Virtual reality could give more people access to outdoors

By Shane Downing, Sierra

As you've probably heard by now, virtual reality technology—or VR—is shaking up industries as disparate as gaming and real estate, filmmaking and journalism, tourism and (no surprise there) pornography. The 360-degree video presentation, which sometimes is also rendered as 3D, has the power to create immersive experiences that seem remarkably real. Now, some media producers and conservation organizations are experimenting with using VR to capture and communicate the experience of outdoor recreation.

Imagine: Someday soon you could scuba dive the Great Barrier Reef, canoe through the Everglades, or hike Half Dome in your bathrobe and slippers, from the comfort of your home.

Those who are experimenting with VR as a conservation tool acknowledge that the visceral experience of being outdoors can't be replicated easily. The intoxicating mountain air, dizzying heights, and sense of adventure of a mountain ascent are one-of-a-kind. "There's nothing that takes the place of actually being outside," says Connie Dassinger, a member of the Centennial Group of the Sierra Club's Georgia Chapter.

Read the whole story

Serenity tops the list for most popular boat name

Th Boat Owners Association of the United States has issued its 2017 Top 10 Boat Names. The names come from tallying up requests for boat names to the BoatUS Graphics service.

Top 10 Boat Names:

- Serenity: The utter calm and quietude boating brings
- Seas the Day: A nautical wordplay on the Latin saying “Carpe diem,” taking boating to its fullest
- Andiamo: “Let’s go!” in Italian and a perennial favorite boat name
- Irish Wake: Mourning and merrymaking after the death of a family member or friend
- Freedom: Patriotic name that first appeared on the Top 10 Names List in 2004
- Adagio: Italian for “at a slow tempo.” Represents how boating reduces stress in our hectic lives
- Ohana: From the Hawaiian culture, meaning “family” in an extended sense
- Oasis: A fertile spot in a desert where water is found; symbolizes boating’s ability to refresh and nourish our daily lives
- Happy Ours: A playful take on the good feeling you get at the afternoon communal cocktail time
- Firefly: Making the list for the first time, it’s thought that the kids picked this one.

Tahoe-Truckee swimmers score at state meet



Tristan Klasko of STHS, second from left, gets ready to compete. Photo/Provided.

Three girls' swim teams from the Tahoe-Truckee area finished in the top seven at the Division 3A state championships in Carson City over the weekend.

Boulder City High School dominated the competition, tallying 214.50 points. In second was Truckee High School with 75 points, Incline High School was sixth with 33 points, and South Tahoe High School with 30 points.

Boulder also captured the overall boys' title in that division with 132 points. Second was Truckee with 99 points, STHS was sixth with 28.5 points, and North Tahoe High School tied for 13th with 11 points.

Individual girls' 3A:

- Kate Rye, Incline, tied for first with 18 points
- Megan Burrill, Truckee, fourth, 15 points
- Alexandra Otomo, STHS, tied for 12th, 10 points

- Courtney Engberg, Truckee, tied for 12th, 10 points
- Grace Bronston, Truckee, tied for 15th, 9 points
- Adrienne Parker, Truckee, tied for 21st, 6 points
- Olivia LaGrandeur, Truckee, tied for 27th, 4 points
- Maia Smith, STHS, tied for 31st, 3 points
- Anna Kates, Truckee, tied for 31st, 3 points
- Ciera Winberg, Incline, tied for 31st, 3 points
- Sophie Stewart, STHS, tied for 31st, 3 points
- Hannah Lucas, STHS, tied for 40th, 2 points.

Individual boys' 3A:

- Cooper DeRyk, Truckee, tied for first, 18 points
- Dylan Cole, Truckee, eighth, 12 points
- Gavin Olsen, Truckee, tied for ninth, 11 points
- Hunter Hoffman, North Tahoe, tied for ninth, 11 points
- Louis Martin, STHS, 16th, 9.5 points
- Evan Opsal, Truckee, 18th, 8 points
- Aaron Bronstone, Truckee, 21st, 7 points
- Tristan Klasko, STHS, tied for 26th, 5 points
- Temugen Enkhbayer, STHS, tied for 29th, 4 points
- Logan Kasten, Truckee, tied for 36th, 1 point.

