

Downtown—with paved corners and a gentle downhill grade through a Jeffrey pine forest—is beloved by beginners, but it's also enjoyed by experienced riders. The trail descends nearly 1,000 feet over 4 miles, and the ride can be extended for pedalers who want to add a 6-mile loop on Paper Route to a viewpoint overlooking the scenic Lakes Basin before returning to the Downtown trail.

Mountain biking is just one of the many great summer activities in the Eastern Sierra, which boasts a diverse landscape containing mountains, high desert, forests, rivers, lakes and streams. This weekend I'm also enjoying standup paddleboarding and hiking in this ideal natural playground.

LAKE MARY—one of the numerous lakes in the Lakes Basin near the south slope of Mammoth Mountain—is an excellent spot for water recreation close to the town of Mammoth Lakes.

I set out on a paddleboard rented at the Pokonobe Marina on the north end of the lake, which is in the Inyo National Forest. Around the edges of today's calm water, I weave through tall grasses and notice the silvery flash of trout below. Some fish rise to the water's surface, feeding on an abundance of hatching bugs.

Fly-fishers cast lines from the rocky shore or from fishing boats, hoping to hook prized rainbow trout, while kayakers and fellow standup paddleboarders cruise the shoreline, dazzled by the view of vibrant evergreens and nearby craggy cliffs.

Mountain springs and alpine snowmelt feed the 140-acre lake, which is surrounded by ridges. Pyramid Peak to the east, Mammoth Mountain to the north and the Mammoth Crest to the south cast stunning reflections on the water. And Crystal Crag, a 10,364-foot granite monolith that juts out from the Mammoth Crest, is particularly spectacular.

In addition to SUPs, Pokonobe Marina rents kayaks, canoes, rowboats, pedalboats, pontoon boats and motorboats, and Lake Mary Marina, on the south end of the lake, also rents various watercraft. The Lakes Basin can be reached by car (limited parking) or via the convenient, free, seasonal Lakes Basin Trolley from The Village. The trolley can even carry bicycles, making it easy to ride the paved 5.3-mile Lakes Basin Path downhill back to The Village. I recommend getting off at the last trolley stop at Horseshoe Lake for the full ride back.

A standup paddleboarder enjoys the view at Lake Mary in the Lakes Basin. Other area activities include fishing, kayaking and pedaling the Lakes Basin Path.



HORSESHOE LAKE, with its clear blue water and sandy shores, is a beloved site in its own right for a day of nature-based relaxation, and it is also a jumping-off point for some of the Eastern Sierra's enjoyable and less-traveled hiking trails.

The approximately 5-mile Mammoth Pass Trail, which heads west from Horseshoe Lake over Mammoth Pass to Reds Meadow, is one of my favorite hiking adventures. I start at the trailhead on the west side of the lake parking area, and ascend to McLeod Lake. On this short section of trail, which includes many granite steps, I pass plenty of leisurely walkers with dogs and kids and picnic lunches in tow.

I stop to catch my breath at the lake and take in the view of a red cone, one of the conical hills created by fragments of lava from a volcanic eruption.

LODGING

Here are some of the many options for accommodations in the Mammoth Lakes area:

Seasons 4 Condominium Rentals (seasons4.com): Spacious options near Canyon Lodge, The Village at Mammoth and the Lakes Basin.

Snowcreek Resort (livesnowcreek.com/vacation-rentals): Luxurious condos and townhomes in an alpine village, with floorplans for every need. The property also includes a 30,000-square-foot athletic club,

plus a nine-hole, 3,306-yard golf course, featuring fast, bent greens, lots of water hazards, and high-elevation loft support.

Vacasa (vacasa.com/mammothpremiere): A full-service vacation-rental company with many properties in Mammoth Lakes.

The Westin Monache Resort (westinmammoth.com): Upscale resort with suites of varying sizes, as well as an outdoor pool, a restaurant and a free hotel shuttle providing local transportation.