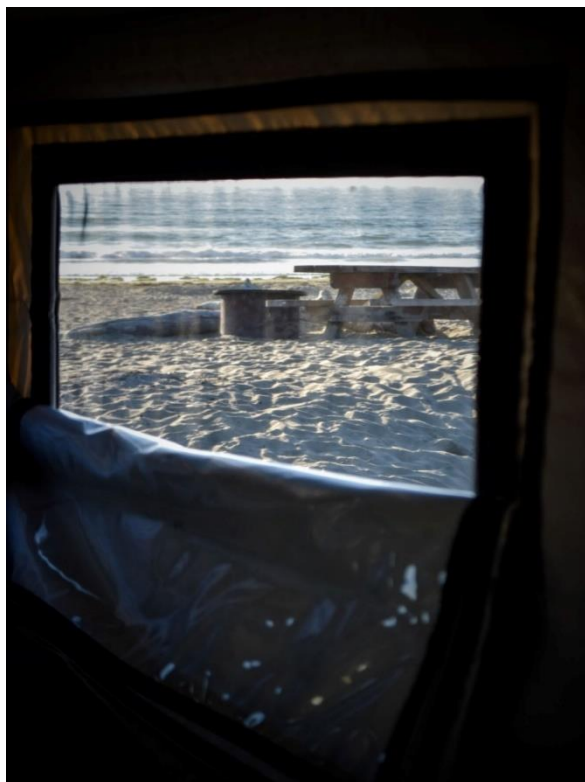


7 Days Solo With Four Wheel Campers: From Point Reyes To Lake Tahoe

Parked Without A Plan

I arrived in Sacramento for a 7-day solo trip in one of Four Wheel Campers' model rigs with nothing but a scarce idea of a handful of places I hoped to see. I wasn't exactly surprised to suddenly find myself somewhat frozen after the logistics were taken care of.

I sat in the parking lot of Food 4 Less on the outskirts of the city, staring at Google Maps on my phone and listening to the gentle roar of the diesel truck.



I'd be driving for the next seven days.

I had made my cross-country flight.
I had picked up the rig.
I had secured provisions to get me through the week.

Now what...?

When In Doubt, Head for The Coast

Being born and raised in a quiet East Coast beach community, we head to the beach no matter what the season (and in New England, we have them ALL). When I first started traveling to places further and further from the coast, I was struck to find what a different feeling it is to be surrounded by land as opposed to being surrounded by sea. For me, the ocean was comfort.

As I continued staring at the map and zooming in and out of different destinations, I looked at the clock. I certainly didn't want to spend all day trying to make a plan. I zoomed in one more time on what looked like a beach due west of where I was currently sitting. I hit the navigate icon and put the truck in drive.



Camping On The Coast Of Marin County, CA

In less than two hours I found myself pulling into a private beach community just north of Point Reyes National Seashore. I was thrilled it was late enough that they were no longer collecting day-use fees.

At this point I had been traveling by bus, plane, train, and truck for more than 24 hours with only a few brief hours of airplane sleep in between. I'd never been so happy to rest. Once I put the truck in park and popped up the camper with my queen-sized bed waiting for me, I was fast asleep until the sunlight started to fade. One solid afternoon nap later, I was ready to roam the beach for a warm and absolutely gorgeous sunset.



Point Reyes National Seashore

The next morning I made more of a point to see the sites. [Point Reyes National Seashore](#) is the second foggiest place in the contiguous United States, and it's also the windiest place on the Pacific Coast. Apparently, the weather was working in my favor, because I was lucky enough to experience a perfectly clear and sunny late September day.

The walkway down to the picturesque Point Reyes Lighthouse was closed in the middle of the week, but the view was still pretty spectacular.

