

For exercise, nothing like the great outdoors

By Gretchen Reynolds, New York Times

Long walks can improve moods and reduce anxiety, but the benefits may be greatest if the walks take place outdoors rather than in a gym, according to a study by researchers in Austria. And while the Alps may be a particularly fine place to hike, a vigorous walk in the woods or paths near home may provide the mental boost we need to keep us moving.

Many different aspects of exercise are thought to affect how much we like working out. But in general, most experts agree that a workout's intensity and its duration have the greatest influence on our feelings about it.

Researchers wondered whether long, relatively gentle walks would make people happy and, if so, whether some types of walks would be more pleasurable than others.

[Read the whole story](#)

Finding tranquility in Tahoe even on a holiday



The start of another glorious day at Lake Tahoe. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

It's possible to enjoy Lake Tahoe without tourists on a holiday, but it will cost you.

The cost is losing sleep.

Getting up to see the sunrise at Emerald Bay on the Fourth of July provided a natural explosion of color that no fireworks show could ever come close to duplicating.



Eagle Falls splashes down to Emerald Bay. Photo/Kathryn Reed

The bay was glass; it would have been perfect for water skiing if there weren't the 5 mph no wake zone. A sailboat appeared to have been moored overnight just off Fannette Island. Plenty of vessels were at the boat-in campground.

A handful of other sunrise seekers were scattered about the rocks above the bay and at Eagle Falls. Most with cameras, others capturing mental images.

Eagle Falls is thundering down to the bay. This is the lower falls; Upper Eagle Falls is across Highway 89, up the path that leads to Eagle Lake.



Snow melt from Desolation Wilderness creates Glen Alpine Falls. Photo/Kathryn Reed

This was not the only magical spot at this hour of the day. (Sunrise was at 5:39am.)

Glen Alpine Falls on the far end of Fallen Leaf Lake Road was the next destination. It was hard to catch a wink in the car; this El Dorado County owned road is horrendous, with potholes almost taking up a whole travel lane.



Wildflowers near Glen Alpine Falls are starting to bloom. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Still, the destination was worth testing the suspension and being worried about the alignment.

There is more water than rock showing; usually it's the other way around.

The third fall was **Hawley Grade** in Meyers. It's accessed at the end of South Upper Truckee Road.



Hawley Grade Falls are not passable right now.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

When there is less water it's possible to cross the falls. It doesn't even look inviting right now or like it would be a possibility anytime soon.

This is a relatively short jaunt, with an elevation gain of 900 feet.

By 8:30am we had seen the sunrise, three waterfalls and did a short hike.

It's naptime.

Southern cooking comes to the mountains



It would be hard to imagine anyone leaving X Crows hungry.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

There was a time when hotel restaurants were just a convenience for travelers; no one living in that town would ever step foot inside of it. X Crows is proving that things have changed – and in an extremely tasty way.

This restaurant inside Hotel Becket in South Lake Tahoe is a destination unto itself. The X = 10.

Executive Chef Trent Bissell hails from Alabama, which is perfect for this restaurant that boasts of all things Southern.

Using a massive pellet smoker, Bissell is able to slow cook the various meats – even vegetables – to get that flavor like no other method does. The brisket and pork butt are smoked overnight; the other meats need less time and are cooked fresh

each day.



Executive Chef Trent Bissell at the smoker. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Up to 500 pounds of meat can be cooked at once. So far, no bears have come to investigate the outside smoker, which has been named Arlene.

Bissell calls that smoky aroma “Southern cologne.” Pork, including ribs and his own sausage recipe, are what he specializes in.

Starting with the black eye pea hummus (\$8) we knew this wasn’t going to be a typical Tahoe meal. Often hummus has a bland, almost chalky taste. No so with this one. The benne seed crackers were a nice accompaniment; and there were plenty of them.

The smoked portabella (\$13) was hefty. Even cutting it in half I had a hard time getting my mouth around it, but once I did the flavor was outrageously good. While this is the only

vegetarian entrée on the menu, Bissell said he has ideas for more.

