Living like the Romans – if only for day

By Susan Wood

BATH, England – As I swirled in the water, she cradled me in such a personal and intimate way, I was immediately transported to thoughts of how a baby might feel being held by her mother.

There lies the experience of receiving a Watsu massage in the hot bath at one of the most renowned spas in the world – the Thermae Bath Spa in the center of the town of Bath.



Susan Wood looks out onto Bath from the Thermae Bath Spa. Photos/Kathryn Reed

The place is like no other. It's where mineral-rich waters were reported to have drained off limestone rock from the hills into a lower, marshy plateau where Romans bathed 2,000 years ago because they believed the water was sacred and had healing powers. Hence, the word spa reflects that image. SPA stands for *salus per aquam*, meaning health through water in Latin. Thermae, which opened in 2006, has never deviated from the belief.

Even Jessica my therapist, who placed me in an almost trance-

like state for 50 minutes as she stretched my body, told me the aquatic Shiatsu represents the type of massage that “those suffering from emotional distress” would find helpful to their wellbeing. On vacation, I had none of that. However, it put me in a mental state of bliss for the rest of the day and into the evening. The cost for a Watsu massage is 60 pounds and couples treatments are offered.

Is this how literary royalty like Jane Austen were inspired? The widespread belief is the resident and author of “Pride and Prejudice” bathed in these same waters with her brother. In the 18th century, soaking socially was all the rage for royalty and literary dignitaries in this city filled with culture. Elizabeth I gave the water rights to Bath, and the city has never looked back.

Across from the world heritage site that started it all – the Roman Baths, the Thermae Bath Spa attracts between 15 to 20 percent local residents. Of the 80 percent who are tourists, half consist of Brits on a day or weekend out. The largest portion of out-of-the-area visitors is Americans.

Guests receive a wristband to add on charges without having to return to the locker room for money. It also doubles as an electronic key for the locker.

Most guests stay for an average of two hours at a cost of 26 pounds – with many people electing to soak in the pools for the evening as reflected in the popularity of the Twilight Package. The three-hour spa session includes dinner at Thermae’s Springs Café. The restaurant urges diners to eat in their provided robes and slippers in order to return to the rooftop pool for the sunset. The experience costs 42 pounds.

“People come here to wind down instead of the pub. The atmosphere is quite a buzz,” Thermae spokeswoman Charlotte Hanna told *Lake Tahoe News* on a recent tour before we witnessed the behavior ourselves. “They’re doing something

here that people have done for thousands of years, and we encourage that.”

Thermae, which is run privately but paid for with public dollars by a council reporting to the city of Bath, has undergone mass renovations. These upgrades include construction to burrow the pipes deeper to alleviate any health safety concerns, restoring the historic buildings and installing an ultraviolet filtration system. By minimally treating, and harnessing the water that comes out of the ground at 114.8 degrees Fahrenheit, the five-story complex can funnel and cool the water flowing into a variety of pools nearly 4½ feet deep to a temperature of 98 degrees.

Beyond the pools, the Thermae Bath Spa offers traditional spa treatments, body wraps, facials and the special Vichy rainforest shower as a cleansing therapy. For heat cleansing, there are a number of aromatic steam rooms in pods – with an overhead shower situated between them to cool off. (Trying each steam room will stimulate your senses.)

Although the majority of guests are adults, it’s easy to feel and act like a child floating around on a flotation noodle – especially in the Minerva Bath.

(An interesting observation: Spending hours in the pool did not wrinkle my hands). There must be something in the water.

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2 educational days about fishing in Tahoe area

Tahoe Center for Environmental Sciences is putting on two fishing events this month.World-class fly fishing is available all around the greater Tahoe area.

Join local fishing expert Victor Babbitt to learn about how, where and when to fish in and around Lake Tahoe at a presentation on Aug. 16 at the Tahoe Center for Environmental Sciences building ion the campus of Sierra Nevada College. (291 Country Club Drive, Incline Village)

Babbitt will discuss local fishing options and will allow plenty of time for questions and answers at the Aug. 16, 6pm event.

Babbitt is owner-guide of Tahoe Fly Fishing Outfitters in South Lake Tahoe, the only full-service fly shop and guide service in the basin.

The next event is Aug. 18 from 10am-2pm at the Tahoe City Field Station (Historic Hatchery) 2400 Lake Forest Road, Tahoe City.

This will be the time to get fly-casting instruction, be part of tying demonstrations, and discuss how and where to fish in and around Lake Tahoe. Young, old and families are welcome.