Rapid snowmelt causes floods, impacts recreation



Water-covered trails are common in the Tahoe basin, which is less of a problem for four-legged hikers. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Memorial Day weekend is usually the start of summer for most of the country. For Lake Tahoe, it's really the end of winter.

This coming weekend won't be any different. While the forecast is for sunny skies and highs in the mid- to high 60s, the remnants of winter will likely be felt by people who are near any body of water and on hiking-biking trails.

The National Weather Service in Reno has issued a flood watch that is in effect through 11pm May 24 for South Lake Tahoe, Truckee, Bridgeport, Mammoth Lakes, Stateline, Incline Village, Carson City, Reno and Gardnerville.

Unseasonably hot weather is in the forecast for this week, which will accelerate the melting of what was a record snowpack for this area of the Sierra. In South Lake Tahoe, the high today is expected to be 78, 79 on May 23, and 74 on May 24. There is also a chance of thunderstorms on Tuesday, which would convert the snow to liquid faster, as well as add to swollen waterways via rain.

According to the Weather Service, “Best estimates for flows this week coming out of unregulated Eastern Sierra creeks and streams are likely to be 2-2½ times current flows with smaller creeks likely to see three times current flows. Daily peak flows on small creeks and streams typically occur during the evening and overnight hours.”

Camping near creeks, streams and rivers is not advised.

Expect the rising water to impact surrounding campgrounds, hiking-biking trails and meadows. Depending on where the water is flowing, it could also destabilize already saturated hillsides, causing mud and rock slides.



Trout Creek is creeping into South Lake Tahoe backyards.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

Water is spilling forth from hillsides, creating mini-waterfalls that even longtime locals don't remember ever seeing.
In South Lake Tahoe the Upper Truckee River and Trout Creek have been beyond their banks for weeks. Trout Creek is in the back yards of people in the Al Tahoe neighborhood. The river looks like it might spill onto the runways at Lake Tahoe Airport.

The Upper Truckee River is flowing at 713 cubic feet per second, about 2½ times higher than the mean for this time of year.

For those who are thinking about venturing into any Sierra body of water should remember how cold the water is and how swift it's moving.

Parts of the bike trail from Tahoe City to Truckee are expected to continue to be under water as the Truckee River floods.

It doesn't take long to hit snow on some of the area's popular trails. And many without snow are covered with measurable water. Trees are also a hindrance in some places.

The U.S. Forest Service says to expect trails about 8,000 feet to be melted by mid-July.

Here are a few reports on trail conditions:

· According to the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit it's possible to drive to the Glen Alpine trailhead. "The hike to the springs is a mix of dry, deep water, and snow. Above the Glen Alpine Spring, expect lots of snow. Snow ranges from 2-20-plus feet depending on aspect, elevation, and shade. Lakes are all frozen, very little dry ground (isolated rock outcroppings) above 8,000 feet."

· Wrights Lake Road is snow-free to the three-mile marker from Highway 50. From there it is covered in 4 to 8 feet of snow, with some large drifts that are 12 to 15 feet deep.