Like most barbecue joints, sides are a big part of the offerings. They range from smoky greens (which Sue raved about) to house cut fries (some of the best I've had) to stone ground cheddar grits. Specials are also common, with Sue loving the fresh squash mix.

And some of those sides would make for a good vegetarian meal.



Cocktails are refreshing and the hummus outstanding. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Sue opted to have the fried catfish (\$18) mostly because it's not something you see on a Tahoe menu. She wasn't disappointed.

It was served with a super-hot sauce that even I couldn't handle. It also came with Bissell's Alabama white sauce, which is more like an aioli. Because it is mayonnaise based it is

not on the table with the other sauces. This white sauce was terrific with the fish, portabella and fries.

To pay homage to the mountain that is across the street the menu includes the Heavenly happy meal (\$17) – chopped pork or chopped chicken sandwich, with fries, a shot of Jameson and a PBR.

Take-outs are encouraged, with sides being available by the pint and quart. Entrees are priced a little less for those taking it to go.

Desserts, as the chef says, are meant for two. The banana pudding (\$7) could serve four. Two days before I had had my friend Sharla's banana pudding, and she's from Kentucky, so I knew what good banana pudding tasted like. She might want to go to X Crows and save herself the trouble of making it.

Whiskey is the dominate drink of choice here, with more than 60 to choose from.

"Whiskey and barbecue are best friends. A lot of bourbons have a smokiness," Bissell told *Lake Tahoe News*.

If straight whiskey isn't your thing, I recommend the Southern Sazerac (\$10) – Bulleit rye, absinthe wash, burnt orange peel and Peychaud bitters.

Beer is the other dominate drink choice, with about 30 bottles and six on tap. Wine and other specialty cocktails are also available.

One of the most memorable things about dinner at X Crows was the service. It was off the charts good. Meesh is more than just a server.

She moved to Tahoe from Pennsylvania last year. She quickly learned about the Tahoe Food Hub in Truckee and now X Crows is sourcing some of its food from there. Meesh is also teaching the chef how to grow herbs and vegetables.

“I have a farming background. I love food,” she told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Her love of food is evident in how she describes the various dishes, gets excited about all the vinegar-based homemade barbecue sauces and helps diners choose what to order.

What she brings to the table is a level of service that is hard to find in the basin. She was as refreshing as the restaurant itself.



The plan is to eventually sell the homemade sauces. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Notes:

- X Crows is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner.
- Hours are 7am-9pm Sunday-Wednesday; closing at 11pm on

Friday and Saturday.

- Tables are inside and outside. The bar seats 10.
 - Dogs are welcome.
 - The only negative is how loud the music is across the street at Heavenly Village.
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Nev.'s scariest animals aren't the deadliest

By Mark Robison, Reno Gazette-Journal

How dangerous are the 550 black bears in Nevada?

Fears would be understandable after black bears recently mauled four people in Alaska, killing two in separate attacks.

The Nevada Department of Wildlife reports that the biggest perceived wildlife threats are not black bears but rather mountain lions and rattlesnakes. Indeed, the state is home to about 3,000 mountain lions and five species of rattlesnakes. Could either of these be the deadliest wild animals in Nevada?

Or maybe you've read these types of stories before and think the deadliest must be mosquitoes.

If you picked any of the above animals, you'd be wrong.

Read the whole story

Study ranks Nev. among best states for road trips

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Review-Journal

This week, when people are thinking about Fourth of July road trips and getting out of town, there's good news and bad news about a recent study commissioned by WalletHub ranking the best states in the country to get on the open road.

The good news: Nevada ranked No. 7 in the country, ahead of Colorado and California. The bad news: The state might have gotten shortchanged in some of the data sets within the study.

To be sure, the study covered lots of ground and placed values on 22 metrics to determine where travelers can get the best bang for the buck.

[Read the whole story](#)

Awesome views of Tahoe from Snow Valley Peak



Much of Lake Tahoe can be seen at the end of the trail leading to Snow Valley Peak. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Snow Valley Peak is aptly named – especially right now with the various pockets of that white stuff leading up to the final approach.