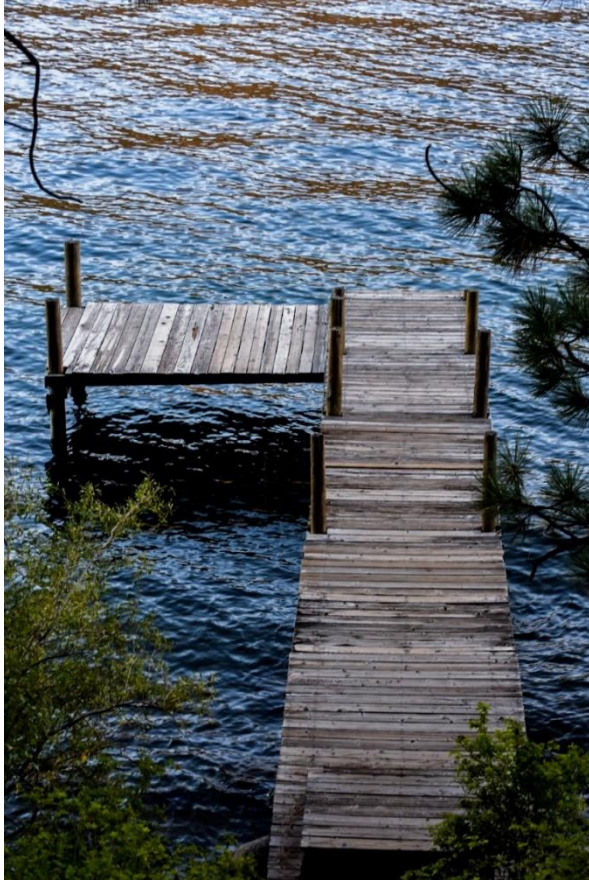
My next stop after visiting a handful of beaches was the [Cypress Tree Tunnel](#). The Monterey Cypress trees that now reach to create the iconic pathway were planted around 1930. They line the access road to the historic [Point Reyes Receiving Station](#), an important pillar in trans-Pacific radio communications during the booming era of ship-to-shore transmissions.

Naturally, I had to snap a few photos here.



Afternoon On The Docks At Donner Lake

When I woke up in the Sam's Club parking lot at 8 am, it was already 85 degrees. With at least two hours between me and Lake Tahoe, I knew I needed to cool off somewhere in between. Fortunately for me, California is home to more than 3,000 lakes. I was back to the map to take my pick, once again at random.



Imagine my excitement in stumbling upon the adorable community of Donner Lake, and finding free public docks for anyone to inhabit. Tahoe was going to have to wait. This place was *perfect* for a swim and an afternoon of laying in the sun with a good book. Plus, I was determined to soak up as much California sun as possible before heading back East to the impending autumn.

I can never waste an opportunity for a great sunset, so I decided to spend just a few more hours relaxing at Donner Lake to get some great shots of golden hour on the water and the final hours of daylight over the mountain pass.

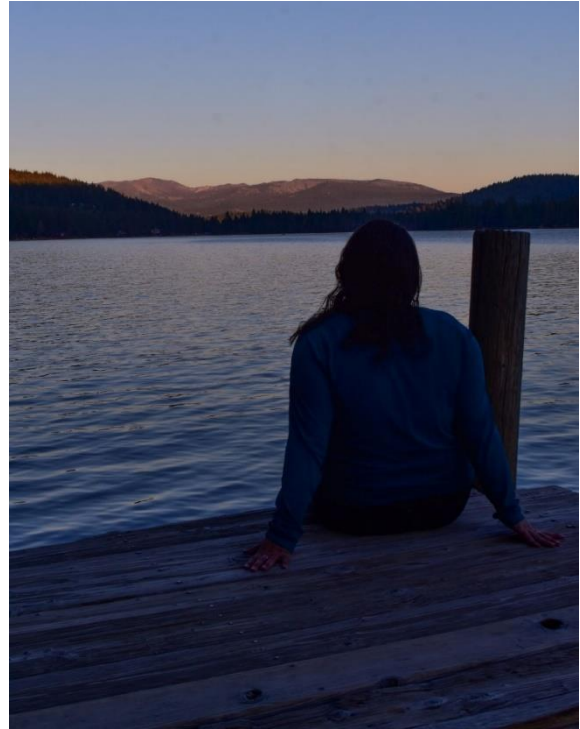


Folks came and went in the next few hours while I cleaned up and made plans for getting to camp that night, but I didn't even have to give up my lakefront parking spot to make a hot meal.

Staying for sunset on one of Donner Lake's private docks was definitely the right move.