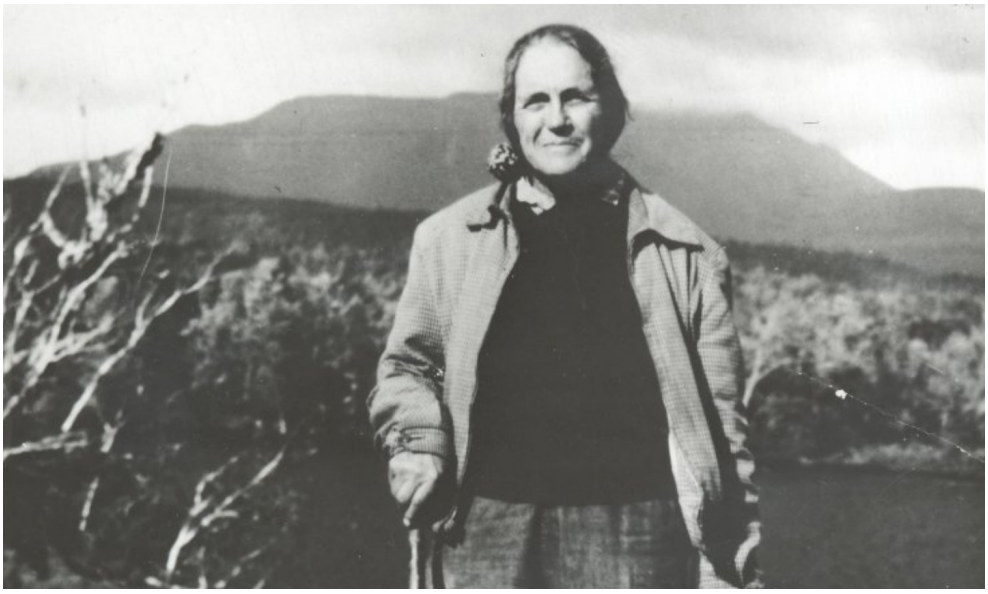
· Patchy snow remains on the Eagle Lake Trail above Emerald Bay. Eagle Lake remains partially frozen. Expect to post hole.

· The Mount Tallac Trail is clear with patchy snow from the trail head to the first ridge, but as the trail nears Floating Island Lake there is 3 to 4 feet of snow on the trail and on the approach to Cathedral Lake, there is 6 to 7 feet of snow obscuring the trail.

· For more info on trails managed by the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, go **online**.

· For more info about mountain biking trails, go to **TAMBA's website**.

The great-grandma who changed the AT forever



Gatewood during her first successful trip on the AT in 1955. Photo/Appalachian Trail Conservancy

By Cass Buggé, Outside

In May 1955, when 67-year-old great-grandmother Emma Gatewood told her children that she was “going for a hike in the woods,” she left out a few important details. Like the fact that she was heading 470 miles from her Ohio hometown to Mount Oglethorpe, Georgia, writes reporter Ben Montgomery in his 2016 book, Grandma Gatewood’s Walk. And the fact that this “hike” was the 2,190-mile Appalachian Trail, and Gatewood’s intention was to become the first woman to solo thru-hike the whole thing.

Born in 1887, in the 2,000-person community of Mercerville, Ohio, Gatewood lived a life tied to the outdoors. A childhood defined by physical labor on her family’s farm gave way to an early marriage—at age 19—to Percy Gatewood, who allegedly physically abused her. As Montgomery writes, “They were married three months before he drew blood.” A walk in the woods behind her home often served as her only respite during her most trying times. After 33 years together, in 1940, Gatewood managed to get a divorce—almost unheard of at the time—and raised the last three of her 11 children on her own.

At some point in the 1950s, with all her children grown and out of the house, Gatewood was reading a 1949 *National Geographic* article about Earl Shaffer, the first man to through-hike the AT. As Gatewood's daughter Rowena later told it, her mother finished the piece and thought to herself, "If those men can do it, I can do it."

Read the whole story

Bike safety a lesson for beyond the classroom



Charlie Baker makes his way through the obstacle course as CHP Officer Jeff Gartner times him. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

If a stop sign isn't enough to get the cyclist to stop, the tennis ball does the trick when it hits the tire. That ball represents a vehicle without the consequences of not following the rules of the road.

"The whole goal here is for kids to be safe through the summer," Officer Jeff Gartner told *Lake Tahoe News*. California Highway Patrol officers were at Bijou Community School on May 19 for a bike rodeo and will be at the other Lake Tahoe Unified School District elementary schools before the end of the school year, with the goal of reaching all K-5 students.

This event is something officers try to do at the end of each school year as kids are more likely to be getting back on their bikes.

Using some of the painted lines on the blacktop and chalk for the course, the goal is to maneuver through without falling, colliding with others, and all the while obeying the signs.