For more information, contact Heather Segale at (775) 881.7562 or email hmsegale@ucdavis.edu.

Mining returns to Virginia City area

By Paul Nelson, KTVN-TV

For several years, Comstock Mining Incorporated has been trying to begin operations at an open-pit mine, in Storey County. This week, the mine began hauling and crushing ore, but not everyone is on board. Corrado De Gasperis is the mine's president and CEO. He says about 100 employees are in the process of digging up 2.5 million ounces of gold and 24-million ounces of silver from the mine.

"At today's prices, it's almost $5-billion worth of value and we honestly feel that we've just started to define the resource," De Gasperis said. "We've only drilled on less than 10% of our property."

The 10 square mile parcel is partly between the towns of Gold Hill and Silver City. Some residents fear the mine will force people out, and bring in transient workers.

"You're basically blowing up the community and starting all over again," Comstock Residents Association Member Joe McCarthy said.

The mine has gotten dozens of permits and Storey County Commissioners have approved the operation, but the Comstock Residents Association says their voices have fallen on deaf ears.

"They want to know what the impact of this project is going to be on wildlife habitat, on our recreational areas, on our ground water," McCarthy said.

"We committed to voluntary soil testing of any disturbances before we do it, and we've proven, now, the safeness of all

the activities," De Gasperis said.

Read the whole story

Crew needed to help build features on Corral Trail

Professional plans have been drawn up detailing 30 new features on the Corral Trail in South Lake Tahoe.

Help is needed to build table tops, hip jumps, log rides, berm turns, and rock drops on one of Tahoe's favorite trails. The next trail day is Aug. 25 from 90am to 4pm. Meet at bottom dirt parking lot of Corral off Oneidas Street.

Bring water, lunch, bike, helmet, long sleeves and long pants, gloves, and glasses.

Tools, lunch, snacks, beer, and a barbecue at the end of the day will be provided.

RSVP via the TAMBA website for tool and food planning.

2-day festival all about dogs at Squaw

The Village at Squaw Valley is paying tribute to man and woman's best friend with the 3nd annual Peaks and Paws Festival on Aug. 25-26.

Dogs and their people can enjoy 16 wineries, beer, 12 hours of continuous live bluegrass, pet themed art, and activities and outings specially designed for furry friends.

All of the proceeds from the festival will benefit the Humane Society of Truckee-Tahoe.

Headlining at Peaks and Paws are the Dead Winter Carpenters, a high-energy, Americana/roots-infused five-piece band from North Lake Tahoe, and the Emmitt-Nershi Band, whose co-founders cut their teeth with Leftover Salmon and the String Cheese Incident respectively. The festival lineup also includes a host of other acts including The Iguanas, David Jacobs Strain, Head for the Hills, Tony Furtado and Bison.

The Peaks and Paws Festival is 11am-6pm each day.

The wine tasting costs $25 per day.

Go online for a full list of activities, times and fees.

South Tahoe going to the dogs for a day

Dawgs on the Run is a canine carnival that will take place Sept. 15 from 10am-4pm on Ski Run Boulevard in South Lake Tahoe.

Activities for dogs, their people and kids are planned.

More information about the various activities and contests is online.

All proceeds will go to local pet nonprofit organizations.

Douglas County forming youth flag football teams

The Douglas County Parks and Recreation Department will be accepting registration for the NFL Youth Flag Football League until team rosters are full.

NFL Flag Football teaches boys and girls the fundamentals of football, sportsmanship, and teamwork in a fun, less-competitive, non-contact way.

Players receive a reversible NFL Flag jersey, mouthpiece, and individual award.

All games will be played on Saturdays at Stodick Park. Participants will be divided into four age groups, 5-6 coed, 7-8 coed, 9-11 coed, and 12-14 coed. Players must be at least 6 and not 15 by Sept. 1. Coaches will randomly choose teams through a draft system.

Season starts with the new player skills training in September. Parent volunteer coaches are the backbone of the league. Forty coaches are needed for a successful season.

For more information, email Anthony Davis at adavis@co.douglas.nv.us or call Douglas County Parks & Recreation at (775) 782.9828.

Significant improvement to Lake Tahoe's clarity confounds scientists

By Kathryn Reed

Another year of data about Lake Tahoe's clarity provides more confusion for scientists.

"This last year has defied conventional wisdom in many ways," Geoffrey Schladow, director of the UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center, said in a statement. "In the past, very wet years have led to decreases in lake clarity, whereas we are now seeing the opposite. This only reinforces the fact that the underlying, driving forces are themselves starting to change."

