

Kayaking Lake Tahoe – not just a summer sport

By Rachel Levin, New York Times

Bumping along a freshly plowed road in Lake Tahoe, I felt oddly unburdened. No skis were locked on top of my car, no clunky boots rattled in the trunk. After more than a decade of ski trips to the region, I kept feeling as if I were missing something. Sure, it was sunny, but also a biting 17 degrees – and I was going kayaking.

“You’re going what?” asked my friend when she heard I wasn’t joining her for another powder day at Squaw Valley. “Seriously?”



A less congested Lake Tahoe in the winter.

Photo/Max Whittaker/New York Times

Seriously. It was the week between Christmas and New Year’s Day – the most crowded week of the season at one of America’s most visited ski destinations. Thanks to a record-setting December snowfall, the actual skiing had been phenomenal. But I was sick of struggling to find a parking spot, tired of waiting in all those lift lines that were as congested as the

bumper-to-bumper traffic that led to them.

Of course, Tahoe offers more than just downhill skiing: snowshoeing and cross-country are the go-to alternative snow sports for most crowd-dodgers. But kayaking? In the dead of winter? Not so much. Not even on the largest alpine lake in the United States, and the second deepest in the country. A lake that never freezes over, where the surface appears so placid and the snowcapped scene so screen-saver-serene that it makes you want to leap off the chairlift into the hallowed blue water. For most, though, the primary function of Lake Tahoe in winter is as a breathtaking backdrop.

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