



Boating



A Singular Point of View

Riding in a boat on Crater Lake provides a unique perspective on the inside of this volcano. Each summer, hundreds of people take advantage of this opportunity to gain a new viewpoint and create lasting memories. To preserve its beauty and clarity, regulations are in place to protect Crater Lake.

Boats on the Lake

Crater Lake is not only the deepest lake in the United States (1,943 feet, 592 meters) it is also one of the cleanest and clearest large bodies of water in the world. To protect these singular qualities, the National Park Service has regulations concerning the use of boats, personal watercraft and even inflatables in Crater Lake.

In the summer, two small research boats and three tour boats are allowed to operate on Crater Lake. Environmental precautions are built in to these boats to try and prevent issues. No other watercraft are permitted. This includes kayaks, canoes, rafts, fishing boats and float tubes. (36 CFR §3.3, 3.12(b), 3.14(a), 3.19)

First, the only legal access to the shore of the lake is the Cleetwood Cove hiking trail. This trail is 1 mile long with an elevation change of 700 feet. The trail is quite steep, not very wide, and receives heavy use. This precludes the safe transport of personal boats, both for the person with the boat and for other hikers on the trail. Our research boats and tour boats were originally flown to the lake by helicopter.

Second, Crater Lake is a large body of water subject to quickly occurring weather changes.

High winds and big waves often make the lake unsafe for small watercraft. The possibility of capsizing is high, and the water temperature is low. The surface of the lake can get as warm as 60° F in August, but it cools quickly as you go deeper. The lake is roughly circular in shape and has few sheltered areas along its 21 mile shoreline. The National Park Service does not have a patrol boat capable of performing rescues should an emergency occur.

Finally, Crater Lake is one of the cleanest large bodies of water in the world. The National Park Service is tasked with protecting the lake's water quality and unique aquatic ecology. Allowing private boats to operate on Crater Lake would risk the introduction of exotic, invasive species that might be hiding out in or attached to these vessels.

Even though private boats are not allowed on Crater Lake, you can still experience the lake by taking a ranger-narrated boat tour. In the summer, three concession-operated tour boats ply the lake's waters. Boat tours typically run from early July until mid-September. For more information, go to their website at www.craterlakelodges.com.