

Special Edition 2023

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Trust the Architect

**How the North American Beaver is at work
restoring Sierra Nevada watersheds**

Also in this Issue

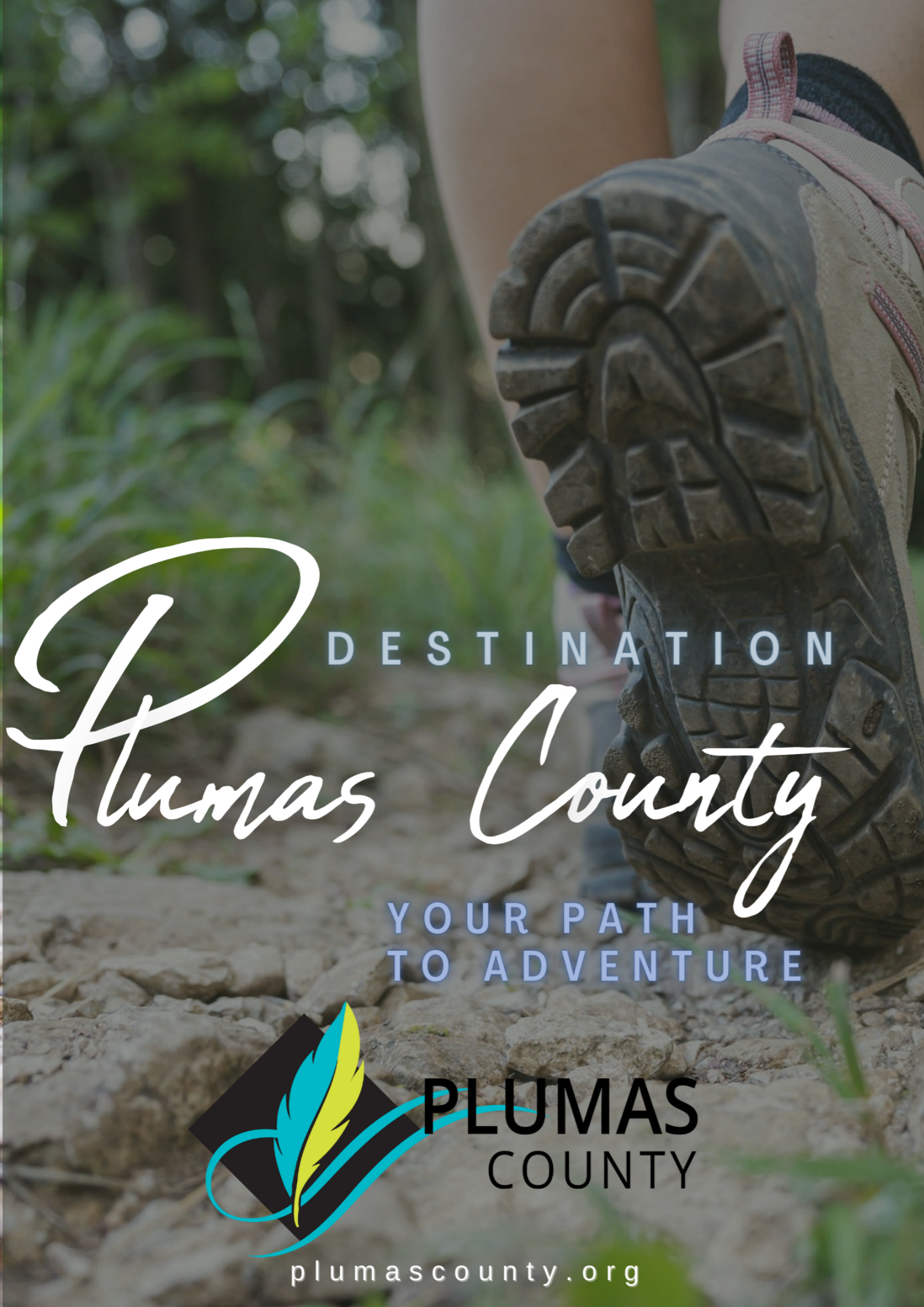
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LETTER FROM EDITOR

CHARLIE PANKEY

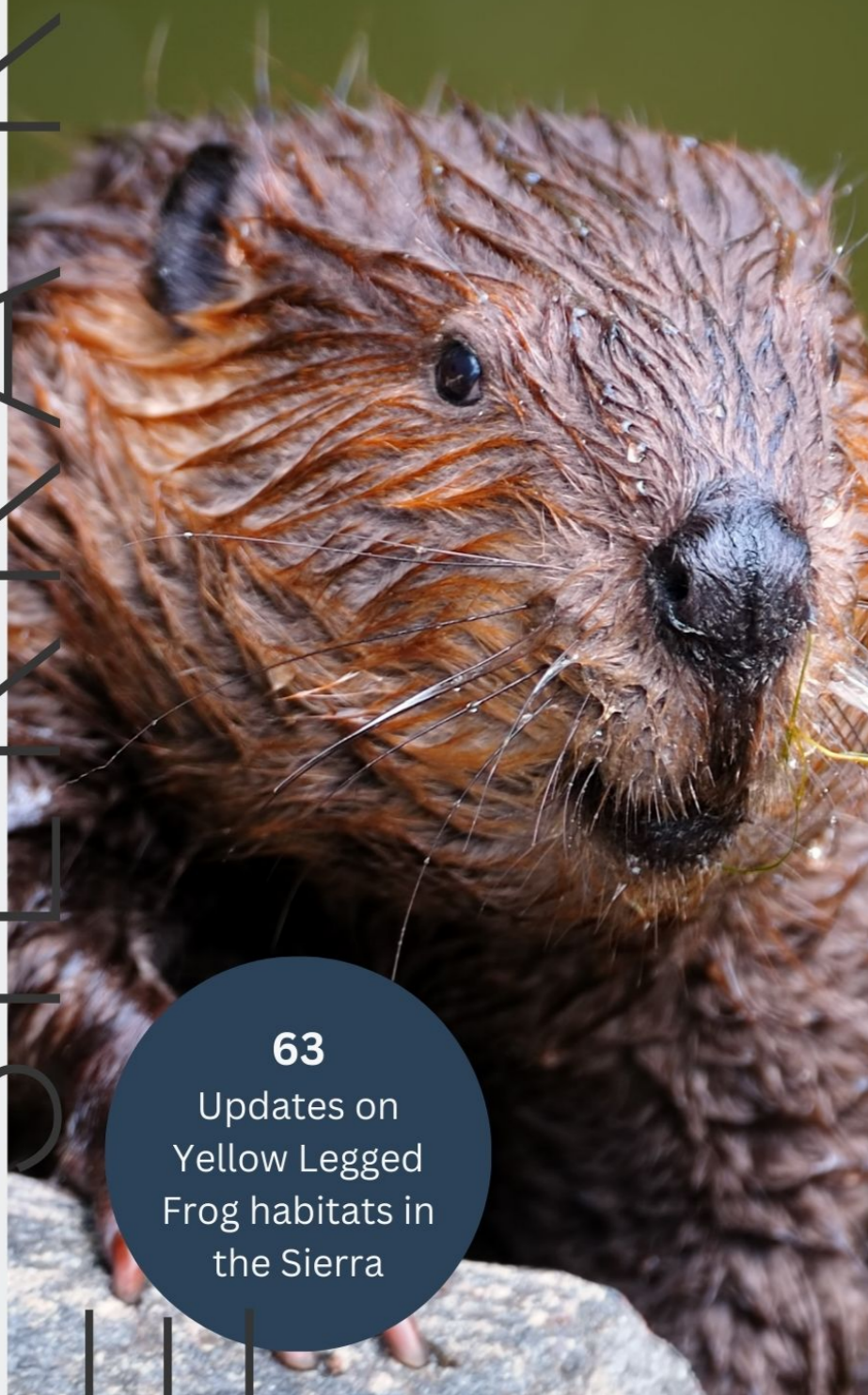
July 2023 special edition - 2023 has been different. Can I get an Amen? Thank you to the readers for sharing and commenting on our magazines in 2023. To date, 2023 has been a massive year in the development and design of Sierra Rec Magazine and the community of readers we have reached. In the later part of 2022, when we started planning out the year and our content plan for each of our six editions, I decided to take a challenge personally that would become our Summer special edition.

Although I volunteer in Desolation Wilderness and consider myself a steward of the lands when I recreate, I would probably not go so far as to say I am a conservationist. I grew up as a logger's son and saw the destruction that the Spotted Owl did to the entire industry of hard-working families that considered logging an honest living.

I still don't care for that creature; that's all I am saying.

So I decided I needed to take a shot at caring a bit more and doing a section that was a combination of Conservation issues and how they relate to recreation and to feature state parks in the Sierra Nevada which in their mission is built to protect and preserve our history. In this issue, we dive a bit deeper into Sierra Nevada beavers, wild horses, frog habitats and a host of state parks that I find fascinating.

Not everyone will like my tone or message for every element in this section. I welcome your feedback and hope, if nothing else, it will give us conversation starters as we find our place in protecting, playing and preserving the Sierra.



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A Signs of Hope in the Sierra Nevada

The Impact of a Natural Architect

Sierra Nevada - The American or North American Beaver is such a fascinating creature. Its long history in American culture has been complex as well as tragic. As a passionate outdoor explorer in the Sierra Nevada, I can think of no other creature I have been more captivated by than the Beaver and the serenity and beauty they provide on various trails and outdoor excursions I enjoy.

My first introduction to beaver activity in the Sierra was in Lundy Canyon 12 years ago. Not knowing of the long-standing beaver legacy in the canyon before I arrived, the sheer size and quality of the beaver dam were so beautiful to admire on my trek into the Hoover Wilderness. Over the past 12 years, I have often

returned to this dam and beaver pond to see how its battle with mother nature and the recreational areas surrounding it has continued to develop. A fascinating story of survival, destruction and growth in the Sierra Nevada.

Of course, over the years, I have seen beaver activity in many canyons and river meadows as I continue to explore. From Green Creek Canyon to Hope Valley, California, Beavers continue to amaze me each time I witness their mastery of building and development in our watersheds.

In the past few years, I have seen movement and more development of beaver activity in my neighboring recreation areas of Alpine County. This



development is exciting to me as it generally affects the watershed of my community and the recreation of some prevalent fishing and hiking regions near my home. However, it begged the question as I sat by a new Dam created on the Carson River in Hope Valley one evening, enjoying the trickle of water sound as it passed through a dam I had never seen in this area.

What does the increase in Beaver Activity mean to water levels, farmers' water rights and recreation opportunities? Are Beavers a welcomed species by all? Is beaver growth in the Sierra increasing with our help, or is nature reclaiming old territory and helping our water system all on its own?

Safeguarding Beavers Across the Sierra Nevada

From the lush forests to the sparkling rivers, the Sierra Nevada is a region of astonishing beauty and ecological importance. Among its many inhabitants, the Beaver plays a particularly crucial role in the health and vitality of the ecosystem. These industrious creatures have a remarkable ability to shape their environment, contributing to water storage, creating habitats, and enhancing biodiversity. As we delve into the Beaver's world, we will discover the unique ways these animals engineer their surroundings and the impact they have on the region's water resources. From their historical decline to their successful reintroduction, the story of beavers in the Sierra Nevada is one of resilience and hope. Beavers are essential to the health of the Sierra Nevada ecosystem, acting as powerful ecosystem engineers.

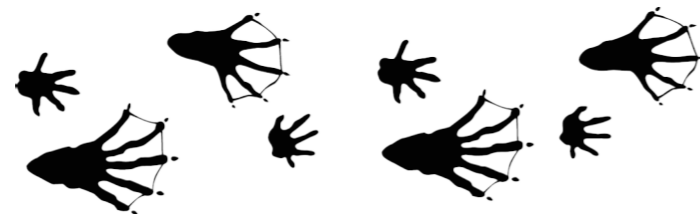
What we discovered in this review is that the answers are multiple to our questions. Yes Beaver activity is increasing, Yes we are helping where we can and Yes their existence, although not always celebrated is being recognized as critical in the fight for better water quality and surplus for Sierra Nevada communities.

The Importance of Beavers in the Sierra Nevada Ecosystem

Beavers have been an invaluable part of the Sierra Nevada ecosystem for centuries, providing essential services such as water storage, habitat creation, and overall biodiversity. Known as the North American Beaver (*Castor canadensis*), these animals thrive in the vibrant freshwater ecosystems of rivers, streams, lakes, and ponds, where they can find a variety of aquatic plants to feed on. Water is essential for beaver habitats, allowing them to move freely, find refuge from land predators, and easily transport building materials for constructing their impressive beaver lodges. However, in the Sierra Nevada, the fur trade and cattle ranches that expanded to the Sierra nearly eliminated a once-abundant population of beavers. Wars over water rights and control of the resources left Beaver as a commonly misunderstood enemy to many.

