

MOON OUTDOORS

**CALIFORNIA
RECREATIONAL
LAKES & RIVERS**

The Complete Guide to Boating, Fishing,
and Water Sports



TOM STIENSTRA

gets rough and hike in the last 0.5 mile. Some four-wheelers bring canoes or rafts and enjoy the spectacular beauty from the water. Fishing for small trout is only fair here, and the water is often too cold for swimming until midsummer. The best fishing spot is at the south end of the lake.

Side trips include a hike to the foot of Gray Butte, that craggy mountainop to the north-east, and visits to nearby Twin Lakes and Lily Pad Lake. This is a great place for four-wheel-drive adventure.

Access: There is no boat ramp.

Facilities, fees: No facilities are available on-site. Primitive, do-it-yourself campsites are available. Supplies can be obtained in Castella. Access is free.

Water sports, restrictions: Swimming, inflatable, canoes, and kayaks are permitted. The lake is too small for most water sports.

Directions: From Redding, drive north on I-5 to the town of Castella (near Castle Crag) and Castle Creek Road. Take that exit, turn west, and drive 11 miles west on Road 25 (Castle Creek Road) to Twin Lakes Road (Forest Road 38N17). Turn left (south) and drive three miles. Bear left where the road forks and proceed one mile to the lake. (The last four miles of road are very rough, suitable only for high-clearance four-wheel-drive vehicles.) Forest Service map recommended.

Contact: Shasta-Trinity National, Mount Shasta Ranger District, 530/926-4511, fax 530/926-5120.

For a map of the area, contact the U.S. Forest Service. For a topographic map, contact the U.S. Geological Survey and ask for Chicken Hawk Hill.

19 TRINITY RIVER

in Shasta-Trinity National Forest

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The Trinity River runs clear and blue green, tumbling around boulders and into deep

holes, all the while framed by a high-lined canyon.

Located in Northern California within Redding, the Trinity starts as a trickle in the Trinity Alps and then flows westward for miles, eventually joining with the Klamath River in its journey to the sea. It is a four-mile-long, rolling pure through granite gorges and abounding with birds and wildlife. Cause flows are controlled by upstream releases, white-water rafting levels are gauged throughout summer.

This is a rafter's river and is especially suitable for beginners for several reasons: Trips here are the lowest priced anywhere in California, setting for rafters is a classic pool-and-drop with most rapids in the Class II range, and summer weather is often perfect. Shuttle rafts are available, and guided oar-boat trips also available at a higher price. Another bonus: Big Flat is the Steelhead Cabins for lodgers as well as nearby campgrounds.

The best trip for newcomers is near Big Flat where the river has long, deep pools interspersed with sudden riffles and drops. Class II and III rapids such as Hell Hole, the Six Zig-Zag, Fishtrail, Pinball, and others attract every five minutes or so, providing bursts of pure thrill and then short rests that allow you to regain your composure. The commercial rafting company at Big Flat provides gear rentals, and a survey I made revealed this was the lowest-cost rafting trip in California.

The Trinity has two additional runs:

- Lewisiston Bridge to Douglas City: This is an easy paddle with Class I and II rapids, nothing difficult. The best put-in spots are at Lewisiston Bridge and Trinity River Lodge RV Resort. Inner tubers looking for a great trip should plop in at Lewisiston Bridge, float a few miles downstream, and take out at Trinity Lodge Resort. The entire 37 miles of river here is easy and manageable for longer trips. The surrounding vegetation is pretty, but the heavy traffic on adjacent Highway 299 is a common reminder that civilization is close at hand.
- Pigeon Point to Cedar Flat: Pigeon Point,

with a Forest Service campground, is located just downstream of where the North Fork Trinity enters the main stem Trinity. This is the most popular put-in spot on the river, although there are a few other campgrounds upstream that also offer river access. The best bet here is to make the 12-mile run, taking out above Burnt Ranch Gorge, a mostly pristine river section that features deep pools and beautiful giant boulders. Burnt Ranch Gorge is rated Class V, clearly for rafters in oar boats who like living on the edge and don't mind a little danger.

As for guided trips, only Trinity River Rafting and Wilderness Adventures run Burnt Ranch Gorge. Meanwhile, many other companies run other stretches of the river. (One of Northern California's greatest swimming areas is here at Fish-Jang Campground, located just upstream from the Hoopa Valley. In mid to late summer, it is the perfect place to laze around in an inner tube or to simply put on a life jacket and slowly float down the river in the warm, benign water.

Access: A primitive boat ramp (small, flat-bottomed boats and rafts only) is available at Trinity River Lodge RV Resort, located south of Lewisiston off Trinity Dam Boulevard. Rafters can put in at the bridge in the town of Lewisiston and take out at one of several points north of Douglas City.

There are no boat ramps on the lower stretch of the river. Rafters can put in near Pigeon Point Campground (access is located just upstream of North Fork); take out five miles down near Big Flat Campground (access is located 0.25 mile downstream from Big Flat Store); those who want a longer run can take out 24 miles downstream at the highway bridge at Cedar Flat. Note: Unless you're an expert, take out at Cedar Flat or upstream. Downstream of Cedar Flat lies Burnt Ranch Gorge, a difficult eight-mile, Class IV-V run.

Facilities, fees: Several campgrounds are located along Highway 299 and off Trinity Dam Boulevard. RV spots are available at the privately owned Trinity River Lodge RV Resort. Drinking water and vault toilets are

available at most campgrounds. Limited boat rentals are available at Lewisiston Lake; you can rent rafts and inflatable kayaks at Bigfoot Rafting Company, located in Willow Creek and also at Big Flat on Highway 299. A fee is charged for camping. Access is free. Rafting permits are not required. Supplies can be obtained at Trinity Fly Shop (530/623-6757, www.trinityflyshop.com).

Water sports, restrictions: Rafts, kayaks, and drift boats are permitted. Both stretches of the river offer excellent swimming holes; two of the best are at Pigeon Point Campground on Highway 299 and at the bridge in the town of Helena.

Directions: To upper Trinity River: From Redding, go west on Highway 299, drive over Buckhorn Summit, and continue for five miles to Trinity Dam Boulevard. Turn right on Trinity Dam Boulevard and drive four miles to Lewisiston. Continue on Trinity Dam Boulevard to Rush Creek Road. Turn left on Rush Creek Road and drive 2.3 miles to Trinity River Lodge RV Resort on the left.

To Steiner Flat: From Redding, go west on Highway 299 and continue over the bridge at the Trinity River near Douglas City to Steiner Flat Road. Turn left on Steiner Flat Road and drive 0.5 mile to Douglas City campground on the left. To reach Steiner Flat, continue two more miles and look for the campground on the left and nearby river access.

To Pigeon Point: From Redding, head west on Highway 299 and drive to Weaverville. Continue west on Highway 299 to Helena and continue 0.5 mile to the campground on the left (south side of the road and nearby river access).

Contact: Shasta-Trinity National Forest, Big Bar Ranger District, 530/623-6106; Trinity Fly Shop, Lewisiston, 530/623-6757; Angling Adventures, 530/623-5014; Trinity River Lodge RV Resort, Lewisiston, 530/778-3791; Steelhead Cabins, 530/623-6325.

Fishing guides: Paul Caranese, Carman's Trinity Guide Service, P.O. Box 425, Douglas City, CA 96024, 530/623-2328, pcaranese@dhscott.com. Other guides:

Dennis Palla, 530/623-5014; Jorgen Moholt, 530/623-2145; Herb Burton, Trinity Fly Shop, 530/623-6757; Jack Trout, 530/926-5450; Liam Gogan, Trinity River Outfitters, 530/623-6376.

Guided rafting trips: Wilderness Adventures, 530/623-3665 or 800/418-9287, www.wildrivertrips.com; Bigfoot Rafting Company, 530/629-2263 or 800/722-2223, www.bigfootrafting.com; Klamath River Outfitters, 530/469-3349 or 800/748-3735, www.klamathriveroutfitters.com; Living Waters Recreation, 530/926-5446 or 800/994-7238, www.livingwatersrec.com; Marble Mountain Ranch, 530/469-3322 or 800/552-6284, www.marblemountainranch.com; Osprey Outdoors Kayak School, 530/926-6310, www.ospreykayak.com; Redwoods and Rivers, 800/429-0090, www.redwoods-rivers.com; River Dancers, 530/926-3517 or 800/926-5002, www.riverdancers.com; Rubicon Whitewater Adventures, 707/887-2452, www.rubiconadventures.com; Tributary Whitewater Tours, 530/346-6812 or 800/672-3846, www.whitewatertrous.com; Trinity River Rafting, 530/623-3033 or 800/307-4837, www.trinityriverrafting.com; Turtle River Rafting, 530/926-3223 or 800/726-3223, www.turtleriver.com; Whitewater Voyages, 800/400-7238, www.whitewatervoyages.com; Trinity Adventure Park, 800/839-7275, www.trinityadventures.com.



20 RUTH LAKE

Rating: 7

near Mad River in Six Rivers National Forest

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California's northwest corner is known for its great rivers—the Smith, Klamath, Trinity, Mad, Matrole, Eel, and Van Duzen to name just a few—but the entire region has scarcely any lakes. Ruth Lake, in fact, is the only major lake that offers significant recreational opportunities within a decent driving distance of Eureka.

Even then it requires a long drive on twisty Highway 36. But in the summer, when the Humboldt coastline is fogged in, the hot climate here makes Ruth an attractive destination. The lake, really a reservoir that covers 1,200 acres, is located at an elevation of 2,600 feet on the western edge of Trinity County, remote by almost anyone's standards.

In the summer, the warm water makes this an ideal place for families to spend some time swimming. Most water sports are permitted on the lake, including waterskiing and riding personal watercraft, but houseboats are not allowed (pontoon boats are okay). Fishing is decent for rainbow trout in the spring and for bass in the summer.

Access: Three boat ramps are available at Ruth Lake.

Facilities, fees: Ruth Lake Marina has full marina services and rents out fishing boats, ski boats, and pontoon boats. Picnic areas are also provided. Several campgrounds with drinking water and vault toilets are nearby. Littlefield Ranch has cabins for rent. Supplies can be obtained in Mad River. Access is free.

Water sports, restrictions: Power boats, waterskiing, wakeboarding, riding personal watercraft, sailing, and windsurfing are permitted. Swimming beaches are available at Sheriff's Cove Day-Use Area, Ruth Recreation Area, Old Ruth Day-Use Area, and at a small gravel bar adjacent to Ruth Lake Marina.

Directions: From Eureka, drive south on U.S. 101 to Alton and the junction with Highway 36. Turn east on Highway 36 and drive about 50 miles to the town of Mad River. Turn right at the sign for Ruth Lake/Lower Mad River Road and drive 12 miles to the lake.

Contact: Six Rivers National Forest, Mad River Ranger District, 707/574-6233, fax 707/574-6273; Ruth Lake Marina, 707/574-6194; Six Rivers Lodge, 707/574-6220; Journey's End, 707/574-6441.



21 TRINITY LAKE

near Weaverville in Shasta-Trinity National Forest

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BEST

Rating: 8

Trinity is a big lake with full-service marinas. You can rent a houseboat, stay in a cabin at Cedar Stock Resort, or head out and pitch a tent at a boat-in camp (there are several good camps, including one at Captain's Point on the west shore of the Trinity River Arm). The lake boasts a wide variety of fishing, including smallmouth bass and rainbow trout. Even when the water level is down, there is still plenty of lake to explore and fish.

Nestled at the eastern foot of the Trinity Alps, the lake is set at an elevation of 2,300 feet and covers 17,000 acres. This is big enough to provide plenty of room for all types of water sports, including waterskiing, personal watercraft, windsurfing, and fishing; yet it's sufficiently remote that large numbers of boaters rarely descend on the place. Most of the people who visit the area end up spending some time in Trinity Center, a big-time family resort destination.

The lake's surface temperature fluctuates gradually throughout the year, dipping to freezing cold in winter and only becoming tolerable for swimming by July. By August, however, the lake is practically a giant bathtub, great for swimming, with the best access at the day-use areas and campgrounds operated by the forest Service.

If only Trinity Lake were a real lake and not a reservoir, it would be a virtual mountain paradise for fishing, boating, and camping. But it is a reservoir, and as such is subject to severe drawdowns because water is diverted and sent to the Sacramento River for farming. That means less water is around for Trinity Lake, particularly by late summer.

For a major lake with significant facilities, marinas, and lodging, it is somewhat remote. For many, that is perfect. It has all the qualities

of Shasta Lake, Northern California's number one recreation lake, yet without the crowds on the water.

Access: Eight boat ramps are located on Trinity Lake.

Facilities, fees: Paved boat ramps, boat docks, rentals for houseboats, fishing boats, ski boats, personal watercraft, and pontoon boats are available at full-service marinas. Lodging, campgrounds with restrooms, drinking water, showers, flush toilets and vault toilets, gas, and stores are available nearby. Resorts include: Trinity Center Marina, Pinewood Cove Resort, and Trinity Lake Resort and Marina (see *Contact* this listing). Many campgrounds are available, including boat-in sites. There are fees for boat launching and lodging. Some resorts charge day-use fees or require rentals.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, waterskiing, wakeboarding, personal watercraft, sailing, windsurfing, and swimming are permitted. A 5-mpg speed limit is enforced near the marinas and in coves. There are several swimming spots here: the Clark Springs and Stoney Creek day-use areas have large beaches.

Directions: From I-5 at Redding, take Highway 299 west and drive 52 miles to Weaverville and Highway 3. Turn north on Highway 3 and drive 14 miles to the lake. This road will take you directly to a boat ramp; boat ramps are also available farther north, off Highway 3 and Trinity Dam Boulevard.

To Tannery Gulch: From I-5 at Redding, take Highway 299 west and drive to Weaverville at Highway 3. Turn north on Highway 3 and drive 13.5 miles to County Road 172. Turn right on County Road 172 and drive 1.5 miles to the campground and nearby boat ramp.

To Stuarts Fork Boat Ramp: From I-5 at Redding, take Highway 299 west and drive to Weaverville at Highway 3. Turn north on Highway 3 and drive seven miles to the Stuarts Fork arm of Trinity Lake.

To Bowerman Boat Ramp: From I-5 at Redding, take Highway 299 west and drive

to Weaverville at Highway 3. Turn north on Highway 3 and drive to Covington Mill (six miles south of Trinity Center). Turn right (south) on Guy Covington Road and drive two miles to the boat-ramp entrance.

To Pinewood Resort: From I-5 at Redding, take Highway 299 west and drive to Weaverville at Highway 3. Turn north on Highway 3 and drive 14 miles to the resort entrance on the right.

To Trinity Lake KOA: From Redding, take Highway 299 west and drive to Weaverville at Highway 3. Turn north on Highway 3 and drive to Trinity Lake and continue to Trinity Center. At Trinity Center, continue 0.5 mile north on Highway 3 to the resort (on the right).

Contact: Shasta-Trinity National Forest, Weaverville Ranger Station, 530/623-2121, www.fs.fed.us/r5/Shasta_Cascade_Wonderland_Association, 530/365-7500 or 800/474-2782, www.shastacasade.org; Estrellita Marina, 800/747-2215, www.estrellitamarina.com.
Resorts: Trinity Lake Resorts, 530/286-2225 or 800/255-5561, www.trinitylakesort.com; Trinity Lake KOA, 530/266-3337 or 800/715-3337, www.wynntonresort.com; Pinewood Cove Resort, 800/988-5253 (reservations) or 530/286-2201, www.pinewoodcove.com; Trinity Alps Marina, 800/824-0083, www.trinityalpsmarina.com.



22 LEWISTON LAKE

near Lewiston in Shasta-Trinity National Forest
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This is one of the prettiest reservoirs in California, always full to the brim and ringed by conifers, with the Trinity Alps to the north-west providing a beautiful backdrop. Features include a campground in a gorgeous lakeside setting (Mary Smith), a small, friendly resort with cabin rentals (Lakeview Terrace), and good trout fishing.

Long and narrow, Lewiston is set at 1,900

feet in elevation, spanning a length of nine miles and 750 acres, with 15 miles of shoreline. People often overlook this lake in favor of its big brother, nearby Trinity Lake, which covers 17,000 acres. When viewed from the air, it is easy to see how Lewiston Lake is actually the afterbay for Trinity, with the flow from Trinity Dam forming the headwaters of Lewiston. When those flows are running through the powerhouse, the trout fishing is outstanding anywhere from Lakeview Terrace on upstream, but it is usually best just below Trinity Dam.

For owners of small boats, the best thing about Lewiston Lake is the strictly enforced speed limit, 10 mph, which keeps the lake quiet and calm. These are ideal conditions for canoes and small aluminum boats because all the powerboaters go to Trinity Lake. Also, the water here is quite cold, great for trout fishing but poor for swimming.

So despite Lewiston's beauty, it gets relatively light use. Water-skiers, personal watercraft, and powerboaters avoid Lewiston, but people looking for a quiet day on a pretty lake treasure it.

Access: A paved ramp is located at Pine Cove Marina. A primitive launch is provided at Lakeview Terrace Resort for resort guests only.

Facilities, fees: Fishing boats and houseboats can be rented at Lakeview Terrace. Pine Cove Marina offers full marina services and rents our fishing boats. Campgrounds with drinking water and vault toilets are available. Supplies can be obtained in Lewiston. Fees are charged for camping, day use, and boat launching.

Water sports, restrictions: Fishing boats, rowboats, canoes, kayaks, inflatables, sailing, and windsurfing are permitted. A 10-mph speed limit is strictly enforced. Water skiing, wakeboarding, and personal watercraft are not permitted. The water is generally too cold for swimming and other water/body contact sports.

Directions: To Lakeview Terrace: From Redding, take Highway 299 west and drive to

the known Summit, continuing for five miles to Trinity Dam Boulevard. Turn right on Trinity Dam Boulevard and drive 10 miles (4 miles past Lewiston) to the resort on the left side of the road. To reach Pine Cove Marina, continue 0.5 mile on Trinity Dam Boulevard.

Contact: Shasta-Trinity National Forest, Weaverville Ranger Station, 530/623-2121; Shasta Cascade Wonderland Association, 530/365-7500 or 800/474-2782, www.shastacasade.org; Pine Cove RV Park & Marina, 530/778-3770, www.pine-cove-marina.com; Lakeview Terrace Resort, 530/778-4403, www.lakeviewterraceresort.com; Trinity Fly Shop, 530/623-6757.



23 CLEAR CREEK

west of Redding
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"Passes: Want to hear a secret? Just don't tell anybody about it."

That is how people talk about Clear Creek. You see, everybody in this area goes to nearby Whiskeytown Lake. They don't know that Clear Creek, along with the little campground here, exists. But it does.

Clear Creek is pretty, with beautiful riparian habitat bordering the water, yet it's far enough off the beaten path that it gets little use. So if you visit Whiskeytown Lake during the peak early summer season and are seeking a quiet alternative, little Clear Creek just might suit your needs.

Several excellent swimming holes, along with a couple of nice sandy bars, are available right off the access road. They are favorite retreats for a few locals. Fishing for small trout here is fair.

Whiskeytown Lake (see the *Shasta Lake* listing) is a National Recreation Area that offers full facilities, most water sports, hiking, biking, and camping. Despite all these

attractions, Clear Creek has a special charm that is just as compelling.

Access: There is no boat ramp.

Facilities, fees: A small primitive campground is provided north of French Gulch. Vault toilets are available. No drinking water. Garbage must be packed out. Other campsites are located at Whiskeytown Lake. Supplies can be obtained in Redding. Access is free.
Water sports, restrictions: Several good swimming holes are located off Trinity Mountain Road; look for the access roads.

Directions: From Redding, take Highway 299 west and drive 17 miles to Trinity Lake Road (just west of Whiskeytown Lake). Turn north on Trinity Lake Road and continue past the town of French Gulch for about 12 miles to the Trinity Mountain Ranger Station. Turn right on County Road 106/East Side Road (gravel) and drive north for about 11 miles to the campground access road (dirt). Turn right on the access road and drive two miles to the campground. Access is available off short roads that junction with Trinity Mountain Road, which parallels the creek.

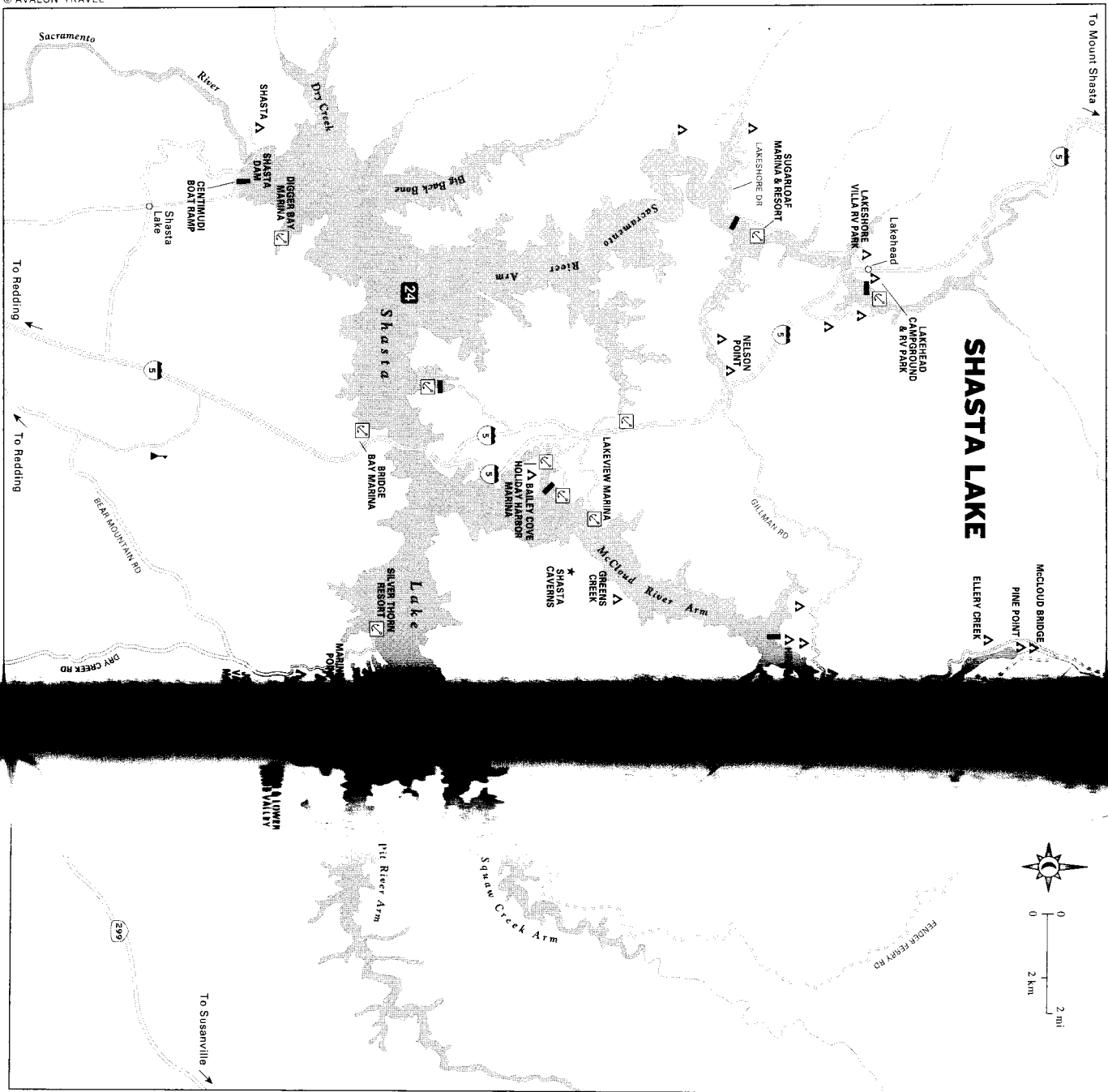
Contact: Shasta-Trinity National Forest, Weaverville Ranger District, 530/623-2121, fax 530/623-6010, www.fs.fed.us/r5.



24 SHASTA LAKE

near Redding in Shasta-Trinity National Forest
Map 2.4, page 48 **BEST**

This is the boating capital of the west. This giant lake has 370 miles of shoreline, 400 houseboat rentals, 11 marinas, 15 boat ramps, 13 campgrounds, lakeshore lodging, and 22 species of sport fish. No matter what the season, Shasta is so big that there is plenty of room for everybody—water-skiers, wakeboarders, personal watercraft riders, houseboaters, anglers, swimmers, windsurfers. You name it, Shasta can accommodate them all. Shasta is really five bodies of water in one,



with each lake arm forming a separate lake: Sacramento Arm, McCloud Arm, Pit Arm, Squaw Creek Arm, and the central lake body (Sacramento) near the dam. Add in the thousands of little coves and secret inlets, and you have the equivalent of a mansion that is so big you could never fully explore it.

It is easy to get accustomed to the large number of boaters at Shasta Lake. In the summer there are hundreds of houseboats here, plus quite a few water-skiers and wakeboarders. But this is one place where there is plenty of room for all comers. With all the houseboats on the water, it can seem like a giant party, with everybody happy, and you can bet on lots of sun, skin, lotion, and potent liquids. If you want to escape the festivities, just head into one of the quieter coves.

Shasta Lake is located just north of Redding, in the foothill country at an elevation of 1,000 feet. Covering 29,500 surface acres, this is the biggest reservoir in California. In a houseboat it takes about five or six days to tour the whole thing. Most people, however, develop an affinity for one section of the lake and return to it year after year, just like going to a second home.

Houseboating has become so popular that virtually every houseboat available for rent on the lake is booked the entire summer, Memorial Day through Labor Day. That makes planning and reserving far in advance a necessity. After a short instructional and safety lesson on how to operate the boat, you are set free to roam and play on your own.

Because surface water temperatures at Shasta range from the 70s to the low 80s in the summer, the lake can feel like a giant bathtub, ideal for waterskiing and personal watercraft. Swimming is only fair, primarily because most of the shoreline areas have steep drop-offs, as do most reservoirs. Two of the better spots to jump in for a swim are at Jones Valley and Gregory Creek, where the lake bottom contours are more gradually sloped. No matter where you take the plunge, children should always be supervised in the water.

Campgrounds never completely fill up, and boaters can take advantage of the additional boat-in sites, the best of which is at Ski Island. One problem at the drive-in campgrounds is the distance between the campsites and the water. Because the big reservoir is drawn down in late summer as water is shipped to points south, campgrounds located on the upper arms of the lake can end up being a steep hike from the water, with a wheezer of a climb up on the way back.

A few side notes: In the spring, bass fishers can have 30-fish (and better) days using plastic worms along the shoreline of the Squaw Creek Arm, Sacramento Arm, and McCloud Arm. Trolling for trout and salmon is often excellent at the Dry Creek Arm, and fishing for spotted bass with live minnows or Senko worms is sensational from late March through early June. The best hiking is on the Centinudi Trail near Jones Valley, and the Shasta Caverns offers a great tour of the limestone caves on the McCloud Arm. The lake has several full-time sheriff's patrol boats. Competitions for wakeboarding, waterskiing, and kneeboarding are held here through late spring and summer. In recent years, wakeboarding, in particular, has become extremely popular. Waterskiing and wakeboarding lessons are available.

When you put it all together, no place provides more boating recreation opportunities, diversity, and quality than Shasta Lake.

Access: There are many boat ramps:

- Antlers Resort: A full-service marina, convenience store, and picnic area are available. Houseboats, pontoon boats, aluminum fishing boats, personal watercraft, ski boats, and canoes can be rented. For more information call 530/238-2553 or 800/238-3924, or visit www.shastalakevacations.com. A campground and paved boat ramp are nearby at Antlers RV Park and Campground, 530/238-2322 or 800/642-6849.

- Bridge Bay Resort & Marina: A paved ramp, full-service marina, motel, convenience store, restaurant, and picnic area are available. Houseboats, ski boats, pontoon boats,

- and aluminum fishing boats are for rent. For more information call 530/275-3021 or 800/752-9669.

- Digger Bay Marina: There is a paved ramp, a full-service marina, gas, and a store. Houseboats, ski boats, and aluminum fishing boats can be rented. For more information call 530/275-3072 or 800/752-9669.

- Holiday Harbor: A two-lane, paved ramp, full-service marina, RV park, cafe, convenience store, gas, picnic area, and playground are available. Houseboats, ski boats, pontoon boats, personal watercraft, aluminum fishing boats, and canoes can be rented. For more information call 530/238-2383 or 800/776-2628.

- Jones Valley Resort: A boat ramp, full-service marina, and convenience store are available. Houseboats, fishing boats, ski boats, pontoon boats, personal watercraft, canoes, and kayaks can be rented. For more information call 530/275-7950 or 877/468-7326.

- Lakeview Marina Resort: A full-service marina and convenience store are available. Houseboats, ski boats, personal watercraft, pontoon boats, fishing boats, and kayaks can be rented. Use of the paved boat ramp depends on parking space availability. For more information call 530/238-2442 or 877/474-2782.

- Packers Bay: A boat ramp, marina, dock, fuel, and convenience store are available. Houseboats can be rented. For more information call 530/275-5570 or 800/331-3137.

- Shasta Marina: A marina, gas, and convenience store are available. Houseboats can be rented. For more information call 530/238-2284 or 800/959-3359.

- Silverthorn Resort: A paved ramp, full-service marina, cabins, mooring, gas, pizza parlor (summer only), and a store are available. Houseboats, pontoon boats, ski boats, aluminum fishing boats, kayaks, and personal watercraft can be rented. For more information call 530/275-1571 or 800/332-3044.

- Sugarloaf Marina: A two-lane, paved ramp, full-service marina, and convenience store are available. Houseboats, ski boats, pontoon

- boats, personal watercraft, aluminum fishing boats, canoes and kayaks can be rented. For more information call 530/238-2711 or 800/233-7950. There is a fee for parking or punting at boat ramps.

- **Facilities, fees:** Lodging, cabins, campgrounds, restrooms with showers and flush toilets, drinking water, and convenience stores are available. Many marinas have fishing boats, ski boats, personal watercraft and priorities for rent. Fees are charged for boat punting, day use, and camping.

- **Directions:** Fishing access points are available all around the shore and can be reached by taking one of several exits off I-5 north of Redding. A popular spot is Fisherman's Point, at Shasta Dam. From Redding, drive four miles north on I-5. Take the Shasta Dam Boulevard exit and drive to Lake Boulevard. Turn right (well signed) and drive to the boat ramp at the dam. Directions to other marinas and access points follow.

- To Antlers: From Redding, drive north on I-5 for 24 miles to the Lakeshore-Antlers Road exit, in Lakehead. Take that exit, turn right at the stop sign, and drive a short distance to Antlers Road. At Antlers Road, turn right and drive one mile south to the campground and nearby boat ramp.

- To Sugarloaf: From Redding, drive north on I-5 for 24 miles to the Antlers-Lakeshore Drive exit. Take that exit and turn left on Lakeshore Drive. Drive three miles (look for the loaf on Inn sign) and turn left and drive to the entrance for Sugarloaf. Turn left and drive to the marina and boat ramp.

- To Hirz Bay: From Redding, drive north on I-5 for about 20 miles to the Salt Creek/Gilman exit. Turn right on Gilman Road/County Road 71100P and drive northeast for 10 miles to the campground/boat launch access road. Turn right and drive 0.5 mile to the boat ramp.

- To Lakeshore Marina: From Redding, drive north on I-5 for 24 miles to Lakehead and the exit for Lakeshore Drive/Antlers Road. Take that exit, turn left at the stop sign and drive under the freeway to Lakeshore Drive. Turn

- left and drive three miles to the entrance on the left.

- To Bailey Cove: From Redding, drive north on I-5 over the Pit River Bridge at Shasta Lake to O'Brien Road/Shasta Caverns Road exit. Turn east (right) on Shasta Caverns Road and drive 0.25 mile to a signed turnout for Bailey Cove. Turn right and drive one mile to Bailey Cove Boat Ramp.

- To Holiday Harbor: From Redding, drive north on I-5 for 18 miles to the O'Brien/Shasta Caverns Road exit. Turn right (east) at Shasta Caverns Road and drive about one mile to the marina entrance on the right.

- To Lakeview Marina Resort: From Redding, drive north on I-5 for 18 miles to the O'Brien/Shasta Caverns Road exit. Turn right (east) at Shasta Caverns Road and drive to the marina road entrance (just past the mailboxes) on the left. Turn left and drive to the marina and boat ramp.

- To Packers Bay: From Redding, drive north on I-5 for 18 miles to the O'Brien/Shasta Caverns Road exit. Take that exit to the stop sign, turn left, drive a short distance, and then turn left and drive south on I-5 a short distance to the exit for Packer's Bay. Take that exit and drive two miles to the marina and boat ramp.

- To Shasta Marina: From Redding, drive north on I-5 for 18 miles to the O'Brien/Shasta Caverns Road exit. Take that exit to the stop sign. Turn west on O'Brien Inlet Road and drive one mile to the entrance to the marina and boat ramp.

- To Jones Valley & Silverthorn: From Redding, turn east on Highway 299 and drive 7.5 miles (just past the town of Bella Vista) to Dry Creek Road. Turn left on Dry Creek Road and drive nine miles to a Y in the road. For Jones Valley Resort and public ramp, bear right at the Y. For Silverthorn Resort, bear left at the Y.

- To Bridge Bay: From Redding, take I-5 north for eight miles to the Bridge Bay exit. Take that exit and continue one mile to the office. Pay for boat launching; then drive south 100 yards to the boat ramp.

- To Centinudi/Shasta Dam: From I-5 in

Redding, drive north for three miles to the exit for the town of Shasta Lake City and Shasta Dam Boulevard. Take that exit, bear west on Shasta Dam Boulevard, and drive three miles to Lake Boulevard. Turn right on Lake Boulevard and drive two miles to a fork. Turn right and drive 0.5 mile to the boat launch.

• **To Digger Bay:** From I-5 in Redding, drive north for three miles to the exit for the town of Shasta Lake City and Shasta Dam Boulevard. Take that exit and bear west on Shasta Dam Boulevard, then drive about three miles to Shasta Park Drive. Turn right on Shasta Park Drive (which becomes Digger Bay Road) and drive about four miles to the marina and boat ramp.

Contact: Shasta Lake Visitor Information Center, 530/275-1589, www.fs.fed.us/r5/Shasta_Cascade_Wonderland_Association, 530/365-7500 or 800/474-2782, www.shastacascade.com; Guide Gary Miralles, Shasta Tackle & Sportfishing, 530/275-2278; Phil's Propeller, 530/275-4939; Basshole, 530/238-2170; Shasta Lake, www.shastalake.com.

Resorts: Digger Bay Marina, 530/275-3072; Bridge Bay Resort, 800/752-9669; Anders Resort, 530/238-2553 or 530/238-2301; Holiday Harbor, 530/238-2383; Silverthorn Resort, 530/275-1571 or 800/332-3044.

25 WHISKEYTOWN LAKE



Rating: 8

near Redding in Shasta-Trinity National Forest

Map 2.4, page 48

Whiskeytown is easy to reach, is sizable enough that you can spend a lot of time exploring, and has decent camping accommodations. Year-round this is a good place for boating, but the highlights here are excellent sailing in the springs, great hiking and biking, and typically high water levels. Is there any downside? Well, the wind can really kick up during the spring, but, hey, that is why this is the hands-down favorite in the area for windsurfers and sailboaters.

The good-sized lake covers 3,220 acres with 36 miles of shoreline and is just a short drive west of Redding at an elevation of 1,200 feet. In the summer the water is clear and warm and with a few large sandy beaches, it is ideal for youngsters to kick around in. The popular picnic areas at Oak Bottom and Brandy Creek are exceptional, and the operators of both marinas are extremely helpful and friendly. Fishing is good for kokanee salmon and rainbow trout, although to be successful you'll need to be skilled in trolling techniques. But Whiskeytown really shines in the spring when winds typically reach 10–15 knots, making perfect for sailing and windsurfing.

The federal ban on personal watercraft and national parks took effect at Whiskeytown in 2003.

Just beyond the western end of the lake at Mill Creek, a pretty hiking trail is routed along the stream for several miles. Covered by a canopy of oak woodlands, Mill Creek runs gin-clear in the summer and strong in the spring, with lots of miniature waterfalls, pools, and drops. The trail parallels the pretty ribbon of water, crossing and recrossing the creek many times. The only sounds to accompany your thoughts are the twittering of birds, rushing water, and perhaps a light breeze rustling the leaves, always gorgeous in the fall.

Upon arrival, your first stop should be the visitor center, an outstanding facility located just off the highway. Free brochures and flyers are available, as are a staff of professionals who can answer any recreation questions.

Access: There are three boat ramps:

- Brandy Creek Marina: From Redding, drive west on Highway 299 for eight miles to the parking center. Turn left at the visitors center (Kennedy Memorial Drive) and drive five miles to the campground entrance road on the right. Turn right and drive a short distance to the camp. A paved launch ramp, swimming beach, snack bar, and convenience store are available.
- Oak Bottom Marina: From Redding, drive west on Highway 299 for 15 miles (past the

visitor center) to the campground entrance on the left. Turn left and drive a short distance to the campground. A paved launch ramp, full service marina, convenience store, and a snack bar are available. Pontoon boats, sailboats, sailboards, fishing boats, canoes, and small boats can be rented.

