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**50TH ANNIVERSARY OF
THE LONDON BRIDGE IN
LAKE HAVASU CITY, ARIZONA
FALL 2021 FACT SHEET**

Lake Havasu City sits on the eastern shore of Lake Havasu along the Colorado River border of California and Arizona. The city was established in 1963 by Robert P. McCulloch, Sr. as a self-sufficient, planned community.

Lake Havasu City is located on what is known as "Arizona's West Coast," just 3 hours west of Phoenix, 2½ hours south of Las Vegas and 4-5 hours east of the Los Angeles area. As part of the northern and western limits of the Sonoran Desert, Lake Havasu City and the surrounding area feature outstanding biodiversity absolutely loaded with beautiful experiences.



The area regularly attracts nearly a million visitors annually with its historic London Bridge, pristine lake, friendly community, abundant sunshine and annual events, ideal weather and wide range of restaurants and lodging. More than 400 miles of stunning coastline offer

exceptional watersports, including fishing, skiing, kayaking and house boating. Visitors can also explore the lake from the beautiful beaches, campsites and hiking trails.

Rated as one of the top 100 best bass fishing lakes in America, Lake Havasu is ideal for catching large and small-mouth bass and renowned as a striped bass fishery. The Lake Havasu region is also host to extensive off-road trails and undeveloped stretches of river.

The London Bridge, purchased in 1968 to draw attention to McCulloch's new community along the shores of the Colorado River, will celebrate the 50th anniversary of its rededication in October 2021, with a kick-off event planned Oct. 1-3, 2021.

History of the London Bridge

"Old" London Bridge



The "Old" London Bridge of nursery rhyme fame was a stone bridge built by Peter of Colechurch, an architect and priest, between 1176 and 1209. Due to uneven construction, the bridge required frequent repairs yet survived more than 600 years. Between 1305 and 1660 at the bridge's southern gateway, the severed heads of traitors were impaled on pikes and dipped in tar to preserve them against the elements. This practice was stopped in 1660, following the Restoration of King Charles II.

"New" London Bridge



By the end of the 18th century, the London Bridge needed to be replaced. It had fallen into severe disrepair and was blocking river traffic. The "New" London Bridge was completed in 1831, designed in 1799 by Scottish engineer John Rennie. Due to the weight of automobile traffic crossing the bridge in the early 20th Century, it began sinking into the River Thames. By 1924, the east side of the bridge was some three to four inches lower than the west side.

The Sale and Purchase of the London Bridge

By 1962, the bridge was unable to support the increased traffic. The City of London put the bridge up for sale at auction. Businessman Robert P. McCulloch, chairman of McCulloch Oil Corporation and founder of Lake Havasu City, was the buyer. McCulloch's ventures ranged from oil exploration to manufacturing chain saws, and he once tried to market a two-man gyroplane: a cross between a helicopter and small airplane.

Looking for a way to raise the visibility of Lake Havasu City, a Colorado river community he was developing on the edge of a man-made reservoir, McCulloch placed the winning bid of \$2,460,000 on April 18, 1968 (over \$19 million in today's dollars).

McCulloch purchased the bridge as an attraction to bring tourists and retirement home buyers to the Lake Havasu City area.

Contrary to rumors and popular belief, McCulloch was not under the impression that he was purchasing the Tower Bridge of London.

The Shipping, Assembly and Rededication of the London Bridge

After it was dismantled, each of the bridge's 10,276 exterior granite blocks from the original bridge was shipped to Lake Havasu City. Each block was numbered before the bridge was disassembled.

The blocks were shipped overseas through the Panama Canal to California and trucked from Long Beach to Arizona. They were reassembled over a concrete structure. Initially, the bridge spanned dry land – until a canal was dug under it and flooded.



The shipping and assembly of the bridge, and dredging of a man-made channel underneath, cost at the time \$7 million (\$54 million in 2021 dollars). Spanning 930 feet, it was designed to connect pedestrians, motorists and cyclists on "mainland" Lake Havasu City to an island on the Colorado River.

