

Wind makes scenic Echo Lake a challenge



Tom and Pam kayak toward the channel at at Echo Lakes.
Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Paddling is always a good upper body workout. Paddling against the wind with white caps is definitely going to require some therapy afterward. Such was the case for the four of us on the Sunday of Labor Day weekend.

Wind wasn't an issue when we left the house, so it came as a surprise when we got to Echo Lake. But we didn't let it deter us.

While it was near impossible to find a parking spot, all those vehicles must have belonged to either hikers/backpackers or cabin owners, because the lake was relatively boat free. The shuttle boat was the main vessel on Lower Echo Lake.



The channel separating the lakes.

Before we even got on the water our canoe and kayaks had to be inspected. Clean-drain-dry is the motto here and throughout the region so aquatic invasive species are not transported from one body of water to the other. Echo Lakes doesn't want the two types of milfoil or the Asian clams that Lake Tahoe has.

It was my intent to take Pam and Tom to both lakes, but the wind changed those plans. It was so gusty at times that we weren't making forward progress. AJ didn't seem fazed though as she lay in the middle of the canoe while Sue and I dug in as hard as we could when the gusts came up.

Still, we took plenty of opportunities to enjoy the towering granite to one side, and the fir and pine-lined shore on the other. Much of the shoreline is rugged, so there are limited opportunities to stop.

Near the end of the lake and on both sides are modest summer cabins on U.S. Forest Service land. They are only accessible by boat.



Sue at the helm of the canoe.

At the channel leading from Lower to Upper Echo Lake we paused for snacks and a chance to rest and stretch our legs. An expansive granite beach of sorts is at the entrance, which made for an ideal break area.

Upper Lake is the smaller of the two. A few islands are on it. No waterskiing is allowed there, so it can be more peaceful.

We meandered through the shallow, windy connector to the upper lake just to say we did it. We were all too tired to do anything more than paddle back to the boat ramp.

We thought we would have a tailwind, but instead we were being pushed into the center of the lake. It was a challenge in both directions. Fortunately, the store was open so we could reward ourselves with ice cream. Adult beverages in the hot tub were next. By that time the paddle didn't seem so bad.



AJ and Britton had it easy.

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Getting there: From South Lake Tahoe, take Highway 50 west. A short distance after cresting Echo Summit, turn right on Johnson Pass Road. Stay to the left. The narrow road leads to the water.

Notes:

- The store is open Memorial Day to Labor Day.
- During that time it costs \$5 to launch a human powered vessel.