

By Lynn Machon



Each month, GO Roseville highlights different travel destinations just an hour's drive from the Roseville area, ideal for weekend trips. Our "GO Away" feature celebrates the concept that you don't have to travel far to experience a true vacation.

This month, we are highlighting Yolo County and its abundance of natural wonders and cultural activities to entertain young and old alike. The entire region, bordered by the Sacramento River on the east and Napa Valley on the west, showcases our state's agriculture and environment in a way that few can match. With endless parks, greenbelts, farms, golf courses, wineries, nature preserves and wildlife areas, Yolo County offers a great way for the whole family get back in touch with nature.

Most of us in the greater Sacramento area are familiar with the thriving communities of Davis and Woodland. However some of the lesser known areas of the County, such as

Capay Valley and the Cache Creek area are intriguing destinations as well. Here's a look at just some of what Yolo County has to offer for families planning a long weekend "away".

A Bike and People-Friendly Place

The popular community of Davis is full of genuine charm. With its friendly people and plethora of restaurants, art galleries, coffee houses and public gathering spots, there's certainly more to do than a single weekend allows. But you can't spend the weekend on the other side of the Yolo Causeway without stopping in at least for a bit.

For starters, you can begin your day at Crepeville for a lingering breakfast, then take in the Public Art Walking Tour's collection of unique sculptures, murals and galleries to walk it all off. Next you might hit Central Park, home to Rainbow City playground and its slides, tubes, castles and giant sand box. Explorit Science Center on Second Street (www.explorit.org) offers hands-on exhibits and family exploration programs about

everything science, from sound and astronomy to solar energy and air flow dynamics.

For a more active experience, you can take the family to Rocknasium, a huge indoor rock climbing facility, boasting 23 different walls for climbers of all abilities. Or, if you're up for healthy competition, schedule a little family time at the Davis Paintball Center. For a quieter afternoon, head over to Impossible Acres where you can pick your own produce and visit the petting zoo (summer only). October at the farm means it's time for hay rides, pumpkin patches and hay bale mazes.

Another relaxing option, UC Davis' public arboretum is home to 4000 types of trees and plants and is a great place to take an afternoon walk or a tour through the gardens and grounds. Throughout the year, the Mondavi Center (www.mondaviarts.org) hosts world-class performances in theater, dance and music. If you decide to stay overnight in Davis proper, there are several major hotel chains from which to choose.

Further west, get a chance to visit the small community of Winters, and you might spend the afternoon riding through the countryside on a horse drawn buggy or enjoying live music at the Palms Playhouse.

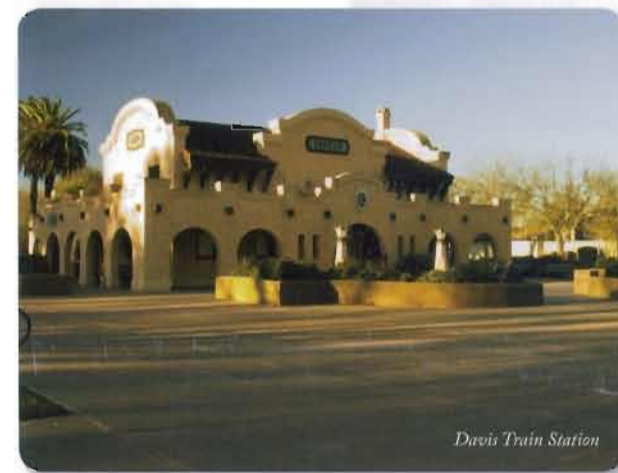
North of Winters, in Esparto, you can take advantage of a rare opportunity to visit the working ranch of West Valley Alpacas (www.westvalleyalpacos.com). Along with meeting the shy star attractions, you can watch spinning demonstrations and purchase unique gifts. Alpaca fiber is said to be as soft as cashmere and as durable as wool.

Riding the Rails in Style

One of the most exciting and unique ways to see the countryside of Yolo County is aboard the historic Sacramento RiverTrain (www.sacramentorivertain.com). While the newly renovated train was re-launched back in July 2005, many near-locals may not yet be aware of all the wonderful excursions currently offered on a year-round basis.

All roundtrips depart from Woodland for a 28-mile, 3-hour, scenic adventure which includes crossing over Fremont Trestle, the longest wooden bridge in the west and 25-feet tall at some points. Most trips include meals and entertainment, in a combination of luxurious dining coaches and open air cars.