Simone Sitchon practices staying in control. Photo/Kathryn Reed

"Something I learned is to control my bike and to go around

turns slower so I’m not out of control,” Simone Sitchon told *Lake Tahoe News.*

She is in Cynthia Pastore’s fifth-grade class. For Pastore, she sees events like this as a real benefit for the students – especially in a practical environment where they can practice what they are being taught.

Before students get on their bikes the officers do a quick inspection to make sure the brakes are working and the steering mechanism is good. They make adjustments if they can, but no unsafe bikes are allowed in the rodeo.

For those who didn’t have a bike, they share with friends. Officers even have a few helmets to hand out that the kids can keep.

At first the cyclists seem a bit wobbly and aren’t inside the lines. The extremely tight angles are like going through the hairpin turns at Emerald Bay in a car. Soon, though, the youngsters are getting a handle on how to adjust their speed, keep their balance and ride in a controlled manner.

The more experienced riders were timed through the course. Go outside the lines, knock a cone over or ignore a road sign and the cyclist was disqualified.

“This teaches kids how to not ride mindlessly,” Charlie Baker, who regularly rides his bike to school, told *Lake Tahoe News.* “There is some (awareness) to not cut in front of cars.”

Fire operations scheduled

throughout Tahoe

Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District, California State Parks, and U.S. Forest Service plan to continue prescribed fire operations beginning May 22.

If conditions are favorable, operations may take place near Sugar Pine Point, Glenbrook, Lower Kingsbury Grade, Ski Run Boulevard, Fallen Leaf Lake and Meyers. Operations may continue over the next several weeks, weather permitting.

To receive prescribed fire notifications, send an email to pa_ltbmu@fs.fed.us.

Each prescribed fire operation follows a prescribed fire burn plan, which considers temperature, humidity, wind, moisture of the vegetation, and conditions for the dispersal of smoke. This information is used to decide when and where to burn.

Camp gems unveiled for Memorial Day

By Tom Stienstra, San Francisco Chronicle

A view of Emerald Bay near South Lake Tahoe from the Highway 89 overlook. The Emerald Bay boat-in, one of the prettiest campgrounds in America, opens next Thursday.

If you act now – and conduct a little bit of detective work – you can book a marquee campsite for Memorial Day weekend at a lake, state park or even at Lake Tahoe.

For the holiday weekend, thousands of campsites and cabins are

available in Northern California. Starting this weekend, many campgrounds and recreation facilities are opening for the summer season across most of California.

One example is at Lake Tahoe, where boat-in sites at Emerald Bay and drive-in sites at adjacent D.L. Bliss State Park open for the season next Thursday, first come, first served.

Read the whole story

Bike Challenge gets people off the gas pedal

The Tahoe Bike Challenge, a friendly competition to see who can replace the most car trips with trips by bicycle, returns June 1-14.

Many of Tahoe's elementary and middle schools coordinate safe rides to school during the Bike Challenge. Each day, parents and community volunteers check in students who rode or walked, with prizes provided to students for their bicycling achievements.

South Tahoe Middle School will host a day-long bicycle skills clinic for students, with volunteers from the Community Mobility Group and the Lake Tahoe Bicycle Coalition.

Information on the Tahoe Bike Challenge can be found **online**, including details on how to register as a team or as an individual, and how to log miles.

People can find tips on safe riding at the Bike Coalition's **website**. To find a route to school or work using the best bike route, use this interactive **online map**.

Nev. peak still honors disgraced Confederate leader



Jeff Davis Peak in Great Basin National Park in Nevada. Photo/National Park Service

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

Jefferson Davis is famous mostly because he presided over the Confederate government that sought to preserve the institution of slavery and tear the United States asunder in the Civil War.

His dark stint in power is the reason city leaders in New Orleans recently removed a statue of Davis from a position of prominence in the city's central business district.

The removal knocked the legacy of slavery from a cultural pedestal in New Orleans but hasn't wiped the Davis name from other positions of high honor, including a mountain peak in a remote corner of Nevada.

At 12,771 feet in elevation Jeff Davis Peak towers over Great Basin National Park in Baker. There's also a Jeff Davis Peak

in Alpine County.

Read the whole story