



CALIFORNIA RECREATIONAL LAKES & RIVERS

The Complete Guide to Boating, Fishing,
and Water Sports

THIRD EDITION

Tom Stienstra



McCloud Arm of Shasta Lake. This Class IV-V run is for experts only.

Contact: Shasta-Trinity National Forest, McCloud Ranger District, 530/964-2184.

21 TRINITY RIVER



Rating: 9

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, tree-lined canyon.

Located in Northern California west of Redding, the Trinity starts as a trickle in the Trinity Alps and then flows westward for 100 miles, eventually joining with the Klamath River in its journey to the sea. It is a fountain of beauty, rolling pure through granite gorges and abounding with birds and wildlife. Because flows are controlled by upstream dam releases, white-water rafting levels are guaranteed throughout summer.

This is a rafter's river and is especially suited to beginners for several reasons: Trips here are the lowest priced anywhere in California; the setting for rafters is a classic pool-and-drop, with most rapids in the Class II range; and the summer weather is often perfect. Shuttle rides are available, and guided oar-boat trips also are available at a higher price. Another bonus at Big Flat is the Steelhead Cabins for lodging, 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 Slot, Zig-Zag, Fishtail, Pinball, and others arrive 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 we made revealed this was the lowest-cost rafting trip in California.

The Trinity has two additional runs:

• Lewiston Bridge to Douglas City: This is an easy paddle with Class I and II rapids, nothing difficult. The best put-in spots are at Lewiston Bridge and Trinity River Lodge RV Resort. Inner tubers looking for a great trip should plop in at Lewiston 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, along with a Forest Service campground, 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 experts 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 Tish-Tang 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 Lewiston off Trinity Dam Boulevard. Rafters can put in at the bridge in the town of Lewiston 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 2.5 miles 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. Drinking water and vault toilets are available at most campgrounds. Limited boat rentals are available at Lewiston Lake; you can rent rafts and inflatable kayaks at Bigfoot Rafting Company, located in Willow Creek and also at Big Flat on Highway 299. Supplies can be obtained in Lewiston. A fee is charged for camping. Access is free. Rafting permits are not required.

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 off 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 Lewiston. 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 .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 .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 Station, 530/623-6106; Trinity River Lodge RV Resort, Lewiston, 530/778-3791; Steelhead Cabins, 530/623-6325. For guided trips: Aurora River Adventures, 707/677-3494 or 800/562-8475, website: www.rafting4fun.com; Bigfoot Rafting Company, 530/629-2263 or 800/722-2223, website: www.bigfootrafting.com; California Canoe and Kayak School, 916/353-1880 or 800/366-9804, website: www.www.california.com; Environmental Traveling Companions, 415/474-7662, website: www.etctrips.org; Living Waters Recreation, 530/926-5446 or 800/994-7238, website: www.livingwatersrec.com; Marble Mountain Ranch, 530/469-3322 or 800/552-6284, website: www.marblemountainranch.com; Redwoods and Rivers, 530/629-4947 or 800/429-0090, website: www.redwoods-rivers.com; River Dancers, 530/926-5517 or 800/926-5002, website: www.riverdancers.com; Rubicon White-water Adventures, 707/887-2452, website: www.rubiconadventures.com; Tributary White-water Tours, 530/346-6812 or 800/672-3846, website: www.whitewatertours.com; Trinity River Rafting, 530/623-3033 or 800/307-4837, website: www.trinityriverrafting.com; Turtle River Rafting, 530/926-3223 or 800/726-3223, website: www.turtleiver.com; Wilderness Adventures, 530/926-6282 or 800/323-7238, website: www.trinityadventures.com.

22 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, Mattole, 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 water-skiing 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 and an RV dump station 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, water-skiing, wake boarding, riding personal watercraft, sailing, and sailboarding 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: To Bailey Canyon: 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 13 miles to the campground on the right side of the road (on the east side of the lake).

Contact: Six Rivers National Forest, Mad River Ranger District, 707/574-6233; Ruth Lake

Marina, 707/574-6524; Littlefield Ranch, 707/574-6689; Ruth Recreation (campgrounds), 707/574-6152 or 800/500-0285; Ruth Lake Community Services District, 707/574-6332, website: www.saber.net/~ruthlakecsd.

23 TRINITY LAKE



near Weaverville in Shasta-Trinity National Forest

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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 small-mouth 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 water-skiing, personal watercraft, sailboarding, 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 greatly 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 No. 1 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, Estrelita Marina, Pinewood Cove Resort, and Trinity Lake Resort and Marina (see Contact, below). 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, water-skiing, wake boarding, personal watercraft, sailing, sailboarding, and swimming are permitted. A 5-mph 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: To Tannery Gulch: From 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 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 Redding, take Highway 299 west and drive to Weaver-

ville 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 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 Wyntoon Resort: 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 .5 mile north on Highway 3 to the resort on the right.

Contact: Shasta-Trinity National Forest, Weaver-Ranger Station, 530/623-2121; Shasta Cascade Wonderland Association, 530/365-7500 or 800/474-2782, website: www.shastacascade.org; Trinity Lake Resort and Marina, 530/286-2215, 530/286-2225, or 800/255-5561 website: www.foreverresorts.com; Estrelita Marina, 800/747-2215, website: www.estrelitamarina.com; Wyntoon Resort, 530/266-3337 or 800/715-3337, website: www.wyntoonresort.com; Pinewood Cove Resort, reservations only at 800/988-5253, or 530/286-2201, website: www.pinewoodcove.com.



24 LEWISTON LAKE

Rating: 9

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 northwest 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 flows 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 miles per hour, which keeps the lake quiet and calm. These are ideal conditions for canoes and small aluminum boats because all the powerboats 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 out 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 sailboarding 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 Buckhorn Summit, and continue for five miles to Trinity Dam Boulevard. Turn right on Trinity

Dam Boulevard and drive 10 miles (five miles past Lewiston) to the resort on the left side of the road. To reach Pine Cove Marina, continue .5 mile on Trinity Dam Boulevard.

Contact: Shasta-Trinity National Forest, Weaver-Ranger Station, 530/623-2121 website: www.fs.fed.us/r5/shastatrinity, Shasta Cascade Wonderland Association, 530/365-7500 or 800/474-2782; Lakeview Terrace Resort, 530/778-3803, website: www.lakeviewterrace.com.

25 SHASTA LAKE



Rating: 10

near Redding in Shasta-Trinity National Forest

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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, wake boarders, personal watercraft riders, houseboaters, anglers, swimmers, sailboarders. 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 wake boarders. But this is one place where there is plenty of room for all comers. With all the houseboaters 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 quiet 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, with 370 miles of shoreline. 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 water-skiing 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 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 wake boarding, water-skiing, and kneeboarding are held here through late spring and summer. In recent years, wake boarding, in particular, has become extremely popular. Water-skiing and wake boarding 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: 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. A paved ramp is available, along with a full-service marina, campground, convenience store, and picnic area. 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. A campground and paved boat ramp are available nearby at Antlers RV Park and Campground, 530/238-2322 or 800/642-6849.

- Bridge Bay Resort & Marina: 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. A paved ramp, full-service marina, boat store, motel, convenience store, restaurant, and picnic area are available. Houseboats, ski boats, personal watercraft, pontoon boats, and aluminum fishing boats are available for rent. For more information call 530/275-3021 or 800/752-9669.

- Digger Bay Marina: From I-5 in Redding, drive north for three miles to the exit for the town of Shasta Lake City and Shasta Dam

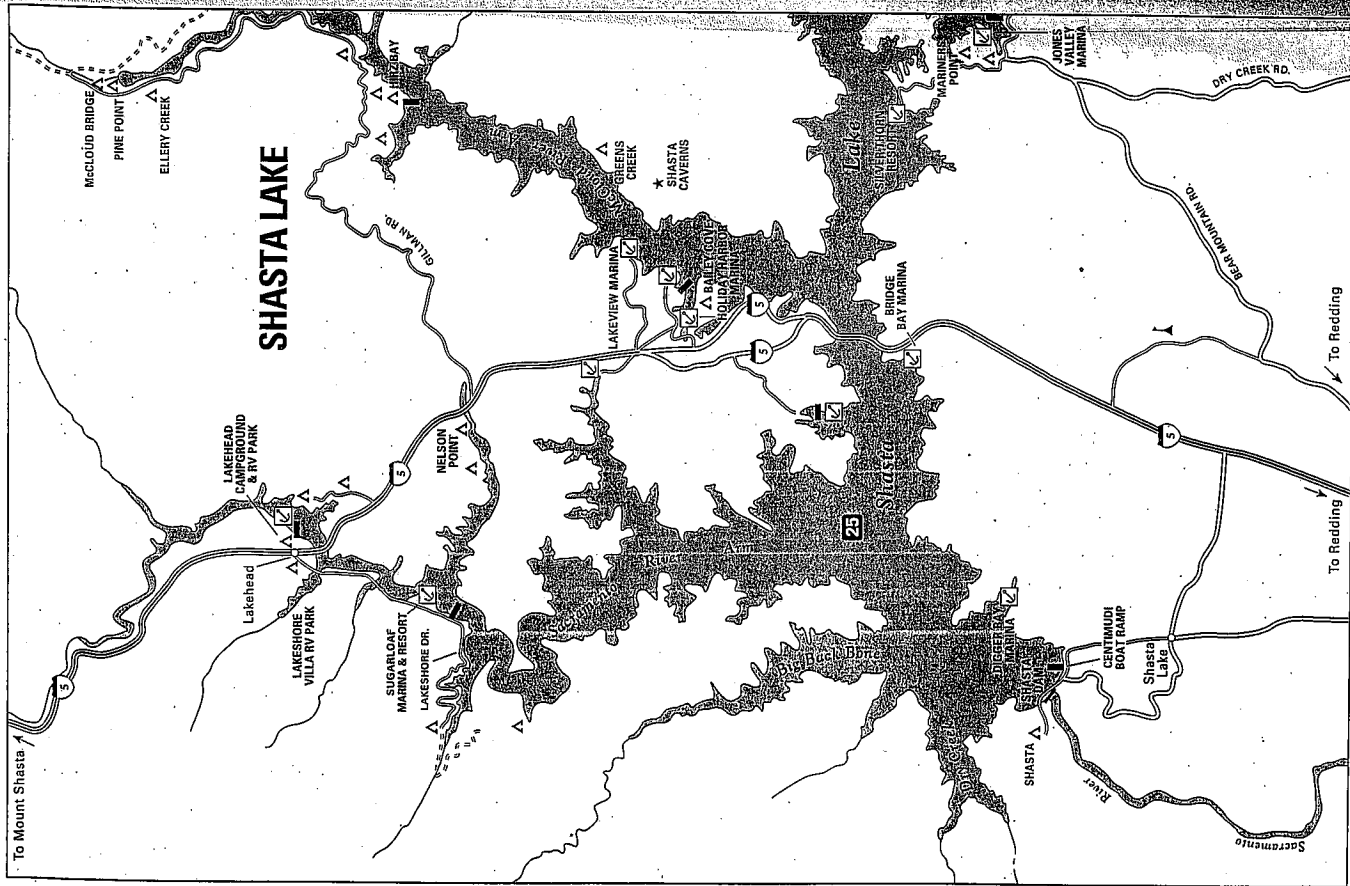
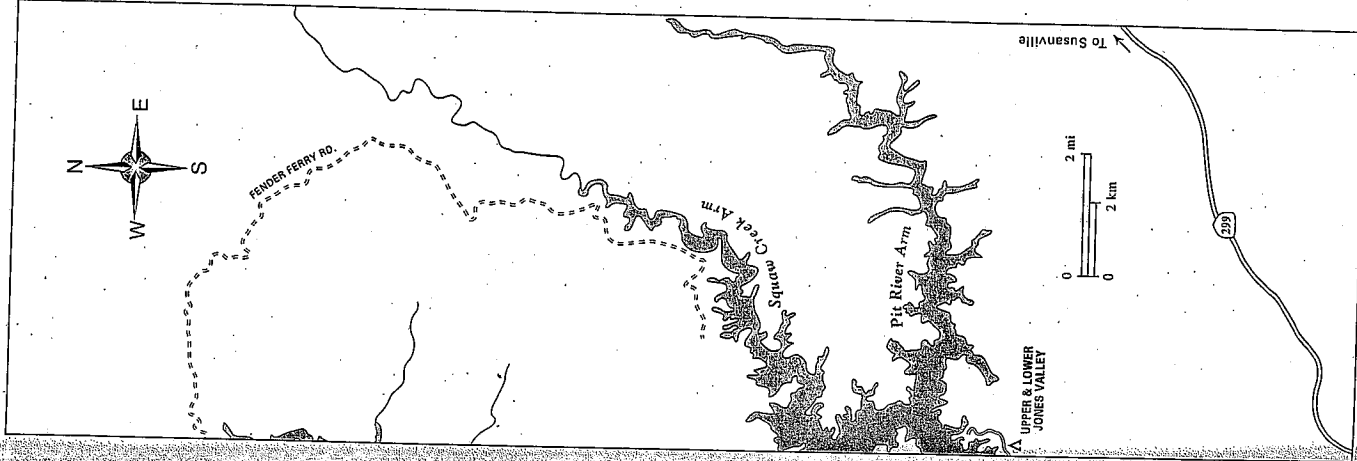


Boulevard. Take that exit and bear west on Shasta Dam Boulevard and drive about three miles to Shasta Park Drive. Turn right on Shasta Park Drive (which becomes Digger Bay Road) and drive about four miles to the marina and boat ramp. A paved ramp, a full-service marina, gas, and store are available. Houseboats, ski boats, personal watercraft, and aluminum fishing boats can be rented. For more information call 530/275-3072 or 800/752-9669.

- **Holiday Harbor:** From Redding, drive north for 18 miles on I-5 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. A two-laned paved ramp, full-service marina, RV park, snack bar, 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 800/752-9669.

- **Jones Valley Resort:** 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 and drive nine miles to a Y in the road. For Jones Valley public ramp or Jones Valley Resort, bear right at the Y. For Silverthorn Resort, bear left at the Y. A boat ramp, full-service marina, and convenience store are available. Houseboats, fishing boats, ski boats, pontoon boats, personal watercraft, rowboats, canoes, and kayaks are available for rent. Parasailing is available. For more information call 530/275-7950.

- **Lakeview Marina Resort:** From Redding, drive north for 18 miles on I-5 to the O'Brien/Shasta Caverns Road exit. Turn right (east) at Shasta Caverns Road and drive to the marina road entrance (just past mailboxes) on the left. Turn left and drive to the marina and boat ramp. A full-service marina and convenience store are available. Houseboats, ski boats, personal watercraft, pontoon boats, fishing boats, kayaks, and canoes are available for rent.



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Only marina customers can use the paved boat ramp. For more information call 530/238-2442 or 877/474-2782.

• **Packers Bay:** From Redding, drive north for 18 miles on I-5 to the 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. A boat ramp, marina, dock, fuel, and convenience store are available. Houseboats are available for rent. For more information call 530/275-5570 or 800/331-3137.

• **Shasta Marina:** From Redding, drive north for 18 miles on I-5 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. A marina, gas, and convenience store are available. Houseboats are available for rent. For more information call 530/238-2284 or 800/959-3359.

• **Silverthorn Resort:** From Redding, turn east on Highway 299 and drive 7.5 miles (just past the town of Bella Vista) to Dry Creek Road. Bear left at the Y. 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, canoes, and personal watercraft are available for rent. For more information call 530/275-1571 or 800/332-3044.

• **Sugarloaf Marina:** 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. A two-lane paved ramp, full-service marina, campground, and convenience store are available. Houseboats, ski boats, pontoon boats, aluminum fishing boats, and kayaks are available for rent. For more information call 530/238-2711 or 800/223-7950.

Facilities, fees: Lodging, cabins, campgrounds, restrooms with showers and flush toilets, drinking water, and convenience stores are available. Many marinas (see below) have fishing boats, ski boats, personal watercraft, and accessories available for rent. Fees are charged for boat launching, day use and camping.

Water sports, restrictions: All boating and water sports are permitted. Water-skiing, wake boarding and personal watercraft are permitted. A 5-mph speed limit is strictly enforced around the coves and marinas and a sheriff's boat patrol enforces no-ski zones and speed limits. Swimming is excellent, best from a boat well up any lake arm. Two of the better spots are Gregory Creek and Jones Valley. Sailboarding is best on the McCloud Arm of the lake, where there is more wind on summer afternoons; two good jump-off points are Bailey Cove and Hinz Bay.

Directions: Follow directions to Access points, above.

To Hinz 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 7H009 and drive northeast for 10 miles to the campground/boat launch access road. Turn right and drive .5 mile to the boat ramp.

To Lakeshore Marina: From Redding, drive north on I-5 for 24 miles to the Antlers-Lakeshore Drive exit. Take that exit to the stop sign. Turn left and drive a short distance to Lakeshore Drive. Turn left on Lakeshore Drive and drive one mile to the marina and boat ramp.

To Bailey Cove: From Redding, drive north on I-5 over the Pit River Bridge at Shasta Lake Turn east (right) on Shasta Caverns Road and drive .25 mile to a signed turnoff for Bailey Cove. Turn right and drive one mile to Bailey Cove Boat Ramp.

To Centimudi/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 and bear west on Shasta Dam Boulevard and drive three miles to Lake Boulevard. Turn right on Lake Boule-

vard and drive two miles to a fork. Turn right and drive .5 mile to the boat launch.

Contact: Shasta Lake Visitor Information Center, 530/275-1589, website: www.fs.fed.us/r5/shastatrinity; Shasta Cascade Wonderland Association, 530/365-7500 or 800/474-2782, website: www.shastacascade.org. Water sports and marinas: John Steiner's Water Sports Center, 530/275-6744; Eansane Wakeboarding, 530/275-6744, website: www.ensanewakeboarding.com; Holiday Harbor Resort and Marina, 800/776-2628, 530/238 2383, website: www.lakeshasta.com. General information websites: www.shastalake.com, www.shastalake.com, www.shastalake.com.

26 CLEAR CREEK



Rating: 6

west of Redding

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"Psssst. 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 near-by 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 light 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 next 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, turn west on Highway 299 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) on right. Turn right on the access road. Access is available off short roads that junction with Trinity Mountain Road, which parallels the creek.

Contact: Shasta-Trinity National Forest, Weaver-Ranger District, 530/623-2121, website: www.fs.fed.us/r5/shastatrinity.