Off-Grid In Tahoe National Forest

The Hawk setup makes it a breeze to camp anywhere, and I wanted a chance to really get off-grid for at least a couple of nights. Locals warned me there was very little dispersed camping near Lake Tahoe, but I took a chance on a suggested site on



iOverlander outside the little town of Truckee. After one final sunset at Donner Lake, I made my way back up to the main road and followed the GPS coordinates to a dispersed campsite in Tahoe National Forest.

While I wouldn't want to take a sedan or even an SUV without good clearance up this steep forest road, the rig sailed up rough terrain with ease. I passed a camper van in one spot, and a traditional ground tent in another. I kept going. I had a rig that would allow me to get *really* remote.

Soon I came to a clearing that confused me at first, but it had tons of opportunities to park perfectly flat so I went for it. Pulling around the perimeter of the clearing and simultaneously hearing the roar of dirt bikes in the distance, I realized it was



probably an OHV staging area. To me, it was the perfect place to call camp.

I had this pristine and totally undisturbed campsite to myself for two nights in a row. To some people, the idea of being totally off-grid and completely alone might be terrifying. In fact, I was surprised at just how not terrified I was out there, but rather relaxed, uninhibited, and totally self-sufficient.

After a peaceful night's sleep under the stars at my new favorite campsite, I spent a leisurely morning making breakfast, taking pictures, and enjoying a hot shower while I had the woods to myself. Other than a family of deer that made their way through the clearing as I brushed my teeth, the only other sign of life was the dull sound of ATVs and dirt bikes in the distance.



Hiking Along The Pacific Crest Trail

The allure of crossing the Pacific Crest Trail was too much to resist, so I absolutely planned to spend a morning getting a few miles on the famous footpath.

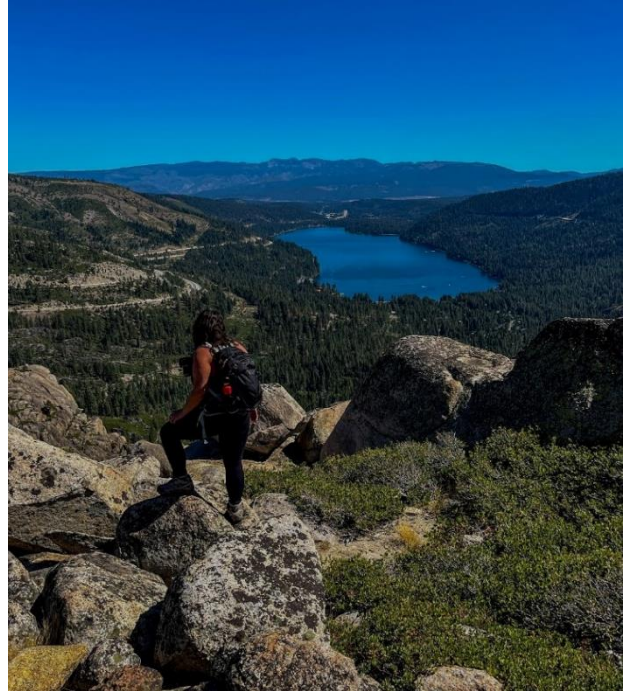
I set out from camp while the air was still chilly and made my way to the trailhead off of I80 where I was greeted with plenty of shaded parking surrounded by taller trees than you could ever imagine to see in the East.

Within a matter of a few miles, I

reached an elevation higher than the tallest mountain in New England (Mount Washington sits at 6,288') and a stellar view of Donner Lake. I smiled looking down at the place I had intended to stop by for a quick swim and ended up spending two full afternoons at.