Whiskey Creek: From Redding, drive west on Highway 299 for eight miles to the visitors center. Turn left at the visitors center (Kennedy Memorial Drive) and drive six miles to the campground on the right side of the road. A paved launch ramp is available. A convenience store is nearby.

Facilities, fees: There are three campgrounds with drinking water and vault toilets. Picnic areas are available. Snacks are sold at Brandy Creek and Oak Bottom; full supplies can be obtained in Redding. Access and boat launching are free. Fees are charged for day use, boat launching, and camping. Annual passes available.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, water skiing, wakeboarding, sailing, windsurfing, and swimming are allowed. No personal watercraft. Several sandy swimming beaches are located around the lake for swimming. The best are at the day-use areas at Brandy Creek and Oak Bottom.

Directions: See directions under *Access* points in this listing.

Contact: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, 530/242-3400 or 530/246-1275; Shasta Cascade Wonderland Association, 530/365-7500 or 800/474-2782, www.shastacascade.org; Oak Bottom Marina, 410/519-2269.

26 KESWICK LAKE



Rating: 4

near Redding in Shasta-Trinity National Forest

Map 2.4, page 48

This long, narrow reservoir is situated directly below giant Shasta Lake, and with Shasta

getting such heavy use, you might think Keswick would make a great, less-crowded alternative.

Well, there are indeed fewer people here. In fact, the lake is used by practically no one except for a few anglers. But great! Sorry.

The water entering 630-acre Keswick comes from the bottom of Shasta Dam, making this lake extremely cold, even in summer. The result is limited opportunities for water sports, including water skiing and swimming. It is doubly poor for swimming, because not only is the water painfully chilly, but the shoreline is rough and blocky with not a beach in sight.

Almost everybody in search of a good lake in the Redding area heads northbound on I-5 to Shasta or west on Highway 299 to Whiskeytown, giving nary a thought to Keswick Lake. Everybody, that is, except a handful of anglers who have learned that there is a chance that giant rainbow trout will bite when the powerhouse is running at the head of the lake. Alas, when the powerhouse is down, fishing opportunities go kaput as well. When that happens you can head up here and never encounter another soul, even in summer.

Access: A paved boat ramp is located off Iron Mountain Road on the east side of the lake. **Facilities, fees:** Vault toilets are available at a day-use area. No drinking water. Access is free.

Water sports, restrictions: Waterskiing, wakeboarding, sailing, windsurfing, and personal watercraft are permitted, but rarely seen. Swimming is allowed, but there are no beaches and the water is quite cold even in summer.

Directions: From I-5 at Redding, take the Highway 299 West exit. Drive four miles west to Iron Mountain Road. Turn right (north) on Iron Mountain Road and drive four miles to the lake. Follow the signs to the boat ramp.

Contact: U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, Northern California Area, 530/275-1554.

27 LOWER SACRAMENTO RIVER



Rating: 7

near Redding

Map 2.4, page 48

Nothing captivates in the spring and early summer quite like a river adventure through woods and water: paddling by day in a canoe (or kayak), and then camping along the river by night. I've done several multi-day trips like this in Northern California on the lower Klamath, Eel, and Sacramento Rivers, and elsewhere. The best all-around easy trip with a few thrills in the mix is the Sac, paddling from Redding to Woodson Bridge State Recreation Area near Corning.

This trip runs about 70 miles, best done in four days and three nights, includes a Class II gorge, several Class I runs, with excellent camping on sand bars. The trip can also be shortened by putting in or taking out at other access points along the way. The most notable of these are at Balls Ferry in Anderson (to avoid the rapids) and at the Red Bluff Diversion Dam. The Diversion Dam starts operations on May 15; before that you can paddle right on through, after that, you must portage. If you don't have a canoe, rentals are available in San Francisco, Oakland, and Sacramento.

The best put-in is at the Posse Grounds in Redding, which is adjacent to the Redding Convention Center. This provides the most scenic trip. From here, the first 20 miles down to Balls Ferry is pretty and easy, with no surprises. The river runs emerald green and is bordered by cottonwoods and alders, a gorgeous upland riparian zone. Wildlife is abundant, especially blue herons and wood ducks, and paddlers will also see turtles sunning on logs or rocks, with deer and wild turkey common along the shore.

This is also the best stretch of river for trout fishing. The best prospects are anchoring just above riffles and slicks, and then running a nightcrawler, Hot Shor, or Glo Bug down-

stream on the edges of these spots, near bottom. Another great fishing spot is at Tehama Riffle for shad, best from late May through mid-June.

But you know what happens? At the starting point, most are eager to paddle, and all become concerned about covering enough water, so many rush through the early stages of the trip, where the fishing is best and will life sightings are highest.

About 10 miles past Balls Ferry, the trip's biggest challenge awaits: China Rapids, rated Class II. This is a chute in a short, rocky gorge where your canoe will rock like a teeter-totter as you are propelled forward. Paddlers add to their safety margin by rocking the paddles back and forth in the current. The will slow the boat down, making it far easier to pick your way through the rough stuff. If you paddle hard, on the other hand (as if in a rat), you can be propelled out of control, you broach, you'll flip.

There are a few other Class I rapids that can be dealt with by taking "an inside line," as it is called, away from the white water.

The evening camping is sensational, with choice of many large sandbars set on the inside of prezel turns on the river. With a canoe, you can bring plenty of supplies, so each evening is a celebration of the day, not a recovery.

River flows are based on releases from Keswick Dam. By late May, releases are typically 12,500–15,000 CFS, which makes for a faster ride—but a required portage around the Red Bluff Diversion Dam. To avoid the portage, some will shorten the trip by using Red Bluff as either the ending point or starting point.

This stretch of the Sacramento is also very popular for fishing, with plenty of trout from spring through early summer, and salmon from mid-August through October. Powerboaters should be aware of fluctuating water levels and shallow spots, which is why most boaters remove their propellers and switch to jet drives, despite the reduction in speed. Potentially dangerous obstacles include downed

floating debris, and, rarely, rebar from broken pilings from failed riprap projects. Some people try inner tubing on the river, but conditions are extremely poor, primarily because the water is so cold that it numbs the hands. If these things don't bother you, be aware that, according to the law, inner tubes must wear life jackets. County sheriffs patrol the river and will issue citations.

If there are four public boat ramps: one (rounds put-in: Take I-5 to Redding and the exit for Highway 299 West/Central Redding. Take that exit and drive one mile north of the Sacramento River) to Auditorium (turn right and drive 0.5 mile (Convention Center on your right) to the parking lot about across.

the Redding Park: Take I-5 to Redding and the exit for Lake Boulevard exit. Take that exit and drive to North Market Street and turn left (left) on North Market Street and drive 0.5 mile to Quartz Hill Road. Turn west (right) on Quartz Hill Road and continue to the round entrance on the left into the park and look for signs for the boat ramp.

Binnyview: Take I-5 to south Redding and the exit for Bonnyview-Bechelli Lane/Churn Creek. Take that exit to Bonnyview and turn west and drive (across the river) to the first exit after the bridge. Turn left to the parking area and boat ramp.

Woodson Bridge take-out: Take I-5 to Corning and the exit for South Ave. Take that exit and drive six miles to the entrance on the right (immediately after crossing the river).

Facilities, fees: Several campgrounds and RV parks are nearby. Access to the river and the public ramps is free.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, driftboats, canoes, kayaks, and rafts are permitted. The river is too cold for swimming and other water/body contact sports. Those floating in rafts or inner tubes must be wearing life jackets or face arrest by the Shasta County Sheriff Boat Patrol.

Directions: Take I-5 to Shasta County. Access is available from exits for Riverside, Balls Ferry/Anderson, Jellys Ferry, and elsewhere. In Redding, access is also available at the Posse Grounds near the Redding Civic Auditorium.

Contact: U.S. Forest Service, Lake Red Bluff Recreation Area, 530/527-2813; Woodson Bridge State Recreation Area, 530/839-2112; Shasta Cascade Wonderland Association, 530/365-7500 or 800/474-2782, www.shastascascade.org; Woodson Bridge State Recreation Area, 530/839-2112. River flows, <http://dec.water.ca.gov>.

Canoe & kayak rentals: California Canoe & Kayak, 510/893-7833 (Oakland) and 916/353-5171 (Sacramento), www.callkayak.com.

Canoe instruction: Canoe West, 530/242-6765, www.snowcrest.net/canoewest; Shasta Climbing and Paddle Sports, 530/222-4606; Marina RV Park, 530/241-7275; Balls Ferry Resort, 530/365-8708.

Fishing guides: J&J Guide Service, 530/222-6253, www.worldwidefishing.com; Mike Bogue, 530/246-8457; The Fly Shop, 530/222-3555, www.theflyshop.com.

36 east to the junction with Highway 89. Continue east on Highway 89/36 past Lake Almanor to Westwood and County Road A21. In Westwood, turn left on County Road A21 and drive 12.5 miles to Silver Lake Road. Turn left on Silver Lake Road/County Road 110 and drive 8.5 miles north to Silver Lake. Continue past Silver Lake a short distance to Caribou Lake.

Contact: Lassen National Forest, Almanor Ranger District, P.O. Box 767, Chester, CA 96020, 530/258-2141, fax 530/258-5194, www.fs.fed.us/r5.

For a map of Lassen National Forest, contact the U.S. Forest Service. A trail map is available for a fee from the Almanor Ranger District.

26 ECHO LAKE



Rating: 5

near Chester in Lassen National Forest

Map 3.3, page 87

Obscure? Hard to reach? Primitive camping? Trout fishing? Not many people around? That is what most people want on a vacation, and that is exactly what Echo Lake provides. The one drawback is its small size, but that's only a problem on extended trips.

This lake is set at an elevation of about 6,500 feet. A highlight is the small, primitive campground that provides seclusion and a very pretty setting. Almost too small for hand launching boats, the lake is better suited for rafts, tubes, and prams. Swimming conditions are fair once the water warms up by midsummer, but you can expect the bottom to be mushy.

The Caribou Wilderness is located less than a mile to the northwest. With a national forest map to help you find your way, it can be easy to make a short trek into the nearby wilderness and hit a lake loop. Hidden Lakes, Long Lake, Posey Lake, and Beauty Lake are all on the same loop trail.

Access: There is no boat ramp. Car-top boats may be hand launched.

Facilities, fees: A primitive campground, drinking water, and vault toilets are available. Garbage must be packed out. Supplies can be obtained in Chester. Access is free.

Water sports, restrictions: Car-top boats, canoes, kayaks, and inflatables are permitted. Swimming is allowed.

Directions: From Red Bluff, take Highway 36 east to Chester. Continue east on Highway 36 for eight miles to Chester Dump Road. Turn left on Chester Dump Road and drive west a short distance on a connector road, then continue north for 9.5 miles to Echo Lake.

Contact: Lassen National Forest, Almanor Ranger District, 530/258-2141 www.fs.fed.us/r5; Sports Nut, Chester, 530/258-3327.

27 WILLOW LAKE



Rating: 4

near Chester in Lassen National Forest

Map 3.3, page 87

This little egg-shaped lake always comes as a surprise. Although located near some of California's top vacation destinations, it is so far off the ole beaten path that it gets missed by out-of-towners every time.

Willow Lake is located in national forest land just west of Kelly Mountain, only three miles from the southeastern border of Lassen Volcanic National Park at Drakesbad, and 10 miles northwest of giant Lake Almanor. Still, it manages to provide an intimate, quiet atmosphere.

Set at an elevation of approximately 6,500 feet, the lake is tiny, and marshy in some places. It is too small for any boating other than car-top or inflatable craft, and gets very little use. The water is too cold for swimming until midsummer; swimmers who do come when things warm up are treated to a small shoreline clearing (more dirt than sand) where they can sunbathe.

Nearby Drakesbad at Lassen Park provides a great side trip for hikers, with destinations such as Devil's Kitchen and several alpine lakes within an hour's walk.

Access: There is no boat ramp. Car-top boats may be hand launched.

Facilities, fees: Dispersed campsites with vault toilets and drinking water are available. Garbage must be packed out. Supplies can be obtained in Chester. Access and camping are free.

Water sports, restrictions: Car-top boats, canoes, kayaks, and inflatables are permitted. Motors are permitted, but the lake is too small for anything but very small engines or electric motors. Swimming is permitted; a small stretch of shoreline near the campground is available for sunbathing.

Directions: From Red Bluff, take Highway 36 east and drive to Chester (at Lake Almanor) and Feather River Drive. Turn left on Feather River Drive and drive 0.75 mile to County Road 312. Bear left on County Road 312 and drive five miles to the fork with County Road 311 and 412. Bear left on County Road 311 and drive nine miles to Forest Service Road 29N14 (a dirt road). Turn right and drive to Willow Lake.

Contact: Lassen National Forest, Almanor Ranger District, 530/258-2141, www.fs.fed.us/r5; Sports Nut, Chester, 530/258-3327.

28 MILL CREEK (LASSEN NATIONAL FOREST)



Rating: 5

near Mineral in Lassen National Forest

Map 3.3, page 87

Mill Creek is a pretty little trout stream running through national forestland, complete with streamside trail. It is the kind of place where you go for a walk in the summer, maybe stopping at a swimming hole on a hot day or waiting for trout on a cool evening.

With Lassen National Forest surrounding the lake, which is set at 4,500 feet in elevation,

this is a heavily forested, picturesque area. Mill Creek is a popular destination for vacationers staying in the area. The prime time here is from mid-July on through summer, with the snowmelt over, the stream drops and the water warms up.

Highlights here include good hiking and two developed campgrounds. Mill Creek is too small for any rafting or boating. Instead, after parking you hit the trail for access to several swimming holes. Do not think of wandering from the trail; some of the land bordering this stream is privately owned.

Access: No boat ramps are available.

Facilities, fees: Two campgrounds with vault toilets and drinking water are available nearby. Supplies can be obtained in Mineral. Access is free. A fee is charged for camping.

Water sports, restrictions: No boating. Several excellent swimming holes are located along the Mill Creek Trail.

Directions: From Red Bluff, take Highway 36 east for 43 miles to the town of Mineral and the junction with Highway 172. Turn right on Highway 172 and drive six miles to the town of Mill Creek and a Forest Service road (at times, this is signed Mill Creek/Hole in the Ground but the sign is often stolen or missing). Turn right and drive three miles to a parking area and trailhead, or continue five miles to the campground access road. Turn left and drive 0.25 mile to the camp. A hiking trail follows Mill Creek for several miles.

Contact: Lassen National Forest, Almanor Ranger District, 530/258-2141 www.fs.fed.us/r5; Mill Creek Resort, 530/595-4449.

29 LAKE ALMANOR



Rating: 10

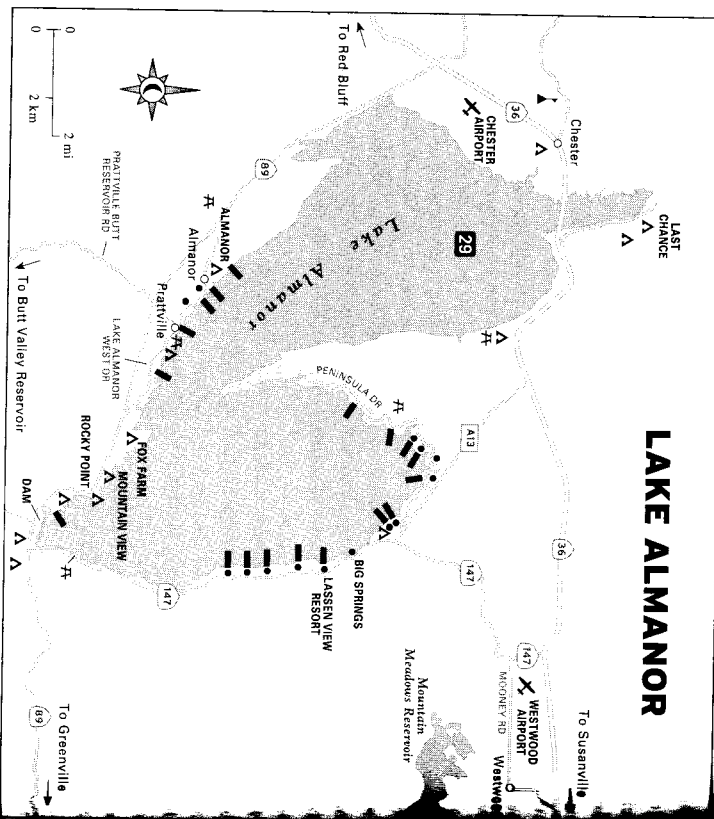
east of Red Bluff in Lassen National Forest

Map 3.3, page 87

BEST

Lake Almanor is a jewel ringed by conifers. It's a big lake, about 13 miles long with 28,000 surface acres, set at an elevation of 4,500 feet.

LAKE ALMANOR



Although Almanor is a reservoir built by PG&E, it looks more like a natural lake because it is kept full most of the year and much of the shoreline is wooded. Big and beautiful. Almanor has sapphire blue water and views of snowcapped Mount Lassen to the northwest. People have figured out that there are precious few lakes in California where it is possible to build a vacation home, and that Almanor is one of these few. There are also opportunities to stay in a lakeside vacation home or rent a cabin here.

The water is clear, ideal for all kinds of boating and water sports, and a large number of vacationers take advantage of it every summer. Waterskiing, wakeboarding, and using personal watercraft are excellent in July and August. The best spots for swimming and windsurfing are located almost exclusively along the east shore, but like most reservoirs, the beaches here are few.

This is one of the best lakes in the state for large rainbow trout, brown trout, and lake raised salmon. Smallmouth bass also live in these waters, and they come to life at midsummer, right when the cold-water species go into a short lull. In the spring and fall, fishing for trout and salmon is often excellent, not so much for the number of fish you can land, but rather for their size. Natural springs keep the water cold and circulating, and along with the penetrating rays of sunlight, help get the aquatic food chain in motion. The lake is so big that many newcomers are unsure where to try their luck. To get the lowdown, always call Lassen View Resort at 530/596-3437; fishing guides are also available there.

Spring winds and a long winter will always prevent this place from turning into a year-round vacation paradise. Wind? Yow, it can really howl. For instance, in May it can be as calm as a small pond at daybreak; then it starts

blow by 9 a.m., and by 10 a.m. the white-water starts churning and continue for the rest of the day. This occurs in the spring, from April through early June, and while not a daily event, happens plenty enough to keep owners of small boats especially wary. Winter is long and cold here, often with tremendous amounts of snow. Sometimes the lake even freezes over, an amazing sight on such a large body of water.

Regardless, Almanor is one of the best recreational lakes in California, and an excellent destination for boaters, campers, and anglers.

Access: There is a boat ramp at North Shore Camp, and a boat ramp near the Almanor North & South camps.

Facilities, fees: Several campgrounds, restrooms with flush toilets, drinking water, and in some cases, vault toilets, are available. Lodging, eating, restaurants, laundry facilities, showers, gas, and gas are available. Access is free. A fee is charged for boat launching.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, water-skiing, wakeboarding, personal watercraft, sailing, windsurfing, and swimming are permitted. Swimming beaches are located at Canyon Dam White Area, Eastshore Picnic Area, and Camp Jeremy Group Camp on the lake's southeast end. Windsurfing is best at these areas.

Directions: From Red Bluff, take Highway 36 east for 44 miles to the junction with Highway 89. Continue east on Highway 36/89 to Lake Almanor and the next junction with Highway 89 (two miles before reaching Chester). Turn right on Highway 89 and drive eight miles to the southwest end of Lake Almanor.

To North Shore camp and boat ramp: From Red Bluff, take Highway 36 east for 44 miles to the junction with Highway 89. Drive east on Highway 36/89; the camp and boat ramp are two miles past Chester, on the right.

To Almanor North & South camps and nearby ramp: From Red Bluff, take Highway 36 east for 44 miles to the junction with Highway 89. Continue east on Highway 36/89 to Lake Almanor and the next junction with Highway 89 (two miles before reaching Chester). Turn right on Highway 89 and drive six miles to

County Road 310. Turn left on County Road 310 and drive one mile to the campground.

Contact: Lassen National Forest, Almanor Ranger District, 530/258-2141; Plumas County Visitors Bureau, 800/326-2247, www.plumascounty.org; Chester-Lake Almanor Chamber of Commerce, 530/258-2426 or 800/350-4838, www.chester-lakealmanor.com; PG&E Recreation Desk, 916/386-5164, www.pge.com/recreation; Sports Nut, Chester, 530/258-3327; Sportsmen's Den, Quincy, 530/283-2733. Guides: D'Angelo's Guide Service, 530/259-2051; Big Meadows Guide Service, 530/596-3072; Roger's Guide Service, 530/528-0525; [8] Guide Service, 530/222-6253, www.worldwidefishing.com; Dick's Guide Service, 530/256-3317; Almanor Fishing Adventures, 530/258-6732.

30 DEER CREEK



Rating: 6

near Mineral in Lassen National Forest

Map 3.3, page 87

From its headwaters on downstream, Highway 32 parallels Deer Creek, providing easy roadside access at three campgrounds, a series of roadside pullouts, and a hiking trail. Don't think the proximity to Highway 32 means that the drive here is painless. Just the opposite: Highway 32 is not even close to being an actual highway and is very twisty, extremely narrow in spots, and far away for most visitors. That is why I advised accessing the road from the junction with Highway 36 and then driving downhill, the easiest route by far.

Deer Creek, at an elevation of 4,000 feet, is primarily a trout stream, with large numbers of trout stocked here each summer, mainly near the three campgrounds. A trail that is routed right along the stream provides good hiking and takes you to a hidden waterfall. The water, fed from snowmelt, is cold until late in the summer.

The traffic ranges from very light early and late in the season, to medium in early summer, then heavy in midsummer when the trout plants are high, the weather is warm and clear, and the stream flows are perfect. Regardless, Deer Creek makes a good alternative to the oft-crowded scene at nearby Lake Almanor (see the *Lake Almanor* listing in this chapter).

Access: There is no boat ramp.

Facilities, fees: Campgrounds with vault toilets and drinking water are nearby. Supplies are available in Mineral. Access is free. A fee is charged for camping.

Water sports, restrictions: Several good swimming holes are located along Highway 32, including near Potato Patch, Elam Creek, and Alder Creek Campgrounds.

Directions: From Chico, take Highway 32 northeast for 40 miles. Just after the small, metal bridge (locals call it the "Red Bridge") that crosses Deer Creek, park on the south side of the road, where there's a dirt pullout. The trailhead is located just up from the bridge, on the north side of the road. This section is good for fly-fishing for trout. There are also several good swimming holes.

From Red Bluff, take Highway 36 east for 44 miles to the junction with Highway 89. Continue east on Highway 36/89 to the junction with Highway 32. Turn south on Highway 32 and drive eight miles to the campground, on the right side of the road. Trailers are not recommended. Direct access to the creek is available off Highway 32 at pullouts.

Contact: Lassen National Forest, Almanor Ranger District, 530/258-2141; Sports Nut, Chester, 530/258-3327.

31 BUTT VALLEY RESERVOIR



near Chester

Map 3.3, page 87

While the official name of this place is Butt Valley Reservoir, nobody calls it that. The reser-

Rating: 6

ervoir goes by Butt Lake, and it is a peculiar place, despite having lakeside campground and the occasional giant rainbow trout. What is so peculiar is that it has the potential for greatness but usually falls just a bit short.

A PG&E-run lake that receives its water via a tunnel coming from nearby Lake Almanor, Butt Lake is set at an elevation of 4,100 feet and is five miles long. In water plumbing terminology, this is the afterbay for Almanor. When full, Butt Lake is very pretty, with campsites set within view of the water and a boat ramp for launching small, trailered boats mainly used by people fishing for trout. What the powerhouse runs at the head of the lake pond smelt from Lake Almanor get poured right into the water, which can inspire even big resident trout to go on a feeding frenzy. In the spring and early summer, a predictable wind plows right down the Feather River Canyon, making conditions good for expert windsurfers. The water, which can be cold, warms up enough by summer for short swims.

As a collective vision this seems just right, eh? Unfortunately, it rarely lives up to the expectations.

The biggest problem is that the lake is often quite low, with lots of stumps on the bare lake bed. Even though there is no speed limit, waterskiing is not permitted because of the underwater hazards, and drivers of fast boats who stray from the channel run the risk of hitting one of those stumps. Another minus is that the trout have grown so fat from feeding on the pond smelt pumped in from Almanor that they usually bite only when the powerhouse is running, an unpredictable event. Also, other than the boat ramp and the campground, the place lacks facilities and a marina.

Hence, what you have here is a lake that got tons of potential. Curiosity about Butt Lake causes many vacationers from nearby Almanor to at least swing by to take a look at the possibilities.

Access: A paved boat ramp is located near Cool Springs Campground on the east shore of the lake.

Facilities, fees: Two campgrounds, vault toilets, drinking water, and a picnic area are provided on the eastern shoreline. Supplies can be obtained in Chester. Access is free. A fee is charged for camping.

Water sports, restrictions: Boats with motors, canoes, kayaks, inflatable, sailing, and windsurfing are permitted. No waterskiing, wakeboarding, or personal watercraft are allowed. Swimming areas are available near the campgrounds and picnic area.

Directions: From Red Bluff, take Highway 36 west for 44 miles to the junction with Highway 89 (continue east on Highway 36/89 to Lake Almanor and the next junction with Highway 89 (two miles before reaching Chester). Turn right on Highway 89 and drive about seven miles to Butt Valley Road. Turn right on Butt Valley Road and drive 3.2 miles for Ponderosa Park Campground or 5.7 miles for Cool Springs Campground and boat ramp, on the right.

Contact: PG&E Recreation Desk, 916/386-6164, www.pge.com/recreation; Sports Nut, Chester, 530/258-3327; Sportsmen's Den, Quincy, 530/283-2733.

NORTH FORK FEATHER RIVER



south of Belden Forebay in Plumas National Forest

Map 3.3, page 87

The highlight at the North Fork Feather is a series of campgrounds and an access road that is routed up to Belden Forebay. The campgrounds have become very popular for their proximity along the stream, and the road that parallels the river provides easy access to swimming holes and trout fishing spots.

When water flows are right, this is a great haven for kayaking, particularly in inflatable kayaks. The problem is that when flows are wrong, it is a dud, often a bony proposition with a lot of butt-dragging. Starting in 2003,

Rating: 6

a program was put in place to provide visitors with water flow information to maximize water sports. Call 530/283-0555 for updates.

Early in the year, the water is often swift and cold from snowmelt, and only an otter would dare swim here. By summer the flows are greatly reduced, temperatures have warmed considerably, and a few swimming holes near the campgrounds are usually passable for taking a dunk.

Most of the people you see around here are fishing for trout. Stocks are made at each of the campgrounds, as well as upstream at Belden.

Access: There is no boat ramp.

Facilities, fees: Campgrounds, restrooms with flush toilets, drinking water, and vault toilets are available. Three campgrounds are set on the river, with access off Caribou Road. Others are provided off Highway 70. Access is free. A fee is charged for camping.

Water sports, restrictions: Rafting and kayaking are permitted when flows are safe; call ranger district for status at 530/283-0555. The best swimming spots are at Queen Lily, North Fork, and Gansner Bar Campgrounds, all located on Caribou Road.

Directions: From Oroville, take Highway 70 north to Caribou Road (two miles past Belden at Gansner Ranch Ranger Station). Turn left on Caribou Road and drive a short distance to the campground, on the left side of the road.

Contact: Plumas National Forest, Mount Hough Ranger District, 530/283-0555, fax 530/283-1821; Sportsmen's Den, Quincy, 530/283-2733.

33 PHILBROOK RESERVOIR



near Paradise in Lassen National Forest

Map 3.3, page 87

Maybe they got the name wrong. Paradise Lake is located very near to the southwest.

Rating: 6

After getting a glimpse of the two lakes, you might think Philbrook Reservoir deserves to have the name Paradise more than the original does.

That is because after traversing a very rough access road, you discover a pretty alpine lake at elevation 5,000 feet, with forest campsites, swimming beaches, and a picnic area. All in all, it's the ideal spot for car-top boats and inflatable, especially canoes and rafts.

Getting here is just difficult enough to keep most folks away. Or many people just plain don't know the place exists. The road is jarring at times, very rough on vehicles not built to handle unpaved roads.

Once here, the hardy few tend to set up camp and then fish for trout or plunk their canoe or raft in and paddle around, submerging themselves in the rapture of this pretty alpine setting.

Access: A car-top boat ramp is provided.

Facilities, fees: A campground, vault toilets, drinking water, and a picnic area are available. Access is free. A fee is charged for camping.

Water sports, restrictions: Car-top boats are permitted. Swimming and windsurfing are allowed; the best spots are at the campground or the picnic area.

Directions: From Orland on I-5, take the Highway 32/Chico exit and drive to Chico and the junction with Highway 99. Turn south on Highway 99 and drive to Skyway Road/Paradise (in south Chico). Turn east on Skyway Road, drive through Paradise, and continue for 27 miles to Humbug Summit Road. Turn right and drive two miles to Philbrook Road. Turn right and drive 3.1 miles to the campground entrance road. Turn right and drive 0.5 mile to the campground.

Contact: Lassen National Forest, Alamanor Ranger District, 530/258-2141; PG&E Recreation Desk, 916/386-5164, www.pgc.com/recreation.



34 EAGLE LAKE

near Susanville in Lassen National Forest

Map 3.4, page 88

Rating: 9

How does a huge lake with massive trout, hot summer temperatures, and lakeside campsites sound to you? Perfect? To some, it is. To others, well... (and we'll get to that).

Eagle Lake is set at 5,100 feet in elevation on the edge of high desert country in northeastern California (hence all the wind, which comes roaring across the plateau). The lake is huge, 27,000 acres with 100 miles of shoreline, yet relatively shallow; its depth of just 10–15 feet in many areas helps the wind quickly whip the water to a froth.

Excellent campgrounds, large trout, and the proximity to Susanville guarantee heavy use all summer. Most visitors tend to congregate around the marina, where they find a beach, Forest Service campgrounds, and picnic areas. As a recreational facility it makes an ideal vacation destination.

Sooner or later, the trout become the most compelling attraction. The strain of Eagle Lake trout averages 18–22 inches; that's right, and they'll take a nightcrawler under a bobber. Fishing is best late in the year just outside the tules at the north end of the lake.

If you hit the lake when it is calm, you might want to move here—it is that pretty. But don't pack your bags quite yet. You see, the wind can really howl at Eagle Lake in the spring and early summer, which quickly results in waves and whitecaps that make boating unpleasant at the least, very dangerous at the worst.

Every Memorial Day weekend, the lake opens with great excitement and hope, and then windy and often foul weather usually sets in. If you're here in the early summer, the solution is to get out on the lake very early—an hour before dawn—and expect the wind to kick up by 10–11 A.M. I've had openers here where I'd caught my limit before the sun peeked out over the eastern horizon. Either

that or schedule your visit for early fall when conditions are much calmer.

Because of the wind, this is an excellent place for windsurfing and sailing. Just be wary. When the whitecaps are too big to deal with, and surface conditions become choppy, cold, and extremely uncomfortable, get off the water. If you hit it during moderate winds, however, you will think you've finally found nirvana.

The lake is so big that there is plenty of room for powerboaters and skiers. Cold water means that only the hardy can stay out for long; however, when the chips are down, you will usually only find a good number of hardcore anglers in pursuit of their dream trout.

Access: In addition to the ramps at Aspen Grove (campground and Spaulding (see *Directions* this listing), there are two other boat ramps:

- Eagle Lake Marina: Head north on Eagle Lake Road and follow the signs to the marina, which has a three-lane paved boat ramp.
- Stones Landing: Head north on Eagle Lake Road, past the signs for the marina, to Stones Landing on the north end of the lake. There is a paved ramp.

Facilities, fees: Lodging, cabin rentals, and campgrounds with drinking water and flush toilets are available. Eagle Lake Marina has fishing boat rentals, a convenience store, coin showers, and coin laundry. There are fees for launching, docking, and camping.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboating, waterskiing, wakeboarding, and riding personal watercraft are permitted. Sailing, windsurfing, and swimming are allowed. Gallatin Beach, a developed area near the marina, offers a large, sandy swimming area roped off with buoys for protection.

Directions: To Aspen Grove Campground and boat ramp: From Red Bluff, take Highway 36 toward Susanville to Eagle Lake Road/County Road A1. Just before Susanville, turn left on Eagle Lake Road/County Road A1 and drive 15.5 miles to County Road 231/Forest Road 31N02. Turn right on County Road 231 and drive two miles to the campground on the left side of the road. To Aspen Grove Campground and boat

ramp: From Red Bluff, take Highway 36 toward Susanville to Eagle Lake Road/County Road A1. Just before reaching Susanville, turn left on County Road A1 and drive (staying left at the junction with County Road 231) to the lake's west shore at Spaulding Tract and County Road 518. Turn right on County Road 518 and drive through a small neighborhood to Strand Way (the lake frontage road). Turn left on Strand Way and drive about three blocks (the boat ramp is on the left) to Palmetto Way. The entrance to the store and the RV park entrance are at 687-125 Palmetto Way. Register at the store.

Contact: Lassen National Forest, Eagle Lake Ranger District, 530/257-4188; Lassen County Chamber of Commerce, 530/257-4323, www.lassencounty-chamber.org; Bureau of Land Management, Eagle Lake Field Office, 530/257-0456, www.ca.blm.gov/eaglelake; Eagle Lake Marina, 530/825-3454; Eagle Lake Cabins, 530/825-2131; Mariners Resort, 530/825-3333; Eagle Lake RV Park, 530/825-3133; Eagle Lake General Store, 530/825-2191, www.eaglelakestore.com.

Guides: J&J Guide Service, 530/222-6233; Jay Fair Flyfishing, 530/825-3475; Bite Me Guide Service, 530/825-3278; Tight Lines Guide Service, 530/273-1986; Sierra Drifters Guide Service, 760/935-4250.



35 ROUND VALLEY RESERVOIR

near Greenville in Plumas National Forest

Map 3.4, page 88

Rating: 4

Considering that Round Valley Reservoir is set at an elevation of 4,500 feet, you might wonder why it's got all those weeds and lily pads. Well, the answer is that this is one of the few warm-water lakes in California's mountain country. If you've never visited here before, it's bound to pleasantly surprise you.

The area surrounding the lake is quite pretty, with trails for hiking and horseback riding nearby.

But there are rules restricting most boating and water sport opportunities because the lake is used as a domestic water supply. No swimming or water contact is permitted, and no motors over 7.5 horsepower are allowed. What you end up with is a rare mountain lake where anglers can try for bass and catfish (not trout) without having to worry about fast boats or swimmers.

Some may remember a small resort here that once rented boats and provided a small campground. The operation is gone.

Access: A gravel boat ramp is located on the east side of the lake.

Facilities, fees: A picnic area and vault toilets are available. No drinking water. Supplies can be obtained in Greenville. Access is free.

Water sports, restrictions: Boats with small motors, canoes, kayaks, and inflatables are permitted. No motors larger than 7.5 horsepower are allowed. No swimming or water-contact sports.

Directions: From Red Bluff, take Highway 36 east and drive 4.4 miles to the junction with Highway 89. Continue east on Highway 36/89 to Lake Almanor and the next junction with Highway 89 (two miles before reaching Chester). Turn right on Highway 89 and drive about 25 miles to the town of Greenville and Greenville Road. Turn right (south) on Greenville Road and drive three miles to the signed turnoff for Round Valley Lake. Turn left and continue to the lake.

Contact: Plumas National Forest, Mount Hough Ranger District, 530/283-0555; Sportsmen's Den, Quincy, 530/283-2733.

36 TAYLOR LAKE



Rating: 4

near Taylorsville in Plumas National Forest

Map 3.4, page 88

Very few boaters pay attention to this small and obscure mountain lake located at an elevation of 5,000 feet. It is too small for most boats, but large enough for a float tube or a

raft; visitors occasionally use one of those life float boats to fish for brook trout.

The water is clear and very cold in summer, but quite tolerable by midsummer. Although there are no beaches, there are swimming access spots all around the lakeshore. The surrounding region of Plumas National Forest is well forested, with a network of roads in the area just waiting to be explored.

This is a primitive spot. Those with SUVs and a raft or canoe might claim it and stake it out for their own.

Access: There is no boat ramp. Small car-tops boats may be hand launched.

Facilities, fees: A few primitive campsites are available. No drinking water or vault toilets. Garbage must be packed out. Supplies can be obtained in Taylorville. Access is free.

Water sports, restrictions: Rowboats, canoes, kayaks, inflatables, and swimming is permitted. The lake is too small for windsurfing and other water sports.

Directions: From Oroville, take Highway 70 east to the junction with Highway 89. Turn left on Highway 89 and drive seven miles to Highway 22. Turn right and drive five miles east to Taylorville and County Road 214. Turn north on County Road 214 and drive about two miles to Forest Service Road 27N10. Turn right on Forest Service Road 27N10 and drive about 10 miles east (stay to the left). Turn left on Forest Service Road 27N57 and travel one mile to the lake.

Contact: Plumas National Forest, Mount Hough Ranger District, 530/283-0555, www.fs.fed.us/r5; Sportsmen's Den, Quincy, 530/283-2733.

