



BLACK ROCK DESERT  
HIGH ROCK CANYON  
EMIGRANT TRAILS



NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA

## THE PLAYA

### North American Deserts/Black Rock Desert

- North America's arid lands can be divided into four distinct deserts: the Great Basin, the Sonoran Desert, the Mojave Desert, and the Chihuahuan Desert.
- Of the four, the Chihuahuan Desert (which occupies 175,000 sq. miles) is the largest.
- The Great Basin lies farthest north and is highest in elevation, so it is a very cold desert, especially in its northern reaches.
- Winters are long, and much of the precipitation falls during the winter in the form of snow.
- Cacti are limited in number by the cold winter temperatures. The vegetative cover consists largely of remarkably uniform stands of small shrubs like sagebrush and shadscale.
- The Great Basin Desert has little outward drainage and is characterized by heavy accumulations of alkaline salts in its lower areas. It is partially drained by the intermittent Quinn River, which has no outlet but evaporates as it crosses the desert.
- The Black Rock Desert is a dry lake bed in northwest Nevada.
- It is considered one of the flattest places on earth.
- The desert is part of the extended playa of the lakebed of prehistoric Lake Lahontan, which existed between 20,000 and 9,000 years ago during the last ice age.
- During the lake's peak around 13,000 years ago, the desert floor was under approximately 500 feet of water.



- Geologists believe that there have been deserts in their current locations in North America for as much as 10 million years.
- Geologists know these dates due to finding fossils of horned lizards; which date back four to five million years.

The Black Rock Desert

Information obtained from Wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black\\_Rock\\_Desert](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Rock_Desert), and Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute, <http://www.cdri.org/NA%20Deserts/>.

