

Weekend Getaways

The Lost Sierra is paradise found



View from Nakoma Clubhouse

Photos Dan Miller

By Fran Miller

If Tahoe's teeming throngs and traffic leave you frustrated, here is a worthy alternative. Head about one-hour north of Truckee on Highway 89 to discover vast open spaces, car-free roads, and serenity. This is California's appropriately named Lost Sierra – an alpine wonderland of 8,500-foot mountain peaks dotted with 50 glacially carved turquoise lakes, miles of hiking and biking trails, and a stylish resort from which to enjoy it all.

This area of the northern Sierra Nevada is located in Plumas County and is anchored by quaint, time-forgotten towns such as Graeagle, Johnsville, and Sierra City (a favored stopping point for trekkers of the fabled Pacific Crest Trail). Sweeping vistas are found at every turn – verdant valley floor farms about the rolling hills and snow capped peaks, creating a Swiss-like vibe. Hidden lake trails lead to stunning views of rugged peaks. And best of all – there is room to breathe.

Pitch your tent at any of the dozen drive-in campgrounds, such as those at Sardine Lake, Salmon Creek, or Lakes Basin. Sardine Lake, at the foot of the majestic Sierra Buttes, also features cozy cabins that line the shore, but fair warning – these are often booked months in advance by families that have been visiting for generations. A great overnight option is the Lodge at Nakoma, a comfortable 42-room, minimalist spot that affords guests access to its resort-like amenities, such as the close-by Altitude Recreation Center, a state-of-the-art 12,000 square foot facility featuring activities for every age, including a fitness room, children's center, climbing wall, basketball hoop, lap pool, hot tubs, movie theater,

and bar and restaurant.

An additional ascent up Nakoma's hill leads to the resort's 18-hole championship course, which debuted as one of America's Top 75, according to Golf World. Named the Dragon, and featuring picture-postcard worthy views from every tee, the course was designed by Robin Nelson, designer of the famous Dunes at Mauna Lani on the Big Island of Hawaii. Nakoma's Clubhouse, a Frank Lloyd Wright design, is the centerpiece for which the resort was named and it houses the stunning Wigwam Dining Room with its towering ceiling, large four-sided fireplace, and picture windows that reveal stunning views. Adjacent is a well-stocked golf shop, and an amiable bar at which golfers gather after their day on the green. The lower level of the Clubhouse is home to Nakoma Spa; book a relaxing massage or facial and afterward enjoy use of the sauna and steam rooms.

The Nakoma property is situated in the center of no fewer than 14 trail heads – from the simple and easy 1.8-mile Dancing Bear Trail that affords views of the Nakoma community, to the strenuous 0.9-mile Falling Water River Access that parallels the river. Further up Gold Lake Highway, you'll find easy trails to Upper Sardine Lake or Frazier Falls; more intrepid hikers might prefer the Lakes Basin's obligatory challenge – the five-mile round trip hike to the Sierra Buttes Fire Lookout with its 360-degree view of snow-capped Lassen Peak and the sparkling Sardine Lakes. Mountain bikers will find miles and miles of rugged terrain and virtually empty trails, and the multitude of lakes keep the anglers happy.

As the Tahoe basin becomes more and more crowded, the Lost Sierra is

soon to be found. Be one of the first to recognize and appreciate its beauty. Nakoma stands ready and waiting to welcome and share with new visitors the bounty of the area.

Nakoma, 348 Bear Run, Clio, California



Nakoma Clubhouse



Lower Sardine Lake

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