37 ANTELOPE LAKE



Rating: 8

near Taylorsville in Plumas National Forest

Map 3.4, page 88

Mountain lake circled by conifers with campsites, good boating, and trout fishing.

While people might want to put an advertisement in the newspaper to find such a place, that isn't necessary for in-the-know visitors from Plumas County. They'll direct you to Antelope Lake, which is ringed by forest and provides campgrounds at each end of the lake, and has a boat ramp conveniently located within a few miles from each camp.

Antelope Lake is just about perfect for a hunting/camping vacation. Seclusion is practically guaranteed—the lake is located approximately 100 miles from Oroville by any estimate—and the road in is accessible to trailered boats. Although not huge, Antelope Lake is big enough, with 15 miles of shoreline and plenty of little islands, coves, and peninsulas to create an intimate atmosphere.

The lake is set at elevation 5,000 feet and covers 930 surface acres. Even though the shoreline is heavily forested, there are good swimming areas adjacent to the campgrounds. Windsurfers will find the prime spots for their sport on the west side near the boat ramp and at Long Point Campground (both offer more wide-open access).

What makes Antelope Lake special is that the drive here is too daunting for most visitors. If it were any closer to civilization, the place would be loaded with vacationers every day throughout summer. Still, it is by no means

unknown. On summer weekends it can even get crowded. Hey, it makes sense. After all, a description of this lake reads like an advertisement for a good time.

Access: A two-lane paved ramp is available on the north shore.

Facilities, fees: Campgrounds, vault toilets, and drinking water are available. A convenience store is nearby. Supplies can be obtained in Taylorville. Access is free.

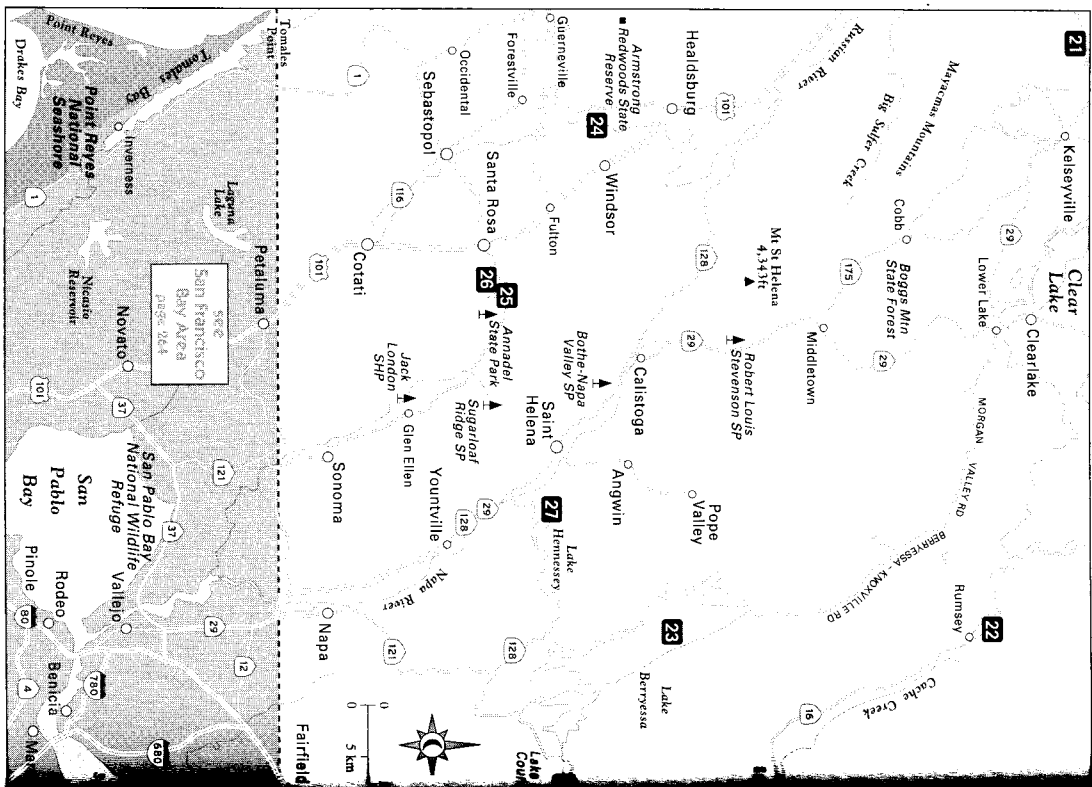
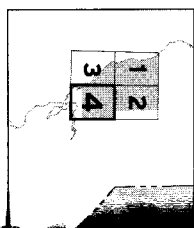
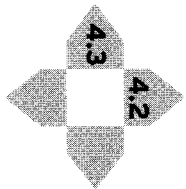
Water sports, restrictions: Powerboating, waterskiing, wakeboarding, personal watercraft, sailing, windsurfing, and swimming are permitted. Swimming access is best near the campgrounds.

Directions: To Long Point Campground: From Red Bluff, take Highway 36 east to Susanville and U.S. 395. Go south on U.S. 395 and drive about 10 miles (one mile past Janesville) to County Road 208. Turn right on County Road 208 (signed Antelope Lake) and drive about 15 miles to a Y (one mile before Antelope Lake). Turn right at the Y and drive one mile to the campground entrance on the left side of the road. The boat ramp is at Lost Cove, a three-mile drive on Indian Creek Road, on the lake's north shore.

Contact: Plumas National Forest, Mount Hough Ranger District, 530/283-0555, www.fs.fed.us/r5.

Map 4.4

Sites 21-28
Pages 143-150



HAMMERHORN LAKE



Rating: 4

Location in Mendocino National Forest

Map 4.1, page 121

Little dot of a lake at just two acres, Hammerhorn is more like a mountain pond in elevation of 3,500 feet in remote Mendocino National Forest. Despite the name there are a few factors that make it special: The lake is quite pretty, there is a campsite, and the location is near the Yolla-Bolly Wilderness.

It is no boat ramp, of course (after all, it's two acres), but small car-top boats and canoes can be launched by hand. That is what some campers do, possibly tossing them far trout, though the lake's popularity for trout shiners has cut into fishing. The lake is warm enough for swimming in mid June, but few people make it out to take a dip.

Hammerhorn typically attracts the hiking and backpackers will make the drive into the wilderness and camp here before heading off the next day for a trip into the Yolla-Bolly Wilderness: a trailhead is located in the northeast. If there is no boat ramp, car-top boats can be hand launched.

Info, fees: A small, primitive campground, vault toilets, and drinking water available. No drinking water in fall and garbage must be packed out. Supplies are thin in Covelo at Western Auto (707/6651). The lake has two wheelchair-accessible piers. Access is free. A fee is charged for camping.

Water sports, restrictions: Rowboats, canoes, and kayaks are permitted. No motors. Swimming is allowed.

Directions: From Willits, take U.S. 101 north about 17 miles to Forest Road M21. Turn right and drive one mile to the campground entrance and lake.
Contact: Mendocino National Forest, Covelo Ranger District, 707/983-6118, fax 707/983-8004, www.fs.fed.us/r5.

HOWARD LAKE



Rating: 5

Location in Mendocino National Forest

Map 4.1, page 121

Little Howard Lake is tucked deep in the interior of Mendocino National Forest between Espee Ridge to the south and Little Doe Ridge to the north. For a drive-to lake, it is surprisingly remote and provides good fishing and primitive camping.

Set at an elevation of 3,600 feet, it covers about 15 or 20 acres. As you might have guessed, this is not a big water-recreation destination. Instead, this is a pretty, remote spot where you can paddle your canoe around, perhaps trying to catch a trout now and then. By early June the water is usually warm enough for swimming, but the shoreline is a little muddy and it is rare to see people taking a dip.

Hammerhorn Lake is located about six miles away.

Access: A primitive boat ramp for car-top boats only is located on the northwest side of the lake.

Facilities, fees: A campground, vault toilets and drinking water is available. Pack out your garbage. Supplies can be obtained in Covelo at Western Auto (707/983-6651). Access is free. A fee is charged for camping.

Water sports, restrictions: Rowboats, boats with electric motors, canoes, and kayaks are permitted. No gas motors. Swimming is allowed.

Directions: From Willits, take U.S. 101 north for 13 miles to Longvale and the junction with Highway 162. Turn northeast on Highway

162 and drive to Covelo. Continue east on Highway 162 to the Eel River Bridge. Turn left at the bridge on Forest Service Road M1 and drive about 11 miles to the campground, at the north end of the lake.

Contact: Mendocino National Forest, Covelo Ranger District, 707/97983-6118, fax 707/983-8004, www.fs.fed.us/f5.



3 TEN MILE RIVER

Rating: 3

north of Mackericher State Park

Map 4.1, page 121

Little Ten Mile River starts in the mountains just north of Bucha Ridge and tumbles some 20 miles on its short journey to the Pacific Ocean. In the winter, when fierce coastal squalls pound the ridge, water rushes down the canyon, forming this stream.

Only a tiny stretch of the river, from the mouth and on upstream for a few miles, is appropriate for canoeing or kayaking and swimming. The river narrows here and runs slowly most of the year, creating conditions that are suitable only for canoes and kayaks. Easy access is the big plus. Farther upstream the Ten Mile cuts through private property, and the riverbanks are smothered by thick brush.

Most people playing in the lower river are doing so as a side trip from another destination, usually Mackericher State Park. Mackericher is a great park, boasting a beautiful beach, outstanding walks, a lookout for viewing harbor seals, a small freshwater lake (see the *Cleone Lake* listing in this chapter) with trout fishing, and excellent campgrounds, including great walk-in campsites. Day-use access is free at Mackericher, which is an extreme rarity for a state park.

Access: No boat ramp is available. There is no standard put-in, but boaters with small craft (canoes or kayaks) may park at the bridge and put in at the beach at the river's mouth.

Facilities, fees: Campgrounds are pro-

vided at Mackericher State Park. Mackericher campsites can be reserved at Recreation America (800/444-PARK or 800/444-7www.reserveamerica.com). Access is Rafting permits are not required. Support can be obtained in Fort Bragg.

Water sports, restrictions: Kayaks, canoers, and swimming are permitted. Swimming is best at the beach or at the goon inside the river's mouth.

Directions: From Fort Bragg, take Highway 1 north for three miles to Mackericher Park (on the left). Ten Mile River is located at the park's north end, and is accessible by driving east on Camp 1 Ten Mile Road south on Camp 2 Ten Mile Road.

Contact: Mackericher State Park, 707/9112, www.parks.ca.gov.



4 CLEONE LAKE

Rating:

north of Fort Bragg in Mackericher State

Map 4.1, page 121

Cleone Lake is one of the few lakes in the state that is actually located west of Highway 1 and Laguna Point. Along with the surrounding Mackericher State Park, the lake is an ideal destination for a weekend vacation. Although small, the lake is gorgeous, bordered by rules on one side and forest on another, and opening to the coast on the west. The ocean is about 100 yards away. A parking lot and restroom are available right next to the lake. This is where visitors can hand launch their car-top boats, canoes, rafts, prams, and the like are recommended. From the shore anglers fish for trout, which are stocked by the Department of Fish and Game.

The gassy shoreline on the northwest makes getting in and out of the water a bit tricky, but few people swim here. The water is too shallow for most of the year because summers are so hot and the lake never gets a chance to heat

up. Cleone Lake holds more appeal for hikers offering a great short trail around its circumference, much of it on a raised wooden walkway that passes in some spots like a tunnel through the lush greenery. Other great spots at Mackericher include one that leads to a harbor seal viewing area and tidepools. Canoeing is also excellent here, especially at the goon in campsites.

Access: There is no boat ramp, but car-top boats may be hand launched.

Facilities, fees: A campground with drinking water, flush toilets, and coin-operated showers is available. Day use is free. There is a fee for overnight camping. Mackericher campsites can be reserved at Reserve America (800/444-PARK or 800/444-7275, www.reserveamerica.com), where permits can be obtained in Fort Bragg.

Water sports, restrictions: Rowboats, canoes, kayaks, prams, and inflatables are allowed. No swimming is permitted.

Directions: From Fort Bragg, take Highway 1 north for three miles to Mackericher State Park (on the left). Turn left and drive 0.5 mile to the lake.

Contact: Mackericher State Park, 707/964-1112, www.parks.ca.gov.



EEL RIVER (MIDDLE FORK)

Rating: 8

Map 4.1, page 121

Millions of rafters and campers are going to the Eel River when they read this. They are going to the Eel River with worry that all will know a stellar spot that was once secret. But fear not, because the place is too remote. It requires skills in wilderness camping and intermediate boating, and most people just don't have the time, equipment, and talent to make the trip.

Those that do, get what they deserve—a killer run from Dos Rios to Alderpoint. The run has everything going for it: seclusion, no access roads, and a run that is practically no access roads along

the route), beauty (set in a gorgeous canyon that's forested on both sides), great camping (at several good beaches on the banks), and a stretch of water just challenging enough to keep things interesting.

With a Class II-III rating, the run is doable in an inflatable kayak as well as in rafts and hard-shell kayaks. Canoeists must be skilled and experienced, as there are many trick eddies that can turn and flip a canoe. In any case, make sure that all your gear is waterproof and strapped in tight—you'll most likely need your warm, dry clothes at the end of the day.

Unpredictable water flows and weather are the biggest problems on the Middle Fork Eel. For the most part, the best time to run is in March, although cold temperatures (for the Humboldt coast) can sap the energy from some boaters, particularly if you get wet weather on your trip. By April this run is largely a goner, and by May and June the flows become more like a dribble, rendering the river unrunnable. If you try to make the trip before March, downpours can be a problem: it can rain, rain, and keep on raining to the point that you might consider boarding an ark instead of an inflatable.

The Eel River is subject to emergency fishing closures if flows are below the prescribed levels needed to protect migrating salmon and steelhead. For a recorded message detailing the status of coastal streams, phone the Department of Fish and Game, 707/442-4502. Also note that the Main Stem Eel is subject to special regulations, which may be changed on a yearly basis.

Access: There is no boat ramp. The put-in is at the small town of Dos Rios.

From the south: Take U.S. 101 to Laytonville and Laytonville-Dos Rios Road. Turn east and drive 15 miles to Dos Rios (the road is narrow and curvy).

From the north: Take U.S. 101 to Longvale and Highway 162. Turn east and drive to Dos Rios. Put in below the Eel River Bridge. Take out 45 miles downstream at Alderpoint.

Facilities, fees: Several campgrounds with drinking water, restrooms, flush toilets, and

RV dump stations are available. State parks charge day-use fees. There is a fee for camping. River access is free. Rafting permits are not required.

Water sports, restrictions: A few swimming holes are located off Highway 162, but they can be difficult to access. Several sandbars north of Dos Rios provide opportunities for sunbathing and swimming. They are accessible only by raft or boat.

Directions: To Main Eel: From Eureka, take U.S. 101 south. As you reach the Eel at Fernbridge, the river largely parallels the highway, and access is available off almost every spur road, as well as through several small towns along the river, including Fortuna, Rio Dell, Shively, and Holmes.

To South Fork Eel: U.S. 101 parallels much of the South Fork Eel, starting in Leggett (84 miles south of Eureka) and running downstream (north) past Benbow, Garberville, Miranda, and Myers Flat on to its confluence with the main stem of the Eel.

Contact: Bureau of Land Management, Arcata Field Office, 707/825-2300.

Guided river trips: Wilderness Adventures, 530/623-3665 or 800/418-9287, www.wildrivertrips.com; Redwoods and Rivers, 530/629-4947 or 800/429-0090, www.redwoods-rivers.com; Rubicon Whitewater Adventures, 707/887-2452, www.rubiconadventures.com; Tributary Whitewater Tours, 530/346-6812 or 800/672-3846, www.whitewatertours.com.

EEL RIVER (PILLSBURY RUN)



Rating: 9

Scott Dam to Van Arsdale Reservoir

Map 4.1, page 121

Of all the rafting runs on the main stem Eel River, the Pillsbury Run is the most popular. One reason might be that the area is so close to the campgrounds at Lake Pillsbury, a great bonus.

The nine-mile run to the final take-above Van Arsdale Reservoir makes a day trip. You can shorten the trip by using several other take-aways available upstream. With a Class III+ rating, the run has technical rapids and is an excellent choice those whose skills are at the intermediate level. Along the way, rafters are treated to beautiful scenery. The river is bordered for the most part by dense forest, and the setting makes you far removed from civilization.

This section of the river has very little in summer, but enough water is released at Lake Pillsbury to keep steelhead alive. When it comes to rafting, the Eel River is hard to star attraction. But of all the available stretches, this stretch is the best.

Access: There is no boat ramp. The portage is just below Scott Dam, southwest of Pillsbury off Porter Valley Road (M-8 River Road). Take out at your choice of several points above Van Arsdale Reservoir, located approximately 15 miles north of Highway off Porter Valley Road.

Facilities, fees: Campgrounds, lodging, restaurants, a resort, and facilities are available at Lake Pillsbury. A fee is charged for camping. Access is free. Rafting permits are not required.

Water sports, restrictions: Rafting and kayaking are permitted. Swimming is possible, but the river can be difficult to access. Whitewater driving on Porter Valley Road, look for spots where you can turn off and park.

Directions: To Fuller Grove: From Ukiah, take U.S. 101 north to the junction with Highway 20. Turn east (right) on Highway 20 and drive five miles to East Potter Valley Road (M-8/River Road). Turn northwest on East Potter Valley Road toward Lake Pillsbury and drive 5.9 miles to the town of Porter Valley. Continue on East Potter Valley Road to Eel River Road. Turn right and drive 15 miles to the River Information Kiosk at Lake Pillsbury. Continue for 2.2 miles to the campground access road. Turn right and drive 0.25 mile to the campground. Or continue to Scott Dam

and access is available along Porter Valley Road and below the Scott Dam.

Notes: Mendocino National Forest, Upper Ranger District, 707/275-2361.

Guided rafting trips: Wilderness Adventures, 530/623-3665 or 800/418-9287, www.wildrivertrips.com.

ALBION RIVER



Rating: 6

North of Mendocino

Map 4.1, page 121

Many people who trailer their boats by pass the area. They do not realize that there is a boat ramp. Well, there is. If you are touring the coast, a stop here can add the missing piece to your vacation puzzle.

The area in the vicinity of Schooner's Landing is well protected, making it a good launch site for trailered boats. With campgrounds on grassy sites and full hookups available for RVs, this is an ideal base camp for a multiday trip.

A great plus is the short cruise to the fishing pinnacles. Most boaters head around Albion Point to the north, then make a left turn, and drive around Salmon Point to the south. There are good chances you'll catch rockfish here, and salmon often school in this area in the summer.

If you do not wish to venture to the ocean, another option is to canoe in the lower river. It is more like a lagoon, with the tidal forces overwhelming about three miles upstream, providing a great little day paddle.

For those who wish to enjoy a coastal environment, temperatures stay in the 50s throughout the year. It is too cold for water sports unless you don a wet suit. However, this stretch of the Mendocino coast is exceptional for snorkeling and shallow diving. There are dozens of secluded spots along the coast that have giant rocks and sheltered tidal lagoons, perfect grounds for snorkeling.

The ocean is within walking distance of Schooner's Landing, which has a good beach for beachcombing. Wear heavy or layered clothing because the weather is typically foggy or windy.

Access: A paved boat ramp is located at Schooner's Landing.

Facilities, fees: A campground, restrooms with flush toilets and coin showers, and drinking water are available. Canoe and kayak rentals, boat ramp, and dock are available at Schooner's Landing. Supplies are available nearby. Access is free. Fees are charged for boat launching and camping. No rafting permits are necessary. Canoeists may put in at the boat ramp and paddle upstream.

Water sports, restrictions: The water is too cold for swimming and other water sports.

Directions: From Mendocino, take Highway 1 south for 5.5 miles to the town of Albion and Albion River Road (just before the bridge, north side of river). Turn left on Albion River Road and drive 0.25 mile to the bottom of the hill, take another left, and drive to the harbor. A boat ramp is available at Schooner's Landing, just north of the Albion Bridge.

Contact: Schooner's Landing, 707/937-5707; Noyo Harbor District, 707/964-4719, www.mendocinocoast.com.

NAVARRO RIVER



Rating: 6

South of Mendocino

Map 4.1, page 121

Highway 128 follows the river all the way to the ocean, providing visitors easy access and a good look at conditions.

In the spring and summer months, this river gets very heavy use. It is excellent for swimming in the summer, when the water heats up a little and the rafters have departed for the season. Many pullouts along Highway 128 offer access to short trails routed to the river, with dozens of great picnic spots along the way.

While the river is too narrow and brushy for large rafts, it is great for beginners in canoes, inflatable kayaks, and hard-shell kayaks. Class I+ all the way, you'll have a relatively easy paddle no matter what stretch of water you choose.

One favorite stretch starts at Hendy Woods State Park, from whence it takes four hours to get downstream to Paul Dimmick State Park and another two to reach the mouth of the river. Time it so you hit an outgoing tide on the lower river and you'll have an easy ride all the way. The route is very pretty, graced with a variety of riparian vegetation throughout; some stretches feature redwood forest.

Access: There is no boat ramp. Canoeists and kayakers can put in at the junction of Highway 128 and Mountain View Road in Boonville, which is about eight miles east of Hendy Woods State Park on Highway 128. You can boat all the way to the mouth of the river, but standard take-outs are located at Hendy Woods State Park and Paul Dimmick State Park.

Facilities, fees: Campgrounds, restrooms with flush toilets, and drinking water are available. There is a fee for day use at state parks. A fee is charged for camping. Rafting permits are not required.

Water sports, restrictions: Several good swimming spots are located along Highway 128; one of the best is at Iron Bridge, located at mile marker 3.66, with a sandy beach and deep swimming hole.

Directions: From Mendocino, take Highway 1 south for 10 miles to Highway 128. Turn left on Highway 128 and drive east. The highway parallels the lower river. Fishing is permitted from the river mouth to Greenwood Road Bridge. The upper river can be accessed through Hendy Woods State Park, located off Highway 128. A path at the south end of the bridge provides excellent access.

To Hendy Woods: From Cloverdale on U.S. 101, turn northwest on Highway 128 and drive about 35 miles to Philo Greenwood Road. Turn left on Philo Greenwood Road and drive

0.5 mile to the park entrance. Call the Department of Fish and Game, 707/442-4502, for current status of closed fishing areas.

Contact: Mendocino Coast Chamber of Commerce, 707/961-6300, www.mendocinocoast.com; Navarro River Redwoods State Park, 707/937-5804; Hendy Woods State Park, 707/895-3141; Harvest at Mendocino, 707/937-5879; Craig Bell, Greenwater Guide Service, 707/884-3012.

LAKE MENDOCINO



near Ukiah

Map 4.1, page 121

Quite a transformation has occurred at Lake Mendocino. At one time this was a quiet place with little boating traffic and few campsites lost in the shadow of Clear Lake to the east. Apparently more and more boaters are becoming enamored with it each year, and now the campgrounds sometimes fill up, the lake abuzz with ski boats, and the swimming beach is sprinkled with lots of happy folks.

The lake is set at 750 feet in elevation the foothill country east of Ukiah, covers 1,750 acres, and has 15 miles of shoreline. It is a major destination point for boaters and campers, especially families who appreciate the warm, clear water, and the easy driving access (compared to Clear Lake). One bonus is an excellent swimming beach set adjacent to restrooms.

Another bonus is that there are excellent opportunities to windsurf, especially in May and June, when the weather is warm, yet the wind is coming out of the northwest—the perfect combination. Once school is out in June, waterskiing activity picks up, especially on weekends, and windsurfers have to be on a constant lookout.

In 2003, a marina that once rented all styles of boats closed shop for good.

Access: There are two boat ramps.

Facilities, fees: Campgrounds, restrooms with flush toilets, vault toilets, and drinking water are available. Three boat-in campgrounds are located on the east side of the lake. Supplies are available in Ukiah at Diana's Sporting Goods (707/462-9741). Access

Directions: There are fees for camping and boating. Campground reservations can be made through Reserve USA (877/444-6777, www.reserveusa.com).

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, wakeboarding, personal watercraft, sailing, and windsurfing are permitted. A slightly swimming area roped off with buoys for protection is available in the Pomo Day-Lake Area.

Directions: To Che-Ka-Ka Campground: From Ukiah, take U.S. 101 north to Lake Mendocino Drive. Exit right on Lake Mendocino Drive and continue to the first stoplight at North State Street. Turn left on North State Street and drive to the next stoplight. Turn right (which will put you back on Lake Mendocino Drive) and drive about one mile to the signed entrance for the campground and boat ramp at Coyote Dam.

Le Kyon Campground: From Ukiah, take U.S. 101 north for five miles to the Highway 10 turnoff. Bear east on Highway 20 to Marina Drive. Turn right and drive 200 yards to the boat ramp (and campground).

Contact: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Lake Mendocino, 707/462-7581, www.spn.wsac.army.mil/mendocino.

BLUE LAKES



near Upper Lake

Map 4.1, page 121

Lake County is home to these Blue Lakes, which are not to be confused with several other Blue Lakes elsewhere in the state. There are four Blue Lakes in Toiyabe-National Forest, Mendocino National Forest, Inyo National Forest,

Tahoe National Forest, and Hoover Wilderness. There's even a town called Blue Lake near Arcata, where there are no lakes at all, and then there is Big Blue Lake in the Russian Wilderness.

Located along Highway 20 north of Clear Lake, these two lakes feature quiet water, low-speed boating, trout fishing, and a lakeside resort with rental units. The lakes are long and narrow, created from the flows of Cold Creek, which eventually meets up with the East Fork Russian River and empties into Lake Mendocino. The upper lake is by far the better of the pair.

The calm, cool, and clean water, combined with the opportunity to catch trout, is very compelling in this region, and Blue Lakes gets heavy use. As for that 5-mph speed limit, don't ignore it or your vacation will end abruptly; they're very strict about enforcing it.

This foothill setting (an elevation of 1,400 feet) is very pretty, with a forested shoreline and a fair number of sandy beaches. You can swim just about anywhere here. Of course most windsurfers don't give Blue Lakes the time of day because the speed limit is more like a stop sign. But beginners will find a good spot on the west shore near Pine Acres Resort, which gets a fair wind out of the north in the spring.

If you end up loving this place and worry that other people will make the same discovery, hey, just tell 'em you're going to Blue Lakes. They won't have a clue.

Access: There are four private boat ramps: • Le Trianon Resort: Located on the north end of the lake off Highway 20 with a paved launch ramp, this resort has a dock and rowboats, with kayaks and pedal boats available for rent.

• The Lodge at Blue Lakes: Located on the east side of the lake off Highway 20, Blue Lakes has a paved launch ramp and a dock.

• Narrows Lodge: On the west side of the lake off Blue Lakes Road, this lodge has a paved launch ramp, dock, rowboats, boats with motors, kayaks, canoes, pontoon boats, and pedal boats available for rent.

• Pine Acres Resort: Located on the west side

of the lake off Blue Lakes Road, Pine Acres offers a paved launch ramp, pier, and rowboats, kayaks, and pedal boats for rent.

Facilities, fees: Cabins, lodging, campground, restrooms with showers, flush toilets, limited marina facilities, restaurants, convenience stores, and gas are available. There are fees for camping and boat launching (inclusive for guests at The Lodge at Blue Lakes).

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, rowboats, canoes, kayaks, and inflatables are permitted. A 5-mph speed limit is strictly enforced. Swimming and windsurfing are permitted. Protected, sandy swimming beaches are located near the lakeside resorts. The best windsurfing spot is near Pine Acres Resort.

Directions: From Ukiah, drive north on U.S. 101 for five miles to the junction with Highway 20. Turn east on Highway 20 and drive 12 miles. Lake access is available off Highway 20 and Blue Lakes Road.

Contact: Lake County Visitor Information Center, 707/1274-5652 or 800/525-3743, www.lakecounty.com; Le Trianon Resort, 707/1275-2262; Pine Acres Blue Lakes Resort, 707/1275-2811, www.bluelakepineacres.com; Narrows Lodge, 707/1275-2718 www.the.narrowsresort.com; The Lodge at Blue Lakes, 707/1275-2181, www.thelodgeatbluelakes.com.

11 BLACK BUTTE LAKE

near Orland

Map 4.2, page 122

Hit this lake at the wrong time and you'll get the vacation from hell. Hit it right and you'll wonder why more people aren't taking advantage of paradise on earth. The reality here is that there is rarely an in-between.

If you come in late March, April, or May, you will find a pretty lake amid freshly greened foothills, with some 40 miles of shoreline and lakeside camps.

But arrive in late July or August and you will find a low water level, brown and most barren hillsides, and camps like sweat pits. Let there be no doubt as to when you should plan your trip.

Black Butte is set at 500 feet in elevation in the west valley foothills and covers 4,500 surface acres. Just a short jog off I-5, the lake is easily accessible, making it very attractive to people with trailered boats. It gets heavy use during the prime season, when warm temperatures set in and spring gives way to summer. This is the best time for waterskiing, wakeboarding, and powerboating, as well as for fishing for crappie, a prize that attracts many anglers.

The best launch points for windsurfing as well as for wading or swimming are near the Orland Buttes Campground and at the Buckhorn Day-Use Area.

The water is warm at Black Butte and, as mentioned previously, the lake is best visited in spring and early summer. By fall not only do the surroundings turn brown, hot, and dusty, but the water levels drop, creating a number of boating hazards just under the surface.

Access: There are boat ramps at Buckhorn, Orland Buttes, and Eagle Pass. See *Directions*.

Facilities, fees: Campgrounds, restrooms with flush toilets and coin showers, and drinking water is available. An RV dump station, convenience store, and propane gas are available. Access is free. Fees are charged for boat launching and camping.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, waterskiing, wakeboarding, personal watercraft, sailing, and windsurfing are permitted. Swimming areas are available near Buckhorn Picnic Area and at Eagle Pass Day-Use Area, near the dam.

Directions: To Buckhorn: From I-5 in Orland, take the Black Butte Lake exit. Drive about 12 miles west on Road 200/Newville Road to Buckhorn Road. Turn left and drive a short distance to the campground and boat ramp on the north shore of the lake.
To Orland Buttes: From I-5 in Orland, take

the Black Butte Lake exit. Drive west on Road 200/Newville Road for six miles to Road 206. Turn left and drive two miles to the campground and boat ramp on the left.

To Eagle Pass: Drive as above to the fork with Buckhorn Road and Road 206. Bear right (signed for the dam) and drive to the turn on the left for the Eagle Pass Picnic Area and boat ramp. Turn left and continue to the paved boat ramp.

Contact: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento District, Black Butte Lake, 916/865-4722.

12 PLASKETT LAKES

Rating: 4

Northwest of Willows in Mendocino National Forest

Map 4.2, page 122

Plaskett Lakes are a pair of connected, dot-to-dot mountain lakes that form the headwaters of little Plaskett Creek. They are difficult to reach, located at the end of a rough road, out in the middle of nowhere.

The lakes are set at an elevation of 6,000 feet. They cover just three and four acres and get very light use. You'll typically find just a few people out here floating around in rafts and fishing for trout. Swimming is not recommended because the lake bottoms are mucky and your feet will sink into the ooze when you enter and leave the water.

But the area is pretty, gets little traffic, and is remote—the nearest town is 35 miles away. There are good opportunities for hiking (one trail is routed along Plaskett Creek), including a number of Forest Service roads (the best in the area is routed up Chimney Rock).

Trout fishing is best at the westernmost of the two lakes. No motors are permitted in the lakes and swimming is not recommended. Note that Plaskett Lakes were drained to kill weeds and were first restocked with trout in summer of 2002.

Access: There is no boat ramp. Car-top boats may be hand launched.

Facilities, fees: Campgrounds, drinking water, vault toilets, and a picnic area are available. Access is free. A fee is charged for camping. Supplies can be obtained in Elk Creek.

Water sports, restrictions: Rowboats, canoes, and kayaks are permitted. No motors. Swimming is allowed.

Directions: From Sacramento, take I-5 to Willows and the exit for Highway 162. Take the exit for Highway 162 West, and drive west (toward the town of Elk Creek) to County Road 306 (just after crossing the Stony Creek Bridge). Turn north on County Road 306 and drive four miles to Alder Springs Road. Turn left on Alder Springs Road/Forest Highway 7 and drive 31 miles to the lake entrance road (and campground) on the left. Turn left and drive a short distance to the lake.

Contact: Mendocino National Forest, Grindstone Ranger District, 530/934-3316, fax 530/934-1212, www.fs.fed.us/r5; Stonyford Work Center, 530/963-3128, fax 530/963-3173; Stonyford General Store, 530/963-3235.

13 STONY GORGE RESERVOIR

Rating: 6

near Elk Creek

Map 4.2, page 122

If only the Bureau of Reclamation made recreation a top priority at Stony Gorge Reservoir, this place would have a chance of being something special.

This is a long, narrow lake set in a canyon, at an elevation of 800 feet, with 1,300 surface acres and 25 miles of shoreline. A classic foothill reservoir, it gets hot weather and experiences summer water drawdowns. The setting is fairly pretty, and all boating and water sports are permitted. In the spring when the lake is full, the water is starting to warm up, and the

surrounding hills are green, you might think you've really found something.

Other than the boat ramp and vault toilets, there are no developed facilities of any kind, not even potable water. A marina? Gas? A bait shop? You've got to be kidding.

In the late spring, conditions are excellent for waterskiing and swimming, with swimmers congregating at a beach near the boat ramp. Then summer arrives and puts an end to all the festivities.

By June, the lake level starts dropping rapidly. Most years the launch ramp is unusable by summer, and even if you do manage to get a boat in the water, you will have to negotiate lots of underwater hazards and deal with the day-to-day fluctuations in the water level.

Access: A paved boat ramp is located on the northeast side of the lake at Skipper's Point.

Facilities, fees: Campgrounds, vault toilets, and picnic areas are available. No drinking water. Access is free. Limited supplies can be obtained in Elk Creek.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, waterskiing, wakeboarding, personal watercraft, sailing, windsurfing, and swimming are permitted. A beach is available at Skipper's Point.

Directions: From Sacramento, take I-5 north for 90 miles to Willows and Highway 162. Turn west on Highway 162 and drive 19 miles to County Road 304 (just before the Stony Creek Bridge). Turn left (signed) and drive two miles to the reservoir.

Contact: Bureau of Reclamation, Northern California Area, 530/934-7069; Stony Gorge Reservoir, 530/968-5267.

14 LAKE PILLSBURY



near Ukiah in Mendocino National Forest

Map 4.2, page 122

Bit by bit, Lake Pillsbury is growing more popular every year. At one time not so long

ago, this was just a mountain lake that had good weather, plenty of water, few people, a lot of trout. Well, with all those attractions it isn't surprising that more vacationers there before are heading here.

Covering some 2,000 acres, Pillsbury is far the largest lake in the Mendocino National Forest. Besides the surrounding forest, highlights include lakeside camping and good boat ramps. Groceries and gas are available.

Set at an elevation of 1,800 feet, Pillsbury is big and pretty when full, with 65 miles of shoreline. It is becoming a popular vacation destination with Bay Area folks, who tend to congregate at the north end of the lake where beaches, Forest Service camps, and boat ramp are located.

Most visitors will fish a little and water a little, enjoy the sun, and maybe take a dip in the cool green waters. Though conditions are decent for windsurfing in the early summer, few windsurfers are willing to make circuitous drive for less than great prospects. Interestingly, you are more apt to see hang gliders here.

The lake remains just difficult enough to reach that it probably will never get undated with people, as occasionally occurs at Clear Lake. If you're staying at Pillsbury, one great side trip is a rafting run down nearby Eel River (see the *Eel River (Main Fork) and Eel River (Pillsbury Run)* listing in this chapter).

The fishing is often good for trout the spring, and then bass in the warmer months.

Access: There are three paved boat ramps, one at Fuller Grove Campground on lake's northwest end, one just past Sunset Campground on the northeast end, and one at Lake Pillsbury Resort on west end. The boat ramp at Fuller Grove wheelchair-accessible.

Facilities, fees: Campgrounds, vault toilets, and drinking water are available. Lodging, marina, boat rentals, gas, and conven-

iences are available at Lake Pillsbury Resort. Access is free. There are fees for boat launch and camping.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, waterskiing, wakeboarding, personal watercraft, sailing, windsurfing, and swimming are permitted. Windsurfing and swimming are best on the lake's north end, which has sandy beaches.

Directions: To Lake Pillsbury Resort: From Ukiah, take U.S. 101 north for five miles to the junction with Highway 20. Turn right on Highway 20 and drive five miles to Sunset Campground (toward Lake Pillsbury). Turn northwest on East Potter Valley Road and drive 5.9 miles to the town of Potter Valley. Continue on East Potter Valley Road toward Lake Pillsbury. Turn northwest on East Potter Valley Road toward Lake Pillsbury. Drive 5.9 miles to the town of Potter Valley. Then continue on East Potter Valley Road toward Lake Pillsbury. Turn right and drive 15 miles to the Eel River Information Kiosk at Lake Pillsbury. Continue east for 4.1 miles to the junction with Hall Mountain Road. Turn right and drive three miles to the camp entrance. A boat ramp is available 0.25 mile to the south.

