

# Valley Boating

## California Boating Destinations

# New Melones Lake Is

By Carrie Wilson —

Nestled in the foothills of California's Gold Country, New Melones Lake is the ideal destination for boaters looking for a fall getaway. With magnificent oak woodland scenery, fantastic fishing, and miles and miles of secluded shoreline, New Melones is a favorite with boaters and anglers from throughout the state year-round.

### Third Largest

Ranked as the third largest reservoir in California, New Melones lies at an elevation of 1,085 feet in the valley foothills near Angels Camp. First filled in 1983, it has 12,500 surface acres when full

**Fall is the great time to come and see what beautiful New Melones Lake and Calaveras County have to offer.**

and more than 100 miles of scenic shoreline to explore. Boaters will find secluded coves, wide-open water, warm, comfortable fall temperatures, and unique rock formations.

Thanks to the large size of New Melones, there's enough

water that both high-speed boaters and low-speed anglers are able to share the water without crowding one another. Water-ski enthusiasts will usually find the main lake body to be open and uncrowded with surface waters as smooth as glass and even a slalom ski course for those open to the challenge.

Jet skiers will enjoy exploring the many coves and creek channels. And anglers, who often prefer the upper arms of the lake, will find quiet waters, secluded coves, and great fishing.

### All Watersports OK

All watersports are permitted at New Melones, with water skiing and houseboating particularly popular. Swimming is permitted only at the swimming beach at the Glory Hole Recreation Area on the Angel Arm of the lake.

"Boaters venturing up the Stanislaus Canyon will be impressed by the sheer limestone cliffs," said Park Ranger Pattie Guida. "In addition to watersports, this whole area is also popular year-round for rock climbing, mountain biking, hiking, horseback riding, and for spelunking through the local caves," she said. The trails are multi-use, and the wildlife area covers 2,400 acres.

### Wildlife Abounds At New Melones

A bountiful array of wildlife inhabit the New Melones Lake basin and wildlife watchers will find hundreds of species including deer, fox, coyote, beaver, otter, and raccoon along New Melones Lake's shore. Ospreys nest in the tall trees near the lake, and bald

eagles are common in the late winter and spring.

Egrets and herons can be spotted on the shore and soaring in the clear skies. Berry bushes at the water's edge provide a home for teal and mallard ducks, Canadian geese, cormorants, and coots. Turtles can be spotted sunning themselves on logs at the water's edge, and even shy river otters may occasionally be spotted frolicking in the sun.

During the summer months, knowledgeable park rangers entertain campers with evening campground fire-side programs about the local ecology. The New Melones Visitor's Center can be found at the park headquarters and has nice interactive displays ideal for both children and adults.

Rangers are also available here throughout the year with information about the area's history, the forming of the lake, and the flora and fauna of the region.

