

Washington State Club cruises on Saguaro Lake

By Karen Devers

More than 50 members and guests of the Washington State Club boarded the Desert Belle for a 90-minute cruise around Saguaro Lake last month.

Before embarking on the cruise, members stopped for lunch at the Shiprock restaurant where they were given an outside seating area overlooking the lake.

The restaurant took its name from a small island called the Ship Rock that sits in the middle of the lake.

After checking out the amethyst jewelry, cards, T-shirts and gift items in the floating gift shop next to the Desert Belle, they were ready to "set sail."

The captain welcomed everyone on board and members found seats on the upper and main decks, outside or under cover. He provided an informative narrative during the tour of the lake.

In the distance, the tops of Four Peaks glistened with snow and contrasted with the colorful granite and basalt cliffs surrounding the group. Club members saw a variety of birds riding the air currents, including hawks, herons and eagles. When they spotted a Bighorn sheep perched on a rock, the captain stopped the boat so everyone could watch it jump up the cliff.

The saguaro cactus gave the lake its name, and they've learned to grow on the sunny side of the hills to avoid the winter temperature drops. There is one towering crested saguaro on the lake, far away from its cousin at the Arizona Botanical Gardens.

Saguaro Lake was formed by the Stewart Mountain Dam, the last dam to be built on the Salt River in 1930.

The dam generates hydroelectric power and prevents flooding on the Salt River, while the lake provides habitat and areas for recreation.

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