The Fuller Grove: From Ukiah, take U.S. 101 north for five miles to the junction with Highway 20. Turn right (east) on Highway 20 and drive five miles to East Potter Valley Road toward Lake Pillsbury). Turn northwest on East Potter Valley Road toward Lake Pillsbury. Drive 5.9 miles to the town of Potter Valley. Then continue on East Potter Valley Road toward Lake Pillsbury. Turn right and drive 15 miles to the Eel River Information Kiosk at Lake Pillsbury. Continue for 2.2 miles to the

campground access road. Turn right and drive 0.25 mile to the campground.

Contact: Mendocino National Forest, Upper Lake Ranger District, 707/275-2361, www.fs.fed.us/r5; PG&E Recreation Desk, 916/386-5164, www.pge.com/recreation; Lake Pillsbury Resort, 707/743-9935; Lake County Visitor Information Center, 707/274-5652, www.lakecounty.com.

15 LETTS LAKE



west of Maxwell in Mendocino National Forest

Map 4.2, page 122

Okay, c'mon now, admit it: You've never seen directions like the ones provided under *Directions* in this listing for Letts Lake, right? If you think they are confusing, imagine how difficult it would be to find the lake without this book. Result? Advantage: you.

When you eventually get here, you find a small lake (35 acres) set at 4,500 feet in elevation just within Mendocino National Forest, along with a few campgrounds on the north shore.

Because boats with motors are not allowed and the access road is quite circuitous, people with car-top rowboats, canoes, and rafts will fare well at Letts Lake. Swimming prospects are good; although there is no sandy beach area, there is a rocky shoreline.

The surrounding area is pretty, with excellent views and good hiking. You can turn a hike into a fortune hunt by trying to discover one of several natural springs in the area: Fir Rock Springs, Summit Springs, Cold Springs, Freezeout Springs, Board Camp Springs, Young's Corral Springs, and Sylar Springs.

Access: A primitive boat ramp that's suitable for car-top boats is located on the east side of the lake.

Facilities, fees: Campgrounds, vault toilets, drinking water, and a wheelchair-accessible fishing pier is available. Access is free. Supplies

can be obtained in Stonyford at Stonyford General Store (530/963-3235).

Water sports, restrictions: Rowboats, canoes, and kayaks are permitted. No motors. Swimming is allowed.

Directions: From Sacramento, take I-5 north for 67 miles to the exit for Maxwell. Take that exit, turn west on Maxwell-Sires Road and drive to Sires and Sires-Lodoga Road. Turn left on Sires-Lodoga Road and continue to Lodoga and Lodoga-Stonyford Road. Turn right on Lodoga-Stonyford Road and loop around East Park Reservoir to reach Stonyford and Fours Spring Road. Turn west on Fours Springs Road/Forest Service Road M10 and drive about 17 miles into the national forest (where the road becomes Forest Service Road 17N02) to the campground, on the east side of Letts Lake.

Contact: Mendocino National Forest, Grindstone Ranger District, 530/934-3316, www.fs.fed.us/r5; Stonyford Work Center, 530/963-3128, fax 530/963-3173.

16 EAST PARK RESERVOIR



Rating: 7

near Stonyford in Mendocino National Forest **Map 4.2, page 122**

It can get hot here, absolutely sizzling. In mid-summer, temperatures in the 90s and 100s are common, and some summers the area is hit with a string of 100-degree days that seems to go on forever. The water levels drop a bit almost daily, and by August, East Park Reservoir has been transformed into a bathtub, complete with the ring.

But until that happens, this is a great lake for powerboating, waterskiing, and swimming. Although the place is primitive, the foothill setting is pretty, launching and access are free, and all water sports are permitted. The best swimming areas are near the campgrounds.

In low rain years and after late July, powerboaters should check water levels before heading out. The dropping levels result in

navigational hazards, and tree stumps are often just beneath the surface.

One of the great secrets of this lake is that the crappie fishing can be sensational. It is best at night, with live minnows or crappie jigs tossed under a bright light. There are also big bass in this lake, including some in the 10-pound class.

Access: A primitive boat ramp is located on the lake's northwest side at the end of the access road.

Facilities, fees: Primitive campsites, and vaulting water. Camping (except for groups), boat launching, and day use are free. Supplies can be obtained in Stonyford and Lodoga; try Stonyford General Store (530/963-3235).

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, waterskiing, wakeboarding, personal watercraft, sailing, windsurfing, and swimming are permitted. A 5-mph speed limit is enforced anywhere within 100 feet of the shoreline and near swimming areas. Swimming beaches are located near the campgrounds.

Directions: From Sacramento, take I-5 north for 67 miles to the exit for Maxwell. Take that exit, turn west on Maxwell-Sires Road and drive to Sires and Sires-Lodoga Road. Turn left on Sires-Lodoga Road and continue to Lodoga and Lodoga-Stonyford Road. Turn right on Lodoga-Stonyford Road and drive to East Park Reservoir and the boat ramp.

Note: A second entrance can be reached 23 miles from I-5 just past Squaw Creek Inn. **Contact:** East Park Reservoir, 530/968-5671; Bureau of Reclamation, Northern California Area, 530/934-7069.

17 CLEAR LAKE

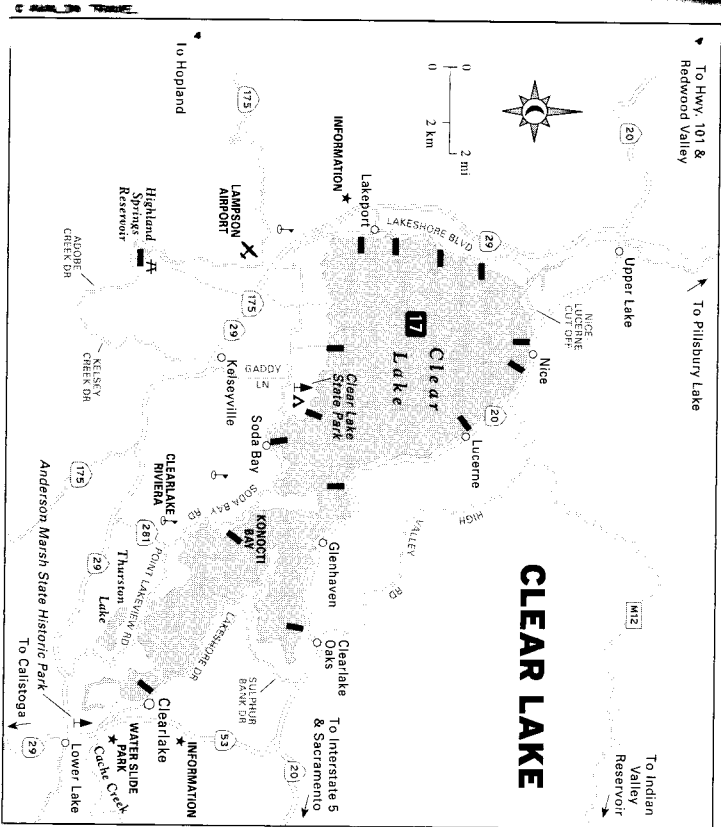


Rating: 9

north of Calistoga

Map 4.2, page 122

Clear Lake is a remarkable vision the first time you drive over the hills and lay your eyes



on it: so big, so full, perhaps a few cumulus clouds sprinkled in the sky over nearby Mount Konocit. It is one of the prettiest sights in California, particularly in the spring when the surrounding hills are green and everything is so fresh and clean.

This is one of those rare places where reality can equal the vision. There is just something about Clear Lake that makes a visit here a special experience. Maybe it's the knowledge that this is a true lake fashioned entirely by the forces of nature rather than a reservoir created by humans to serve humans.

For one thing, the body of water is vast, covering more than 40,000 surface acres amid the foothills of Lake County; it's the largest natural freshwater lake within California's borders. It often seems full right to the brim, and with Highway 20 running alongside the eastern shore, there is a sense of intimacy that large reservoirs just can't claim, where the water levels

can be low and roads far from the water. With dozens of resorts and private campgrounds sprinkled along the 100 miles of shoreline, the lake can accommodate huge numbers of visitors without making one feel crowded. In addition, there are almost 100 boat ramps (including 10 free ramps). That makes Clear Lake ideal for boating/camping weekends.

Every imaginable water sport—even parasailing—can be enjoyed here, and just about every kind of watercraft is available for rent. Add to that staying at a resort, camping, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, bicycling, rockhounding, golfing, touring wineries, taking glider flights, exploring Native American village archaeological sites, and well, you've got it all.

The lake is shaped somewhat like an hourglass, with the northern section much larger and rounder than its southern counterpart. These two sections are somewhat divided by an extended peninsula. Waterskiing is best on

calm summer days on the lake's northern part. Note that the shoreline along the north and west shores, and along the southern half of the lake, is very popular for bass fishing, so waterskiers should avoid the shoreline, particularly in the coves. To ensure that waterskiers stay where they're supposed to, a sheriff's boat patrols the lake full time.

The water is very warm in summer, with surface temperatures often approaching 80 degrees—ideal for all water sports. The NorCal Boat & Ski races are held here each summer, along with the annual Splash In, an event for seaplane owners.

Clear Lake is the bass capital of the west. It can be the most rewarding lake in California. Yet in the turnaround of a day, it can also be the most humbling. More times than not, however, it rewards, not humbles. There may be no better place in America to catch a big bass. The average angler is going to catch one five pounds or better 80 percent of the time. There are also wads of 12- and 14-inch bass in the lake, and you can catch and release 30 or 40 of them. But the big ones are the appeal. If you target the bigger fish, you hope for five bites. Some days you get lucky and get 10 bites. Of those bites, you hope to catch them all. The lake also has excellent numbers of catfish, crappie, and bluegill.

The lake's marinas are complete and well staffed, and the marinas that have lodging and docking facilities are extremely popular all summer long. Reservations are always advised and often needed at the higher quality spots. The same is true at Clear Lake State Park, which provides campgrounds, as well as boater access to an adjacent section of tulle-edged shoreline that is especially good for fishing for bluegill and bass.

Dozens of mom-and-pop operations are located around the lake. They vary greatly in quality, but virtually all have their own boat ramps or are situated very close to a public ramp. The most developed operation is at Konociti Harbor Resort & Spa, which has condo-style units, a restaurant, full marina, and a small concert hall.

Windsurfing is possible just about anywhere there's a beach. The best time for the sport is in the spring, when the wind is up of course.

There are several beaches around the lake. The Lake County Visitor Information Center provides a free map that details all the public boat ramps and beach access points.

Access: Clear Lake has 10 free boat launches, along with dozens at private resorts and launch at the state park. Several resorts and private boat ramps are in the area:

- Edgewater Resort, at Soda Bay: Kelseyville on Highway 29, take the Gadd Lane exit and drive (the road immediately becomes Merritt Road) on Merritt Road for two miles to Soda Bay Road. Turn right on Soda Bay Road and drive three miles to the park entrance and boat ramp on the left. For more information, call 707/279-0208.
- Holiday Harbor, near Nice: From north of Ukiah on U.S. 101, drive north to the junction with Highway 20. Turn east on Highway 2 and drive to the town of Nice and Howard Avenue. Turn left on Howard Avenue and drive 200 feet to the park and boat launch at the end of the road. For more information, call 707/274-1136.
- Beachcomber Resort, RV near Lucerne: From north of Ukiah on U.S. 101, or from Williams on I-5, turn on Highway 20 and drive to the town of Lucerne. Continue on Highway 20 to the east side of Lucerne and to the resort at 6345 East Highway 20. For more information, call 707/274-6639.

- Glenhaven Beach, at Glenhaven: From north of Ukiah on U.S. 101, or I-5 at Williams, turn on Highway 20 and drive to Clear Lake and the town of Glenhaven (four miles northwest of Clearlake Oaks). In Glenhaven, continue on Highway 20 to the camp and boat ramp at 9625 East Highway 20. For more information, call 707/998-3406.

There are also the following free public ramps:

- Clear Lake Avenue: From Main Street in the town of Lakeport, take Clear Lake Avenue

east and head to the paved ramp located at the lake's edge.

- Fifth Street Ramp: From Main Street in the town of Lakeport, turn east on Fifth Street and drive to the two-lane paved ramp.
- First Street Ramp: From Main Street in the town of Lakeport, turn east on First Street and continue to the two-lane paved ramp.
- Hudson Avenue: From Highway 20 in Nice, turn south on Hudson Boulevard and continue to the two-lane paved ramp at the lake's edge. Fishing access is free.
- I. V. Keeling County Park: This park is located in the town of Nice at 3000 Lakeshore Boulevard and has a paved ramp.

- Lake County Park: On Highway 29 south of Kelseyville, turn north on Soda Bay Road/Highway 281 and drive to Park Drive. Turn north on Park Drive drive to the paved ramp at 1985 Park Drive.
- Lakeshore Drive and Crystal Lake Way: From Main Street in the town of Lakeport, turn west on Clear Lake Avenue and continue to High Street. Turn north, drive to Lakeshore Drive, turn right and continue to the paved ramp at the junction with Crystal Lake Way.

- Lucerne Harbor County Park: A paved ramp is available in the town of Lucerne at 6225 East Highway 20.
- Redbud City Park: In the town of Clearlake, look for the park entrance at 14655 Lakeshore Drive. A four-lane paved ramp is available.
- Third Street Ramp: From Main Street in the town of Lakeport, take Third Street east to the two-lane paved ramp.

Facilities, fees: Full marina services are available at Fendale Marina in Kelseyville, 707/279-4866; Glenhaven Marina in Glenhaven, 707/998-3406; and Will-O-Point Resort in Lakeport, 707/262-5896. Boat rentals, bait and tackle, and supplies are available. Camping and cabins are available. Boat launching is free at most public ramps. Fees are charged for camping and boat launching at private marinas.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, water-

skiing, wakeboarding, personal watercraft, sailing, windsurfing, and swimming are permitted. Swimming beaches are located at Clear Lake State Park in Kelseyville, Redbud City Park in Clearlake, Star Beach in Lucerne, H.V. Keeling Park in Nice, and at 16th Street in Lakeport.

Directions: To Clear Lake State Park: From Vallejo, take Highway 29 north to Lower Lake to a lighted junction (still Highway 29). Turn left on Highway 29 and drive seven miles to Soda Bay Road. Turn right on Soda Bay Road and drive 11 miles to the park entrance on the right side of the road.

From Sacramento, take I-5 north to Williams and Highway 20. Turn west on Highway 20 and drive to the junction with Highway 53. Turn left on 53 and drive to Lower Lake and the lighted junction with Highway 29. Turn right on Highway 29 and drive seven miles to Soda Bay Road. Turn right on Soda Bay Road and drive 11 miles to the park entrance on the right side of the road.

From Eureka, take U.S. 101 south to Calpella (17 miles south of Willits), turn east on Highway 20, and continue to Highway 29. Turn right on Highway 29 and drive to Kelseyville and Main Street. Turn left on Main Street and drive a short distance to State Street. Turn right and drive 0.25 mile to Gaddy Lane. Turn right on Gaddy Lane and drive about two miles to Soda Bay Road. Turn right and drive one mile to the park entrance on the left (well signed from Kelseyville).

Contact: Clear Lake State Park, 707/279-4293; Lakeport Regional Chamber of Commerce, 707/263-5092; Lake County Visitor Information Center, 707/274-5652 or 800/525-3743, www.lakecounty.com; Clearlake Chamber of Commerce, 707/994-3600; Greater Lakeport Chamber of Commerce, 707/263-5092, www.lakeportchamber.com; Konociti Harbor Resort & Spa, Kelseyville, 707/279-4281, www.konocitiharbor.com.

Boat rentals: Funtime RV Park, Clearlake (pontoon boats, fishing boats, and ski boats), 707/994-6267; Blue Fish Cove Resort, Clearlake Oaks (fishing boats, pedal boats, and

Personal watercraft, 707/998-1769; Lake Marina Resort, Clearlake Oaks (pontoon boats and canoes), 707/998-3787; Konocri Harbor Resort & Spa Marina, Konocri Bay (pontoon boats, ski boats, fishing boats, pedal boats, kayaks, and personal watercraft), 707/279-6628; Disney's Water Sports, Lakeport (fishing boats, ski boats, pontoon boats, pedal boats, kayaks, and personal watercraft), 707/263-0969, www.disneywatersports.com; Shaw's Shady Acres, Lower Lake (fishing boats), 707/994-2236; Edgewater Resort, Soda Bay (fishing boats and kayaks), 707/279-0208 or 800/396-6224.

Boat cruises and tours: *Clear Lake Queen* (tri-level paddlewheel), Lucerne, 707/994-5432; Konocri Harbor Resort & Spa Marina (75-passenger charter boat), Konocri Bay, 707/279-6628.

Lodging and supplies: Clearlake Bait & Tackle, 707/994-4399; Konocri Harbor Resort & Spa, 800/660-5253; Clearlake Outdoors, 707/262-5832; Lakeshore Bait and Tackle, 707/994-3474; Limit Out Bait & Tackle, 707/998-1006; Pit Stop, 707/262-0931; Tackle It, 707/262-1233; Female Resort and Marina (on the west side of the lake), 707/279-4866; Shaw's Shady Acres on Cache Creek, 707/994-2236; Holiday Harbor RV Park & Marina (north end of lake), 707/274-1136.

Guides: Jim Munk, 707/479-7961; Boats Guide Service, 707/857-3752; Clear Lake Guide Service, 707/349-1427; Get-R-Done Fishing Service, 707/272-6640; The King Connection, 707/263-8856; Pounds Year Round Guide Service, 707/279-4739; Bob Thein's Fishing Guide Service, 707/994-4886; Bassini' With Bob Mysky, 707/274-0373; Konocri Guide Service, 707/279-0472; Big George's, 707/279-9269; Bass'n Guide Service, 707/857-3752.

18 INDIAN VALLEY RESERVOIR



Rating:

near Clear Lake

Map 4.2, page 122

Imagine a lake so ugly that it is beautiful. Such is the case at Indian Valley Reservoir.

Ugly? To some people it is one downright ugly dog. The water level is often very low, turning the lake into a long, narrow strip with miles of exposed shore. For most of the year, the surrounding hills are brown and barren. The road in from either side is a twisted nightmare.

But after a while Indian Valley Reservoir becomes more like a homely dog that you love more than anything in the world, because inside bears a heart that will never betray you. Indian Valley is a long, narrow reservoir set at elevation 1,500 feet. When full, the lake covers about 4,000 acres and has 4 miles of shoreline. The water harbors many submerged trees, which provide an excellent habitat for bass, kokanee salmon, and catfish. This is some of the best bass fishing territory in Northern California.

A 10-mph speed limit, clear water, and hot days create a quiet setting for fishing and make for good swimming all summer long. There are no sandy beaches, but the clear, warm water is good for swimming, and those who want to take the plunge can jump in wherever and whenever they desire. After all, it is fairly remote and primitive out here. Rental boats are not available.

The saving graces are the little Indian Valley Store at the lake's south end and the boat ramps located at the north and south ends. Boater traffic is low, consisting primarily of people who come to fish for bass and kokanee salmon. Relatively few know about this place, and of those who do, the long twisty drive, ugly surroundings, and enforced speed limit keep most of them away.

But for anglers that makes it just beautiful.

Access: There are two boat ramps.
Facilities, fees: Campgrounds, vault toilets,

thinking water, and a convenience store are available. Fees are charged for day use (boat launching included) and camping.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, canoes, kayaks, inflatables, sailing, windsurfing, and swimming are permitted. A 10-mph speed limit is strictly enforced. No waterskiing, wakeboarding, or personal watercraft. Although there are no designated beaches, you can swim all along the shoreline; the most popular swimming spots are near the campgrounds.

Directions: From Williams on I-5, turn west on Highway 20 and drive 25 miles into the foothills in Walker Ridge Road. Turn north (right) on Walker Ridge Road (a gravel road) and drive north 5.4 miles to a major intersection of two dirt roads. Turn left and drive five miles (you will pass Blue Oak Campground to your right) to the Indian Valley Store and boat ramp; at the south end of the lake near the dam. Note that the access road is dirt and washboarded.

From the north end of Clear Lake, at the town of Nice, drive one mile east on Highway 20, then turn left on Bartlett Springs Road. The twisty road is routed to the north end of the lake, where there's a boat launch. This is a slow, twisty but scenic route.

Contact: Bureau of Land Management, Ukiah Field Office, 707/468-4000, www.blm.gov/ca; Indian Valley Store and Marina, 530/662-0607. A detailed map is available from the BLM.

19 GUALALA RIVER



Rating: 6

south of Point Arena

Map 4.3, page 123

Remote and pretty, the Gualala River is the lowest of the smaller rivers flowing along the Sonoma and Mendocino coastline. Families and novice rafters find that it makes a great place to enjoy an easy float in a canoe or a kayak. The water is clean and warm in the summer, and the lower river is good for swimming. Because the river's upper stretches are often

too shallow in the summer, the lower section gets pretty heavy recreational use. The run down in a kayak or canoe is an easy Class I affair that gets a lot of traffic in the summer months. About 50 kayaks are available for rent, and customers are provided with all of the necessary accessories and shuttle service. Bikes and canoes are also available.

The river is very scenic, and boaters should be able to see lots of wildlife and a variety of bird species. Swimming is good all along the lower river, which has deep swimming holes and even rope swings in a couple of places. One word of warning: Don't try to find swimming spots upstream because that river section is bordered by private property.

The season here is a two-part affair. Part One is during relatively higher flows, when the river runs into the ocean. Part Two is when flows drop and a sand bar closes the mouth of river. Both provide boating opportunities—the first for down-the-river technical kayaking, the second for flat-water, family-style opportunities. **Access:** There is no boat ramp. To reach the standard put-in (called Switchvale), see the *Directions* in this listing for access to the lower river; once on Old State Road, drive three miles to a parking area. Park and carry your gear a short distance down to the beach. An alternate put-in is located about six miles upstream (at an access known as Hot Spot), but it is generally only boatable very early in the season.

Facilities, fees: Campgrounds, restrooms with flush toilets, drinking water, and vault toilets are available nearby. Kayak rentals, shuttle service, and boating supplies can be obtained at Adventure Rents. Full facilities are available in Gualala. Access is free. Rafting permits are not required. A fee is charged for camping. **Water sports, restrictions:** Driftboats, kayaks, canoes, and inflatables are permitted. Several swimming holes are located off the roads mentioned above.

Directions: To access the lower river from the town of Gualala, turn east on Old Stage Road (County Road 501) and drive less than one mile to Old State Road (County Road 502).

Turn right on Old State Road, where access is available on the road. To reach the upper fishing limit of the river from Gualala, drive south on Highway 1 to Annapolis Road. Turn left (east) on Annapolis Road and travel to the twin bridges. The bridges cross the Gualala. **Contact:** Redwood Coast Chamber of Commerce, 707/884-1080, www.redwoodcoastchamber.com; Gualala Sports & Tackle, 707/884-4247; Craig Bell, Greenwater Guide Service, Gualala, 707/884-3012; Gualala Point Regional Park, 707/785-2377; Gualala River Redwood Park, 707/884-3533; Adventure Rents, North Coast Kayaking, 707/884-4386 or 888/881-4386, www.adventurerents.com.

20 LAKE SONOMA



north of Santa Rosa

Map 4.3, page 123

BEST

Nestled in the rich foothill country of Sonoma County, Lake Sonoma offers one of the best boating/camping experiences around. A 5-mph speed limit and no-wake zones have been established in many areas of the lake, along with 109 boat-in campsites and two group boat-in campgrounds. This guarantees peace, quiet, and excellent swimming and fishing opportunities; yet there's still a huge section of water available for water sports.

There's plenty of room for everybody. The lake is set at an elevation of 450 feet and covers 2,500 surface acres, with 53 miles of shoreline and hundreds of hidden coves. In addition, the lake is adjacent to an 8,000-acre wildlife area that has 40 miles of hiking trails. From the dam, the lake extends nine miles north on the Dry Creek Arm and four miles west on Warm Springs Creek. Each of the lake arms has several fingers and miles of quiet and secluded shore. One of the great things about this lake is that boat rentals, including houseboat rentals, are available at the marina.

Rating: 10

Any potential conflict between high-speed operators and anglers has been resolved, setting aside a large area in the main lake for water-skiing, wakeboarding, and personal watercraft use.

Water-skiers usually stick to the Warm Springs Arm, which gets less wind than the Dry Creek Arm. Swimmers and beginning windsurfers will find the best conditions near Yory Creek, although speed-loving windsurfers can vent into the waterskiing area on the Dry Creek Arm. How is the water? Well, after the winter runoff runs it a bit off-color, the lake quickly turns green in the spring, and by summer temperatures are in the high 70s.

The lake attracts heavy use, with most tents staying at the Liberty Glen Campground. Boaters have the advantage of being able to access the boat-in camps, which are great if you're looking for a personal, secluded site. There are primitive sites without drinking water, but provide chemical toilets, garbage cans, picnic sites, picnic tables, fire rings, and lantern pits (you can hang your food on them). Be sure to bring some kind of sun shade, even if it's just a light tarp rigged with poles and ropes.

To get the most out of a stay here, stop the visitors center below the dam to pick up maps, brochures, and other information, ask about boat-in campsite availability, and bring your own picnic supplies.

All in all, Lake Sonoma provides the perfect example of how to do something right. **Access:** A five-lane paved boat ramp is located on the lake's west side. A primitive, half-mile launch area is available at Yory Creek. **Facilities, fees:** A full-service marina, boat ramps, and boat rentals are available. There are 109 primitive boat-in campsites around the lake: two hike-in sites, four group sites (two which are boat-in), and 95 tent sites and group sites at Liberty Glen Campground. Picnic tables, fire grills, and vault toilets are provided at the primitive sites, but drinking water is not. At Liberty Glen picnic tables and fire rings are provided, as are flush toilets, drinking water, lantern holders, solar-heated showers, and an RV dump station.

ing, and other supplies can be obtained at the Dry Creek Store on Dry Creek Road in Healdsburg. Day-use and launch fees apply. **Water sports, restrictions:** Powerboats, watercraft, wakeboarding, and personal watercraft are allowed in designated areas; a large area is available in the main lake body. Other designated areas have a posted 5-mph speed limit. The best area for swimming and windsurfing is within the Yory Creek access.

Directions: To primary ramps: From Santa Rosa, drive north on U.S. 101 to Healdsburg. In Healdsburg, take the Dry Creek Road exit, turn left, and drive northwest for 11 miles. After crossing a small bridge, you will see the visitors center on your right. To reach the boat-in ramp, continue past the visitors center about three miles. Follow the signs to the boat launch ramp across the ridge, or to the boat-in area at Lake Sonoma Marina.

The Yory Creek access: Car-top boats can be launched at the Yory Creek access. From Santa Rosa, drive north on U.S. 101 to Cloverdale. After the first Cloverdale exit and turn left at the first sign, driving over U.S. 101 to Southwardale Boulevard. Turn right and drive west on Brookside Road. Turn left and drive north on Foothill Drive. Turn left on Foothill Drive and drive to Hot Springs Road. Turn right on Hot Springs Road and continue on the narrow, winding road several miles to the lake. **Contact:** U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Lake Sonoma, 707/433-9483, www.spn.usace.army.mil/lakesonoma; Lake Sonoma Marina, 707/414-2200, www.lakesonoma.com; Dry Creek Store, 707/433-4171.

HIGHLAND SPRINGS RESERVOIR



north of Clear Lake

Map 4.4, page 124

ample can drive to giant Clear Lake many miles over a lifetime and never learn about

Rating: 6

nearby Highland Springs Reservoir or the adjacent Adobe Creek Reservoir. Yet these two lakes are so close, only about 10 miles west of Clear Lake, and between them they fulfill many needs.

Highland Springs Reservoir is located in the foothills just southwest of Big Valley, about a mile west of Adobe Creek Reservoir. Created when a dam was built on Highland Creek, a tributary of Adobe Creek, it covers about 150 acres.

Because no gas-powered motors are allowed on the lake, Highland Springs offers a perfect alternative for people with small, hand-powered boats, such as canoes, rafts, or prams. Boaters are guaranteed calm water, even on three-day weekends when nearby Clear Lake just about gets plowed under by all the hot jet boats.

This is a nice, quiet, day-use only lake that's ideal for a few hours of picnicking and splashing or wading around. With warm, fairly clear water and no motorized boats to disturb the peace, the swimming here is decent and windsurfing is excellent. The lake gets moderate use, and most of the visitors are anglers. A golf course is available next to the lake.

Access: A primitive boat ramp is located on the lake's east side adjacent to the picnic area.

Facilities, fees: Restrooms with flush toilets, a grassy picnic area, horseshoe pits, and basketball court are provided. Access is free.

Water sports, restrictions: Small boats, canoes, kayaks, inflatables, sailing, windsurfing, and swimming are permitted. No gas motors allowed. Swimming is best at the picnic area.

Directions: From Vallejo, take Highway 29 north to the town of Lower Lake. Bear left on Highway 29 and drive to Kelseyville, then continue on Highway 29 four miles to Highland Springs Road. Turn left on Highland Springs Road and drive four miles to the reservoir.

Contact: Lake County Visitor Information, 707/274-5652; Lake County Public Works,

707/263-2341, www.lakecountry.com/lakes.html; Tackle It, 707/262-1233; Lakeshore Bait and Tackle, 707/944-3474.

22 CACHE CREEK



southeast of Clear Lake

Map 4.4, page 124

Cache Creek is best known as the closest place to go white-water rafting by people who live in the San Francisco Bay Area.

From San Francisco it is 110 miles away, and for residents of Napa in the northern Bay Area, it is only 65 miles away. The most accessible area is right along Highway 16, the little two-laner that links tiny towns such as Guinda and Rumsey and eventually connects with Highway 20 near the Cache Creek Wildlife Area.

This is an ideal river for inflatable kayaks, a first-time white-water experience, or an easy overnight trip.

For one-day trips the best put-in spot is about 10 miles north of Rumsey. You can cover about eight miles of river, including shooting three Class II rapids, and use adjacent Highway 16 as your shuttle road. The best take-out is at Camp Haswell, which has a good picnic area that closes at dusk.

The warm water is ideal for swimming, and many rafters fall in on purpose. Although the scenery is not spectacular, the rural foothill country setting is quiet. There is a good deal of traffic here in the summer, mostly Bay Area people taking a quick trip. But if you leave enough room between boats when you get on the river, you can go a full day and not see anyone anyway.

An insider's note: The upper reach of Cache Creek, just south of Clear Lake, is largely inaccessible. However, few people know that a two-mile stretch of water can be reached on the obscure road that runs out of Anderson Flat. **Access:** Rafters may put in along Highway

Rating: 7

16 just before the point where the highway and the creek split off into different directions (this is roughly 10 miles north of the town of Rumsey, near the county line). Take out about six miles downstream at Camp Haswell.

Facilities, fees: Campgrounds, restrooms with flush toilets, drinking water, and vault toilets are nearby. Access to the river is free. A fee is charged for camping.

Water sports, restrictions: Swimming access is available at most of the campgrounds and picnic areas along Highway 16.

Directions: From Vacaville on I-80, turn north on I-505 and drive 21 miles to Madison at the junction with Highway 16. Turn north on Highway 16 and drive northwest for about 10 miles to the town of Rumsey. From Rumsey continue west on Highway 16 for five miles to the park entrance. Direct access is available from the town of Rumsey to four miles upstream, at the confluence of Bear Creek. South of Rumsey, the creek runs on private property; be aware of the boundaries.

Contact: Cache Creek Canyon Regional Park, 530/666-8115, www.yolocounty.org.

Rafting trips: Whitewater Adventure, 800/977-4837, www.gotwhitewater.com; Cache Canyon River Trips, 530/796-3091 or 800/796-3091, www.cachecanyon.com.

23 LAKE BERRYESSA



Rating: 9

north of Vallejo

Map 4.4, page 124

This is a big lake, covering some 21,000 acres with 165 miles of shoreline, complete with secret coves, islands, and an expanse of untouched shore on the eastern side.

Berryessa is the Bay Area's backyard boating headquarters, often a wild scene on hot weekends with lots of fast boats, water-skiers, suntan oil, and flowing liquid refreshment of various origins. During the week the place is more peaceful and the natural beauty

shines; this is the best time for fishing and family recreation. Enthusiasts have a hard time staying on summer weekends in the warm, clear water.

Berryessa does not provide free public boat ramps. Instead, there are several resorts, all of which have ramps, marinas of varying size, and showers and campgrounds. The largest is the Park Resort, which has waterside condos, a marina, boat rentals, an RV park, cottages, a pool, tennis courts, and a swimming school. Most of the marinas offer boat rentals.

The main body of Berryessa is upstream of the Narrows. To the north is a wide expanse of water that is so roomy that jet boats and personal watercraft can go crazy and have all the fun anybody could dream of. To the south of the Narrows, where fishing is more popular, the lake is much smaller and more intimate.

Fishing is excellent at Berryessa. Fishing for trout and salmon can provide spectacular numbers of fish for those on the water early and rolling the proper depth, typically 25–40 feet deep. Bass fishing is also great in late winter through early summer, with counts of 30 and 40, catch-and-release, for know-hows. There is a sprinkling of giant bass and catfish, usually caught by surprise.

Another unique element of Berryessa is at the far northern end of the lake, well up the North Creek Arm. A buoy line there marks the point where powerboats aren't permitted upstream, making it ideal for canoeists to paddle into this rarely traveled lake section, bordered on the west by a dramatic granite wall and on the east by a meadow where deer often graze. You will never forget it.

Access: There are seven boat ramps on Lake Berryessa:

- **Brush Creek Resort:** From Vallejo, take I-80 northeast about 10 miles to the Suisun Valley Road exit. Take Suisun Valley Road and drive north to Highway 121. Turn north on Highway 121 and drive five miles to Highway 128. Turn left on Highway 128, drive five miles to Berryessa-Knoxville Road, and continue 13 miles

to 7600 Knoxville Road. A paved boat ramp, marina, motel, restaurant, bar, campground, restrooms, showers, coin laundry, convenience store, and arcade are available.

- **Rancho Monticello Resort:** From Vallejo, take I-80 northeast about 10 miles to the Suisun Valley Road exit. Take Suisun Valley Road and drive north to Highway 121. Turn north on Highway 121 and drive five miles to Highway 128. Turn left on Highway 128, drive five miles to Berryessa-Knoxville Road. Turn right, and drive 12.5 miles to 6590 Knoxville Road. A paved boat ramp, boat rentals, full-service marina, gas, vacation cabins, campground with restrooms and showers, coin laundry, convenience store, and snack bar are available.

- **Lake Berryessa Marina Resort:** From Vallejo, take I-80 northeast about 10 miles to the Suisun Valley Road exit. Take Suisun Valley Road and drive north to Highway 121. Turn north on Highway 121 and drive five miles to Highway 128. Turn left on Highway 128, drive five miles to Berryessa-Knoxville Road, turn right, and continue nine miles to 5800 Knoxville Road. A paved boat ramp, full-service marina, houseboat and boat rentals, cabins, campground, flush toilets, showers, an RV dump station, a snack bar, RV supplies, and a convenience store are available.

- **Spanish Flat Resort:** From Vallejo, take I-80 northeast about 10 miles to the Suisun Valley Road exit. Take Suisun Valley Road and drive north to Highway 121. Turn north on Highway 121 and drive five miles to Highway 128. Turn north on Highway 128 and drive five miles to Berryessa-Knoxville Road. Turn right on Berryessa-Knoxville Road and continue four miles to 4290 Knoxville Road. A paved boat ramp, full-service marina, boat rentals, park model cabins, campground, restrooms with flush toilets, showers, and convenience store are available. A deli is open in summer and a grill is open on Sundays. Coin laundry, a restaurant, and RV supplies are within 1.5 miles.

- **Steele Park Resort:** From Vallejo, take I-80 northeast about 10 miles to the Suisun Valley Road exit. Take Suisun Valley Road and drive

north (it becomes Wooden Valley Road) another 10 miles to Highway 121. Turn north on Highway 121 and drive about eight miles to the end of Highway 121 and the junction with Highway 128. Turn left (west) on Highway 128 and drive a short distance to Steele Canyon Road. Turn right and drive five miles to the resort. A paved boat ramp, full-service marina, gas, covered and open berths, dry storage, boat rentals, a waterskiing school, an RV park, a motel, cottages, two restaurants, a bar, a convenience store, and a picnic area are available.

- **Pleasure Cove Marina:** From Vallejo, take I-80 northeast about 10 miles to the Suisun Valley Road exit. Take Suisun Valley Road and drive north another 10 miles to Highway 121. Turn north on Highway 121 and drive about eight miles to the end of Highway 121 and the junction with Highway 128. Bear right (southeast) on Highway 128 and proceed four miles to Wagg Canyon Road. Turn left and continue three miles to the resort entrance at the end of the road. A paved boat ramp, full-service marina, boat rentals, houseboats, gas, campground, restrooms, showers, ice, bait and tackle, propane gas, an RV dump station, and a convenience store are available.

