

Travel insurance a prerequisite for worry free vacation

By Lee Traupel, Huffington Post

Every traveler begins her journey with a complex web of connections, coupled with dreams of blue skies, unlimited horizons, fair weather and unlimited upgrades.

But, as in everything in life, risk and reward live together and in this complex fine print driven world we all live and travel in the “devil truly is in the details.”

You are out there in the wilds ready to re-enact your favorite Bear Gryll’s survival technique and you hear the dreaded words: “your luggage did not make it....”

Or, worse, “we have no idea what kind of fungus this is and we may need to put you in quarantine for a few days...”

But to practical discussion. Many will tell you traveling without travel insurance has too much risk and not enough reward.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Use natural methods for pesky rodents

By Stella McMillin

Rats, mice and voles are commonly sighted around homes and businesses this time of year. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife encourages Californians to let nature control rodent populations by actively protecting their natural predators – owls, hawks, falcons, eagles and vultures – rather than using poisons to eliminate pests. Environmentally friendly tactics such as providing tall trees that raptors favor will encourage these birds of prey to hang around your yard and remove rodents for you.

Most raptors use the same nest for many years and some even pass from one generation to the next. Bald eagles are known to have used the same nest as long as 35 years. That makes them an excellent long-term control for rodent populations in the immediate area.

During breeding season, a family of five owls can eat as many as 3,000 rodents. You can encourage them by hanging a nest box on your property, but please don't do that if you or any of your neighbors are using anticoagulant rodenticides. Remember that poisoned rodents can poison the predators, scavengers and pets that eat them!

Even though the state Department of Pesticide Regulation and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have restricted public access to the most dangerous rodenticides, all rodenticides – including the types still available to consumers – are poisons that can kill wildlife, pets and children.

More wildlife could be saved if people would use sanitation, removal and exclusion to keep rodents out of homes and reduce their numbers. Like most animals, rodents will congregate and multiply where food is available and they feel safe. The easiest way to discourage them is to remove or modify anything that could make them comfortable. Sanitation is the first step to controlling rodents. For example:

- Keep your home and yard neat and clean. Don't give rats

places to hide.

- Remove objects and plants that rodents can hide under, such as wood piles, debris, construction waste, dense vegetation and ground-covering vines like ivy.
- Pick up fruit that has fallen from trees as soon as possible.
- Secure your garbage in a tightly sealed can.
- Seal water leaks and remove standing water that can attract unwelcome animals, breed mosquitoes and waste water.

To remove unwelcome rodents, set traps in secluded areas where they've been seen or are likely to travel: close to walls, behind objects, in dark corners, on ledges, shelves, fences, pipes and garage rafters. In areas where children, pets or birds might go, put the trap inside a box or use some kind of barrier for their safety. Check traps daily and wear disposable gloves when removing rodents from traps. Place them in a sealed plastic bag then into your garbage bin for weekly collection. Wash your hands after handling traps or rodents, even when using gloves.

Once you've removed mice and rats from inside the building, seal the entries they used to get in: openings where cables, wires and pipes enter buildings, and cracks or holes in the foundation, walls and roofs. Rodents can squeeze into holes as narrow as half inch diameter. Use hardware mesh and concrete, plaster or metal whenever possible. At the very least, stuff stainless steel or copper pot scrubbers, or Stuf-fit copper mesh wool into the spaces. All of these are sold online and at hardware and dollar stores.

If you feel you must use "rat poison," please carefully follow the label directions for all rodenticides. Only use them in small treatment areas indoors or right against building walls in tamper-resistant bait stations, never out in open field or garden areas, where they're most likely to reach wildlife and pets.