27 WHISKEYTOWN LAKE



Rating: 8

near Redding in Shasta-Trinity National Forest

Map 24, page 45

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 sailboarders 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 west winds typically reach 10 to 15 knots, making it perfect for sailing and sailboarding.

The federal ban on personal watercraft at 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 clear in the summer and strong in the spring, with lots of miniature waterfalls, pools, and drops. The trail parallels this 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 is 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 park visitor center. Turn left at the visitor 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 visitors center) to the campground entrance road 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, ski boats, sailboats, fishing boats, canoes, and pedal boats can be rented.

• **Whiskey Creek:** From Redding, drive west on Highway 299 for eight miles to the visitor center. Turn left at the visitor 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.

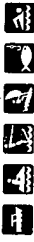
Facilities, fees: There are three campgrounds with drinking water and vault toilets. Picnic areas are available. Snacks are sold at Brandy Creek and Oak Bottom; full supplies can be obtained in Redding. Access and boat launching are free. Fees are charged for day use, boat launching, and camping. Annual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

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, water-skiing, wake boarding, sailing, sailboarding, 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 to Access points, above.

Contact: Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, 530/246-1225, website: www.nps.gov/whis;
 Brandy Creek Marina, 530/243-2733; Oak Bottom Marina, 530/359-2269; Shasta Cascade Wonderland Association, 530/365-7500 or 800/474-2782, website: www.shastacascade.org;
 Shasta-Trinity National Forest, Weaverville Ranger District, 530/623-2121, website: www.fs.fed.us/r5/shastatrinity.

28 KESWICK LAKE



Rating: 4

near Redding in Shasta-Trinity National Forest

Map 2.4, page 45

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: Water-skiing, wake boarding, sailing, sailboarding, 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, 530/275-1554.

29 LOWER SACRAMENTO RIVER



Rating: 7

near Redding

Map 2.4, page 45

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 Shot, or Glo Bug downstream on the edges of these spots, near the bottom.



Another great fishing spot is at the 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 also become concerned about covering enough water, so many rush through the early stages of the trip, where the fishing is best and wild-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 can add to their safety margin by rocking their paddles back and forth in the current. That 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 raft), you can be propelled out of control. If 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 a choice of many large sand bars 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 to 15,000 CFS, which makes for a faster ride—but a required portage around the Red Bluff Diversion Dam. To avoid that 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 trees, floating debris,

and, rarely, rebar from concrete blocks 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 feet and because there are few places to stop along the bank. If these things don't bother you, be aware that, according to the law, inner tubers must wear life jackets. County sheriffs patrol the river and will issue citations.

Access: There are four public boat ramps:

- Posse Grounds put-in: Take I-5 to Redding and the exit for Highway 299 West/Central Redding. Take that exit and drive one mile (over the Sacramento River) to Auditorium Drive. Turn right and drive .5 mile (Convention Center on your right) to the parking lot and boat access.

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

- Bonnyview: 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 left 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 east 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, drift-boats, 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, and Jellys Ferry, and elsewhere. In Redding, access is also available at the Posse Grounds near the Redding Civic Auditorium. Contact: Shasta Cascade Wonderland Association, 530/365-7500 or 800/474-2782; website: www.shastascascade.org; U.S. Forest Service, Lake Red Bluff Recreation Area, 530/527-2813, website: www.fs.fed.us/r5/shastatrinity; Woodson Bridge State Recreation Area, 530/839-2112. River flows, website: <http://cdec.water.ca.gov>.

Canoe & kayak rentals: California Canoe & Kayak in Oakland 510/893-7833, Sacramento 916/353-5171, website: www.calkayak.com; Outdoors Unlimited in San Francisco, 415/476-2078, website: www.outdoors.ucsf.edu/ou. Canoe instruction: Canoe West, 530/242-6765, website: www.snowcrest.net/canoewest; Shasta Climbing and Paddle Sports, 530/222-4606; Marina RV Park, 530/241-7275; Balls Ferry Resort, 530/365-8708.



29 DEER CREEK



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 and drive 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 signed Mill Creek/Hole in the Ground. 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 .25 mile to the camp. A hiking trail follows Mill Creek for several miles.

Contact: Lassen National Forest, Almanor Ranger District, 530/258-2141; Mill Creek Resort, 530/595-4449. For a map, send \$6 to U.S. Forest Service, Attn: Map Sales, P.O. Box 587, Camino, CA 95709, 530/647-5390, fax 530/647-5389, website: www.fs.fed.us/r5/forests. Major credit cards accepted.

Rating: 6

near Mineral in Lassen National Forest

Map 33, page 84

From its headwaters on downstream, Highway 32 parallels Deer Creek, providing easy streamside 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 we 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 next listing).

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 north-east for 40 miles. Just after crossing a small red 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 flyfishing 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. For a map, send \$6 to U.S. Forest Service, Attn: Map Sales, P.O. Box 587, Camino, CA 95709, 530/647-5390, fax 530/647-5389, website: www.fs.fed.us/r5/forests. Major credit cards accepted.

30 LAKE ALMANOR



Rating: 10

east of Red Bluff in Lassen National Forest

Map 33, page 84

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. 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 snow-capped 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. Water-skiing, wake boarding, and using per-

sonal watercraft are excellent in July and August. The best spots for swimming and sailboarding 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 mid-summer, 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.

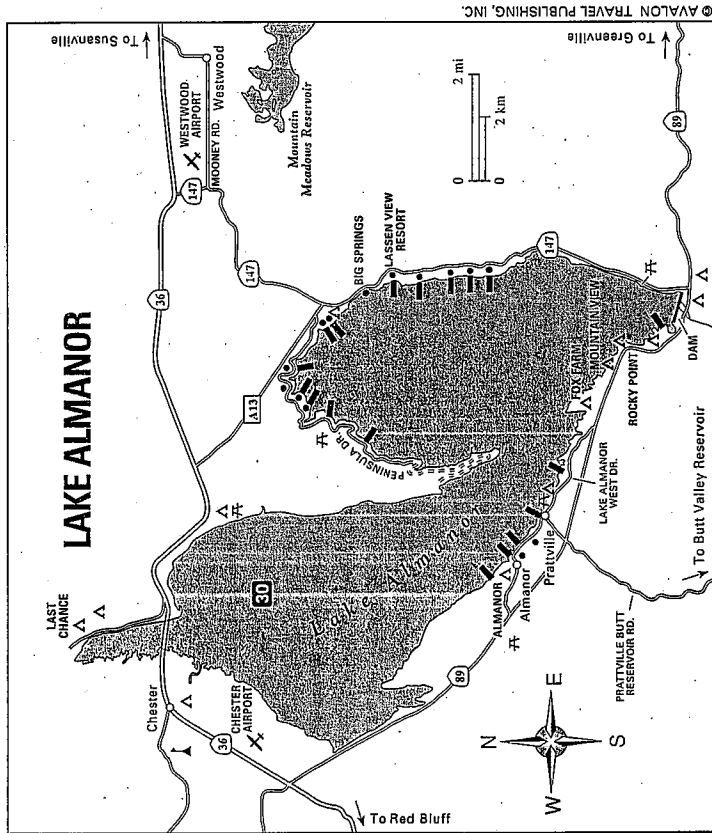
Spring winds and a long winter will always prevent this place from turning into a year-round vacation paradise. Wind? Yow, it can really howl. For instance, in May it can be as calm as a small pond at daybreak; then it starts to blow by 9 A.M., and by 10 A.M., the whitecaps start churning and continue for the rest of the day. This occurs in the spring, from April through early June, and while not a daily event, it 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 a jewel. It's one of the best recreation lakes in California, and an excellent destination for boaters, campers, and anglers.

Access: Many boat ramps are available at resorts and campgrounds around the lake:

- Big Cove Resort: Two paved ramp, docks, and a full-service marina with water sports equipment are available. Fishing boats, water





- Lake Cove Resort and Marina: A paved ramp and dock are provided. Fishing boats and pontoon boats are available for rent. For more information call 530/284-7697, website: www.lakecove-rv-resort.com.
- Lake Haven Resort: A paved ramp, docks, and limited marina services are available. For more information call 530/596-3249.
- Lassen View Resort: From Red Bluff, take Highway 36 east for 44 miles to the junction with Highway 89. Continue east on Highway 36/89 to Chester and drive through Chester to the junction with County Road A13. Turn right (south) and drive about four miles to the junction with Highway 147. Turn right on Highway 147 and drive .9 mile to the well-signed camp entrance on the right. A three-lane paved ramp and docks are provided. Cabins, fishing boats, and pontoon boats are available for rent. For more information call 530/596-3437.
- Little Norway Resort: There is a paved ramp
- Wilson's Camp Prattville: A dirt ramp, docks, and limited marina services are available. For more information call 530/259-2464.
- Knotty Pine Resort: A paved ramp, docks, and a full-service marina are available. Fishing boats, ski boats, personal watercraft, kayaks, canoes, pontoon boats, and pedal boats are available for rent. For more information call 530/596-3348, website: www.knottypine.net.
- Lake Almanor Resort: 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. There is a paved ramp and docks. For more information call 530/596-3337.

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 inflatables, 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, submersing 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 sailboarding are allowed; the best spots are at the campground or the picnic area.

Directions: At 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 .5 mile to the campground.

Contact: PG&E Land Projects, 916/386-5164, website: www.pge.com/recreation; Lassen National Forest, Almanor Ranger District, 530/258-2141.

32 BUTT VALLEY RESERVOIR



near Chester

Rating: 6

Map 33, page 84

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



and a full-service marina. Fishing boats, ski boats, pontoon boats, and personal watercraft are available for rent. For more information call 530/596-3225, website: www.littlenorway.net.

• Plumas Pines Resort/Major's Outpost: Fishing boats, ski boats, personal watercraft, and pontoon boats are available for rent. For more information call 530/259-2727.

• Northshore Campground: 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. A paved ramp and dock are available. For more information call 530/258-3376.

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

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, water-skiing, wake boarding, personal watercraft, sailing, sailboarding, and swimming are permitted. Swimming beaches are located at Canyon Dam Picnic Area, Eastshore Picnic Area, and Camp Conery Group Camp on the lake's southeast end. Sailboarding is best at these areas.

Directions: See directions to Access points, above, or call individual resorts listed under Access. **Contact:** Lassen National Forest, Almanor Ranger District, 530/258-2141; PG&E Land Projects, 916/386-5164, website: www.pge.com/recreation.

31 PHILBROOK RESERVOIR



Rating: 6

near Paradise in Lassen National Forest

Map 33, page 84

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

9 HOWARD LAKE



near Covelo in Mendocino National Forest
Map 4.2, page 117

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 that you can paddle your canoe around in, 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. **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, drive north on U.S. 101 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 Road M1 and drive about 11 miles to the lake and campground.

Contact: Mendocino National Forest, Covelo Ranger District, 707/983-6118, fax 707/983-8004.

Rating: 4

near Covelo in Mendocino National Forest

Map 4.2, page 117

A veritable dot of a lake at just two acres, Hammerhorn is more like a mountain pond set at an elevation of 3,500 feet in remote Mendocino National Forest. Despite the small size there are a few factors that make the place special: The lake is quite pretty, there is a campground, and the location is near the border of the Yolla-Bolly Wilderness.

There is no boat ramp, of course (after all, it's only two acres), but small car-top boats and inflatables can be launched by hand. That is exactly what some campers do, possibly tossing out a line for trout, though the lake's population of hardhead shiners has cut into fishing success. The lake is warm enough for swimming by mid-June, but few people make it out here just to take a dip.

The place typically attracts the hiking crowd. Backpackers will make the drive into the Mendocino wildlands and camp here before heading off the next day for a trip into the Yolla-Bolly Wilderness; a trailhead is located nearby to the northeast.

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

Facilities, fees: A small, primitive campground, vault toilets, and drinking water are available. No drinking water in fall and winter. Garbage must be packed out. Supplies can be obtained in Covelo. 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, drive north on U.S. 101 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 Road M1 and drive 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.

11 PLASKETT LAKES



Rating: 4

northwest of Willows in Mendocino National Forest

Map 4.2, page 117

Plaskett Lakes are a pair of connected, dot-size 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. Supplies can be obtained in Elk Creek. **Access is free.** A fee is charged for camping.

Water sports, restrictions: Rowboats, canoes,

and kayaks are permitted. No motors. Swimming is allowed.

Directions: In Willows on I-5, turn west on Highway 162 and drive toward the town of Elk Creek. Just after crossing the Stony Creek Bridge, turn north on County Road 306 and drive four miles. 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.

12 STONY GORGE RESERVOIR



Rating: 6

near Elk Creek

Map 4.2, page 117

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 water-skiing 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. Limited supplies can be obtained in Elk Creek. Access is free.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, water-skiing, wake boarding, personal watercraft, sailing, sailboarding, and swimming are permitted. A beach is available at Skipper's Point.

Directions: From Sacramento, drive 90 miles north on I-5 to Willows. Turn west on Highway 162 and continue for about 19 miles; turn left at the signed entrance and travel two miles to the reservoir.

Contact: Bureau of Reclamation, 530/275-1554 or 530/934-7066.

13 LAKE PILLSBURY



Rating: 8
near Ukiah in Mendocino National Forest

Map 42, page 17

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, and lots of trout. Well, with all those attractions, it isn't surprising that more vacationers than ever before are heading here.

Covering some 2,000 acres, Pillsbury is by far the largest lake in the Mendocino National Forest. Besides the surrounding forestland, highlights include lakeside camping and good boat ramps. Groceries and gas are also 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 a boat ramp are located.

Most visitors will fish a little and water-ski a little, enjoy the sun, and maybe take a dunk in the cool green waters. Though conditions are decent for sailboarding in the early summer, few sailboarders are willing to make the 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 inundated with people, as occasionally occurs at Clear Lake. If you're staying at Pillsbury, one great side trip is a rafting run down the nearby Eel River (see the Eel River listings in this chapter).

The fishing is often good for trout in the spring, and then bass in the warmer months. There is an advisory for eating fish caught from Pillsbury.

Access: There are three paved boat ramps: one at Fuller Grove Campground on the lake's northwest end, one just past Sunset Campground on the northeast end, and one at Lake Pillsbury Resort on the west end. The boat ramp at Fuller Grove is wheelchair-accessible. **Facilities, fees:** Campgrounds, vault toilets, and drinking water are available. Lodging, marina, boat rentals, gas, and convenience store are available at Lake Pillsbury Resort. Access is free. There are fees for boat launching and camping.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, water-skiing, wake boarding, personal watercraft, sailing, sailboarding, and swimming are permitted. Sailboarding and swimming are best on the lake's north end, which has large, sandy beaches.

Directions: To Lake Pillsbury Resort: From Ukiah on U.S. 101, drive north to the junction with Highway 20. Turn east (right) on Highway 20 and drive five miles to East Potter Valley Road (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 to Eel River Road. Turn right and drive 15 miles to Lake Pillsbury and

Forest Road 301F. Turn right at Forest Road 301F and drive two miles to the resort.

To Sunset: From Ukiah on U.S. 101, drive north to the junction with Highway 20. Turn east (right) on Highway 20 and drive five miles. Turn northwest on East Potter Valley Road toward Lake Pillsbury. Drive 5.9 miles to the town of Potter Valley. Continue on East Potter Valley Road to Eel River Road. Turn right and drive 15 miles to the Eel River Information Kiosk at Lake Pillsbury. Continue east for 4.1 miles to Lake Pillsbury and the junction with Hall Mountain Road. Turn right and drive three miles to the camp entrance. A boat ramp is available .25 mile to the south.

To Fuller Grove: Continue as above to the Eel River Information Kiosk at Lake Pillsbury. Continue for 2.2 miles to the campground access road. Turn right and drive .25 mile to the campground.

Contact: Lake Pillsbury Resort, 707/743-1581; Mendocino National Forest, Upper Lake Ranger District, 707/275-2361; Lake County, 707/263-2222.

14 LETTS LAKE



Rating: 6

west of Maxwell in Mendocino National Forest

Map 42, page 17

Okay, c'mon now, admit it: You've never seen directions like the ones provided in the Directions field (below) 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 Saylor 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. Supplies can be obtained in Stonyford. Access is free.

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

Directions: From I-5 at Maxwell, turn west on Maxwell-Sites Road and drive to Sites and Sites-Lodoga Road. Turn left on Sites-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 Fouts Spring Road. Turn west on Fouts Spring Road/County Road M10 and drive about 17 miles into national forest (where the road becomes Forest Service 17N02) to the campground on the east side of Letts Lake.

Contact: Mendocino National Forest, Grindstone Ranger District, 530/963-3128. For a map of Mendocino National Forest, send \$6 to U.S. Forest Service, Attn: Map Sales, P.O. Box 587, Camino, CA 95709, 530/647-5390, fax 530/647-5389, website: www.fs.fed.us/r5/forests. Major credit cards accepted.

15 EAST PARK RESERVOIR



Rating: 7

near Stonyford in Mendocino National Forest

Map 42, page 17

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, water-skiing, 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 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 vault and chemical toilets are available. No drinking water. Supplies can be obtained in Stonyford and Lodoga. Camping (except for groups), boat launching, and day use are free.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, water-skiing, wake boarding, personal watercraft, sailing, sailboarding, 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: Take I-5 to Maxwell (67 miles north of Sacramento) and Maxwell-Sites Road. Turn west on Maxwell-Sites Road and drive to Sites. Turn left on Sites-Lodoga Road and continue to Lodoga. Turn right on Lodoga-Stonyford Road and drive to East Park Reservoir and the boat ramp.

Contact: East Park Reservoir, 530/968-5267;

Bureau of Reclamation, 530/275-1554; Stonyford General Store, 530/963-3235.

