



Lake County Rising

With gorgeous scenery, inviting inns and eateries, and the cleanest air in the state, Lake County is right on the cusp of stardom. Our advice: Get there soon, while the pear orchards—not the crowds—are blooming.



Stay and Eat

Though Lake County doesn't exude the chichi atmosphere of Napa or Sonoma, small sophisticated establishments—hotels, restaurants, and local produce sellers—are beginning to appear, especially in the towns around Clear Lake. One of the best is the Tallman Hotel in Upper Lake. This handsome wood structure, built in 1896 as a stagecoach stop between Sacramento and Mendocino, was restored over the past three years to create a lovely boutique hotel with fourteen-foot ceilings and private verandas. Some of the garden rooms come with an outdoor teak *ofuro*, a Japanese soaking tub. There's also a pool and lounging area for guests. Right next door, the Blue Wing Saloon & Café is a relaxed place that dishes out California comfort food, local wines, and its own bottled sarsaparilla; don't miss the tri-tip and the chocolate cake. Tasty! When you're ready for some action, the Tallman has an arrangement with kayak outfitters Rubicon Adventures that will soon allow guests to explore nearby Rodman Slough, the largest heron rookery in the West.

[Tallman Hotel](#), 9550 Main St., Upper Lake; 866-708-5253. Weekend rooms start at \$129.

[Blue Wing Saloon & Café](#), 9520 Main St., Upper Lake; 707-275-2233.



Wine-Hopping

Before Prohibition shook the industry in the 1920s, Lake County had a thriving wine scene. Now the vines are creeping back and winning notice, especially for the region's cabernets, sauvignon blancs, and petite sirahs. Here are three wineries to check out. Start off in Jim Fetzer's sprawling Spanish-style villa at Ceago del Lago. This biodynamic winery just south of central Nice is the only one right on the lake; you can arrive by car, boat, or seaplane. Bring a picnic and enjoy the views. Next head over to the most charming town in Lake County, Kelseyville. Make your first stop at Steele Wines, which was started by Jed Steele, the artisan winemaker who put Kendall Jackson on the map. Next up: the friendly Wildhurst Vineyards tasting room, right downtown. When hunger strikes, trot over to Studebaker's and enjoy their signature dark roast coffee and a deli sandwich on their sidewalk patio—it's Clear Lake people-watching at its best, and there's not a Starbucks in sight.

[Ceago del Lago](#), 5115 E. Highway 20, Nice; 707-274-1462.

[Steele Wines](#), 4350 Thomas Dr., Kelseyville; 707-279-9475.

[Wildhurst Vineyards](#), 3855 Main St., Kelseyville; 707-279-4302.

[Studebaker's Coffee House and Delicatessen](#), 3928 Main St., Kelseyville; 707-279-8809.



Water-wings

Clear Lake is known as the "bass capital of the West." Locals tell us that the bass just keep getting bigger, and that it's something in the water that's making them this way. Rumor has it that it's just a matter of time before the biggest bass-ass gets his catch. You can cast your line right in Kelsey Creek at [Clear Lake State Park](#). Get your Guinness ready. (Note: The state park also offers your best camping option.)

For a good time in a local retreat, gather a group for a game of Frisbee golf in Highland Springs. The reservoir and park has its own challenging eighteen-hole course (if you've forgotten your Frisbee, you can buy one at Fastop, across from the Jack in the Box in Lakeport at 2620 S. Main). Also here: swimming, boating, and picnicking on the park's open grasslands. And when you're sufficiently inspired to showboat for the locals, hit the rope swing and give your best "flying squirrel."

Directions to Highland Springs: From Highway 29, just south of Lakeport, take Highland Springs Rd.

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south about 4 miles.

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