



# BRIDGING THE GAP

For 75 years, crossing the Hoover Dam was the easiest way to get from Nevada to Arizona. It was a scenic bucket-list experience, but it was slow going. This fall, that dam crossing will be a thing of the past. A new bridge is going in – an unbelievably impressive new bridge – and our photographer was on-site to document its construction.

BY JODI CISMAN

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMEY STILLINGS

Made on the evening of April 29, 2009, this image of the Arizona arch segment of the Hoover Dam Bypass highlights the highline catenary system. Identified by the two lighted towers, the system transported most of the construction materials and workers out to the arch's construction area.



Captured from the banks of the Colorado River on May 21, 2009, this image features the 24-hour construction of the arch as concrete was poured at night to take advantage of cooler temperatures.



This acrophobic view from the top of the Arizona pylons looks down through the cable stays toward the Arizona bridge deck.

Standing on the rocky edge of the Colorado River's Black Canyon, photographer Jamey Stillings was mesmerized as he gazed up at two massive concrete structures that seemed to leap off the side of the canyon and soar into the topaz sky — they were support structures for the Hoover Dam Bypass.

It was an unexpected sight along a detour to Hoover Dam during a road trip with his assistant last March. "My initial perception of the bridge was more of a gut feeling," Stillings says. "There's something very exciting about it."

He decided to stay for 24 hours so he could photograph the magnificent structure from a variety of angles at different times of the day. Those 24 hours turned into 26 days, and those 26 days generated this portfolio. Both the photos and the bridge are impressive.

In all, the \$240 million Hoover Dam Bypass soars nearly 900 feet above the Colorado River. It's an engineering marvel that dwarfs the existing bridge, which was the main route for people traveling between Nevada and Arizona on U.S. Route 93. The old route, which was notorious for its sharp, winding turns and seemingly endless congestion, was ineffective and dangerous. By diverting traffic to the new bridge, the incidence of pedestrian-vehicle accidents is expected to decrease, along with bottlenecks on the nearby interstate highway.

The project also helps preserve the 75-year-old historic Hoover Dam monument. When construction began on the dam in 1931, it was the largest undertaking of its kind. Although the dam's main purposes are flood control, agricultural irrigation and the generation



This downstream view of Hoover Dam and the Colorado River shot on February 3, 2010, shows the construction of the highway that will span the top of the arch.



Just as they did every morning, ironworkers climbed up the Nevada side of the arch segment on April 29, 2009, to start work. Cable stays supported the arch construction until the arch span was completed.

of hydroelectric power, it also provided thousands of jobs to Americans during the Great Depression.

Like the dam it detours, the bypass bridge is big. It's the largest concrete-arch structure in North America and the fourth largest in the world. Although construction of the new bridge began in 2005, before the economic downturn, it continues through "the great recession."

"It's interesting to note the historic parallel between the building of the bridge and the dam," Stillings says.

Just as Ansel Adams captured the wonder of Hoover Dam, Stillings has captured the awe of the bridge. "If we didn't have pictures of Hoover Dam when it was being built, we wouldn't be able to remember it the way we do," Stillings says. "And I think the same thing's true of the bridge. It's visually compelling to see this technologically challenging bridge shooting out across Black Canyon, and it's amazing to imagine putting something like that together." ■



On the evening of June 29, 2009, the Arizona and Nevada arch segments neared their rendezvous point over the Colorado River.