However, in the past ten years, the Beaver's importance to our ecosystem and water values in mountain states has started to be revealed. As we will see, the activities of these fascinating animals have far-reaching effects on the Sierra Nevada ecosystem.

Beaver Dams and Aquatic Habitats



Beaver dams are true marvels of engineering, built by these skilled architects to create a pond for their homes. Restricting water flow is especially important in California watersheds that feed communities and agriculture in two states, where water resources and management are constantly discussed. The materials beavers use to construct their dams and lodges primarily come from trees and shrubs. This natural thinning of wild willow and trees is, at times, questioned in some regions. However, research has shown that Beavers have a natural and positive effect on new growth in a dam and pond area, reshaping landscapes to affect the local ecology positively.

However, this has caused added management for recreation areas, as downed trees across trails and flooded trails near the new pond development require additional resources for management. Additionally, as mountain communities have developed, property owners near local streams or culverts find beavers troublesome as these non-discriminating creatures will block water flows and take down trees and shrubs that the owners wanted to keep. The added pressures and management of property flooding and human interactions have kept many beyond busy in places like Lake Tahoe and Mammoth, CA.

This management area has caused the most disturbance in the reintroduction of the Beaver, says Sherry Guzzi, co-founder of Wildlife Coalition. Working with land owners and helping change the perception of Beavers as rodents in mountain communities is an ongoing dialog.

However, in 2023 positive movement is being seen across California, and Governor Newsome has built new funding into his 2023 budget. The Governor's June budget proposal provides funding to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to launch a new statewide Beaver Restoration Program to guide the restoration and management of the species. CDFW's new program will fund five permanent staff members to develop a Beaver Management Plan and carry out a full suite of restoration practices, including coexistence and relocation.

Beavers as Ecosystem Engineers

Creating beaver dams leads to incredible aquatic habitats supporting diverse species, including fish, amphibians, and birds. These habitats provide a safe haven for beavers and other species and contribute to the overall health and biodiversity of the Sierra Nevada ecosystem.

As ecosystem engineers, beavers can alter the paths of streams and rivers, create wetland habitats, and stabilize water levels. Increased pond levels increase fish production, bird habitat and wildlife watering and vegetation.

Their keen sense of smell allows them to detect differences in the composition of anal gland secretions. This makes it easy to recognize their relatives and mark their territories with scent mounds made of mud and vegetation, scented with castoreum.

Their dispersal range is typically less than 5 km, but they have been known to travel further when local resources have already been taken advantage of.

History of Beavers in the Sierra Nevada Region

Throughout history, the North American beaver has had a wide range that includes the Sierra Nevada in California. The California Golden Beaver subspecies (*Castor canadensis subauratus*) was once abundant in the Sacramento and San Joaquin River watersheds. Radiocarbon dating was used to examine wood from two Beaver Dams uncovered by deep channel incision in Red Clover Creek, located in the Feather River watershed. This proved that the beavers were native to the Sierra Nevada until at least the mid-nineteenth century.

The recovery of beaver populations has the potential to bring positive impacts to the Sierra Nevada region, such as the restoration of aquatic habitats, riparian vegetation, and the ability of beavers to act as ecosystem engineers.

Reintroduction Success Stories

In 1940 and 1944, beavers were reintroduced to the Sierra Nevada region, a testament to the power of conservation efforts and the resilience of these remarkable animals. Reintroduction programs in the mid-20th century have enabled beaver populations to recover and thrive in the region. In the Tahoe Basin, for example, beavers were reintroduced to help prevent stream degradation and promote wetland restoration.

These successful reintroduction efforts have not only helped beaver populations recover but also had a positive impact on the health and biodiversity of the Sierra Nevada ecosystem. As we will see, ongoing conservation efforts remain crucial to ensure the continued success of beaver populations in the region.

Current Beaver Management Strategies

Today, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has implemented an innovative policy recognizing the ecological benefits of beavers while effectively mitigating conflict over damage to land and property. This policy builds upon existing beaver management policies and lays the foundation for exciting projects that utilize



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beavers' natural abilities. Hunting, trapping and relocation can help control the population. It is also beneficial to relocate specific individuals. Additionally, other effective forms of beaver management include habitat restoration, fencing, and the use of repellents. In preserve locations such as Taylor Creek in Lake Tahoe, they learned that painting trees with a sand grit base deters beavers from eating trees that the park is looking to keep.

Current beaver management strategies are designed to maximize the advantages of beavers while minimizing potential infrastructure damage. By striking this balance, we can ensure the continued success of bear populations in the Sierra Nevada.

Addressing Infrastructure Damage

One of the primary concerns regarding beaver populations is the potential for damage to human infrastructure caused by their activities. Measures such as flow devices and fencing can help mitigate this damage. Flow devices, like beaver pipes, can be used to manage beaver flooding effectively. Fencing and hardware cloth are excellent ways to protect trees and shrubs from bear damage.

In some cases, dam removal may be necessary to address infrastructure damage. Hand tools, heavy equipment, or explosives can effectively break down dams. They all can get the job done. These measures are essential to balance the ecological benefits of bears with the potential for infrastructure damage.

Promoting Coexistence with Beavers

Promoting coexistence with bears involves educating the public about their ecological benefits and implementing non-lethal management techniques. Fostering harmonious coexistence with beavers can be achieved through culvert-protective fencing, sand/paint mixtures, and beaver dam analogs. Beaver dam analogs are straightforward restoration strategies designed to imitate the shape and purpose of natural Beaver dams and can enhance water quality by capturing sediment in the ponds created by their dams and by moderating water flows.

Educating the public about beavers is an opportunity to emphasize their ecological benefits and foster a harmonious relationship with them. By working together and understanding the importance of bears in our ecosystem, we can ensure their continued success in the Sierra Nevada region.

The Future of Beavers in the Sierra Nevada

.As we have seen, beavers play a crucial role in the region's ecosystem, and their populations are slowly increasing due to conservation efforts and habitat restoration. Recent efforts to reintroduce beavers to the area have been highly successful, and they are now considered keystone species essential for the health and diversity of riparian ecosystems.

Exciting beaver management strategies are now in place to address infrastructure damage, promote coexistence with beavers, and conduct scientific research and conservation efforts, which will significantly shape the future of beavers in the Sierra Nevada. With these efforts, the future of beavers in the region looks bright and promising.

Scientific Research and Conservation Efforts

Scientific studies continue to explore the historical range, ecological impacts, and potential reintroduction sites for beavers in the region. These research and conservation efforts are crucial in ensuring the continued success of beaver populations in the Sierra Nevada.

By understanding and addressing the challenges faced by beavers, we can work towards a future where they thrive and continue contributing to the health of the region's ecosystem.

The Role we play as Recreationists in Beaver Habitats

Beaver ponds and dams are more than humble engineering projects or roadblocks to our recreation. They offer a plethora of recreational benefits that are often overlooked. These industrious creatures have a remarkable ability to shape their environment, creating complex wetland ecosystems that attract a wide variety of wildlife.

Beaver ponds provide nature enthusiasts a unique opportunity to observe and appreciate the intricate interplay between land and water.

One of the key recreational benefits of beaver ponds is their contribution to biodiversity. These water bodies create a rich habitat for numerous species, including birds, fish, amphibians, and mammals. The calm waters of the pond serve as a sanctuary for waterfowl, attracting species like ducks, herons, and even ospreys, which can be a delight for birdwatchers. Additionally, the dams create diverse microhabitats, offering shelter and breeding grounds for amphibians like frogs and salamanders. Anglers also reap the benefits of beaver ponds, as they provide ample opportunities for fishing, with a higher likelihood of catching a variety of fish species.

Apart from supporting biodiversity, beaver ponds and dams offer recreational activities for outdoor enthusiasts. Kayaking through a beaver

pond can be a serene and immersive experience, allowing individuals to connect with nature while navigating the tranquil waters. Hiking along the edges of these ponds provides a chance to witness the ever-changing landscape as beavers continuously modify and shape their surroundings. Wildlife photography is another popular activity, with beaver ponds serving as picturesque backdrops for capturing moments of nature's beauty. Ultimately, beaver ponds and dams give nature lovers a unique opportunity to appreciate these remarkable animals' dynamic and transformative power while enjoying the many recreational activities they offer.

Throughout this article, we have explored the fascinating world of beavers in the Sierra Nevada, their history, and the ongoing efforts to conserve and manage their populations for a sustainable future. From their vital Role in the ecosystem to their incredible engineering skills, bears are truly remarkable creatures with a significant impact on the health and vitality of the region.

As we face the challenges of climate change and

increasing demands on our water resources, the continued conservation and management of beaver populations in the Sierra Nevada is more crucial than ever. By working together, we can ensure these fantastic animals' success and contributions to the region's health and well-being for generations to come.

For more information on Current Beaver habitat restoration and education we recommend <https://www.sierrawildlife.org/> or <https://martinezbeavers.org/> and <https://wildlife.ca.gov/News/Archive/new-cdfw-policy-recognizes-ecological-value-of-beavers-in-california>





HASSLE FREE

An inside look at a local conservation effort to give wildhorses and wildlife a hassle free zone in the mountains



While I spend a reasonable amount of time traveling the Sierra Nevada and exploring new places and great adventures, my home base in Minden, Nevada, is hard to beat for the outdoor lifestyle and that feeling of living on the frontier.

The first time my wife and I drove south from Reno and through Carson City into the Carson Valley, we knew instantly, it was a place we wanted to raise our kids and build a life. Fifteen years later, the kids have grown and started their life adventures, and we have settled into a great groove of life filled with friends, adventure and travel.

One of my favorite things about living in Nevada is the Wild horse populations seen throughout Northern Nevada. They are powerful and beautiful creatures that embody most outdoor explorers' free spirit. But it was not until recently that I began to understand their complex relationship with both us as Humans and with their own Bands. (A Band is like a family unit for Wild horses, usually a group of 3- 12 horses)

The Polarizing Wild Horse Debates of the West

From the beginning of my time here in

Nevada, I have often bumped into lively and emotional debates on Wild horse Populations. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) here annually does wild horse round-ups and captures these animals as they are often referred to in the growth community as "Feral Animals." BLM has a responsibility to manage the Public lands and the Wild horse populations. My limited understanding was that the horses would be captured and trained, then auctioned off to the horse community. Honestly, this seemed okay, and I could understand the concept of controlled grazing on the lands so that both open-range grazing and recreation could continue.

There were always emotional pleas for the horses online, talk of cruelty, unfair practices, mismanagement etc... All these seemed horrible and unfair, but since I didn't understand the whole story, nor could I give an educated opinion on how to do this better, I stayed away from the conversation. It is easier to just like all the gorgeous pictures online and move on, hoping I can capture my own trophy image the next time I see a wild horse.

Then recently I heard about a group in my hometown that had secured a piece of land to Protect and preserve a space where wild horses and all wildlife could roam Hassle Free of BLM practices. The idea intrigued me and had a positive win-win spin I needed to learn more about.

A Day on the Range with the Wild Horses & a Local Authority on the Wild Bands of Fish Springs

A relatively active Horse and photography group in the Carson Valley is all over Facebook with stunning images of the Fish Springs Wild Horse Herd. So as I started to connect the dots in the area to the news of a substantial land purchase in the Pinenut mountain range east of town, I connected with Suzanne Roy, the Executive Director of the American Wild Horse Campaign. I had a great and very educational conversation with Suzanne, who was happy to share much information and resources for my research into the BLM practices and why preserving Wild horses in our area was so meaningful. She, in turn, asked me to reach out to John Humphrey for an informal close-up look at the range.

I quickly connected with local John Humphrey, who has been hired as "Property Manager" for the new parcel. John has been leading tours for photography here in the Carson Valley for some time now and is known by many as a "Carson Valley Legend" in our local marketing collateral by the visitor's authority. A title I later learned John finds quite embarrassing.

Meeting John Early on a May morning, we road into the Pinenut range to see and photograph wild horses and to discuss the boundaries and reach of this new sanctuary preserve he now manages.

With Wildflowers exploding from the desert floor and the sun rising over the range, it didn't take long for us to locate the bulk of the Heard on top of a knoll grazing freely like nothing in life could bother them.

The heard was spread out in little pockets of horses (I learned this morning that they call that a Band). We positioned ourselves for fantastic photo opportunities with the Snowy Sierra Nevada range behind the horses. John knew them all by name, which should speak volumes to any visitor about people's passion for these wild animals. As we watched the herd maneuver and travel, it became easy to see the different fractions they had created among themselves: The strongest Stallions, direct traffic of their band with head bobs, body placement and directional push. The rest of the heard follows the leader. And challengers to order and met with authority and conviction, including a swift kick or body slam from the lead stallion.

John has spent so much time with these horses that he knows their attitudes and movements, sensing if one Stallion was upset with another or if a challenge for supremacy was in work etc. You learn quickly while visiting the herd that there is a hierarchy of power and Love with in the herd that is in constant





significant challenges still ahead for Wildhorse heard in Nevada. In my opinion, the policy is a bit dated based on a generational divide between cattle grazing and open space land management that has been a public battle since the west's inception.

