

Nevada Public Radio's
desert
COMPANION 2007

Your Guide to Extraordinary Living and Great Escapes

**THE REALLY
GREAT OUTDOORS**

Five adventure ideas that are cool, fresh
and close to home

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Excellent Adventures

Whether your speed is biking uphill or paddling downriver, here are five fresh outdoor ideas to put to the test. **By Rebecca Zisch**

For so much of each year in Southern Nevada's aridly oppressive climate, air conditioning isn't so much a modern luxury as it is a necessity for breathing. While we know about the vast and picturesque outdoors in and around our region, unfortunately it is often just a lovely daydream. So when the weather gives us the temperate climate that we pray for all summer long, thoughts turn to being outdoors: the desert and canyons, the snowy mountains. But like an accidentally freed house pet that doesn't know which way to run, we can be so overwhelmed by the options for recreation that we don't know what to choose or where to go. So, we tend to turn to the same places and activities again and again, each time missing a chance to be adventurous. There are so many new or just undiscovered opportunities to connect with the outdoors in our own back yards or just a short drive away—from motorcycles and bicycles to winter and water sports—why not try something new while breathing in that fresh air?

Skiing the Hot Spot

About three hours away in the San Gabriel Mountains just south of Victorville, California, is an unassuming collection of ski resorts called Mountain High. With the addition of its third resort last year and \$2 million in upgrades debuting this season, this

can find the runs they're looking for to challenge their skill level or just have fun.

Mountain High is generally open from November through spring break. All pricing and scheduling information is available at mhigh.com or by calling (888) 754-7878.

Roaming the Forest

Southern Utah is awash with nationally protected lands that have been beautifully developed to provide a variety of recreational opportunities. Every possible way to enjoy nature is available: hiking, climbing, fishing, hunting, horseback riding, canoeing, sailing and all variety of winter sports, too. But why choose?

The organizers of the Dixie National Forest recently created a

unique getaway by converting three former guard stations on the Escalante and Powell Ranger Districts into rental cabins—each with easy access to an array of adventures.

If you stay at Jones Corral Guard Station, near the north end of Powell, you can go rock climbing and horseback riding on Mount Dutton. At Podunk Guard Station, just above the East Fork of the Sevier River, there's great hiking and places for off-roading. And Cowpuncher Guard Station, a few miles northwest of Hell's Backbone Bridge, is a good location for fishing and mountain biking.

The accommodations vary. Jones Corral has two sets of bunks, for example; the two-room Podunk sleeps six. Just don't expect luxury: Only Cowpuncher has running water and an indoor shower, and even that is seasonally limited. Also, no linens or cooking utensils are provided.

unpretentious alternative to the bigger resorts is becoming more popular with young adults and families. Think of it as Big Bear's hipper cousin.

Mountain High is a great place for a casual snow adventure. Only 15 minutes from Interstate 15, it requires no mountain driving. It's also relatively affordable considering that it is actually three resorts in one and lift tickets are interchangeable. Adult day tickets are \$49, but season packages offer deals that can more than cut the price in half.

And while the resorts sit only a mile apart, each features noticeably different terrain and activities.

The West Resort is usually the first ski resort in Southern California to open and the last to close each year. It caters to those looking for a more extreme snow experience. Because of this, Mountain High has garnered a reputation as a cool mountain for freestyle skiing and snowboarding.

But the East Resort has always featured more traditional ski runs. And with last year's opening of the third resort, Mountain High offers family-friendly snow recreation, too.

The North Resort features 70 acres of beginner terrain and tubing designed to attract families with younger children and introductory skiers.

No matter what you're looking for or who you're with, everyone

Then again, if all you want is instant access to some great outdoors, these cabins may seem downright opulent.

Podunk and Jones Corral Guard Stations are \$30 per night. The Cowpuncher is \$45 per night or \$270 per week from Memorial Day to Labor Day, and \$30 per night or \$180 per week otherwise. Reservations during the summer can be made through the National Recreation Reservation Service, (877) 444-6777, or by visiting reserverveusa.com. The cabins are available to walk-in visitors on a first-come, first-served basis the rest of the year.

