

Nature-Based Recreation at Lake Berryessa

by Peter Kilkus

The Napa County General Plan defines Nature-Based Recreation as recreation which takes place in and around, and is significantly focused on, the natural environment, including but not limited to walking, hiking, equestrian and mountain bicycle riding, camping in tents, recreational vehicles, and rustic cabins, wildlife viewing, fishing, hunting, picnicking, swimming in lakes and rivers, and paddling.

Another general description of Nature Based Recreation is that people use natural areas to participate in activities such as walking, recreating with family and friends, sightseeing, picnicking, and viewing nature scenery, which are among the most popular outdoor recreation activities.

The Lake Berryessa Revitalization Program includes nature-based recreation as a key goal in any resort redevelopment. All the bids received over the years, including recent ones from Sun Outdoors, Suntex Marinas (Pleasure Cove Marina), Camp Margaritaville Resorts, and Collective Retreats include strong commitments to environmental management and nature-based recreation.


Lake Berryessa has always been a perfect destination for nature-based recreation and has been known as such for many years. When I restarted the Lake Berryessa Chamber of Commerce in 2005, we promoted nature-based recreation as a main reason to visit the lake. This was our 2007 brochure which was distributed widely in the Sacramento-Bay Area region.

WATER, WILDLIFE AND WINE

NESTLED BETWEEN BLUE RIDGE AND CEDAR Roughs, just 16 miles northeast of the city of Napa, Lake Berryessa and the surrounding area—the Backroads of Napa—offer year-round fun and recreation for all ages.

- Spectacular vistas
- Great fishing
- Award-winning wineries
- Miles of nature trails
- Quiet coves for kayaks and picnics
- Food and fun
- Warm summer water for swimming, boating, jet and water skiing

Lake Berryessa is one of the largest bodies of fresh water in California. It's approximately 26 miles long, 3 miles wide, with 165 miles of shoreline (that's more shoreline than Lake Tahoe!) Come and enjoy the waters of Lake Berryessa for boating, fishing, and swimming. Spend the day exploring the beauty of the area. Stay for a while at a lake front resort. Rent a houseboat. Taste award-winning wines. Enjoy dining at one of the local houses.



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ADVENTURES AWAIT YOU AT LAKE BERRYESSA AND THE SURROUNDING VALLEYS

COME FOR THE DAY AND ENJOY A SCENIC DRIVE with a stop for food and wine. Or spend a day on the water swimming and boating. Better yet, plan to stay for a while at one of the lakeside resorts or at the hotel and breakfast within a vineyard and ranch. There is something to entertain everyone.

WATER SPORTS, BOATING & FISHING

The best way to appreciate the lake is from the water. Launch your own boat, or rent from one of the lakeside resorts. The water is 75° warm in the summer, and the scenery is spectacular all year. You'll find many quiet coves to enjoy swimming and relaxation. Or take to the open water for tubing and skiing.

Bring your kayak or canoe and cruise along the shore or around one of several islands. There are a dozen different points around the lake with public access from the road for paddle launch.

The fishing at Lake Berryessa is rated as some of the best in the state. Anglers enjoy fishing for both cold and warm water species including bass, cutfish, bluegill, rainbow trout, kokoi and crappie. Knowledgeable fishing guides are available year round. Contact the resorts for more information, or launch your boat at Capell Cove.

WILDLIFE & HIKING

Hike one of the trails around the lake and go bird watching to see osprey and bald eagles as they catch "the one that get away" from the angle in the bear. Look for nesting eagles in the fall and

winter months, along with geese, ducks, pelicans, loons, herons and numerous other species throughout the year. You might also see fox, bobcat, mountain lion, or snakes. Information and maps are available at trailheads or the Bureau of Reclamation Visitors Center.

WINERIES

Leave the congested Napa Valley and visit our award-winning and historic local wineries. You'll discover why they have achieved cult status among discerning wine lovers. Stop by and you'll often get to speak directly with the wine makers and learn more about the local vintage and viticulture. Plan, be sure to take in the beauty of the surrounding oak-studded hills and acres of Napa's most spectacular agricultural land and open space.

LODGING & CAMPING

Overnight accommodations are available at most of the privately-managed resorts around Lake Berryessa. Each is unique in what is offered, but you'll find cabins, camping for RV's and tents, boat and jet ski rentals, boat and fishing licenses, marina services and gasoline, plus scenic views all around. If you prefer, there's a bed and breakfast tucked in the hills.

FOOD & DINING


Many of the resorts offer food service and convenience stores, but be sure to stop by one of the local restaurants for good food and fine wines of the area. Or pick up snacks and picnic supplies at one of the local stores. Then continue to enjoy the beauty and fun of the area.

OTHER POINTS OF INTEREST

No matter how you access Lake Berryessa, you'll come through beautiful valleys. At the north is Pope Valley where you'll find the historic buildings of Arena Springs, and Lim's Hubcap Ranch, California State Landmark No. 939. From the west you'll pass through Chiles Valley or Capell Valley. And from the southeast a must see destination is the Monticello Dam.

PUBLIC DAY USE FACILITIES

Lake Berryessa and the nearly 10,000 acres surrounding it are administered by the Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Department of the Interior. The BOR maintains three, free public day use facilities: Sontik Creek Park, Oak Shores Park, and Capell Cove Boat Ramp. The parks include picnic sites with BBQ grills, water fountains, restrooms, and miles of shoreline for swimming, fishing and observing nature.



To learn more about the area and for contact information visit the Lake Berryessa Chamber of Commerce website:
www.lakeberryessachamber.com

DISCOVER THE BEAUTIFUL BACKROADS OF NAPA

The Bureau of Reclamation has promoted nature-based recreation at Lake Berryessa for many years. It has an excellent series of informative brochures available for download at:

<https://www.usbr.gov/mp/ccao/berryessa/media-library.html>

which includes:

Photo Albums: Recreation, Scenery, Wildlife, Wild Flowers

Brochures: Bird Checklist, Fishing, Guide Snakes, Watchable Wildlife, Junior Ranger Activity Book

The best report ever written about Lake Berryessa's recreation potential, including nature-based recreation, is the Ragatz Report written in 2017 and available for download at the link below.

[Lake Berryessa: An Untapped Resort Development Opportunity](https://www.lakeberryessanews.com/resources/References-PDFs/2017-Ragatz-Report-Full.pdf)

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Lake Berryessa itself, the five concession areas and the surrounding environs offer many unique and outstanding attributes, as discussed in the previous section – accessibility, size, extensive shoreline and surface area, beautiful scenery in a very natural setting, some of the best fishing in the state, large enough to offer both nature-based and motor-based activities without interference, and a wide array of family-oriented outdoor recreation opportunities.

The challenge and opportunity are to redevelop the five concession areas into resorts that more appropriately reflect the lifestyle of today's participants in outdoor recreation – higher quality, more variety, greater convenience, more nature-based (but not forgetting the ever-popularity of motor boats and RVs), more family-oriented, etc. If more care is given to these important trends, Lake Berryessa has the opportunity to: (1) become a significant year-round destination for the almost 10 million people in the PMA (Primary Market Area); (2) significantly impact the economy of Napa County; (3) be profitable to appropriately selected concessionaires; and (4) do so while maintaining and enhancing the natural environment.