Sunny September On Lake Tahoe

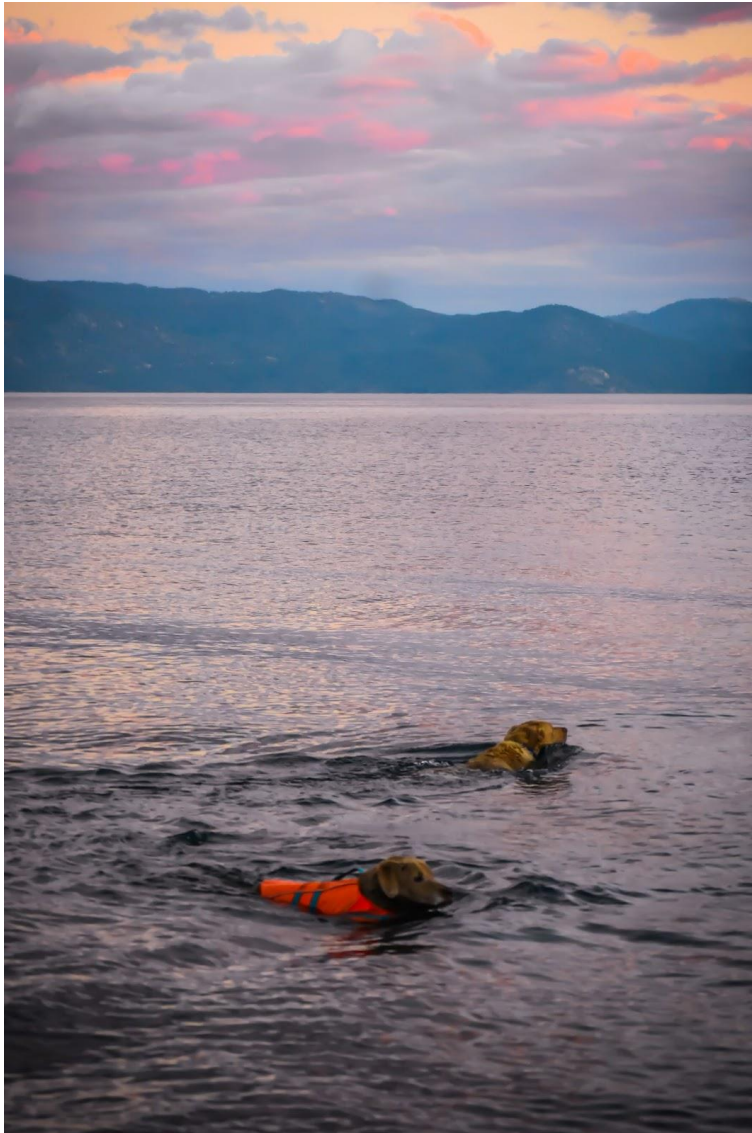
Lake Tahoe is absolutely everything it's cracked up to be and more. First of all, it REALLY is as blue as people describe it. Late September on the lake was absolutely perfect for being able to really enjoy the area without the crowds,



and still experience gorgeous weather warm enough for swimming and watersports.

Looking to get out on the lake as soon as possible, I made my way to [Waterman's Landing Rentals and Cafe](#) in the King's Beach area of North Lake Tahoe. It's amazing what a bustling community exists around the lake.

Having just switched to off-season hours in late September, the incredibly kind folks at Waterman's were nice enough to stick around late and let me have a solid kayaking session on the lake before closing up shop.



Waterman's Landing is a full rental service for paddle sports on the lake, as well as a cafe with locally roasted coffee, deliciously fresh options, and spirits for sipping.

The landing is right next to a public access area where I shared an incredible sunset with friendly dog walkers and enthusiastic pups squeezing in their last swims of the season. What better place to watch the sun set over Lake Tahoe?

After one more night in the woods, I woke up before the sun to make my way back to Waterman's for sunrise. I was there early enough to get a perfect sunrise-viewing spot, and pop up the camper to brew up some hot chocolate before the main event.

Watching the light creep over the mountains and illuminate the lake from the cozy comfort of the camper certainly didn't disappoint.

After sunrise in my fleece-lined jacket and hat, it didn't take long before the sun was high enough in the sky that I enjoyed a few hours of laying on the beach and reading before enjoying a final meal at Waterman's cafe.

Journey From Tahoe To Mammoth Hot Springs

As I sit and sipped my iced Americano on the deck at Waterman's Landing on my last morning in Lake Tahoe and pondered what to do with my final few days in California, I saw that a handful of hot springs I had saved the location of on a previous trip were only four hours away.

It sounded far, but why not continue the theme of chasing water across California and make a loop out of it?

