

Embracing China's historical and modern marvels

By Kathryn Reed

BEIJING – “Don’t yell protest.”

That was my niece’s sage advice as we walked along Tiananmen Square.

As the largest public square in the world, this mass of concrete in itself is not so impressive. Its history, of course, is what makes it seem like something more than it is.

Police officers mill about. But they have no weapons visible. Military units march in. Also weaponless. But cameras adorn many of the light standards. In a corner across the street inside the Forbidden City are riot helmets and shields lined against a wall.



Each
Terracotta
Warrior is
unique.

Photos/Kathryn
Reed

China, as the oldest continuous world civilization with records dating back 3,500 years, is a complex country.

On the one hand Beijing can boast of having one of the seven

seven-star hotels in the world – the Morgan Plaza that opened just before the 2008 Summer Olympics. On the other hand, people are using construction tools that look like they came from the 1800s.

On one corner are high-end shops like Versace and Gucci. Across the street is a traditional market where with the right person in your group silk scarves can be negotiated down to \$4.

In hotels the card key is inserted inside the room to turn on the lights. Taking the card when leaving means no wasted electricity while out of the room. Then there are many public bathrooms that require hovering and bringing your own toilet paper.

China is the world's largest energy consumer and the world's third-largest net importer of crude oil, after the United States and Japan. I would never want to drive there. Veronica says getting around on a bike is easy. Congestion is so rampant that fast-food places deliver via bicycle instead of automobile.

While hotels have wireless access, Facebook and Twitter are off-limits.

I had the opportunity to spend two weeks in China this spring. My sister, Pam, and I went to visit our niece who lives in Beijing. It was her college graduation present – which was her idea. In the process of planning our adventure we invited our mom along. Having someone speak near-fluent Mandarin and plan all of our travel inside the country made for one of the most relaxing trips I've been on.

Veronica made sure we didn't get ripped off and Pam provided the frequent flier miles for all of us. Like most vacations, you can spend lots or little. For the most part, though, China is not expensive – except for Apple products.

Land of pandas

After an initial night in Beijing we flew to Chengdu. Chengdu is in the Sichuan Province – home of incredibly, fabulous spicy food.

Veronica said watch out for that tiny numbing pepper. It was in my mouth already. Naively I asked how it got its name. She said because it will make my tongue numb. It was soon making my throat numb.

This area is one of China's agricultural regions. As the world's most populous country (1.3 billion people), not having to import all of one's food is important. However, only 13.5 percent of the land is suitable for agricultural, though 40 percent of the labor force works in agriculture.

Peppers of all shapes, sizes and heat are available. They seem to be mixed in with everything. One of my favorites was the spicy peanuts. And the mushrooms. I never got tired of the variety of mushrooms I ate throughout the country; cooked differently each time.

Hot pot is a specialty of Sichuan. It's similar to fondue in that veggies, meat and fish are cooked in a broth and everyone is sharing from the same pot.

We came to this area so I could see the pandas. Holding the little guy was definitely one of the highlights for me.

Having never been to China, everything was new and magical. And so much of what is built is to such a large scale.

The Leshan Buddha is the largest stone Buddha in the world at 233-feet tall and 92-feet across. Construction on it started in 713 AD.

Walking down the narrow stairs is worth it as you stare up at this piece of history that sits at the confluence of the Minjiang, Dadu and Qingyi rivers.

Taking a side trip, we stop off at a tea plantation. Rows of terraced plants that look like hedges grow in a bowl shaped area. Leaves are picked one by one.

Terracotta Warriors

Xi'an is the only city in China that still has a wall surrounding it. Like most cities in China, the history extends thousands of years. But what it is most famous for now is the 1974 discovery of the Terracotta Warriors.

Nearly 2,000 warriors have been unearthed. Each is life size and no two are alike. Experts believe more are buried, but new pits are not being searched for until scientists are able to find a technique to preserve the original color of the warriors.

Not having the technology of the 21st century, these soldiers have such precision and detail it's hard to believe they were created in less than two years.

Emperor Qin had them built to protect him in the afterlife. They were in the ground for 2,000 years until a farmer discovered the artifacts.

In 1979, a museum opened at the site. The structure is built around the main excavation site.