In addition to regular weekly trips such as Murder Mystery Dinners, Great Train Robberies and Sunday Champagne Brunch, the Sacramento RiverTrain hosts several special events, including the Spaghetti Western Dinner Train, Oktoberfest, Great Pumpkin Express, and Christmas Train. Purchasing tickets aboard this diesel locomotive certainly signals fun for the whole family and a relaxing way to take in the scenery.



Davis Train Station

A Rural Oasis for Fun

Out westward, in the heart of the valley, lies the Cache Creek Casino Resort and Spa (www.cachecreek.com). Opened in 2004, the resort is located in a picture perfect setting of rolling hills and natural and artificial water ways and features a 2000-room hotel, eight restaurants and more than 74,000 square feet of casino enticement. For other entertainment options, Club 88 is the place to go for a variety of music, dancing and special concerts.

Onsite, the Yoca-De-He Golf Club is the newest Troon Golf Course in Northern California – so new that the clubhouse isn't set to open until December 2008, although tee-times are already in full swing.

The resort's spa and fitness center indulges guests through body massages and treatments,

facials, pedicure thrones, a fully equipped fitness center, whirlpools, steam rooms and saunas.

Harvesting Homegrown Pride

Capay Valley, encompassing the mile-wide watershed along Cache Creek in the western portion of Yolo County, is diverse in both history and geography. Agriculture is still the primary use of the largely rural region, with proud farmers yielding more than 50 different types of products, including fruits and vegetables, wheat, wine, beef, lamb, walnuts, and almonds (www.capaygrown.com).

Individual farms, ranches and nurseries host farm stands and festivals to showcase the region's award-winning goods. Also, The Capay Valley Regional Farmer's Market is

open the 2nd Saturday of each month, from April through December. In addition to locally-grown produce and traditional vendor booths, the market hosts a festival-like atmosphere with entertainment and kids activities.

If you choose to stay overnight in Capay Valley, two rustic and charming lodging options stand out. Capay Valley Bed & Breakfast, nestled on a 142-acre working ranch, has private rooms as well as individual cottages, and features a pool and its own onsite zoo with llamas and zebras.



Rumsey Canyon Inn Bed & Breakfast offers quaint accommodations with a huge wrap-around porch for outdoor relaxation and gorgeous views of the surrounding mountains. While in Rumsey, drive over to the local lavender farm, www.cachecreeklavender.com to experience the beautiful, fragrant fields and shop for specialty products.

Hiking, Kayaking and Habitat Preservation

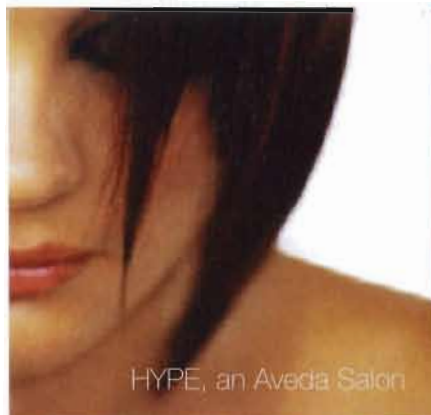
About six miles north of the town of Rumsey, the 700-acre Cache Creek Canyon Regional Park is one of the area's most diverse natural resources, prime for picnicking, camping, fishing, hiking, rafting and horseback riding.

California's first solar-powered campground, the middle section has 45 campsites along with a playground. Hiking trails traverse the landscape providing ridge hikes through the Blue Ridge Trail and Frog Pond Trail network and access to 54,000 acres of federally preserved land (www.yolohiker.org). Cache Creek itself offers several put-in areas for river rafters and kayakers looking for either scenic or challenging water experience.

Before heading home, make a point to visit the Jan T. Lowrey Cache Creek Nature Preserve, 130 acres on the lower Cache Creek dedicated to wildlife habitat conservation and education. The preserve lets families observe native flora and fauna in wetlands and washes while learning about ecosystems and environmental management.

More than 80 different species of birds have been sighted at the preserve, in addition to beaver, otters, bobcats, deer, raccoon, rabbits and muskrats. Visitors should call ahead (530-661-1070) to reserve a time to explore this special natural wonder.

Whether relaxing on a train or hiking in the hills, a visit to Yolo County is sure to bring adventure and a celebration of nature and our environment that few destinations truly can offer. ■



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