Stella McMillin works for the CDFW Wildlife Investigations Lab.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



- Senate Bill 605, which would establish a good neighbor tuition policy with students in Nevada, passed out of the California Senate Committee on Education with unanimous, bipartisan support on April 22 and is now on its way to the Senate Committee on Appropriations.
- El Dorado County's annual Great Bike Ride is May 7 from 11:30am-1pm at the government center in Placerville. For more info, email jrice@edctc.org.
- The Tahoe XC Junior Mountain Riders Program provides children ages 7-11 an opportunity to experience and grow in the sport of mountain biking. Here is the [registration form](#).
- An opening day celebration is planned at the South Tahoe Little League Complex on April 25th. A parade and ribbon cutting ceremony are planned prior to the start of scheduled games. The parade will start on the street next to the South Tahoe Middle School tennis courts at 9am with a planned parade path to follow Lyons Avenue to Rufus Allen, and into the major's field by way of the snack shack entrance.
- At each stage of the 2015 Amgen Tour of California there will be a Lifestyle Festival adjacent to the finish line. The daylong festival will feature cycling products and demos, cancer awareness education, family activities, food, entertainment and more. For the women's race in South Lake

Tahoe, VIP access and tickets to the team presentation and reception may be purchased online.

Public can be part of DCSD superintendent search

The Douglas County School District board of trustees is looking for input into the selection of the next superintendent. Lisa Noonan announced her retirement earlier this year.

Meetings will take place May 4 at 4:45pm at Carson Valley Middle School multipurpose room and May 6 at 4:15pm at Zephyr Cove Elementary School multipurpose room.

The public may also submit feedback through an online survey. The survey will be available until May 5.

For more information, contact search consultant Jim Huge at 415.572.8553 or jimhuge@att.net

Opinion: Tahoe – a continual work in progress



Lake Tahoe's natural beauty is not reflected in the South Shore ad campaign. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Park City is being held up as the latest poster child of tourism for the South Shore to emulate.

The theme of the ninth annual South Shore Tourism Forum was economic and community revitalization. Instead of a to-do list for the South Shore it was more of a tutorial on what the Utah resort community has done.

Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce, Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority and North Lake Tahoe Resort Association employees and members traveled to Park City in April 2014 to learn what that ski town has done to be successful. Ever since then there has been a litany of dog-and-pony shows to tout how great Park City is.

Tuesday afternoon was another chance for about 150 people to hear the same story that has been repeated multiple times since the excursion. Only this time it was two Park City officials who did much of the talking. This was after a lengthy video was shown of their town when the Tahoe brigade

was there.

Ken Fisher, recreation manager, and Jonathan Weidenhamer, economic development manager, were the Park City officials who came west for the two-hour event at Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel on April 21.

Park City is an old mining town that in the 1950s was practically a ghost town with boarded up businesses on Main Street. Now it embraces that history which is evident by walking through the downtown.

One of the more revealing comments from the duo was prompted by a question from Ty Polastri with Lake Tahoe Bicycle Coalition. He asked what authentic elements they saw on the South Shore.

An awkward pause and chuckle ensued.



Heavenly Village has been full of people all winter even without snow. Photo/LTN file

"I think the authentic experience is the vibrancy, the people," Fisher said. "I love that you have a campground on the main street. And obviously the lake."

But he admitted he would not publicly say what he would rather see the campground land used for.

They were both most impressed with how Heavenly Mountain Resort's gondola starts from the center of Heavenly Village. What they'd like to see is the energy of the village carried all the way to the lake.

The problem, they didn't have to point out, is that it's like walking or driving through a ghetto near the state line going from Highway 50 to the lake.

They smirked at the names of some of the hotels that reflect a bygone era, and scooted by how some of those lodging establishments look.

Then they commented on how their recreation center is a true community gathering place. That isn't true of South Lake Tahoe's or even Kahle in Stateline. They did have good things to say about the operators of the city owned ice rink.

It was the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics that spurred revitalization. (Winter is Park City's main season, unlike Lake Tahoe where summer dominates.)

But what was lacking in the presentation was how Tahoe – any of the shores – could capture a bigger piece of the winter market.

Leading up to those 2002 Games and afterward Park City taxpayers approved a slew of bonds that primarily fund recreation and arts. There are restaurant taxes, higher property taxes for second homeowners, and additional sales tax beyond what the state mandates.



Taxes for the “right” reason will get voter approval. Photo/LTN file

Todd Poth with Getaway Reno-Tahoe said how the South Shore isn't about to tax itself to have what Park City has. It has a ton of public art, free public transit and embraces its mining history. It has a performing arts center and other venues for people to gather.

