



2024

TrailLink Unlimited



Guides



Historic Railroad Trail

Nevada



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Just 30 miles from Las Vegas, near Boulder City, the gravel Historic Railroad Trail hugs the hills on the southern shoreline of vast Lake Mead. The 3.7-mile rail-trail offers panoramic views of the manmade lake and snakes through five railroad tunnels on its way toward Hoover Dam. After the dam was completed in 1935, the railroad ceased operation, and in 1962 the tracks were removed; the trail opened in 1995.

Access the trail's western endpoint at the Alan Bible Visitor Center in the Lake Mead National Recreation Area (10 Lakeshore Rd, Boulder City), which also serves as a trailhead for the [River Mountains Loop Trail](#). From the shared trailhead, the River Mountains Loop Trail heads north around Lake Mead towards Boulder Beach and west towards Boulder City.

Heading east on the Historic Railroad Trail, you'll experience 3.7 miles of desert terrain trail through the Hemenway Valley, where jackrabbits bound over washed-out gullies, bighorn sheep graze and the usual desert-dwelling snakes and lizards are at home.

On the easy, wide path you first pass through a high cut in the red, iron-rich volcanic rock. The cut was blasted out in 1930 for trains to pass through, carrying stone to the dam site. As the trail curves toward the edge of Lake Mead, you'll find yourself several hundred feet above the grey blue water. While the descent isn't a sheer drop, take care as there is no guardrail. The lake views are spectacular all along the trail. Peaks of ancient volcanic mounds rise above the lake surface of this drowned valley like the humps of an aquatic beast. Far in the distance the craggy, smoky blue South Virgin Mountains rise into the clouds.

Each of the five tunnels along the trail is 25 feet in diameter to accommodate the large equipment that passed through. In this unforgiving terrain, it's impressive to consider the sheer magnitude of force needed to blast the path. Pioneer trails from early dam construction parallel the trail intermittently.

Just before tunnel 1, look down the ravine to the right to see concrete plugs taken from Hoover Dam to install turbines. You come across the first and second tunnels in quick succession, and their dark interiors provide a cool respite from the desert sun. (The Lake Mead National Recreation Area discourages hikers on any of its trails in the summer months, but fall and winter are prime touring seasons.) As you pass through tunnel 2, notice that the ceiling and sidewalls have been reinforced. This work was done after the tunnel was burned by arson in 1990. Wildfire gives rise to much of the plant life along the trail; creosote and mesquite bushes, which are fire-resistant, are scattered in green and brown bundles along the trail and on the surrounding hillsides.

In tunnel 3 the arches were shored up to support the massive



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States: Nevada

Counties: Clark

Length: 3.7miles

Trail end points: Pacifica Way & Waters Edge Dr (Boulder City) to Hoover Dam Visitor Center (81 Hoover Dam Access Rd, Boulder City)

Trail surfaces: Crushed Stone,Dirt

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Wheelchair

Accessible,Horseback Riding,Mountain

Biking,Walking

Parking & Trail Access

Parking and access is available at multiple points along the trail, including at the Lake Mead National Recreation Area Alan Bible Visitor Center (10 Lakeshore Rd, Boulder City), and the Hoover Dam Visitor Center (81 Hoover Dam Access Rd, Boulder City). View the [TrailLink map](#) for all options and detailed directions.



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Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



TrailLink
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

TrailLink.com