16 HIGHLAND SPRINGS RESERVOIR



Rating: 6

west of Clear Lake

Map 42, page 17

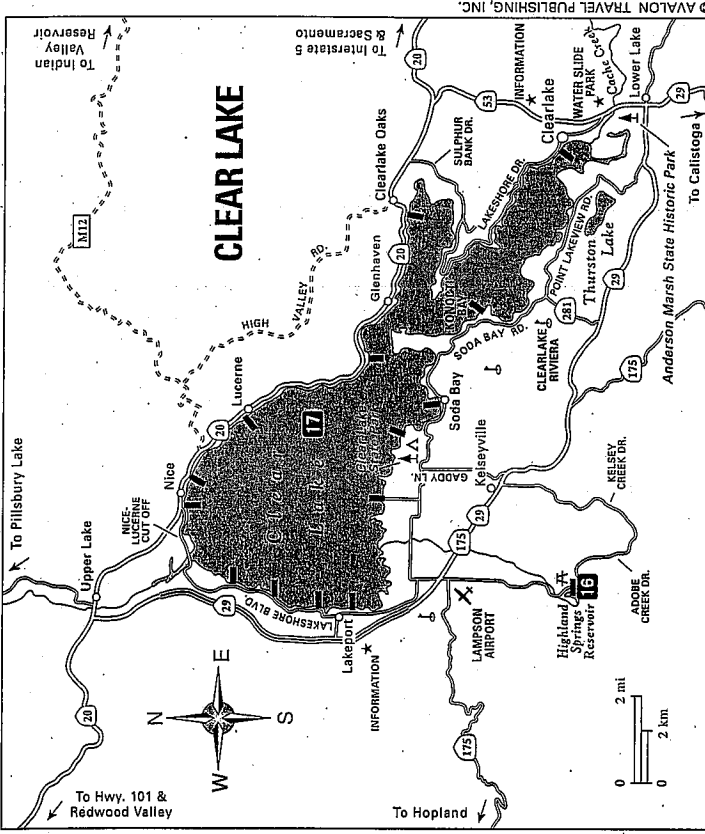
People can drive to giant Clear Lake many times over a lifetime and never learn about nearby Highland Springs Reservoir or the adjacent Adobe Creek Reservoir. Yet these two lakes are so close, only about 10 miles west of Clear Lake, and between them they fulfill many needs.

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 sailboarding 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, sailboarding, and



swimming are permitted. No gas motors allowed. Swimming is best at the picnic area. **Directions:** From Vallejo, drive north on Highway 29 and proceed 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 Flood Control, 707/263-2341; Tackle It, 707/262-1233; general information website: www.lakecounty.com/lakes.html.

17 CLEAR LAKE



Rating: 9

north of Calistoga

Map 42, page 17

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 Konociti. 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 boater/camper 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, rock-hounding, golfing, touring wineries, taking glider flights, exploring Native America 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. Water-skiing 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 water-skiers should avoid the shoreline, particularly in the coves. To ensure that water-skiers 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 Nor-Cal 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.

I-5, turn on Highway 20 and drive to the town of Lucerne. Continue on Highway 20 to the east side of Lucerne and the campground and boat launch at 6720 East Highway 20. For more information call 707/274-7715.

- 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.
- Clear Lake State Park near Kelseyville: From Vallejo, drive north on Highway 29 to Lower Lake. 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. For more information call 707/279-4293.

From Kelseyville on Highway 29, take the Kelseyville exit and turn north on Main Street. Drive a short distance to State Street. Turn right and drive .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.

- Edgewater Resort at Soda Bay: In Kelseyville on Highway 29, take the Merritt Road exit and drive on Merritt Road for two miles (it becomes Gaddy Lane) 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.

There are also the following free public ramps:

- 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.
- Redbud City Park: In the town of Clearlake, look for the park entrance at 14655 Lakeshore Drive. A four-lane paved ramp is available.
- First Street Ramp: From Main Street in the town of Lakeport, turn east on First Street and continue to the two-lane paved ramp.

- Third Street Ramp: From Main Street in the town of Lakeport, take Third Street east to the two-lane paved ramp.

- Fifth Street Ramp: From Main Street in the town of Lakeport, turn east on Fifth Street and drive to the two-lane paved ramp.

- 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.

- 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.

- H. V. Keeling County Park: This park is located in the town of Nice at 3000 Lakeshore Boulevard and has a 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.

Facilities, fees: Full marina services are available at Ferndale Marina in Kelseyville, 707/279-4866; Glenhaven Marina in Glenhaven, 707/998-3406; Will-O-Point Resort in Lakeport, 707/262-5896, and others. 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, wake boarding, personal watercraft, sailing, sailboarding, 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: From San Francisco, cross the Golden Gate Bridge and drive north on U.S. 101 past San Rafael to Highway 37. Drive east on Highway 37 for 23 miles to Vallejo and Highway 29.



Turn north on Highway 29 and drive 70 miles to the town of Lower Lake.

From Sacramento, take I-5 north to Williams and Highway 20. Turn west on Highway 20 and drive to the town of Clearlake.

From the North Coast, take U.S. 101 south to Calpella (17 miles south of Willits) and Highway 20. Turn east on Highway 20 and drive to the town of Nice.

Contact: Lake County Visitor Information Center, 707/274-5652 or 800/525-3743 (in California only), website: www.lakecounty.com; Greater Lakeport Chamber of Commerce, 707/263-5092, website: www.lakeportchamber.com; Konociti Harbor Resort & Spa, Kelseyville, 707/279-4281, website: 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; Konociti Harbor Resort Marina, Konociti 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, website: 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 & tours: Clear Lake Queen (tri-level paddlewheel), Lucerne, 707-994-5432; Konociti Harbor Resort Marina (75-passenger charter boat), Konociti Bay, 707/279-6628.

18 INDIAN VALLEY RESERVOIR



near Clear Lake

Map 42, page 117

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

Rating: 5

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 beats a heart that will never betray you.

Indian Valley is a long, narrow reservoir set at 1,500 feet elevation. When full, the lake covers about 4,000 acres and has 41 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 whenever 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, drinking 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, sailboarding, and swimming are permitted. A 10-mph speed limit is strictly enforced. No waterskiing, wake board-

ing, 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 to Walker Ridge Road. Turn north (right) on Walker Ridge Road (a dirt road) and drive north for about four 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 washedboarded.

Or, 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.

Contact: Indian Valley Store, 530/662-0607; Yolo County (water level info), 530/662-0265, website: www.ycfwcwd.org; Bureau of Land Management, Ukiah Field Office, 707/468-4000, website: www.ca.blm.gov/ukiah.

19 GUALALA RIVER



south of Point Arena

Map 45, page 118

Remote and pretty, the Gualala River is the best 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 nec-

essary 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), follow the directions below for access to the lower river: once on the Old State Highway, 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 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: Adventure Rents, 707/884-4386, website: www.adventurerents.com; general information website: www.redwoodcoastchamber.com.

20 LAKE SONOMA



Rating: 10

north of Santa Rosa

Map 43, Page 18

Nestled in the rich foothill country of Sonoma County, Lake Sonoma offers one of the best boater/camper 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.

Any potential conflict between high-speed operators and anglers has been resolved by setting aside a large area in the main lake for water-skiing, wake boarding, 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 sailboarders will find the best conditions near Yorty Creek, although speed-loving sailboarders can venture into the water-skiing area on the Dry Creek

Arm. How is the water? Well, after the winter storm runoff turns it a bit off-color, the lake quickly turns green in the spring, and by summer surface temperatures are in the high 70s.

The lake attracts heavy use, with most visitors 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. These are primitive sites without drinking water, but they provide chemical toilets, garbage cans, tent sites, picnic tables, fire rings, and lantern poles (you can hang your food on them). Be sure to bring some kind of sunscreen, even if it's just a light tarp rigged with poles and ropes.

To get the most out of a stay here, stop at the visitor center below the dam to pick up maps, brochures, and other information, and ask about boat-in campsite availability.

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, hand-launch area is available at Yorty Creek.

Facilities, fees: A full-service marina and boat slips are available. Ski boats, houseboats, fishing boats, personal watercraft, canoes, and pedal boats are available for rent. There are 109 primitive boat-in campsites around the lake, several hike-in sites, four group sites (two of which are boat-in), and 95 tent sites and two group sites at Liberty Glen Campground 2.5 miles from the lake. Restrooms with flush toilets and solar showers and an RV dump station are provided. Vault toilets are provided at the primitive sites. No drinking water. Supplies can be obtained at the Dry Creek Store on Dry Creek Road near Healdsburg. Fees are charged for day use, boat launching, and camping.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, water-skiing, wake boarding, and personal watercraft are allowed in designated areas; a large area is set aside in the main lake body. Other designated areas have a posted 5-mph speed limit. The best area for swimming and sailboarding is from the Yorty Creek access.

Directions: To primary ramp: 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 visitor center on your right. To reach the boat ramp, continue past the visitor center for about three miles. Follow the signs to the public launch ramp across the ridge or to the ramp at Lake Sonoma Marina.

To Yorty Creek access: Car-top boats can be launched at the Yorty Creek access. From Santa Rosa, drive north on U.S. 101 to Cloverdale. Take the first Cloverdale exit and turn left at the stop sign, driving over U.S. 101 to South Cloverdale Boulevard. Turn right and drive to West Brookside Road. Turn left and drive to Foothill Drive/Hot Springs Road. Turn left and follow the narrow, winding road several miles to the lake.

Contact: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Lake Sonoma, 707/433-9483, website: www.spm.usace.army.mil/lakesonoma; Lake Sonoma Marina, 707/433-2200; Dry Creek Store, 707/433-4171.

21 RUSSIAN RIVER



northwest of Santa Rosa

Map 43, Page 19

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 day, you either will have bonded with your companion or will want to jam a paddle down their throat.

Rest assured that this is a great place for such an experiment because the results are likely to be positive. Most of the year, the river is fresh and rolling green, with a prime 10-mile stretch between Forestville and Guerneville that is routed through 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 your time

floating lazily down to their private beach in Guerneville, where you can catch a shuttle ride back (it's included in the price). Without guides, you set the pace of your trip. It's an easy paddle along one of the prettiest sections 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 where-as other river sections have temporary dams to retain water, here there are no dams to cross.

Burke's is the long-established canoe rental service and campground on the Russian River. The favorite trip is the 10-miler from Burke's in Forestville to Guerneville, which is routed right through the heart of the area's redwoods, about a 3.5-hour paddle trip with plenty of time in the day for sunbathing, swimming, or anything else you can think of. The cost is \$45, including a return by shuttle. Many other trips are available.

There are several other places to put in downstream, however, and it's an easy float nearly all the way to the ocean. Casino's is another popular put-in, the beginning of a six-mile paddle trip. In the summer, the river gets heavy use, with lots of boaters and swimmers at every imaginable access point. There are large, sandy beaches all along the highway. The best are at Johnson's Beach and Monte Rio, which offer full-facility 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 Greysville, 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, unrated 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 .7 miles 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: Burke's Canoes, 707/887-1222, website: www.burkescanoetrips.com; Trowbridge Canoe Trips, 707/433-7247 or 800/640-1386; Casini Ranch Family Campground, 707/865-2255 or 800/451-8400, website: www.casini-ranch.com.

22 CACHE CREEK



southeast of Clear Lake

Map 4-4, page 119

Cache Creek is best known as the closest place

Rating: 7

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 town of Guinda 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 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.

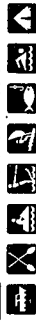
Facilities, fees: Campgrounds, restrooms with flush toilets, drinking water, and vault toilets are nearby. Access to the river is free. A fee is charged for camping.

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 and the junction with Highway 16 West. Turn north-west on Highway 16 and drive northwest for about 45 miles to the town of Rumsey. From Rumsey, continue west on Highway 16 for five miles to the park entrance on the left. Direct access is available here near the confluence of Bear Creek. Note that the creek is largely bordered by private property south of Rumsey.

Contact: Cache Creek Canyon Regional Park, 530/666-8115. Rafting trips: Whitewater Adventures, 707/257-4444 or 800/977-4837, website www.gotwhitewater.com; Cache Canyon River Trips, 530/796-3091 or 800/796-3091, website: www.CacheCanyon.com. General information website: www.yolocounty.org.

23 LAKE BERRYESSA



north of Vallejo

Map 4-4, page 119

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 really shines; this is the best time for fishing and family recreation.

All water sports are permitted, but the focus is on powerboaters, wake boarding, water-skiing, and tubing. Enthusiasts have a field day 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, small stores, and campgrounds. The largest is Steele Park Resort, which has waterside condo units, motel, marina, boat rentals, RV park, cottages,

pool, tennis courts, and a waterskiing 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 space 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 trolling the proper depth, typically 25 to 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 Putah 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:

- Putah Creek Resort: From Vallejo; drive north on I-80 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, and convenience store are available. For more information call 707/966-2116.

- Rancho Monticello Resort: From Vallejo, drive north on I-80 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 and drive five miles to Highway 128. Turn left and drive five miles to Highway 128. Turn left and drive five miles to Highway 128. Turn left and drive five miles to Highway 128. Turn left and drive five miles to Highway 128. Turn left and drive five miles to Highway 128.



on Highway 128, drive five miles to Berryessa-Knoxville Road. Turn right, and drive 12.5 miles to 5800 Knoxville Road.

A paved boat ramp, boat rentals, full-service marina, gas, campground with restrooms and showers, coin laundry, convenience store, and snack bar are available. 707/966-2188; marina, 707/966-9803.

• Lake Berryessa Marina Resort: From Vallejo, drive north on I-80 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, RV dump station, coin laundry, snack bar, RV supplies, and convenience store are available. For more information call 707/966-2161, website: www.lake-berryessa.com.

• Spanish Flat Resort: From Vallejo, drive north on I-80 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, drinking water, flush toilets, showers, and convenience store are available. A deli and grill is open on summer weekends. Coin laundry, restaurant, and RV supplies are available within 1.5 miles. For more information call 707/966-7700, marina 707/966-7708, website: www.spanishflatresort.com.

• Steele Park Resort: From Vallejo, drive north on I-80 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, marina, gas, pump/house, fishing boat rentals, houseboat moorings, bait, convenience store, and snack bar are available. For more information call 707/966-2134.

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: Powerboats, water-skiing, wake boarding, personal watercraft, sailing, and sailboarding are permitted. A public swimming beach is available at Oak Shores, about three miles south of Lake Berryessa Marina on Knoxville Road. Beaches are also available at Lake Berryessa Marina, Spanish Flat Resort, and Steele Park Resort, and are for guests only. No-wake zones are signed and strictly enforced in the vicinity of all marinas. High-speed users are advised to avoid the shoreline. No motors are permitted past the signed entrance of the northern Putah Creek arm of the lake.

Directions: From Sacramento, take I-80 east to Davis and the exit for Highway 113. Take that exit and drive north on Highway 116 to Covell Boulevard. Turn west on Covell Boulevard and drive to Winters (where the road becomes Highway 128), and then continue up Putah Creek and past Monticello Dam. See access directions for specific boat ramps, marinas, and resorts.

From the Bay Area, take I-80 east to Cordelia and the exit for Suisun Valley Road. Take that exit, turn north and drive 17 miles to Highway 121. Turn right on Highway 121 and drive seven miles to Moskowite Corners and the junction of Highway 128. See access directions for specific boat ramps, marinas, and resorts.

Contact: Contact any of the resorts listed above or Napa Chamber of Commerce, 707/226-7455, website: www.napachamber.com; Willi's Water-ski Center, Steele Park Resort, 707/966-5502. Boat rentals: Spanish Flat Resort, 707/966-7708; Wet Dawg Watersports, 707/966-5701; Wet Pleasure and Jet Ski Rentals, 707/966-4204; Berryessa Marina Resort, 707/966-2827, website: www.lakeberryessa.com; American Watercraft Rentals, 707/966-1000; Rancho Monticello Resort, 707/966-9803.

Fishing guides: Jim Munk Fishing Guide & Instruction, 707/987-3734; Larry Hemphill Guide & Instruction, 530/674-0276.

24 LAKE RALPHINE

Rating: 5

in Santa Rosa at Howarth Park

Little Lake Ralphine is located within Santa Rosa's Howarth Park. It is available for day use only and is used primarily for fishing, paddling, and rowing small boats, or for enjoying a picnic on the shore.

Some even come here just to watch the water and feed the ducks. On the lake's edge are a snack bar and a boathouse where you can rent a small boat. In early spring Ralphine is stocked with trout twice a month. There is also a trail that connects this park with nearby Spring Lake.

The surrounding Howarth Park is an ideal destination for families with young children, with pony rides, petting barn, carousel, and miniature steam train.

Access: A boat ramp is adjacent to the picnic area.

Facilities, fees: Rowboat, canoe, and sailboat rentals are available. A picnic area is nearby. Access to the lake is free.

Water sports, restrictions: Rowboats, canoes, and sailboats are permitted. No motors. No swimming or water-contact sports. All boaters must wear life jackets.

Directions: In the North Bay, take U.S. 101 to Santa Rosa and the junction with Highway 12. Turn east on Highway 12 (it will become Hoen Avenue) and continue to Summerfield Road. Turn left and drive to Howarth Park.

Contact: Santa Rosa Parks Department, 707/543-3282, website: www.santarosarec.com.

25 SPRING LAKE

Rating: 6

in Santa Rosa in Spring Lake County Park

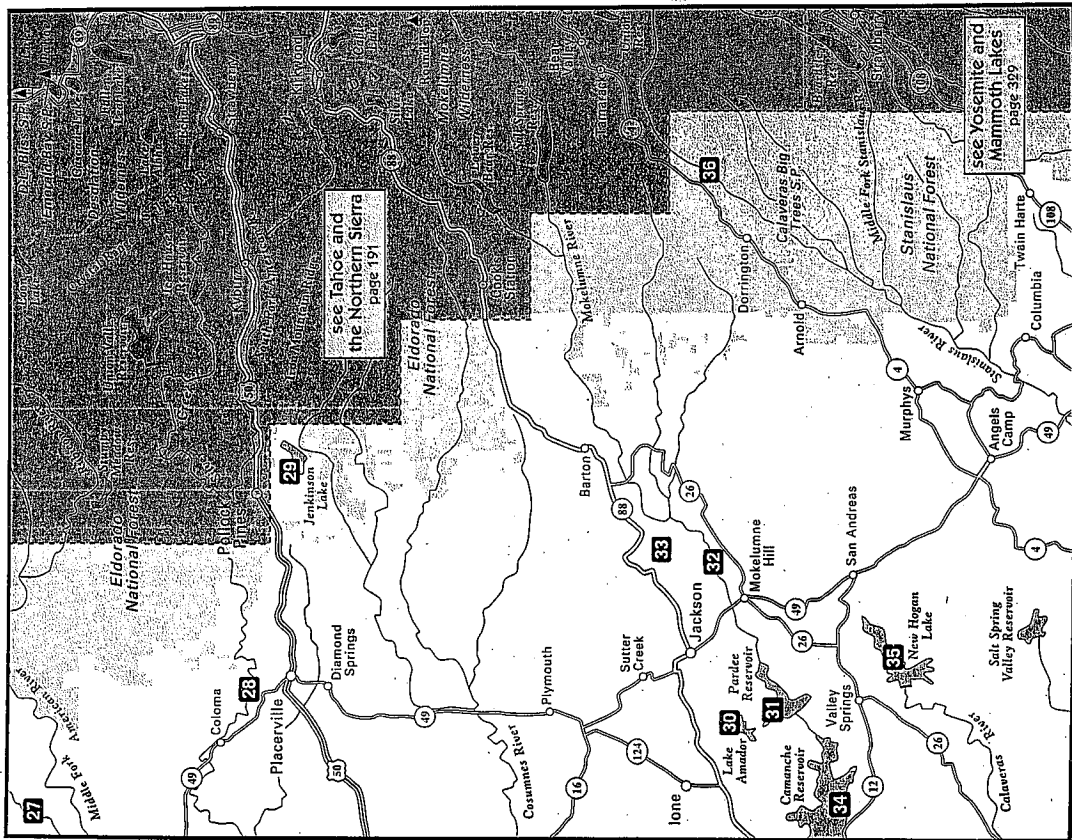
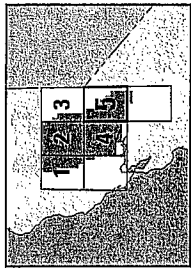
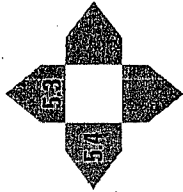
A precious handful of parks in the San Francisco Bay Area have both campgrounds and



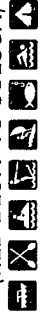
Map 5.5

Sites 27-36

Pages 179-187



1 SACRAMENTO RIVER (RED BLUFF TO COLUSA)



Rating: 9

in the Sacramento Valley

Map 5.5, Page 148

The old river is an emerald green fountain, the lifeblood of Northern California, and a living, pulsing vein in the heart of the state. But to phrase it a little more directly, this section of the river from Red Bluff downstream to Colusa is the prettiest part of California's Sacramento Valley, a place filled with beauty and power.