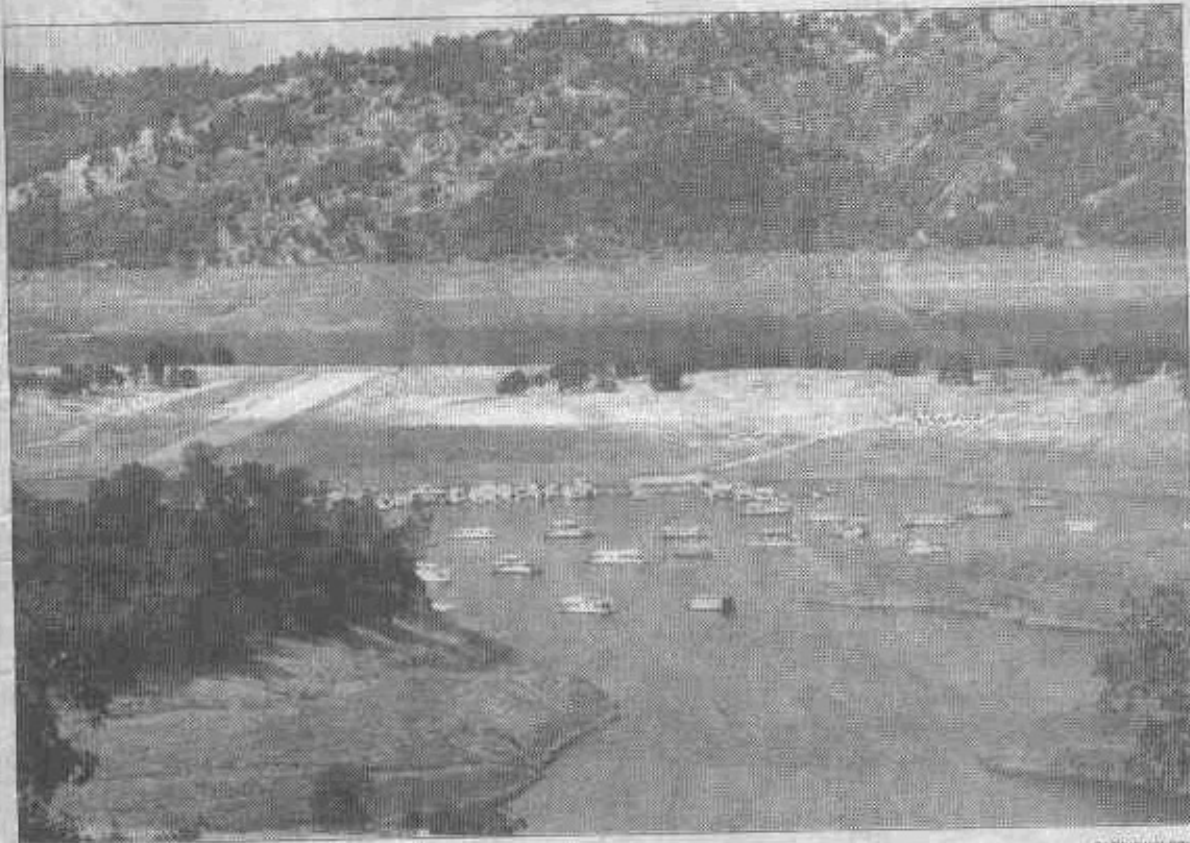
### Year-Round Fishing

Anglers enjoy some of the best fishing in the region at New Melones because something's always biting. Rainbow and brown trout, kokanee, black bass, bluegill, sunfish, catfish, bullheads, crappie, and perch make this a favorite fishing destination.

The bass action is especially hot during the spring through fall. Fishing derbies are very popular, and various fishing organizations hold tournaments regularly throughout the year.

The majority of the lake is bordered by land managed by the Bureau of Land Management and is also open to hunt-

# Perfect Fall Getaway



CARINE WILSON

**WORTH THE HAUL.** — The third largest reservoir in California, Lake Melones is a year-round favorite with boaters and anglers throughout the state.

ing (deer, pigs, pheasants, rabbits, etc.), season permitting.

## **Early California History And Lots Of Family Fun Activities**

If you're looking for more than a water-oriented vacation, the choices here are endless! New Melones Lake is conveniently located right in the heart of the Sierra Mother Lode, one of California's most popular tourist spots.

Within a 30-60 minute drive, the early California gold rush towns of Angels Camp, Murphys, Sonora, Jamestown and Columbia offer endless adventures. Historic main streets, muse-

ums, wineries with tasting rooms, micro breweries, cavern tours through gigantic underground caverns, river rafting, and state parks full of enormous sequoia trees are just some of the unique aspects of this region.

Angel's Camp is also home to the famous Calaveras County's famous Jumping Frog Jubilee held during mid-May each year.

Liz Gilbert, local resident and mother to three active young boys says, "We find this to be an ideal area because there's always so much for us to do together as a family. We're very active and love the hiking, camping,

and watersports available here. It's usually quiet and low-key, but we never get bored. We also enjoy the numerous festivals and the cultural and community activities that are ongoing throughout the year."

Whether it's boating, fishing, camping, hiking, mountain biking, hunting, or sight-seeing that you're after, this area has it all. Fall is the great time to come and see what beautiful New Melones Lake and Calaveras County have to offer.

There's definitely something for everyone in this amazingly diverse part of Northern California.

# New Lake Melones: Easy-To-Access, Easy-To-Enjoy

• **Location/Directions:** New Melones Lake is situated between Calaveras and Tuolumne counties in the Sierra Nevada foothills. Three major routes exist, each of which provides easy access to the lake. From the south, take Highway 99 to Highway 120. Visitors from the Bay area will find Highway 4 out of Stockton to be the ideal route. For those coming from the north, Highway 12 from Lodi to Highway 49 will provide the most direct route.

• **Size:** When full with a capacity of 2.4 million acre-feet, it covers 12,500 acres and more than 100 miles of shoreline.

• **Facilities:** The New Melones Lake Marina is a full-service marina with fuel dock, fresh water, sewage pumpout, and propane. The marina store offers a full line of convenience foods and beverages as well as bait and tackle, marine hardware, and leisure apparel.

• **Camping:** More than 400 campsites and day-use sites available on a first-come, first-

served basis. Group camping is available by reservation. Campgrounds contain showers, restrooms, drinking water, picnic tables, barbecues, and playgrounds. Camping fees run \$14 per night.

• **New Melones Lake Marina:** Open year-round, the marina offers boat rentals, launch facilities, a bait and tackle shop, and fuel dock. There are six no-fee launch ramps available.

• **Boat Rentals:** Weekend rates during the off-season for

spacious luxury houseboats containing hot tubs, satellite TVs and other surprising options run between \$1,500-\$2,000. A variety of other boats and watercraft (ski boats, PWC, patio boats, and fishing boats) are available for rent by the

hour, day, or week.

• **Fees:** Overnight boat slips run \$20 night. Trailer parking is free and readily available.

• **Boating Restrictions:** None

• **Contacts For New Melones Lake And Calaveras**

**County Area:** New Melones Lake Marina, (209)785-3300, [www.newmelones.com](http://www.newmelones.com); Calaveras County Chamber of Commerce, (209) 738-2580, [www.Calaveras.org](http://www.Calaveras.org); Mercer Cave and local caverns, (209) 728-2101, [www.mercercaverns.com](http://www.mercercaverns.com).