

# Plenty of hot water to enjoy around Lake Tahoe



MontBleu's spa is open to the public – for a fee.  
Photo/Kathryn Reed

## By Kathryn Reed

Soaking in hot water has a history dating to the 4th century BC. There's been quite an evolution from hot stones being placed in water to today's fiberglass tubs found in so many Lake Tahoe back yards.

It was in the 1940s that hot tubs started to become popular in the United States.

Nearly every hotel in the Lake Tahoe Basin has a hot tub. Plus, there are a few natural springs in the area that people may enjoy.

The following is a sampling of tubs in the region and beyond.

With a hot tub somewhat shaped like a three-leaf clover, people are able to spread out at **MontBleu** in Stateline. And this is good because there were loud, splashing children in one section.

It's one of the more chlorinated tubs. Sue's eyes began to sting when she lifted her hands to her face. The depth is a bit much for someone of her stature. She had to crouch and couldn't sit comfortably.

But the temp is ideal. The jets had a ton of pressure, which I would think some people would not like. I thought it was wonderful.

There is also a tub in each of the dressing rooms if people want to stay more secluded. The women's tub was the perfect temp and the depth good for shorter people. The dim lighting makes it even more relaxing. The jets put out just the right amount of oomph.

Hotel guests may use the pool and adjacent hot tub for free, guests must pay \$10 to use the indoor tub and locker room facilities, and it's \$20 for non-hotel guests to use everything.



Grover Hots Springs in Markleeville is popular with locals and tourists. Photo/LTN

**Tahoe Keys** has two outdoor hot tubs that are accessed via the indoor pool. People must live in this South Lake Tahoe neighborhood or have access to guest passes to be allowed in.

The secluded feeling is great. The 103-degree temp is perfect, especially when the outside temp is below freezing. The depth is ideal. The jets could use a little more force.

No one younger than 6 is allowed in them. And one does not allow anyone younger than 14 so it's a quasi-adult tub.

Lots of signs warn people no alcohol is allowed and if people are caught with any, they could lose their privileges to use the facilities. There is also 24-hour recorded surveillance.

Several hours one Saturday afternoon in early January were spent in the pools at **David Walley's Hot Springs Resort** in Genoa. We were happy to have two gift certificates because we're not sure it's worth the \$30. A lot of this has to do with having our own hot tub and not making a whole day of it. The value really depends on how much time one spends at Walley's. We've been there in the spring when it's cold at the lake and warm in the valley. It's a great spot to start working on your tan.

The scenery is wonderful – even though the mountains should have had way more snow.

The five tubs are supposed to range in temperature from 100 to 104 degrees. The larger pool is about 85 degrees. An employee is regularly checking the temps.

Two of the older hot tubs have been taken out since the ownership changed in the past couple years. An employee said there is talk of adding more tubs.

Be careful about wearing jewelry into the waters. My toe ring is now a different color because of the sulfur.

The other natural spring that is nearby is **Grover Hot Springs**,

which is part of a state park by the same name in Markleeville. Cost is \$7. Hours change in the summer, but it's open seven days a week.

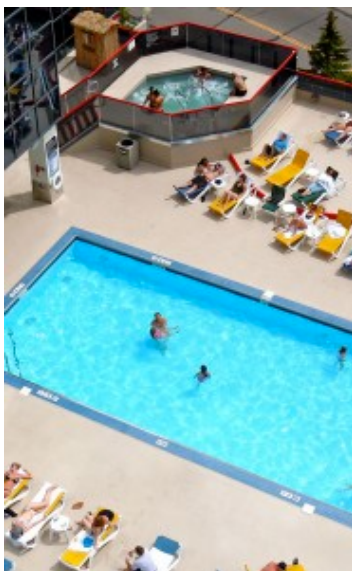
It's one big pool that is fed by water that is percolating from the hillside. The surroundings are spectacular. This is definitely more rustic than Walley's, but that is part of its charm. It's definitely a social place, but that can be a drawback because it can get crowded.

At **Nepheles** in South Lake Tahoe hot tubs may be rented by the hour. They are available from 2pm to 2am at \$20/hour for two people. The more people, the more it costs. Towels are provided.

It had been years since Sue and I had been there. They are private, though there is no ceiling. This is perfect – being outdoors, but secluded. Amazingly, we had no trouble staying there for an hour. The temperature was ideal.

Hooks and benches are provided to put stuff on. But if were snowing and there were several people, clothing might get wet.

One of the perks at Nepheles is that there is an intercom to the bar. We tried it repeatedly and no one ever responded. While not the end of the world, it was disappointing.



The hot tub at  
Harveys is  
elevated away  
from the pool.

Photo/LTN

**Harveys** hot tub is outside, but on the fourth floor. The outer railing for the entire area gives it a secluded feeling. It's not until getting to the far side can one look down on all the rebar and concrete for what might be the completed Chateau project.

The tub is small considering how many hotel rooms there are. But on a weekend in May there is ample room for everyone. The biggest disappoint is that for what otherwise is a 24-hour facility, the pool-hot club closes at 9pm.

The temperature was perfect. But the depth of the bench to sit on to the top of the tub is so high that I can't put my arms out as a way to cool off. It reminded me in some ways of being in an old redwood tub. Not the most comfortable seating.

### **Tubs outside the area**

It almost seems like the hot tub at the **Hyatt House in Rancho Cordova** was an afterthought based on how tiny it is. I don't know how much use it gets when the outside temp is in triple digits, but in February plenty of people wanted to use it, including members of a Zephyr Cove tennis team and a Sonora high school wrestling team who were all in town to compete. Not everyone could fit.

Also disappointing was how rapidly the temperature decreased when the bubbles were on. And the jets were a bit spastic. There also ought to be rules about young kids in hot tubs – like not allowing them or having an adults only hot tub.

A trip to Reno in December found us at the **Atlantis**. The only problem was getting to the hot tub because we were barefoot

and there was ice melt on the walk. We couldn't go in before bed because access closes at 10pm, so we popped in first thing in the morning.

The temp was ideal on this frosty morning. With the bubbles going, there were no distracting sounds. The tall hotel towers make the tub seem secluded.

The **Residence Inn by Marriott in Folsom** couldn't seem to get the temp right on the hot tub when the two of us were there in March. When it's so hot that after less than five minutes you want to sit on the edge, there is too much heat. The next day the water was so tepid I got out quickly and opted for the shower to relax me.



Walley's has multiple tubs to choose from.  
Photo/Provided

The other problem was how muggy the room was. The hot tub and pool are inside.

Not knowing what we would find next, we chose to go next door to the **Courtyard by Marriott**. The water was the perfect temperature. I liked that some of the jets were more powerful than others.

And the setting is better than its sister hotel because of all the windows by the tub look out onto a courtyard where people could be sun bathing.

If relaxation is what you want, then skip the tub at the **Marriott Marquis in San Francisco**. Sounds of screaming children in the nearby pool reverberate off the walls. Plus, it's another one of those instances where kids fill up the hot tub, too. But the size and temperature are good.

It was hard to know we were in the middle of Sonoma while soaking at the **Sonoma Valley Inn** tub. This Best Western is just off the Sonoma square. The tub and nearby pool are in a courtyard with mature landscaping. It's almost like a park setting. The hot tub is covered by a gazebo, which would act as nice protection from the sun on hot days. The bubbles were a bit spastic – causing water to fly into our wine glasses. But the temp and depth were ideal.