With the heat wave the Lake Tahoe Basin has been experiencing, there will be even less snow now compared to two weeks ago. Still, it might be a good idea to take poles to steady yourself.

This East Shore peak at 9,214 feet is the tallest mountain in Carson City. (Carson is a city and a county all in one, with a small unpopulated swath of land that stretches into the basin.)

Traditionally, the east side of the lake is the place to hike in early season because the snow melts faster there than the West Shore. With the Sierra receiving record snowfall last winter, it's possible snow will be an issue for a while.

Our entire route to Snow Valley Peak was along the Tahoe Rim Trail. This was the second time I had done this hike. The first time we dropped in by Spooner Lake before going up to

the peak – away from Marlette Lake and the Flume Trail.



Rhoda and Liz maneuver through one of the snow fields. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Had we been really adventurous, we could have gone the 61 miles to Tahoe City.

A nice thing about our route in June is bikes are not supposed to be on it. That's a good thing. It's mostly single track, and was narrow at times with people coming from the opposite direction.

While there is plenty of beauty to be seen along the trail, it's near the end that is the most spectacular. It's as if the entire lake is before you. So often it's just a section that

is visible from most trails. Not this one. It's like you are seeing 15-feet across and the whole 22-mile length of Tahoe.

The four of us, plus AJ the wonder dog, opted to not actually go to the peak itself. There isn't any more beauty from there than along the ridge we were on. So we found some boulders and had lunch before turning back.

We met a woman along the way who had attempted to go to Marlette Lake, but said there was too much snow.

Several downed trees from winter storms cross the original path. For the most part they were easy to get around. There was one point where we lost the trail in the snow, but we quickly realized it and were able to get back on track.

There is no water, other than late snow melt, so be sure to take plenty with you and for your four legged companions.

Much of the trail is shaded, which was nice on a warm day. But it's all exposed on the last push to the peak along the scenic ridge.

It's about 12 miles round trip to the peak, with an elevation gain of 2,493 feet.



Marlette Lake from the trail above.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

Getting there:

From South Lake Tahoe take Highway 50 east. Go up Spooner Summit. Just beyond Highway 28 is parking on the left. There is lots of signage at the trailhead there.

Calif. reservoirs replenished after drought



An arm of Lake Orville on June 22, 2015, is nearly depleted. Photo/LTN file

By Amy Graff, San Francisco Chronicle

California's reservoirs are brimming after a winter of relentless storms and a late-spring heatwave that thawed the a big chunk of the snowpack.

The Golden State's system of 154 major reservoirs is holding 34,464,000 acre-feet according to the most recent June 12 state report with data pulled from an array of entities that own and manage these bodies of water, including the Department of Water Resources, the Bureau of Reclamation, the Army Corps of Engineers and several city water departments.

The state's reservoirs held 25,628,000 acre-feet on the same date last year, when El Niño was expected to bring extraordinary weather systems, but instead hit us with weak storms dropping average precipitation.

Read the whole story

Lots of water, little beach area in Tahoe

By Amy Graff, San Francisco Chronicle

Even packed on a Monday: The beach at Sand Harbor, Lake Tahoe Nevada State Park, is packed on June 19. In the summer, even Mondays are busy at this popular beach.

The parking lot at Sand Harbor, the most popular beach on Lake Tahoe, filled up every day over the past two weeks.

That means 3,000 to 3,500 people were looking for real estate to spread towels and set up chairs on the crescent of sand.

Read the whole story

Summer skiing – a rare, memorable experience



Shorts are the clothing of choice for most summer skiers at Squaw Valley. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

OLYMPIC VALLEY – You know it's not an ordinary ski day when long pants and jackets look out of place.

Sometimes only a Speedo or bikini was covering certain parts. This is summer skiing. And it is very different than spring skiing – the atmosphere, the skier, the attitude, the conditions.