But this article, nor the purchase of this small parcel of land in Northern Nevada, will change this. The only real solution probably lies within the boundaries of the local community, where local ranchers, local advocacy groups and local BLM officers work together on a healthy solution for the open range.

BLM has a responsibility to manage the land and resources, opinions obviously vary on their success. What I learned in studying this continual war is that at some point in history there was a number set as to the proper quantity of wild horse that land could sustain, along with all the other public interests including open range grazing. That number is in great part based on my reading based on the assumption that these horses are not native and are feral in nature. And that the general public can not stomach the sight of struggling and staving herds.

BLM manages this number right or wrong with round-ups, sterilization of herds and bands and transporting horses out of the range into holding/stockyard properties that do not affect open-range

grazing.

The constant battle from advocacy groups against BLM practices, greatly revolves around the changing of language and management tactics that were originally intended in the [Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971](#). Since its inception policy changes, management tactics and the lack of routine and or proper research and data collection on the herds have resulted in blind round-ups based on many mathematical assumptions and public promotion language disguised as protection of the herd. The Advocacy groups who spend time watching these herds, desperately feel like BLM is sidestepping their true responsibility and instead harassing and damaging the natural order of the horse herds by ignoring obvious signs that history needs to be reviewed thoroughly before further round ups take place.

The efforts of the Pinenut Wild Horse Advocates and American Wild Horse Campaign are a step in a positive direction for advocacy of the Wild horses. Wild horses will not be held captive here in the Carson Valley, but my sense tells me they will understand the sense of freedom within this new preserve's borders. A place where helicopters can't do round-ups and where the people who come are more interested in a great photo than breaking up the Band.



balance. John on this day would share a story of an older stallion who recently lost his power struggle and his beloved band. Are hopes today were to see him in the hills and to see if any of his former band had slipped away to rejoin him in recovery.

I am happy to report that Zorro was indeed found later that morning with two of his band hiding in the trees and looking very healthy. John was ecstatic as one of the horses and Zorro I guess have a rather famous local love story.

The Protected Space

A few hundred images later, John and I headed off in the quad to get a feel of the new protected space. A network of dirt roads leading us deep into the Pinenut Range. Three thousand three hundred thirty-five acres of Previously owned "Bently" Pine Nut land with a year-round running stream.

An article published by the Record Courier in April 2023 - Suzanne Roy, explained how the Bentlys donated seven parcels totaling 757.18 acres and

donors purchased 14 additional parcels amounting to 2,538 acres.

Driving across this land, it was obvious to me that this new land preserve would be significant in the efforts of the Pinenut wild horse advocates efforts to protect this prized and cherished heard. The land has water, and it has varied terrain with tree cover so the bands can separate when needed and travel safely. The Pinenuts also have predators to help naturally manage the herd. John confirmed that there is no intention of adding fences to the property, and though it is now private land, they expect visitors on the land and on the roads as usual. He also shared a smattering of details of a growing cooperative relationship with the tribal councils as they border tribal land in the Pinenuts as well.

Moving Forward with BLM Regulations on wild horse management

After reading over 100 pages of BLM wild horse management policy, I can tell you that there are

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STATE PARKS

A Guide to Conservation & Recreation

A Traveler's Guide to State Parks in the Sierra Nevada

create opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.

In this guide

Explore the Sierra Nevada State Parks for outdoor activities, historical sites & natural wonders!

Take a scenic drive and discover multiple parks and various recreational opportunities.

Discover the Communities that support and keep these state treasures and how your visit helps generations of future travelers.

Discovering the Sierra Nevada State Parks

Nestled along the California-Nevada border, the Sierra Nevada region boasts four national parks, three national monuments, and countless state parks, each with its unique charm and attractions. Lake Tahoe, the largest alpine lake in North America, is a jewel in the heart of the region, with crystal-clear waters and breathtaking mountain vistas, and home to several state park conservation efforts.

If it's history you're after, the Sierra Nevada is home to some of the most important historic sites in the country, such as the gold discovery site in Coloma, California. Take a trip back in time and explore the enchanting Gold Rush towns, like Columbia, once inhabited by a diverse population of miners and merchants from various countries.

For those searching for natural wonders, the region offers unique geological formations, ancient forests, and pristine lakes that will leave you in awe.

High Sierra State Parks

The High Sierra State Parks are a treasure trove of outdoor experiences, perfect for those looking to escape the everyday hustle and immerse themselves in nature. With parks such as Calaveras Big Trees State Park, D.L. Bliss State Park, and Ed Z'berg Sugar Pine State Park, you'll have endless opportunities to camp, hike, boat, fish, and more.

Let's dive into what each of these parks has to offer!



Calaveras Big Tree State Park

If you want to feel humbled by the grandeur of nature, look no further than Calaveras Big Tree State Park. Home to two groves of giant sequoias, the park offers a glimpse into a world of ancient giants. The park's mixed-conifer forest, with the Stanislaus River and Beaver Creek flowing through it, provides the perfect backdrop for hiking, camping, or fishing.

Remember to pay a visit to the Louis Agassiz tree, standing at an impressive 250 feet tall and over 25 feet in diameter.

Bodie State Historical Park

Step back in time and explore the fascinating history of Bodie State Historic Park. Once a bustling gold-mining town, Bodie was abandoned in 1942 when the gold ran out, leaving over 100 historic buildings frozen in time.

Strolling through the well-preserved streets, you can almost hear the echoes of the past and imagine the lives of those who called this place home. This ghost town is a must-visit for history buffs and adventure seekers alike.

D.L. Bliss State Park

Located in the heart of the Sierra Nevada, D.L. Bliss State Park is a haven for outdoor enthusiasts. With its visitor center filled with a natural history collection, a campground boasting 142 campsites, and a pristine beach on Lake Tahoe, there's no shortage of activities to keep you entertained.

Soak up the sun on the sandy shore, explore the park's hiking trails, or enjoy the breathtaking views of Lake Tahoe – the choice is yours!

Ed Z'berg Sugar Pine Point State Park

Nestled on the west shore of Lake Tahoe, Ed Z'berg Sugar Pine Point State Park is a must-visit for nature lovers. With nearly two miles of lake frontage and one of the best-preserved natural areas on Lake Tahoe, you'll find plenty of opportunities for hiking, swimming, boating, and fishing.

The park's diverse landscape and abundant outdoor activities make it a popular destination for visitors seeking an authentic Tahoe experience.

Ready for an unforgettable adventure in the heart of the Sierra Nevada mountain range? This majestic area in California and Nevada offers jaw-dropping natural beauty, rich history, and an incredible array of outdoor activities. From mighty peaks and crystal-clear lakes to fascinating historical sites, there's something for everyone in "A Travelers Guide to State Parks in the Sierra Nevada." So buckle up and join us on a journey through the enchanting Sierra Nevada State Parks

Beyond the Ordinary:

State parks often conjure images of tranquil picnic spots or well-worn hiking trails, but the Sierra Nevada's state parks defy such conventions. The ordinary is left behind here as nature reveals her most extraordinary creations. From the towering granite cathedrals of Yosemite to the kaleidoscope of colors in Death Valley, the Sierra Nevada National Park system grandeurs much attention. But the small and quieter State parks on the Sierra Nevada tell the story of the mountains. The State parks in this region are unrivaled in their ability to awaken our senses and ignite our spirit of adventure and history.

Nature's Time Capsules:

The state parks are not simply patches of land set aside for preservation; they are living time capsules that carry the stories of our region's ancient past. As you venture deep into the heart of the Sierra Nevada, you will find yourself surrounded by landscapes shaped by eons of geological forces. Discover animals and fauna unique to only this region of the world and step back into a time when our history was uncertain, but the few's dreams would shape a country's future and direction. State parks provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people by helping to preserve the region's extraordinary biological diversity, protect its most valued natural and cultural resources, and

Donner Memorial State Park

Discover the rich history and scenic beauty of Donner Memorial State Park. Located at the east end of Donner Lake in Truckee, California, the park offers a variety of activities, including camping, picnicking, boating, fishing, and hiking.

Take advantage of the Emigrant Trail Museum, which pays tribute to the California emigrants who traveled west in the mid-1800s, and the Pioneer Monument, honoring their incredible journey.

Burton Creek State Park

Adventure awaits you at Burton Creek State Park, a 1,890-acre park on the northwestern side of Lake Tahoe. With over six miles of hiking and cross-country skiing trails, this park is perfect for those exploring the great outdoors.

Whether you're an experienced hiker or just looking for a leisurely stroll through nature, Burton Creek State Park has something for everyone.

Emerald Bay State Park

Experience the breathtaking beauty of Emerald Bay State Park, a forested inlet on the west side of Lake Tahoe, home to the picturesque Fannette

Island. Recognized as a National Natural Landmark for its stunning scenery, unique geology, and interesting history, the park offers many activities, such as hiking, picnicking, boating, swimming, and kayaking.

Remember to visit the Vikingsholm mansion, a marvel of Scandinavian architecture that adds a touch of history to your visit.

Mono Lake Tufa State Park

Venture into the Eastern Sierra and discover the otherworldly beauty of Mono Lake Tufa State Park. This ancient salty lake is home to unusual limestone towers known as tufa formations, which rise eerily from the water.

While exploring the park, be sure to take a walk along the South Tufa Interpretive Trail, which offers stunning views of the lake and its unique geological features.

Grover Hot Springs State Park

For a truly rejuvenating experience, visit Grover Hot Springs State Park in the eastern Sierra Nevada mountains. The park's 550 acres offer a diverse landscape of alpine meadows, stunning mountain views, and the hot springs themselves.

Take a dip in the soothing waters, camp under the

stars, or hike along one of the park's scenic trails, such as the Grover Hot Springs Trail, Summit Trail, or Hot Springs Trail.

Johnsville State Park

While Johnsville State Park may not be in the Sierra Nevada, visiting Plumas-Eureka State Park, located in Plumas County, California, is a must for nature enthusiasts. This park, situated in the Sierra Nevada and Cascade Range, offers many activities, including hiking, fishing, and taking in the awe-inspiring views of the mountain landscape.

The park is home to various wildlife, including black bears, deer, and bald eagles. There are also plenty of opportunities for bird watching, with over 200 species of birds spotted in the area. Visitors can also explore the park's many trails, which range from short to long.

Gold County

Gold Country, a region in the Sierra Nevada, is steeped in history and offers a unique glimpse into California's past. The area is home to several fascinating state parks, including Empire Mine, Columbia, Sutter's Fort, Indian Grinding Rock, and South Yuba River, each offering a different perspective on the region's rich history and cultural heritage.

Let's delve deeper into the attractions that await you in Gold Country.

Empire Mine State Park

Discover the fascinating world of California's gold-mining history at Empire Mine State Park in Grass Valley. Home to one of the oldest, largest, most profound, longest, and richest gold mines in the state, the park offers a unique window into the bygone era of gold mining.

Explore the museum, blacksmith shop, and stamp mill, and immerse yourself in the park's history as you hike along the trails. Remember to wear comfortable shoes and bring plenty of water for an enjoyable day at the park.

Columbia State Park

Step back in time at Columbia State Park, founded by miners from Sonora and Jamestown in the heart of Gold Country. Once a bustling mining town, Columbia now offers a glimpse into the lives of the diverse population of miners and merchants who once called this place home.

Explore the well-preserved streets and buildings, learn about the area's rich history, and perhaps

even try at gold panning.

Sutters Fort State Historic Park

Experience the early days of California at Sutter's Fort State Historical Park, an open-air museum in Sacramento. The park pays tribute to John Sutter's founding of the first non-indigenous settlements in California and offers a fascinating insight into the lives and jobs of early Californians.

Explore the museum, watch living history demonstrations, and join educational programs for an unforgettable journey into the past.

Indian Grinding Rock State Historic Park

Marvel at North America's largest collection of bedrock mortars at Indian Grinding Rock State Historic Park. The park's marbleized limestone grinding rock, known as a chaise, featured 1,185 mortar holes and was used by the Miwok people for thousands of years to grind acorns for food.

Immerse yourself in the park's rich cultural history and enjoy the tranquil surroundings as you explore the area.

South Yuba River State Park

Unleash your adventurous spirit at South Yuba River State Park, located in the Sierra Nevada mountain range. The park offers a wide range of outdoor activities, from hiking and fishing to swimming in the pristine waters of the Yuba River.

And don't worry. Your furry friend is welcome to join you on your adventure, as dogs are allowed on all trails and shoreline areas, except for the Family Beach area.

