

Rainbow Lake

By damming Walnut Creek in 1903, Mormon settlers created Rainbow Lake. Eventually, the settlement grew into the Town of Lakeside, now incorporated as the Town of Pinetop-Lakeside. Despite now being surrounded by homes, Rainbow Lake remains open to the public for fishing, boating, bird watching or just enjoying the outdoors.

Location – Rainbow Lake is located near the heart of Lakeside at 6,760 feet. The land surrounding the lake is privately owned and inaccessible to the public; however, the Department owns a small parcel of land adjacent to the dam, and maintains it for public fishing and recreational boating. To reach this parcel, turn south on Rainbow Lake Road or Lakeview Lane from Highway 260.



Description – Rainbow Lake is 116 surface acres, and has a maximum depth of 14 feet and an average depth of 7 feet. Currently, the Department stocks catchable-sized rainbow trout in the spring and early summer. Naturally propagating warm water species include largemouth bass, channel catfish, black bullhead, bluegill and green sunfish. The lake also contains illegally introduced northern pike. Because it is shallow and weedy, Rainbow Lake is subject to water quality problems.

Amenities – On the Game and Fish parcel, there's a boat ramp for public use, a barrier-free fishing pier and paved parking, but no restrooms. The nearby Lakeside Campground, while not on the banks of the lake, is just a few hundred yards from the dam. Lakeside Campground is on Highway 260, about ¼-mile west of Porter Mountain Rd. This campground has 82 sites, vault toilets, potable water and firewood for sale. You can make reservations for a campground site by visiting www.reserveusa.com on the Web or by calling 1-877-444-6777. Additional amenities, in the form of boat rentals, are available from Rainbow's End Resort, a private business adjacent to the public access area. Cabin rentals are available at Lazy Oaks, where guests can use one of two private fishing piers or rent a boat.

Fishing Techniques – Because so much shoreline is privately owned, Rainbow Lake is best fished from a boat. The spring and early summer are the best times to fish for trout because that's when water quality is at its best, the weeds are down and the Department is stocking fish. Troll for trout with Panther Martin and Rooster Tail spinners, small Kastmasters or wooly bugger flies. You may also have some luck fishing from shore with worms or Power Bait. Casting near structure with spinner baits works well for largemouth bass and northern pike. Fish on the bottom with night crawlers or stink baits to catch black bullheads and channel catfish.

Special Notes – Statewide fishing regulations apply and a trout stamp is required. The daily bag limit is six trout; three for unlicensed anglers under the age of 14. Boat motors are restricted to either electric or 10 hp gas motors or less.