But the reality is people on the South Shore will tax themselves. Just look at the \$55 million Lake Tahoe Community College bond that was passed last fall and the \$64.5 million Lake Tahoe Unified School District bond voters approved a few years ago. Those are for facilities. Voters approved Measure S for recreation. South Lake Tahoe voters approved an increase in hotel and sales taxes.

This community has demonstrated it will pay for what it believes in.

Douglas County Board of Commissioners this month gave direction to staff to come back in June with ordinances that would raise nearly \$4 million a year. This money would be used on the South Shore Vision and in the valley. The dollars could be leveraged to obtain grants so the total pot of money to invest in the county is even greater.

A 2.5 percent utility operator fee (natural gas, electricity,

landlines, and a portion of cell phones), 0.05 percent fuel tax and 0.25 sales tax are likely to be approved this summer. State law allows the county to implement all of these taxes by ordinance without going to the voters.



Douglas County is moving forward with the South Shore Vision. Rendering/Design Workshop

“Figure out your vision. What’s the prize? I think you can build a better place if you figure out what it is,” Weidenhamer said. “Doing nothing is a terrible choice.”

He admitted it will be hard and that some people will be mad, but that is a side effect of progress and change.

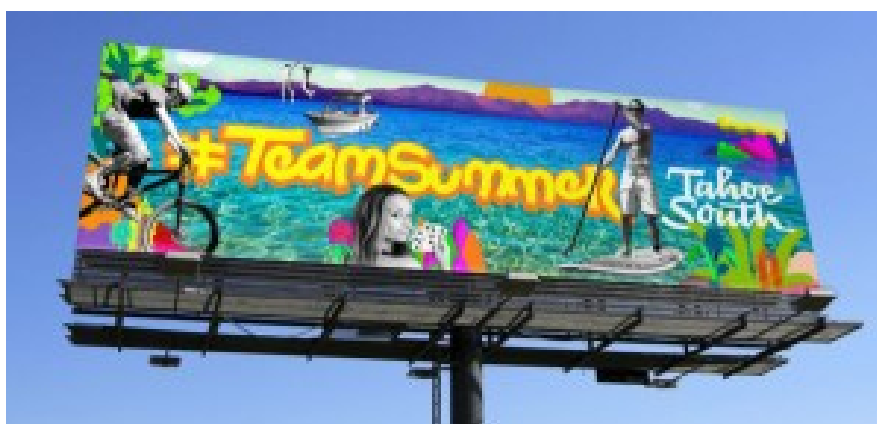
The problem is that the South Shore has not figured out what it wants to be. Instead of looking inward for self-reflection, for authenticity to grow upon the reasons we all moved here or stay here, the community looks elsewhere for answers.

Plenty of consultants have come through with ideas. Pretty drawings have been composed of what the area could be. The same “leaders” trot out the same ideas and yet nothing changes. At some point one has to question whether it’s

ineffective leadership that is stalling progress, or perhaps the wrong ideas are being presented, or perhaps the will of the people is being ignored. Or maybe it's the rules that are in place – like being the only place in the country that has tourist accommodation units and commercial floor area as commodities – that are hindering forward movement.

It's pretty evident by anyone who travels elsewhere that the South Shore is tired looking and that there is no "there there" – as in no soul, no wow factor (other than the lake), no defining event or visual that says Tahoe. There is the lake, but it's been pointed out for years that the body of water has not been marketed as well as it should have been or could be. Access points are not well marked. Think about visiting Tahoe for the first time. Would you know how to get to the beach? Lakeview Commons in South Lake Tahoe and Tahoe Commons in Tahoe City are the only obvious places. A vast swath of the shoreline is visible on the West Shore but it's rocky and every "private" sign on all the docks is not welcoming.

We have this incredible jewel, but it's like a museum piece that is locked behind a gated wall. Bringing the lake to the forefront may be our answer.



