

McCloud River not an ordinary paddle



The Reed sisters – Jann, from left, Pam and Tami – paddle on the McCloud. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

McCLOUD – The Hearst Castle of the north is a little more difficult to get to than the one in San Simeon that is now part of the State Park system. But it's worth the paddle.

Going up the McCloud River the Wynton spread that is owned by the Hearst Corporation is not open to tours. Rumor has it Patty Hearst calls this castle in the North State home.



Tom and Pam approaching Wyntoon.

It was Phoebe Apperson Hearst who first purchased the land along the river. Her only son, media mogul William Randolph Hearst, took over the deed when she died. Now the corporation has title to the property, which is 67,000 acres in dense forest, with some of the structures right along the river.

The water is how the public can get a glimpse – via kayak or canoe. The roads leading into the compound are private.

Julia Morgan designed this estate, just like she did San Simeon.



Tami and Tom in clear waters.

Wyntoon got its name from the local Wintu Indian tribe that used to call this part of Northern California home.

This is the area where Hearst was going to re-create a 13th century monastery. Those stones instead ended up in Vina at the Abbey of New Clairvaux.

Last weekend eight of us set off to see what my sister, Pam,

and her boyfriend, Tom, have been talking about – water that changes colors, at times so clear it makes Lake Tahoe look cloudy, and a house that is beyond ordinary.

It takes us less than two hours to get to the estate. Sue and I are in our canoe, while my three sisters and their significant others are in individual kayaks.



Much of this section of the McCloud is emerald in color.

The water is like glass. Pine trees come down to the water's edge. At times the embankment is extremely steep. There is little opportunity to beach, but that doesn't bother us.

The few motorboats that are out are full of people fishing for rainbow and brown trout. They are courteous as they pass, slowing so their wake is gentle.

As we paddle upstream the water begins to change. From the dock it started off as an emerald green. It becomes more teal. Then it's sparkling clear to a depth of at least 10 feet in some spots.

Normally it's the shore during a canoe voyage that captures my attention. This time it's the water. It's mesmerizing.

Soon we reach our destination – Wyntoon. Signs say don't trespass. Instead we take pictures of the rock and wood structures that in some ways do resemble a castle.

My brother-in-law, Mike, paddles up a bit farther to the

rapids where instead of getting anywhere he gets a workout.

We head back, taking our time, chatting among ourselves and wishing the headwind would go away.

A bald eagle swoops down and successfully plucks lunch from the lake. We aren't the only ones enjoying the McCloud.