- **Markley Cove Resort:** From Vallejo, take I-80 northeast about 10 miles to the Suisun Valley Road exit. Take Suisun Valley Road and drive north another 10 miles to Highway 121. Turn north on Highway 121 and drive about eight miles to the end of Highway 121 and the junction with Highway 128. Bear right (southeast) on Highway 128 and drive eight miles to the resort on the left. A paved boat ramp, a marina, gas, a pump/house, houseboat moorings, bar, a convenience store, and a snack bar are available. Fishing access is free.

Facilities, fees: All resorts have boat ramps and marinas. Most have campgrounds and/or lodging. Fees are charged at resorts for day use, boat launching, and camping.

Water sports, restrictions: All water sports are permitted, but the focus is on power boats, wakeboarding, waterskiing, and tubing.

Directions: From Sacramento, take I-80 west

to Davis and the exit for Highway 113, that exit and drive north on Highway 113 to Covell Boulevard. Turn west on Covell Boulevard and drive to Winters (where the becomes Highway 128), and then continue Purah Creek and past Monticello Dam.

From the Bay Area, take I-80 east to Coalinga and the exit for Suisun Valley Road. Take the exit, turn north and drive 17 miles to Highway 121. Turn right on Highway 121 and seven miles to Moskowitz Corners and the junction of Highway 128. See *Access* in this list for specific boat ramps, marinas, and **resort**.
Contact: Bureau of Reclamation, Lake Berryessa, 707/966-2111, www.usbr.gov/mp/berryessa/
Lodging: Purah Creek Resort (at the end of lake), 707/966-2116; Steele Lake Resort, 707/966-2123 or 800/522-2121; www.steelcreekpark.com; Rancho Monticello Resort, 707/966-2188 or 707/966-9696; Lake Berryessa Marina, 707/966-2161, www.lakeberryessa.com; Spanish Lake Resort, 707/966-7700, marina.707/966-7700; www.spanishlakeresort.com; Pleasure Cove Resort, 707/966-2172; Markley Cove Resort, 707/966-2134.

Tent and RV camping: Rancho Monticello Resort, 707/966-2188; Lake Berryessa Marina Resort, 707/966-2161; Pleasure Cove Resort, 707/966-9600.

Boat rentals: Markley Cove Marina (southeast end of lake), 707/966-2134; Lake Berryessa Houseboat Rentals, 707/966-2827.

Guides: Jim Munk, 707/479-7966; Larry Hemphill Guide & Instruction, 530/674-0276.

24 RUSSIAN RIVER



northwest of Santa Rosa

Rating:

Map 4.4, page 124

Want to find out just how well you get along with somebody? Try paddling a canoe with them down the Russian River. By the end

of the trip, you either will have bonded with your companion or will want to jam a paddle down your throat.

Don't assume that this is a great place for an experiment because the results are likely to be positive. Most of the year, the river is lush and rolling green, with a prime 10-mile stretch between Forestville and Guerneville that is suited for rough redwoods. All this makes for a great first-time paddle.

The most popular launching spot for canoeists is Burke's Canoes. From here, you take an easy paddle along one of the prettiest stretches of the entire river, winding through the heart of the redwoods. The area is green and lush, yet also has many sunny beaches where you can picnic. And whereas other rivers have temporary dams to retain water, there are no dams to cross.

Burke's is the long-established canoe rental and campground on the Russian River. The favorite trip is the 10-miler from Burke's Forestville to Guerneville, which is routed through the heart of the area's redwoods, and a 3.5-hour paddle trip with plenty of time in the day for sunbathing, swimming, and anything else you can think of. The cost is \$4, including a return by shuttle. Many other trips are available.

There are several other places to put in a swimstream, however, and it's an easy float paddle all the way to the ocean. Casini's is another popular put-in, the beginning of a 20-mile paddle trip.

In the summer, the river gets heavy use, with lots of boaters and swimmers at every accessible access point. There are large, sandy beaches all along the highway. The best are at Johnson's Beach and Monte Rio, which offer all the dirty beaches with lifeguards.

Way upstream on the Russian River, between Cloverdale and Hopland, is a challenging bend and rapid at Squaw Rock where

kayakers like to practice. You'll sometimes see people taking kayaking lessons here.

From Cloverdale on downstream past Geyserville, it's an easy paddle. The river is more sedate, and there are far fewer people than at the stretch downstream of Forestville. With only a handful of short, unratified rapids, this is the kind of place where you can enjoy being close to the water as it helps to propel you downstream, and you gain a sense of exhilaration from the freedom of riding a river. Regardless of which section you pick, the Russian River is an ideal first-time destination for canoeing or kayaking.

Access: Paved boat ramps are provided at Burke's put-in, Casini's put-in, and Monte Rio Fishing Access.

Facilities, fees: Lodging, cabins, campgrounds, restrooms, showers, canoe and kayak rentals, and shuttles are available. Public beaches with restrooms, picnic facilities, and snack bars are available as well. Day use is free in most areas. Fees are charged for camping and boat launching at private campgrounds.

Water sports, restrictions: Several excellent swimming beaches are available along Highway 116. They include Johnson's Beach in Guerneville, the public beach at Monte Rio, and the beach at Casini Ranch Campground.

Directions: To Burke's put-in: From the Bay Area, drive north on U.S. 101 to the junction with Highway 116 west (just north of Petaluma). Take Highway 116 west and drive 15 miles to Forestville and Mirabel Road (at the gas station). Turn right and drive 1.5 miles until it dead-ends at Burke's and the Russian River.

To Casini's put-in: On U.S. 101 north of Santa Rosa, turn west on River Road and drive 16 miles to Guerneville and Highway 116. Continue west on Highway 116 and drive seven miles to Duncan Mills and Moscow Road. Turn left (southeast) on Moscow Road and drive 0.7 mile to the campground on the left.

To Monte Rio Fishing Access: In the town of Monte Rio, turn south on Church Street and continue down to the ramp.

Contact: King's Sport & Tackle, Guerneville, 707/869-2156; Casini Ranch Family

Park near Red Bluff, Hidden Harbor RV Park near Los Molinos, and Woodson Bridge State Recreation Area near Corning. Lodging and supplies can be obtained in Red Bluff, Corning, and other towns. Access is free. Rafting permits are not required. A fee is charged for camping. **Water sports, restrictions:** Powerboats, water skiing, wakeboarding, personal watercraft, canoes, kayaks, inflatables, and windsurfing are permitted. Swimming is permitted at Lake Red Bluff. Life preservers are required for all users with inflatables.

Directions: Access is available off roads that junction with I-5 near Red Bluff, Corning, and Oland. Highway 45 southeast of Oland parallels the river, providing direct access to Colusa. **Contact:** Lake Red Bluff Recreation Area, 530/527-2813; Sacramento River Discovery Center, 530/5271916; Woodson Bridge State Recreation Area, 530/839-2112, www.parks.ca.gov (click on Find A Park); Shasta Cascade Wonderland Association, 800/474-2782, www.shastacascade.org; Department of Fish and Game in Red Bluff, 530/527-8892.

Rentals, shuttles, camping: Bend RV Park, 530/527-6289; Driftwood RV, 530/384-2851; Hidden Harbor RV and Marina, 530/384-1800. **Guides:** J&J Guide Service, 530/222-6253, www.worldwidefishing.com; Mike Bogue, 530/246-8457; Three Rivers Guide Service, 530/671-9206; The Fly Shop, 530/222-3555, www.the-flyshop.com.

2 PARADISE LAKE



near Paradise

Map 5.2, page 156

There are a lot of things you can't do at Paradise Lake. You can't have a motor on your boat. You can't swim. You can't windsurf. There's no campground, yet they charge a day-use fee. Car-top boats are strictly regulated by lake officials: only "approved" craft (that

Rating: 5

is approved by them) are permitted; cannot be completely self-enclosed. In fact, you must have two outside air chambers on your boat. Despite all the can'ts, Paradise Lake earned a fair rating. Set at 3,000 feet, Mount Lassen foothills, the pretty lake is a transition zone where the valley woodlands way to alpine country. With all the boat restrictions, the lake is primarily visited fishing for trout. There is also a pretty area, and you can plunk in a car-top boat.

You get quiet water that is ideal for paddle-powered boats. In early summer can be the perfect place to bring your boat and spend a few calm, relaxing hours. **Access:** A paved boat ramp is located from the picnic area on North Lake Road. **Facilities, fees:** A day-use picnic area is available. Supplies can be obtained in Paradise. **Water sports, restrictions:** Rowboats, kayaks (no self-enclosed kayaks), and inflatables (at least two air chambers) are permitted. No motors. No swimming, windsurfing, or water-contact sports. Life jackets be worn at all times when on water. **No Directions:** From Chico, take Highway south to Skyway Road. Turn east on Skyway Road and drive 10 miles to Paradise and Colene Road. Turn right on Colene Road and drive 3.5 miles to the lake entrance. **Contact:** Paradise Lake, Paradise Irrigation District, 530/877-4971, www.paradiselake.com; Paradise Sporting Goods, 530/877-9761; The Tackle Box, Chico, 530/898-9761.

3 BUCKS LAKE



near Quincy in Plumas National Forest

Map 5.2, page 156

Here's one of the perfect boating/camping fishing spots if only—if only it attracted more people.

Rating: 4

Bucks Lake is set at an elevation of 5,200 feet in Plumas National Forest, about a 25-minute drive out of Quincy. That's remote enough to make you feel like you're on the edge of wilderness and high enough to give you a full dose of the four seasons. It's an ideal destination for a family on a camping trip with a boat.

At 1,800 acres the lake is big enough for water sports. Campers tend to congregate on the lake's northwest side, where the less developed Forest Service campgrounds are built: the marina, cabins, and developed facilities are all on the east side. The campsites are quiet and wooded, some with views of the lake, and provide excellent shoreline access. **Directions:** From Quincy, take Highway 89 north to the junction with Highway 89. Turn south on Highway 89/70 and drive 11 miles to Quincy and Bucks Lake Road. In Quincy, turn right at Bucks Lake Road, and drive 16.5 miles to Bucks Lake and the junction with Bucks Lake Dam Road/Forest Service Road 33.

Contact: Plumas National Forest, Mount Hough Ranger District, 530/283-0555; Plumas County Chamber of Commerce, 800/326-2247, www.plumascounty.org; Sportsmen's Den, Quincy, 530/283-2733; Bucks Lake Lodge, 530/283-2262; Bucks Lake Marina, 530/283-4243; Bucks Lake-shore Resort, 530/283-6900, www.bucks lake.com; Timberline Inn, 530/283-9667 or 800/481-28925.

The lake freezes over every winter, and snow hinders the access road. The road is usually plowed by the end of April or very early in May, and even with snow still on the ground at the campgrounds, fishing is usually outstanding. By late June, the surface waters start to warm and powerboats and skiers come out to take advantage of the warm midday temperatures. The combination of clear water and frequent afternoon winds makes Bucks Lake by far the best in the region for windsurfing, a fact that is not well known.

What is well known, however, is that this lake is just about the perfect destination for families who are hauling their boats along in search of some camping fun. That fact keeps the place full of happy folks. **Access:** There are three paved boat ramps,

all on the east side of the lake. When you're driving in on Bucks Lake Road, look for the signs for Lakeshore Resort, Bucks Lake Lodge, and Haskins Valley Inn.

Facilities, fees: Lodging, marinas, boat rentals, cabins, campgrounds with drinking water, and a picnic area are available. Convenience stores and a restaurant are available. Access is free. Fees are charged for camping and boat launching.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, water skiing, wakeboarding, and personal watercraft are permitted. Swimming and windsurfing are allowed; the best beach is at the Sandy Point Day-Use Area on the northwest end of the lake.

Directions: From Oroville, take Highway 70 north to the junction with Highway 89. Turn south on Highway 89/70 and drive 11 miles to Quincy and Bucks Lake Road. In Quincy, turn right at Bucks Lake Road, and drive 16.5 miles to Bucks Lake and the junction with Bucks Lake Dam Road/Forest Service Road 33.

Contact: Plumas National Forest, Mount Hough Ranger District, 530/283-0555; Plumas County Chamber of Commerce, 800/326-2247, www.plumascounty.org; Sportsmen's Den, Quincy, 530/283-2733; Bucks Lake Lodge, 530/283-2262; Bucks Lake Marina, 530/283-4243; Bucks Lake-shore Resort, 530/283-6900, www.bucks lake.com; Timberline Inn, 530/283-9667 or 800/481-28925.

4 MIDDLE FORK FEATHER RIVER



northeast of Oroville in Plumas National Forest

Map 5.2, page 156

The Middle Fork Feather River is one of the wildest streams in Northern California. Cutting through the bottom of a deep canyon, it is beautiful and free-flowing; remote and

Rating: 4

unarmed. Most people who venture here are hikers and backpackers taking steep, butre-kicking trails in and out of the canyon, some crossing the river on the Pacific Crest Trail. There are a number of pools for fishing and swimming, though the water is cold.

Only a handful of expert rafters will try conquering the Middle Fork Gorge, a wild and woolly run that can be terrifying. A series of Class IV and V rapids, as well as some unrunnable suicide portions, must be portaged. These include several waterfalls, even the dramatic Granite Dome Falls. Newcomers should have at least one person in their party who knows the river well, and they should attempt running the river only during low water. The season when this river is runnable is very short. Flows cannot be too high, nor too low. No commercial rafting companies are permitted to offer trips on this section of river.

That said and done, you have a 32-mile run at the bottom of a canyon in beautiful, extremely remote country. It is a virtual wilderness, where rafters are commonly treated to wildlife sightings and lush vegetation borders much of the river. Once you embark on this run, there is no way out of the canyon, so you are committed to heading downstream all the way to the take-out. Rescues are nearly impossible.

Access: There is no boat ramp. Rafters may put in at the following locations:

- Upper put-in: From Quincy, drive southeast on Highway 70/89 for three miles to La Porte Road. Turn south and drive seven miles. The put-in is on the left bank, just past the bridge. Note: This Class V+ run is considered one of the most difficult in the state. Only highly skilled and experienced boaters should attempt it, and then only in kayaks or self-bailing rafts.
- Milasp Bar: In Oroville, drive to the junction of Highway 70 and 162. Turn north on Highway 162 (Olive Highway) and drive 26 miles to the town of Brush Creek and Bald Rock Road. Turn right (south) on Bald Rock Road and drive 0.5 mile to Forest Service

Road 22N62 (Milasp Bar Road), and drive (steep and rough) to Middle Fork Feather and the Middle Fork Bridge, available directly off the road. Other put-ins of the Middle Fork Feather are also available by hiking or driving to other trailhead access points.

• Blaisden: Drive north on Highway 70 and drive (steep and rough) to Middle Fork Feather and the Middle Fork Bridge, available directly off the road. Other put-ins of the Middle Fork Feather are also available by hiking or driving to other trailhead access points.

Facilities, fees: Primitive campground vault toilets are available nearby. No drinking water. Garbage must be packed out. Supplies can be obtained in Oroville. Blaisden. Access is free. Rafting permits not required.

Water sports, restrictions: Rafting, kayaking and swimming are allowed. No commercial rafting companies are permitted to offer trips on this section of river. Various swimming holes are available off the access roads mentioned above. Reaching some spots requires hiking; consult a map of Plumas National Forest for specifics.

Directions: See directions to put-ins in this listing, otherwise:

In Oroville, drive to the junction of Highway 70 and 162. Turn north on Highway 162 (Olive Highway) and drive 26 miles to town of Brush Creek and Bald Rock Road. Turn right (south) on Bald Rock Road and drive 0.5 mile to Forest Service Road 22N62 (Milasp Bar Road). Turn left and drive (steep and rough) to Middle Fork Feather. Access is available directly off the road. Other sections of the Middle Fork Feather are also accessible by hiking or driving to other trailheads and access points.

From Blaisden, take Highway 70/89 north. Access is available off the highway between the towns of Blaisden and Sloat, and off trailhead junction with it.

Contact: Plumas National Forest, Feather River Ranger District, 530/534-6500, www.fs.fed.us/r5; Sportsmen's Den, Quincy 530/283-2733.

THE GRASS VALLEY LA PORTE



Rating: 8

Map 5.2, page 156

La Porte in Plumas National Forest has become quite popular, and why not? It has a little bit of everything, and most of it is of high quality. The lake is set at an elevation of 1,000 feet in Plumas National Forest and covers 1,600 acres, so you get plenty plus plenty of room for people to enjoy water sports.

Swimming and launching is free, a nice perk. The lake is clear and, by midsummer, has warmed up. Lake levels are usually quite good. A popular fishing hole is kokanee salmon has given the lake a boost, too.

The best places for windsurfing and swimming are near the campgrounds on the east side of the lake. This is a great spot for recreation, with hiking trails (the Pacific Crest Trail runs nearby) and a number of Forest Service camps in the area.

Just in case the camper/boater who benefits from this lake, you can get it here. Excellent for solitude, that is. A growing number of summer visitors are becoming quite enamored with the place, so expect company.

Access: Three paved boat ramps are available.

Facilities, fees: Campgrounds, restrooms with vault toilets, drinking water, and an RV dump station are available. Supplies can be obtained in La Porte. Access and boat launching are free. A fee is charged for camping.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, water skiing, wakeboarding, personal watercraft, sailing, windsurfing, and swimming are permitted. Swimming beaches are available at Running Deer and Little Beaver Campgrounds.

Directions: To Wyandotte: From Oroville, take Highway 162 east for about eight miles to the junction signed Challenge/LaPorte. Turn right (to LaPorte) and drive east past

Challenge and Strawberry Valley to LaPorte. Continue two miles past LaPorte to the junction with County Road 514/Little Grass Valley Road. Turn left and drive one mile to a junction. Turn left and drive one mile to the campground entrance road, on the right.

To Black Rock: From Oroville, take Highway 162 east for about eight miles to the junction signed Challenge/LaPorte. Bear right (to LaPorte) and drive east past Challenge and Strawberry Valley to LaPorte. Continue two miles past LaPorte to the junction with County Road 514/Little Grass Valley Road. Turn left and drive about five miles to the campground access road on the west side of the lake. Turn right on the access road and drive 0.25 mile to the campground and nearby boat ramp.

To Peninsula Tent: Drive as above to County Road 512 (which becomes County Road 514/Little Grass Valley Road) for three miles to Forest Road 22N57. Continue on Forest Road 514 for one mile to the campground entrance on the right. Turn right and drive 0.25 mile to the campground.

Contact: Plumas National Forest, Feather River Ranger District, 530/534-6500, www.fs.fed.us/r5.



THERMALITO FOREBAY

Rating: 6

near Oroville in Lake Oroville State

Recreation Area

Map 5.2, page 156

With so many boaters, campers, and anglers heading to nearby Lake Oroville (see the *Lake Oroville* listing in this chapter), Thermalito Forebay is becoming a surprisingly attractive option to those who prefer quiet water and freedom from motorized boats. Although small compared to the giant Lake Oroville, the Forebay is not exactly pint-sized, covering 300 acres in the Oroville foothills at an elevation of 900 feet.

The North Forebay is the prettiest area here and makes the best spot for swimming and windsurfing. Only nonmotorized boats are allowed, so you get quiet water and don't have to keep looking over your shoulder. There is also a swimming beach and a picnic area with drinking water, shaded shelters, and lots of trees. What a concept.

The South Forebay, on the other hand, is visited almost entirely by people hoping to land a few fish. It is much more primitive, offering only vault toilets and not a tree (or a fire hydrant) in sight. Dogs have it tough.

At less than 1,000 feet in elevation, this area gets hit with blowtorch heat day after day once midsummer arrives. Visit then and you might as well camp in the caldera of a volcano.

Access: The North Forebay has a two-lane paved ramp, and the South Forebay has a four-lane paved ramp.

Facilities, fees: A day-use picnic area is provided at the North Forebay. Restrooms with drinking water and flush toilets are available. Supplies can be obtained in Oroville. Fees are charged for day use and boat launching.

Water sports, restrictions: Motors are not permitted on the North Forebay. A sandy beach is available for swimming, and windsurfing and sailing are allowed. The South Forebay is open to all boating. There is a 5-mph speed limit within 100 yards of the shoreline. Swimming access is available along the shore.

Directions: To the North Forebay: Take Highway 70 to Oroville and continue two miles to Garden Drive. Turn left on Garden Drive and drive 0.5 mile to the picnic area.

To the South Forebay: Take Grand Avenue west and drive three miles to the parking area.

Contact: North Thermalito Forebay, 530/538-2221; Lake Oroville State Recreation Area, 530/538-2200; Bidwell Canyon Marina, 530/589-3165; Limesaddle Marina, 530/877-2414; Huntington's Sportsman's Store, Oroville, 530/534-8000, www.huntingtons.com; Oroville Chamber of Commerce, 530/538-2542 or 800/655-4653; Lake Oroville Vis-

itors Center (open weekends), 530/538-2211; McGrath's Fishing Supplies, 530/533-8564



LAKE OROVILLE

Rating:

Map 5.2, page 156

Best:

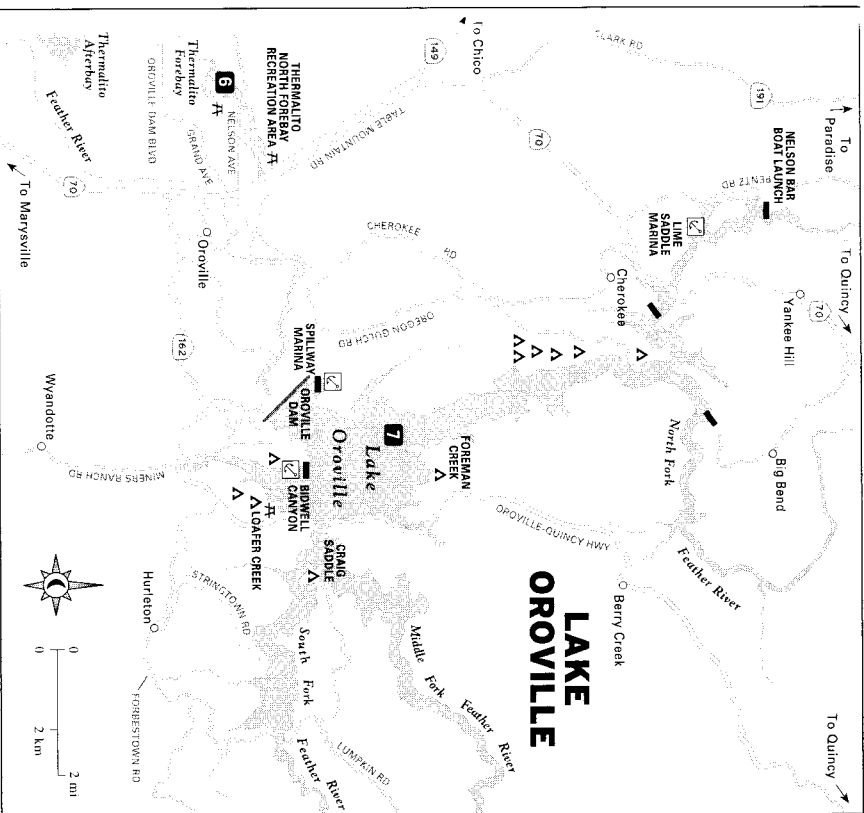
Lake Oroville is a huge, artificial reservoir with extensive lake arms and a large center body of water. When full, it covers more than 15,000 acres and offers 165 miles of shoreline. Throughout much of the year, Oroville has all: campgrounds, enough water for all kinds of boating, a fish for every angler, and accommodations that are tailor-made for the boater/camper, including boat-in floating campsites, floating toilets (no kidding), and an excellent marina.

You will find this beauty in the Sacramento foothills set at an elevation of 900 feet. The fully developed recreation sites make it a favorite family destination. Most newcomers head to the Bidwell Canyon area, where the primary marina, boat ramp, and most of the campgrounds are located. But there are many alternatives.

Fishing has improved in recent years at Oroville. Anglers seek out the quiet water in the lake coves, where there is fantastic underwater cover for spotted bass. 30- and 40-fish days are common in May and June.

In the summer the water in the main lake warms up, making it ideal for waterskiing. Water temperatures in June can be 5-10° colder up in the lake arms. Most skiers prefer the warm water, and anglers tend to prefer the cold water. By mid-July, though, even the water up in the lake arms begins to warm significantly. When the water levels are high, it creates a dramatic setting, especially for waterskiing in the old Feather River Canyon.

Several problems at Lake Oroville prevent its being awarded a perfect 10 rating. First, in years with light rains, so much water is drained



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out of the lake for farmers that the place can look like the Grand Canyon of Oroville by September, with acres and acres of exposed lake bottom. That makes the hike up to the boat-in campsites long and steep. After heavy winters, however, the problem isn't nearly as severe. Another dilemma is the weather. At an elevation of 900 feet in foothill country, the lake gets some very hot temperatures in the summer. Anybody who isn't prepared for it will shrivel like a prune. Creating shade, whether on your boat or at your camp, is critical.

Major advances in bass fishing here are the result of habitat improvement projects and the success of spotted bass. At reservoirs in the foothills, the Department of Fish and Game

planted spotted bass, which solved a 50-year problem of lake drawdowns leaving the spawns of largemouth bass high and dry. Spotted bass spawn deep, so reproduction is very high, even with drawdowns. That is why Oroville, Berryessa, Camanche, Folsom, Shasta, and many others are now loaded with bass.

The Department of Fish and Game has advanced this success at Oroville by creating a slot limit, that is, that all bass 12-15 inches must be released. That is why there are more big spotted bass at Oroville than any other lake in Northern California: it has the Northern California record: 14 pounds, 11 ounces. Improvements at Lake Oroville, including upgraded boat-in campsites, make this

big lake an ideal destination for an overnight boating/camping trip.

Access: Four paved boat ramps are available: • Bidwell Canyon Marina: At the State Recreation Area (see *Directions* this listing), houseboats, ski boats, fishing boats, and pontoon boats are available for rent.

• Line Saddle: From Oroville, take Highway 70 and drive nine miles north to Pentz Road. Turn left on Pentz Road and drive three miles; look for signs indicating the marina. A multilane paved boat ramp and a dock are provided.

• Loafer Creek: From Highway 70 in Oroville, take the Oro Dam Boulevard exit, turn right, and drive 1.5 miles to Highway 162/Olive Highway. Turn right and drive eight miles to the turnout for Loafer Creek Campground. A paved launch ramp is adjacent to the campground.

• Spillway: From Highway 70 in Oroville, take the Oro Dam Boulevard exit and follow the signs heading to the dam and the adjacent multilane paved boat ramp.

Facilities, fees: Campgrounds, restrooms with flush toilets and coin showers, and an RV dump station are available. Floating campsites and restrooms are available on the lake. Marinas with boat accessories and convenience stores are available. Fees are charged for day use, boat launching, and camping. Supplies are available in Oroville at Huntington's Sportsman's Store (530/534-8000, www.huntingtons.com).

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, waterskiing, wakeboarding, personal watercraft, sailing, windsurfing, and swimming are permitted. Swimming beaches are located near Loafer Creek and Bidwell Canyon Campgrounds.

Directions: To the State Recreation Area: From the Sacramento area, take I-5 north to the junction with Highway 99/70. Turn north on Highway 99/70 and continue on Highway 70 into Oroville to Highway 162. Turn east and drive two miles to Olive Highway. Turn right on Olive Highway (still Highway 162)

and drive six miles to Kelly Ridge Road left (north) on Kelly Ridge Road and drive miles to Arroyo Drive. Turn right on Arroyo Drive and drive one mile to the state entrance.

Contact: Lake Oroville State Recreation Area, 530/538-2200, www.parks.ca.gov (click on Find A Park); Oroville Chamber of Commerce, 530/538-2542 or 800-4653; Lake Oroville Visitors Center (weekends), 530/538-2219; Bidwell Canyon Marina, 530/589-3165, www.gobidwell.com; Limesaddle Marina, 530/877-2414.

8 BULLARDS BAR RESERVOIR



Rating:

near Camptonville in Tahoe National Forest
Map 5.2, page 156
Bullards Bar Reservoir shines like a sapphire in a field of pennies when compared to the other reservoirs in the Central Valley foothills.

The lake is set at an elevation of 2,300 feet and with 4,700 surface acres and 55 miles shoreline, it covers a lot of territory. Not only are there two boat-in campgrounds, but boaters are allowed to create their own primitive campsites anywhere along the lakeshore (chemical toilet is required). This is a great breakthrough for boater/campers, and it's a combination of boat-in campgrounds and do-it-yourself sites make this one of the best in California.

There's more, too. The average surface temperature in the summer is 78°F, ideal for water sports. The steep shoreline makes this a poor place for children to go wading, but most people here have boats, and the water makes it great for boats towing just about anything—skiers, wakeboarders, and tubers. It is a kick just to strap on a life preserver and float around for an hour on a hot summer afternoon.

Fishing runs hot and cold here. Pros will be best when trolling for kokanee in a growing fishery. Rainbow trout are caught.

Any of the 155 major reservoirs in California are just water-storage facilities, drawn at the whims of the water brokers responsible for the effects on recreation and fisheries. The folks who control the plumbing will do whatever it takes to keep the reservoirs full through July, even in low-water years when other reservoirs have been turned into dirt bowls. So right off, you get good water for camping, boating, and general beauty with a lot of water.

Two paved ramps are available, one at Dark Day Day-Use Area on the west side of the lake, and one at Emerald Cove Marina at the mouth end of the lake.

Facilities, fees: A full-service marina is available at Emerald Cove with fishing boat, ski boat, and houseboat rentals. A snack bar and convenience store are also available.

In camping includes two developed boat-in campgrounds, with vault toilets available, and many primitive boat-in sites with no drinking water where boaters are required to bring portable chemical toilets. Garbage must be packed out. Full supplies can be obtained in Marysville, Camptonville, and Dobbins. Access is free.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, waterskiing, wakeboarding, personal watercraft, sailing, windsurfing, and swimming are permitted. The best swimming areas are in coves accessible only by boat.

Directions: To Emerald Cove Resort and Marina: From Marysville, take Highway 20 north to Marysville Road/County Road 1/1. Turn north at Marysville Road (signed Bullards Bar Reservoir) and drive 12 miles to Mt. Marysville Road. Turn right and drive 14 miles to reach the entrance road for Cottage Creek Launch Ramp and the marina (turn left just before the dam).

To reach the Dark Day Boat Ramp: Continue over the dam and drive four miles. Turn left on Dark Day Road, and continue to the ramp.

Contact: Tahoe National Forest, North Yuba/Downieville Ranger District, 530/288-3231; Yuba County Water Agency, 530/741-6278.

Boat-in camping, reservations, and a shoreline camping permit: Emerald Cove Resort and Marina, 530/692-3200, www.bullardsbar.com.

Guide: Tight Lines Guide Service, Grass Valley, 530/273-1986.

9 SOUTH FORK YUBA RIVER



Rating: 6

east of Nevada City in Tahoe National Forest
Map 5.2, page 156

With beautiful, clear blue water and forested banks flanked by granite boulders and walls, this is a particularly scenic river. Recreational options include swimming and sunbathing, as well as hiking, fishing, and punting for gold.

Although swimming in the river can be excellent, things sometimes turn dangerous. On hot days the pools look cool and inviting, but swimmers who are new to the river may not recognize how cold and swift the water can be or just how quickly they can get into trouble. The risk is heightened greatly when swimmers down a lot of beer and their judgment is impaired. Despite the river's fun nature, several people drown here each year, usually during a period of high snowmelt.

Explorers will discover a number of spots along the river that are ideal for picnicking and sunbathing. The prettiest one is at Purdon Crossing, which has become notorious for nude bathing; if that isn't what you have in mind, head in the other direction to Edwards Crossing.

This river is generally too shallow and rocky for rafting, but early in the season and at high water it is possible for expert kayakers to have a go at it. A 12-foot waterfall below Humbug Creek must be portaged. Again, this is rated by experts only, usually in the company of at least one or two others who have experience on

the river and can recognize the portage spot before everyone goes sailing over the waterfall.

A special drawing is held that provides access to the Lower Yuba River in Brown's Valley. Each year, fishing dates are announced in April, May, June, July, and August, usually two days per month. To apply, contact: Department of Fish and Game, River Fishing Access, 1701 Nimbus Road, Suite A, Rancho Cordova, CA 95670. The access is limited to 15 anglers per day to the site location 1.5 miles upstream from the Highway 20 bridge. Access allows anglers to fish both banks between posted boundaries. In addition, anglers can launch car-top boats, canoes, kayaks, rafts and float tubes. But any boats, such as a large inflatable, that require the use of a trailer are not allowed. For more information, call 916/358-2926.

Access: There is no boat ramp. Three of the best swimming holes are available north of Nevada City:

- **Edwards Crossing:** From Highway 49 in Nevada City, drive to North Bloomfield Road. Turn north on North Bloomfield Road and drive up a hill until you come to a Y-intersection. Bear right and continue about five miles to the parking area at Edwards Crossing.
- **Highway 49 Bridge:** From Nevada City, drive north on Highway 49 for 6.5 miles to the Highway 49 bridge.

- **Purdon Crossing:** From Highway 49 in Nevada City, drive to North Bloomfield Road. Turn north on North Bloomfield Road and drive up a hill until you come to a Y-intersection. Bear left at the sign for Lake Vera-Purdon Crossing and continue about five miles on a dirt road to the river at Purdon Crossing.

Facilities, fees: Campgrounds are available off I-80; there is also a campground just over the river from Purdon Crossing. Restrooms are provided at Edwards Crossing. Supplies can be obtained in Nevada City and off I-80. Access is free.

Water sports, restrictions: Public access is largely restricted on the Yuba River, except for the Lower Yuba. See directions for swimming areas above.

Directions: To Upper Yuba: From Sacramento, take I-80 east to Emigrant Gap Road, Springs Road and continue to the Eagle Lakes or Big Bend/Rainbow Road. Access to this section of the Yuba is available from either road. Much of the land bordering the South Yuba is private; be on the lookout for signs.

To Lower Yuba: At the junction of Highway 20, just north of Willow Lake Highway 20 east for 30 miles to the village. Access is at the Simpson Lane in Marysville, and at the E Street Bridge on Highway 20.

Contact: Tahoe National Forest, Nevada Ranger District, 530/265-4531, fax 530/6109; Bureau of Land Management, Field Office, 916/985-4474; Sycamore RV Park, 530/741-1190 or 800/834-4444; www.sycamoretranchrvpark.com; John Bair & Tackle, Yuba City, 530/674-1912. **Guides:** Three Rivers Guide Service, 530/671-9206; Craig Smith Fishing, 530/674-5183; Sierra West Outfitters, 530/755-0821; G&J Outdoor Enterprises, 530/885-1492.



T0 COLLINS LAKE

north of Marysville in Collins Lake Recreation Area

Map 5.2, page 156

The boating rules have resolved most of the potential user conflicts at Collins Lake, offering an example for lakes across the state.

Conflicts between water-skiers and anglers are kept to a minimum because each group has a separate area to roam in the summer. In addition, skiing is not allowed after September 30, when the water-skier crowds tend to dwindle anyway, and cool water attracts more people who want to fish at the lake.

at 1,200 feet in the foothill country of Yuba County, Collins Lake is a pretty spot ideal for the camper/boater. The lake covers 1,400 acres and has 12 miles of shoreline. Temperatures are warm from March through October, and in the summer visitors enjoy a day after day of hot weather and cool breezes. In late spring, when the foothills are green and the lake sparkles, the area can appear to be glowing.

The recreation area has been developed to accommodate hordes of summer visitors. It includes a huge swimming beach with restrooms, showers, and snack bar, and well-maintained picnic and camping facilities. Many folks use the swimming beach as a jumping-off point for windsurfing; conditions for this sport are here. Sailing is not popular.

If you see someone pulling into the campground towing a trailer with a personal watercraft, don't panic; personal watercraft users are allowed here, then drive 20 minutes up the road to Bullards Bar for the day.

Are you starting to think that this qualification must attract a good number of anglers? Well, you got that right. On weekends from Memorial Day through Labor Day, the campgrounds are almost always filled to capacity.

This lake is known among serious anglers as an outstanding destination for trophy-size trout, especially in spring. Bass fishing is also good.

Access: A paved boat ramp is located between the picnic area and the southernmost campground.

Facilities, fees: A full-service marina is available with rentals for fishing boats, rowboats, kayaks, pedal boats, and pontoon boats. Campgrounds, restrooms, drinking water, flush toilets, an RV dump station, coin-operated showers, volleyball, three group picnic areas, a convenience store, coin laundry, wood, ice, and propane gas are available. Fees are charged for day use, boat launching, and camping.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, canoes, kayaks, inflatables, sailing, and

windsurfing are permitted. Waterskiing and wakeboarding are permitted from May 15 through September 30 only. No personal watercraft permitted. Designated areas reserved solely for fishing with a 5-mph speed limit. A large, sandy swimming beach is available near the picnic area.

Directions: From Marysville, drive east on Highway 20 about 12 miles to Marysville Road. Turn north and drive approximately eight miles to the recreation area entrance road, on the right. Turn right, drive a mile to the entrance station, and then continue to the campground, on the left side of the road.

Contact: Collins Lake Recreation Area, 530/692-1600 or 800/286-0576, www.collinslake.com; Tight Lines Guide Service, 530/273-1986.



T1 ENGLEBRIGHT LAKE

Rating: 10

northeast of Marysville

Map 5.2, page 156

This lake resembles a huge water snake winding its way through the Yuba River Canyon. Although Englebright covers just 815 acres, it has 24 miles of shoreline.