In 1971, after three years of reconstruction, the bridge was rededicated on October 10, 1971 at a ceremony attended by London's lord mayor, Sir Peter M. Studd, and 25,000 spectators. McCulloch died in 1977 but his gambit paid off. Today, Lake Havasu City attracts nearly a million visitors a year.



World War II Legacy

When it spanned the River Thames, the London Bridge was strafed by artillery fire from German war planes; bullet holes on the bridge can still be seen. There is also graffiti left by two previously unknown American soldiers. On the Island-side of the bridge, near the abutment, two names are etched into the centuries-old stone:



Aug. 1942

Sgt. Fitzwater

Pfc. Smith

Both were members of the 1st Infantry Division, who were participating in field maneuvers with British commandos in Scotland. While on weekend leave, they visited the London Bridge and left their mark.

After the war, Merrill Fitzwater worked as a Montana state game warden until his retirement in 1978. He and his wife learned that the London Bridge had been bought and transported to Lake Havasu City, and Fitzwater stopped to see the bridge several times while visiting his daughter in Tucson. He'd left his name on another continent, only for it to follow him home 23 years after the war ended, reports Lake Havasu City's local paper, *Today's News-Herald*.

Arizona's London Bridge in Popular Culture

- *The Day of the Wolves* was a 1971 heist movie starring Richard Egan. Recognizing a great way to promote the newly-established city, the McCulloch Corporation flew film producers to Lake Havasu City and offered production film support.
- The 1983 American psychological thriller *Olivia* used the relocation of the bridge as a central plot device.
- The 1985 made-for-TV movie *Bridge Across Time*, a supernatural crime drama starring David Hasselhoff, also used the relocation of the bridge as a plot device. In the film, the spirit of Jack the Ripper was somehow transported to 1980s Arizona along with a stone from London Bridge, resulting in a murder spree. The film was also known as *Terror at London Bridge*.



- London Bridge is featured in the 1987 film *Million Dollar Mystery*.
- Las Vegas-based magician and escape artist Criss Angel came to Lake Havasu in 2010 to star in an episode of the A&E series *Mindfreak*. In a death-defying stunt, he escaped from a cement block dangled off the London Bridge into the lake water below.
- In 2020, The Travel Channel paranormal reality television series *Ghost Adventures* covered the story of the London Bridge, in the episode, London Bridge. (Watch it here: <https://tinyurl.com/londonbridgelhc>)

Media Assets

London Bridge Virtual Tour

<https://www.londonbridgetour.com>

Live webcam

<https://www.londonbridgetour.com/london-bridge-webcam/>

BBC history of the Arizona London Bridge

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idx-sh/the_bridge_that_crossed_an_ocean

High-resolution images (please credit Go Lake Havasu unless otherwise indicated)

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/ej2gi26glcve1vz/AACeQ5ayT3cOYrgraXkzQWiiia?dl=0>

London Bridge Fun Facts

<https://www.golakehasvu.com/london-bridge-fun-facts>

London Bridge historian Jan Kassies Facebook tour (one hour) –

<https://www.facebook.com/32bravo/videos/2870338619668254/UzpfSTYxNTk4MDE0Mjc1OjEwMTU4ODYwMDQ1NjU5Mjc2/>

Media Contacts

Jason Castellucci, Go Lake Havasu
928 453 3444 x 133
jason@golakehasvu.com

Jeff Blumenfeld, Blumenfeld and Assoc. PR
203 326 1200
jeff@blumenfeldpr.com



London Bridge Data

- **Design** Arch bridge
- **Material** Clynelish (Brora) sandstone and various granite mixes
- **Total length** 930 ft (283.4 m)
- **Total width** 56 ft (17 m)
- **Footpath width** 9 ft (2.7 m)
- **Roadway width** 35 ft (10.6 m)
- **Longest span (at center)** 150 ft (45.6 m)
- **Total weight** 30,000 tons
- **No. of spans** 5
- **Designer** John Rennie (June 7, 1761 – October 4, 1821)
- **Reconstruction start** September 23, 1968
- **Rededication** Oct. 10, 1971