From the caliber of skier on the slopes off the five lifts at Squaw Valley these are die-hard, darn good skiers. It's not that beginners aren't welcome to the fun, but as some said, they probably aren't going to get it.



Plenty of aerial acrobatics in the terrain park. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Yes, it's a novelty to ski this time of year. After all, this is only the fourth time in Squaw's history that it will have been open on Independence Day. But it's something so much more. There's a magic to summer skiing. Perhaps because only a few have had the opportunity to experience it this makes for an elite group.

It's locals and out-of-towners showing up. Carly Carlson works at Squaw and was there Saturday on his day off to ski with his wife and their three kids – ages 6, 4 and 2.

"It's a great treat. How often do you get to ski in the morning and paddleboard in the afternoon?" Carlson remarked.



You don't have to be a skier to enjoy the pool and hot tub.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

These days of summer are the icing on what was an epic, record-setting winter in the Sierra.

At Squaw Valley on July 1 it was a party atmosphere on the slopes, in the lift lines – and certainly at the pool at High Camp.

Squaw is the only Tahoe area resort still open. It will be through July 4, then Saturdays until the conditions deteriorate enough to call it a season.



Freedom Festival is bringing out lots of patriotic garb. Photo/Kathryn Reed

"If we are able to operate on July 8, it would be the latest we have ever stayed open, but not the longest season. In terms of number of days of operations, we have had longer seasons in history, but have never operated past the 4th of July," Sam Kieckhefer, spokesman for Squaw, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

On Memorial Day the base was about 192 inches, now it's 103 inches at 8,200 feet. Top-to-bottom skiing is gone. At the base, well, it's about cycling and golf. It really is a whole different world riding to the top via the funitel or tram.

Daily, crews assess the conditions to decide what to open. On what is skiable, the coverage is fantastic.



Clearly the seasons are blending as passenger vehicles and snowmobiles are needed to get around the mountain. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Each day the conditions change. That's what happens when it's 80 something degrees out.

"The heat wave contributed to a considerable amount of snow melt. Regardless, we still have a significant amount of snow," Kieckhefer said.

A snowcat at the top of Gold Coast clearly has been pulling snow from the side of the mountain to make the traverse to Shirley Lake do-able.

Once at Shirley, it's soft, manageable runs. To the skier's left of the chairlift is a GS style shoot where skiers seemed to get lost as they go through this mouse-hole of sorts. The laughter coming from there could be heard on the chairlift.



Hiking trails from High Camp are pretty short right now.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

There were other unfamiliar sounds. It was coming from unusual wildlife – at least to a skier. Frogs were ribbitting in the water at the Shirley lift.

A couple from the Bay Area talked about their harrowing experiences to get to Tahoe this past winter. Sometimes arriving only to find the lifts unable to spin. They were determined to get their money's worth from their 2016-17 pass.

For some, the lift accessible runs aren't enough. Tracks are visible in various chutes. People have been hiking to Palisades. Skiing in some form might be a year-round activity in 2017.

While it's unusual to get snow in summer, it has happened. And with the amount of snow on the ground today and a possible early winter, it's not out of the question that this season

will just blend into 2017-18.



Snowcats are doing a better job covering trails than some people are covering their bodies. Photo/Kathryn Reed

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Notes:

- The Freedom Festival continues through July 4.
- Skiing is available from 8:30am-2pm through July 4, then Saturdays from 8:30am-12:30pm.
- The pool and hot tub are open from 11am-6pm.
- Fireworks start at 9pm, July 3.

How to buy pot legally in Nevada

By Jenny Kane, Reno Gazette-Journal

While it may not be your first time buying pot, it may be your first time doing so legally.

As of today, recreational marijuana will be available in select dispensaries in Northern and Southern Nevada, and an expected green rush is expected to follow.

While the Nevada Department of Taxation has yet to release a list of dispensaries licensed to sell recreational marijuana during the early start program, we spoke with one of the co-owners of Mynt, Joey Gilbert, about what you may need to know if you stop at a pot shop.

Read the whole story