Englebright Lake is set at an elevation of 520 feet in the Yuba County foothills, so it gets hot here in the summer, ideal for sun-loving water enthusiasts. It is a waterskiing mecca, with warm and calm water (south of Upper Boston). A bonus is that the nearby shoreline gives skiers an illusion of greater speed—something you don't get on a wide-open lake.

But the real bonanza here is for boaters. There are 100 boat-in campsites, more than any other lake in California. These campsites rarely fill up, even in summer when the lake can get crowded on weekends with day-use water-skiers.

As with any narrow lake where high-speed water-skiers run the risk of rounding a point

and plowing into a low-speed fishing boat, crowded conditions can present major conflicts. But rules have been enacted to resolve that problem: All boating is permitted up to Upper Boston, yet fast boating is restricted from Upper Boston upstream to the North Fork Yuba. So you find people happily waterskiing below Upper Boston, and people contentedly fishing above Upper Boston where the trout fishing is good.

Because Englebright Lake is set in a river canyon, the shoreline drops abruptly and is quite rocky. Hence most of the lake provides poor swimming access, but there are still a few sandy stretches adjacent to the campgrounds.

The water level is fairly stable, but boaters should be aware of underwater hazards. With a boat at Englebright Lake, you can enjoy water sports to your heart's desire and still have the luxury of a pretty campsite.

Access: Two paved ramps are available, one just east of the dam, adjacent to the picnic area, and one at the marina at Skipper's Cove. There are signs for each on the entrance road.

Facilities, fees: Boat-in campsites, group camp, vault toilets, full-service marina, moorings, convenience store, fuel dock, and houseboat, pontoon boat, ski boat, fishing boat, canoe, and pedal boat rentals are available. Drinking water is available at the marina. Fees are charged for day use, boat launching, and camping.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, waterskiing, wakeboarding, personal watercraft, sailing, and windsurfing are permitted only below the lake's Upper Boston area. Sandy beach areas are located near several of the boat-in campgrounds.

Directions: From Auburn, take Highway 49 north to Grass Valley and the junction with Highway 20. Turn west on Highway 20 and drive to Mooney Flat Road (if you reach Smartville, you have gone a mile too far). Turn right on Mooney Flat and drive 2.5 miles to the park entrance on the left. Turn left at the fork and drive a mile to park headquarters and the boat ramp, just east of the dam.

Contact: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento District, Englebright Lake, 530/432-6427; Skipper's Cove, 530/6302, www.EnglebrightLake.com.

12 YUBA RIVER



from Browns Valley to Marysville

Map 5.2, page 156

The Yuba is one of California's great river inner tubing. Unfortunately, that means it is not so great for other water sports.

Throughout the Sacramento and San quin Valleys, the condition of many rivers depends on water releases from the reservoirs located upstream. In this case, the that Bullards Bar Reservoir is always so of water means that the Yuba River is of quite low.

That makes it perfect for inner tubing. Boaters should be aware that they are advised wear life jackets, that access here is difficult and that if you hit the river on a rare day water releases are up out of Bullards Bar. Flows of the Yuba can be swift. Several bars along the river make the best spots swimming, but they are inaccessible by Some tubers will float to these spots, set a day camp and picnic site, then enjoy themselves and jump into the river now and then. Camping is not permitted on the river.

The Yuba is usually too shallow for bo larger than canoes or kayaks, and even kay boats must occasionally get out and portage the boats to deeper water. Another pain is that is necessary to take out above Daguerra Dam where you portage, and then put in below dam and continue downstream to Marysville. The Yuba is used mostly by locals. U stream, difficult access is a perennial pro len, with the river bordered for many mile by private property—the landowners treat as their personal river to be used as they see fit not a public resource available to all.

A special drawing is held that provides access to the Lower Yuba River in Brown's Valley. Each year, fishing dates are announced April, May, June, July, and August, usually two days per month. To apply, contact Department of Fish and Game, River Fishing Agency, 1701 Nimbus Road, Suite A, Rancho Cordova, CA 95670. The access is limited to 10 anglers per day to the site location 1.5 miles upstream from the Highway 20 bridge. Access allows anglers to fish both banks between natural boundaries. In addition, anglers can launch car-top boats, canoes, kayaks, rafts and float tubes. But any boats, such as a large inflatable, that require the use of a trailer are not allowed. For more information, call 916/558-2926.

Access: There is no boat ramp. Canoeists and kayakers can put in at Parks Bar, located at the bridge where Highway 20 crosses the river, approximately 20 miles east of Marysville. Nine: Boaters must take out above Daguerra Dam (there are warning signs for boats). Another put-in is available just below the dam. From here, boaters can continue all the way to Marysville.

Facilities, fees: Lodging and supplies can be obtained in Marysville or Yuba City. No commercial rafting trips. Camping is available at Lower Oak Campground (north of Yuba City) and at Sycamore Ranch in Brown's Valley. Boat ramps are at both campgrounds. Lodging and supplies are in Yuba City. Fishing access is free.

Water sports, restrictions: Rafting, canoeing, and kayaking are permitted. Swimming is best at eddies adjacent to extended sandbars. Swimming is not recommended in the main river channel.

Directions: Take I-5 to Williams and the junction with Highway 20. Take Highway 20 east and drive about 30 miles to Marysville. Access is available at the Simpson Lane Bridge in Marysville and at the E Street Bridge on Highway 20. Much of the Yuba upstream is bordered by private property and public access is very difficult.

Contact: Johnson's Tackle, Yuba City, 530/674-1912; River Guide Service, 530/673-5716; Sycamore Ranch RV Park, 530/741-1190 or 800/834-1190, www.sycamoreranchrvpark.com; Johnson's Bait & Tackle, Yuba City, 530/674-1912; Star Bait & Tackle, Marysville, 530/742-5431; Marysville Parks and Recreation, Yuba County, 530/741-6666, www.marysville.ca.us; Yuba City, www.yubacity.net.

Guides: Three Rivers Guide Service, 530/671-9206; Craig Smith Fishing Guide, 530/674-5183; Sierra West Outfitters, 530/755-0821; G&J Outdoor Enterprises, 530/885-1492.

13 FEATHER RIVER



from Marysville to Sacramento

Map 5.2, page 156

The placid appearance of the Feather River often belies its true nature. Actually, the river has quite a strong current, and anyone thinking of getting into the water should be prepared to wear a life jacket. This goes for swimmers, windsurfers, water-skiers, and personal watercraft riders.

Many of the people on the river, however, are in powerboats whose engines have been converted to jet drives. As you might guess, most of them are here to bring in a few fish. The river attracts striped bass in the spring, shad in the early summer (best at Shinghai Bend), and salmon in late summer and fall (best at Verona).

The most popular general recreation area, complete with boat ramp, is at Riverfront Park near Marysville. Another boat ramp is at Verona Marina, located near where the Feather feeds into the Sacramento River; this is primarily a boat-access point used by anglers. **Access:** River access is limited. Paved boat ramps are available at Riverfront Park and Verona Marina.

Rating: 6

Rating: 6

Facilities, fees: Boating services are available at Verona Marina. Riverfront Park has picnic facilities, drinking water, and restrooms with flush toilets. Campgrounds and lodgings are available nearby. Supplies can be obtained in Yuba City and Marysville. Day use is free. Private marinas charge a fee for boat launching.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, waterskiing, personal watercraft, drift boats, canoes, kayaks, windsurfing, and swimming are permitted. Swimming is not recommended in most areas. No swimming at banks or boat dock at Riverfront Park.

Directions: To Shanghai Bend: Take I-5 to Williams and the junction with Highway 20. Turn east on Highway 20 and drive 30 miles to Yuba City and the Garden Highway. Turn south on Garden Highway and drive four miles to Shanghai Bend Road. Turn left and continue on a dirt road to the parking area.

To the Verona Marina: At the junction of I-5 and Highway 99 (north of Sacramento), take Highway 99 north and drive eight miles to Sankey Road. Turn left and drive two miles west to the Verona Marina.

To Riverfront Park: From Yuba City, take Highway 20 east into Marysville (cross the bridge) and continue to the second stoplight. Turn left and continue to a stop sign. Continue straight to a second stop sign. Turn left (continuing over a levee) and follow the signs to Riverfront Park.

Contact: Verona Marina, 916/927-8387; Johnson's Bar & Tackle, Yuba City, 530/674-1912; Star Bait & Tackle, Marysville, 530/742-5431; G&J Outdoor Enterprises, 530/885-1492; J&J Guide Service, 530/222-6253, www.worldwidefishing.com; Three Rivers Guide Service, 916/591-4035; Golden State Guide Service, 530/370-4246; Yuba City Parks and Recreation, 530/822-4650, www.yubacity.net; City of Marysville, 530/741-6666, www.marysville.ca.us.

174 CAMP FAR WEST RESERVOIR



Rating:

east of Marysville

Map 5.2, page 156

Camp Far West is one of the best lakes for fishing in the Sacramento Valley. It is set at an elevation of 320 feet in the foothill country, getting an early spring followed by a hot summer. The lake covers 2,000 surface acres, 29 miles of shoreline, and is an outstanding destination for boating and water sports. Warm water, hot weather, and plenty of fish are available for everybody.

For the most part, users split the lake into two areas. Most powerboaters and water skiers head to the lake's southern side. It is outrageous on the weekends when a few prompt boater parties get underway with lots of liquors and suntan lotion flowing all over the place. The lake is also used as fast as the jet boats. In fact, jet boat races are held here during the summer.

The northern side of the lake, on the other hand, tends to be quieter, a setting for family-oriented activities. This is also where the lake's best day-use area is located. Water skiers should note that there is a large rocky area on the northwest side of the lake that should be avoided when the water level drops.

Because the lake is used to store water for agricultural use, by late summer the level falls quite a bit. In fact, in low rain years, the change can be quite drastic. By late August, it is recommended that visitors call ahead to check conditions. The lake typically drops up to 200 feet by fall. When full in spring, the lake is 200 feet deeper than in early winter. Use it moderate on summer weekends on three-day holidays, and light during the week.

Access: There are two paved boat ramps on the north side and one on the south side. Clearly marked signs for both boat ramps are posted on the entrance road. **Facilities, fees:** Campgrounds, flush

toilets, water, and picnic areas are available. On the north shore, a boat dock with fishing gear, personal watercraft, and pedal boat rentals is available. Convenience store, bait and tackle, and snack bars are nearby. On the south shore, gas, boat dock, and limited facilities are available. Fees are charged for day use (including boat launching) and camping.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, waterskiing, wakeboarding, personal watercraft, windsurfing, and windsurfing are permitted. A dry-dock area and swimming area is provided on the north side near the campground; a shallow swimming area is available on the south side.

Directions: From Sacramento, take I-80 east toward Roseville to Highway 65. Turn north on Highway 65 and drive to the town of Sherman and Rio Oso Road. Turn right on Rio Oso Road and drive about five miles to McCourtney Road. Turn left on McCourtney Road and drive to the lake. The road circles the lake and provides access to campgrounds and launching ramps at the north and south shores.

Contact: Camp Far West, North Shore, 916/408-5037; South Shore, 916/408-5037; Wild Boat Rentals, 530/315-2560.

SACRAMENTO RIVER (COLUSA TO SACRAMENTO)



Rating: 7

Sacramento Valley

Map 5, page 157

I traced the entire Sacramento River, particularly the section left the most lasting impression, both good and bad.

Just below the river is quite beautiful as it flows its way southward. The banks are lined with trees, and there are some deep holes, rapids, and good fishing for salmon in the fall. In the spring, most of the fish are striped bass in the spring. Most of the anglers are there to go fishing. You will occasionally see a water-skier or personal wa-

tercraft rider, as well as a few power cruisers out for a scenic river drive.

The bulk of the recreational traffic is near the Feather River mouth at Verona and the American River mouth in Sacramento near Discovery Park. In fact, the latter is sometimes inundated with people on warm summer weekend afternoons.

After all, nearby Sacramento is the state's capital and the largest city in the valley, and this beautiful river represents to a lot of people the best chance to enjoy freedom and fun.

The scenery is dramatic in Sacramento. In addition to the riparian zone along the river, you see some old bridges, the occasional ship, and a wide variety of boats, from runabouts to yachts. Both waterskiing and personal watercraft have become quite popular, along with power cruising and pontoon boating. Fishing is generally fair at the mouths of the American and Feather Rivers, with the best prospects for salmon in the fall and for striped bass in the winter and spring.

The river is quite benign in the summer months when it has a decent flow, green water, and a predictable nature. Such is not the case, however; the rest of the year. Runoff causes the water to turn murky and run swift, and is highest in the spring and early summer. After big storms, all manner of debris is sent floating down the river, even trees, creating dangerous boating hazards. In addition, dead fog is common from mid-December through early February.

For the most part, the Sacramento River is a great recreational resource, made even more important by the number of people living nearby.

Fishing is often excellent during peak migrations, with the best section of river from Sacramento to Freepoint. In the spring, striped bass fishing can be outstanding near Colusa. In the fall, salmon fishing takes on the entire river.

Many people have never seen the river section between Colusa and Verona, largely a nightmare. Many long segments have been

converted into a virtual canal by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; they have turned the riverbanks into riprapped levees, complete with beveled edges and 90-degree turns. These parts of the river are treeless, virtually birdless, and the fish simply use it as a highway, migrating straight upriver without pausing. There are a few river holes near Grimes, but that's about it. The best reason to venture to this stretch of water south of Colusa is outstanding fishing for crawdads. Commercial crawdad traps are found all along the rocky, riprapped banks.

Access: Boat ramps are available at several locations. Canoeists and kayakers can also put in at these boat ramps:

- Colusa/Sacramento River State Recreation Area: From I-5 in Williams, turn east on Highway 20 and drive to Colusa and 10th Street. Turn north on 10th Street and continue to the park entrance. There is a paved ramp. For more information, call 530/6458-4927.

- Ward's Boat Landing: From I-5 at Williams, turn east on Highway 20 and drive to Colusa and Market Street. Turn right on Market Street to the road's end. Turn left (still on Market), drive over the bridge to Butte Slough Road. Turn right on Butte Slough Road and drive five miles to the marina. There is a paved ramp. For more information, call 530/696-2672.

- Verona Marina: At the junction of I-5 and Highway 99, take Highway 99 north and drive eight miles to Sankey Road. Turn left and drive two miles west to Verona Marina. From I-5 north of Sacramento, take the Garden Highway north and drive approximately nine miles to Verona for full services and a paved ramp. For more information, call 916/927-8387.

- Alamar Marina: From I-5 north of Sacramento, take the Garden Highway north and continue to Alamar Marina, where there is a paved ramp. For more information, call 916/922-0200. Pontoon boats, ski boats, and fishing boats are available for rent next door at Metro Marina, 916/920-8088.

- Discovery Park: From I-5 at Sacramento, take the Garden Highway exit and turn left and drive to Natomas Park Drive. Turn right and drive to the traffic signal, and follow the signs into Discovery Park. For more information, call Sacramento County Park 916/875-6672.

- Miller Park: From I-5 at Sacramento, turn east on I-80 and drive to Sixth Street. Take Sixth Street exit and drive south to Broadway Turn right and continue to Miller Park. Paved ramp and a marina are provided. For more information, call City of Sacramento Marina, 916/264-5712.

- Freepoint Marina: From I-5 south of Sacramento, take the Pocket Road exit. Turn left Pocket Road and drive to Freepoint Boulevard. Turn right and drive 0.74 miles to the marina. For more information, call 916/665-1555.
- Clarksburg Flac: From I-5 south of Sacramento, take the Pocket Road exit. Turn left Pocket Road and drive to Freepoint Boulevard. Turn right and drive about one mile (and you come to a bridge). Turn right, cross the bridge, make an immediate left, and follow road through Clarksburg. The paved ramp located about 2.5 miles south of Clarksburg on the left side.

Facilities, fees: Discovery Park has picnic facilities available. Campgrounds and lodging are available in the Sacramento area. Fees for day use and camping are at state parks. Boat launching fees charged at all private marinas. Supplies are available in Sacramento at Broadway Boat, Rod & Gun (916/448-6338), Freepoint Boat (916/665-1935), and Golden State Guide Service (530/370-4260).

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, water skiing, wakeboarding, and personal watercraft are permitted. Windsurfing and swimming are allowed, but due to the river's murky water and steep drop-offs, swimming is generally not recommended along this section's north reaches. Sandy beaches are available at Colusa-Sacramento River State Recreation Area, and along the Garden Highway north of Sacramento at Discovery Park, and south

of Sacramento near Clarksburg. No-wake zones are powered near boat ramps and marinas.

Directions: Access is off roads that intersect I-5. You'll find boat ramps at the following locations: Colusa-Sacramento River State Recreation Area, in Colusa; Ward's Boat Landing, on Butte Slough Road, south of Colusa; Verona Marina, on Garden Highway, in Verona; Miller Boat Launch, northwest of Sacramento, on Bayou Way; Alamar Marina, on Garden Highway, in Sacramento; Discovery Park, in Sacramento, at the confluence of the Sacramento and American Rivers; Miller Park, below the Capitol City Freeway; and Garcia Blvd., off I-5, in South Sacramento.

Contact: Sacramento Department of Parks & Recreation, 916/264-5200, www.sacramento-river.org; Sacramento Metro Chamber of Commerce, 916/552-6800, www.metrochamber.org; Sacramento Convention & Visitors Bureau, 916/264-7777, www.sacramento.org.

Boat charters and tours: Riverboat Cruises, 916/552-2933 or 800/433-0263, www.spiritofsacramento.com (two paddle-wheel boats that accommodate 150-400 people each); River City Queen, Sacramento, 916/921-1111; River Otter Water Taxi, Sacramento, 916/446-7704, www.riverotter.com; Delta Expeditions, Rio Vista, 916/600-2420, www.deltalexpeditions.com (37-foot yacht).

Boat rentals: Alamar Marina, Sacramento, 916/922-0200 (housesboats, pontoon boats, ski boats), personal watercraft, and fishing boats); Milk's Jet Ski and Boat Rentals, Metro Marina, Sacramento, 916/923-2466 (personal watercraft and ski boats); California Canoe & Kayak, Rancho Cordova, 916/353-1880 (kayaks and kayaks).

Marinas: Freepoint Marina, 916/665-1555; Miller Wood Harbor Marina, 916/371-3471; Clarksburg Marina, 916/744-1274.



Rating: 9

northeast of Sacramento in Folsom Lake State Recreation Area

Map 5.3, page 157

Folsom Lake State Recreation Area is Sacramento's backyard vacation spot, a huge lake covering some 18,000 acres with 75 miles of shoreline, which means plenty of room for boating, waterskiing, fishing, and sunbathing.

Because of the lake's shallow arms, water levels can fluctuate dramatically from winter to spring. This lake can look almost empty before the rains start in winter, then in spring seems to fill overnight.

This is an extremely popular (and popular-ed) spot in summer. Families, college students, and anyone in Sacramento with a yearning for some lake-oriented fun seem to flock here, sometimes at the same time. Some come for the waterskiing, some for the fishing, and some for the camping.

Visitors have the use of attractive swimming beaches with lifeguards and buoys, several boat ramps, boat rentals, and nice campgrounds and day-use areas. Fishing is available for trout, bass, catfish, and perch. The adjoining recreation area has a network of trails for jogging, hiking, and horseback riding.

Temperatures get extremely hot here in the summer. One-hundred-degree days are common, and as early as May the mercury often hits the 90s. If you stick around long enough, you'll witness just about every imaginable stunt that is borne of the combination of hot sun, cold suds, and lots of people.

There are opportunities for hiking, biking, running, picnics, and horseback riding. A 32-mile long trail connects Folsom Lake with many Sacramento County parks before reaching Old Sacramento. This trail is outstanding for family biking and in-line skating.

Access: There are paved boat ramps at the following locations:

• Folsom Point: From Sacramento, take U.S. 50 east to the exit for Folsom. Take that exit to Folsom Boulevard and drive to Blue Ravine Road. Turn right on Blue Ravine Road and drive four miles to East Natoma Road. Turn right and drive to the boat ramp adjacent to a picnic area. A multilane paved ramp is here.

• Folsom Lake Marina: From Sacramento, take U.S. 50 east to the exit for Eldorado Hills Boulevard. Take that exit and drive 4.5 miles to Green Valley Road. Turn left on Green Valley Road and drive one mile (to the bottom of the hill) to the entrance to the marina. Turn right and continue to the ramp.

• Granite Bay: From Sacramento, take I-80 east to the exit for Douglas Boulevard. Take that exit to Douglas Boulevard East and drive to where it dead-ends, at Granite Bay. A multilane paved ramp is here.

• Rattlesnake Bar: From Sacramento, take I-80 east to the exit for Elm Street. Take that exit and drive east 0.5 mile to High Street. Turn left on High Street (which becomes Highway 49) and continue on Highway 49 into Pilot Hill and Rattlesnake Bar Road. Turn right and drive 2.5 miles to the entrance. A paved ramp is here.

• Rattlesnake Bar: From Placerville, take Highway 49 north (toward the town of Coloma) for 8.3 miles into the town of Pilot Hill and Rattlesnake Bar Road. Turn left on Rattlesnake Bar Road and drive nine miles to the end of the road and the park entrance.

Facilities, fees: Campgrounds, picnic areas, restrooms with flush toilets and showers, drinking water, mooring, ice, bait and tackle, and a snack bar (summer only) are available. Folsom Lake Marina has full boating services and rents out fishing boats in summer. Rentals of pontoon boats, ski boats, fishing boats, and personal watercraft are also available near the Granite Bay boat launch. Supplies can be obtained in Folsom. Fees are charged for day use, boat launching, and camping.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, water skiing, wakeboarding, personal watercraft, sailing, and windsurfing are permitted. Des-

ignated swimming beaches are available at Granite Bay and Beals Point. Swimming is permitted anywhere along the shoreline at boat launching areas. For boat-in areas, boats must be registered at either the off Green Valley Road or Granite Bay.

Directions: From Sacramento, take U.S. 50 east to the Folsom Boulevard exit. Take that exit, turn left and drive seven miles (the name changes to Folsom-Auburn Road) to Beal's Point. Turn right and continue to the entrance.

Contact: Folsom Lake State Recreation Area, 916/988-0205, fax 916/988-9062; Folsom Chamber of Commerce, 916/985-2100; www.folsomchamber.com; Folsom Lake Marina, 916/933-1300; Folsom Lake Recreation Area, 916/223-8129, www.folsomlakerecreation.com



17 LAKE NATOMA

Rating: 8

east of Sacramento at Nimbus Dam

Map 5.3, page 157

Below every major reservoir is usually a small lake called an atberby, and Lake Natoma is that for big Folsom Lake to the east. Natoma provides water-sports enthusiasts in the area with a decent alternate destination for windsurfing, sailing, fishing, and low-speed boating.

This narrow lake covers 500 acres with 1.5 miles of shoreline. Because it gets its water from the bottom of Folsom Dam, Natoma tends to be colder than big brother Folsom. The real plus here is quiet and calm water. Waterskiing is prohibited and a 5-mph speed limit is enforced, so visitors never have to compete with personal watercraft and speedboats.

The CSUS Aquatic Center draws a college-age crowd who come to learn about windsurfing and sailing. Sailing and rowing are the two most popular activities on the lake. Recreation is concentrated at two points: the Aquatic Center for boaters, and Negro Bar

for swimmers, and picnickers. Use heavily in the summer.

Boat ramps for launching small boats are available at the California State University (CSUS) Aquatic Center on the lake's west end, and at Negro Bar on the west end. Restrooms with flush toilets and showers are available. Rowboats, fishing water are available. Rowboats, fishing water are available for rent. Aquatic Center offers sailing and windsurfing classes. Fees are charged for day use and launching.

Water sports, restrictions: Boats with small motors, canoes, kayaks, inflatables, sailing, windsurfing are permitted. A 5-mph speed limit is enforced. A sandy swimming area is available at Negro Bar. You can also launch at Nimbus Bar, but there is no beach.

Directions: From Sacramento, take I-80 north to the exit for Douglas Boulevard. Take that exit and drive five miles to Auburn-Folsom Road. Turn right on Auburn-Folsom Road and drive south six miles until the road ends into Greenback Lane. Turn right and drive 0.2 mile down, on the left.

Contact: Folsom Lake State Recreation Area, 916/988-0205.



18 LOWER AMERICAN RIVER

Rating: 8

Nimbus Dam to Sacramento

Map 5.3, page 157

The American River is the site of some of the biggest water parties in California, starting Memorial Day weekend and ranging well into summer. Just about anybody can get into a raft here, and go for a float on a hot summer day, and that is exactly what a lot of folks do.

It's great fun, even though there are many people on the river, some of them absolutely hyped from the combination of too much beer and too much sun. There are a few drownings

every year, and the typical victim is someone who drank too much, didn't wear a life jacket, then fell overboard. Don't drink alcohol and do keep your life jacket on, and you'll surely enjoy the float (and stay afloat).

This section of the American flows from the outlet at Nimbus Basin on downstream, past Fair Oaks and Rancho Cordova before entering the Sacramento River at Discovery Park. The entire run is 23 miles. Within that span are several excellent access points. In addition, the Sacramento River Parkway provides a 23-mile trail that runs parallel to the American River on downstream to the Sacramento River.

This is an easy rafting river, rated Class I. A couple of Class II rapids are thrown in: Suicide Bend, located about three miles downstream of the dam; San Juan Rapids, one mile farther; and Arden Rapids, another five miles past that. These rapids are not difficult, but newcomers may want to scout them from the shore. Portaging is easy at all the runs.

One great bonus is that American River Recreation rents out kayaks and rafts of all sizes. When renting, you always put in at their shop on Sunrise Boulevard, then enjoy the 2.5-hour float down to Goethe Park. For a small fee they will give you a shuttle ride back.

The only outfitter offering guided trips is California Canoe & Kayak. But this is an easy float, and novice boaters can do most of it alone.

Though temperatures around here get hot, the water is often cold, which can come as a big surprise. Rafters sometimes discard their life jackets to enjoy the sunny weather, then are stunned by the cold water when they fall in. After big winters, the river can be quite high and cold on Memorial Day weekend, the traditional kickoff of the party/rafting season on the American River.

Access: Easy access is off the roads in Rancho Cordova and Fair Oaks that cut off from U.S. 50. Excellent shore-fishing access is at the following locations: Nimbus Basin, Ancel Hoffman Park, Goethe Park, the Sunrise Avenue

than it is farther upstream. There is a good access ramp right at Rio Vista and at nearby marinas. You'll also find beach access in Rio Vista for swimming and windsurfing.

Boating traffic in the Sacramento River Delta is high in the summer. One of the reasons it is so popular is that in a boat you gain access to a network of adjoining waterways, many with excellent sheltered areas suitable for waterskiing. Most boat rentals are booked up on weekends.

One of the best of these areas is known as the Meadows, and is located on Snodgrass Slough near Walnut Grove. It is fed from the Mokelumne River, not the Sacramento River. A boat launch at Walnut Grove Marina provides nearby access.

There's just one problem on the Sacramento River Delta in late spring and early summer: the wind. When temperatures reach the 100°F range in the Central Valley—yet it is foggy on the San Francisco coast—the wind whistles west, using the river as a passageway. That means rough going for most boating and water sports. These winds tend to come and go in three-day cycles, that is, three days of wind, then three days of calm. Not always, of course, but that is the general pattern.

Boaters can search out the narrow channels adjoining the main river. These channels are not only largely sheltered from the wind, but their very size by nature creates a calmer surface, ideal for waterskiing. Many other such spots are in the adjoining San Joaquin Delta (see the *San Joaquin Delta* listing in this chapter).

The Sacramento River is often fantastic for fishing, with striped bass, sturgeon, and salmon caught in excellent numbers during their respective peak migrations. Many of the best spots are in the Rio Vista area, downriver near Brannan Island State Recreation Area, and in Montezuma Slough.

Access: Paved boat ramps are available at the following locations:

- To B&W Resort, Isleton: Take I-5 to Highway 12 (south of Sacramento, near Lodi). Turn

west on Highway 12 and drive 1 1/2 miles to Brannan Island Road (after the second turn right and drive a very short distance to your immediate left).

• To Korth's Pirates' Lair Marina, Take I-5 to Highway 12 (south of Sacramento, near Lodi). Turn west on Highway 12 and drive 11 miles to Brannan Island Road (the second bridge). Turn right and drive 1/2 mile to the marina.

• To Vieira's Resort, Isleton: Take I-5 to Highway 12 (south of Sacramento, near Lodi) and drive 17 miles to a four-way stop at Highway 160 (just before Rio Vista Bridge). Turn right (north) on Highway 160 and drive three miles to Vieira's on the left. Turn left and drive a short distance into the resort.

• To Sandy Beach County Park, Rio Vista: Take I-80 to Fairfield and the exit for Highway 12. Take that exit southeast and drive 16 miles to Rio Vista and the intersection with Main Street. Turn right on Main Street and drive a short distance to Second Street and drive to Marina Drive. Turn left (west) on Beach Drive 0.5 mile to the park.

• To Delta Marina RV Resort, Rio Vista: Take I-80 to Fairfield and the exit for Highway 12. Take that exit and drive 16 miles to Rio Vista and the intersection with Main Street. Turn right on Main Street and drive a short distance to Second Street. Turn right on Second Street and drive to Marina Drive. Turn left and continue another 1/2 mile to the harbor.

• To Snug Harbor Resort: Take I-80 to Fairfield and Highway 12. Turn east on Highway 12 and drive 16 miles to Rio Vista and Front Street. Turn left on Front Street and drive under the bridge to River Road. Turn right on River Road and drive two miles to the Real McCoy Ferry (signed Ryer Island). Take the ferry (free) across the Sacramento River to Ryer Island and Levee Road. Turn right and drive 3.5 miles on Levee Road to Snug Harbor on the right.

Boat: Lodging, cabins, and campgrounds provided; full-service marinas, slips are available at or near many of the sloughs listed above. Fees are charged for private marinas for day use, boat launch, and camping. River access is free.

Boat restrictions: Powerboats, water-skiing, windsurfing are permitted. A swimming beach and designated wind-surfing area are available at Brannan Island Recreation Area. Another swimming area is available at Vieira's Resort in Isleton. Beach access points for swimming, fishing, and fishing are available along Highway 160 on Brannan Island.

Directions: To Brannan Island State Recreation Area: From I-80 in Fairfield, take the exit for Highway 12, exit and drive southeast 14 miles to Rio Vista, and continue to Highway 160 (just before the bridge). Turn right on Highway 160 and drive three miles to the entrance on the left.

Directions: To Antioch, take Highway 4 and continue to the Antioch Bridge (where the road crosses Highway 160) and continue to the right.

Directions: California Delta Chamber & Visitors: 916/777-4041, www.californiadelta.org; Sandy Beach County Park: Sonoma County Parks, 707/374-2097, www.sonomacounty.com; Brannan Island State Recreation Area, 916/777-6671; Riverside Boat Club, 916/777-6662.

Marinas and lodging: Korth's Pirates' Lair Marina, Isleton, 916/777-6464, www.korthsmarina.com; Snug Harbor Marina and RV Camp/Park, 916/777-1455, www.snugharbor.net; Duck Island RV Park, 916/777-6663 or 800/825-3898; B&W Resort, Isleton, 916/777-6161, www.bandwresort.com; Vieira's Resort, Isleton, 916/777-6661, http://vieiras95641.tripod.com; Delta Marina RV Resort, Rio Vista, 707/374-2315, www.deltamarina.com.

Boat rentals and charters: Herman &

Helen's, 209/951-4634; KOA Boat Rentals, 209/369-1041; Waterflies (will deliver), 916/777-6431; Herman & Helens, Stockton, 209/951-4634; Big River Kayaks, Bethel Island, 925/684-3095; Delta Expeditions, 916/600-2420; Martin's Sailing School & Club, 916/369-7700, www.lovetosail.com.

Guides: Fish Hookers Sportfishing, 916/777-6498, www.fishhookers.com; Fish Hooker Charters, 916/777-6498.

Maps: Hal Schell's *Delta Map and Guide* can be ordered by mail at P.O. Box 9140, Stockton, CA 95208, and online at www.californiadelta.org/ordermap.html. Call 209/727-5153 for pricing.



21 SAN JOAQUIN DELTA

Rating: 10

near Antioch

Map 5.3, page 157

BEST

The network of waterways in the San Joaquin Delta is so vast that you can change the course of your life instantly by simply making another turn—taking you amid the spiderweb of rivers, sloughs, bays, and estuaries.

The Delta is rimmed by roads perched on the tops of levees, linked by 70 bridges and a few old-time cable ferries. You can explore it for years by boat or car and not see it all. It is among the world's best destinations for boaters.

The best areas for waterskiing and wakeboarding are in the sloughs, providing miles of calm water and shelter from the north winds that often affect the Sacramento River side of the Delta. And there are dozens and dozens of sloughs: Middle River, Old River, Grant Line Canal, and Victoria Cut are among the best. The sloughs are better protected from winds than the wide-open areas, such as Frank's Tract and Sherman Lake (where the San Joaquin and Sacramento Rivers join), which means smooth, warm water for waterskiing. Don't underestimate the value of

these sheltered areas. At times the wind can be howling 15 miles away on the Sacramento River while False River is being stroked only by a gentle breeze.

Two popular spots for windsurfing are Ski Beach and Swing Beach, both located near Frank's Tract. The best beach access is available in the sloughs, which are reachable by boat only.

In addition, the fishing for largemouth bass is considered among the best in America, especially in the vicinity of Victoria Slough, Old River, and the Grant Line.

The San Joaquin Delta was once a vast marshland. According to Delta historian Hal Schell, Chinese laborers working for 13 cents per cubic yard built the original levees in the Delta. "That work was eventually converted to clamshell dredges, because it was cheaper," Schell said. By 1930, some 700,000 acres had been reclaimed, creating 55 islands.

The Delta levees are lined with rules, cottonwoods, and grass, habitat that supports one of North America's most diverse and abundant arrays of bird life. On any given day, you can see everything from Canada geese to peregrine falcons, mated pairs of mallards to flocks of white pelicans, giant egrets, and marsh hawks.

There is just so much of it. Thus it can be inundated with people and boats in the summer, particularly water-skiers, who descend in unbelievable numbers. The place can get wild.

The problem is that these waterways can be narrow in places, meaning there is sometimes limited forward visibility, yet there are a lot of boats out on weekends. That is one of the reasons the law says you must have a spotter on board to watch the trailing water-skier so that the driver can stay alert to what is going on ahead.

Because waterskiing traffic is so heavy on weekends, most windsurfers will head instead to Windy Cove near Brannan Island State Recreation Area (see the *Sacramento River Delta* listing). Most beach areas in the San Joaquin Delta are accessible by boat only.

The best time on the Delta (with the fewest people on it) is a late September and early October, weather of the year arrives in early fall—a weekday morning, you can have the place—all thousand miles of it—put to yourself.

Also check out the listing for the *quinn Southbeast Delta* in this chapter. **Access:** Launching facilities are available at the following locations:

- To Emerald Pointe Marina, Bethel Take Highway 4 to Antioch and continue to Oakley and Cypress Road. Turn left on Cypress Road and drive three miles (drive over the Bethel Island Bridge; the road name changes to Bethel Island Road) to Stone Road. Turn right on Stone Road and continue 1.5 miles on the right for the marina entrance.
- Bethel Harbor, Bethel Island: Take Highway 4 to Antioch and continue east to Oakley Cypress Road. Turn left on Cypress Road and drive three miles (drive over the Bethel Island Bridge; the road name changes to Bethel Island Road) to Harbor Road (on the northern side). Turn right and drive the end of the road.

- Lundborg Landing, Bethel Island: Highway 4 to Antioch and continue to Oakley and Cypress Road. Turn left on Cypress Road and drive three miles (drive over the Bethel Island Bridge; the road name changes to Bethel Island Road) to Gateway Road. Turn right on Gateway Road and drive two miles to the park entrance on the left for the large sign and tugboat).

- Sugar Barge Marina, Bethel Island: Highway 4 to Antioch and continue to Oakley and Cypress Road. Turn left on Cypress Road and drive three miles (drive over the Bethel Island Bridge; the road name changes to Bethel Island Road) to Gateway Road. Turn right on Gateway Road and drive 0.25 mile to Piper Road. Turn left and drive two miles to Willow Road. Turn right and drive a short distance to the marina.

- Eddo's Harbor & RV Park, Sherman Island

Highway 4 to Antioch and continue over the Bethel Island Bridge (where the road becomes Highway 160). Continue to Sherman Island and drive three miles (drive over the Bethel Island Bridge; the road name changes to Bethel Island Road). Turn right and drive to the end of the road.

• **Antioch:** Take Highway 4 to Antioch and the exit for Wilbur Avenue. Turn right and drive 0.25 mile to the signed entrance for the yacht club on the right. Fees charged for day use at private resorts; boat launching, boat rentals, and camping.

• **Bethel Harbor, Bethel Island:** Take Highway 4 to Antioch and the exit for Wilbur Avenue. Turn right and drive 0.25 mile to the signed entrance for the yacht club on the right. Fees charged for day use at private resorts; boat launching, boat rentals, and camping.