What a shame that most people never see this. The river's most visible aspect is the variety of recreation offered at Lake Red Bluff, created by a fish-killing atrocity called the Red Bluff Diversion Dam. Lake Red Bluff has calm water for ski boats, wake boards, and personal watercraft, and some areas for swimming. Conditions are often perfect in the spring and early summer for sailing, with a strong wind, calm water surface, and warm temperatures, yet it is extremely rare to see anyone practicing the sport. Although there are no beaches at Lake Red Bluff, there is a large grassy area on the west bank where people sunbathe and swim. This is the only practical spot for wading and swimming because water temperatures are much colder out on the main lake body.

Below the Red Bluff Diversion Dam, there is a great stretch of easy canoeing water, Class I all the way. Woodson Bridge State Recreation Area is the most popular take-out. The river is wide, cool, and bordered by riparian habitat. This is an outstanding opportunity to cool off on a typical hot summer day in the north valley.

Commercial outfitters do not offer rafting trips here. Instead, this is a do-it-yourself special, just plop in and enjoy the scenery and the wildlife. When giant blue herons lift off before your eyes, they look almost prehistoric. Other common sights are turtles sunning on rocks,

hawks soaring overhead, and deer venturing out to the riverbanks. If you're lucky, you might see an eagle or even a wild turkey.

Water flows often run at 14,000 to 16,000 cubic feet per second in the summer months, a good, strong rate that makes your paddle strokes seem quite powerful. Most people take their time, with more floating than paddling, but those aboard eventually end up paddling a bit anyway. Either way you go, you gain a personal glimpse of one of the valley's least-visited paradises.

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 on multi-day canoe and kayak trips, with a choice of many large sand bars set on the inside of pretzel 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.

Access: There are four boat ramps. Rafters should put in at the Red Bluff Diversion Dam and float down to Woodson Bridge State Recreation Area.

- Bend Bridge Public Ramp: Take I-5 to the exit for Jellys Ferry Road (north of Red Bluff). Take that exit and turn east on Jellys Ferry Road. Continue to the signed turn off for Bend RV Park. A two-lane paved ramp is located just behind the park.

- Red Bluff Diversion Dam: Take I-5 to Red Bluff and the exit for Susanville-Highway 36. Take that exit and drive east a short distance to Sale Lane. Turn right and drive to the end of the road. A paved ramp is available that provides access downstream of the Diversion Dam.
- Red Bluff River Park: Take I-5 to Red Bluff and the exit for central Red Bluff. Take that exit west and drive to Main Street. Turn left on Main Street and drive four blocks to the Red Bluff River Park entrance. Turn left into the park and continue through the parking area to the paved ramp. Restrooms are available.

- Woodson Bridge State Recreation Area: Take I-5 to Corning and the exit for South



Avenue. Take that exit and turn east and drive six miles to the entrance on the right (immediately after crossing the river). Turn right and follow the signs to the paved boat ramp.

Facilities, fees: Several campgrounds and RV parks are located nearby. They include Bend RV 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, wake boarding, personal watercraft, canoes, kayaks, inflatables, and sailboarding are permitted. Swimming is permitted at Lake Red Bluff. Life preservers are required for all users with inflatables.

Directions: The river is accessible off roads that join with I-5 near Red Bluff, Corning, and Orland. Highway 45 parallels the river south-east of Orland, and direct access is available to Colusa.

Contact: Lake Red Bluff Recreation Area, 530/527-2813; Woodson Bridge State Recreation Area, 530/839-2112, website: www.parks.ca.gov (click on Find A Park); Shasta Cascade Wonderland Association, 530/565-7500 or 800/474-2782, website: www.shastascascade.org; Kittle's Outdoor Sport Company (kayak rentals/shuttles), 530/458-4868, website: www.kittlesoutdoor.com; Driftwood RV (rentals, shuttles, camping), 530/384-2851, website: www.campdriftwoodrvpark.com; Hidden Harbor RV, 530/384-1800.

2 BLACK BUTTE LAKE



near Orland

Map 51, page 148

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 advan-

Rating: 6

tage 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 mostly 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 square 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 water-skiing, wake boarding, and powerboating, as well as for fishing for crappie, a prize that attracts many anglers.

The best launch points for sailboarding 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.

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, water-skiing, wake boarding, personal watercraft, sailing, and sailboarding 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 eight miles to Road 206. Turn left and drive three miles to the camp entrance 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, Black Butte Lake, 530/865-4781.

3 PARADISE LAKE



near Paradise

Map 52, page 149

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 sailboard. There's no campground, yet they charge a day-use fee. Car-top boats are strictly regulated by lake officials; only "approved" craft (that is, approved by them) are permitted. Kayaks cannot be completely self-enclosed, inflatables must have two outside air chambers, and all boaters must wear life jackets at all times.

Despite all the can'ts, Paradise Lake has earned a fair rating. Set at 3,000 feet in the Mount Lassen foothills, the pretty lake is in the transition zone where the valley woodlands give way to alpine country. With all the boating restrictions, the lake is primarily visited by trout fishermen. There is also a pretty picnic area, and you can plank in a car-top boat.

You get quiet water that is ideal for small paddle-powered boats. In early summer this can be the perfect place to bring your canoe and spend a few calm, relaxing hours.

Rating: 5

Access: A paved boat ramp is located across from the picnic area on North Lake Road. **Facilities, fees:** A day-use picnic area is provided. Supplies can be obtained in Paradise. Fees are charged for day use and boat launching.

Water sports, restrictions: Rowboats, canoes, kayaks (no self-enclosed kayaks), and inflatables (must have at least two air chambers) are permitted. No motors. No swimming, sailboarding, or water-contact sports. Life jackets must be worn at all times when on water. No dogs.

Directions: From Chico, drive south on Highway 99 to Skyway Road. Turn east on Skyway Road and drive 10 miles to Paradise and Coutolenc Road. Turn right on Coutolenc Road and drive 3.5 miles to the lake entrance.

Contact: Paradise Lake Irrigation District, 530/873-1040, website: www.paradiseirrigation.com.

4 THERMALITO FOREBAY



near Oroville in Lake Oroville State Recreation Area

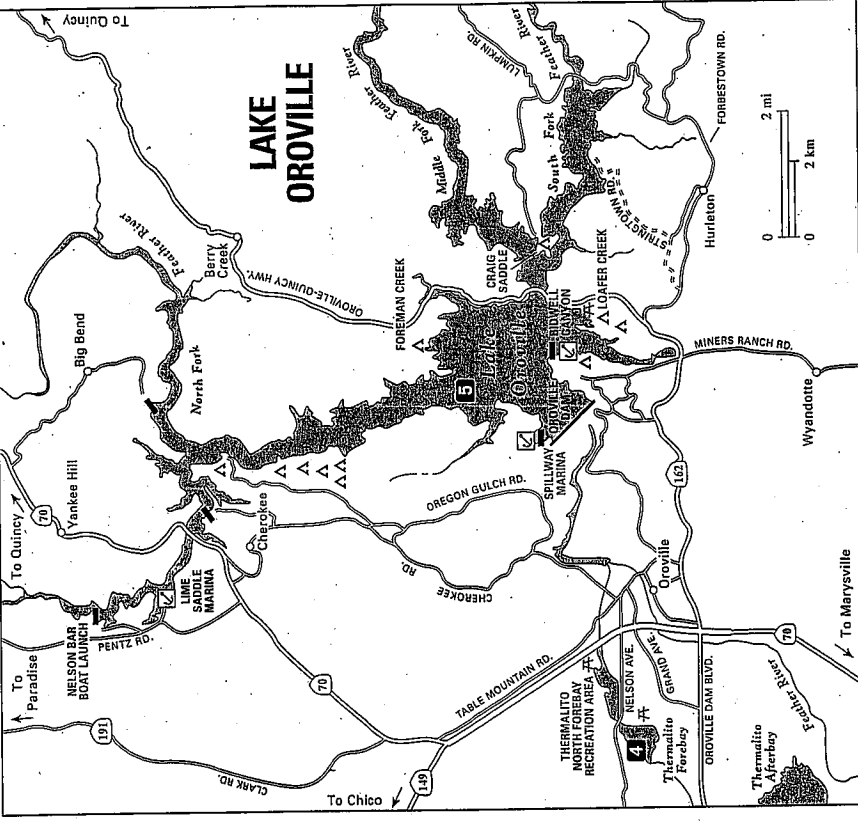
Map 52, page 149

With so many boaters, campers, and anglers heading to nearby Lake Oroville (see next listing), 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 sailing. Only non-motorized 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





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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 sailboarding 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 North Forebay: Take Highway 70 to Oroville and continue two miles to Garden Drive. Turn left on Garden Drive and drive .5 mile to the picnic area.

To 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; Huntington's Sportsman's Store, 530/534-8000, website: www.huntingtons.com.



LAKE OROVILLE

Rating: 9

near Oroville

Map 52 Page 149

Lake Oroville is a huge, man-made reservoir with extensive lake arms and a large central 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 it 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 water-skiing. Water temperatures in June can be 5 to 10 degrees 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 water-skiing 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

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, Shaasta, and many others are now loaded with bass.

The DFG has advanced this success at Oroville by creating a slot limit, that is, that all bass 12 to 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: 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 approximately seven miles to Kelly Ridge Road. Turn left and continue to Arroyo Road. Turn right and continue to the marina and the paved boat ramp. Houseboats, ski boats, fishing boats, and pontoon boats are available for rent.
- Lime Saddle: From Oroville, take Highway 70 and drive nine miles north to Pentz Road.



6 BUCKS LAKE



Rating: 10

near Quincy in Plumas National Forest

Map 52, Page 149

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

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 all water sports. Campers tend to congregate on the lake's northwest side, where the less expensive Forest Service campgrounds are located; the marina, cabins, and developed facilities are all on the east side. The campsites are pretty and wooded, some with views of the lake, and provide excellent shoreline access. Trout fishing is outstanding here; it's one of the state's top mountain lakes for trout. In addition to good numbers of rainbow trout, there are also occasionally huge rainbow, brown, and mackinaw trout.

When the water levels are high, the lake has a gemlike beauty, its deep blue-green surface contrasted with a forested backdrop and an azure summer sky. But even when the water is low, there are benefits, as several beaches become accessible. In high water, only the beach at the Sandy Point Day-Use Area is available.

The lake freezes over every winter, and snow buries 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 powerboaters 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 sailboarding, 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, wake boarding, and personal watercraft are permitted. Swimming and sailboarding are allowed; the best beach is at the Sandy Point Day-Use Area on the northwest end of the lake.

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

Contact: Plumas National Forest, Mount Hough Ranger District, 530/283-0555; Bucks Lake Lodge, 530/283-2262 or 800/481-2825; Bucks Lake Marina, 530/283-4243; Bucks Lakeshore Resort, 530/283-6900, website: www.buckslake.com; Timberline Inn, 530/283-9667 or 800/481-28925.

7 MIDDLE FORK FEATHER RIVER



Rating: 4
northeast of Oroville in Plumas National Forest

Map 52, Page 149

The Middle Fork Feather River is one of the wildest streams in Northern California. Cut-

ting through the bottom of a deep canyon, it is beautiful and free-flowing, remote and untamed. Most people who venture here are hikers and backpackers taking steep, butt-kick 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.
- Millsap 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 .5 mile to Forest Service Road 22N62 (Milsap Bar Road). Turn left and drive (steep and rough) to Middle Fork Feather and the Middle Fork Bridge. Access is available directly off the road. Other sections of the Middle Fork Feather are also available by hiking or driving to other trailheads and access points.

• **Blairdsden:** Drive north on Highway 70/89. Access is available off the highway between the towns of Blairdsden and Sloat, and off trails that junction with it.

Facilities, fees: Primitive campgrounds with vault toilets are available nearby. No drinking water. Garbage must be packed out. Supplies can be obtained in Oroville and Blairdsden. Access is free. Rafting permits are 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 Access, above.

Contact: Plumas National Forest, Feather River Ranger District, 530/534-6500; Sportsmen's Den, 530/283-2733. For a map, send \$6 to U.S. Forest Service, Attn: Map Sales, P.O. Box 587, Camino, CA 95709, 530/647-5390, fax 530/647-5389, website: www.fs.fed.us/r5/forests. Major credit cards accepted.

BULLARDS BAR RESERVOIR

Rating: 10

near Camptonville in Tahoe National Forest

Map 5.2, page 149

Bullards Bar Reservoir shines like a silver dollar 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 of shoreline, it covers a lot of territory. Not only

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, water-skiing, wake boarding, personal watercraft, sailing, sailboarding, and swimming are permitted. The best swimming areas are in coves accessible only by boat.

Directions: To Emerald Cove Marina: From Marysville, drive northeast on Highway 20 to Marysville Road. Turn north at Marysville Road (signed Bullards Bar Reservoir) and drive about 10 miles to Old 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: Emerald Cove Resort and Marina, 530/692-3200; Yuba County Water Agency, 530/741-6278; Tahoe National Forest, North Yuba Ranger Station, 530/288-3231. General information website: www.bullardsbar.com.

SOUTH FORK YUBA RIVER

Rating: 6

east of Nevada City in Tahoe National Forest

Map 5.2, page 149

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 panning 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 Humbung Creek must be portaged. Again, this is rafted 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.

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: See directions for swimming areas above.

Directions: From Sacramento, take I-80 east to Emigrant Gap to Indian Springs Road and continue to the exits for 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.



Contact: Tahoe National Forest, Nevada City Ranger District, 530/265-4531, fax 530/478-6109; Bureau of Land Management, Folsom Field Office, 916/985-4474.

10 COLLINS LAKE



Rating: 9
north of Marysville in Collins Lake Recreation Area

Map 52, page 149

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

Set at 1,200 feet in the foothill country of Yuba County, Collins Lake is a pretty spot that's ideal for the camper/boater. The lake covers 1,000 acres and has 12 miles of shoreline. Temperatures are warm from March through October, and in the summer visitors enjoy day after day of hot weather and cool water. In late spring, when the foothills are green and the lake sparkles, the area can almost appear to be glowing.

A 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 sailboarding, conditions for this sport are fair 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 will often camp here, then drive 20 minutes up the road to Bullards Bar for the day.

Are you starting to think that this quality

operation must attract a good number of people? 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, RV dump station, coin-operated showers, volleyball, three group picnic areas, 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 sailboarding are permitted. Water-skiing and wake boarding 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 for 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.

Contact: Collins Lake Recreation Area, 530/692-1600 or 800/286-0576, website: www.collinslake.com.

11 YUBA RIVER



Rating: 5
from Browns Valley to Marysville

Map 52, page 149

The Yuba is one of California's great rivers

for inner tubing. Unfortunately, that means that it is not so great for other water sports.

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

That makes it perfect for inner tubing. Tubers should be aware that they are advised to wear life jackets, that access here is difficult, and that if you hit the river on a rare day when water releases are up out of Bullards Bar, the flows of the Yuba can be swift. Several sandbars along the river make the best spots for swimming, but they are inaccessible by car. Some tubers will float to these spots, set up 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 boats larger than canoes or kayaks, and even kayakers must occasionally get out and portage their boats to deeper water. Another pain is that it is necessary to take out above Daguerra Dam, where you portage, and then put in below the dam and continue downstream to Marysville.

The Yuba is used mostly by locals. Upstream, difficult access is a perennial problem, with the river bordered for many miles by private property—the landowners treat it as their personal river to be used as they see fit, not a public resource available to all.

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. Note: 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. Access is free.

Water sports, restrictions: Rafting, canoe-

ing, 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 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: Marysville Parks and Recreation, Yuba County, 530/741-6666, website: www.marysville.ca.us; Yuba City, website: www.yubacity.net; Johnson's Tackle, Yuba City, 530/674-1912. River Guide Service, 530/673-5716, website: <http://odoc.water.ca.gov>.

12 ENGLEBRIGHT LAKE



Rating: 10
northeast of Marysville

Map 52, page 149

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 water-skiing 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 water-skiing 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 marinas, 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. Day use is free. Fees are charged for day use, boat launching, and camping.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, water-skiing, wake boarding, personal watercraft, sailing, and sailboarding 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, drive north on Highway 49 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 three miles to a fork. 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, 530/639-2342, website: www.engebrightlake.com; Skipper's Cove, 530/639-2272.

13 FEATHER RIVER



from Marysville to Sacramento

Map 52, page 149

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, sailboarders, 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 Shanghai 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.

