

Lee Valley Lake

Loved by fly fishermen and breath-taking in its setting, Lee Valley Lake sparkles below the flanks of Mount Baldy. A beautiful lake year-round, Lee Valley is especially glorious in the fall when aspen are changing to their golden colors and elk can be heard bugling at dawn and dusk.

Location – At 9,418 feet in the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, Lee Valley Lake is Arizona’s highest elevation reservoir. It is located approximately one hour’s drive from Pinetop, using Highways 260 and 273 and Forest Road 113. Access is restricted in the winter when roads are closed due to snow, generally December to early April.



Description – Lee Valley Lake has 35 surface acres with a maximum depth of 20 feet and an average depth of 9.5 feet. It’s located on Lee Valley Creek, an Apache trout recovery stream. The Apache trout is Arizona’s official state fish. The creek naturally flows into the East Fork of the Little Colorado River, however, the spillway directs overflow to the West Fork of the Little Colorado River. Both streams are also designated for Apache trout recovery, thus Lee Valley Lake finds itself at the heart of three Apache trout recovery streams and is managed accordingly. By a fortunate set of circumstances, the Department is able to provide anglers with one-of-a-kind fishing opportunities. The Department owns water rights in the lake, so water levels can be maintained. The lake is stocked with catchable-sized and subcatchable Apache trout several times a year, and is periodically stocked with Arctic grayling, as supplies of these unique fish permit. Some of these fish overwinter, reaching a good size the following spring.

Amenities – There is a boat ramp, paved parking, and barrier-free restroom. No camping is allowed around the lake, but overnight visitors can camp at nearby Winn campground. This fee campground includes 63 sites plus a group site and has water, vault toilets, picnic tables and fire rings. Firewood is available and there is a host. Reserve a site at Winn campground by visiting www.reserveusa.com on the web or by calling 1-877-444-6777. Nearby Gabaldon campground, just off the Mount Baldy Wilderness area, is only for people camping with horses. It has five sites, fire rings, vault toilets, and a corral for horses. There is no fee, no potable water, and no reservations are taken.

Fishing Techniques – Lee Valley Lake can only be fished with artificial lures and flies. Float tubes are popular and easy to use at this lake; however, fishing success from shore is comparable to fishing from a float tube or a boat. Lee Valley holds the state record for Arctic grayling. Either ends of the dam are good places to fish from shore. Fly-fishing is probably the most productive technique at this lake. Wet flies to try are hare’s ear nymphs, small peacock ladies and prince nymphs in sizes 14 to 16. Just before dark, surface action is quite good with dry flies, such as small Adams, mosquito or midge larvae, and light Cahills in sizes 16 to 20. Spinning lures to try are small Panther Martin, small Z-ray or a very small Kastmaster fished from the dam.

Special Notes – Statewide fishing regulations apply and a trout stamp is required. The daily bag limit is two trout, which includes grayling, each must be a minimum of 12 inches long. For unlicensed anglers under the age of 14, the limit is one trout. Boat motors are restricted to electric motors only.