Biking the Canyon

Most trails used for mountain biking were originally built for other reasons, like hiking or

horseback riding. But Bootleg Canyon Mountain Bike Park in Boulder City was designed specifically for rolling wheels, which makes it "more fun and roller-coastery," according to Jeff Frampton.

Frampton owns All Mountain Cyclery, a bike shop that sits a half-mile from the trailhead in Bootleg Canyon. Besides bike sales, rentals and repairs, All Mountain Cyclery runs weekend shuttles to the top of Bootleg Canyon from 9 a.m. till sundown, guided cycling tours for riders of all levels, and even instruction and clinics for those new to the sport.

This artfully constructed network of trails is highlighted on bootlegcanyon.org, a very cool website sponsored by the local mountain biking community, which is glad to have this internationally recognized park in

their own back yard. The more than 20 downhill and cross-country trails accommodate everyone from novices to experts, as descriptive names such as "Girl Scout" and "Kevorkian" will attest. One trail was even given the honor of "Epic Ride" by the International Mountain Bike Association.

No matter what your speed, there are enough variations to warrant repeat visits. And it's not only open year-round, it's always free.

For prices, schedules, shuttles, tours, bike rentals and other details, visit allmountaincycley.com or call (702) 453-2453. Hours are 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. weekdays, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturdays and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sundays.

Kayaking Through Evolution

Dan Cameron has been sailing the waters along the 550-mile shoreline of the Lake Mead Recreation Area practically his

entire life, and he'd like others to know what they've been missing. So, early in 2006, he created Evolution Expeditions, a kayaking tour outfit focused on the lesser-known features of Southern Nevada waters.

Cameron especially raves about the hot springs, waterfalls, petroglyphs and colorful ancient paint pots formed by volcanic activity along Lake Mead and the Colorado River. Kayakers on these trips are encouraged to take their time to stop and enjoy the natural wonders. There are three tour lengths to choose from (quick, half-day or full day), each allowing an opportunity to see the sights of this majestic national park—from Hoover Dam to Emerald Cave—at a moderate pace, rather than racing by on Jet Skis or speedboats. There have even been people who've stopped to take naps.

Cameron prides himself on being flexible and working with each tour group to mold a trip that they want to take. This includes length of tour, sites visited and the athletic difficulty

of the trip. Evolution Expeditions can accommodate families with young children as well as expert oarsmen. Naps not included.

Evolution Expeditions books kayaking tours year-round. Prices start at \$85 per guest. For more information, visit evolutionexpeditions.com or call (702) 259-5292.

Zooming Through the Desert

Daryl Folks has been riding motorcycles since he was five years old, and his wife calls him a "self-acclaimed Nevada historian." So, three years ago he combined his two passions and created an "uncommon off-road experience." Trail Ride Adventure Circuit of Nevada, otherwise known as TRAC-ON, is an opportunity for motorcycle and ATV enthusiasts to explore the Nevada desert on guided rides that focus on appreciation of our natural terrain and historic sites.

Recent rides have explored the Mojave and the Great Basin, including trips to Carpenter Canyon near Pahrump and a Tonopah excursion. Folks makes sure to plan the rides so that he can highlight points of interest and share historical facts, while also leading a fun and challenging ride.

Folks organizes five TRAC-ON rides each year that are either one- or two-day adventures. Each ride is split into two formats: the A Ride, for motorcyclists with desert racing experience; the B Ride, for new riders, ATV enthusiasts and even kids on 65cc motorcycles.

Not owning a motorcycle isn't a problem since rentals are available. And each format makes the same stops for lunch and overnight stays, so even people of a variety of skill levels will still all start and end together.

For ride schedules, pricing and more information, call (702) 641-6401, look up <http://trac-on.com>, or visit [Sportsman Cycle Sales](http://SportsmanCycleSales.com), 3475 Boulder Highway.