PBS had a special about the warriors that aired earlier this month.

China's capital

Beijing is huge, with more to see and do than a week allows. But, still, we felt like Veronica's itinerary allowed us to hit the highlights, with some non-traditional stops as well.

The Great Wall is aptly named. At 5,500 miles, we barely touched it. To think this was built more than 2,000 years ago is mind-boggling. Though it's not one of the original Seven

Wonders of the World, modern lists would include it.

The Forbidden City is fascinating with its lore. There are 9,999 rooms in more than 200 buildings.

The Summer Palace is definitely worth seeing.

Walking around the Olympic Park was such a contrast to having visited so many historical sites. The modern architecture of the Cube and Birds Nest are so much more impressive in person than on television.

Spending an afternoon and evening in a cooking class just for the four of us was fabulous. It's definitely not something that could be done in the U.S. because it was in the home (non-commercial) kitchen of three siblings. My stomach feels full thinking about it and I'm still wary of ever picking up a cleaver again.

Veronica found us a tea seminar through the Chinese version of Groupon. There's a lot more to tea than boiling water and putting in a bag. And fact, I don't know if tea bags exist in China. It's all loose leaves.

Street food is excellent, though I'm glad I had someone ordering for me instead of just pointing to things.

All of the food in China was wonderful – nothing like what you get in the States.

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S. Tahoe writer to release 'Poems on Travel'

Suzanne Roberts' book launch party for "Three Hours to Burn a Body: Poems on Travel" is June 17 at 6:30pm. Also, being celebrated is the opening of the photography show "Faces," featuring some of her travel photographs from around the world.

The event at Bona Fide Books includes a short poetry reading, book signing, drinks, appetizers, tribal belly dancers, and more.

Bona Fide Books is located in Meyers at 1069 Magua St., No. 4, behind the Getaway Café.

Indian casinos compete for music acts; Tahoe-Reno impacted

By Carla Meyer, Sacramento Bee

On Saturday night, John Fogerty will play at Yolo County's Cache Creek Casino Resort while his ex-bandmates play Lincoln's Thunder Valley Casino Resort as Creedence Clearwater Revisited.

"I thought that was very ironic," Cache Creek entertainment manager Ben Slaght said of the Creedence Clearwater overflow. "It is like having the Rolling Stones with Mick (Jagger) and Keith (Richards) on one stage and the Rolling Stones with Bill

Wyman" on another stage.

"It is not ironic, it is intentional," Thunder Valley spokesman Doug Elmets said. Upon learning Cache Creek had booked Fogerty to open its new venue, Thunder Valley sought its own piece of the Creedence crowd. "It is a competitive market out there."

Competition and the economy are reshaping the concert scene in Northern California and Northern Nevada. Tapping a level of act once more commonly found in Reno and Lake Tahoe casinos, Cache Creek and Thunder Valley also are drawing from a huge baby boomer market.

Boomers buoyed the concert business in 2010, when overall receipts decreased 12 percent, but Bon Jovi and the Eagles ranked among top ticket sellers, according to concert magazine Pollstar.

"The (first) goal is to provide an entertainment option for the region," Elmets said of Thunder Valley's amphitheater, which will hold boomer favorites the Beach Boys and Chicago and, like Cache Creek's venue, is a "seasonal" structure built atop a parking lot. "Goal two is to get people of a particular demographic to come to the casino – either gambling or going to the restaurants or the spa."

Read the whole story

Movies about the forest, fires to air at Explore Tahoe

Explore Tahoe: An Urban Trailhead will be showing a series of

movies May 31-June 3.

All are free. The visitor center is located at 4114 Lake Tahoe Blvd. near Heavenly Village.

“The Greatest Good” – a U.S. Forest Service Centennial Film about Smokey Bear will be shown May 31 from 2-3pm.

“Forests with a Future” – a U.S. Forest Service film about protecting old-growth trees, wildfire, and communities in the Sierra Nevada will be shown June 1 from 2-2:30pm.

“Living with Fire in the Lake Tahoe Basin” will be shown June 2 from 2-2:30pm.

“Be Ember Prepared” is on June 3 from 2-2:30pm.