Facilities, fees: Boating services are available at Verona Marina. Riverfront Park has picnic facilities, drinking water, and restrooms with flush toilets. Campgrounds and lodging 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, water-skiing, personal watercraft, drift boats, canoes, kayaks, sailboarding, 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 Verona: 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, drive east on Highway 20 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: Yuba City Parks and Recreation, 530/822-6550, website: www.yubacity.net, Verona Marina, 916/927-8387, City of Marysville, 530/741-6666, website: www.marysville.ca.us; River Guide Service, 530/673-5716, website: <http://ctec.water.ca.gov>.

14 CAMP FAR WEST RESERVOIR



Rating: 9

east of Marysville

Map 52, page 149

Camp Far West is one of the best lakes for bass 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 with 29 miles of shoreline, and is an outstanding destination for boating and water sports, with warm water, hot weather, and plenty of room 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 can get out-

rageous on the weekends when a few impromptu boater parties get under way with lots of liquids and suntan lotion flowing almost as fast as the jet boats. In fact, jet boat races are held here during the summer.

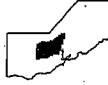
The northern side of the lake, on the other hand, tends to be quieter, a setting for more family-oriented activities. This is also where the lake's best day-use area is located. Water-skiers should note that there is a large rocky area on the northwest side of the lake that should be avoided when the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

Because the lake is used to store water for agricultural use, by late summer the levels can fall 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 for conditions. The lake typically drops up to 36 feet by fall. When full in spring, the lake can be 200 feet deeper than in early winter.

Use is moderate on summer weekends, high on three-day holidays, and light during the week. **Access:** There are two paved boat ramps, one 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, drinking water, and picnic areas are available. On the north shore, a boat dock with fishing boats, 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, water-skiing, wake boarding, personal watercraft, sailing, and sailboarding are permitted. A large day-use and swimming area is provided on the north side near the campground; a smaller swimming area is available on the lake's south side. **Directions:** From I-80 in Sacramento, drive east toward Roseville to Highway 65. Turn north on Highway 65 and drive to the town of Sheridan and Rio Oso Road. Turn right on Rio Oso Road and drive about five miles



Connection, 530/622-6446 or 800/536-7238, website: www.whitewaterconnection.com; Whitewater Excitement, 530/888-6515 or 800/750-2386, website: www.whitewaterexcitement.com; Whitewater Voyages, 510/222-5994 or 800/488-7238, website: www.whitewatervoyages.com; Wilderness Adventures, 530/926-6282 or 800/323-7238, website: www.wildrivetrrips.com; Whitewater Expedition & Tours (WET), 916/451-3241, website: www.raftwet.com.

Rentals: California Canoe & Kayak, Rancho Cordova, 916/353-1880; Sierra Outdoor Center, Auburn, 530/885-1844. Rentals are not available in El Dorado County because of county ordinance.

21 BIG RESERVOIR/MORNING STAR LAKE



Rating: 6

northeast of Auburn in Tahoe National Forest

Map 5, page 150

Beautiful Big Reservoir—also called Morning Star Lake—is a 70-acre freshwater pocket surrounded by forest and set at an elevation of 4,100 feet. In addition to being quite pretty, it is also quiet because no gas-powered motors are permitted.

A picnic area is provided at the lake's edge, and a campground is available nearby. With all these features, this little lake is becoming a favorite for families. Many families find that the lake is easily accessible, located a relatively short distance from Sacramento.

Another wonderful aspect of Big Reservoir is that conditions are about perfect for sailing. A breeze kicks in around 9 A.M. and continues into the late afternoon, only to pick up again around 7 P.M. In addition, you can swim anywhere on the lake because the entire shoreline is sandy and gently sloped. The lake is stocked with rainbow trout.

Morning Star Resort offers a developed camp-

ground with showers. The lake is very popular on summer weekends and the campground fills quickly for Friday and Saturday nights.

Access: A primitive boat ramp is available next to the picnic area.

Facilities, fees: A campground, vault toilets, drinking water, and picnic area are available. Restrooms with showers, a small store, and pedal boat rentals are available at Morning Star Lake Resort. Supplies can be obtained in Foresthill. A day-use parking fee is charged.

Water sports, restrictions: Gas-powered motors are not permitted on the lake. Sailboarding is allowed. Swimming beaches are provided, but you can swim anywhere along the shoreline.

Directions: From Sacramento, drive east on I-80 to the north end of Auburn and the Foresthill Road exit. Take that exit and drive east for 20 miles to Foresthill. Drive through Foresthill (road changes to Foresthill Divide Road) and continue for eight miles to Sugar Pine Road. Turn left and drive about 4.5 miles to Forest Road 24 (signed Big Reservoir). Bear right on Forest Road 24 and drive about 1.5 miles to the campground and lake entrance road on the right.

Contact: Tahoe National Forest, Foresthill Ranger District, 530/367-2224, fax 530/367-2992; Morning Star Lake Resort, 530/367-2129.

22 SACRAMENTO RIVER (COLUSA TO SACRAMENTO)



in the Sacramento Valley

Map 5, page 151

When I canoed the entire Sacramento River, this particular section left the most lasting memories, both good and bad.

Near Colusa the river is quite beautiful as it winds its way southward. The banks are lined with trees, and there are some deep holes, gravel bars, and good fishing for salmon in the fall and for striped bass in the spring. Most of the boaters are there to go fishing. You will occa-

sionally see a water-skier or personal watercraft 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 water-skiing 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 swiftly, 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 Freeport. 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 rip-rapped 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, rip-rapped 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 530/458-4927.

- 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. Or: From I-5 north of Sacramento, take the Garden Highway north and drive approximately nine miles to Verona. 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. Sacramento County Parks, 916/875-6672.

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

• Freepoint Marina: From I-5 south of Sacramento, take the Pocket Road exit. Turn left on Pocket Road and drive to Freepoint Boulevard. Turn right and drive .74 miles to the marina, 916/665-1555.

• Clarksburg Flat: From I-5 south of Sacramento, take the Pocket Road exit. Turn left on Pocket Road and drive to Freepoint Boulevard. Turn right and drive about one mile (until you come to a bridge). Turn right, cross the bridge, make an immediate left, and follow the road through Clarksburg. The paved ramp is located about 2.5 miles south of Clarksburg on the left side.

Facilities, fees: Discovery Park has picnic facilities available. Campgrounds, lodging, and supplies are available in the Sacramento area. Fees for day use and camping are at state parks. Boat launching fees charged at all private marinas. **Water sports, restrictions:** Powerboats, water skiing, wake boarding, and personal watercraft are permitted. Sailboarding 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 northern reaches. Sandy beaches are available at the 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 posted near boat ramps and marinas.

Directions: Access is available off roads that junction with I-5.

Contact: Sacramento Chamber of Commerce, 916/552-6800; Sacramento County Department

of Regional Parks, Recreation & Open Space, 916/875-6961, website: www.sacparks.net.

Services: Sherwood Harbor Marina, 916/371-3471, website: www.sherwoodharbor.com; Freepoint Bait, Sacramento, 916/665-1935; Broadway Bait, Sacramento, 916/448-6338; Kittle's Outdoor Sport Company, 530/458-4868, website: www.kittlesoutdoor.com.

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

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

23 FOLSOM LAKE



Rating: 9

northeast of Sacramento in Folsom Lake State Recreation Area

Map 54, pages 151

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, water-skiing, 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 seem to fill overnight.

This is an extremely popular (and populat-

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 water-skiing, 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 five paved boat ramps:

• 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 multi-lane paved ramp is available.

• Folsom Lake Marina: 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 Green Valley Road (road name changes from Blue Ravine to Green Valley). Continue straight for approximately two miles to the signed turn for Folsom Lake Marina on the left. Take that turn and drive to marina. A multi-lane paved boat ramp is available.

• Granite Bay: Take I-80 east of Sacramento

to the exit for Douglas Boulevard. Take that exit to Douglas Boulevard East and drive to where it dead-ends at Granite Bay. A multi-lane paved ramp is available.

• Peninsula: Take I-80 east of Sacramento to Auburn and the exit for Maple Street. Take that exit, stay right on Maple Street and drive south (it turns into Auburn-Folsom Road) four miles to Rattlesnake Bar Road. Turn right on Rattlesnake Bar Road and drive 2.5 miles to the entrance. A paved ramp is available.

• Rattlesnake Bar: From Placerville, drive north on Highway 49 (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, wake boarding, personal watercraft, sailing, and sailboarding are permitted. Designated swimming beaches are available at Granite Bay and Beals Point. Swimming is permitted anywhere along the shoreline except at boat launching areas. For boat-in camping, boats must be registered at either the marina off Green Valley Road or Granite Bay.

Directions: From Sacramento, drive east on U.S. 50 to the Folsom Boulevard exit. Turn left at the stop sign and continue on Folsom Boulevard for 3.5 miles, following the road as it curves onto Leidesdorff Street. Head east on Leidesdorff Street for .5 mile, dead-ending into Riley Street. Turn left onto Riley Street and proceed over the bridge to Folsom-Auburn Road. Turn right on Folsom-Auburn Road and



drive north for 3.5 miles to the park entrance on the right.

Contact: Folsom Lake State Recreation Area, 916/988-0205; Folsom Lake Marina, 916/933-1300; Fran and Eddy's Sports Den, Rancho Cordova, 916/363-6885; Folsom Lake Boat Rentals, 916/223-8129, website: www.folsomlakerecreations.com.

24 LAKE NATOMA



east of Sacramento at Nimbus Dam

Map 5:4, page 151

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

This narrow lake covers 500 acres with 13 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. Water-skiing 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 sailboarding 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 campers, swimmers, and picnickers. Use is fairly heavy in the summer.

Access: Boat ramps for launching small boats are located at the California State University System (CSUS) Aquatic Center on the lake's south end, and at Negro Bar on the west end. **Facilities, fees:** Restrooms with flush toilets and drinking water are available. Rowboats, sailboats, and sailboards are available for rent. CSUS Aquatic Center offers sailing and sail-

boarding classes. Fees are charged for day use and boat launching.

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

Directions: From I-80 north of Sacramento, take the Douglas Boulevard exit and head east for five miles to Auburn-Folsom Road. Turn right on Auburn-Folsom Road and drive south for six miles until the road dead-ends into Greenback Lane. Turn right on Greenback Lane and merge immediately into the left lane. The park entrance is approximately .2 mile on the left. **Contact:** Folsom Lake State Recreation Area, 916/988-0205, website: www.ca.parks.gov (click on Find A Park); CSUS Aquatic Center, 916/985-7239, website: www.csusaquaticcenter.com; Fran & Eddy's, 916/363-6885.

25 LOWER AMERICAN RIVER



from Nimbus Dam to Sacramento

Map 5:4, page 151

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 ripped 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 got drunk, 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 enter-

ing 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: By boat, the best and most easily accessible spot is at the confluence of the Sacramento and American Rivers at Discovery Park in Sacramento. Several boat ramps and rafting put-ins and take-outs are available:

• **Ancel Hoffman Park:** From I-80 at Sacramento, drive to the exit for Arden Way. Take that exit east and drive 4.5 miles to Fair Oaks Boulevard. Turn left on Fair Oaks Boulevard and drive 1.5 miles to Oak Avenue. Turn right and drive to California Avenue. Turn left and drive .5 mile to Tarshes Drive. Turn right and drive west into Ancel Hoffman Park. No boat

ramp. Hand-launching is difficult, and the former put-in area is washed out.

• **Discovery Park:** From I-5 at Sacramento, drive to the exit for the Garden Highway. Take that exit, turn left, and drive to Natomas Park Drive. Turn right and drive to the signed park entrance. A paved ramp is available.

• **Goethe Park:** From Sacramento, take U.S. 50 east to the exit for Bradshaw Road. Take that exit, turn north, and drive to Folsom Boulevard. Turn right on Folsom Boulevard and drive about one mile to Rod Beaudry Drive. Turn left on Rod Beaudry Drive and continue to Goethe Park. No boat ramp. Hand-launching only.

• **Harrington Way:** From I-80 in Sacramento, take the Arden Way exit. Turn west on Arden Way and drive 4.5 miles to Kingsford Drive. Turn right on Kingsford Drive (which turns into Harrington Way) and continue to the access. No boat ramp. Hand-launching only.

• **Howe Avenue:** From Sacramento, take U.S. 50 east to the exit for Howe Avenue. Take that exit, turn north, and drive to La Riviera Drive. Turn right on La Riviera Drive and drive to the sign for the river access.

• **Mira Del Rio:** From Sacramento, take U.S. 50 east to the exit for Bradshaw Road. Take that exit, turn north, and drive to Folsom Boulevard. Turn left and drive a short distance west to Butterfield Way. Turn right and drive to Stoughton Way. Turn right and drive to Mira Del Rio Drive. Turn left on Mira Del Rio, and then immediately turn right for river access. No boat ramp is available. Some boats are launched from the gravel bar, but difficult for two-wheel drive vehicles or four-wheel-drive vehicles without significant tires.

• **Rossmoor Drive:** From Sacramento, take U.S. 50 east to the exit for Sunrise Boulevard. Take that exit, turn north and drive .5 mile to Coloma Road. Turn left turn on Coloma Road and drive 1.5 miles west to Rossmoor Drive. Turn right on Rossmoor Drive and continue into the park to the car-top boat ramp at the end of the road.



• **Sailor Bar:** From Sacramento, take U.S. 50 east to the exit for Hazel Avenue exit. Take that exit, turn north and drive 1.5 miles to Winding Way. Turn left and drive about .5 mile to Illinois Avenue. Turn left on Illinois Avenue and continue to the end of the road. A paved boat ramp was installed in 2002.

• **Upper Sunrise:** From Sacramento, take U.S. 50 east to the exit for Sunrise Boulevard. Take that exit, turn north, and drive 1.5 miles to South Bridge Street. Turn right and drive to the car-top boat ramp. A paved launch for hand-launched boats was installed in 2003.

• **Watt Avenue South:** From Sacramento, take U.S. 50 east to the exit for Watt Avenue. Take that exit and drive about .5 mile to the sign for the launching area. A paved ramp is available for launching small boats.

• **Lower Sunrise:** From Sacramento, take U.S. 50 east to the exit for Sunrise Boulevard. Take that exit, turn north and drive 1.5 miles to South Bridge Street. Turn right on South Bridge Street and drive past the Upper Sunrise turnout and continue (looping around) to Lower Sunrise (located just past the bridge). No ramp is available.

• **Sacramento Bar:** From Sacramento, take U.S. 50 east to the exit for Sunrise Boulevard. Take that exit, turn north and drive two miles to Fair Oaks Boulevard. Turn left and drive a short distance to Pennsylvania Avenue. Turn left on Pennsylvania Avenue and drive .5 mile to the river. No ramp is available.

Facilities, fees: Campgrounds, lodging, and supplies are available in the Sacramento area. Restrooms with flush toilets, drinking water, picnic areas, and barbecues are provided at many river access points. Fees are charged for day use, boat launching, and camping. Rafting permits are not required.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats (not advised), drift boats, rafts, canoes, kayaks, and inflatables are permitted. A 5-mph speed limit is strictly enforced. Boating, swimming, and rafting are prohibited from Nimbus Dam to 150 feet downstream. Swimming is allowed at

Facilities, fees: A campground and a picnic area are provided. Lodging and supplies can be obtained in Sacramento. A fee is charged for day use.

Water sports, restrictions: Gas-powered motors and live bait are not allowed on the lake. Sailing and boarding is permitted. A large swimming beach is available near the picnic area. The park is open for day use only, closing each day at sunset.

Directions: From Sacramento drive about 12 miles south on Highway 99. Take the Highway 104 exit and drive 12 miles east on Highway 104/Twin Cities Road. Turn right at the signed entrance for Rancho Seco Recreation Area and continue to the lake.

Contact: Rancho Seco Recreation Area, 209/748-2318

27 CLEMENTINE LAKE



Rating: 10
northeast of Auburn on the American River
Map page 152
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 quite narrow, set in a dammed-up gorge on the North Fork American River at an elevation of 1,200 feet. It is ideal for the boater, with boat-in campsites, great boat-in swimming beaches, and a 25-boat limit. The water is warm in summer, great for water sports.

Highlights include very pretty scenery, easy access from Auburn, and the boat-in campgrounds, which provide visitors with a wilderness-like atmosphere. It is extremely popular with water-skiers and locals from the Auburn area. Although no stocking program is in effect, there's fishing for trout and smallmouth bass in season.

It is critical to understand the ramifications of the 25-boat quota implemented by the Auburn State Recreation Area. What it all boils

down to is that boaters who are camping at the lake get 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 is a better bet for day use; if you're scheduling a trip for a summer weekend, you should reserve a campsite.

The lake is not stocked. It instead provides a self-perpetuating fishery for trout in spring and smallmouth bass in the summer.

No services are offered at the lake, except for gasoline, a plus.

Shoreline access is virtually impossible without a boat. But with a boat? Heh, heh, what a payoff!

Access: There's a paved ramp at the end of the access road.

Facilities, fees: Boat-in campgrounds, floating 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, wake boarding, and personal watercraft are permitted. The lake is too small for sailing and sailboarding. Swimming areas are available in front of the campgrounds; access is limited to boats only.

Directions: To boat-in camps: From I-80 at Auburn, take the Foresthill exit on to Foresthill Road. Continue northeast on Foresthill Road for 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.

28 SOUTH FORK AMERICAN RIVER



Rating: 10

near Placerville in Eldorado National Forest
Map page 152
Behold, the most popular rafting river in the Western United States. For newcomers to the

most of the parks listed above and at several other access points along the river.

Directions: From Sacramento, take U.S. 50 to Rancho Cordova or Fair Oaks. More specific directions are listed for specific access areas above.

Contact: Sacramento Chamber of Commerce, 916/552-6800, website: www.sacramentoconv.org; Sacramento County Parks, 916/875-6961, park rangers 916/875-6672, website: www.sacparks.net; U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, 800/742-9474, website: www.mp.usbr.gov.

Guided rafting trips: California Canoe & Kayak, 916/353-1880 or 800/366-9804. Raft or kayak rentals: American River Recreation, 916/635-6400, website: www.raftrentals.com; River Rat, 916/966-5777, website: www.river-rat.com.

Flyfishing: Specialities, Citrus Heights, 916/722-1055.

26 RANCHO SECO LAKE



Rating: 5
southeast of Sacramento in Rancho Seco Recreation Area

Map page 151
Looking for the ideal spot for a family picnic? Here it is. Rancho Seco Lake (160 acres) is part of the 400-acre Rancho Seco Recreation Area and offers a boat ramp (no motors permitted), picnic area, and several docks. Because no motors are allowed, you get quiet water, fair fishing, and good access and picnic sites. Bring the family.

