one of these storms strike. Thunderstorms can produce lightning and strong winds. Contrary to popular belief, lightning can and does strike the river. Also, be aware that flash floods occur in the canyon. During heavy rains, avoid side drainages and be aware of waterfalls from the canyon rim that can wash into the river. Never camp in any area that these flows can occur.

September is still monsoon season, but the temperatures are starting to cool with warm days and cooler evenings. This is one of the best months of the year as far as weather goes.

October Is arguably the best weather of the year with comfortable day temperatures and cool nights. **November** is cool and the nights are starting to get cold – the days are getting short. The sun begins to lay over to the south which brings shade to the river with many areas of the river not getting any sunlight at all.

December and **January** are cold days with night temperatures well below freezing and very little sunlight in the canyon. This is not camping weather except for the hearty few and well-equipped. **February** is still cool, but usually by the middle of the month the temperatures are beginning to warm; sun is coming back into the canyon and the days are getting longer.

March and **April** are full blown spring and the weather can be anything from snow to shirt sleeves and everything between. Spring is characterized by a few nice days followed by a fast-moving upper level low pressure system (cold front) which brings cooler temperatures and often violent winds that sweep through the canyon. It is usually easy to predict these windy days several days in advance by watching the daily weather forecast. Look for much cooler temperatures from one day to the next. In the spring, this signifies a cold front moving through and the larger the difference between temps from one day to the next the stronger the wind. These winds can exceed hurricane force as the air is squeezed in the narrow canyon which creates huge and dangerous waves on the river. Plan on not being on the river during one of these high wind events. If you are caught in high wind, drag your boat far from the water and hunker down in place until the wind has subsided. High winds rarely last more than 12 hours. Never risk your safety by trying to float through large waves. Always wait the wind out. There will be no other boat traffic during one of these winds and you will need to fend for yourself.

Be aware that WE CANCEL ALL TRIPS AND LAUNCHES WHEN THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE ISSUES A WIND ADVISORY OR WARNING OR WHEN THE CAPTAIN OF THE VESSEL DEEMS CONDITIONS UNSAFE. We will endeavor to give our guests as much notice as possible when one of these cancelations occur and do everything in our power to reschedule the trip when it is safe to do so. Your safety is our highest priority; trust us to make the right decision for you. There are other services that might launch you when conditions are not safe ... **don't you let them!**

May is the month that all the locals look forward to. A high-pressure system builds over the western U.S. and the weather is near perfect. Warm days and comfortable nights are the norm. The migratory birds are back and singing to celebrate the beauty of spring.

WATERFLOWS

The water that flows from Glen Canyon Dam is the largest river in the southwestern United States. This river supplies water to 50,000,000 people and provides electricity to power homes and industries throughout the southwest. It is the electrical generation that requires us to pay attention to waterflows. A normal daily flow pattern from Glen Canyon Dam is low water during the evening hours, and then the water rises during the morning as electrical demand increases it will reach a high peak sometime during the day. Then the water will begin to drop during the late

day-early evening and stay low throughout the night. Most times these water fluctuations occur slowly, but the rate of changes happens more abruptly the closer to the dam. It is possible to see a 3 foot vertical rise or drop in the river any given day. Pay attention to this when you park your boat or place items close to the river. It is always possible that the river can rise and cover an area or allow your boat to float away.

There are two major flow patterns during the year, **high flows** and **low flows**. Each of these flow patterns is based upon and determined by electrical demand. **High flows** occur during periods of high electrical demand which occur during the warmest and coldest months. Our highest flows occur in **June-July-August** and **December-January-February**. A normal **high flow** is 12,000 to 20,000cfs. Flows can always be higher or lower than this depending on many factors. The most important factor to water flows for the floating boater are:

Higher Flows equal faster current and more turbulent water conditions. Low flows typically occur during the more moderate weather months of September, October, November, February, March, April, and May.

Lower flows translate into slower current speed and calmer water. Where this really comes into play is comparing float times from one season to the next. For example, in **high water** it may take 5 hours to paddle from the dam to Lees Ferry while in low water it may take 8-hours or more. So plan your float times to the water flows.

Another important consideration is that the **water flows are almost always lower on the weekends and holidays than they are during normal weekdays**. This is tied to lower electrical demand on weekends.

Another thing to keep in mind is that it takes time for the water to travel in the canyon. For example, the water at Lees Ferry might appear low, but the water at the dam 16 miles away might already be at maximum flow for the day and the travel time for this water to arrive at Lees Ferry might be a few hours. Higher water travels faster, lower water travels slower.

To see up-to-the-minute current water flows go to <https://waterdata.usgs.gov/usa/nwis/uv?09380000>