Zephyr Cove alum stars in ‘Wizard of Oz’

They say what goes around, comes around. And it seems the Yellow Brick Road of Oz is no exception.

May 19-21, Barbara Rugg reprises her role as Dorothy in the classic production of “The Wizard of Oz,” at Sage Ridge School, a part that she played several years ago in for the Get in the Act Youth Theatre Company as a student at Zephyr Cove Elementary School.

As a graduating high school senior, Rugg has a performance resume that includes screenwork for Reno-area film companies, voiceover work for an off-Broadway puppetry performance in New York and Atlanta, and stage experience with the Nevada Civic Light Opera Company, the D.G. Menchetti Youth Shakespeare

program, and the Nevada Shakespeare Company.

For the past two summers, she has organized a troupe of elementary-school students to perform shows for local senior citizens and nursing homes. In August, she will begin studying drama at Brandeis University in Massachusetts.

Reserved tickets for the Sage Ridge School production of "The Wizard of Oz" are \$20. General admission tickets are \$15 for adults and \$10 for students and seniors and will be sold at the door.

For tickets and information, contact Cameron Crain at (775) 852.6222, ext. 525, or ccrain@sageridge.org.

Ways to deal with plantar fasciitis

By Caroline Barichievich

Plantar fasciitis is a common and often nagging problem. Two million people a year live with plantar fasciitis, an inflammation of the thick band of fibrous tissue on the bottom of the foot. The plantar fascia runs from your toes to your heel and helps form the arch of your foot. It does not get a lot of circulation, which creates a problem for many runners, hikers and people who stand and walk a lot.

Common symptoms include heel pain, pain returning after prolonged standing and pain after activities. Generally, pain is worse in the morning due to the lack of circulation and the inflammatory process that affects the tissue overnight. Some people find that pain lessens with activity because of the

increased circulation to the affected tissue.



Caroline
Barichievich

Causes of plantar fasciitis include excessive running, walking, jumping or any repetitive stress where the tissue gets overloaded. These forces cause microtrauma to the tissue. Foot mechanics can also be a prime contributing factor if you overpronate, have flat feet or have high arches. Certain foot shapes can cause chronic irritation to the tissue with each step you take.

Easing the pain: Treatment for plantar fasciitis includes resting or modifying your activity, applying ice and/or taking anti-inflammatory medication, and sometimes wearing night splints. In Barton Health's Rehabilitation Services, we assess the issues causing plantar fasciitis.

In most cases, the tissue is tight, necessitating tissue or joint mobilization. Our physical therapists teach patients stretches that will allow for more pliability in the foot. Ultrasound can also increase circulation to the tissue. When someone has a biomechanical problem, we can mitigate it with orthotics, taping and recommendations for proper footwear. There are specific exercises that can help strengthen the surrounding muscles of the foot and lower leg to increase the dynamic stability of the foot, allowing a return to activity.

Tips for happier feet: To alleviate or prevent plantar fasciitis pain:

- Never walk with bare feet, especially with your first steps out of bed in the morning. This can overstretch any tight tissue and cause irritation.
- Roll the bottom of your foot over a frozen water bottle for five minutes to help mobilize tight tissue and decrease inflammation.

Plantar fasciitis can be a chronic ailment if not addressed in the acute stages. Therefore, consulting your health care provider right away and being proactive are vital steps to your well-being and recovery.

Get back on your feet by calling Barton Rehabilitation Services at (530) 543.5896.

Caroline Barichievich is a physical therapist with Barton Health Rehabilitation Services.

Toccata plans chamber music events

Toccata presents Trio Brio in “Chamber Music Charmers” June 12-19.

Featured performers are David Brock, piano; Pat Crane, violin and viola; and Darrell Moore, clarinet performing works by classical, romantic, and 20th century jazz/impressionist composers including Mozart, Schumann, Bruch, Milhaud and Villiers Stanford.

Performances are:

June 12, 6pm at Squaw Valley Chapel, Olympic Valley.

June 18, 4pm at the Steinway Piano Gallery of Reno.

June 19, 7:30pm at the Valhalla Boathouse in South Lake Tahoe.