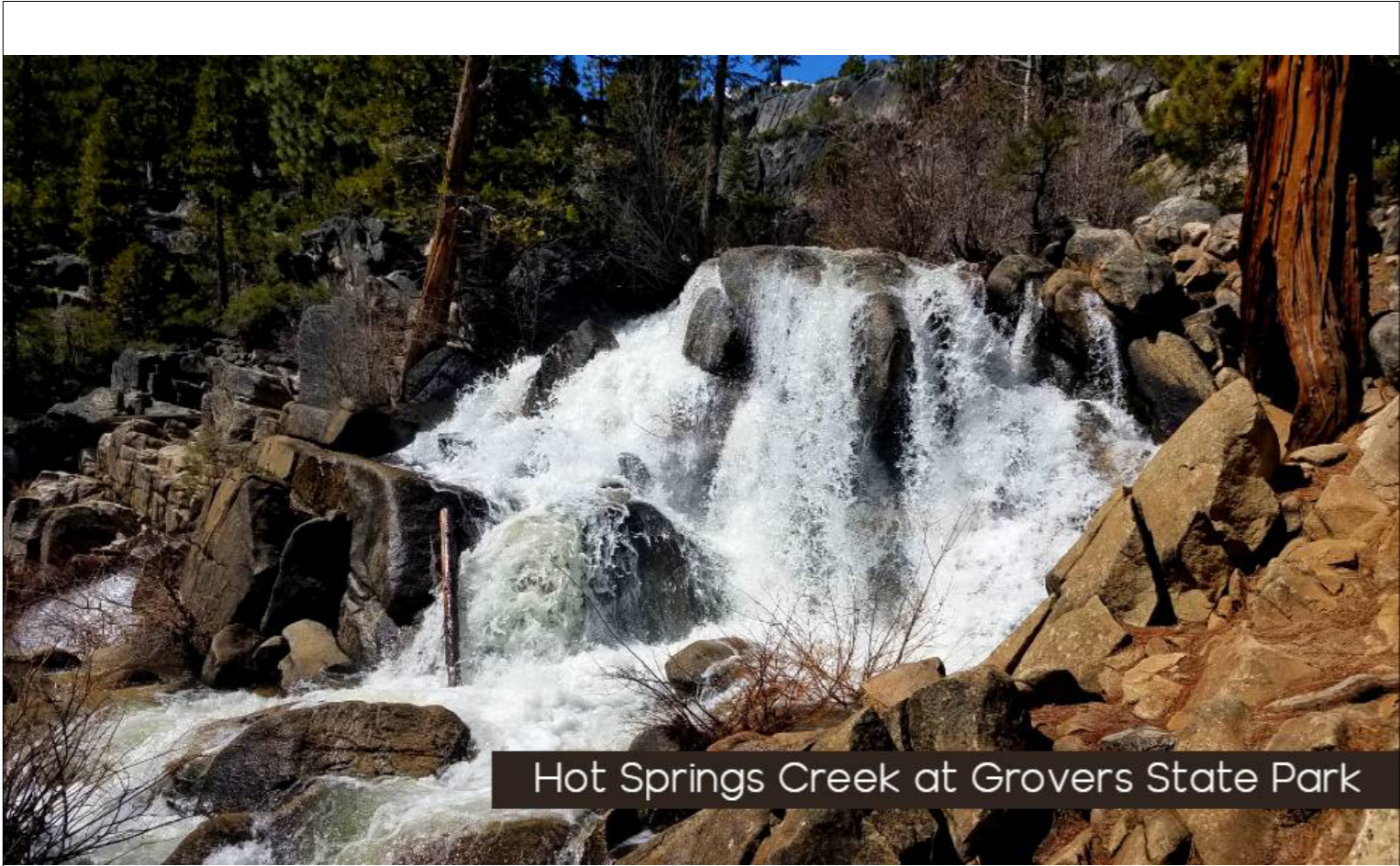
Adventure Awaits: Outdoor Activities in Sierra Nevada State Parks

Every trip to the Sierra Nevada would be complete with indulging in some thrilling outdoor activities. The region offers many opportunities to explore the great outdoors, from hiking and rock climbing to skiing and snowboarding.

Whether you're an adrenaline junkie or simply looking to connect with nature, the Sierra Nevada State Parks have something for everyone. Let's take a closer look at some of the most popular outdoor activities in the region.

Hiking Trails

Lace up your hiking boots and hit the Sierra Nevada State Parks trails! With a diverse range of hiking trails, such as Yosemite Falls Trail,



Hot Springs Creek at Grovers State Park



Cathedral Lakes, and Mist Trail, there's no shortage of breathtaking scenery to discover.

And don't forget to check out popular Lake Tahoe trails like Eagle Falls and Eagle Lake, which offer stunning views of the lake and surrounding mountains. No matter your skill level, there's a trail waiting to be explored.

Winter Sports

When the snow falls, the Sierra Nevada becomes a winter wonderland, offering world-class skiing and snowboarding opportunities. With ski resorts like Squaw Valley, Heavenly, and Northstar, you can find the perfect slopes to suit your skill level and style.

And if skiing and snowboarding are different from your style, you can also enjoy ice skating, snowshoeing, and more, all while taking in the beauty of the snow-capped mountains.

Water-based Activities

Embrace the crystal-clear waters of the Sierra Nevada State Parks and indulge in various water-based activities. From windsurfing and fishing at Washoe Lake State Park to kayaking, canoeing, and swimming in the pristine waters of Lake Tahoe and other mountain lakes, there's no shortage of aquatic adventures to be had.

So grab your swimsuit, life jacket, and sense of adventure, and dive into the refreshing waters of the Sierra Nevada.

The Sierra Nevada State Parks have plenty to offer if you're a history buff or a nature enthusiast. From fascinating historical sites like Bodie Ghost Town to awe-inspiring natural wonders such as Mono Lake, the Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest, and Devils Post Pile National Monument, there's something to pique everyone's interest.

Let's explore these must-visit attractions in more detail.

Bodie Ghost Town

Enjoy California's gold-mining past at Bodie Ghost Town, now a State Historic Park and National Historic Landmark. Wander through the deserted streets and over 100 well-preserved buildings, imagining the lives of the gold miners who once called this place home.

Don't miss the chance to take a guided tour, and try your hand at gold panning for an authentic taste of life during the gold rush era.

Mono Lake

Venture to the eastern Sierra Nevada and marvel at the otherworldly beauty of Mono Lake. This ancient, salty lake is home to unique limestone towers known as tufa formations, which rise eerily from the water.

As you explore Mono Lake Tufa State Park, take a walk along the South Tufa Interpretive Trail, which offers stunning views of the lake and its fascinating geological features.

Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest

Discover some of the world's oldest trees in the Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest, located in the White Mountains near Bishop. Some of these awe-inspiring trees are estimated to be over 4,000 years old, standing as silent witnesses to the passage of time.



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Experience

Washoe Meadows State Park

In Lake Tahoe

By Brandy Diane



Located Highway 50 and Sawmill road near Meyers California, at the base of the breathtaking Echo Summit sits Washoe Meadows State Park. The undeveloped park encompasses a vast expanse of pristine meadows and lush woodlands, providing a serene retreat for visitors seeking solace from the hustle and bustle of tourism in Lake Tahoe, California.

This protected haven pays homage to the Native Americans who harmoniously inhabited this land for thousands of years. Their rich heritage is preserved within the park's borders, inviting visitors to connect with the deep-rooted history of the region.

One of the most notable features of Washoe Meadows State Park is its commitment to preserving the land in its natural state. Unlike many developed parks, this sanctuary remains untouched, allowing visitors to revel in the raw beauty. This dedication to preservation ensures that the park's ecosystems thrive, providing a haven for native flora and fauna.

During our visit to Washoe Meadows State Park in early June, we were surprised to discover a different and unique experience, unlike most other state parks we have previously explored in California. In contrast to the well-defined entrances and prominent signage typically found in developed parks, Washoe Meadows has absolutely none of that!

Without traditional park booths and clearly marked signs, we were stuck in an endless loop of circles

until we spotted the holy grail, a modest marker delicately affixed to a tree, merely stating "state park." Finally, we found it! This subtle indication served as our guide, revealing the elusive path camouflaged within the landscape.

As we walked into the park, our ears filled with the sounds of birds chirping, insects buzzing, and a swarm of flies that are common this time of year. The path is flat and great for hikers of all ages, with views of Angora Peak and Twin Peaks, to name a couple. Stroll along the Upper Truckee River and Angora Creek while birdwatching and taking in the sights.

During summer, the temperature hovers around a comfortable 75 degrees during the day, providing ideal conditions for exploring the park. During winter, the park glitters like a winter wonderland with average temperatures ranging from a high of 40 degrees to a low of 20 degrees. To fully enjoy your short hike into Washoe Meadows State Park, it is advisable to dress appropriately for the ever-changing weather conditions. In summer, lightweight and breathable clothing with comfortable boots or walking shoes works best. During winter, layering is the way to go with warm, waterproof attire with boots and a jacket that will ensure you enjoy your experience in the snowy wonderland.

Washoe Meadows State Park represents more than just a picturesque landscape; it embodies the

importance of responsible stewardship and our collective duty to protect our natural treasures. As visitors, we can actively contribute to the preservation effort by adhering to park regulations, cleaning up after ourselves, and respecting the delicate ecosystems that thrive within the park's boundaries.

Dogs are welcome in designated developed areas within Washoe Meadows State Park. These areas include campsites, paved roads, paths, dirt fire roads, and paved parking areas, allowing visitors to enjoy the park's amenities while accompanied by their furry companions. Dogs are not permitted on the beaches or dirt trails.

If you're seeking respite from the bustling tourism of Lake Tahoe, Washoe Meadows State Park offers a tranquil escape to immerse yourself in the quiet beauty of nature. Visitors to Washoe Meadows State Park are encouraged to practice responsible recreation, which includes respecting the park's guidelines and Leave No Trace principles.

Parking and trailhead for Washoe Meadow State Park

The natural trailhead for Washoe Meadow State Park is located off Lake Tahoe Blvd Approx. 2.5 miles west of the "Y" intersection (HWY 50/SR 89) in South Lake Tahoe. The Gated trailhead is located off the road about 100 feet and is not easy to locate. Look for the Lake Valley Fire District Station, the trail is just prior the station near the intersection with Tahoe Mountain Road.



All Image Courtesy: [Brandy Diane - BrandyTravelsCalifornia.com](https://www.BrandyTravelsCalifornia.com)





Discover the Beauty of Sierra Nevada State Parks: A Family Adventure in California

Are you seeking an unforgettable family adventure? Look no further than the breathtaking Sierra Nevada state parks in California. With the recent introduction of three free pass programs,

exploring these natural wonders has never been easier or more accessible for families. Thanks to California and Nevada policies in 2023 state park access is as easy as it has ever been for families in both states.

The Sierra Nevada mountain range is a treasure trove of natural beauty, offering an array of state parks that cater to all interests and ages. From towering granite peaks to serene alpine lakes, these parks provide a stunning backdrop for family adventures and create lifelong memories. Amidst the hustle and bustle of daily life, escaping to the mountains offers a welcome respite, allowing families to reconnect with each other and with nature.

Outdoor recreation has long been recognized for its positive impact on physical and mental well-being. Spending time in the Sierra Nevada state parks provides an opportunity for families to engage in various activities such as hiking, camping, fishing, and picnicking. These activities not only promote physical fitness but also instill a sense of adventure, resilience, and a deeper appreciation for the natural world. Moreover, the mountains serve as an outdoor classroom, offering valuable educational experiences for children.

Research has shown that exposure to nature enhances cognitive development and creativity in children. By exploring state parks, youngsters can learn about diverse ecosystems, observe wildlife in their natural habitats, and develop a sense of environmental stewardship. The Sierra Nevada



state parks provide an immersive learning environment, allowing children to connect with the wonders of the natural world and gain a deeper understanding of their place within it.

To make these experiences even more accessible, the California State Park Adventure Pass program offers fourth graders and their families the opportunity to explore select state parks for free throughout the school year. This initiative, championed by First Partner Jennifer Siebel Newsom, not only encourages children's physical, mental, and social-emotional well-being but also fosters family bonding and community connections. By obtaining a free Adventure Pass online or through designated State Parks Pass Sales Offices, families can embark on a year-long journey of discovery and adventure in the Sierra Nevada mountains.

Additionally, the California State Park Library Pass program, in partnership with the California State Library, further enhances the value of exploration for children. By using their library cards, kids can check out a pass from their local library, granting them access to state parks. This not only promotes a love for reading and learning but also introduces young minds to the wonders of the outdoors. The program also includes grants for public libraries to conduct outreach and educational programs, emphasizing the importance of connecting children with nature and the benefits of outdoor experiences.

As families embark on their Sierra Nevada state park adventures, they will discover the true value of quality time spent together in nature. The majestic mountains provide a backdrop for cherished moments, creating lasting bonds and memories. Amidst the stunning landscapes and awe-inspiring vistas, parents and children can escape the distractions of technology and immerse themselves in the simplicity and beauty of the natural world.

