Park Guidelines

Please observe the following park regulations to ensure a safe and pleasant visit.

Fires – Campfires are allowed in developed pits only. All developed campsites provide barbeque grills. Firewood is available for purchase at the Visitor Center.

Fireworks – Explosives, fireworks, and firecrackers are prohibited.

Pets – Pets are allowed, but should be on a maximum six-foot leash. Service dogs are the only animals admitted into park buildings. Please clean up after pets.

Plants and Animals – All plants, animals, minerals, and other natural features in state parks are protected. It is unlawful to remove, alter, or destroy them.

Vandalism – Please help keep our parks beautiful. It is unlawful to mutilate or deface any natural or constructed feature.

Wastewater – It is unlawful to dump or drain wastewater from campers or trailers onto the ground. Utility sinks and a sanitary disposal station are provided.

Quiet Hours – 10 p.m. to 7 a.m.

Your park fees provide for the care, protection and enhancement of this park.

Park Location:

The park is located 17 miles west of Salt Lake City on I-80, Exit 104 (Saltair Dr).

Operating Hours:

The park is open year-round.
April through September: sunrise to sunset.
October through March: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Address Inquiries To:

Great Salt Lake State Park
P.O. Box 440
Magna, UT 84044
(801) 828-0787
or
Utah State Parks and Recreation
P.O. Box 146001
Salt Lake City, UT 84114-6001
(801) 538-7220
stateparks.utah.gov

Utah State Parks Mission:

To enhance the quality of life of Utahns and visitors by preserving and providing natural, cultural, and recreational resources for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations.

Information contained in this brochure was accurate at the time of printing. Policies, facilities, charges, hours, and regulations, etc., change as mandated. For updated information please

Guided Tour

Scan the QR code for a guided tour around the park!

Printed 01-2026

Great Salt Lake State Park

State Parks

STATE PARK

GREAT SALT LAKE

Great Salt Lake State Park is a premier gateway to Great Salt Lake, offering opportunities for boating, birding, kayaking, swimming, and biking, along with sweeping views of the lake. Millions of migratory birds stop by Great Salt Lake each year, making the park a popular destination for birders. The park provides visitors a chance to explore this unique inland sea with a boat launch, observation deck, beach, Visitor Center and gift shop, and camping facilities.

Great Salt Lake

Great Salt Lake is a remnant of prehistoric Lake Bonneville, which once covered more than 20,000 square miles of land. The present lake is approximately 75 miles long and 35 miles wide, with a maximum depth of 33 feet. Water levels are far from constant and depend on seasonal evaporation and precipitation.

Four rivers and numerous streams empty into Great Salt Lake, carrying dissolved minerals. Because the lake has no outlet, water evaporates and leaves the salt and other minerals behind, resulting in an exceptionally high concentration of salt.

The lake's salinity levels typically range between 5 and 28 percent, compared to the ocean's average of 3.5 percent. An estimated 4.5 billion tons of salt are contained in the lake, and commercial removal equals about 2.3 million tons annually.

Fish and most other aquatic life cannot tolerate this hyper-saline water. However, the lake is home to an abundance of specialized organisms, including brine shrimp, brine fly larvae, and algae, which form a crucial part of the ecosystem.

History

For thousands of years, Great Salt Lake area has been home to Indigenous peoples, including the Goshute, Shoshone, and Ute Nations. These communities hunted, gathered, and maintained a deep, reciprocal connection with the ecosystems of the Great Basin, and the lake remains culturally and spiritually significant to the original stewards of this land.

The first documented European-American to view the lake was the fur trapper and mountain man Jim Bridger, who reached Great Salt Lake in the fall of 1824 while exploring the Bear River. He initially mistook the massive, salty body of water for an arm of the Pacific Ocean. Subsequent expeditions helped chart the area: U.S. Army surveyor John C. Fremont and his party explored and mapped the lake in September 1843, an effort that helped define the vast geographic region known as the Great Basin. Major Howard Stansbury of the U.S. Army Corps of Topographical Engineers led a comprehensive two-year expedition from 1849 to 1851 to survey the lake, and his report provided the first serious scientific exploration of the area's flora and fauna. The historic landmark Black Rock, located about a mile west of the marina, was first seen by Brigham Young three days after the first company of Latter-day Saint pioneers arrived in the Salt Lake Valley in July 1847.

From the mid-1800s to the present, Great Salt Lake has been visited for recreation by swimmers, boaters, bikers, hikers, and hunters. Before the 1960s, most early watercraft were for industrial purposes, including mineral extraction and ferrying livestock, and commercial vessels assisted in the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad. The first sailing craft was launched in 1847, and by the 1860s, boating for pleasure began, with various cruises and boat races held throughout the late 19th century. Great Salt Lake Yacht Club was established on May 10, 1877, and continues to operate today, making it among the oldest in the nation, holding sailboat races at the marina.

Lakeside resorts were once spread along the lakefront, though water level fluctuations affected their survival. Saltair is the most famous resort, located about two miles east of the park. The first pavilion was built in 1893 but was destroyed by fire in April 1925. Saltair II opened in 1926 but closed in 1958. The abandoned building burned down again in an arson fire in November 1970. Saltair III was built in 1981, but it closed again due to a historic flood in 1984. Saltair III was successfully reopened in 1993 (its one hundredth anniversary) and is now primarily used as a concert venue.

Wildlife

The hypersaline environment of Great Salt Lake cannot support fish or most other aquatic life. Only algae, brine fly larvae, brine shrimp, and a species of nematode discovered in 2022 can survive in these highly saline waters.

Brine shrimp are a major source of food for migratory birds. They are also valuable for their hard-walled eggs, or cysts, which are commercially harvested and sold worldwide as fish and prawn food. Shrimp harvesting boats can be seen on Great Salt Lake from October through January.

Great Salt Lake is a popular destination for birders due to the diverse number of migratory birds that pass through. The lake attracts more than 330 bird species, depending on the season.

Ducks, shorebirds, gulls, pelicans, eagles, and hundreds of other birds live in the marshes and wetlands surrounding the lake. Great Salt Lake is an important part of the Pacific and Central Flyways for migratory birds and is designated as a part of the Western Hemispheric Shorebird Reserve Network.

The shores and nearby wetlands are also home to a number of reptiles and mammals.

Geology

The park offers excellent views of the Bonneville Shoreline levels, which mark the presence of the ancient Lake Bonneville. Four distinct shorelines are visible along the mountain ranges surrounding the lake, as well as on the islands within it.

Great Salt Lake is home to some of the most extensive reefs of living microbialites (stromatolites) on Earth. These reef-like sedimentary structures are primarily built by photosynthetic microorganisms, or cyanobacteria, which precipitate calcium carbonate to form hard, layered domes.

These formations are among the oldest forms of life on Earth and thrive in the lake's hypersaline environment because the salt concentration prevents grazing by organisms that would otherwise destroy them.

Silver Sands Beach consists of oolitic sand, a unique feature of Great Salt Lake. Oolitic sand consists of round, smooth grains that are formed when concentric layers of calcium carbonate build up around mineral grains or brine shrimp fecal pellets.

Salinity Comparison

Body of Water	*Average % of Salinity*
Dead Sea, Israel	33%
Great Salt Lake, Utah	15%
Salton Sea, California	4%
Oceans	3%
Drinking Water	0%