Tickets are \$20 adults and \$35 preferred, and are available at the door or at www.ToccataTahoe.com. For the Valhalla Boathouse, tickets are available online. Preferred seating includes a wine and cheese gathering one hour prior to the concert.

For further information or questions call (775) 313.9697, (775) 781.4702 or go online.

Avoiding Echo Summit – scenic, but definitely longer

By Kathryn Reed

Scenic – definitely. An hour longer – without a doubt. More windy – no avoiding it. Tiresome – if you have to do it more than once.

That's the report on having driven the Highway 50 scenic detour – so named by local officials. Road closure is not the phrase they want to use even though that is exactly what is going on.



Detour signs
are throughout
the route.
Photos/Kathryn
Reed

Echo Summit shutdown May 11 for 10 to 14 days while a construction firm hired by Caltrans fixes the deteriorated rock wall that links the South Shore with points west. Of course if the work isn't done, it will be more than a two-week closure.

Although the work was interrupted for more than 24 hours because of snow, Caltrans said the gang was back at work Monday. But that could be short-lived with the winter weather advisory that is in effect until 10 this morning – which is calling for more than a half foot of white stuff above 7,000 feet. Echo Summit is at 7,382 feet.

Road well traveled

Making the trek from Contra Costa County to Kirkwood Mountain Resort via back roads, and mostly highways 4 and 88 was commonplace growing up because that's where my dad liked to ski. In many ways it's still easier than dealing with Highway 50 or Interstate 80.

But it's not the way most people choose to come all the way to the South Shore. That's because 50 is faster, shorter – and, actually, more scenic. Something about that American River Canyon never gets tiring.

Still, headed for San Francisco on Saturday we had few options for getting there. We opted to follow (for the most part) the Caltrans route over Highway 88.

It was a good thing the Amgen Tour de California never intended Luther Pass to be part of the route because the debris on the west side looked treacherous and the water

coming off the opposite side onto the road was no better. Of course then there are the numerous potholes, but cyclists in the Lake Tahoe Basin are accustomed to those on highways and city streets.

More traffic than usual for a Saturday in May is headed to Hope Valley.

Watching the Carson River gush it's hard to tell where its bank is – the water is that high.

Atop Carson Pass the lots are full. Backcountry skiers are eager to get in some runs. With the amount of snow the season – and it still dumping – wildflower season is something to only dream about.

Ice is melting on Caples Lake, with shades of blue piercing the surface like an iceberg. By Monday, the blue is gone – covered with a fresh layer of snow.

A group of snowmobilers is gathered at the 8,000-foot mark. Winter is not over for them. Spots near the Carson Spur have drifts of snow 20-feet high.

Farther along is the Bear River Reservoir, which may have part of the Kirkwood Mountain Resort power line going through it.

Panther Creek is off to the left. Back in a ways reportedly is a waterfall worth seeing. But the road was closed a few weeks back when we were thinking about scouting it out.

Dirt roads continuously connect with Highway 88. It looks like a mountain bike and ATV haven.

Snow is getting spotty at 6,000 feet and is gone at 5,000 – at least on May 14.

Omo Ranch Road is on the right. This is the back way to Fair Play wineries. Get on those roads and you can find your way to Placerville. Just have plenty of time.

Finally, the road is improving at about 4,000 feet, just past Cooks Station. The terrain is changing. Not so many pine trees. More filler trees that are too hard to name whizzing by.

New signs to read – like, “Owl and Bat Houses”, bars touting karaoke, Saturday prime rib, “Food, Gas, Sporting Goods,” “Haircuts \$12” – and all those fruit and vegetable stands.

A little more pro-active marketing by these folks might get people to stop.

Jackson Rancheria seems out in the middle of nowhere. Maybe because it is. But just driving by it is more inviting than any gaming venue on the South Shore.

Making our own detour

We zip through Jackson. On the outskirts is the Highway 50 detour sign that we ignore. It leads people to Highway 49. Instead, we stay on Highway 88. Going back to the childhood route.

As we leave Jackson the terrain flattens out. Definitely ag land. Hills are turning golden, with only faint hints of green lingering.

Homes near Ione are selling for \$159,900. Don't want to know if our house in Tahoe is worth more.

