

# Travel

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Adventure • Tips • Leisure

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SECTION E



CAROL FOWLER FOR THE TIMES

## Twin lakes' differences run deep



**HOUSEBOATING IS HOT** at Shasta Lake, where the mood runs to partying and, below, personal-watercraft action. The body has 370 miles of coastline, so there's room for plenty of revelers.

Shasta, Whiskeytown cater to visitors with widely different interests

By Carol Fowler  
TIMES CORRESPONDENT

**O**UR SHASTA LAKE houseboat inched away from the dock. Just then a high-powered ski boat cut in front of us. Loud rock music blared from its speakers, while its skipper raised a can of beer in salute.

People party hard on Shasta Lake.

A few days after this outing of noisy fun, we had a much quieter encounter at nearby Whiskeytown Lake. We shoved off from shore in a two-person kayak, the swoosh-drip-drip of the paddle and the quiet murmur of conver-

sation from other kayakers the only sounds to break the silence. An osprey soared overhead, performing aerial acrobatics. Nature is within whispering distance on Whiskeytown Lake.

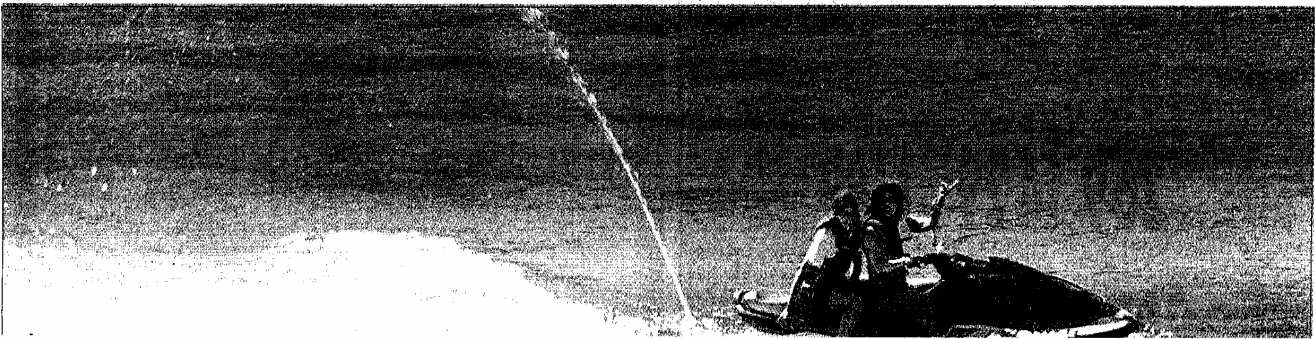
Of course, Shasta has many quiet coves for enjoying nature, and Whiskeytown has its party animals. But these first encounters set the tenor of our visits to the two popular lakes near Redding.

Dams create both of them, and they lie within the same water system. But they are as different as heavy metal and Mozart. Shasta Lake is huge, with 370 miles of shoreline created by the convergence of three rivers — the Pit, McCloud and Sacramento. Roughly the shape of a turkey foot, it wears a golden collar of bare shore that varies in width as the water rises and falls. It's a



**BRANDY CREEK BEACH** at Whiskeytown Lake caters more to people looking for a peaceful getaway surrounded by wildlife. The state park service offers a free kayak tour, top.

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# Lakes

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house- and power-boater's paradise. Whiskeytown Lake is much smaller. The mountains, including 6,199-foot Shasta Bally, embrace its 36-mile, tree-clad shoreline. Personal watercraft — Jet Skis or wave runners — are not allowed, so the sound of wind in sails, the drip of a paddle or whip of a fly rod set the tone for a day's recreation.

We started our Shasta Lake outing from Jones Valley Marina on the Corinthian model houseboat, a floating palace that sleeps 14 and has a hot tub on the top deck. No need to worry about meal preparation. It has not one, but two galleys. The upper deck outdoor area has a gas-fired barbecue and refrigerator; the lower-deck galley has a double-door refrigerator-freezer, range and microwave. A dishwasher and trash compactor ease cleanup.

We were sailing up the Pit arm of the lake and then to the open area where the three rivers meet. The open water attracted ski boats and zipping personal watercraft that sported a water tail. Sharon Whitaker, who lives along the lake, pulled alongside with a Jet Ski, or personal watercraft.

Everyone took turns with this aquatic power toy, making a big loop almost to shore and back to the houseboat. Noisy, yes. Fun, yes. In early June the water was still a little cold for me to swim, but the youngster on board kept us entertained by zipping down the top-deck slide and splashing mightily into the water. The surface of the water heats up under the summer sun, making it quite comfortable to swim in midsummer.

Houseboats meander up Shasta Lake's many arms, poking into nooks and crannies. It is quieter in these places, and most people tie up at the shore to spend the night out of sight and sound of others. This can be a good time to see wildlife, said Michael Han, who rents the houseboats out of Shasta Lake Resorts and knows every inch of the lake. There are also plenty of opportunities to hike, visit waterfalls or caves not accessible by road.

At dusk, the slanted sun silhouetted other boats on the lake and turned the water into a shimmering silver sheet. We barbecued chicken and steak on the top deck grill, and enjoyed supper into the long summer evening. The boat activity had quieted and the whole lake basin seemed to take on a hush.

