

CENTRAL ARIZONA

On the Rocks

Just 4 miles from downtown Prescott, a high-desert reservoir and a dramatic maze of boulders paint a watery backdrop for outdoor fun – by Sarah Cribari

Watson Lake might best be described as unique. One of two reservoirs in the Granite Dells area of Prescott, Arizona, it's surrounded by imposing outcroppings of smooth granite boulders rather than sandy or grassy shores. While swimming isn't allowed in this watery oasis, boating and fishing are, along with hiking, biking, rock climbing and camping.

Watson Lake Park, operated by the City of Prescott, offers miles of hiking and mountain-biking trails through the beautiful dells. The most popular hikes are the nearly 6-mile Prescott Peavine National Recreation Trail, which follows a former railbed, and the 4.8-mile Watson Lake Loop. The dells are also

a destination for rock climbing, with many routes on the lake's west shore.

Rainbow trout, largemouth bass, sunfish, catfish and crappie swim among the stocked lake's rocky inlets. With an Arizona fishing license, anglers can try their luck from boats or the dock. Motorboats are permitted with a 5-mile-per-hour speed limit.

Bird watchers flock to Watson Lake and nearby Willow Lake to take in a variety of species from bald eagles, pelicans and great blue herons to ducks and geese. The adjacent Watson Woods Riparian Preserve has been designated an Important Bird Area by the Audubon Society.

Rounding out the 380-acre park's facilities are an 18-hole disc-golf course, horseshoe pits, picnic areas and a large playground. Local outfitters rent kayaks, canoes and paddleboards at the lake from late March through mid-October, and leashed dogs are welcome throughout the park and on the trails all year long.

STAY AND PLAY

From the first weekend of April through the first weekend of October, Watson Lake Park accommodates RVs on 34 dry sites. The family-owned Point of Rocks RV Campground, connected to the park by an easy ¼-mile hiking trail, is open year-round with 96 full-hookup sites.

www.prescott-az.gov

www.pointofrocksrvcampground.com

↓ At Arizona's Watson Lake, the photogenic Granite Dells present a watery playground for kayakers and spectacular views for hikers, rock climbers and picnickers, particularly at sunset.