Sign for Pardee Reservoir brings back memories of a camping trip a few years back when we were in search of warmer weather and just started driving.

Tasteful sign says, “Thank you for visiting Amador County.” El Dorado, Placer, Douglas – are you listening?

Cows cover the grasslands.

Lake Camanche is another refuge for Tahoeans looking for

warmth.

At the intersection of highway 88 and 12 we go right.

Vineyards, apple trees, cherry trees and row crops cover the landscape.

Most of the small towns we hit have gas prices similar to Lake Tahoe.

The scenic trip to agriculture land turns urban on the outskirts of Stockton.

From Highway 88 we take Highway 99 south, then quickly onto Highway 4 west, which merges with Interstate 5.

We pass a sign for Highway 120 at Manteca. For now, this is the main road into Yosemite National Park because Tioga Pass isn't likely to open until July.

Off I-5 we merge onto Interstate 205, which leads us to Interstate 580, then to Interstate 80 over the Bay Bridge.

It took 208 miles and four hours.

Headed back to Tahoe

With about the same miles driven, the route we took May 16 back to South Lake Tahoe seemed faster. But with stopping at a winery and for lunch, we're not really sure of the exact time.

We left The City, and in Sacramento took Power Inn Road. This leads to Highway 16 toward Jackson.

Allow your passenger to sleep through this section of road.

As the golden hills full of oak trees emerge it becomes that scenic route people keep touting.

Up ahead is Highway 49, where we turned right. Not far up is Drytown Cellars. It's the only winery actually on the detour

that doesn't require turning off on a non-designated road. Business is picking up, according to Jon.

Jon is pouring us sips of red. He tells us this area at about 2,300 feet had several inches of snow over the weekend. We recommend the house red for 10 bucks a bottle.

Fresh snow covers the green grass in Pioneer at 3,000 feet. It wasn't there two days before.

Clouds are forming. Sky darkening. Trees at 6,000 feet are full of snow.

Flurries are falling at the Kirkwood Inn. We stop for a bite and to decompress in front of the roaring wood fire. Built in 1864, the dark wood interior looks like it has stories to tell.

Our waitress says it's the weather that is keeping people away. Thursday and Friday business had picked up, but by Monday it was so-so. Such are the hazards with snow in the parking lot and no plow to clear it.

Sue raves about the chicken tortilla soup. Their portabella mushroom sandwich is one of the better ones I've had.

Back on the road, back over Luther, back into South Lake.

Fingers crossed Echo Summit opens soon.

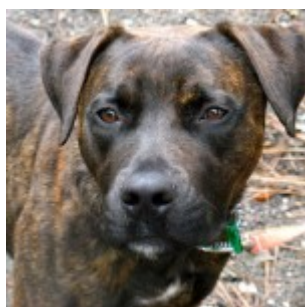
AAA's Sierra Nevada map is good one to carry while traveling this scenic route.

Susan Wood contributed to this story.

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Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe

Ender is an 8-month old Lab-pit bull mix who is a real sweetheart.



When he plays with a group of dogs at the shelter, he is the most mellow one of the bunch – his Labrador characteristics clearly show through.

He has lived with small children. Anyone who is interested in a pit bull mix with a great personality should come to the shelter to meet Ender.

Call (530) 573.7925 for directions, hours, and other information on adopting a pet.

For spay-neuter assistance for South Tahoe residents, go online.

– Karen Kuentz

STHS artists dominate congressional art competition

South Tahoe High School art students swept the Congressional Art Competition, An Artistic Discovery, which is a nationwide high school art competition.

Each congressional district submits entries. For Rep. Tom McClintock's district, all the winners are students of STHS teacher Candi Lincoln's.

The winning entry from STHS will be displayed for one year in the Cannon Tunnel leading to the Capitol.

STHS students placed first in the 2009 and 2010 competitions, too.

The winners are:

First: Alana Mosca (Barefoot Beauty)

Second: Gisela Renteria (Folklorica)

Third: Christopher Garrett (Falls)

Honorable mention: Nick Knowles (3 Bears), Casey Willitts (Untitled), Petr Colwell (Sun Storm).

The winners are expected to be recognized by the Lake Tahoe Unified School District board at an upcoming meeting.