

Tahoe's colors unfold on West Shore paddle



There is no question why people call Lake Tahoe blue.
Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

HOMEWOOD – Judging by the water's colors it could have been the Caribbean. Based on the number of boats it was clearly post-Labor Day. A headwind in both directions – it must be Lake Tahoe.

We opt to head south from the West Shore Café in Homewood to tackle a section of the lake we have not paddled before. Normally this is a pretty narrow section of rocky beach on the West Shore. The drought has even more land exposed.

From the get-go things are different than other mooring areas at Tahoe. The abundance of sailboats is noticeable. Too bad their owners are nowhere to be found because on this particular Monday in mid-September the wind is more suitable for their craft than our canoe.



Expansive view of Tahoe from the pier at Sugar Pine Point State Park

But we don't let that bother us.

We have all day to churn away at what is mostly a rough lake. We had thought we might take a break at Chamber's Landing on the way back, but it's already closed for the season.

It's not until one is on the water that the actual contours of the shoreline are revealed. Driving this section of Highway 89, while scenic, doesn't do justice to the twists and turns that can be encountered while on the water.

It made for some nice reprieves from the wind as we paddled into little inlets.



Chamber's Landing with the runs of Homewood to the right.

But rounding a rocky bend the wind was like an assault on our muscles as we had to dig in hard to make forward progress, all the while keeping an eye on the waves hitting the canoe at odd

angles.

An expansive stretch of sand unfolded in front of us. We knew we had met our destination – Sugar Pine Point State Park.

Via car this is about three miles from the café.

We pull the canoe on shore and then walk to the pier. Several people are milling about the grounds near the Ehrman mansion.

The water here is an emerald reminiscent of the tropics. The temperature, though, is the opposite.

We didn't want to linger too long because the wind was not dying down. We strategize on how best to navigate around the rocks, contend with waves that could tip us and a swirling wind. We make it around the bend into calmer water. But that tailwind we were counting on as we headed back had shifted to be a headwind – again.



Rough water makes for a bit of a challenging paddle

Still, going back we had Homewood Mountain Resort ahead and to our left. Those runs look like they are about to drop into the lake – similar to what it's like when schussing down them.

We had thought about stopping at Obexer's for lunch, but we were so tired we were afraid if we stopped, we might leave the canoe there. It was going to be easier to walk down there for a sandwich and bring it back to eat in our room at the West Shore Inn.

By this time looking at the lake seemed so much more appealing than being on it. A headwind in both directions can have that affect on a paddler.



West Shore Cafe and Inn

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Getting there:

From South Lake Tahoe, go north on Highway 89. West Shore Café is on the right across from Homewood Mountain Resort. There is plenty of parking now because the café is closed until Nov. 24.