

October 2008

Lake Tahoe

by
Mike Prero

Lake Tahoe is located on the western border of Nevada and the eastern border of California. It is 198 miles (316.8 kilometers) north of San Francisco, 98 mi. (156.8 km.) east of Sacramento, California, and 158 mi. (252.8 km.) west of Reno, Nevada. It is central to several National Forests and State Parks. It's known for its purity and outstanding clarity. Once can see objects clearly as deep as 100 feet (30.48 meters) beneath its surface. This lake has 72 mi. (115.2 km.) of shoreline, with open beaches and shaded, sheltered coves alike.

Tahoe is the eighth largest lake in the world (519 square miles, or 1343.69 square kilometers), and it is the third largest lake in the United States. It is fed by 63 streams and two hot springs. The water has a purity level of 99.9%, making it one of the cleanest natural water resources on the planet. It is 22 miles (35.2 km) long, and 12 mi. (19.2 km.) wide. The deepest point is 1645 feet (501.39 meters), making it the tenth deepest lake in the world. The Lake Tahoe Basin floor is at an elevation of approximately 4580 feet (1395.98 meters).

One research resource states that Tahoe never freezes to its depth, because of said depth and constant water movement. This same source went on to state that, if the lake were ever drained, it would take seven hundred years to refill it. Further, if Lake Tahoe were "tipped over" the contents would cover an area the size of California (163,707 sq. mi., or 423,837 sq. km.) in 14.5 in. (36.83 cm.) of water. The total volume of water is 39 trillion gallons (902,063,703 barrels-UK)!

Even at its elevation, the first 12 feet (3.65 meters) of surface water can reach 68 degrees Fahrenheit (20 degrees Celsius) in the summer, with the shallows at the shoreline warming even more. At the coldest, the surface temperature may drop to between 40 and 50 degrees F (4.44 to 10 degrees C). The depths below 600 and 700 ft. (182.88 and 213.36 meters) stay consistently at 39F (3.88C) year round.

The Lake Tahoe Basin has an annual snowfall of 152 inches (386.08 cm.), which typically occurs between December and March. This accounts for 80% of the total annual precipitation for the area. Average temperatures range from 60 to 80F (15.55 to 26.66C) between June and October, and 20 to 60F (6.66 to 15.55C) from November to May. Records show that the mountain peaks surrounding the Basin can be snow capped all year round, and there may actually be snowfall even in the hottest months.

The water is typically a turquoise-blue, and reflects the sky and surrounding objects as clearly as a mirror when the surface is placid and undisturbed.

History

Lake Tahoe was formed when the valley which became Tahoe Basin sank between two parallel fractures in the Earth's crust. Mountains continued to form over a period of time. The lake began to fill at the south end of the valley, fed by snow meltdown and rainfall. During the course of formation, an erupting volcano blocked the outlets for water drainage and forced the lake to rise. During the Ice Age, large masses of ice determined the outlay of the land surface and terrain, which is the present-day topography that one can see when visiting the Basin.

The Native American Washoe tribe inhabited the Tahoe region as far back as 10000 years ago. The Washoe called the area "Da ow a ga", translated to "edge of the lake". The first white visitors to the area mispronounced this name, and called it "Tahoe". The name remained in this Anglicized form. In 1844, pioneers began to settle throughout Tahoe Basin and establish claims on the land. In 1849, during the California Gold Rush, more settlers came along, opened roadhouses, and staked out ranches and farms. Toward the end of the 1800s, many Tahoe forests were leveled to supply lumber and fuel to the Comstock Mines in Virginia City, Nevada. Once the land had been stripped of its natural forestation, entrepreneurs snapped up the land (literally dirt-cheap) and began building hotels and mansions for the wealthy. In the early 1900s, serious attempts were made to have Lake Tahoe declared a national park. These efforts failed, due to the fact that the area had been ravaged and lacked the "untouched" qualities necessary for national park status.

With the coming of the automobile and improved roadways, Tahoe lost its exclusivity with the influx of the general population. After World War II campgrounds and inexpensive hotels sprouted up, and were very popular during the post-war growth period.

The Winter Olympics in 1960 thrust Tahoe into the international spotlight, and was instrumental in establishing it as a world-class resort. It quickly became popular in both the winter and summer seasons. The growth period that followed threatened the purity of the lake and its environment. In 1970, a group of preservationists and residents came together to form a regional planning agency to regulate the growth and protect the lake.

Tahoe is known today for its marvelous cold-weather sports conditions and great ski slopes, as well as the warm-weather amenities. It is a magnet for tourists from around the world. Thanks to the efforts of the regional agency, as well as the National Forest Service and other preservationists, much of the area surrounding the Basin has been restored to its natural beauty. The views are magnificent and the forests provide habitat for many species of wildlife, including some of those which are listed in the United States as endangered. [<http://ezinearticles.com/?Lake-Tahoe>]

There's a good supply of Tahoe covers, even though I couldn't find any at the time of this writing! (hence, no pics!) When looking for these covers, remember that half the lake is on the Nevada side, so don't just look through California covers. Also, there's N. Lake Tahoe, S. Lake Tahoe, etc.

Tahoe covers are especially popular with California collectors, as it's the big recreation area here in Northern California...plus, of course, on the Nevada side, it also means Casino covers, as well. I don't have any stats on Tahoe collections, per se.