So, whether it's hiking to the top of a granite peak, casting a fishing line into a crystal-clear mountain stream, or marveling at the vibrant colors of wildflowers, the Sierra Nevada state parks offer a plethora of opportunities for family exploration. Through the free pass programs and the utilization of library resources, families can unlock the doors to adventure, education, and discovery.

Take the leap and plan your family's Sierra Nevada state park adventure today. Embrace the mountains, breathe in the fresh air, and create memories that will last a lifetime. The wonders of nature await, ready to inspire, educate, and bring your family closer together.





FOR CALIFORNIA OUTDOORS ALL

CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS PASSES

For more information on these passes, visit www.parks.ca.gov/Passes

PASS NAME	PRICE	VALIDITY	DESCRIPTION
California Explorer Vehicle Day Use Annual Pass	\$195	12 months	Covers vehicle day-use fee at most locations, including Southern California beaches.
California State Library Parks Pass	FREE	# of days allowed by library	Can be checked out by any public library patron. Provides free vehicle day-use entry to over 200 participating state parks.
California State Park Adventure Pass	FREE	12 months	Provides free entry for fourth graders and their families at 19 participating state parks.
Golden Bear Pass	FREE	Calendar year	Provides free day-use vehicle access for disadvantaged families to over 200 participating state parks.
Disabled Discount Pass	\$3.50	Lifetime	For persons with permanent disabilities, entitles 50% discount for vehicle day-use, family camping and boat-use fees at State Parks-operated units.
Distinguished Veteran Pass	FREE	Lifetime	For qualified veterans, entitles free use of all basic facilities (including day use, camping and boating) in state parks.
Limited Use Golden Bear Pass	\$20	Calendar year, nonpeak season	For persons 62 years or older, entitles holder and spouse/registered domestic partner vehicle day-use entry to most State Parks-operated units during nonpeak season.
Golden Poppy Vehicle Day Use Annual Pass	\$125	12 months	Covers vehicle day-use fee at most Northern California beaches, destination parks and reservoirs.
Tahoe Regional Vehicle Day Use Annual Pass	\$75	12 months	Covers vehicle day-use fee at Lake Tahoe-area state parks.
Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Day Use Annual Pass	\$50	12 months	Valid for passenger vehicles with a capacity of nine persons or less at all state vehicular recreation areas (i.e., designated off-highway vehicle trails and/or open areas).
SNO-PARK Season/Day Permits	\$40/season or \$15/day	Nov. 1 to May 30	Provides access to 21 SNO-PARK sites that have snow-cleared parking lots with sanitation facilities and access to snow play area and cross-country ski and snowmobile trails.
Historian Passport Day Use Admission Annual Pass	\$50	12 months	Provides unlimited entry for up to four persons to many state historic parks that charge per-person admission fee or a vehicle day-use fee.
Boat Use Annual Pass	\$100	12 months	Covers additional fees required for motorized vessels, sailboats over 8 feet or personal watercraft. Valid only in addition to another pass.
Oversized Vehicle Pass Sticker	\$75	12 months	Covers additional fees associated with oversize vehicles (25 feet in length or over) or trailers. Valid only in addition to another pass.

California State Parks Pass Access Programs

With the leadership of Governor Gavin Newsom and First Partner Jennifer Siebel Newsom, California was able to create for the very first time, innovative access programs for children and families to explore California's State Park System. Via the new California State Park Adventure and State Library Parks Pass programs and a revamped Golden Bear Pass Program, California is promoting a healthier, more equitable California for all. This effort helps advance the Newsom Administration's "California Outdoors for All" initiative to enable all Californians, regardless of zip code or income, to access parks and open spaces.

The pass programs are funded through the 2021/22 State Budget (www.ebudget.ca.gov), which included a \$9.1 million one-time General Fund investment to launch pilot programs to expand FREE State Parks pass distribution.



Provides free day-use passes for fourth graders and their families to 19 participating state parks. The pass is valid over the duration of the fourth grader's school year through the following summer (September-August). More info: www.parks.ca.gov/AdventurePass



In partnership with the California State Library, State Parks is providing vehicle day-use passes to over 200 participating state park units operated by State Parks to library-card holders. Library cards are free and easy to get at your local public library. More info: www.CheckOutCAStateParks.com



State Parks and the California Department of Social Services have made it easier for CalWORKs families to receive a free annual vehicle day-use pass valid at over 200 participating state parks and beaches operated by State Parks. Now, families receiving CalWORKs can complete the application on their smartphone in just minutes. More info: www.parks.ca.gov/OutdoorsForAll



www.parks.ca.gov/OutdoorsForAll

From Ghost Towns to Natural Wonders

Exploring Mono Lake and Bodie State Historic Park



From Ghost Towns to Natural Wonders: Exploring Mono Lake and Bodie State Historic Park

Are you looking for a unique and adventurous trip that will take you off the beaten path? Look no further than Mono Lake and Bodie State Historic Park! These two destinations offer a fascinating glimpse into California's history and natural wonders Just Highway 395 in the Eastern Sierra.

Mono Lake, a saltwater lake, is home to fascinating rock formations called tufa towers, providing a stunning backdrop for photographers and nature lovers. The Black sand beaches on the Northside of the Lake also provide a unique peak into the region's geology.

Meanwhile, Bodie State Historic Park is a well-preserved ghost

town that will transport you back in time to the California Gold Rush. As you explore the dilapidated buildings and abandoned streets, you'll feel as though you've stepped into the pages of a Western novel. Whether you're a history buff, an outdoor enthusiast, or simply looking for a unique vacation destination, Mono Lake and Bodie State Historic Park are not to be missed!

The history of Mono Lake and Bodie State Historic Park

Mono Lake and Bodie State Historic Park are both located in the Eastern Sierra region of California, about 30 miles apart with Conway summit separating the two great parks. Mono Lake is a large, shallow, saline lake that covers over 70 square miles. The Lake has a long and fascinating



history, with evidence of human habitation dating back thousands of years. The Kutzadika'a People, also known as the Mono Tribe, were the area's first inhabitants. They lived along the shores of the Lake, seasonally harvesting Pinenuts from the surrounding region from the Pinyon pine forests and hunting antelope and Jackrabbits. They established trade routes into Yosemite, but their fruitful existence and relationship to Mono Lake changed forever once the discovery of Gold at Bodie and Aurora. The mining boom in Aurora and Bodie led to an insatiable need for wood and other resources. When residents of those two towns cut the surrounding pinyon pine forest for firewood, it deprived the Kutzadika'a of an important seasonal food source, pinyon pine nuts. Additionally, increasing settlement in the Mono Basin pushed the Kutzadika'a from their prime camping and food-gathering lands, typically close to fresh water and thus the most desirable land for ranching and agriculture.

Bodie State Historic Park, today, is a ghost town that was once a thriving gold mining town. In the late 1800s, Bodie was home to over 10,000 people, making it one of the largest cities in California at the time. The town had over 60 saloons, a red-light district, and a reputation for

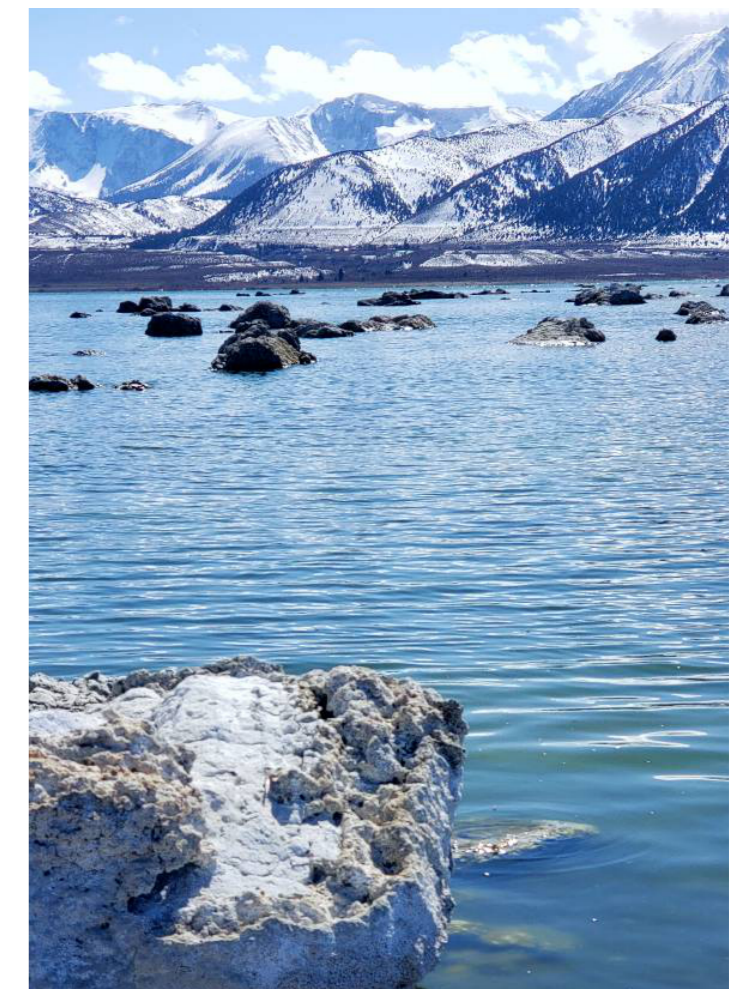
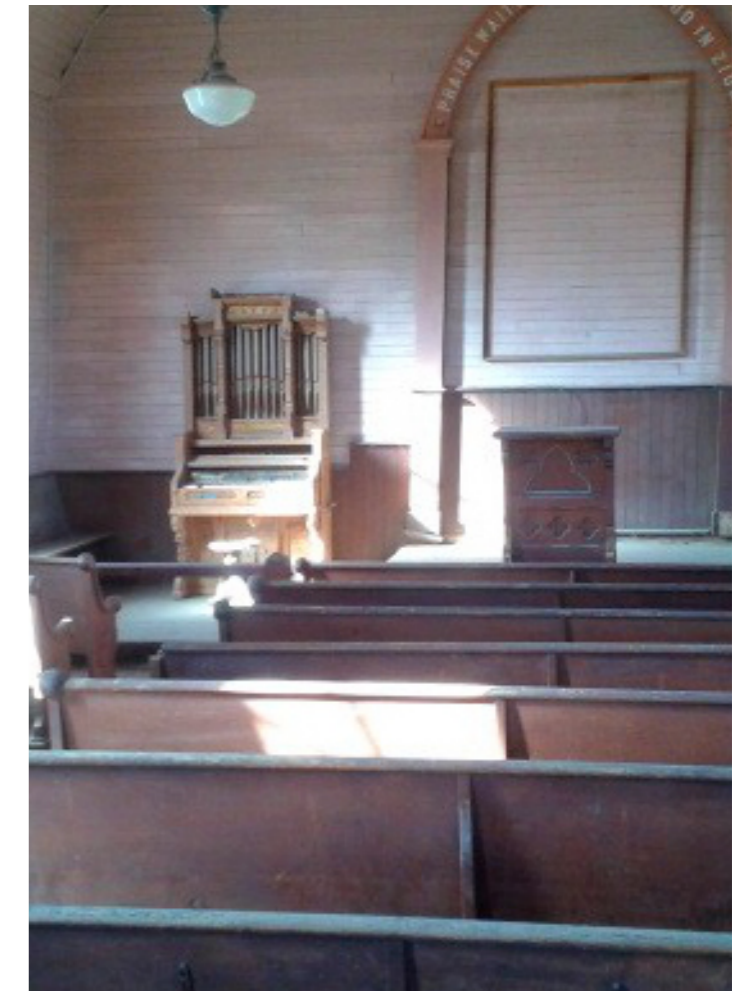
lawlessness. However, as the gold rush ended, the town began to decline, and by the 1940s, it was mostly abandoned.

The unique geology of Mono Lake

Mono Lake's unique geology is one of the things that makes it such a fascinating destination. The Lake sits in a basin that was formed by volcanic activity millions of years ago. Over time, sediments and minerals from the surrounding mountains were deposited in the Lake, creating a high concentration of salts and minerals. As a result, the Lake is three times saltier than the ocean.

One of the most striking features of Mono Lake's geology is the tufa towers. These towers are formed by interacting with freshwater springs and the Lake's salty water. The springs contain calcium and other minerals, which react with the Lake's carbonates to form the towers. Over time, the towers grow taller and more intricate, creating a stunning and otherworldly landscape.

The importance of Mono Lake for migratory birds



Mono Lake is a beautiful natural wonder and an essential habitat for migratory birds. The Lake is home to over 80 species of birds, including the California Gull, American Avocet, and Wilson's Phalarope. The Lake's shallow waters and abundant food sources make it an ideal resting spot for birds as they migrate along the Pacific Flyway. Fine dining for the birds includes a healthy diet of Alkali flies and Brine shrimp of which Mono lake is plum full of both.