• **Marinas and lodging:** Emerald Pointe Marina, Bethel Island, 925/684-2388; Bethel Harbor, Bethel Island, 925/684-9351; Lundborg Landing, 925/684-9351; www.lundborglanding.com; Sugar Barge Marina, Bethel Island, 925/684-8575 or 800/799-4100; Eddo's Harbor & RV Park, 925/757-5314, www.eddosresort.com; Lauritzen Yacht Harbor, Antioch, 925/757-1916, www.lauritzen.com; Beacon Harbor, 925/684-2174; Seahore Marin, 925/684-3606; Wood's Harbor, 925/684-9550; D'Anna's Bethel Island Marina Resort, 925/684-3720; Frank's Marina, 925/684-2101; Hennis Marina, 925/684-3333; Russo's Marina, 925/684-2024; Rusty Porthole Marina, 925/684-3607; Sunset Harbor, 925/684-3522.

• **Boat rentals and charters:** H2O To Go, 209/810-6755, http://h2orent.com; Lundborg Landing, 925/684-9351; Paradise Point Marina, 800/752-9669; Warflees (will deliver), 916/777-6431; Herman & Helen's, Stockton, 209/951-4634; Lundborg Landing, Bethel Island, 925/684-9351, www.lundborglanding.com; Delta Expeditions, Rio Vista, 916/600-2420; Big River Kayaks, Bethel Island, 925/684-3095; Martin's Sailing School & Club, 916/369-7700, www.lovetosail.com.

• **Guides:** Fish Hookers Sportfishing, 916/777-6498.

• **Maps:** Hal Schell's *Delta Map and Guide* can be ordered by mail at P.O. Box 9140, Stockton, CA 95208, and online at www.californiadelta.org/ordermap.html. Call 209/727-5153 for pricing.

• **Directions:** From Antioch, take Highway 4 and drive to Oakley and Cypress Road.

• **Turn left on Cypress Road, drive over the Bethel Island Bridge, and continue 0.5 mile in Gateway Road. Turn right and drive on Gateway Road. This route provides access to the interior San Joaquin Delta.**

• **Contact:** California Delta Chamber & Visitor Bureau, 209/367-9840, www.californiadelta.org.

• **Marinas and lodging:** Emerald Pointe Marina, Bethel Island, 925/684-2388; Bethel Harbor, Bethel Island, 925/684-9351; Lundborg Landing, 925/684-9351, www.lundborglanding.com; Sugar Barge Marina, Bethel Island, 925/684-8575 or 800/799-4100; Eddo's Harbor & RV Park,

19530 East Levee Road, Sherman Island, 925/757-5314, www.eddosresort.com; Lauritzen Yacht Harbor, Antioch, 925/757-1916, www.lauritzen.com; Beacon Harbor, 925/684-2174; Seahore Marin, 925/684-3606; Wood's Harbor, 925/684-9550; D'Anna's Bethel Island Marina Resort, 925/684-3720; Frank's Marina, 925/684-2101; Hennis Marina, 925/684-3333; Russo's Marina, 925/684-2024; Rusty Porthole Marina, 925/684-3607; Sunset Harbor, 925/684-3522.

• **Boat rentals and charters:** H2O To Go, 209/810-6755, <http://h2orent.com>; Lundborg Landing, 925/684-9351; Paradise Point Marina, 800/752-9669; Warflees (will deliver), 916/777-6431; Herman & Helen's, Stockton, 209/951-4634; Lundborg Landing, Bethel Island, 925/684-9351, www.lundborglanding.com; Delta Expeditions, Rio Vista, 916/600-2420; Big River Kayaks, Bethel Island, 925/684-3095; Martin's Sailing School & Club, 916/369-7700, www.lovetosail.com.

• **Guides:** Fish Hookers Sportfishing, 916/777-6498.

• **Maps:** Hal Schell's *Delta Map and Guide* can be ordered by mail at P.O. Box 9140, Stockton, CA 95208, and online at www.californiadelta.org/ordermap.html. Call 209/727-5153 for pricing.

22 SAN JOAQUIN SOUTHEAST DELTA



Rating: 10

near Stockton

Map 5.3, page 157

Exploring the Delta can be like entering a vast human void—and a dreamland for boating, water sports, wildlife, and fishing. And yet just over the hills to the west are 6.8 million residents, where the nearby highways are jammed with angry people squeezing the life out of their steering wheels, pushing, pushing, pushing.

• **Tower Park Marina and Resort, Lodi:** Take I-5 to Lodi and Highway 12. Take Highway 12 west and drive about five miles to Tower Park Way (before first bridge). Turn left and drive a short distance to the marina. For more information, call 209/369-1041, or visit www.westrec.com.

• **Walnut Grove Marina, Walnut Grove:** Take I-5 to the exit for Thornton-Walnut Grove/County Road J11 (located south of Sacramento and west of Galo). Take that exit, turn west and drive five miles to Old Walnut Grove/Thornton Road. Turn right and drive 0.3 mile to the marina. For more information, call 916/776-1181, boat rentals at 916/776-4270 or 800/255-5561, or visit www.walnutgrovemarina.com.

• **New Hope Landing, Thornton:** Take I-5 to the exit for Thornton-Walnut Grove/County Road J11 (located south of Sacramento and west of Galo). Take that exit, turn west and drive 3.3 miles to the campground entrance on the left. For more information, call 209/794-2627, or visit www.newhopelanding.com.

Facilities, fees: Lodging, cabins, campgrounds, houseboats, full-service marinas, and supplies are available at or near many of the boat ramps listed above. River access is free along roads. Fees are charged at parks and private marinas for day use, boat launching, and camping. Supplies are available at Delta Sportsman Bar & Tackle on Bethel Island (925/684-2260) and at Larry's Bar in Stockton (209/473-2230).

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, water-skiing, wakeboarding, personal watercraft, sailing, and windsurfing are permitted. Swimming and windsurfing access is available in many of the sloughs. Some popular sandy beaches: Orwood Tract, north of Discovery Bay; the Mandeville (south) side of Venice Island, east of Frank's Tract; and Lost Isle, north of Holt.

Directions: See specific listings under *Access*.

Contact: California Delta Chamber & Visitor Bureau, 916/777-4041, www.california-delta.org.

Marinas and lodging: Ladd's Marina,

Stockton, 209/477-9521; River Marina, near Clifton Court Forebay, 8365; Discovery Bay Yacht Harbor, 925/634-5928; Holland Riverside Brenwood, 925/684-3667; Lazy M Byron, 925/634-4555; Orwood Ranchwood, 925/634-2550, www.orwood.com; Paradise Point Marina, 209/952-1000; Haven Marina, 925/634-3822; Tower Marina, 209/835-3182; Whiskey Slough, 209/942-4588.

Boat rentals: Waterflies (will call), 916/777-6431; Herman & Helen's, 209/951-4634; Big River Marina, 925/684-3095; Tower Marina, Lodi, 209/368-3030, www.walnutgrovemarina.com; Paradise Point Marina, Lodi, 209/952-1000 or 800/752-1000; paradisepoint.com; Walnut Marina, Walnut Grove, 916/776-4800/255-5561; Delta Houseboat Rental, 209/477-1840; Houseboat Association, 209/477-1840; Houseboat Rental, 877/468-7326, www.houseboats.com.

Instruction: Discovery Bay Board & Ski Center, 925/634-0412, gowakeboard.com or www.gowakeboard.com; Martin's Sailing School & Marina, 916/369-7700, www.lovetosail.com.

Guides: Delta Expeditions, 600-2420.

Maps: Hal Schell's *Delta Maps and Guides*, 925/634-0412, gowakeboard.com or www.gowakeboard.com; CA 95208, and online at www.california.org/ordermap.html. Call 209/727-5151 for pricing.



23 CLEMENTINE LAKE

Rating:

northeast of Auburn on the American River

Map 5.4, page 158

Some places you just plain need a boat. When you visit Clementine Lake, you will discover that this is one of those places.

Clementine Lake is 3.5 miles long and

is set in a dammed-up gorge on the American River at an elevation of 1,000 feet. It is ideal for the boater, with swimming, great boat-in swimming, and a 25-boat limit. The water is clear, great for water sports.

Highlights include very pretty scenery, easy access to the lake, and the boat-in campground. Auburn, and the boat-in campground, which provide visitors with a wilderness atmosphere. It is extremely popular with skiers and locals from the Auburn area.

Although no stocking program is in effect, trout fishing for trout and smallmouth bass is popular. What it all boils down to is that boaters who are camping at the lake have priority, and if you're coming on a weekend to spend the day, you run the risk of being shut out. Arriving during the week will get you a day use; if you're scheduled for a summer weekend, you should arrive early.

The lake provides a self-perpetuating fishery for trout in spring and smallmouth bass in summer. Boat services are offered at the lake, except for launch access is virtually impossible without a boat. But with a boat? Heh, heh, that's a payoff!

Access: There's a paved ramp at the end of the access road.

Facilities, fees: Boat-in campgrounds, floatation, chemical toilets, picnic areas, and gas are available. No drinking water. Garbage must be packed out. Supplies can be obtained in Auburn. Access to the lake is free. Fees are charged for boat launching and camping.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, water-skiing, wakeboarding, and personal watercraft are permitted. The lake is too small for sailing and windsurfing. Swimming areas are available in front of the campgrounds; access is limited to boats only.

Directions: From Sacramento, take I-80 east for 31 miles to Auburn and continue to the exit for Foresthill. Take that exit to Foresthill Road. Turn northeast on Foresthill Road and drive three miles to Lake Clementine Road. Turn left and drive 2.5 miles to the boat launch.

Contact: Auburn State Recreation Area, 530/885-4527; Auburn Chamber of Commerce, 530/885-5616, www.auburnchamber.net; Auburn Outdoor Sports, 530/885-9200.

24 SOUTH FORK AMERICAN RIVER

Rating: 10

near Placerville in El Dorado National Forest

Map 5.4, page 158

BEST

Behold, the most popular rafting river in the Western United States. For newcomers to the sport, the South Fork American is the choice, with easy access, enough white-water challenge to add some sizzle, and a huge array of trips offered by rafting outfitters. No experience needed; just hop on for the ride.

The run begins at Chili Bar, the somewhat legendary put-in, and is a 20-mile trip to completing the entire run. Half-day trips are extremely popular.

This is a Class III run, considered a perfect introduction to rafting, and there are plenty of takers. River traffic is very heavy starting on Memorial Day weekend, especially on weekends, and anybody desiring any semblance of solitude should go elsewhere.

The river can usually be run from April through early October, but there are no guarantees, as flows are determined from upstream hydro releases. The scenery is pleasant, not sensational, but there's an open, rugged feel and lots of gold rush historical sites along the way.

White-water highlights include Meangrinder (Class III), Troublenaker (Class III+), the most dramatic drop on the river), and Satan's Cesspool (Class III+), which can challenge even experienced paddlers and give most any

beginner the opportunity to see if their heart can pound a hole through their chest. After Meagrinder, there are 10 sets of rapids until reaching Troublemaker. This stretch covers nine miles and takes you to Coloma. The second half of the trip covers 11 miles from Coloma to Salmon Falls, referred to as The Gorge. The run starts off lazy enough before abruptly dropping into The Gorge. Here you will encounter back-to-back rapids, including Satan's Cesspool, Haystack Canyon, Bouncing Rock, and Hospital Bar.

Guides always point out to the occupants in the raft that there is a seven-mile stretch running past several private homes and campgrounds that boaters are asked to treat as a quiet zone. That means rafters have to try to not act like lunatics for about two hours, no mean feat for some people.

Many rafting companies offer an array of specialty trips on this river. These include family trips, youth trips, theme trips, and half-day trips.

Access: There is no boat ramp. You can put in at Chili Bar (see *Directions* this listing). Take out 20 miles downstream from Chili Bar just above the Salmon Falls Bridge (above Folsom Lake) or farther upstream at one of several other access points: The Highway 49 bridge in Coloma, Hemmingsen-Lotus County Park, or Camp Lotus (Highway 49 in Coloma to Lotus Road, then to Bassi Road). Access is available at Marshall Gold Discovery State Park, but only put-ins are allowed, no take-outs.

Facilities, fees: Private campgrounds are available on Highway 49 near Coloma and Lotus. No camping at the state park or the county park. Supplies are available in Placerville. A private concession charges a fee to put in at Chili Bar. Access fees are charged at Marshall Gold Discovery State Park, Hemmingsen-Lotus County Park, and Camp Lotus.

Water sports, restrictions: Rafting and kayaking is permitted. Swimming is available at all the parks listed.

Directions: To Chili Bar Run: Take U.S. 50 to Placerville and the exit for Highway 49. Take

that exit and drive north on Highway 193. Turn right and drive down to the bridge at Chili Bar.

Contact: Eldorado National Forest, Placerville Ranger District, 530/644-7777, www.fs.fed.us/f5; Bureau of Land Management, 916/985-4474.

Guided rafting trips: Action Water Adventures, 800/453-7777, www.rivertugid.com; Adventure Camp, 800/556-6060, www.raftcalifornia.com.

Outdoors Whitewater Rafting, 800/2387, www.aorafing.com; American Recreation, 530/622-6802 or 800/7238, www.arrafting.com; ARTA (A River Touring Association), 209/966-8000/323-2782, www.arta.org; American Whitewater Expeditions, 800/825-8000/234-7238, www.wtrtripp.com; Outdoor Center, 530/621-1236 or 800/2262, www.cbocwhitewater.com; Earth Expeditions, 530/642-1900 or 800/8735, www.earthtrekepeditions.com; Mariah Wilderness Expeditions, 530/6049 or 800/462-7424, www.mariahwhitewater.com; Motherlode River Trips, 800/427-2222, www.motherlode.com; Outdoor Adventure Specialists (OARS), 800/346-6666, www.oars.com; Tributary Whitewater Tours, 530/346-6812 or 800/3846, www.whitewatertours.com; Whitewater Connection, 800/336-7238, www.whitewaterconnection.com; White Excitement, 800/750-2386, www.whitewaterexcitement.com; Whitewater Voyagers, 800/400-7238, www.whitewatervoyagers.com; Wilderness Adventures, 800/323-7777, www.wildrivertrips.com.

Rentals: California Canoe & Kayak, Elcho Cordova, 916/353-1880 or in the Bay Area at 510/893-7833, www.cal kayak.com; Sierra Outdoor Center, Auburn, 530/885-1818, www.sierraoutdoorcenter.com; River Rentals in Fair Oaks, 916/966-6777.

JENKINSON LAKE/ SLY PARK



Rating: 10

Placerville in Sly Park Recreation Area **Map, page 158**

Only thing wrong with Jenkinson Lake is it's hardly a secret. In fact, it may just be the ideal vacation destination.

The lake is set at an elevation of 3,500 feet, covering 640 acres with eight miles of shoreline. All water sports are permitted and rules that separate high-speed users from low-speed users help to resolve potential conflicts and set the stage for first-class water recreation.

The 7 mph zone covers 80 acres of the lake north of Sierra Point; of course, water-skiers and wakeboarders should stay clear of there. Nonmotor launch ramp lies within this zone and is used primarily by anglers. Visiting with ski boats and other fast craft should be limited to the other ramp.

Swimming is available all along the shoreline, but swimmers are cautioned to stay within 40 feet of the shore to avoid any chance of getting in the way of fast boats. Windsurfing is also good here, usually best 11 a.m.–3 p.m., when a steady wind courses over the lake.

Anglers often head upstream into the Hazel Creek arm of the lake for trout in the spring and fall in the summer. In addition, this is one of the better lakes in the Sierra for brown trout. A bonus at Sly Park is the variety of campgrounds, with campsites available for individuals, youths, families, and equestrians.

Access: Two paved boat ramps are available: a nonmotorer. On the entrance road, continue straight past Pine Cone Campground to the motorer. Campground and launch ramp.

West Shore: Once inside the lake entrance, drive 50 feet past the kiosk to the boat-ramp access road, on the right. Turn right and drive 1/2 mile to the ramp. Day-use and boat-launch fees apply.

Facilities, fees: A small marina with docks,

campgrounds, vault toilets, drinking water, and picnic areas; an RV dump station, a snack bar, bait and tackle, and a convenience store are available. Full supplies can be obtained in Pollock Pines. Fees are charged for day use, boat launching, and camping.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, water-skiing, wakeboarding, sailing, and windsurfing are permitted. No personal watercraft. A 5-mph speed limit is enforced north of Sierra Point (on the north side of the lake). No pets or babies in diapers are permitted in the lake.

Directions: From Sacramento, take U.S. 50 east to Pollock Pines and take the exit for Sly Park Road. Take that exit south and drive five miles to Jenkinson Lake and the campground access road. Turn left and drive one mile to the campground, on the left.

Contact: Sly Park Recreation Area, El Dorado Irrigation District, 530/644-2545, www.eid.org; Sly Park Resort, 530/644-1113.

26 LAKE AMADOR



Rating: 5

northeast of Stockton **Map 5.4, page 158**
Yeah, this lake seems like it was planted on Earth for one reason: fishing.

Although there is a campground and swimming pond nearby, Amador is better known for providing excellent fishing for trout and bass, with good catch rates for rainbow trout and a fair number of giant Florida bass. The lake is set at an elevation of 485 feet in the foothill country east of Stockton, covering 425 acres with 13.5 miles of shoreline. Of the four lakes in the immediate area—Camanche, Pardoe, New Hogan, and Amador—it is Amador and Pardoe that have enacted the most restrictive boating rules to guarantee that anglers have quiet water and the best chances for success.

That means no waterskiing, personal watercraft, or windsurfing. And while swimming is

not prohibited, much of the shoreline is rocky, swimming access is poor, and hey, with a one-acre pond specifically designated for swimming near the campground, you never see people taking a dunk in the lake. The pond is family oriented, with a playground, waterslide, and gently sloping sandy beaches. Use is high year-round, the campground is often full in early summer, and reservations are suggested. There also are hiking and mountain biking trails in the area.

Among the fishing highlights: Trout are stocked weekly. The largest two-man bass limit was caught here, at 80.4 pounds, and the lake-record bass was 17 pounds, 1 ounce, and catfish up to 40 pounds are caught in summer. A special strain of cross-bred trout called cutbow are stocked here.

Access: A paved boat ramp is available at Lake Amador Marina, located just off Lake Amador Drive.

Facilities, fees: A small marina rents fishing boats. Campgrounds, picnic area, drinking water, restrooms, showers, an RV dump station, fishing supplies (including bait and tackle), a snack bar, a convenience store, propane gas, a swimming pond, and a playground are available. Fees are charged for day use, fishing permits, boat launching, and camping.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, canoes, kayaks, inflatables, and sailing are permitted. A 5-mph speed limit is enforced within the coves and around the marina. No waterskiing, wakeboarding, or personal watercraft. A swimming pond is available near the campgrounds.

Directions: From Stockton, take Highway 88 east for 24 miles to Clements. Just east of Clements, bear left on Highway 88 and drive 11 miles to Jackson Valley Road. Turn right (well signed) and drive four miles to Buena Vista Drive. Continue straight one mile to Lake Amador Drive. Turn right and drive over the dam to the campground office.

Contact: Lake Amador Recreation Area, 209/274-4739, www.lakeamador.com.

27 PARDEE LAKE



northeast of Stockton

Map 5.4, page 158

Of all the lakes in the Mother Lode country, Pardee is the prettiest, covering more than 2,000 acres with 37 miles of shoreline. The lake, which has a T-shape configuration, is most beautiful in early spring, when the hills are full, the hills are green, and the wildflowers are blooming. And one other thing: The water is baring then, too.

Like Amador, this lake was designed exclusively for fishing. Waterskiing, swimming, windsurfing are prohibited. There is a 25-mph speed limit and most boaters heed a "courtesy" rule, making the lake safe and enjoyable. That includes for those with a low-speed craft, such as canoes or small motorboats. Pardee has full facilities for boaters, even a marina, and in spring this is the destination for the camper/boater/angler.

The lake opens each year in February, kicking right off with good trolling for steelhead and kokanee salmon. It is stocked with trout weekly. With good fishing and good weather it doesn't take long before the campground can get quite crowded. During hot weather, attentions turns to bass, both smallmouth largemouth, as well as catfish. The lake closes in the fall in late October during the migratory bird season.

Many families take advantage of the swimming pool near the campground.

Access: A 10-lane paved ramp is available at Pardee Recreation Area, located on the northeastern arm of the lake.

Facilities, fees: A full-service marina has 100 boat slips, 100 pontoon boats for rent, 100 motorboats and boat storage. A campground has drinking water, restrooms, showers (in an RV section of the campground), an RV dump station, a fish-cleaning station, coin laundry, a convenience store, propane gas, RV storage, a wading pool, and a seasonal swimming

Rating: 4

pool available. Fees are charged for day use, camping, fishing permits, boat launching, and boat tubes.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, canoes, and boat tubes are permitted. Due to the threat of quagga and zebra mussels, no boats are allowed from Southern California, San Diego, and Santa Clara counties, and outside California. No body contact with the water is permitted. No waterskiing, wakeboarding, personal watercraft, and swimming. Those with inflatable tubes must wear waders. A large swimming pool is available at the campground.

Directions: From Stockton, take Highway 88 east for 24 miles to the town of Clements. Just east of Clements, bear left on Highway 88 and drive 11 miles to Jackson Valley Road. Turn right and drive to a four-way stop sign at Buena Vista Drive. Turn right and drive for three miles to Pardee Road, on the left. Turn left and drive a mile to the campground, on the right.

Contact: Pardee Recreation Area, 209/772-4772; Pardee Marina, 209/772-8108, www.lakepardee.com.

28 MOKELUMNE RIVER



Rating: 7

northeast of Stockton

Map 5.4, page 158

This short, three-mile stretch of the Mokelumne River provides a window to the way a pristine river once was. It's a great spot for river tubing and easy kayaking and is decent for swimming.

The rafting season is a long one here, from March to September, when the river features warm water and good scenery. It's an easy river to kayak, mostly Class I with a couple of Class II rapids, ideal for beginning and practicing kayakers (especially in inflatable kayaks), as well as for inner tubers.

The three-mile-long run cuts through the small town of Jackson and Mokelumne Hill, and there are many historic sites in the

area. By far the best spot for swimming is at Electra Picnic Area. Although use is moderate, and no guided trips are available, there can be lots of inner tubers here on hot summer weekends, and kayaking is extremely popular in the spring and early summer.

But there is a major problem. The river is a prisoner of water releases, which means that flows can fluctuate wildly according to the whims of the water master, not rainfall and snowmelt. You should always call the Bureau of Land Management to check flow levels before scheduling a trip on the Mokelumne.

Access: There is no boat ramp. Kayakers, canoeists, and inner tubers can put in just below Electra Powerhouse (see *Directions* this listing). Take out three miles downstream at the Highway 49 bridge.

Facilities, fees: A picnic area is provided on Electra Road. Access to the river is free.

Water sports, restrictions: Rafting, canoeing, kayaking, and tubing are available. Swimming access is available at Electra Picnic Area.

Directions: From Stockton, take Highway 88 east for 24 miles past the town of Clements, and then continue on Highway 88 past Camanche Lake and Lake Pardee to Martel and Highway 49. Turn south on Highway 49, drive through Jackson, and continue 4.5 miles to Electra Road. Turn east on Electra Road. The river is accessible off this road for four miles upstream, to the powerhouse at Electra.

Contact: Bureau of Land Management, Folsom Field Office, 916/985-4474; PG&E Recreation Desk, 916/386-5164, www.pge.com/recreation.

29 LAKE TABEAUD



Rating: 4

near Jackson

Map 5.4, page 158

It is always funny to hear people try to pronounce the name of this lake on their first visit. People who commonly mangle names

sometimes call it Lake "Tay-Be-A-Ud." It's pronounced Tah-Bow. Just like it looks.

This lake is an hour's drive east of Stockton, set at an elevation of 2,000 feet, just high enough to keep the water cool into early summer. The lake gets light use, primarily by anglers.

The surrounding area is pretty and attracts a small amount of vacation traffic. No motors are permitted, which limits boating to rowboats, canoes, and inflatables. Swimming and windsurfing are also not allowed—just paddling, fishing, and picnicking. That's about it. And sometimes that's just plenty.

Access: No boat ramp is available. Car-top boats may be hand launched.

Facilities, fees: A picnic area is available. Supplies can be obtained in Jackson. Access to the lake is free.

Water sports, restrictions: Rowboats, canoes, kayaks, and inflatables are permitted. No motors. No swimming. The lake is too small for sailing and windsurfing.

Directions: From Stockton, take Highway 88 east to Highway 49. Turn south on Highway 49 and drive to Jackson. From Jackson, continue south on Highway 49 for 0.5 mile to Clinton Road. Turn left on Clinton Road and drive east for 5.1 miles to Tabcaud Road. Bear right on Tabcaud Road and continue two miles to the lake.

Contact: PG&E Recreation Desk, 916/386-5164, www.pge.com/recreation.



30 LAKE CAMANCHE

Rating: 10

northeast of Stockton
Map 5.4, page 158

Camanche is a large, multifaceted facility that covers 7,700 acres and has 53 miles of shoreline. It is set in the foothills east of Lodi at an elevation of 325 feet. Here you will find the best of everything—boating, camping, fishing, waterskiing, swimming, and windsurf-

ing—with enough space for everyone to keep user conflicts to a minimum.

The water is clear and warm. Recreation grounds are available at both the north and south ends of the lake, and as you expect, visitor turnout is high, especially during the peak months in late spring and summer. There are few trees here, which makes the lake largely exposed.

All boating is allowed on the lake, and personal watercraft are permitted in the narrows on the northern end. Windsurfing conditions at Lake Camanche are excellent because the afternoons are just about every day. Yet there is hardly any windsurfing activity.

The swimming is also good here. People sunbathe for a spell, then jump in the lake to cool off and have a little fun. Although there are no designated swimming areas, much of the shoreline has suitable spots for two most popular spots are at Campground on the north shore and the area near the bar on the south shore.

More than anything, though, this lake is for fishing. In the spring and summer, it provides outstanding fishing for trout, bass, salmon, crappie, bluegill, and catfish. It is one of extensive structure in the lake, it is known as a premier bass lake.

Access: Multilane paved boat ramps are available at both recreation areas (see *Directions* for this listing).

Facilities, fees: Full-service marinas offering boat and pontoon boat rentals, maintenance and boat storage. Lodging, campground, restrooms, showers, an RV dump station, trout pond, coin laundry, a snack bar, and convenience store are available. Restrooms are available nearby. Fees are charged for day use, boat launching, fishing permit, and camping.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboat skiing, wakeboarding, personal watercraft, kayaking, and inflatables are permitted. Due to the threat posed by quagga and zebra mussels, no boats are allowed from Sac-

ramento, San Benito and Santa Clara counties, and outside California. No waterskiing, wakeboarding, or personal watercraft permitted in the narrows on the northern end of the lake. Windsurfing, sailing, and swimming are permitted. There are no designated beaches, but almost all of the shoreline is rocky and almost all of the shoreline is rocky and gradually sloped.

Directions: To the north shore: From Stockton, drive east on Highway 88 for 24 miles to Jackson. Just east of Clements, bear left on Highway 88 and drive six miles to Camanche Marina. Turn right and drive seven miles to Campground North Shore entrance gate. In the south shore: From Stockton, drive west on Highway 88 for 24 miles to Clements. Turn left and drive six miles to the entrance gate.

Contact: Lake Camanche North Shore, 209/763-5121; North Shore Marina, 209/763-5164; Lake Camanche South Shore, 209/763-5174, www.camancherecreation.com; South Shore Marina, 209/763-5915.



NEW HOGAN LAKE

Rating: 8

north of Stockton
Map 5.4, page 158

New Hogan is a big lake, covering 4,400 acres with 50 miles of shoreline. There are many camp spots along the eastern shore at Deer Point that are suitable for boat-in camping. It's the last factor that makes this a tremendous vacation spot for anglers who have boats and want to camp overnight.

All water sports are popular here. Since the water is quite warm in the summer, swimming, waterskiing, and windsurfing are extremely popular. The place gets heavy use on weekends from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

Numerous sandy areas are available all along the shoreline for swimming, although

none is designated specifically for that activity. Some boaters will pull up at one of these spots for a picnic, and the youngsters aboard will jump out and cavort in the shallows. In a few of these areas, the underwater drop-off is steep, so kids should always wear life jackets.

New Hogan Lake is a decent lake for fishing, with a unique opportunity for striped bass, and it's okay for largemouth bass. Of the four lakes in the immediate area, Amador attracts anglers who are looking for bass and trout. Camanche gets those who want bass and crappie. Pardee lures anglers seeking trout and kokanee salmon, while New Hogan gets those who are in search of stripers and largemouth bass. New Hogan also has crappie, bluegill, and catfish.

From December through March, this lake is a wintering area for bald eagles, and sightings are a common highlight. In late fall, the lake provides limited hunting opportunities for waterfowl, usually on the southern side of the lake.

A 5-mph speed limit in the coves keeps the atmosphere decent enough for fishing. That leaves the rest of this big lake wide open for fast boats, and on hot summer days, they really let it rip out here.

One problem is that since 2000, no marina operator or boat rentals were available at New Hogan. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has been hoping for a replacement. But hopping, whether in fishing or in government, never is the best strategy to get something done. At press time, there was still no marina operator.

Access: Paved boat ramps are available, a four-lane ramp at the Fiddleneck Day Use Area, and one two-lane ramp adjacent to Acorn East Campground. Ramps can be accessed from the entrance road, watch for signs.

Facilities, fees: Two drive-in campgrounds, drinking water, restrooms with flush toilets, showers, a fish-cleaning station, two boat ramps, and an RV dump station are available. Boat-in campsites, picnic area, and

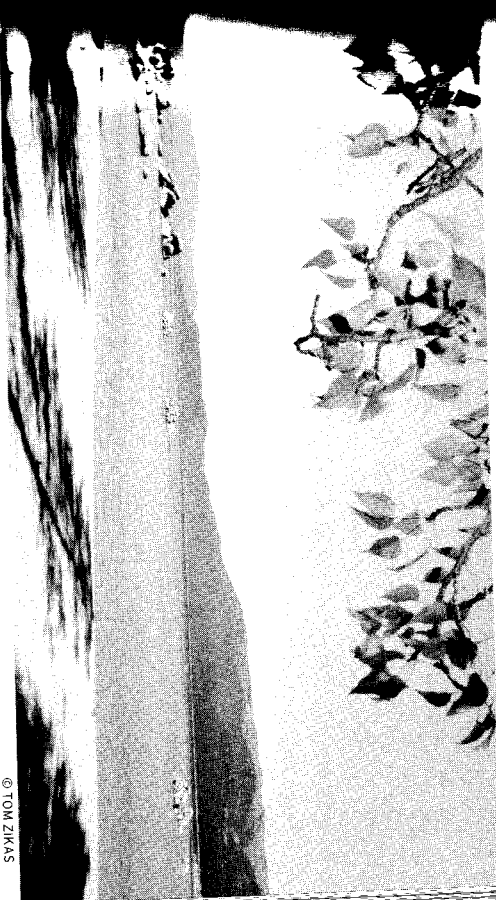
a golf course are nearby. A day-use fee is charged. A boat-launching fee is charged daily or annually. Supplies are available in Valley Springs.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboating, waterskiing, wakeboarding, personal watercraft, sailing, and windsurfing are permitted on the lake's main body. A 5-mph speed limit is enforced around the coves, and a 15-mph speed limit is enforced across the lake after sunset. Swimming access is available all along the

shoreline; a popular spot is at **Wildwood**, located off the lake's entrance road.

Directions: From Stockton, drive Highway 26 for about 35 miles to Valley Springs and Hogan Dam Road. Turn left and drive 1.5 miles to Hogan Park Road. Turn left and drive one mile to South Park Road. Turn left and drive 0.25 mile to campground at the lake, on the right side of the road.
Contact: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento District, 209/772-1625.

LAHORE AND THE NORTHERN SIERRA



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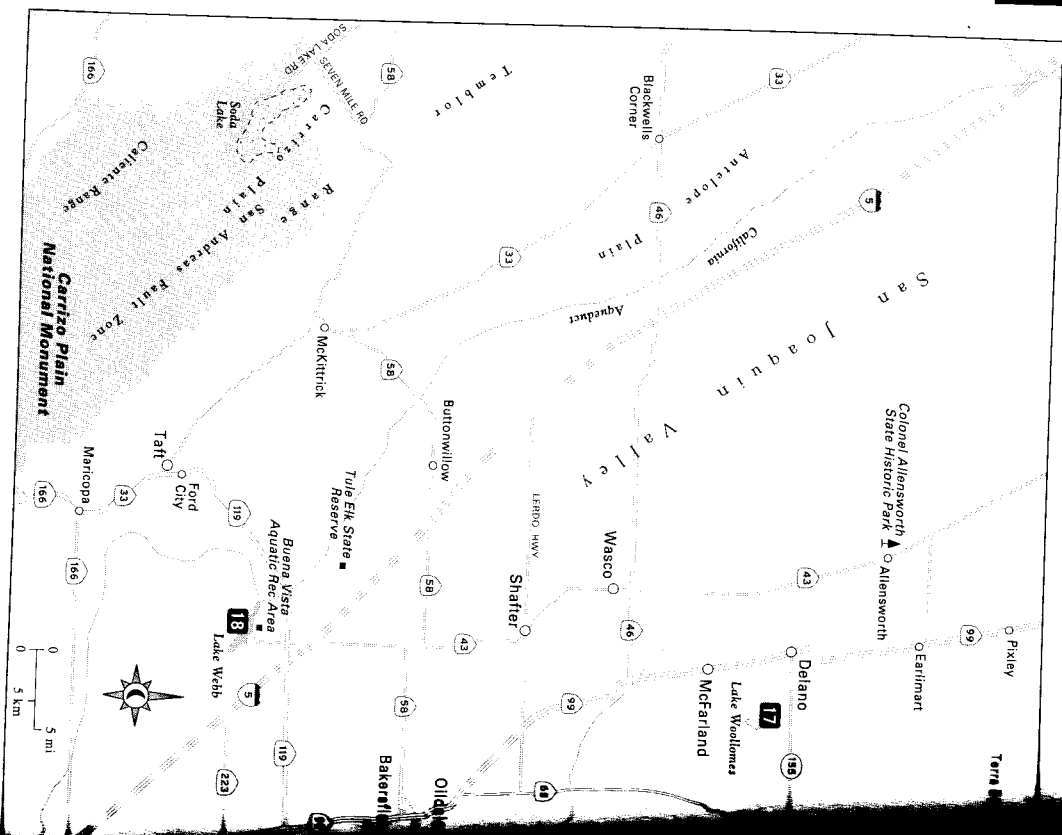
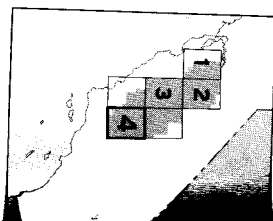
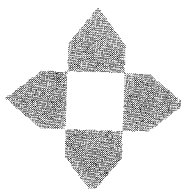
BEST LAKES & RIVERS

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Map 9.4

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WOOD LAKE



Rating: 7

page 305

Wood Lake Resort is basically a big water park. The attractions include the famous Minneka Water Slides, "river rapid" water slides, a roller-skating rink, a video arcade, a movie theater, a bungee jumping, a movie theater, and a softball field. This is one of the largest water-based theme parks in the valley. And for those who want to spend more than one day here, there's a 400-site campground.

This site is adjacent to the San Joaquin River, with the park covering 375 acres of riparian land, including the 75-acre Oakwood Wetlands. Note that life jackets are required for all water sports on the lake. There are bass, bluegill, crappie, and catfish in the lake, but only resort campers are permitted to fish, and only resort campers are permitted to use the lake.

For the big picture? Right, this is the kind of place where you bring the youngsters on a hot summer day so they can have the time of their lives.

Access: There is no boat ramp.

Facilities, fees: A campground, restrooms, showers, an RV dump station, a store, coin laundry, propane gas, a swimming lagoon, waterslides, organized activities, and a stocked 75-acre lake are available. Children's kayaks are available for rent. A fee is charged for day use and fishing.

Water sports, restrictions: Rowboats, boats with electric motors, canoes, kayaks, inflatables, sailing, and windsurfing are permitted. No gas motors. No swimming. Life jackets are required at all times. Only campers are permitted to use the lake. Open weekends from May through September and daily from mid-June through Labor Day.

Directions: Take Highway 120 to Airport Way (two miles east of Manteca). Turn south on Airport Way and drive 0.5 mile to Woodward

Way. Turn right and drive two miles to the park entrance.

Contact: Oakwood Lake Resort, 209/239-2500, www.oakwoodlake.com.

SAN LUIS RESERVOIR



Rating: 6

near Gilroy in San Luis Reservoir State Recreation Area

Map 9.1, page 305

San Luis Reservoir is literally a water hole, and it's one of the biggest water holes imaginable. The primarily stark, artificial reservoir was built on the edge of the San Joaquin Valley for the sole purpose of storing water on line with the California Aqueduct. When pumped full, usually by spring, it covers 13,800 acres and has 65 miles of shoreline. By fall the water gets drawn way down, and its vast, barren appearance can seem quite stark. The elevation is 575 feet.