Another day, we headed for Whiskeytown Lake and joined one of the free National Park Service kayak tours out of Oak Bottom Marina. A park ranger leads each of the two-person kayak flotillas, and a park volunteer follows to keep up with the slowpokes. We

## IF YOU GO

■ **Getting there:** Shasta Lake is off Interstate 5 just north of Redding, about four hours north of the East Bay. Whiskeytown Lake is west of Redding on Highway 299.

■ **Shasta Lake:** Houseboat rentals: Shasta Lake Resorts rents several houseboat models out of three marinas. The company also offers small boats, water skis, wakeboards, personal watercraft, kayaks and canoes. Full briefing is given before renters leave the dock. Rates: Start at \$829 for the smallest model; \$2,341 for the Corinthian. 877-474-2782; [www.houseboats.com](http://www.houseboats.com).

■ **Whiskeytown Lake:** Free kayak tours are offered daily during the summer, and twice on weekends. Reservations recommended and can be made up to two weeks in advance. The park has an extensive activities program. 530-243-5345.

■ **Gold towns:** Whiskeytown got its name when a barrel of whiskey rolled off the wagon and into a small creek. Thirsty miners scrambled down to the creek to drink its whiskey-laced water. Camden House tours 2 p.m. Sundays. 530-246-1225; [www.nps.gov/whis](http://www.nps.gov/whis).

■ **French Gulch** is on Trinity Mountain Road (Highway 106) about three miles north of Highway 299. French Gulch Hotel has eight rooms, and known for its Sunday brunch. 530-359-2112; [www.frenchgulchhotel.com](http://www.frenchgulchhotel.com).

■ **Shasta State Historic Park:** Litch Store, Courthouse Museum and shells of 19th century buildings. 530-243-8194; [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov). More information: Shasta Cascade Wonderland Association, 800-474-2782; [www.shastacascade.org](http://www.shastacascade.org).

set out crossing an inlet near Clear Creek, a major source of the lake, and detoured around some islands. The shore twists in and out here, and islands are never more than a short paddle away.

We reached the mouth of Boulder Creek, a wide glassy surface across the lake and idled on its shore. Sometimes paddlers see black bears or weasel-like animals along here. We had no such luck. But we did see the osprey and a kingfisher. The day was hot, and so we drifted to a sandbar, where the water was no more than knee deep.

We got out to cool off, and let the kayaks bump gently against our legs. Alongside, crystal water magnified boulders under the surface. Sometimes the kayak tours pass over the old Highway 299, covered when the lake was filled.

Whiskeytown Lake was filled in 1963. President Kennedy came to dedicate the dam at a spot marked with a memorial. Here you'll see the Glory Hole Spillway, a huge round concrete rim where water can overflow when the lake gets too high. A bit farther up is Brandy Creek camp and marina, where we found

## If you're 'inn' the mood

Tiffany House Bed and Breakfast Inn owners Susan and Brady Stewart were once marooned in a Port Townsend, Wash., bed-and-breakfast inn because of a storm. "We loved it," said Brady Stewart. "That's when we knew this is what we wanted to do." They bought the Tiffany House, a late Victorian-style house in the mid-1990s. It sits on a bluff above the Sacramento River within view of Redding's famed Santiago Calatrava pedestrian bridge and the Lassen Range.

It offers three rooms and a separate suite, all with private bath. Guests may play board games in the parlor, furnished with 19th century antiques, or relax in the music room with an upright piano and old sheet music. A flag sampler made by Susan Stewart's mother when she was 9 years old accented our bedroom, decorated in muted red, white and blue. One window looked out on an oak tree and the pool, and the other to the Lassen Range. When we arrived bedraggled after the hot drive from the coast, Stewart offered a cold drink — "anything." It was ice water that we wanted. When we went to dinner, he gave us a map and highlighted the route we would take to the other side of Redding. The next morning, the scent of banana bran muffins brought us downstairs. They were delicious and we polished off more than one before "Breakfast at Tiffany's" — pears poached in Burgundy, a vegetable frittata, roasted asparagus and tomatoes with fresh marjoram. We didn't need to turn in the key when we left. There are no locks and keys here.

■ **Details:** Tiffany House Bed & Breakfast Inn, 1510 Barbara Road, Redding. Rates: \$100-\$150. 530-244-3225; [www.TiffanyHouseBB.com](http://www.TiffanyHouseBB.com).

Canada geese and children playing on the sandy beach.

Three tiny gold towns, all relics of the northern diggings, are near the lake, though Whiskeytown itself is covered. The precious medal was discovered here in 1848 just a few months after James Marshall found it at Sutter's Mill. Camden House is the only survivor of the feverish activity near Clear Creek mouth. Flowers and a picket fence surround the white board house built by one of the mine operators, an idyllic-looking place. We headed up the creek a few miles to French Gulch, passing mining tailings on our way into the hamlet, where a dog could take a midday nap in the center of the road. Last summer's fire threatened the town, but fortunately the historic French Gulch Hotel and E. Franck & Co. store and bar survived.

Michael Han