In the 1940s, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power began diverting water from the streams that fed Mono Lake, causing the Lake's water levels to drop dramatically. This had a devastating effect on the Lake's ecosystem, and bird populations began to decline. In the 1980s, a group of concerned citizens and environmental organizations banded together to save Mono Lake. Their efforts led to a landmark legal battle that resulted in protection and restoration efforts for the Lake.

South Tufa tours

Join a naturalist-guide for a tour among strange tufa towers, bubbling springs, birds, wildlife, brine shrimp, and the behind-the-scenes story of the most unusual Lake in California. This one-hour-long, guided tour is great for all ages and includes hands-on activities and an overview of the human and natural history of Mono Lake. Advance reservations are recommended.

Take a Trail and Relive the History:

Two trails on the Mono Basin that we recommend for both better understanding geology and the natural history of the Lake are the Black fissure trail north of the Lake and the Bloody Canyon trail that was used as a trade route for the Kutzadika'a People. This trail is located off the June Lake loop and will lead you into Ansel Adams wilderness and Yosemite National Park. A popular but difficult backpacking route with three lakes at different elevations.

Bodie State Historic Park - a gold rush ghost town

Bodie State Historic Park is a well-preserved ghost town that offers visitors a glimpse into California's gold rush era. The town is located in the Bodie Hills, east of the Sierra Nevada mountain range. Bodie was once a thriving gold mining town, with over 10,000 residents at its peak. The town had all the amenities of a large city, including a bank, a post office, and several newspapers.

However, as the gold rush ended, Bodie began to decline. By the 1940s, the town was mostly abandoned, and it was declared a state historic park in 1961. Today, visitors can explore the town's dilapidated buildings and abandoned streets, giving them a sense of what life was like in the Wild West.

The preservation efforts at Mono Lake and Bodie State Historic Park

Both Mono Lake and Bodie State Historic Park are protected areas, with dedicated preservation efforts to ensure that they remain intact for future generations. Mono Lake, in particular, has been the subject of a landmark legal battle that led to protections for the Lake and the surrounding ecosystem. The Mono Lake Committee, a non-profit organization, works tirelessly to protect the Lake and its wildlife while promoting sustainable tourism in the region.

Similarly, Bodie State Historic Park is carefully preserved to maintain its historical significance. The park's rangers and staff work tirelessly to maintain the town's buildings and infrastructure while providing visitors with educational opportunities.

Exploring the tufa towers at Mono Lake

One of the most popular activities at Mono Lake is exploring the Tufa towers. Visitors can hike or kayak to get up close and personal with these stunning rock formations. The South Tufa area is trendy, with a boardwalk that winds through the towers and offers stunning views of the Lake and surrounding mountains.

If you're interested in photography, Mono Lake is a must-visit destination. The tufa towers and surrounding landscape create stunning photo opportunities, especially during sunrise and sunset.

Birdwatching at Mono Lake

Birdwatching is another popular activity at Mono Lake, with over 80 species of birds calling the lake home. The Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua, an annual event held in the region, offers guided birdwatching tours and educational opportunities for bird enthusiasts.

Hiking trails and activities at Bodie State Historic Park

Bodie State Historic Park offers a variety of outdoor activities, including hiking and camping. The park has several hiking trails that wind through the surrounding hills, offering stunning views of the town and surrounding landscape. The park is also a popular destination for stargazing, with its remote location and lack of light pollution making it an ideal spot for astronomy enthusiasts.

If you have a vehicle set up for off-dirt road adventures, an alternative travel trip is the Off-Road route North of Bridgeport at the Masonic Mines and travel the backcountry to Bodie. This alternative, fun, backroad route to Bodie State Historic Park starts north of Bridgeport. History buffs will enjoy the remains of the Chemung Mine and the site of Masonic, as well as incredible views along the way. The north end of the route enters the national forest with plenty of spur roads for green-sticker vehicles.

Difficulty

Easy: It starts as wide gravel road but soon

narrows with ruts and embedded rock. The side trip to Masonic Mountain is narrow and rough but still easy. Suitable for most stock SUVs with 4-wheel drive and moderate clearance.

Planning your visit to Mono Lake and Bodie State Historic Park

If you're planning a trip to Mono Lake and Bodie State Historic Park, there are a few things to keep in mind. Both destinations are located in remote areas, so bring plenty of water and snacks. The weather in the Eastern Sierra can be unpredictable, so check the forecast beforehand.

When visiting Mono Lake, respect the fragile ecosystem and wildlife. Stay on designated trails and avoid walking on the Tufa towers, as they are delicate and can be easily damaged.

If you plan to visit Bodie State Historic Park, check the park's website for current information on hours and access. The park is only open seasonally, and some areas may be closed due to weather or maintenance.

Mono Lake and Bodie State Historic Park are two of California's hidden gems, offering visitors a unique and fascinating glimpse into the state's history and natural wonders. Whether you're interested in geology, history, or outdoor activities, these destinations have something for everyone. So pack your bags, grab your camera, and prepare for an adventure you'll never forget!



Discover California's Gold Rush at Columbia Historic State Park



Imagine stepping back in time to experience life during the California Gold Rush. Sounds exciting. Well, buckle up for a journey to Columbia Historic State Park, where the echoes of the past ring loud and clear. This gem nestled in the southern mines region of California, is a living gold rush town, boasting the largest collection of gold rush-era buildings in the state. A visit here promises an adventure filled with history, charm, and family-friendly activities that cater to every taste.

Short Summary

Explore Columbia Historic State Park for a Wild West adventure & hands-on gold panning experience!

Enjoy the charm of Main Street, preserved buildings from 1850s and live performances.

Visit nearby attractions like Rail Town 1897 or Yosemite National Park for an unforgettable trip!

Exploring Columbia Historic State Park

Columbia Historic State Park is a treasure trove of history waiting to be explored. Walking down its wooden sidewalks, you'll feel like you've stepped into a time capsule. From the clattering of a working blacksmith shop to the delicious waft of ice cream

parlors, this park is a sensory delight among state parks.

So why not spend an afternoon exploring this historic town? Savor the rich history, admire the well-preserved buildings, and enjoy the charming Main Street. Whether you're a history buff or just looking for a unique family trip, Columbia Historic State Park has something for everyone.

California Gold Rush History

Gold, the shining beacon that ignited the California Gold Rush, was the lifeblood of Columbia. In the 1850s and 1870s, gold worth over a billion dollars today was mined in the area, turning Columbia into the second-largest city in California. This vibrant history is captured in the park's museum, where displays and exhibits tell the tale of the Gold Rush era.

The museum offers an engaging blend of history and hands-on activities. Some of the highlights include:

Children can participate in a virtual scavenger hunt

Adults can watch a video about the town's history or try on period attire

Gold Rush Days, held on the second Saturday of each month in the afternoon,

where you can participate in hands-on crafts, go on special tours, and even try your luck at gold panning

All the park docents are dressed up in costume, adding an extra layer of authenticity to the experience

Preserved Historic Buildings

Columbia State Historic Site. Park is home to a remarkable collection of gold rush-era buildings, each a window into the past. The park's historic buildings, including two fire houses, the Wells Fargo Express office, and a Chinese shop, have been carefully preserved, offering a snapshot of life during the gold rush.

Strolling along the main street boardwalks, you'll discover an array of businesses that evoke the spirit of the 1850s. From hotels and restaurants to ice cream parlors and saloons, there's something to pique everyone's interest. Whether you fancy a trip to a vintage bookstore, a visit to a working blacksmith shop, or a quiet moment in a quaint tea house, Columbia has it all.

Main Street Charm

A stroll down Main Street is



like stepping into a time machine. The wooden sidewalks, the quaint shops, the friendly townspeople dressed in old-fashioned clothing - it's easy to forget you're in the 21st century. This is the charm of Columbia Historic State Park, a place where history comes alive.

The main street is lined with a variety of shops and eateries, offering something for every palate and preference. From saloons and candy stores to ice cream spots and a tea house, there's something to satisfy every craving. And the best part? Most businesses are open seven days a week, so no matter when you visit, you're in for a treat.

Activities for the Whole Family

Columbia Historic State Park is not just a place to learn about history - it's a place to create memories. The park offers a variety of family-friendly activities that cater to all ages and interests. Whether you're an adventurer at heart or a history enthusiast, Columbia has something for you.

Hop onto a stagecoach for a

thrilling ride through the park, or try your hand at gold panning and see if you can strike it rich. Kids will love the live performances that bring the history and culture of the Gold Rush era to life.

So why wait? Pack your bags and embark on a journey to the past that your family will never forget.

Stagecoach Rides

One of the highlights of any visit to Columbia Historic State Park is the Quartz Mountain Stage Line. This stagecoach ride is an adventure in itself. As the stagecoach rumbles down the street, you'll feel a rush of adrenaline. But hold onto your hats - there might be robbers on the way!

An actor, armed with a fake gun, jumps out and tries to rob the stagecoach of gold and jewelry. It's all in good fun, of course, but it's a thrill that's sure to get your heart racing. It's a fun and exciting way for the whole family to experience a taste of the Wild West, right in the heart of California.

Gold Panning Experience

Want to feel like a real gold miner? Give gold panning a try! This hands-on activity lets

you experience the thrill of searching for gold, just like the miners did during the Gold Rush era.

Gold panning involves using a pan to separate gold from other materials in a stream or river. It's a simple process, but it requires patience and a keen eye. Don't worry if you're new to this - there are plenty of friendly staff members on hand to guide you. Who knows, you might even strike it rich!

Live Performances

Live performances are a big part of the Columbia Historic State Park experience. At the Fallon House Theatre, you can catch live productions that transport you back to the Gold Rush era. These performances offer a unique glimpse into the history and culture of the time, making history fun and engaging for all ages.

From musicals to dramas, the performances at the Fallon House Theatre are a treat for the whole family. So why not grab a ticket, sit back, and let the talented performers whisk you away to another time?

Dining Options in Columbia

All that exploring is bound to

work up an appetite. Luckily, Columbia CA 95310 has plenty of options to refuel. From historic saloons to family-run joints, there's something for every palate.

Whether you're in the mood for classic American food at a historic saloon, a hearty breakfast at a homely diner, or a fancy dinner at a sophisticated restaurant, Columbia has you covered. And don't forget to satisfy your sweet tooth at one of the town's delightful candy stores or ice cream parlors.

Charles Saloon

At the north end of Main Street, you'll find the St. Charles Saloon. This lively spot serves up a variety of craft beers, hot sandwiches, and pizzas, all in a fun and relaxed atmosphere.

The St. Charles Saloon is a great place to unwind after a day of exploring the park. With its welcoming staff and hearty food, it's a favorite among locals and tourists alike. So why not pull up a chair, order a refreshing sarsaparilla, and soak in the atmosphere?

City Hotel Restaurant

For a more refined dining experience, head to the City Hotel Restaurant. Set in a stunning 19th-century building, this restaurant offers

a menu filled with traditional American dishes, all made with locally-sourced produce.

The City Hotel Restaurant is perfect for a romantic evening or a special celebration. The elegant setting, combined with the delicious food and excellent service, guarantees a memorable dining experience.

Sweet Treats

No visit to Columbia would be complete without a trip to Nelson's Columbia Candy Kitchen. This candy store is a paradise for sweet lovers, offering a wide variety of handmade candies and confections.

From chocolate-covered marshmallows to fresh fruit jellies, there's a sweet treat for everyone at Nelson's Columbia Candy Kitchen. It's the perfect place to pick up a souvenir or two, or simply indulge in a sugary delight.

Practical Information for Visiting Columbia

To make your visit to Columbia Historic State Park as smooth as possible, it's important to have all the practical information at your fingertips. From location and contact details to parking and accessibility, here's everything you need to know before you go.

And don't forget about the

special events! Columbia Historic State Park hosts a variety of events throughout the year, offering even more opportunities to delve into the rich history and culture of the Gold Rush era.

Location and Contact Information

Columbia Historic State Park is located in the heart of California's Mother Lode, offering a unique blend of history, nature, and adventure. To help you plan your visit, here's the contact information: The park's phone number is (209) 532-0150, and you can reach them via email at columbiastatepark@parks.ca.gov.

Whether you're planning a day trip or a weekend getaway, Columbia Historic State Park is a must-visit destination. So why wait? Start planning your adventure today!

Free Parking and Accessibility

One of the best things about visiting Columbia Historic State Park is the ease of access. The park offers free parking, so you can spend the day exploring without worrying about parking fees.

The park is also wheelchair accessible, making it easy for visitors of all abilities to explore and enjoy. From the

historic buildings to the charming main street, there's a world of history and adventure waiting to be discovered.

Special Events

Columbia Historic State Park hosts a range of special events throughout the year, adding an extra dose of excitement to your visit. From Gold Rush Days to the Infocus Photography Exhibition, there's always something happening in Columbia.

