

Redding, California

Beyond Shasta's Shadow by Lou Jurassic

"Lonely as God, and white as a winter moon, Mount Shasta starts up sudden and solitary from the heart of the great black forests of Northern California."

— Joaquin Miller, poet, novelist, pioneer

Redding, a four-season playground in the northwest corner of California's Central Valley, ushers travelers into Mount Shasta's wonders and much more. Consider these reasons to visit one of the Golden State's finest recreational treasures:

Turtle Bay Exploration Park, Redding's defining diversion touches upon every important aspect of the area. It's easy to spend a day strolling through the botanical gardens and arboretum and adjacent natural habitat along the Sacramento River. Pause atop the Sundial Bridge and watch fishermen in drift boats float beneath you. Rent a Segway or bicycle and join a tour or hire a pedicab. The Turtle Bay Museum caps the experience with in-depth exhibits detailing Redding's environment and man's place in it. The Paul Bunyan Forest Camp, Interpretive Forest, live animal programs and butterfly house appeal to all ages.

The Sundial Bridge for pedestrians and cyclists, is an undisputed architectural marvel in the midst of Turtle Bay's riparian area. The creation of noted architect Santiago Calatrava, the glass-decked wonder spans the Sacramento River and unifies Turtle Bay Exploration Park's attractions. Artistically appealing and scientifically amazing, it casts a shadow that serves as a large (albeit imprecise) sundial. Redding's most popular attraction, it is also the entrance to the 10-mile Sacramento River Trail.

Mount Shasta's dramatic silhouette abruptly towers more than 10,000 feet above its surroundings, providing a stunning backdrop for the sprawling valley below and a world of recreation. Meadows, waterfalls, deep forests and an abundance of wildlife add to enjoyment on the mountain. Hiking and mountain climbing are popular in warmer months. Downhill, Nordic skiing, snowshoeing and snowboarding are part of the winter fun. The 14,179-foot peak remains snowy from October through July.

Shasta Lake, 10 miles north of Redding, the state's largest reservoir, entices visitors and locals with huge opportunities for play. They all beat Redding's summer heat by taking to the water. With 355 miles of rugged shoreline to explore it's not hard to get away from it all even on the busiest days. Houseboats, and less elaborate craft—party barges, ski boats, wave runners and more—are available for rent. Spring, when water is high and crowds low, is a great time to explore the lake. Fishing is good all year round. The bass, especially in summer, are legendary.



Brandy Creek Falls in Whiskeytown Recreational Area

Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, just eight miles west of Redding, offers 36 miles of shoreline and placid waters—the ideal setting for sailing, scuba diving and kayaking. Personal watercraft are prohibited and lifeguards patrol the popular Brandy Creek Beach in summer. Hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding and camping are other outdoor options for benefiting from the area's sunshine. (Only Yuma, Arizona boasts a higher percentage of sunny days per year.)

Shasta City Historical State Park, six miles from Redding on Highway 299, is well worth a stop if you're heading to Whiskeytown, or other points west. While much of the once-thriving gateway to

the gold fields lies in ruins, the many restored brick buildings and ongoing presence of residents makes it one of the state's most engaging "ghost" towns. The courthouse is now a museum and the emporium and bakery still serve visitors, although operating hours are sporadic.

The Cascade Theatre, built in 1935 and lavished with Art Deco gilt (despite the Great Depression) was restored to former glory in 2004. The non-profit performing arts center marries historic splendor with state-of-the-art technology. The result is worth the price of admission. Top-notch road shows and performers are a bonus. ■

Insider's Dining Tip

Nello's Place, 3055 Bechelli Lane, Redding, is a family's labor of love. A local institution for more than 30 years, it's the best of Old World Italian. Settle into cushy red banquettes, enjoy tableside service and a hearty menu ranging from pasta to an amazing Veal Salto in Bocca .



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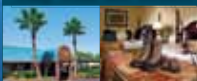
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