**2015 Calaveras Story Ideas**

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**High Sierra Lake tour**

In between the bustling summer playgrounds of Yosemite and Lake Tahoe is a more serene option – a group of emerald lakes set in the high Sierra granite that make for a moderate overnight or multi-day hiking and camping trip. Beginning at [Lake Alpine Resort](http://www.lakealpineresort.com), where you can provision at their general store – or rent a cabin for the night – set out for destinations like Sword Lake, Lost Lake and Elephant Rock Lake. The hike takes you into the [Carson-Iceberg Wilderness](http://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/stanislaus/recreation/hiking/recarea/?recid=15109&actid=51) and follows portions of the Emigrant Trail, so named for the early gold seekers who traveled over the Sierras in the late 1800s, and which is now part of a Lake Tahoe to Mount Whitney hiking trail. Plan to see very few people and more stars than ever!

Prefer to stay closer to civilization? [Lake Alpine Resort](http://www.lakealpineresort.com/accomodations.html) rents cabins starting at $150, nearby [Bear Valley Lodge](http://www.bearvalley.com/lodge) has rooms from $99, Rent kayaks and stand up paddle boards from [Bear Valley Adventure Company](http://www.bearvalleyxc.com/Summer/tabid/62/Default.aspx) starting at $45/full day.

**Rock On**

Bring your inner rock hound for an exciting weekend of ancient volcanoes, giant gold nuggets and limestone caverns. The region that drew gold seekers over a century ago abounds in geological wonders – and we’ve got the world’s largest gold nugget on display too. Harness up for a 165-foot rappel into California’s largest vertical cave at [Moaning Cavern Park](http://www.caverntours.com/MoCavRt.htm), get down and dirty with the Middle Earth tour at [California Caverns](http://www.caverntours.com/CalifRt.htm), or for a more gentle underground stroll opt for the walking tour at [Mercer Caverns](http://www.mercercaverns.com), where you can get up close with the cave’s crystalline features. Stop into [Ironstone Vineyards](http://www.ironstonevineyards.com) for a look at that gold nugget and then pay a visit to the [Angels Camp Museum](http://angelscamp.gov/index.php/angels-camp-museum) to see what the mining life was really like. After all that time underground, get up onto [Table Mountain](http://www.usbr.gov/mp/ccao/newmelones/maps/map_table_mountain.pdf), part of an ancient lava flow extending from the High Sierra to the Central Valley. Its flat ridge makes for a unique hiking experience while its sheer walls have become a hot spot for rock climbers looking for a challenge. The area is managed by the Bureau of Reclamation, stop into their visitor center at [New Melones Lake](http://www.usbr.gov/mp/ccao/newmelones/planning_visit.html) for seasonal access information.

**Hand made in the Sierra**

See how the Sierra Nevadas have inspired the many artisans and craftspeople drawn to the region’s history and natural wonder. The towns of [Murphys](http://www.visitmurphys.com) and [Mokelumne Hill](http://mokehill.org) – both original gold mining towns - provide ample opportunity to meet the artists and their creations. [Petroglyphe Gallery](http://gallerypetroglyphe.com) features contemporary works in many media, while [Allegorie](http://www.allegoriewine.com) features ceramic and installations infused with the natural elements found nearby. As many old wooden barns have fallen into disrepair, the timbers have found new life at Timbercraft Designs, where they are recycled and remade into furniture and structural home accents. Their new showroom in Murphys is also housed in an old blacksmith shop where you can see remnants of that industry. Among these and many more galleries are boutique wineries whose grapes come from the surrounding hillsides and a growing number of farm-to-table restaurants who pride themselves on sourcing their ingredients from the area’s farms. Book a table at [Outer Aisle Foods](http://outeraislefoods.com) for the freshest local fare.