Gold Rush Days, held on the second Saturday of every month, offer a unique opportunity to explore special exhibits and residences not usually open to the public. The Infocus Photography Exhibition, held in March, showcases stunning photographs capturing the beauty of the park. Don't

miss our special Labor Day event during Gold Rush Days, where we celebrate the hard work and dedication of the miners who shaped our history.

So be sure to check the events calendar when planning your visit!

Nearby Attractions

While Columbia Historic State Park offers plenty to see and do, there are also several nearby attractions worth exploring. From the living history museum at Rail Town 1897 State Historical Park to the breathtaking natural beauty of Yosemite National Park, there's a whole world of adventure just a short drive away.

Additionally, the historic towns of Sonora, Jamestown, and Angels Camp are close by,

offering even more opportunities to delve into the region's rich history. So why not extend your trip and explore all that the California Mother Lode and southern mines have to offer?

Summary

Columbia Historic State Park is more than just a park - it's a living piece of history. With its preserved buildings, family-friendly activities, and unique dining options, it offers a unique glimpse into the California Gold Rush era. Whether you're a history enthusiast, a nature lover, or looking for a fun family outing, Columbia Historic State Park has something for everyone. So why wait? Pack your bags, hop in the car, and embark on a journey back in time..



Image Courtesy: California State Parks



Empire Mine State Historic Park -

Grass Valley California

Empire Mine State Historic Park is the site of one of the oldest, deepest, and richest gold mines in California. The park is in Grass Valley California.

In operation for more than 100 years, the mine extracted 5.8 million ounces of gold before it closed in 1956. The park contains many of the mine's buildings, the owner's home and restored gardens, as well as the entrance to 367 miles of abandoned and flooded mine shafts. The park encompasses 856 acres of forested backcountry and fourteen miles of trails - including easy hikes (for hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding) - in the park.

The "Secret Room"

To keep track of the mine's 367 underground workings, a place called "The Secret Room" (named for its blacked-out windows) was built. In it, the entire room was filled with a scale model of the mine's below the surface workings. Few people knew the room existed while the mine was in operation. Today, visitors to the park can see it in the Visitor Center. The model represents five square miles of underground workings. When the visitors go down the actual shaft in the park, they have journeyed only "one inch" on the model. Anything past "two inches" on the model is underwater in the actual mine.



Image Courtesy: California State Parks

Malakoff Diggins State Historic Park

Malakoff Diggins State Historic Park is nestled amongst the pine-studded chaparral forest of the Sierra Nevada Foothills and is home to California's largest hydraulic gold mine. The 3,000-acre park encompasses the town of North Bloomfield and the historic Diggins site, which allows visitors to step back in time and experience the boom and bust of the California Gold Rush. Visitors can see huge cliffs carved by mighty jets of water, results of the gold-mining technique of washing away entire mountains to find gold.

Legal battles between mine companies and the downstream agricultural towns of Marysville and Yuba City ended this particular method of mining, and was the first environmental lawsuit in the United States. The park Visitor Center features displays on mining and pioneer life in the old mining town of North Bloomfield, as well as a short video on hydraulic mining.

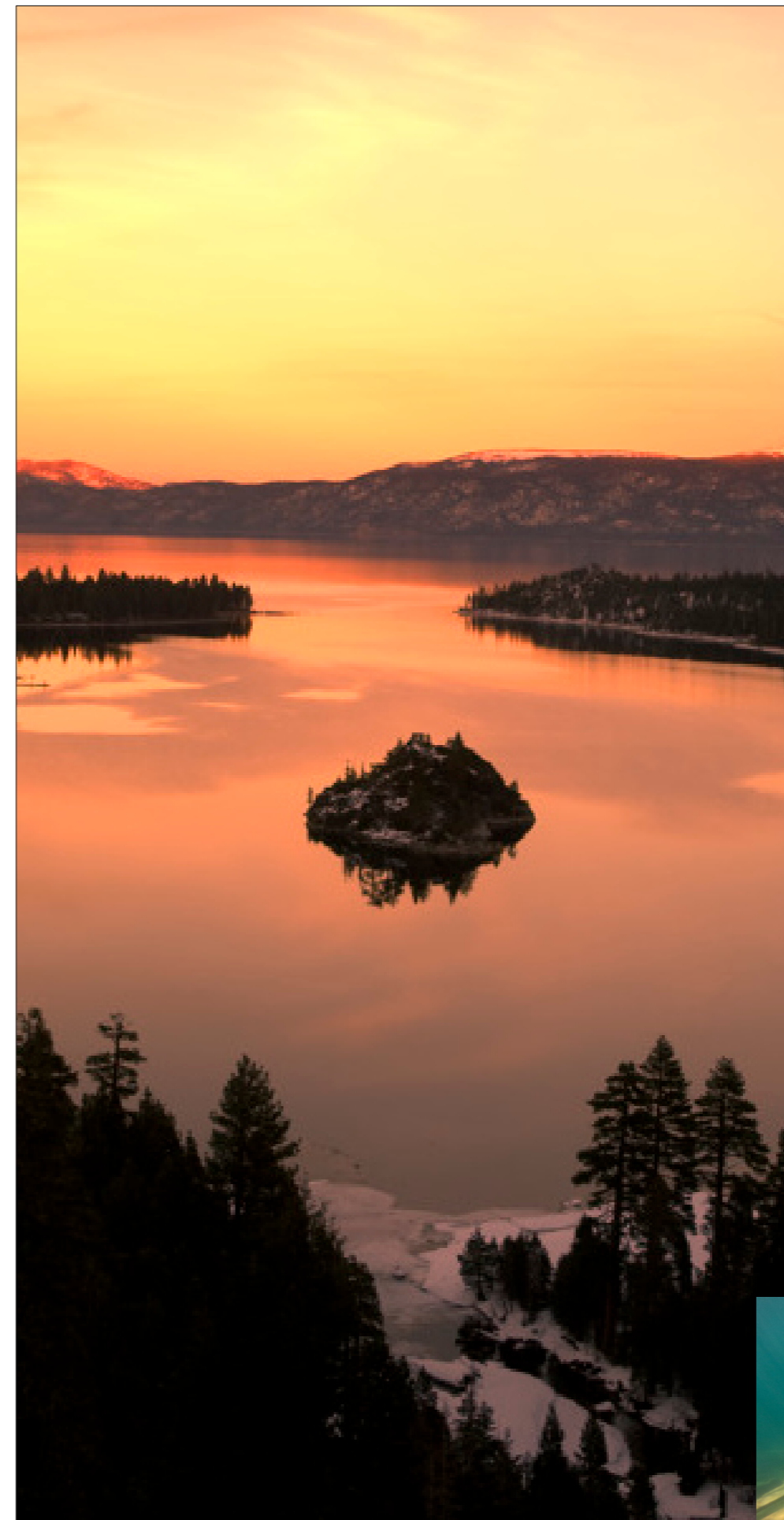
The park also offers unparalleled hiking, camping, and fishing opportunities, and, in winter, snowshoeing.



Ed Z'berg Sugar Pine Point State Park

The largest of the state parks at Lake Tahoe, Ed Z'berg Sugar Pine Point is 2,000 acres of dense pine, fir, aspen and cedar forests set behind nearly two miles of lake frontage. This is the only Tahoe-area park where camping in the snow (conditions permitting) is part of the lake's winter experience. Located ten miles south of Tahoe City on the west side of Lake Tahoe, the park's acreage extends three-and-a-half miles into the U.S. Forest Service's Desolation

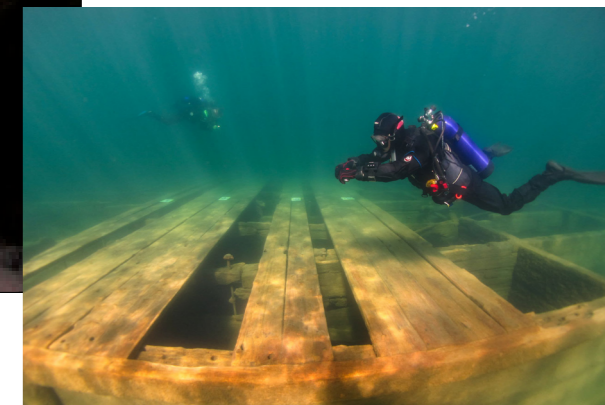
Wilderness area. The park's showpiece is the elegant but rustic 11,000-square-foot Pine Lodge —also called the Ehrman Mansion. It is a fine example of the grand, turn-of-the-century summer homes of the well-to-do who began to settle the lake shore in the early 1900s. Here, they could escape their bustling city lives and reconnect, if only temporarily, to the serenity and recreation of the outdoors.



Maritime Heritage Underwater Trail Lake Tahoe

In October 2018, the public was officially able to experience [California's first maritime heritage underwater trail](#) devoted to showcasing Lake Tahoe's historic recreational watercraft and barges, that now rest below the surface of Emerald Bay.

Scuba and snorkel diving visitors will be able to explore an underwater "trail" of historic features at several sites along the shoreline of Emerald Bay State Park, Lake Tahoe. Currently, divers have access to the Historic Barge Dive Site established by California State Parks in 1998. The department has never publicly released the location and information about three additional sites highlighted in this underwater trail until now.





Spooner Lake Backcountry State Park Nevada

Nestled in the Lake Tahoe Basin, the Spooner Backcountry is a widespread recreational and natural oasis, with a lake surrounded by aspens and more than 12,000 acres of forested, open space. The park features 50 miles of hiking, equestrian and mountain biking trails and primitive roads. A few of the more popular trails are the Marlette, Red House, Flume and Tahoe Rim Trails. Camping and cabins are also available. The Spooner Lake Cabin sleeps four people comfortably and Wildcat Cabin sleeps two. Both cabins have basic amenities such as composting toilets, beds, cook stoves and wood burning stoves.



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The V&T Trail



Reviving Nevada's Legendary Rail Corridor:

Regarding conservation efforts in the Sierra Nevada, trail enthusiasts rejoice in Carson City! We've got some fantastic news for all you walking and biking aficionados in Nevada. A dream of connecting five counties and countless years of Nevada history is taking tangible steps forward as organizers, planners and trail experts continue to push forward a dream of a **Bikeable, Walkable Trail future in Northern Nevada.**

Picture this: you're about to embark on a 60 plus-mile trail journey like no other—a trail that traces the footsteps of Nevada's rich railroad history. The V&T Trail, also known as the Historic Virginia and Truckee Trail, takes you along one of the most famous railroads in the state, promising an unforgettable experience for both present and future trail enthusiasts.

If you will, Flashback to 1868 when the Virginia and

Truckee Railroad came into existence, built by the Bank of California to transport ore from the Comstock silver mines of Virginia City to the processing mills along the Carson River. Over time, the railroad expanded its tracks, connecting various regions and creating a unique three-legged configuration for its 66-mile route.

But, like many good things, the railroad's glory days ended in 1950, and the corridor was handed back to its previous owners, which included private, city, and county entities, as well as the Bureau of Land Management.

Fast forward to 2015 when passionate advocates started pushing for a transformation of the corridor into a rail-trail. After tremendous effort and support from local leaders, momentum started building. In

HISTORIC VIRGINIA & TRUCKEE TRAIL



2017, they submitted their first grant application to the National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program to kickstart trail development.

The summer of '19 marked a game-changer for trails in the state with the signing of Assembly Bill 84 by Governor Steve Sisolak. Hold on to your handlebars because this bill allocates a whopping \$217 million in bonds for conservation and wildlife management, paving the way for some incredible projects, including the much-anticipated Historic Virginia and Truckee Trail (V&T Trail).

Thanks to Assembly Bill 84, things are taking off big

time! This bill opens up incredible funding opportunities, paving the way for 50–60 miles of paved and compressed-dirt nonmotorized paths in the V&T footprint. Imagine a trail connecting five counties, five cities, and six museums, preserving northern Nevada's high desert's historical significance and natural beauty.

Some portions of the Trail are already up and running. Carson City, the state capital, has several miles of the V&T Trail on the ground. And believe it or not, you might have already ridden along parts of the old route through Washoe and Pleasant Valleys in Washoe County without even realizing it. This fall, they will celebrate the Trail's early adoption by holding the first-ever Truckee to Carson Trail Day, where riders will have the opportunity to ride from the Truckee River in Reno to the Carson River in Carson City. The Trail is now fully marked and ready to ride for adventure travelers.

I had the opportunity to sit with the Trail's original dreamer and current project leader and Historic Virginia & Truckee Trail non-profit association, Donna Inversin, in May of 2023. "Imagine a time in the near future where visitors and locals can take off on a bike packing trip from Reno and stage a multiple-day bike trip that includes Douglas County, Tahoe, Virginia City etc." the V&T trail will be the connector trail of communities and adventure enthusiasts will have a new way to see the scenic region by foot or bike" says Donna.

Donna's passion for this project and her work as the President of the Historic Virginia & Truckee Trail non-in Carson City has helped secure funding and make plans for excellent new editions to the community. But there is more to accomplish.

