

## Why Redding? Meade Fischer

You've likely heard it said, or perhaps you've said it: Why Redding? After all, it's considered a central valley town, too hot in summer, too rainy in winter. So, why would you want to travel there, rather than some other California destination?

To begin with, for much of the year Redding has comfortable weather, and even if you arrive in the hottest or rainiest times of the year, Redding is the gateway to some of the best outdoor activities and destinations California has to offer. Although it is technically a valley town, it sits at the base of the mountains and it's a hub for the surrounded lakes and forests, most within an easy hour's drive.

But if you're really going to explore the area, Redding should be your starting point and base of operations. Unpack, relax from the road and plan your trip at any of the abundant choices of lodging. I recommend either the Best Western Hilltop, Holiday Inn or Red Lion, all on Hilltop, right off I-5. From these places you can walk to dining, such as Cattlemen's Applebees Marie Calenders and several others. Also, from Hilltop, it's an easy drive to one of Redding's most interesting attractions, Turtle Bay and the Sundial Bridge. You turn left out of your hotel, go over a bridge and turn left onto 44. The first exit is Turtle Bay Exploration Park.

This park is situated on one of the most scenic stretches of the Sacramento River. From the parking lot you can walk over the bridge, then turn left and stroll through the botanical gardens or take the path along the river to the turtle pond that the area is named from. Once back over the bridge, the museum and cafe are a few steps away. Allow some time to really experience the museum, then stop for lunch or an espresso.



That path to the turtle pond is the same bike path that starts at Shasta Dam. Have someone drop you at the dam, at the end of a six mile road off I-5 at Shasta Lake City, hop on your bike and then follow the river, mostly all down hill for fifteen miles back to Turtle Bay. This stretch of river, while below the dam, still has a wild and free feel to it, and you may even see people in inflatable rafts running the white water.



Before hopping on your bike and starting off down the trail, take one of the tours of the dam, built for water reclamation first, with electric power and recreation an after thought.



The dam's history is fascinating, and the tour takes you into the heart of this massive concrete structure.

If it's summer and you're in the mood for some serious hiking, Lassen Volcanic National Park is less than an hour away on Highway 44 east. The 2 or 3 mile hike from the parking lot to the summit gives you a 100 mile panorama, and the fairly short hike into Bumpass Hell, gets you up close to bubbling thermal vents.

Also, about an hour northeast on 299 takes you to Highway 89. Make a left and shortly you'll come to McArthur Burney Falls State Park, home of one of the most photogenic waterfalls in the state. Take an hour to hike down and around the falls, and then stop at the beach on the lake for a cooling swim and a picnic.

A short drive east of 89, on 299 takes you to the town of McArthur and one of our most unusual state parks, Ahjumewi Lava Springs State Park. Turn left on Main and follow the dirt road to the end. You'll need a boat, canoe or kayak, as the camp ground is a few hundred yards past the launch ramp, over the lake. Haul your tent, food and sleeping bag over and camp where you can look up and see both Mt. Shasta and Lassen at the same time, as well as a wealth of wildlife, including turtles and swimming gopher snakes.



Also, explore the lake, and search out the lava springs that feed it.

However, if you're in the mood for a major lake, there are three of California's best and most beautiful. Highway 299, a few miles west of Redding, passes Whiskeytown Lake. There is a launch ramp, store and campground. You can water ski, kayak, fish or just explore. Also, at the western end of the lake, you'll see a turn off for a short hike to a waterfall.

If you continue on 299 for another half hour, you reach Weaverville, home of the annual Salmon Festival and the jumping off place for the back country and miles of Trinity River white water, some of the best in the west.



At Weaverville, turn right on Highway 3 to Trinity Lake, a wandering maze of stream-fed fingers, surrounded by forested mountains. There are many lodgings and camp grounds available, but my favorite is Trinity Lakes Resort and Marina, one of the first you'll come to. Turn on Cedar Stock Road at the sign. The cabins are spacious and fully equipped, and the marina offers houseboats, speed boats and deck boats, as well as launching for your own

boat. The restaurant serves outstanding food. 530-286-2225.

The lake is on the east side of Highway 3, and on the west you'll find roads leading to various trail heads. You can day hike to secluded lakes and trout streams or embark on a week's backpacking in the Trinity Alps wilderness. One of the best of these is Siligo Peak, with glacier-fed lakes high up on all four slopes.

If you want to camp in total solitude, stop at Rush Creek campground off 3, below Trinity Lake. You just might have this scenic BLM campground to yourself.



You can get a map of the lake, showing the best places to catch various species of game fish, or you can simply wander the miles of water, jumping in from time to time to cool off.



Lake Shasta is the largest and most well known of the lakes, accessible from I-5 and dotted with marinas. One of the best of these is also one of the closest to Redding, Jones Valley Marina on the Pit River arm of the lake. It's on the lake, but practically in Redding. Just drive north on I-5 to Oasis Rd. exit. Go east about 3 miles, and right on Bear Mountain Rd. to Dry Creek Rd. Go left a mile and take the right fork to Jones Valley. They have houseboats for any group. You have a full galley, bathrooms, state rooms, hot tubs, barbecues and all the comforts of home. Cruise the lake, stop to fish, pull up on shore and spend the night. These houseboats give you the whole lake. We were catching fish from the deck. Reserve a boat: (530) 275-7950.

After enjoying the lake for a day or week, continue a bit further on I-5 until you see the sign for Shasta Caverns (exit 695), about a half hour north of Redding. It's more than just a cave tour. You take a boat across an arm of the lake, followed by a wild bus ride up the mountain to the cave entrance. Then, since there are about 300 stairs to go up and down, you get a bit of exercise with your tour. It's interesting, educational and fun. 800-795-



CAVE.

If you continue up I-5 you'll come to Mount Shasta, a majestic peak that begs to be photographed. Take some time to drive up to one of the parking areas and take a hike, remembering to take your camera.

On your way back south, stop in Corning for some olive tasting. Watch for the signs along the highway.

If you are in a hurry and make a tight itinerary, you can squeeze this all into a week, but you can easily spend two or three weeks and never be more than an hour from Redding, a true gateway to the wonders of northern California.