There is a large, sandy swimming area, a pleasant picnic site, and a campground for tents or RVs. In addition there are trails for hiking, horseback riding, and bicycling, as well as several fishing docks along the shore.

This lake is also popular with sailboarders. Every afternoon from spring through summer, you will usually see about a dozen people on sailboards catching the afternoon breeze.

Access: A boat ramp is located near the picnic area.



Contact: Sly Park Recreation Area, El Dorado Irrigation District, 530/644-2545, website: www.eid.org.

30 LAKE AMADOR



Rating: 5

northeast of Stockton

Map 5.5, page 152

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, Pardee, New Hogan, and Amador—it is Amador and Pardee that have enacted the most restrictive boating rules to guarantee that anglers have quiet water and the best chances for success. That means no water-skiing, personal watercraft, or sailboarding. 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, water slide, 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 . . . 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, RV dump station, fishing supplies (including bait and tackle), snack bar, convenience store, propane gas, 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, sailing, and sailboarding are permitted. A 5-mph speed limit is enforced within the coves and around the marina. No water-skiing, wake boarding, or personal watercraft. A swimming pond is available near the campgrounds.

Directions: From Stockton, turn east on Highway 88 and drive 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 Lake Amador Drive. Turn right and drive over the dam to the campground office.

Contact: Lake Amador Recreation Area, 209/274-4739, website: www.lakeamador.com.

31 PARDEE LAKE



Rating: 5

northeast of Stockton

Map 5.5, page 152

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 lake is full, the hills are green, and the wildflowers are blooming. And one other thing: The trout are biting then, too.

Like Amador, this lake was designed exclusively for fishing. Water-skiing, swimming, and sailboarding are prohibited. There is a 25-mph speed limit and most boaters heed a "common courtesy" rule, making the lake safe and com-

fortable. That includes for those with small, low-speed craft, such as canoes or small fishing boats. Pardee has full facilities for boating, even a marina, and in spring this is the ideal destination for the camper/boater/angler.

The lake opens each year in February, often kicking right off with good trolling for trout 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 turn to bass, both smallmouth and 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, which tends to be deluged with throngs of youngsters and their parents.

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 fishing boats and pontoon boats for rent, boat moorings, and boat storage. A campground, drinking water, restrooms, showers (in the RV section of the campground), RV dump station, fish-cleaning station, coin laundry, convenience store, propane gas, RV storage, wading pool, and a seasonal swimming pool are available. Fees are charged for day use, camping, fishing permits, boat launching, and float tubes.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, canoes, and float tubes are permitted. No body contact with the water is permitted. No water-skiing, wake boarding, personal watercraft, and swimming. Those with float tubes must wear waders. A large swimming pool is available at the campground.

Directions: From Stockton, drive east on Highway 88 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 Huges Vista. Turn right and drive for three miles to Stony Creek Road on the left. Turn

left and drive a mile to the campground on the right.

Contact: Pardee Recreation Area, 209/772-1472, website: www.lakepardee.com.

32 MOKELUMNE RIVER



Rating: 7

northeast of Stockton

Map 5.5, page 152

This short, three-mile stretch of the Mokelumne River provides a window to the way the entire river once was. It's a great spot for inner 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 Gold Rush towns 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 below). 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, drive east on Highway 88/12 for 24 miles to the town of Clements. Continue on Highway 88 past Lake Camanche and Pardee Lake to Martell and Highway 49/88. Turn south on Highway 49/88 and drive through Jackson and continue to Electra Road. Turn left on Electra Road and drive east. The river is accessible off this road for four miles upstream to the Electra powerhouse.

Contact: Bureau of Land Management, Folsom Field Office, 916/985-4474; PG&E Land Projects, 916/386-5164, website: www.pge.com/recreation.

33 LAKE TABEAUD



near Jackson

Map 5.5, page 152

Rating: 4

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 "Fay-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 sailboarding 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 sailboarding.

Directions: From Stockton, drive east on Highway 88 to Highway 49. Turn south on Highway 49 and drive to Jackson. From Jackson, continue south on Highway 49 for .5 mile to Clinton Road. Turn left on Clinton Road and drive east for 5.1 miles to Tabaud Road. Bear right on Tabaud Road and continue two miles to the lake.

Contact: PG&E Land Projects, 916/386-5164, website: www.pge.com/recreation.

34 LAKE CAMANCHE



northeast of Stockton

Map 5.5, page 152

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, water-skiing, swimming, and sailboarding—with enough space for everyone and rules to keep user conflicts to a minimum.

The water is clear and warm, resorts and campgrounds are available at both the north and south ends of the lake, and as you might expect, visitor turnout is high, especially during the peak months in late spring and early summer. There are few trees here, with shoreline largely exposed.

All boating is allowed on the lake, but fast boats and personal watercraft are prohibited in the narrows on the northern end.

Sailboarding conditions at Lake Camanche are excellent because the afternoons are breezy just about every day. Yet there is hardly any sailboarding activity.

The swimming is also good here. Most people sunbathe for a spell, then jump into the lake to cool off and have a little fun. Although there are no designated swimming beaches, much of the shoreline has suitable access; the

two most popular spots are at Campers Cove on the north shore and the area near the snack bar on the south shore.

More than anything, though, this is a lake for fishing. In the spring and summer, it provides outstanding fishing for trout, bass, king salmon, crappie, bluegill, and catfish. Because of extensive structure in the lake, it is well known as a premier bass lake.

Access: Multilane paved boat ramps are available at both recreation areas (see Directions, below).

Facilities, fees: Full-service marinas offer fishing boat and pontoon boat rentals, mooring and boat storage. Lodging, campgrounds, restrooms, showers, RV dump station, trout pond, coin laundry, snack bar, and a convenience store are available. Restaurants are available nearby. Fees are charged for day use, boat launching, fishing permit, and camping.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, water-skiing, wake boarding, personal watercraft, canoeing, kayaks, and inflatables are permitted. No water-skiing, wake boarding, or personal watercraft permitted in the narrows on the northern end of the lake. Sailboarding, sailing, and swimming are permitted. There are no designated beach areas, but almost all of the shoreline is rocky or sandy and gradually sloped. **Directions:** To North Shore: From Stockton, drive east on Highway 88 for 24 miles to Clements. Just east of Clements, bear left on Highway 88 and drive six miles to Camanche Parkway. Turn right and drive seven miles to the Camanche North Shore entrance gate.

To South Shore: From Stockton, drive east on Highway 88 for 24 miles to Clements. Just east of Clements, continue east on Highway 12 and drive six miles to South Camanche Parkway. Turn left and drive six miles to the entrance gate.

Contact: Lake Camanche North Shore, 209/763-5178; North Shore marina, 209/763-5166; Lake Camanche South Shore, 209/763-5178; South Shore marina, 209/763-5915; general information website: www.camancherecreation.com.

35 NEW HOGAN LAKE



east of Stockton

Map 5.5, page 152

New Hogan is a big lake, covering 4,400 acres with 50 miles of shoreline. There are many good spots along the eastern shore at Deer Flat that are suitable for boat-in camping. It's that 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, water-skiing, and sailboarding are extremely popular. The place gets heavy use on weekends from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Note that as of 2003, no marina operator or boat rentals were available for the third straight year. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is hoping for a replacement in 2004. If this is of concern, call prior to making your trip.

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 OK 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 strippers 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, this 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.

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: Drive-in campgrounds, drinking water, restrooms with flush toilets, show-ers, pay telephones, fish-cleaning station, and RV dump station are available. Boat-in campsites, picnic area, gas, and golf course are nearby. Fees are charged for day use, camping, and boat launching.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboating, water-skiing, wake boarding, personal watercraft, sailing, and sailboarding 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 Wrinkle Cove, located off the lake's entrance road.

Directions: From Stockton, drive east on Highway 26 for about 35 miles to Valley Springs and Hogan Dam Road. Turn right and drive 1.5 miles to Hogan Parkway. Turn left and drive one mile to South Petersburg Road. Turn left and drive .25 mile to the campground at the lake on the right.

Contact: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento District, 209/772-1343.

36 NORTH FORK STANISLAUS RIVER



Rating: 9
near Arnold in Stanislaus National Forest

Map 5.5, page 152

Beautiful, wild, and exciting—this stretch of

river has everything going for it but length. Only the rafting run's relatively short length, a mere five miles, keeps the North Fork Stanislaus from snagging the highest rating.

This river is rated as Class IV and is ideal for most rafters, difficult enough for plenty of excitement, yet with only one truly mind-bending piece of white water. That stretch, Sourgrass Ravine, will launch you to the edge and beyond, then release you back to your senses, as well as to the seat of your raft. The scenery is beautiful, with big granite boulders peppered about the river, and pines and sequoias lining much of the adjacent shore, plus a sprinkling of fragrant azaleas.

Not only is the run short, but right out of the starting gate you encounter the big one, Sourgrass Ravine. After conquering that (or not), you face a number of challenging Class IV rapids and drops, including Beginner's Luck, Sierra Gate, The Claw, Convulsion, Wallet Slot, and Emerald Falls. You couldn't demand more from a five-miler.

The water is clear, cold, and beautiful. How cold? In the spring dry suits or wet suits are mandatory, but they become optional by summer, when temperatures are considerably warmer. In most years the season runs from April through August, though it can be shortened due to a low snowpack and the resultant minimal melt-off.

Only a few commercial companies are permitted to raft here, so the water is significantly less crowded than the main stem Stanislaus. Regardless, it is becoming increasingly popular, especially among non-guided experts who want a trip that can be completed in a day.

The North Fork Stanislaus is a real favorite for swimming and sunbathing, with the most popular spot being at Candy Rock. Note that this is an infamous spot for nudists, not a typical hangout for families from Stockton. There are natural and man-made rock slides here, as well as several large, deep pools, and the water is warmer than at places farther upstream.

Families are better off heading to the series

of pools located about a mile upstream past Sourgrass Campground; there's a parking area there and a short hiking trail down to the swimming hole.

Trout are stocked monthly near Wa Ka Luu Hep Yoo Campground, and fishing is good for rainbow, brook, and brown trout. **Access:** There is no boat ramp. To reach the rafting put-in from Angels Camp, drive east on Highway 4, past Arnold to Dorrington and Boards Crossing Road, and then continue driving four miles to Sourgrass Campground. Put in on the left bank above the bridge.

Note: A difficult Class V drop is located immediately downstream of the put-in; boaters who wish to avoid it can put in below the rapid (on the right bank). When you reach Calaveras Big Trees State Park, take out just downstream of the bridge.

Facilities, fees: Campgrounds are available on Boards Crossing Road and at Calaveras Big Trees State Park. Restrooms, drinking water, showers, and flush and vault toilets are available. Picnic areas are nearby. A wheelchair-accessible river trail is available at Wa Ka Luu Hep Yoo Campground. Supplies can be obtained in Dorrington and Arnold. Fees are charged for camping and for day use. Rafting permits are not required.

Water sports, restrictions: Rafting and kayaking are permitted. Good swimming areas are available near Sourgrass Campground, Wa Ka Luu Hep Yoo Campground, and at Calaveras Big Trees State Park. Farther downstream is a popular area called Candy Rock, which is accessed by taking Hunter Dam Road south off Highway 4 (just east of Hathaway Pines) for five miles to the river. Several large pools and rock slides are available.

Directions: From Angels Camp, drive east on Highway 4, past Arnold to Dorrington and Boards Crossing Road. Turn right and drive four miles to the forest service campground on the left (just before the bridge that crosses the Stanislaus River). Access is also available at Calaveras Big Trees State Park on Highway 4. **Contact:** Stanislaus National Forest, Calaveras Ranger District, 209/795-1381; Calaveras Big Trees State Park, 209/795-2334.

Guided rafting trips: All-Outdoors White-water Rafting, 925/932-8993 or 800/247-2387, website: www.aorrafting.com; Outdoor Adventure River Specialists (OARS), 209/736-4677 or 800/346-6277, website: www.oars.com; Beyond Limits, 209/869-6060 or 800/234-7238, website: www.rivertrip.com.



for 5.5 miles to Inland Drive. Turn right and drive five miles (Inland Drive turns into McDonald Road) to Holt Road (one mile after the road becomes McDonald). Turn right and drive to the road's end at a T intersection with Windmill Cove Road. Turn right and drive .5 mile to the marina. For more information call 209/948-6995, website: www.windmillcove.com.

- Whiskey Slough Harbor, Holt: Take I-5 to Stockton and the exit for Highway 4 West. Take that exit and drive west on Highway 4 for six miles to Whiskey Slough Road. Turn right and drive about nine miles to Whiskey Slough Harbor. For more information call 209/942-4588.
- 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, website: www.westrec.com.

- Walnut Grove Marina, Walnut Grove: Take I-5 to the exit for Thornton-Walnut Grove/Courtesy Road J11 (located south of Sacramento and west of Galt). Take that exit, turn west and drive five miles to Old Walnut Grove/Thornton Road. Turn right and drive 3 mile to the marina. For more information call 916/776-1181, boat rentals at 916/776-4270 or 800/255-5561, website: 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 Galt). Take that exit, turn west and drive 3.3 miles to the campground entrance on the left. For more information call 209/794-2627, website: 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.

Water sports, restrictions: Power-boats, water-skiing, wake boarding, personal watercraft, sailing, and sailboarding are permitted. Swimming

and sailboarding 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: Access is available from I-5 near Stockton and Lodi; on Highway 160 between Sacramento and Isleton; on Highway 12 between Sacramento and Rio Vista; off Highway 4 between Brentwood and Stockton. See Access for specific directions.

Contact: Braunan Island State Recreation Area, 916/777-7701; Hal Schell's Delta Map and Guide, \$2.99 at stores, \$3.75 by mail at P.O. Box 9140, Stockton, CA 95208; California Delta Chamber & Visitor Bureau, 209/367-9840, website: www.californiadelta.org.

Boat rentals: Waterfries (will deliver), 916/777-6431; Herman & Helen's, Stockton, 209/951-4634. **Kayaks:** Big River Kayaks, Bethel Island, 925/684-3095; Tower Park Marina, Lodi, 209/368-3030, website: www.h2o.rentis.com; Paradise Point Marina, Stockton, 800/752-9669 or 209/952-1000, website: www.paradise-point.com; Walnut Grove Marina, Walnut Grove, 916/776-4270 or 800/255-5561. **Houseboats:** Delta Houseboat Rental Association; 209/477-1840.

Wake board and ski lessons: Discovery Bay Wakeboard & Ski Center, 925/634-0412, website: www.gowakeboard.com or www.gowater-ski.com.

Sailing instruction: Martin's Sailing School & Club, 916/369-7700, website: www.love2sail.com.

Fishing guides: Fish Hooker Charters, 916/777-6498.

Boat charters: Delta Expeditions, 916/600-2420.

2 OAKWOOD LAKE



near Manteca

Map 9-2, Page 299

Oakwood Lake Resort is basically a big water

Rating 7

fun park. The attractions include the famous high-tech Manteca Water Slides, "river rapid" rides, video arcades, a roller skating rink, playgrounds, bungee jumping, a movie theater, bingo, and a softball field. This is one of the largest water-based theme parks in the country. 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 private land, including the 75-acre Oakwood Lake. Note that life jackets are required for all taking part in water sports on the lake. There are bass, bluegill, crappie, and catfish in the lake, but only resort campers are permitted to fish or use the lake.

Get 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, RV dump station, store, coin laundry, propane gas, swimming lagoon, water slides, 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 sailboarding are permitted. **Motorboats:** 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: Drive on Highway 120 to Airport Way (two miles east of Manteca). Turn south on Airport Way and drive .5 mile to Woodmill Way. Turn right and drive two miles to the park entrance.

Contact: Oakwood Lake Resort, 209/239-2500, website: www.oakwoodlake.com.

3 SAN LUIS RESERVOIR



Rating: 6

near Gilroy in San Luis Reservoir State Recreation Area

Map 9-2, Page 299

San Luis Reservoir is literally a water hole, and it's one of the biggest water holes imaginable. The primarily stark, man-made 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 next listing), 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 sailboarders. 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 caterwauling 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 sailboarders. The stark, vast surroundings and choppy water don't add much ambience to the affair, however.



4 O'NEILL FOREBAY



Rating: 8

near Los Baños in San Luis Reservoir State Recreation Area

Map 9, Page 299

Sometimes bigger is not better, and that theory 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 of the pair, the opportunities for boating and water sports are far more attractive here.

O'Neill Forebay covers 2,000 surface acres with 14 miles of shoreline, providing the recreation for the recreation area. Whereas the main reservoir is used primarily for fishing, O'Neill Forebay caters to swimmers, water-skiers, and personal watercraft. Even anglers, however, will be pleased here, as there are some 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 beach to have lunch, go for a swim, and then head back out on the water to ski. Sailboarding is decent, but in the spring winds can get just as gusty as at San Luis, driving everybody off the water as 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 folks simply surrender and head over to San Luis Reservoir in order to avoid the crowds. Sailboarders, who like having some room to zoom are the most likely to flee.

The Forebay is home of many of the biggest striped bass caught in California history, including the world record for landlocked striped bass. Note that the Medeiros boat ramp has been closed since 9/11. It will not reopen. In addition to security concerns, there were problems with launching in low water here.

Access: 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: Water-skiing, wakeboarding, and personal watercraft are permitted. All boaters must wear life jackets. Sailboarding and swimming are allowed; a large, sandy beach is available on the west side of the forebay.

Directions: From Los Baños, take Highway 152 west 12 miles to San Luis Reservoir and the signed Forebay entrance road. Turn north and drive to the Forebay and beach area.

To San Luis Creek Boat Launch: Drive west on Highway 152 past San Luis Reservoir (12 miles west of Los Baños) to the signed campground entrance road (15 miles west of Los Baños). Turn and drive two miles to the campground on the left and continue to the boat-ramp.

Contact: San Luis Reservoir State Recreation Area, Four Rivers District, 209/826-1197, fax 209/826-0284.

5 NEW MELONES RESERVOIR



Rating: 9

near Sonora

Map 9, Page 300

New Melones is the fourth largest man-made 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 water-skiing, personal watercraft, and swimming. The conditions are often excellent for water-skiing. 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, seven 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, fishermen 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. Water-skiing and houseboating are particularly popular. When there are afternoon winds, common in the spring and early summer, it is possible to sailboard. Swimming is limited to the swimming beach; elsewhere the shoreline is fairly rocky or tree-lined.

