

Paddling between watering holes on the shore of Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

First paddles of the season can be problematic. Launching, having all the gear, syncing strokes, using muscles that aren't used to that motion – and white caps.

Luckily, everything went smoothly last Sunday except for the water as we headed back to port. Lake Tahoe has been windy for what seems like all of 2011, with the National Weather Service in Reno constantly issuing wind advisories.

No body of water should be navigated with human power when high winds are howling. Lake Tahoe, though, seems to be particularly precarious because it's in a basin and can create its own weather. Plus, the water is so dang cold.



Human powered watercraft are growing in popularity on Lake Tahoe. Photos/Kathryn Reed

We wear our lifejackets no matter how close we are to shore and no matter if we can see the bottom.

Wanting to stay close to home, we opted to go out on Tahoe instead of another Sierra lake. And with wild stories told to each of us about kayak trips down the Upper Truckee River this year, we didn't want to attempt taking the 17-foot canoe on the fast moving, icy waters. (We have a hard enough time on it in calmer waters.)

Launching at the beach of Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course was easy. This weekend it would be impossible to even drive to the clubhouse because of the American Century Celebrity Golf Tournament. But doing the reverse route of what we did would be an option for anyone not wanting to pay to see a little white ball being whacked about.

Our original destination was Lakeland Village because the South Lake Tahoe police boat guys had told me there is food served on shore close to the beach. Silly me thought that would mean alcohol, too. After all, we needed one last day of research for the summer libation story.

No alcohol was available, so back in the canoe we went. Not far up is Timber Cove Marina – home of Blue Water Bistro.

Lots of people are playing near shore in rented paddleboats, on standup paddleboards and in kayaks.

Others are doing what we want to do – getting a bite to eat and something to drink. This is one of the few places on the South Shore that has lakeside dining.

Last year we were able to paddle under the pier. Not so this year. Lake Tahoe is more full than it has been in recent years.

Beaches are scarce throughout the basin because of the snowpack that has yet to completely melt. But for the last three days the lake level has been pretty consistent at 6,228.35 feet, according to the National Weather Service in Reno. (For comparison, on June 1 the lake was at 6,226.78

feet.)

The legal limit is 6,229.1, which is when water must be released from the dam in Truckee that sends water to Reno and points east. The natural rim, though, is 6,223 feet.

Water officials say the lake won't hit the legal limit and that the numbers will start heading down soon.

We take our time going back. It's a bit of an architectural tour going past lakefront hotels, then the gated community of Tahoe Meadows, then back into Nevada.

Lakeshore Lodge looks like the place to be. If only the "private party" signs weren't on the beach facing us.

For years Discount Tire has rented out the lodging property for its employees. The economy doesn't seem to be affecting the tire guys. Three volleyball courts are set up, multiple bars, a stage, and flags from several countries are on the water's edge.

Most boaters are friendly— letting us cross the channel as they are going in. We do have the right-of-way, but not everyone knows the rules of the water.

However, the guys at Ski Run ferrying people to and from the marina and private boats could slow it down a bit. A wave of the hand doesn't negate the large wake created from going more than 5 mph.

Houses of varying sizes dot the shoreline. Some are cabins, several are larger – but no mansions on this stretch. But they all have incredible views.

The cross in Mount Tallac is striking with the amount of snow this time of year. White stuff dots other peaks, too.

Passing Lakeside Marina I pay attention to the waves hitting both sides of the canoe. So much for hitting the wake head-on.

The breaker protects the boats in the marina, but is a bit disconcerting when in a canoe. Paddle harder, I tell Sue. That was the only part of the voyage that wasn't fun. But it's not a long stretch by any means.

The odd shaped roofline of Edgewood's clubhouse is visible. We paddle on. We know mojitos are in our future.

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