The "Tahoe: State of the Lake Report 2012" was released Aug. 9 by the Tahoe Environmental Research Center at UC Davis.

Summer clarity of 51.5 feet in 2011 was the second worst on record. Winter clarity of 84.9 feet was an improvement of 11.9 feet. Overall, the 2011 average lake clarity improved 4.5 feet from 2010.

Scientists speculate the winter improvement was from efforts to reduce fine sediment from reaching Lake Tahoe. However, they also stressed that monitoring is the only way to prove that statement.

A Secchi disc, which looks like a white dinner plate, has been used since 1968 to figure out how clear Lake Tahoe is. Researchers drop the disc overboard and use their naked eye to see how far down the disc goes.

For most of those years the clarity has been decreasing. Throughout these 44 years the reasons why keep changing. The

latest thinking is fine sediment is the main culprit. That is why every project that is proposed in the basin must have an environmental component that would reduce the amount of sediment reaching the lake from that particular parcel.

That is why close to $2 billion has been pumped into what is called the environmental improvement program. The EIP was established after President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore came to Tahoe for the first Lake Tahoe Environmental Summit. (The next one is Aug. 13, 10am at Edgewood Tahoe, Stateline.) Much of that money came through the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act. Reauthorization of it is not expected any time soon. Other money has come from the Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act.

With the tap dry on both those sources, local jurisdictions and regulatory agencies are scratching their heads as to how future projects will be get paid. And with the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board and Nevada Department of Environmental Protection Agency implementing the total maximum daily load protocols, the gauntlet has been laid down for the five counties, one city, U.S. Forest Service and two state transportation agencies.

Clarity readings since 2000



Lake Tahoe's clarity improved in 2011, but why remains unknown. Photo/LTN

file

- 2011: 68.9 feet
- 2010: 64.4 feet
- 2009: 68.1 feet
- 2008: 69.6 feet
- 2007: 70.1 feet
- 2006: 67.7 feet
- 2005: 72.4 feet
- 2004: 73.6 feet
- 2003: 71 feet
- 2002: 78 feet
- 2001: 73.6 feet
- 2000: 67.3 feet

Source: UC Davis

Other data from the latest clarity report:

• Despite the cold winter and a cool July, the annual average surface water temperatures rose by 0.6 degrees.

• The length of time a summerlike stratification – where layers of water form with different temperatures – persists has increased by almost 20 days, a likely outcome of climate change. Researchers fear if this trend continues, oxygen replenishment to the bottom of the lake will become less frequent.

• A potential culprit to reduced summer clarity is a microscopic algae cell called Cyclotella. The tiny cells have grown exponentially in the past five years, scattering light and reducing clarity. Research shows that times of the highest concentrations of Cyclotella coincide with the lowest summer clarity levels.

• The 2007 Angora Fire, which burned 9 percent of the Upper Truckee River drainage, had almost no effect on lake water quality.

• An experiment using rubber mats on a half-acre site in the southeast portion of Lake Tahoe to control the spread of Asian clams appears to be effective.

Hot weather throughout Sierra; but no record highs

A persistent high pressure system is bringing hot weather to most of California and into western Nevada.

While the National Weather Service in Reno is not predicting to set any record highs between Friday and Sunday in Tahoe, Carson or Reno, it will be hot. Reno should have triple digits for the next three days.



AJ and Rusty, foreground, cool off Aug. 9 at Cove East. Photo/Kathryn Reed

In South Lake Tahoe the highs will be in the high 80s.

Most of the thunderstorm activity is expected to be in the

late afternoon and evenings, with the greatest chance on Sunday. This is for the Lake Tahoe Basin, Reno and Pine Nut areas.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Trail building weekend near Donner Summit

The U.S. Forest Service and Truckee Trails Foundation are hosting a trail volunteer weekend Aug. 18-19.

The Hole in the Ground Trail is a popular mountain biking trail on Donner Summit. Volunteer participants will work under direction from local Forest Service and trail advocate crew leaders.

Bring sturdy shoes, sunscreen, water, lunch, and appropriate clothing for a full day (or two) of trail work. Meet at the Interstate 80 Pacific Crest Trailhead (Boreal/Castle Valley exit) at 8:30am. The workday ends at 4pm.

Interested volunteers must preregister by emailing allison@truckeetrails.org.

Volunteers will complete such tasks as brushing, drainage work, tread enhancement and repair, and even a minor re-route. To complete the remaining deferred maintenance on the Hole in the Ground Trail, the Forest Service received a $14,000 grant from the Nevada and Placer County Resource Advisory Committee.