Rafters may hate 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 Tutletown 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, 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, wake boarding, personal watercraft, sailing, and sailboarding are permitted. A sandy swimming beach is available at Glory Hole Recreation Area, on the Angel Arm of the lake. **Directions:** To Tutletown: From Sonora, drive north on Highway 49 to Reynolds Ferry Road. Turn left and drive about two miles to the entrance road for Tutletown Recreation Area.

To Glory Hole: From Sonora, drive north on Highway 49 for about 15 miles (Glory Hole Market will be on the left side of the road) to Glory Hole Road. Turn left and drive five miles to Glory Hole Recreation Area. **Contact:** New Melones Visitors Center 209/536-9094, website: www.recreation.gov/detail.cfm?ID=25; New Melones Lake Marina, 209/785-3300; Glory Hole Sports, 209/736-4333, website: www.gloryholesports.com.

6 WOODWARD RESERVOIR



Rating: 8

near Oakdale in Woodward Reservoir County Park

Map 9-3, page 300

This is one of the best sailing lakes in Northern California. Regattas are held through the year, and it is also very popular for sailboarding. Woodward's nickname, in fact, is "Windward 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 water-skiing vs. fishing conflict is to separate the two groups. At Woodward Reservoir that is exactly what has happened. May each go thine 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 water-skiing 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 sailboarding 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, multi-lane 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, RV dump station, three boat ramps, a marina, mooring, dry boat storage, a store, bait, fishing licenses, and some equestrian facilities are available. Fees are charged for day use, including boat launching and camping. **Water sports, restrictions:** Powerboats, water-skiing, wake boarding, personal watercraft, sailing, and sailboarding are permitted. Swimming is available at Office Point, near the marina; this is also the best spot for launching sailboards.

Directions: Take Highway 120 to Oakdale (the road becomes Highway 108/120) and the junction with County Road J14/26 Mile Road. Turn left on 26 Mile Road and drive four miles to the park entrance at Woodward Reservoir (14528 26 Mile Road).

Contact: Woodward Marina, 209/847-3129; Woodward Reservoir County Park, Stanislaus County, 209/847-3304 or 209/525-6750, website: www.co.stanislaus.ca.us.

7 LAKE TULLOCH



Rating: 7

near Jamestown

Map 9-3, page 300

Tulloch is set in two canyons that crisscross each other, like a giant X, and by boat you never see the other canyon. The lake is actually the afterbay for New Melones Lake, and the water that fills Lake Tulloch comes from the New Melones Dam on the northeastern end of the X. These extended lake arms give the reservoir a total of 55 miles of shoreline. The elevation is 500 feet.

The shape of the lake has an effect on boating. Because the water is basically set in filled canyons, the waterway is relatively narrow. Fishermen and powerboaters live in harmony for the most part due to the many coves and a six-mile long arm with an enforced 5-mph speed limit.

Unlike many reservoirs in the foothill country, Tulloch is nearly always filled with water. If you pick your spots well, sailboarding and swimming can also be excellent. The best area for sailboarding is along the north shore, where the most predictable wind can be found. But because this lake lies in a deep canyon, winds can be erratic. In addition, sailboarding is not advised on summer weekends, when the narrow lake is swarming with speedboats and the danger factor is raised a few notches.

Both of the lake's resorts offer great swimming opportunities. Each has large, sandy

beaches complete with developed facilities. The only campground here is at South Shore.

Another surprise at this lake: It's one of the best for crawdad fishing.

Access: There are two paved boat ramps, at Lake Tulloch Marina on the south shore, and on the north shore (see Directions).

Facilities, fees: Marinas with boat launches, rentals, and docks are available at both the north shore and south shore. Lodging, a campground, picnic areas, drinking water, restrooms with showers, coin laundry, RV dump station, convenience stores, restaurant, and a bar are available. Fees are charged for day use, boat launching, and camping.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, water-skiing, wake boarding, personal watercraft, sailing and sailboarding are permitted. Large, sandy swimming beaches are available at South Shore and North Shore. A 5-mph speed limit (signed) is enforced on a six-mile arm of the lake.

Directions: To the south shore: From Manteca, drive east on Highway 120 (it becomes Highway 108/120) to Oakdale. Continue east for 13 miles to Tulloch Road on the left. Turn left and drive 4.6 miles to the campground entrance and gatehouse at the south shore of Lake Tulloch. Or, continue for 10 more miles on Highway 108/120 to O'Byrnes Ferry Road. Turn left and drive to the north shore.

Contact: Lake Tulloch Campground and Marina (south shore), 209/881-0107, website: www.laketullochcampground.com; Lake Tulloch Resort (north shore), 209/785-2286 or 888/785-2286.

8 STANISLAUS RIVER



Rating: 10

below New Melones Lake to below Knights Ferry

Map 9-3, page 300

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+), Matterhorn (Class V-VI), Pinball (Class III), and Haunted House (Class IV+). Matterhorn is treated like an off-ramp by many rafters who choose to portage this scary and sometimes dangerous piece of white water.

Note that this river section can be run only when the water masters see fit to release enough water downstream to get it going. This means it can't be run every year. When it can be run, there is sometimes very short notice.

Knights Ferry Run: Not to worry, this is an easy float, all Class I water with one Class II rapid, Russian Rapid. Rafts and kayaks can be rented at Sunshine River Adventures and River Journey, which also provide shuttle services. The Knights Ferry Run is a great opportunity for newcomers, and most people adopt the do-it-yourself approach, alternating between paddling and floating, and stopping occasionally to jump in and swim. Half-day to multiday trips can be arranged, depending on one's schedule. Most people take out within 10 miles of Knights Ferry, but it is possible to 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 was completed in 1982, the Camp Nine run on the Stanislaus above Melones Reservoir was considered one of the prime stretches of water in the state and was run more often than any other river. When the New Melones Dam was built, well, the dam backed up water so far that it covered the entire Camp Nine Run. Now it can only be run in drought conditions, that is,

when the lake is very low. This has 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, section, 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 .5 mile downstream from the dam. Take out four miles downstream at Knights Ferry, just down from the stream at Knights Ferry, just down from the bridge. Note: This river section is rated Class V and is for experts only; people have drowned attempting this run. It can be run only 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 east on Highway 108/120 to the town of Knights Ferry. Put in at the new bridge. The standard take-out is eight miles downstream at Orange Blossom Park, although there are several other access points.

Facilities, 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 from Sunshine Rafting Adventures. Supplies are available along Highway 4. Access is free. Rafting 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 parks 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 above for specific directions.

Contact: All-Outdoors Whitewater Rafting 925/932-8993 or 800/247-2387; Beyond Limits Adventures, 209/869-6060 or 800/234-7238

River Journey, 209/847-4671 or 800/292-2938, website: www.riverjourney.com; Sunshine Rafting Adventures, 209/848-4800 or 800/829-7238, website: www.raftadventure.com; Knights Ferry Resort, 209/881-3349.

9 MODESTO RESERVOIR



Rating: 7

near Modesto

Map 9-3, page 300

Modesto Reservoir is a big lake, covering 2,800 acres with 31 miles of shoreline, set 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 buy gas that does not contain MTBE. Some gas stations provide MTBE-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.

Water-skiing is excellent in the main lake body. Anglers head to the southern shore of the lake, which is loaded with submerged trees and coves 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 for 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 body oil flowing fast and furious.

In addition to good water-skiing and jet boating, the swimming in Modesto Reservoir is great. The best spots for swimming and playing in the water are near the day-use areas, where a 5-mph speed limit is in effect and boaters stay well clear of the near shore. That

ensures calm water for non-boaters. Water levels fluctuate greatly.

One of the great things about the place is the boat-in camping. Many coves 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 is often 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 on the reservoir's west side, off Rio Linda Drive.

Facilities, fees: Campgrounds, picnic areas, drinking water, restrooms with flush toilets, showers, RV dump station, marina, snack bar, store, and propane gas are available. Fees are charged for day use and boat launching.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, water-skiing, wake boarding, personal watercraft, sailing, and sailboarding are permitted. Owners of boats with motors must have proof of purchase of MTBE-free gas. A 5-mph speed limit is enforced on the lake's southern arm and around the day-use areas. Water-skiing 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, drive east on Highway 132 for 16 miles past Waterford to Reservoir Road. Turn left and drive to the lake and campground at 18143 Reservoir Road.

Contact: Modesto Reservoir, 209/874-9540, website: www.co.stanislaus.ca.us; Modesto Marina, 209/874-1340.

10 LAKE DON PEDRO



Rating: 8

northeast of Modesto

Map 9-3, page 300

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 sailboarding 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 mid-summer through early fall. Low water also creates considerable boating hazards, and water-skiers should pay special attention at all times.

Access: There are three boat ramps.

- Moccasin Point: From Manteca, drive east on Highway 120 (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.

- 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 .5 mile to the campground and boat ramp on the left.

- 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.

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 (south shore) and Moccasin Point Marina (north shore). Campgrounds, boat-in campsites, restrooms with flush toilets and showers, RV dump station, picnic areas, snack bars, café, convenience store, coin laundry, gas are available. Some facilities are wheelchair-accessible. Fees are charged for day use, boat launching and camping.

Water sports, restrictions: Powerboats, water-skiing, wake boarding, personal watercraft, sail-

ing, and sailboarding are permitted. A sandy swimming beach is available on the south shore at Fleming Meadows Picnic Area.

Directions: See directions to ramps in Access, above.

Contact: Don Pedro Recreation Agency, 209/852-2396; Lake Don Pedro Marina, 209/852-2369, website: www.donpedrolake.com; Moccasin Point Marina, 209/989-2206.



11 TURLOCK LAKE

Rating: 7
east of Modesto in Turlock Lake State Recreation Area



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 to 74 degrees in late spring and summer, when other lakes in the region are 75 to 82 degrees. 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 non-boaters 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 water-skiing, wake boarding and personal watercraft are pretty popular at Turlock. Although permitted, sailing and sailboarding 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, wake boarding, personal watercraft, sailing, and sailboarding are permitted. You'll find large, sandy swimming beaches at the day-use area.

Directions: From Modesto, drive east on Highway 132 for 14 miles to Waterford, then 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, website: www.parks.ca.gov (click on Find A Park).

12 LAKE MCCLURE



Rating: 7
east of Modesto



Some people think that Lake McClure and adjoining Lake McSwain (see next listing) appear to be the same lake. That will teach 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, wake boarding and houseboating. The elevation is 900 feet.

This is a full-facility recreation area that offers developed campgrounds, picnic areas, and boating services. Water-skiing, 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 lagoons in the campgrounds, which have sandy sunbathing areas. Although swimming is not prohibited in the lake, you'll rarely see people swimming or playing along the shore, mainly because of the typically steep drop-off. A more common sight is that of folks using their boats as swimming platforms, jumping in, treading water, floating around, and then scrambling back into the boat for a repeat performance.

Fishing for bass is best on the left half of the "H" near Cotton Creek. Fishing for trout is best on the right half of the "H." This is because of differences in water temperatures in these two areas.

Access: Paved ramps are located at Barrett Cove, McClure Point, Horseshoe Bend, and Bagby.

• Barrett Cove: From Modesto, drive east on Highway 132 for 31 miles to La Grange and then continue for about eight miles (toward Coulterville) to Merced Falls Road. Turn right and drive four miles to Bear Cove Road. Turn left and drive one mile to the kiosk.

• McClure Point Recreation Area: From Turlock, drive east on County Road J16 for 19 miles to the junction with Highway 59. Continue east on Highway 59/County Road J16 for 4.5 miles to Snelling and bear right at Lake McClure Road. Drive seven miles to Lake McSwain Dam and continue for seven miles to the end of the road to the campground and boat launch.

• Horseshoe Bend Recreation Area: From Modesto, drive east on Highway 132 for 31

miles to La Grange and then continue for about 17 miles (toward Coulterville) to the north end of Lake McClure and the campground entrance road on the right side of the road. Turn right and drive .5 mile to the campground and boat launch.

• Bagby: From Turlock, drive east on County Road J16 for 19 miles to the junction with Highway 59. Continue east on Highway 59/County Road J16 for 4.5 miles to Snelling and Merced Falls Road (continue straight, well signed). Drive .5 mile to Hornitos Road. Turn right and drive eight miles (drive over the bridge) to Hornitos to a Y. Bear left at the Y in Hornitos (signed to Highway 49) and drive 10 miles to Highway 49. Turn left on Highway 49 and drive eight miles the Bagby Bridge and entrance kiosk on the right.

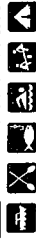
Facilities, fees: Full-service marinas with mooring are available at McClure Point, Barrett Cove, and Bagby. Barrett Cove Marina rents fishing boats, ski boats, personal watercraft, houseboats, and pontoon boats. McClure Point rents fishing boats and pontoon boats. Campgrounds, fish-cleaning stations, picnic areas, restrooms with flush toilets and showers, convenience stores, snack bars, coin 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, wake boarding, and personal watercraft are allowed. Sailing and sailboarding are permitted, but winds are usually light. The shoreline has no swimming beaches, but there are swimming lagoons at each recreation area.

Directions: See directions to ramps in Access above.

Contact: McClure Point and Bagby Recreation Areas, Merced Irrigation District, 209/378-2521, website: www.lakeMcClure.com; Horseshoe Bend Recreation Area, 209/878-3452; Barrett Cove Marina, 209/378-2441; houseboat rentals, 209/378-2441, website: www.houseboats.com/mcclure.

13 LAKE MCSWAIN



east of Modesto

Map 9 • Page 300

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 contend with the crowds that descend on McClure to the east because this lake is small, water-skiing is prohibited, and the water is much colder. If you have a canoe or car-top boat, this lake is preferable to Lake McClure.

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 fishermen. 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, RV dump station, coin laundry, playground, snack bar, and conven-

ience 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 water-skiing, wake boarding, personal watercraft, or houseboats permitted. The lake is too small and not windy enough for sailboarding and most sailboats. A sandy swimming beach is available adjacent to the marina.

Directions: From Turlock, drive east on County Road J16 for 19 miles to the junction with Highway 59. Continue east on Highway 59/County Road J16 for 4.5 miles to Snelling. Continue straight ahead to Lake McClure Road and drive seven miles to Lake McSwain Recreation Area on the right.

Contact: Lake McSwain Recreation Area, 209/378-2521 or 800/468-8889, website: www.LakeMcClure.com; Lake McSwain Marina, 209/378-2534.

14 YOSEMITE LAKE



Rating: 6

north of Merced in Lake Yosemite Park

Map 9 • Page 300

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 sailboarding. Large swimming beaches are available, and lifeguards



11 PYRAMID LAKE



Rating: 9

north of Los Angeles in Angeles National Forest.

Map 12, Page 391

Pyramid Lake is one of the most heavily used recreation lakes in California. One of the cornerstones of California's Central Valley Project, Pyramid Lake is a major storage facility for water as it is moved from north to south.

Pyramid Lake is set at an elevation of 2,600 feet. Although the lake is surrounded by Angeles National Forest, I-5 is routed right past several lake arms, making it one of the more easily accessible bodies of water in California. It is

a favorite destination for powerboaters; note that a 35-mph speed limit is enforced.

The lake covers 1,300 acres and has 20 miles of shoreline. Because it's a showpiece, the water masters tend to keep it fuller than other lakes on line with the California Aqueduct. The primary activities are water-skiing and fishing, though the two are not always compatible.

Sailboarding is best from the northern launch ramp. Swimming is best at the boat-in picnic sites or the designated swimming area.

Several pretty boat-in picnic sites with nice sandy beaches are located along the shoreline. Since most of the shoreline is inaccessible by car, these spots offer that rarity—a chance for seclusion. This is one great bonus for boaters.

Sailboarding can be excellent here as well, and the sport seems to be gaining in popular-

ity each year. The best jump-off spot is at the northern launching area, where you can sail off to access any of Pyramid Lake's more private arms.

A large off-road-vehicle area is located three miles from the lake.

Some anglers feel that the water-skiers are trying to drive them off the lake, and the situation would be greatly improved if the powerboats that would set aside special areas for low-speed boating. You typically see anglers here in the spring and fall, when prospects are best for striped bass, largemouth bass, catfish, crappie, and bluegill; then the water-skiers take over the lake during the summer months.

Access: A paved launch ramp is located on the lake's north side.

Facilities, fees: Picnic areas, restrooms with flush toilets, a convenience store, and a concession stand are provided. Fishing boats can be rented at Pyramid Lake Marina. A campground is available two miles away. There is a fee for day use and a fee for boat launching.

Water sports, restrictions: Water-skiing, wake boarding, personal watercraft riding, sailing, and sailboarding are allowed. Swimming is available at a sandy beach near the marina and at several boat-in sites around the lake. A quota is set of 75 personal watercraft per day.

Directions: From Los Angeles, drive north on I-5 for about 60 miles to the exit for Smokey Bear Road (about eight miles south of Gorman). Take that exit west and drive 1.7 miles to the lake.

Contact: Pyramid Lake Marina, 661/257-2892; Pyramid Enterprises, 661/295-1245.

12 CASTAIC LAKE



Rating: 9

north of Los Angeles

Map 12, Page 391

Castaic Lake is known the world over as the lake most likely to produce the next world-record bass. After all, this is where, in 1991, Bob Crupi

caught, weighed, photographed, and released a 22-pound largemouth bass, just four ounces shy of the world record. Who knows where that fish is swimming around now. Or how big it might be—or its many cousins.