This is the 2014 ad campaign which is similar to 2015's. Photo/Duncan-Channon

Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority is trying to do just that with

its summer 2015 ad campaign even though it is continuing to keep with the comic book-like characters instead of the true natural environmental that is so stunning. And, of course, gaming is still part of the mix. And it should be. But maybe it's time for the marketers to emphasize the natural beauty of the lake – not a caricature of it – (have you seen the ads for Colorado and Montana?) – that also touts recreation, and then have separate gaming ads with a bit of that scenery. Because, really, no gaming destination is as beautiful as Lake Tahoe.

Or maybe the current ad campaign reflects the South Shore perfectly – colorful, a bit schizophrenic, without a true focus and a message the masses can't understand. LTVA's summer campaign message is "Summer rules your face".

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



- The South Tahoe Public Utility District board of directors will have a public hearing on the budget May 7 from 6-7:30pm in the district board room, 1275 Meadow Crest Drive, South Lake Tahoe.
- Elder Option's employee Rachel E. Carter published her second book in the Black Mage Series, "Apprentice".
- South Lake Tahoe residents and those working in the tourism industry are invited to enjoy a free night of music and entertainment on the last Sunday of every month at the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Lake Tahoe. The first event kicks off April 26 with a performance by the Truckee-based rock band Forget the Roses. Doors open at 8pm and the show starts at 9pm.

- Barton Hospice's Reflections of Life and Loss grief support group on the first and third Thursday of each month had changed its time to 5–6:30pm. The group meets at 2092 Lake Tahoe Blvd., Suite 600, South Lake Tahoe.
 - Mental Health Awareness Week is May 10-16.
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Lecture to focus on survival in the wilderness

Wilderness Medicine Explored is the topic of Khristy Gavigan and Lauren Hansen's lecture.

The two Barton Health employees will talk about practical techniques to recognize and treat an injured person in the wilderness. There will be hands-on case scenarios and review of minimum safety essentials. Attendees are encouraged to bring a backpack fully packed and ready for an adventure.

The talk is May 6, 6-7pm in the board room at Lake Tahoe Community College.

Tourism's challenge: Bay Area millennials

By Bill O'Driscoll, Reno Gazette-Journal

The San Francisco Bay Area has spoken on Reno-Tahoe tourism,

and while the region's favorability holds steady from last summer, more attention is needed on marketing to millennials.

Among the findings from the Reno-Sparks Convention & Visitors Authority's twice-a-year Bay Area Awareness Survey in February to be presented to the RSCVA board on Thursday:

- 79 percent of respondents have a favorable opinion about Reno-Tahoe, unchanged from the August 2014 survey and up 3 points from a year ago, while 63 percent see Reno favorably, down 1 point since summer but up 6 points from the February 2014 survey.

[Read the whole story](#)

Passage of Nev. tax hikes bittersweet for Dems

By Kyle Roerink, Las Vegas Sun

CARSON CITY – For Democratic Sen. Tick Segerblom, Tuesday yielded a victory five sessions in the making.

Senate lawmakers passed into the Assembly a tax measure, SB 252, that's backed by GOP Gov. Brian Sandoval that would annually raise \$430 million to fund education and other programs.

The rub for Segerblom, though, was that his party didn't have its name on the legislation.

Segerblom, a Las Vegas lawmaker serving in his fifth legislative term, and his colleagues have championed tax increases in every session since 2007. But despite holding a

majority in both chambers of the Legislature, the Democrats' efforts did little to provide new revenues for education. During Segerblom's time in office, both parties have fought to fill the budget shortfalls posed by the recession and raise more money for government.

Segerblom applauded Republicans on the floor for "biting the bullet on taxes" and blamed them for not calling to do so sooner.

Read the whole story

Study: Too many vitamins may increase cancer risk

By Matt Keller, KGO-TV

Your mom always told you to take your vitamins, but that advice may be bad for your health.

Many studies show eating fruits and vegetables can reduce the risk of cancer and heart disease, but what about vitamins?

A new report reveals taking too many supplements can actually increase the risk of some cancers. "The idea was give people more vitamins and it would prevent cancer, but they find when they do a lot of these studies is it can do the exact opposite and it's hard to know what's safe," ABC News Chief Health and Medical Editor Richard Besser said.

Read the whole story