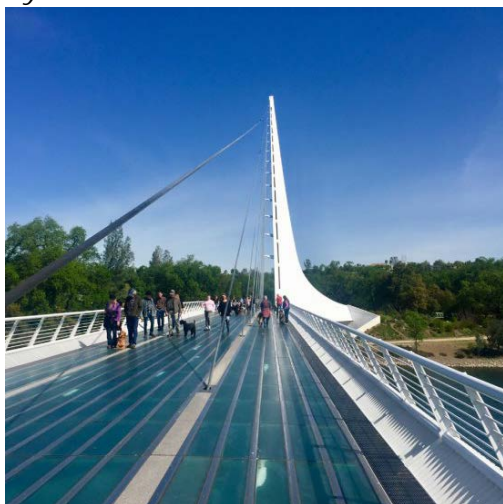


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Redding is ready for its close-up

By Fran Miller



Sundial Bridge Photos Fran Miller

When planning a summer weekend getaway, Lamorindans likely look to Santa Cruz, Carmel, or Tahoe. But Redding? The largest town in California's northern-most region is not traditionally top-of-mind when plotting a little family R&R.

It should be.

Boasting a multitude of recreational activities, Redding (about a 3-hour drive from the East Bay) is ripe for discovery. A new hotel, miles of bike trails, and a nature preserve are just a few of the attractions. Travelers who've never been will be surprised with the town's offerings, and those who've visited in the past will find that recent revitalizations make the area nearly unrecognizable.

Key to the town's reinvigoration is the new Sheraton Redding at the Sundial Bridge. The first four-star level hotel in the region, it's adjacent to its namesake - Redding's most iconic landmark. The LEED-certified property offers comfy guest rooms with floor-to-ceiling windows that overlook Turtle Bay Exploration Park, which boasts 300 acres of botanical gardens, an interactive museum, and a forestry and wildlife center filled with 64 different animal species. Sheraton's resort-style accommodations include a heated swimming pool and hot tub, a fitness center, and creative family amenities such as tents and sleeping bags which staff will set up in-room upon request. S'mores kits can be purchased at the front desk for use at the outdoor fire pit, and fishing poles are also available for those hoping to reel one in on the nearby Sacramento River. On Fridays and Saturdays, animal ambassadors from Turtle Bay greet guests in the hotel lobby.

Steps from the Sheraton is the spectacular Sundial Bridge, a sky-soaring beacon that spans the Sacramento River. The bridge - designed by renowned Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava - is one of the world's largest working sundials and is a day and night communal gathering spot for all ages. Steel, glass, and granite combine to create the stunning structure that alone is worth a visit.

The bridge connects the north and south sides of Turtle Bay, where visitors can visit Spike the porcupine, Whisper the bobcat, and Sweet Pea the skunk. During summer months, wander through the Butterfly House and observe Monarchs emerging from their cocoons. Deck yourself in colorful lorikeets at The Parrot Playhouse, an interactive aviary where guests become a parrot perch. Turtle Bay's 200-acre arboretum is a peaceful sanctuary of native trees and plants. A one-mile walking loop trail surrounds the arboretum and directly links to the paved, multipurpose, 11-mile Sacramento River Trail, just one of many trails in the area. Bring your bikes to take advantage of the more than 200 miles of paved and unpaved trails, all within a 15-mile radius of Redding's city center. You'll pedal past waterfalls, flowing rivers, mountains and forests.

Take an excursion to nearby Whiskeytown Lake, Mount Shasta, Lassen Volcanic National Park, Shasta Dam, or Lake Shasta Caverns, a geological wonder featuring multicolored columns, tall stone draperies, stalactites and stalagmites, glistening crystals, and limestone and marble formations, accessed via scenic boat rides across Lake Shasta.

The Sheraton's own Mosaic Restaurant, named for the white mosaic tiles lining the Sundial Bridge (which can be viewed from the restaurant's back patio), is a popular Italian-inspired destination that's become a favored gathering spot for both locals and tourists. Chef James Vereb serves-up tasty items such as artisan wood-fired pizzas, shareable appetizers, and hearty salads and pastas, all made with local, farm fresh ingredients. Mosaic also boasts a vibrant bar scene; enjoy craft beers, creatively crafted cocktails, and curated local wines.

For more information, visit:

<http://www.sheratonredding.com>

<https://www.turtlebay.org>

<http://lakeshastacaverns.com>

<http://www.sheratonredding.com/redding-restaurants>



Lake Shasta Caverns

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