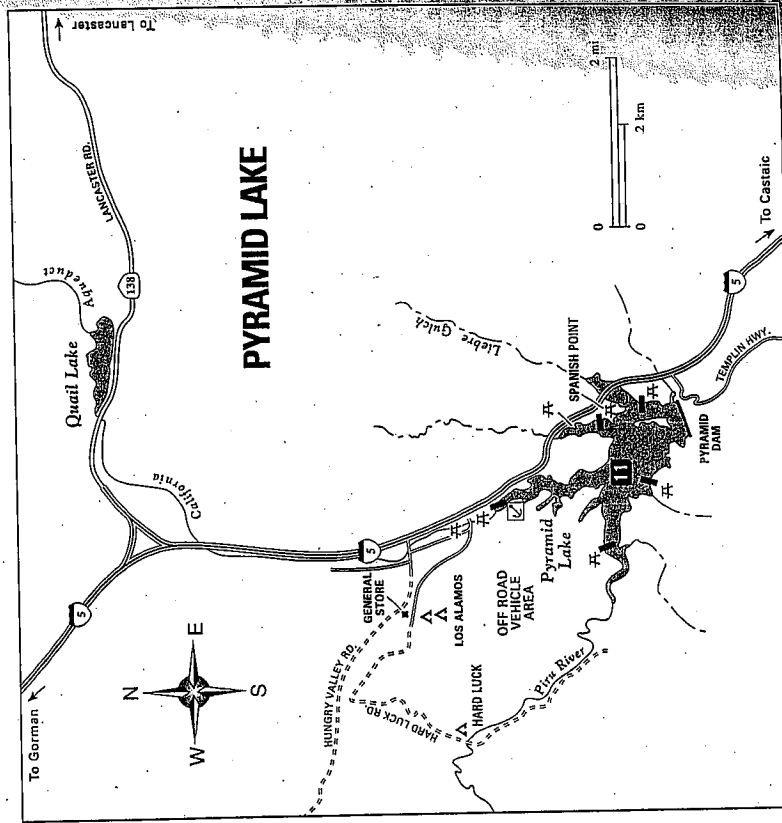
But the lake is famous for more than fish. It's a boater's paradise, an outstanding choice for all water sports, with even a specially designated area for personal watercraft.

Castaic is easy to reach, just a short hop from the junction of I-5 and Highway 126. It is set at 1,535 feet in the foothills adjoining Angeles National Forest to the north. Shaped like a giant V, it covers nearly 2,400 acres when full. That's right: it's huge. There is also an adjacent lagoon, which provides additional facilities. Locals call Castaic the upper lake, and the afterbay is referred to as the lower lake or the lagoon.

Of course it is the big brother, the upper lake, that attracts most of the attention. This is where the giant bass roam and where water-skiing is most popular. In general, people who are fishing for bass stick to the coves, while the water-skiers run in a counterclockwise direction from the dam on up the northern lake arm. Note that a buoy line marks the boundary of a restricted area on the far end of the northern lake arm. The area closest to the dam is for personal watercraft.

If you prefer quiet water, try the nearby afterbay, commonly known as the Castaic Lagoon. It is located just below the Castaic Dam. No gas motors are permitted here (electric motors are permitted), and even though a few rental watercraft are allowed, for the most part the place is very low-key compared to the main lake. A bonus is that fishing is allowed 24 hours a day at the lagoon. Rainbow trout are stocked, and there are also catfish and crappie.

Sailboarding is quite popular. The best areas are the upper lake's west arm and all over the lagoon. Swimming is prohibited at Lake Castaic, but is permitted at Castaic Lagoon from mid-June through September. Use is quite heavy into fall.



Access: Paved boat ramps are located on the main lake's east and west arms (near the dam) and on the lagoon's south shore; follow the ramp signs from the lake entrance.

Facilities, fees: A primitive campground is available .5 mile west of the lagoon. Picnic areas are provided at both the lake and the lagoon; drinking water and flush toilets are available. Castaic Boat Rentals (on the main lake) rents out fishing boats and personal watercraft. Rowboats, water bikes, canoes, and kayaks are available for rent at the lagoon. Bait and tackle are available at the marina. Fees are charged for day use and boat launching.

Water sports, restrictions: The speed limit on the main lake is 35 mph. Water-skiing, wakeboarding, personal watercraft riding, and sailing are allowed. No motorized boats are allowed on the lagoon, except for electric motors. Sailing is allowed on the upper lake on weekdays only. Swimming is allowed in the lagoon, but prohibited on the main lake.

Directions: From Los Angeles drive north on I-5 for 40 miles to Castaic and Lake Hughes Road. Turn north on Lake Hughes Road and drive .5 mile to Ridge Route Road. Turn left and drive .75 mile to Castaic Lake Drive. Turn right and drive a short distance to the lake entrance.

Contact: Castaic Lake, Los Angeles County, 661/257-4050; Castaic Boat Marina and Rentals, 661/775-6232; personal watercraft rentals, 661/775-3800.

13 LAKE PIRU



Rating: 7

northwest of Los Angeles

Map 12, page 59

Things can get crazy at Piru. Luckily, it's usually a happy crazy, not an insane crazy.

You see, this lake is within a pretty quick drive from the Los Angeles Basin, and it's no secret either, so quite a lot of people come here for boating, water-skiing, fishing, swimming, and

sunbathing. The weather is warm, and the water often seems to be the perfect temperature.

Water-skiing is restricted to a designated area, roughly the middle of the lake, where there's a 35-mph speed limit. The wind can really kick up here in the spring and early summer. At times, conditions are excellent for sailing, but then the winds can make the lake look something like a washing machine in full spin—enough to scare everybody off the water.

The lake covers 1,200 acres when full and is set at an elevation of 1,055 feet. Most summer mornings are quite beautiful here, with the warm temperatures, pretty scenery, and emerald green water adding to the charm. If you're looking for a good spot for swimming and picnicking, head to the west shore, where there is a large sandy beach.

Fishing is often very good here, best in spring, of course, for both bass and trout.

Most boaters come here in the summer to go water-skiing or sailing. Afternoon winds are predictable on most days, and fishing is popular from fall through spring. Use is quite heavy from May through mid-September, as you might figure. Because the place is so popular, especially with boaters on summer weekends, all boating rules are strictly enforced.

Access: A multi-lane paved launch ramp is located on the lake's western side.

Facilities, fees: A campground, restrooms with showers, picnic areas, full-service marina, temporary mooring, snack bar, RV dump station, and convenience store are available. Fishing boats and pontoon boats can be rented at the marina. There is a fee for day use, boat launching, and camping.

Water sports, restrictions: Motorized boats under 12 feet long or over 26 feet long are prohibited. Canoes and kayaks over eight feet long are permitted in a special use area; anything smaller is prohibited. Water-skiing is permitted. Sailing is allowed. Personal watercraft and sailboards are not allowed. Swimming is allowed only in designated areas during the summer

season; a beach is available on the west shore, past the gatehouse.

Directions: From Ventura, drive east on Highway 126 for about 30 miles to the Piru Canyon Road exit. Take that exit and drive northeast

on Piru Canyon Road for about six miles to the campground at the end of the road.
Contact: Lake Piru Recreation Area, 805/521-1500; Lake Piru Marina, 805/521-1231, website: www.lake-piru.org.



1 LITTLEROCK RESERVOIR



Rating: 5

near Palmdale in Angeles National Forest

Map 13, page 408

In the summer when Littlerock Reservoir is the only cool place around for miles, this is quite a popular spot.

This small lake is set at an elevation of 3,258 feet in Angeles National Forest and covers just 150 acres. It's open year-round, and although fishing is the number one activity most of the time, in the summer, camping and swimming attract their fair share of attention.

The 5-mph speed limit keeps things quiet, eliminating most powerboating, personal watercraft riding, and sailboarding. Note, however, that the wind can really whip through here in the late afternoon.

From late winter to spring and early summer, Littlerock Reservoir is a pretty little mountain lake. But when the water starts to be drained down the Palmdale Ditch and into the California Aqueduct to the north, the lake can be turned into a miniature Grand Canyon. In low water years it might even resemble a moonscape by late fall. When that happens, boaters might as well see when the next spaceship is departing.

At that time, the lake is used for OHV use, and the campground is taken over by off-road enthusiasts.

Access: A primitive launching area is located on the lake's northwest shore. Facilities, fees: A wheelchair-accessible boat ramp, campground, picnic areas, and store with groceries, bait, and tackle are available. Littlerock Lake Resort rents fishing boats. Adventure Pass (\$30 annual fee) or \$5 daily fee per parked vehicle is required.

Water sports, restrictions: Gas motors up to 10 horsepower are permitted. A 5-mph speed limit is strictly enforced. Personal watercraft and water-skiing are not allowed. Swimming is permitted.

Directions: From Los Angeles, drive north on I-5 to the Highway 14/Lancaster/Palmdale exit. Turn east and continue to Palmdale and Highway 138/Pearlblossom Highway. Turn east on Highway 138/Pearlblossom Highway and drive about five miles (through the stoplight at the four-way intersection) to Cheseboro Road. Turn right on Cheseboro Road and continue for four miles to the reservoir.

Contact: Angeles National Forest, Santa Clara/Mojave Rivers Ranger District, 661/296-9710; Littlerock Lake Resort, 661/533-1923.

2 SILVERWOOD LAKE



Rating: 9

north of San Bernardino in Silverwood Lake State Recreation Area

Map 13, page 408

Silverwood Lake is bordered by San Bernardino National Forest to the south and high desert to the north, and its proximity to San Bernardino makes it very popular with boaters especially on hot summer days. It is set at an elevation of 3,350 feet, and when full to the brim, covers 1,000 acres and has 13 miles of shoreline.

The speed limit is 5-mph in all of the major coves, and there are several other boating rules that keep the place relatively sane. The main lake area south of the dam is the hot spot for water-skiing, with a 35-mph speed limit. There is a 175-boat quota per day. Boat launch reservations are required on summer weekends and holidays.

Tourists of every kind are attracted to the clear and cool water in the summer. All boating is allowed, as well as water-skiing, personal watercraft riding, fishing, and sailboarding, though the latter is restricted to designated areas. This lake is quite good for sailboarding with afternoon winds usually strong in the spring and early summer.

The lake facilities are fully developed and include an excellent marina, boat rentals, and

a small store. Some people make a great day of it by renting a pontoon boat, having a floating barbecue or picnic, then parking in a cove and using the boat as a swimming platform. In addition to drive-in campsites, there are some hike-in and bike-in campsites—a rare treat. The lake also has a modest trail system for hiking and biking.

Fishing varies dramatically according to season, with trout planted in the cool months, largemouth bass coming to life in the spring, and striped bass and bluegill occasionally caught the rest of the year.

Because of its location on the edge of the high desert, there are times when the winds can really kick up here, making boating potentially hazardous. Aside from that, Silverwood Lake is a great spot.

Access: A paved boat ramp is located on the lake's south shore. There is an unimproved ramp for car-top boats on the northwest shore.

Facilities, fees: Campgrounds, restrooms with flush toilets and showers, a full-service marina, picnic areas, RV dump station, and convenience store are available at the lake. Fishing boats and pontoon boats can be rented at the marina. Supplies can be obtained nearby. Fees are charged for day use, boat launching, and camping.

Water sports, restrictions: There is a 35-mph speed limit (5-mph in the major coves). Water-skiing, wake boarding, sailing, sailboarding, and personal watercraft are permitted. There are designated areas for boating, water-skiing, fishing, and sailboarding. Boats must be off the water by sundown. A large, sandy swimming beach is available on the lake's southeast side at the Sawpit Recreation Area.

Directions: Drive on I-15 to Cajon Junction (north of San Bernardino) and the exit for Highway 138 East. Take that exit and drive east on Highway 138 for 13 miles to the park entrance on the right.

Contact: Silverwood Lake State Recreation Area, 760/389-2303 or 760/389-2281; Silverwood Lake Marina, 760/389-2299.

3 LAKE GREGORY



Rating: 6

north of San Bernardino in Lake Gregory Regional Park

Map 13, page 408

Little Lake Gregory (120 acres) is set at an elevation of 4,520 feet, just north of San Bernardino on the edge of San Bernardino National Forest. An adjacent regional park, good swimming (no gas-powered motors permitted on boats), and an opportunity to paddle a canoe or kayak in a family setting make Lake Gregory a winner.

While no privately owned boats are permitted here, a real downer, boats can be rented at the marina. Beauty, intimacy, and cool waters make this a very popular destination, and it is often packed to capacity on summer weekends.

The setup is family oriented, and rules that forbid motors keep the lake quiet and safe for swimming. There is a large swimming beach on the south shore that even has a water slide, along with restrooms.

The lake is stocked with rainbow trout, and starting in 2003, steelhead. No brown trout have been stocked here since 1993. The lake also has catfish and crappie.

It is also one of the relatively few lakes in California where you can buy property near a lake. The trip here is a pleasant one, too, on Rim of the World Drive, a winding but pretty road that builds up a bit of anticipation before your arrival. Nearby Silverwood Lake to the northwest is an alternative choice.

Access: Private boats may not be launched here, only boats rented at Lake Gregory may be used.

Facilities, fees: A campground, restrooms with flush toilets, drinking water, picnic area, and a snack bar are available. Rowboats, pedal boats, sailboards, sailboats, and water bikes can be rented at the boathouse in summer. Cabins are available nearby at Camp Switzerland. Supplies are available nearby. A fee is charged for day use.



10 PRADO PARK LAKE



Rating: 6

at Prado Regional Park near Corona

Map 13.3, page 410

Prado Park Lake is the centerpiece of a 2,280-acre, recreation-oriented park that features an equestrian center, athletic fields, shooting range, and a golf course.

The lake is small and used primarily for paddling small boats. It is also popular for fishing in the winter and early spring when trout are planted, and then in early summer for catfish and bass. The shooting facility is outstanding; it was the 1984 Olympic shooting venue.

Access: A paved boat ramp is available on the lake's north shore.

Facilities, fees: Rowboat and pedal boat rentals are available at a small marina. A campground, restrooms, coin laundry, showers, pay phone, snack bar, picnic area, playing fields, boat ramp, bait shop, and boat rentals are available. A playing field with softball, soccer, and horse-shoes is on site. Supplies can be obtained nearby. Fees are charged for day use, boat launching, fishing, and camping.

Water sports, restrictions: Rowboats, boats with electric motors, canoes, kayaks, and sailing are allowed. No gas motors, inflatables, sailboarding, swimming, or water/body contact. Open year-round, 7:30 A.M. to sunset.

Directions: Drive on Highway 91 to Highway 71 (west of Norco and Riverside). Take Highway 71 north and drive four miles to Highway 83/Euclid Avenue. Turn right on Euclid Avenue and drive a mile to the park entrance on the right.

Contact: Prado Regional Park, 909/597-4260, website: www.san-bernardino.ca.us/parks/prado.

11 LAKE EVANS



Rating: 4

in Riverside at Fairmount Park

Map 13.3, page 410

Quit your yelpin'. Sure Lake Evans is a far cry from Big Bear Lake (see listing earlier in this chapter), but considering how hot it can be out here, and how few lakes there are in the area, this little lake is one of the few places that can provide a respite from the sweltering summer heat.

Evans is a good spot to bring a small rowboat or canoe, go fishing for a bit, or have a picnic. Rules prohibit most boats and water sports. What you usually see here are fishermen out to catch some small rainbow trout, which are planted when the water is cool enough, plus a few folks just paddling canoes.

The surrounding park is grassy and pleasant, and a golf course and a bowling green are located nearby. Lake use is relatively light. There are several fishing derbies for catfish each year. The lake is stocked with channel catfish, and there's also bluegill, bass, and carp.

Access: A primitive launching area is provided. Boats under eight feet or over 15 feet long are prohibited, with the exception of canoes and kayaks. A free boating permit must be obtained at the park.

Facilities, fees: Rowboats and pedal boats are available for rent. Restrooms and picnic areas are provided. Supplies are available in Riverside. A campground is available at Jurupa Regional Park. Access is free.

Water sports, restrictions: Motorized boats and inflatables are not permitted. No swimming, sailing, or sailboarding is allowed. The lake is open from 10 A.M. to 7 P.M., Thursdays through Tuesdays, Memorial Day Weekend through Labor Day Weekend; then 10 A.M. to sunset in the off-season.

Directions: Take Highway 60 to the north end of Riverside to the exit for Market Street. Take

that exit. Turn left (south) and continue to the park entrance on your right.

Contact: Riverside County Department of Parks and Recreation, 909/715-3440, website: www.riversidecountyparks.org; boat rentals, 909/715-3406.

12 LAKE PERRIS



Rating: 8

southeast of Riverside at Lake Perris State Recreation Area

Map 13.3, page 410

The weather out here in the summer and fall can make you feel like you're standing in a fire pit, and that's why water-skiing and swimming are such big hits at Lake Perris.

The lake is set in Moreno Valley, just southwest of the Badlands foothills, at an elevation of 1,500 feet. It has a roundish shape, covering 2,200 acres, with an island that provides a unique boat-in picnic site.

The recreation area covers 8,300 acres and includes 11 miles of paved bike trails, including a great route that circles the lake. There are also 15 miles of equestrian trails and five miles of hiking trails.

Although known primarily for fishing (many records for spotted bass have been set here), Lake Perris is an extremely popular vacation destination for all types of boating and water recreation in the summer. In addition to fishing, favorite activities are water-skiing, sailboarding, sailing, and swimming. There is also a special area for scuba diving.

With large ski beaches on the northeast and southeast shores, the lake can be great for water-skiing and riding personal watercraft. There is a designated sailing cove on the northwest side, an ideal spot for sailboarding and sailing.

Swimming is also excellent, but note that it is only allowed at the developed beaches, a short distance from the campground.

For an out-of-the-ordinary picnic site, steer

your boat over to the island, where you can hike up 200 feet to get a unique view of the surrounding country. In addition, there are many trails near the lake that are ideal for mountain biking, horseback riding, and hiking. On the lake's south side, there is even a rock climbing area. Note that no swimming or scuba diving is permitted at the island.

As you might figure, visitor traffic at Perris is extremely high in the summer. Crowds are considerably smaller in the spring and fall, but the attractions are just as compelling then.

The lake also provides fishing for spotted bass, trout, largemouth bass, bluegill, catfish, and sunfish.

Access: A large, multi-lane paved launching area is located on the lake's north shore, just east of the marina, and a personal watercraft launching area is on the northeast shore.

Facilities, fees: Campgrounds, restrooms with flush toilets, coin showers, RV dump station, picnic areas, a full-service marina, moorings, two swimming beaches, snack bar, and convenience store are available. Fishing boats and pontoon boats are available for rent. Fees are charged for day use and boat launching.

Water sports, restrictions: The speed limit is 35-mph, except in a few areas where it is reduced to 5-mph. Water-skiing, wake boarding, personal watercraft, sailing, and sailboarding are permitted. No towing of inflatables is permitted. Ski beaches are available on the lake's north and south shores. A large, sandy swimming beach is available on the north shore, east of the boat ramps.

Directions: From Riverside, drive east on I-215/Highway 60 for about five miles to the I-215/60 split. Bear south on I-215 at the split and drive six miles to Ramona Expressway. Turn left (east) and drive 3.5 miles to Lake Perris Drive. Turn left and drive .75 mile to the park entrance. Boat ramps are located on the north shore of the lake.

Contact: Lake Perris State Recreation Area, 909/940-5603, or 909/657-0676; Lake Perris Marina, 909/657-2179.