Build a water-storage facility and you get an interesting by-product: opportunities for boating and recreation. In this area though, most boaters head instead to the adjoining O'Neill Forebay (see the O'Neill Forebay listing in this chapter), which has full facilities, boat rentals, and a large beach.

That leaves San Luis, which is largely undeveloped, to be used primarily by anglers, water-skiers, and windsurfers. The Department of Water Resources tries to fill this lake as early as possible in winter. When many reservoirs on the southwest slope of the Sierra are still largely empty, San Luis can be more than 90 percent full. This huge expanse of water can reach its highest levels from late March through mid-May.

In the spring and early summer, boaters should use extreme caution on San Luis. That is because the wind comes careening out of the west, pounding the lake as it roars on its course from Monterey Bay to the San Joaquin Valley. Lights and horns have even been

installed to alert boaters to get off the lake during dangerous wind warnings.

Most of the year the winds are tolerable enough to present a significant challenge to windsurfers. The stark, vast surroundings and choppy water don't add much ambience to the affair, however.

Summer temperatures can occasionally exceed 100 degrees, but evenings are usually pleasant.

San Luis is well known for its striped bass fishing. This is best in the fall, when the strippers chase schools of baitfish on the lake surface.

During the winter, tule fog is common.

Regardless, boater use is significant in the summer when the winds are down, and this enormous reservoir provides plenty of space compared to the oft-cramped quarters of O'Neill Forebay. After all, just combine a huge body of cool water and a hot climate, provide a boat, and this is where many people are apt to come.

Access: Two paved launch ramps are available.

Facilities, fees: Campgrounds, restrooms with flush toilets and coin showers, drinking water, an RV dump station, and picnic areas are available. A store, coin laundry, a gas station, a restaurant, and propane gas are nearby. Supplies can be obtained in Gilroy and Los Banos. Fees are charged for day use, including for boat launching.

Water sports, restrictions: Waterskiing, wakeboarding, and personal watercraft are permitted. Sailing, windsurfing, and swimming are allowed, although there are no developed beaches.

Directions: To San Luis Creek boat ramp: From Los Banos, take Highway 152 west for 14 miles to the park entrance (marked San Luis Creek State Recreation Area/O'Neill Forebay). Turn right and drive 1.5 miles to the boat ramp.

To Basalt boat ramp: From Los Banos, take Highway 152 west for 12 miles to Gonzaga Road (the park entrance road). Turn left and drive four miles to the boat ramp.

To Dinosaur Point: Take Highway 152 west side of San Luis Reservoir. Turn east on Point Road and continue to the boat ramp at the road's end.

Contact: San Luis Reservoir State Recreation Area, Four Rivers District, 209/826-



O'NEILL FOREBAY

near Los Banos in San Luis Reservoir State Recreation Area

Map 9.1, page 305

Sometimes bigger is not better, and that is proven at San Luis Reservoir State Recreation Area. O'Neill Forebay is the little brother of the adjacent and giant San Luis Reservoir, but even though it's by far the smaller pair, the opportunities for boating and sports are far more attractive here.

O'Neill Forebay covers 2,000 surface acres with 14 miles of shoreline, providing the reason for the recreation area. Where the main reservoir is used primarily for flood control, O'Neill Forebay caters to swimmers, skiers, and personal watercraft. Even an off-leash dog park is available. However, will be pleased here, as there are no huge striped bass roaming these waters.

A large developed beach is available for swimmers, complete with outdoor showers for rinsing off. Boaters can dock at the boat ramp to have lunch, go for a swim, and then back out on the water to ski. Windsurfing is decent, but in the spring winds can get as gusty as at San Luis, driving everybody back to the water.

O'Neill Forebay is a very attractive recreation lake, but sometimes it can be too attractive. Weekends and holidays May through October can get so congested that some boaters simply surrender and head over to San Luis Reservoir in order to avoid the crowds. Windsurfers, who like having some room to sail, are the most likely to flee.

Forebay is home of many of the biggest bass caught in California history, including the world record for landlocked bass.

That the Medeiros boat ramp has been closed since 9/11. It will not reopen. In addition, security concerns, there were problems launching in low water here.

A paved launch ramp is available. **Facilities, fees:** Two campgrounds, chemical toilets, drinking water, and showers are available. Fees are charged for day use, including for boat launching.

Water sports, restrictions: Waterskiing, wakeboarding, and personal watercraft are permitted. All boaters must wear life jackets. Sailing, windsurfing and swimming are allowed, but a windy beach is available on the west side of the forebay.

Directions: Take Highway 152 to San Luis Reservoir (12 miles west of Los Banos) to the forebay entrance road. Turn north and drive to the forebay and beach area.

In San Luis Creek boat launch: Drive on Highway 152 to San Luis Reservoir (12 miles west of Los Banos) and the signed campground entrance road (15 miles west of Los Banos). Continue straight and drive two miles to the campgrounds, on the left, and continue to the boat ramp.

Contact: San Luis Reservoir State Recreation Area, Four Rivers District, 209/826-1196, fax 209/826-0284.



NEW MELONES RESERVOIR

Rating: 9

near Sonora

Map 9.2, page 306

New Melones is the fourth largest artificial lake in California, behind only Shasta, Oroville, and Trinity. When full, it is huge, covering 12,500 acres with more than 100 miles of shoreline, so there's plenty of room for all boating and water sports. There are countless

hidden coves, inlets, and lake arms to fish and explore by boat, including the upper Stanislaus River Canyon. It is set in the valley foothills at an elevation of 1,085 feet between the historic mining towns of Angels Camp and Sonora.

New Melones is established as one of California's top recreation lakes. One of the best things at New Melones is that day use is free, including boat launching and parking, as well as access for hiking or mountain biking. The lake rises significantly every spring as the Sierra snowpack starts melting on the western slopes below Sonora Pass.

A day on the lake here is nearly guaranteed with wildlife sightings. Osprey, blue herons, and bald eagles are common right now. So are turtles on rocks along the shore up the lake arms.

In summer, the place gets very crowded on weekends. On holiday weekends, the areas near boat ramps can resemble something like an aquatic zoo on parade. Once on the water, you can always find your own hideaway, since the lake is so big. In addition, weekdays are much more quiet.

Temperatures are warm in the summer, and the surface waters are perfect for waterskiing, personal watercraft, and swimming. The conditions are often excellent for waterskiing. A slalom course is available at Peoria Cove. The water-ski season doesn't usually get underway until Memorial Day Weekend.

Between fishing for bass or trout and wildlife watching, you might flip a three-sided die and have it land on its side, it's that good. Lake records: brown trout, 12.7 pounds; black bass, 12.98 pounds; spotted bass, 7 pounds; catfish, 36 pounds.

There is so much water that low-speed anglers and high-speed boaters have room to stay out of each other's way. For the most part, anglers stick to the lake's upper arms, while the high-speed boaters head to the more open, main lake body.

All water sports are permitted. Waterskiing and houseboating are particularly popular. When there are afternoon winds, common in

the spring and early summer, it is possible to windsurf. Swimming is limited to the swimming beach; elsewhere the shoreline is fairly rocky or tree-lined.

Rafters may have this lake, since it flooded the famed Camp Nine run on the Stanislaus River, but boaters love it.

Access: There are three paved boat ramps, two at Glory Hole Recreation Area and one at Turtletown Recreation Area.

Facilities, fees: A full-service marina, rentals for fishing boats, pontoon boats, ski boats, personal watercraft and houseboats, moorings, bait and tackle, and boat storage are available at New Melones Lake Marina. Five campgrounds, restrooms with flush toilets, drinking water, showers, an RV dump station, and picnic areas are available nearby. Supplies can be obtained in Sonora. Day use and boat launching are free. A fee is charged for camping.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, water skiing, wakeboarding, personal watercraft, sailing, and windsurfing are permitted. A sandy swimming beach is available at Glory Hole Recreation Area, on the Angel Arm of the lake.

Directions: To Turtletown: From Sonora, take Highway 49 north to Reynolds Ferry Road. Turn left and drive about two miles to the entrance road for Turtletown Recreation Area.

To Glory Hole: From Manteca, take Highway 120 east (it becomes Highway 108) to Jamestown and Rawhide Road. Turn left and drive five miles to Highway 49. Turn left and drive 10 miles to Whittle Road (signed New Melones, with Glory Hole Sports on the left). Turn left on Whittle and drive five miles to the marina and boat launch.

Contact: New Melones Administrative Office, 209/536-9094; New Melones Visitors Center, 209/536-9094; New Melones Lake Marina, 209/785-3300; Whistle Stop, Jamestown, 209/984-5554; Glory Hole Sports, Angels Camp, 209/736-4333, www.gloryholesports.com.

Guides: Sierra Sportfishing, Ripon,

209/599-2023; Reel Adventure, Modesto, 209/571-9748; Guide Service, Twain Harra, 2383; Sale's Guide Service, 5907 Basin; LA Guide Service, 209/7 Fishnetters, 866/565-2633; Gold Sportfishing, 209/848-2746; Hill Service, 209/533-2330; Hook B Service, 209/384-1133; Rand, 209/543-6260.

BLAKE TULLOCH



near Jamestown

Map 9.2, page 306

Tulloch is set in two canyons the each other like a giant X, and never see the other canyon. The lake the afterbay for New Melones Lake water that fills Lake Tulloch can New Melones Dam on the north of the X. These extended lake are reservoir a total of 55 miles of the elevation is 500 feet.

The shape of the lake has an effect. Because the water is basically canyons, the waterway is relatively Anglers and powerboaters live in for the most part due to the many a six-mile long arm with an enforced speed limit.

Unlike many reservoirs in the country, Tulloch is nearly always filled. If you pick your spots well, wind swimming can also be excellent. The for windsurfing is along the north the most predictable wind can be because this lake lies in a deep canyon can be erratic. In addition, wind advised on summer weekends, when row lake is swarming with speedboats danger factor is raised a few notches.

Both of the lake's resorts offer many fishing opportunities. Each has

complete with developed facilities. The campground here is at South Shore. Other surprise at this lake: It's one of the few extended fishing.

There are two paved boat ramps, at Blak Marina on the south shore, and on the shore (see *Directions* this listing).

Facilities, fees: Marinas with boat launches, and docks are available at both the shore and south shore. Lodging, a picnic areas, drinking water, showers with showers, coin laundry, an RV are available. Fees are charged for boat launching, and camping.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, sailing, wakeboarding, personal watercraft, and windsurfing are permitted. Sandy swimming beaches are available on South Shore and North Shore. A 5-mph limit (signed) is enforced on a six-mile stretch of the lake.

From Manteca, take Highway 120 east (it becomes Highway 108/120) to the continue east for 13 miles to the shore/Tulloch Road on the left. Turn left and drive 4.6 miles to the campground and gatehouse, at the south shore of the lake. For the north shore, continue four miles on Highway 108/120 to the Perry Road. Turn left and drive to the shore.

At Lake Tulloch Resort, 209/785-2286; Hill, 2286; Lake Tulloch Campground, 209/881-0107.

WOODWARD RESERVOIR



located in Woodward Reservoir

Map 9.2, page 306

One of the best sailing lakes in North America. Regattas are held through the year. It is also very popular for windsurf-

ing. Woodward's nickname, in fact, is "Winding Reservoir."

Woodward covers 2,900 acres with 23 miles of shoreline, set in the rolling foothills just north of Oakdale at an elevation of 210 feet.

A plus is that user conflicts have been solved here. The only solution to the waterskiing vs. fishing conflict is to separate the two groups. At Woodward Reservoir that is exactly what has happened. May each go their own separate way and live in peace and happiness.

The two large coves on the lake's south and east ends, as well as the area behind Whale Island, are for low-speed boats only; no waterskiing or personal watercraft. Meanwhile, the jet boats have full run of the main lake, where they can make all the fun they want. This is an example of the correct way to organize a recreational lake.

All boating is allowed, but note the aforementioned restrictions designed to prevent user conflicts. The best area for windsurfing is at Office Point, located on the west side of the lake, near the marina. This is also the best place for swimming.

Trout are stocked here from October through March. By spring, bass fishing takes the top spot among anglers.

Because this is one of the largest reservoirs in the area near Modesto and Stockton, it gets lots of local traffic, especially on summer weekends. It can be extremely hot here in July and August, and by the end of summer, jumping in the lake may feel like stepping into a large hot tub.

Access: Three boat ramps are available: a paved, multilane ramp at the marina (at the entrance, turn left at the stop sign), a paved ramp at Area X (at the stop sign, turn right), and another paved ramp at Heron Point (at the stop sign, turn right).

Facilities, fees: Drinking water, flush toilets, showers, campground, three boat ramps, a marina, mooring, boat ramp, dry boat storage, and some equestrian facilities are available. An entrance fee is charged per vehicle per day; a boat-launching fee is also charged.

Part of the lake's rebirth is a \$1.87 million renovation at Heron Point, on the south shore of the lake, that includes a new boat ramp, parking, fish-cleaning station, and other facilities. This will greatly help congestion that has been a pain in the butt at the old one-lane ramp here.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, water-skiing, wakeboarding, personal watercraft, sailing, and windsurfing are permitted. Swimming is available at Office Point, near the marina; this is also the best spot for launching sailboards.

Directions: From Manteca, take Highway 120 east (it becomes Highway 108) for 20 miles to Oakdale and the junction with County Road J1426 Mile Road. Turn left and drive four miles to Woodward Reservoir.

Contact: Woodward Reservoir County Park, 209/847-3304 or 209/525-6750, www.co.stanislaus.ca.us; Bob's Marine, 209/551-2165.

7 STANISLAUS RIVER



Rating: 10

below New Melones Lake to below Knights Ferry

Map 9.2, page 306
You get everything from heaven to hell on the Stanislaus River, sometimes on the same day.

Two runs are available, the Goodwin Canyon Run, which is exciting, even scary, and challenging, and the Knights Ferry Run, an easy float. Here are the details of both, followed by a synopsis of the Camp Nine Run.

As it pours through an untouched granite canyon in a wilderness setting, Goodwin Canyon Run is a stretch of water that can only be called beautiful. The Class V white water is exciting and difficult, winding through a narrow canyon with steep rapids and drops. The highlights are Mr. Toad's (Class IV+), Marchhorn (Class V-VI), Pinball (Class III), and Haunted House (Class IV+). Marchhorn is treated like an off-ramp by many rafters who

choose to portage this scary and somewhat dangerous piece of white water.

Note that this river section can be only when the water masters see fit to enough water downstream to get it going means it can't be run every year. When it be run, there is sometimes very short Knights Ferry Run. Not to worry, in an easy float, all Class I water with one II rapid, Russian Rapid. Rafts and kayaks can be rented at Sunshine River Adventures and River Journey, which also provide services. The Knights Ferry Run is a opportunity for newcomers, and most people adopt the do-it-yourself approach, altering between paddling and floating, and stop occasionally to jump in and swim. Half-day muldary trips can be arranged, depending on one's schedule. Most people take out within 10 miles of Knights Ferry, but it is possible float about 45 miles downstream, all the way to the San Joaquin River confluence.

This listing wouldn't be complete without a historical note: Before New Melones Dam completed in 1982, the Camp Nine run on Stanislaus above Melones Reservoir was considered one of the prime stretches of water in the state and was run more often than any other. When the New Melones Dam was built, the dam backed up water so far that it covered the entire Camp Nine Run. Now it can only run in drought conditions, that is, when the lake is very low and river reappears again. This occurred just a few times in the past 20 years. What you will find then is the deepest limestone canyon in the country: dramatic canyon beauty, plenty of excitement, one mind-bending rapid, seclusion, and great swimming.

Access: No boat ramp is available.

• Goodwin Canyon Run: To reach the put-in from Oakdale, drive east on Highway 108/120 for 17 miles to Tulloch Road. Turn left and drive north to the river. Put in 0.5 mile downstream from the dam. Take out four miles downstream at Knights Ferry, just down from the bridge. Note: This river section is rated Class V and is for experts only; people have

and attempting this run. It can be run when water is released from the dam upstream. Some years, low flows make it impossible to run. Call for conditions.

Knights Ferry Run: From Oakdale, drive on Highway 108/120 to the town of Knights Ferry. Put in at the new bridge. The put-in take-out is eight miles downstream (Change Blossom Park, although there are several other access points).

Utilities, fees: Campgrounds are available around New Melones Lake and at Knights Ferry. Rafts and kayaks can be rented at River Journey; kayaks and canoes can be rented at Sunshine Rafting Adventures. Supplies are available along Highway 4. Access is free. Allowing permits are not required.

Water sports, restrictions: Rafts and kayaks are permitted where appropriate. The river is generally too dangerous for swimming upstream of Knights Ferry, although there are some good swimming areas that can be accessed by boat. Downstream, swimming is available at several spots, along Highway 108/120. A good one is Knights Ferry Resort in Knights Ferry.

Directions: Below New Melones, access is available near Knights Ferry off Highway 108/120. See *Access*; this listing, for specific directions.

Contact: All Outdoors Whitewater Rafting, (800)247-2387, www.aorrafting.com; Beyond Limits, 800/234-7238, www.rivertrip.com; River Journey, 209/847-4671 or 800/292-2918, www.riverjourney.com; Sunshine Rafting Adventures, 800/829-7238, www.raftadventure.com.

LAKE DON PEDRO



Rating: 8

northeast of Modesto

Map 9.2, page 306

BEST

Don Pedro is a giant lake with many extended lake arms and one of the best boating and recreation lakes in California.

Did I say giant? When full, it covers nearly 13,000 surface acres with 160 miles of shoreline. Not only do the lake arms extend far, but they harbor zillions of hidden coves and secret spots where you can park your boat, camp, swim, play in the water, and fish.

Temperatures soar here in the summer because the lake is set low at an 800-foot elevation. To protect yourself from the sun, it is critical that you have a canvas canopy on your boat and bring along a light tarp with poles and rope. That done, prepare to have the time of your life on Don Pedro. The water is often lukewarm on top and cool a few feet down, perfect for water sports.

The best areas for water-skiing are just inside the lake arms, where the water is largely sheltered from wind, yet large enough for plenty of space. Because anglers tend to head well up the narrow lake arms and into coves, conflicts with water-skiers are less common than at many lakes. Personal watercraft can cause problems, however, if their riders zip into the coves and disrupt low-speed boaters.

Don Pedro has one designated swimming area at Fleming Meadows, located on the south shore. There is a fairly sandy beach here and a nearby concession stand. On the lake's northern end there are no beach areas, but people swim anyway, either from the shoreline or by jumping off their boats. Some shoreline areas have quick drop-offs, so children should always wear life jackets and be supervised.

Hey, newcomers, here's a great insider's note: The lake's northern, upper end sits in a deep, narrow canyon. It is ideal for fishing and other low-speed use, such as paddling a canoe or kayak, or floating about in a raft.

The lake gets sufficient wind in the afternoon to make sailing and windsurfing fairly popular. The best areas for these activities are at the lake's southern end, which is largely open and receives more predictable winds.

This is also one of the best fishing lakes in the foothill country. Bass, trout, salmon, redear sunfish, catfish, crappie, and bluegill provide good fishing.

The big problem at Don Pedro is that it is subject to drawdowns from midsummer through early fall. Low water also creates considerable boating hazards, and water-skiers should pay special attention at all times.

Access: There are boat ramps at Moccasin Point, Blue Oaks, and Flaming Meadows campgrounds. See *Directions*, this listing.

Facilities, fees: Full-service marinas with fishing boat, houseboat, and pontoon boat rentals, mooring, boat storage, motor repairs, and bait and tackle are available at Lake Don Pedro Marina (north shore). Campgrounds, boat-in campsites, restrooms with flush toilets and showers, an RV dump station, picnic areas, snack bars, a café, a convenience store, coin laundry, and gas are available. Some facilities are wheelchair-accessible. Fees are charged for day use, boat launching, and camping.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, water-skiing, wakeboarding, personal watercraft, sailing, and windsurfing are permitted. A sandy swimming beach is available on the south shore at Fleming Meadows Picnic Area.

Directions: The following are directions to the reservoir's campgrounds and boat ramps.

To Moccasin Point: From Manteca, take Highway 120 east (it becomes Highway 108/120) for 30 miles to the Highway 120/Yosemite exit. Bear right on Highway 120 and drive 11 miles to Jacksonville Road. Turn left on Jacksonville Road and drive a short distance to the campground and lake, on the right.

To Blue Oaks: From Manteca, take Highway 120 east to Oakdale (the road becomes Highway 120/108). Continue east on Highway 108 for 20 miles to La Grange Road/159 (signed Don Pedro Reservoir). Turn right on La Grange Road and drive 10 miles to Bonds Flat Road. Turn left on Bonds Flat Road and drive 0.5 mile to the campground and boat ramp, on the left.

To Fleming Meadows: From Manteca, take Highway 120 east to Oakdale (the road becomes Highway 120/108). Continue east on Highway 108 for 20 miles to La Grange

Road/159 (signed Don Pedro Reservoir). Turn right on La Grange Road and drive 10 miles to Bonds Flat Road. Turn left on Bonds Flat Road and drive 2.5 miles to the campground and boat ramp, on the left.

Access: Don Pedro Lake Recreation Area, 209/852-2396, www.donpedrolake.com; Pedro Marina, 209/852-2369; Moccasin Point, 209/989-2206.

Guides: Sierra Sportfishing, 209/599-2023; Reel Adventures Guide Service, Modesto, 209/571-9748; Fish'n Bassin, 209/586-4184; Twain Harre, 209/586-4184; Country Sportfishing, 209/848-2746.

MODесто RESERVOIR



Rating:

near Modesto

Map 9.2, page 306

Modesto Reservoir is a big lake, covering 2,800 acres with 31 miles of shoreline, in the hot foothill country.

This is one of the first recreation lakes in the Central Valley to advertise "MTBE-free waters." To keep it that way, boaters must use gas that does not contain MTBE. Some stations provide MBTE-free gas. You must show proof that the gas in your boat has been purchased from such a station. MTBE-free fuel is available at the lake.

Waterskiing is excellent in the main lake body. Anglers head to the southern shore of the lake, which is loaded with submerged trees and covers and is also protected by a 5-mph speed limit. Fishing for bass is good, though the fish are often small.

The reservoir is set at 200 feet on the edge of the Central Valley, where it gets very hot days upon days in the summer. The proximity to, uh... what's the name of that town? Oh, yeah, Modesto, that's it... and the diverse recreation opportunities make it very popular and it often gets extremely crowded in the summer

months. On weekends the scene can be wild, with fast boats and lots of liquid refreshments and a lot of flowing fast and furious.

In addition to good waterskiing and jet skiing, the swimming in Modesto Reservoir is great. The best spots for swimming and playing in the water are near the day-use area, where a 5-mph speed limit is in effect and boaters stay well clear of the near shore. Water ensures calm water for nonboaters. Water levels fluctuate greatly.

One of the great things about the place is the boat-in camping. Many covers at the lake's southern end provide an opportunity to set up primitive self-made boat-in campsites. It's a good idea to bring a shovel in order to dig out a flat spot for sleeping, something that isn't always necessary when boat-in camping at a reservoir.

Access: Two paved boat ramps are available: one at the marina, located on the south shore just west of the campgrounds, and one at Modesto Reservoir's west side, off Rio Linda Drive.

Facilities, fees: Campgrounds, picnic areas, drinking water, restrooms with flush toilets, showers, an RV dump station, a marina, a snack bar, a store, and propane gas are available. Fees are charged for day use and boat launching.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, wakeboarding, personal watercraft, sailing, and windsurfing are permitted. A 5 mph speed limit is enforced on the lake's northern arm and around the day-use areas. Waterskiing and personal watercraft are permitted in designated areas. Sandy swimming beaches are available at various spots around the shoreline; there's a designated swimming area next to the marina.

Directions: From Modesto, take Highway 132 east for 16 miles (past Waterford) to Reservoir Road. Turn left (north) on Reservoir Road and continue to the reservoir. **Contact:** Stanislaus County, Parks and Recreation, 209/525-6750, www.co.stanislaus.ca.us; Modesto Reservoir Regional Park, 209/874-9540; Modesto Marina, 209/874-1340.

TURLOCK LAKE



Rating: 7

east of Modesto in Turlock Lake State Recreation Area

Map 9.2, page 306

Turlock Lake covers 3,500 acres and has 26 miles of shoreline. New Melones Reservoir feeds Turlock Lake with cold, fresh water in the spring. Because this water comes from the bottom of New Melones, the lake is cooler than many San Joaquin Valley reservoirs, with surface temperatures usually ranging 65–74°F in late spring and summer, when other lakes in the region are 75–82°F. If you prefer cool water, the swimming is great and the excellent swimming beaches, big and sandy, are a special highlight.

But get this: The developed facilities—marina, grocery store, and gas station—are gone. That's right, the owner folded his tent and said adios. Lacking these facilities, Turlock Lake is one of the more primitive major recreation sites in the valley.

It does still get a lot of traffic. Turlock Lake has become far more family oriented than the old days when fast jet boats dominated the scene. One major factor in the personality change is that alcohol is no longer allowed on the lake or beaches, which keeps away the rowdiest folks.

When you arrive on the entrance road, note that the first beach you come to is the "family" beach, where people take their kids, and where the nonboaters hang out. Drive farther down the road and you will arrive at another beach known as Ski Beach; this is where the recreational boaters tend to group.

In addition to waterskiing, wakeboarding and personal watercraft are pretty popular at Turlock. Although permitted, sailing and windsurfing do not attract much traffic.

Access: A paved boat ramp and dock are located on the northwest shore, about one mile east of the Lake Road turnoff. **Facilities, fees:** A campground is one mile

away on the Tuolumne River. Picnic areas with drinking water and restrooms are provided. Some facilities are wheelchair-accessible. There is a day-use fee and boat launch fee.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, water skiing, wakeboarding, personal watercraft, sailing, and windsurfing are permitted. You'll find large, sandy swimming beaches at the day-use area.

Directions: From Modesto, go east on Highway 132 for 14 miles to Waterford. Continue eight miles on Highway 132 to Roberts Ferry Road. Turn right and drive one mile to Lake Road. Turn left and drive two miles to the campground, on the left.

Contact: Turlock Lake State Recreation Area, 209/874-2008 or 209/874-2056, www.parks.ca.gov (click on Find A Park).



LAKE MCCLURE

east of Modesto

Map 9.2, page 306

Some people think that Lake McClure and adjoining Lake McSwain (see the *Lake McSwain* listing in this chapter) appear to be the same lake. That will reach them to think. Even though McClure and McSwain are connected by the Merced River, they are two separate lakes, each with its own unique identity.

McClure is the giant, a huge H-shaped lake that covers more than 7,000 surface acres with 82 miles of shoreline. The water is warmer and there is more water sports activity here, including skiing, wakeboarding, and houseboating. The elevation is 900 feet.

This is a full-facility recreation area that offers developed campgrounds, picnic areas, and boating services. Waterskiing, personal watercraft, and houseboating are all very popular. In the summer the place can get crowded, but for the most part everybody seems to be having the time of their lives. In the off-season, it gets low to moderate use.

Swimming is pretty much limited

to the campgrounds, which are sunbathing areas. Although swimming is prohibited in the lake, you'll rarely see swimming or playing along the shore because of the typically steep drop-off. A common sight is that of folks using the swimming platforms, jumping in, water, floating around, and then scuba back into the boat for a repeat performance. Fishing for bass is best on the left side of the "H" near Cotton Creek. Fishing is best on the right half of the "H," because of differences in water temperature in these two areas.

Access: Paved boat ramps are located at Barrett Cove, McClure Point, Horseshoe and Bagby. See *Directions*, this listing.
Facilities, fees: Full-service marina mooring are available at McClure Point, Barrett Cove, and Bagby. Barrett Cove rents fishing boats, ski boats, personal craft, houseboats, and pontoon boats. McClure Point rents fishing boats and pontoon boats. Campgrounds, fish-cleaning stations, showers, convenience stores, snack bar, laundry, RV dump stations, and gas are available at all major access points. Fees are charged for day use and boat launching.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, water skiing, wakeboarding, and personal watercraft are allowed. Sailing and windsurfing are permitted, but winds are usually light. The shoreline has no swimming beaches, but there are swimming lagoons at each recreation area.

Directions: To McClure Point Recreation Area: From Turlock, take County Road 117 east for 19 miles to the junction with Highway 59. Continue east on Highway 59/County Road 116 for 4.5 miles to Snelling, and turn right at Lake McClure Road. Drive six miles to Lake McSwain Dam and continue for seven miles to the end of the road, to the campground and boat launch.

To Horseshoe Bend Recreation Area: From Modesto, take Highway 132 east for 31 miles

and then continue for about 17 miles (toward Coulterville) to the north end of McClure and the campground entrance on the right side of the road. Turn right and drive 0.5 mile to the campground and launch.

Barrett Cove: From Modesto, take Highway 132 east for 31 miles to La Grange and continue about 11 miles (toward Coulterville) to Merced Falls Road. Turn right and drive three miles to the campground entrance on the left. Turn left and drive a mile to the campground, on the left side of the road.

Horseshoe Recreation Area: From Modesto, take Highway 132 east for 31 miles to La Grange and then continue for 20 miles to Coulterville and the junction with Highway 49, drive about 1.5 miles south on Highway 49, drive about 1.5 miles, cross the bridge, and look for the campground entrance, on the left side of the road. Turn left and drive 0.25 mile to the campground.

Contact: Lake McClure Recreation Area, 209/468-8889, www.lakemcclure.com; Horseshoe Bend Recreation Area, 209/878-3452; Lake McClure Marina, 209/378-2441.

Guides: Sierra Sportfishing, Ripon, 209/599-2023; Reel Adventures Guide Service, Modesto, 209/571-9748; Fish n' Dan's Guide Service, Twain Harre, 209/586-2383.



LAKE MCSWAIN

east of Modesto

Map 9.2, page 306

If you find that adjacent Lake McClure is simply too large and filled with too many big, fast boats, then little Lake McSwain provides a perfect nearby alternative. You won't have to

McSwain may be like a puddle compared to McClure, but the water level is usually near full capacity here. That makes it the more attractive option, especially in low water years when McClure can look almost barren in comparison by late fall. McSwain, of course, is the afterbay for Lake McClure on the Merced River.

Although McSwain is developed, recreation is far more low-key than at big brother McClure. It is quite small, and the campground fills up fast on summer weekends, so reservations should be made in advance.

It is used primarily by anglers. The lake is stocked with trout and fishing is often good. Several fishing derbies are held here each year.

Another bright spot is that much of the shoreline is favorable for swimming, and there's even a good, sandy beach. However, the lake is colder because the water that fills McSwain comes from the bottom of McClure Dam. But that cold water is what makes the trout fishing better here than at McClure.

Access: A paved boat ramp is available next to Lake McSwain Marina, located on Lake McClure Road.

Facilities, fees: A full-service marina is available with rentals for fishing boats and pedal boats. A campground, drinking water, restrooms with showers, an RV dump station, coin laundry, a playground, a snack bar, and a convenience store are nearby. Fees are charged for day use, boat launching, and camping.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, canoes, kayaks, inflatables, and small sailboats are permitted. A 10-mph speed limit is strictly enforced. No waterskiing, wakeboarding, personal watercraft, or houseboats permitted. The lake is too small and not windy enough for windsurfing and most sailboats. A sandy swimming beach is available adjacent to the marina.

Directions: From Turlock, drive east on County Road 117 for 19 miles to the junction with Highway 59. Continue east on Highway 59/County Road 117 for 4.5 miles to Snelling and Lake McClure Road. Bear right at Lake McClure Road and drive seven miles to the

Lake McSwain Recreation Area turnoff, on the right.

Contact: Lake McSwain Recreation Area, 209/378-2521 (information) or 800/468-8889 (reservations), www.lakemcswain.com, Lake McSwain Marina, 209/378-2534.



13 YOSEMITE LAKE

Rating: 6

Map 9.2, page 306

Now don't get confused: Yosemite Lake is not in Yosemite National Park. In fact it has nothing to do with Yosemite National Park. It's more like a backyard lake for local residents. Unlike many lakes in the San Joaquin Valley, the water is cool, not warm. The lake is stocked with trout.

Yosemite Lake, on the outskirts of eastern Merced County, is a 25-acre lake where all water sports are permitted (outside of restricted areas). Unlike the national park with which it shares a name, it doesn't quite make the major leagues: Although not stellar in any way, this is still a nice spot, particularly for cooling off on a hot summer evening.

The best things going here are opportunities for swimming and windsurfing. Large swimming beaches are available, and lifeguards are posted during the summer. That's a winner. Another winner is windsurfing, with steady winds nearly every afternoon.

It is also popular with powerboaters and water-skiers, especially with the weather being so hot almost all summer long. Rare prospects good, but not great. One problem is that the water is usually too choppy for stellar waterskiing.

One problem is that on hot summer nights, there are occasional groups of young partyers that can create havoc here. The county sheriff has tried to round them up with varying success.

Access: A paved boat ramp is available just past the park entrance.

Facilities, fees: Picnic areas, restrooms, and

drinking water are provided. A concealed with pedal boat and fishing boat rental be in business; check current status. **Launched for day use and boat launching. Water sports, restrictions:** Powerboating, wakeboarding, personal water skiing, and windsurfing are permitted in designated areas. Two large, sandy swimming beaches are available along the southern off Lake Road.

Directions: From Modesto (or north of) take Highway 99 south to Highway 209. Turn right on Highway 59 north and drive five miles east to Lake Road and drive five miles east to Lake Road left on Lake Road and drive to the lake.

From Fresno (or south of Merced) take Highway 99 north to Merced and drive five miles to Bellevue Road. Turn right on G Street. Take that exit and drive five miles to G Street. Turn right on G Street and drive 2.5 miles to Lake Road left on Lake Road and drive to the lake. **Contact:** Merced County Parks and Recreation, 209/385-7426.

14 LOS BANOS CREEK RESERVOIR

near Los Banos

Map 9.3, page 307

Los Banos Creek Reservoir is set in a narrow valley and covers 410 acres with 330 feet. The surrounding hills are baked brown by late May, and on the summer day, it gets really hot out there.

Like nearby San Luis Reservoir, it can howl through this country in summer. That is why the number of anglers has become windsurfing (the 5-mph limit is often exceeded) and sailing. It is not exactly paradise, it makes an

for an overnight stay, a quick respite the grinding drive, or a couple hours of fishing for anybody making the long trip up or down nearby I-5.

Waterskiers soon discover that the winds in San Luis Reservoir and O'Neill Forebay, the 5-mph speed limit keeps out small watercraft and water-skiers, a bonus for windsurfers. Swimmers will find the best near the picnic area and campgrounds. **Directions:** From Fresno, take Highway 99 north to Highway 99 and drive five miles to Los Banos Reservoir is moderate.

When anglers have discovered that the fishing is good for trout and bass. The lake is stocked with rainbow trout in winter and spring. A paved launch ramp is available on the north side.

Facilities, fees: A campground, chemical toilets, drinking water, and picnic areas are available. Fees are charged for day use, including boat launching.

Water sports, restrictions: A 5-mph speed limit is enforced. Sailing, windsurfing, and swimming are permitted.

Directions: Take Highway 152 to Volia Road and drive five miles west of Los Banos. Turn right on Volia Road and drive about a mile to Pioneer Road. Turn left on Pioneer Road and drive a mile to Canyon Road. Turn south into Canyon Road and drive about five miles to the park.

Contact: San Luis Reservoir State Recreation Authority, 209/826-1197, fax 209/826-0284.

MENDOTA POOL

Mendota

Map 9.3, page 307

Just the northern access point to Mendota Slough, Mendota Pool is the centerpiece of surrounding county parkland.

This is basically little more than a boat-launching site for water-skiers. There is no beach and no developed facilities, and the water can be a bit too mucky for swimming.

Water-ski boats may run down to the Highway 180/Whites Bridge Road overpass, then turn around, and make the run back; be sure not to water-ski past the overpass. For swimming and recreation, better prospects are to be found at Jack's Resort at Mendota Slough—see the *Mendota Slough* listing in this chapter.

Access: A paved launch ramp is available.

Facilities, fees: Restrooms, picnic areas, drinking water, a softball field, and barbecue pits are provided. Supplies can be obtained in Mendota. Access is free.

Water sports, restrictions: Waterskiing, wakeboarding, and personal watercraft are permitted from Mendota Pool to the Highway 180/Whites Bridge Road overpass; you cannot ski south of this point. Windsurfing is not recommended. Swimming is permitted.

Directions: From Fresno, take Highway 180 west (Whites Bridge Road) for 11 miles, through the town of Kernan, and continue 19 miles to the Mendota Wildlife Area entrance. Cross the bridge at the slough and drive five miles to Mendota and Bass Avenue. Turn right on Bass Avenue and drive 3.5 miles to a gravel road (past Mendota Pool Park). Turn right and drive 0.25 mile.

Contact: Mendota Pool Park, City of Mendota, 559/655-4298; Department of Fish and Game, 559/655-4645.

16 MENDOTA (FRESNO) SLOUGH

west of Fresno in Mendota Wildlife Area

Map 9.3, page 307

If you're planning a visit, make every effort to get here before dawn so you can see the surrounding marshland wake up with the rising sun. Mendota Slough is truly one of the

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