The completed rail-trail will also link up with other significant trails like the 1,800-mile Pony Express Trail, the 6,800-mile-plus American Discovery Trail, and the 114-mile Tahoe Pyramid Trail. And that's not all—travelers will have access to the 165-mile Tahoe Rim Trail and the epic 2,650-mile Pacific Crest Trail through connections to Carson City and Douglas and Washoe counties.

In Douglas County, officials are reviewing the idea of adding a trail bridge over the Carson River near Sunridge Golf Course connecting with Heybourne Road and into Douglas County, where the train initially stopped.

In the future, riders could be in Lake Tahoe or Virginia City and then head out on a trail to ride or hike back into Carson City or Reno. Hikers and bikers could take the train to Virginia City and then return to Carson City on foot or two wheels.

There are so many possibilities with this Trail and the vision for its future. As a recreation community, we must volunteer our time, resources, and voice to this great new community asset to see it come to its completion.

Historic Virginia & Truckee Trail, a 501-c non profit citizen group advocating for this five county connection trail, couldn't be more excited about the already completed sections of the new V&T trail. It has much work still to accomplish. However, it's vital to preserve this priceless corridor. So much has been lost since the railway closed 73 years ago, and we must do everything possible to protect what remains!

Head to the Historic Virginia & Truckee Trail Facebook page for more information on this fantastic project. Happy trails!



Scan Code to get more information and support this new rail to trail project



A dream of Bike Tour businesses drawn out by leadership of V&T trail.

Donna shared with us a vision for a regional bike tour industry that could be developed with the completion of the Virginia truckee trail, especially with the invention and expansion of

electric bikes. Here is a quick review of what a bike tour using the Virginia truckee Might look like in northern Nevada. With the understanding that a business like this requires considerable resources to get started, at least 2 vans, electric bicycles that can work on paved surfaces and handle minor soft trails just to get started.

Most such outfits usually have between 8 and 12 participants and many of the days will include two options for activities

Proposed Itinerary

This itinerary is based on traveler flying into Reno. If you are already local skip to Day 2.

Day 1: Meet guests at the airport and ferry them to a hotel somewhere near City Plaza for the first night.

Day 2: Morning Ride

Option A ride west along the Tahoe Pyramid Trail

Option B sight seeing in the downtown area.

Afternoon Ride

Everyone meets up for lunch and then rides east on the Historic Virginia & Truckee Trail/Tahoe Pyramid Trail and then south on Historic Virginia & Truckee Trail/Veterans Parkway to Historic Virginia & Truckee Trail/Old 395 south and after Pleasant Valley turn off on Eastlake Blvd to reach Washoe Lake State Park where tents are set up and the guests enjoy a typical campfire cookout and night under the stars.

Day 3: Morning Adventure

-Option A hike into the hills east of Washoe Lake State Park to the Gazebo

-Option B kayak on Washoe Lake

Afternoon Adventure

Everyone meets up for lunch and then bicycles into Carson City via The Historic Virginia & Truckee Trail to a designated hotel

Day 4 Ride

Option A mountain biking the Ash to Kings and Lincoln Bypass Trail

Option B bike around Carson on the many multi-use paths and shopping

Option C visit some of Carson City & 395 museums

Day 5 Adventures

Ride the train to Virginia City, visit the museums, shops and restaurants Return to Carson City via vans and then ride to Carson Valley via the Historic Virginia & Truckee Trail south to Clearcreek Rd. Then south along Highway 395 to Jacks Valley Rd to Muller Lane east to Hwy 395 into Minden for the night.

Day 6 Ride and Explore

Option A mountain bike rides on the CVTA trails

Option B visit Dangberg ranch, shopping and other museums in Minden and Gardnerville

Day 7 Flume Adventure

Van shuttle up to Incline Village

Option A those who wish to ride the famous Flume Trail are dropped off on the at SpoonerLake State Park

Option B ride from Incline Village south on the Eastshore Multi-Use Path to Sand Harbor for a day at the beach

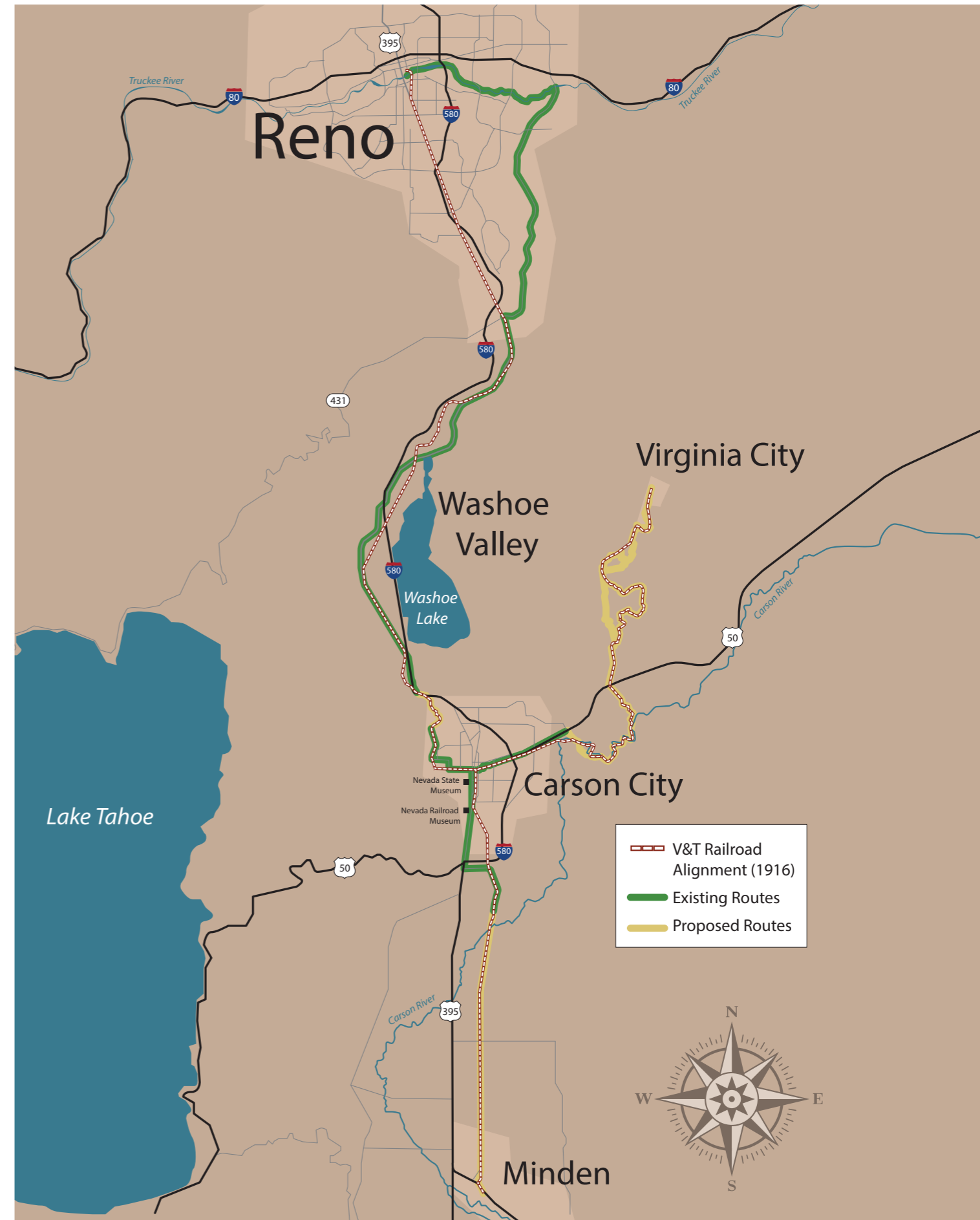
End of the day van transport to an hotel near the airport

-Day 8

leave for home or for those who wish to stay and explore more they can make arrangements

Of course this could be extended into longer trips and as The Historic Virginia & Truckee Trail is improved more and different options will become available.

PRELIMINARY MAP OF THE VIRGINIA TRUCKEE TRAIL



Frog Habitat



Why are some Sierra Mountain Lakes now Fishless? And how is the Yellow-legged frog changing how we view bio-diversity importance in places like Yosemite and Desolation Wilderness?

Last summer, we had the opportunity to hike into Yosemite National Park backcountry and enjoy the solitude of Roosevelt Lake on the Northeastern board of Yosemite National Park and the Hoover Wilderness.

Roosevelt Lake is a beautiful backcountry lake & high alpine area with a lush meadow system, outreaching from the southern shorelines down towards the Tuolumne meadow watershed.

We noticed a science experiment in the water upon arrival at the lake. After a little investigation, it became clear that this might be part of the fish removal program that has been happening in select Yosemite Backcountry lakes to bring back the decimated population of Yellow Legged to Yosemite National Park.

I remember being in the Vogelsang region of the park two years back and seeing dead frogs on the shoreline. I researched and learned about the Fungus that was killing Yellow Legged frogs. So why are Frogs being protected, and what does it mean to recreational access and Sierra Nevada bio-diversity health?

The Yellow-Legged Frog in the Sierra Nevada

The Yellow Legged Frog in the Sierra Nevada is a significant indicator of species in the Sierra Nevada ecosystems. Once upon a time, the Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog (*Rana sierrae*) was a common sight in the breathtaking high mountain lakes of the Sierra Nevada. Imagine hiking along the lakeshores and coming across hundreds of these delightful amphibians. It was a true natural wonder! Unfortunately, things have taken a turn for the worse. The frog populations have declined by a staggering 95% in the Sierra Nevada, including in Yosemite National Park. Recent surveys from 2005 to 2007 showed that this decline was ongoing and put the species on the path to extinction. That's why the Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog has been granted the status of an endangered species under the Federal Endangered Species Act.

The repercussions of losing the Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog from most of its range have been immense. These frogs played a crucial role in the delicate balance of our beloved Sierra Nevada ecosystems. As keystone predators and prey, they held a special place in the food chain. They also acted as an essential nutrient and energy-cycling agents, ensuring the ecosystem thrived. Their decline has left a void that affects both aquatic and terrestrial life.

What caused this decline, you may wonder? Well, one major factor is the introduction of fish into lakes where they naturally didn't exist. Back in the early 20th century, Yosemite's brilliant scientists noticed something fascinating: frogs and fish were rarely found together in the same lakes or streams. This observation led them to believe that these aquatic inhabitants had their own territories. However, with the introduction of non-native trout, this balance was disrupted. These fish voraciously feed on frog eggs, tadpoles, and even young adults. They also compete with the frogs for food resources. While fish stocking in Yosemite ceased in 1991, there are still lingering populations of non-native trout, causing issues for our beloved yellow-legged frogs.

Chytrid fungus and Non-Native Fish

With the tragic disappearance of the Frog from many Yosemite and Sierra lakes, the discovery of a nasty Fungus called Chytrid fungus was discovered as a primary culprit in the mass elimination of frog cultures. Research suggests that the Fungus is a "novel pathogen," meaning that it has recently spread from outside the geographic area to highly susceptible local species that did not evolve with the pathogen. The Fungus is known to live in an African Frog that might have spread the Fungus through trade markets across the globe and introduced it slowly to amphibian populations who were not adapted to live with this Fungus in their skin. However, recent habitat restoration in Yosemite and Desolation Wilderness Lakes (removal of Non-Native fish Populations) has shown signs of hope that the Yellow Legged Frog with a proper habitat can live with this Fungus and even build a thriving culture if they are not competing unnecessarily for other resources.

Researchers are learning that the Chytrid Fungus has no cure but that Frogs can adapt to live with the Fungus when outside environments are not induced with extra stressors such as Fish Predators.

Keeping Fishing Alive in the Sierra

It is essential to note that although there has been a concerted effort to eliminate non-native fish from select Sierra Lakes. The goal of this

conservation effort is different from the elimination of fishing with the frogs. Although Stocking Backcountry fish has stopped in Yosemite and much of the Sierra since 1990, Non-native fish populations continue to thrive in many lakes and streams. In restoring Habitat, the goal is to find a balance of restored locations where Frogs and the evolving biodiversity it creates in large alpine meadow areas and a mix of High alpine Lakes where fishing is popular and abundant with these new species of fish in the Sierra can co-exist.

Backcountry fishing is among the many great things people cherish in the Sierra. I have enjoyed catching beautiful fish in the Hoover wilderness and watched as fly fishermen fished the waters at a Yosemite off-trail lake, only to watch an eagle swoop down and claim the prize trout of the evening.

I have also enjoyed seeing frogs in the wilderness and falling asleep to the sounds of frogs in the evening near Lassen volcanic national park.

I will be ok with the reintroduction of frogs to some lakes at the cost of losing non-native fishing holes. Will I ever experience a thriving bio-diverse ecosystem that acts and responds as nature intended? That is a time and space my dreams take me to.



SUMMER DREAMIN'



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