

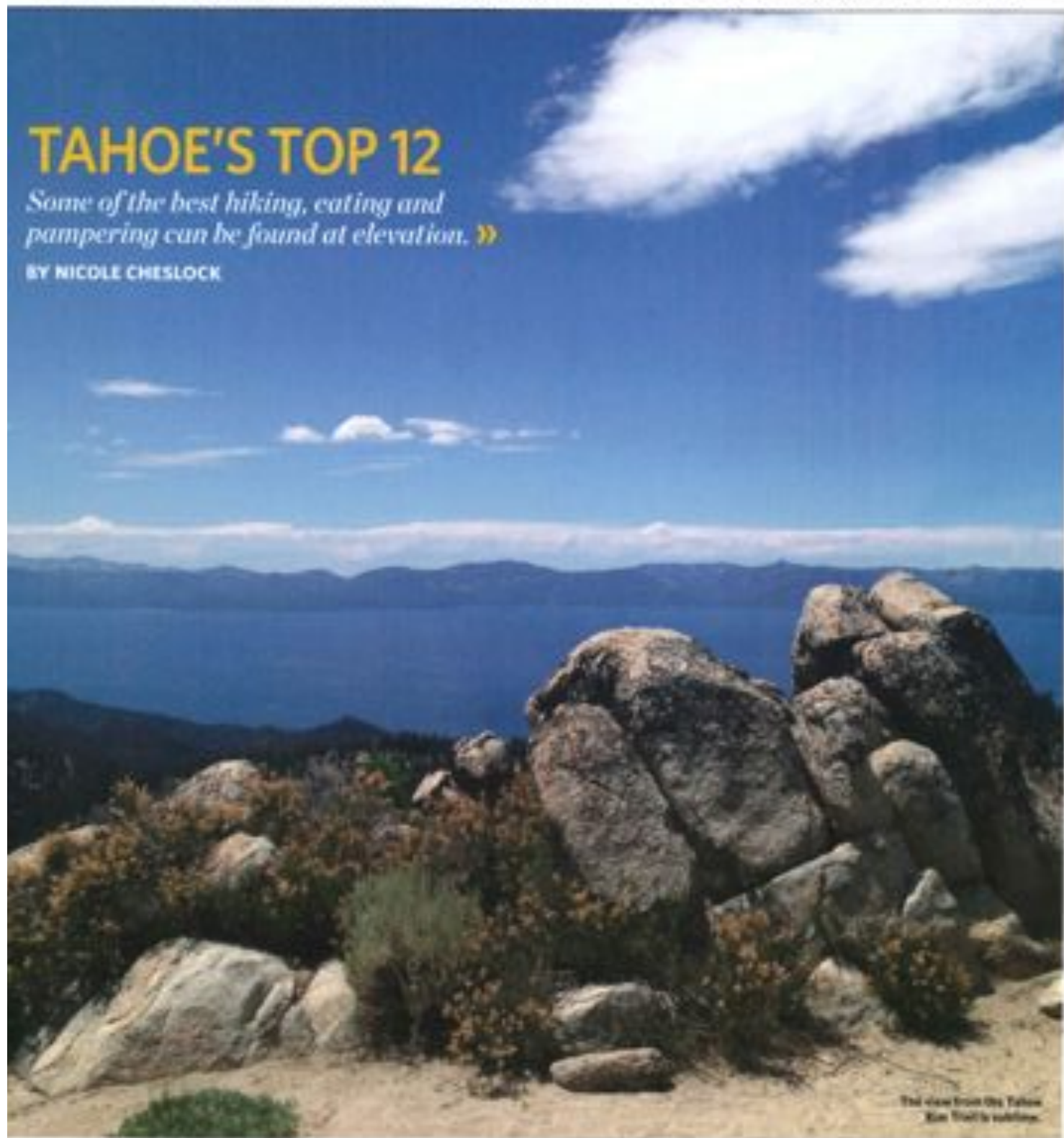
Destinations

THE LATEST LOCAL TRAVEL DEALS AND GETAWAYS PLUS JOURNEYS AROUND THE GLOBE

TAHOE'S TOP 12

Some of the best hiking, eating and pampering can be found at elevation. »

BY NICOLE CHESLOCK



The view from Old Tahoe
Kinn Trail is sublime.



IN THE SUMMER of 2010, a decade after moving west from New York City, I heard the perfect description of Lake Tahoe: "Alpine Caribbean." I was on the beach, about to glide across the water on a stand-up paddleboard, when I heard the phrase and realized that although Tahoe's temps are not nearly as welcoming, the magnificence of the see-through crystal-blue water definitely compares to the splendor of that sun-splashed land. As school wraps up, thoughts turn to summer getaways, here are some favorite Tahoe locations that never disappoint.

Hit the Trails

Heart-Pumping Rewards

By far my favorite short hike is one that begins on the **Tahoe Rim Trail** right off Highway 267. In less than an hour, you can capture one of the most astounding views of Lake Tahoe while raising your heartbeat on the ascent. This out-and-back-again hike can easily be stretched to two hours (or more). The rock outcroppings at the top offer natural "seats" where you can relax and catch up with a

friend, enjoy a snack and take photos with the lake as a backdrop. From North Lake Tahoe Boulevard in Kings Beach, drive or bike 2.6 miles up Highway 267 to access the trailhead. From the Tahoe Rim Trail, take a left onto the spur trail for incredible views. For a more strenuous challenge continue on the Tahoe Rim Trail to Martin Peak, where the unforgettable view from the fire lookout building will have you gazing at the peaks you've bagged and asking for more. tahoe.rimtrail.org

Backpacking 101 and Beyond

Put your fitness level to the test at higher altitude. **Tahoe Trips and Trails**, led by the insanely fit Petty and Jeff Baird, offers three-day trips with the latest ultralight packs. Expect a night under the stars and epic hikes culminating with a final dinner at Stella and lodging at the Cedar House Sport Hotel in Truckee. Your guides take care of all the logistics — you just show up. Also check out Tahoe Trips' teasers for endurance treks, outdoor yoga, edible plant walks and a geology hike. ahwoytrips.com

Big Blue Paddle

Tahoe's water trail offers 72 miles of shoreline. Beat the crowds (and the noise of motorboats) with an early morning start. I often begin paddling from Kings Beach State Recreational Area. I'll head east for a quick dip and loop around the rocks-off Speedboat Beach or west for a snack at Waterman's Landing in Carnelian Bay. One of these days I will do all 72 miles, which usually takes a week. Check out the **Lake Tahoe Water Trail** map for stand-up-paddle and kayak launch sites, amenities and parking. laketahoe.watertail.org

Give and Explore

Step up to the **Tahoe Rim Trail Challenge**, a self-guided fundraiser for the Tahoe Rim Trail Association (the organization dedicated to the stewardship of the trail). With six featured destinations, the challenge reveals the best of the 665-mile trail. Depending on the destination and season, you can hike, bike, ride horseback, ski or snowshoe. Children especially love photo-ops with the Trail Challenge mascot, a stuffed marmot.



Opposite page: The Ritz-Carlton. This page, from top-left: Stretching with Tahoe Trips and Trails; lobster grilled/cheese from Morgan's; the Trail Challenge mascot; Coupe Sixty-One.

istration includes a one-year TRTA membership, a T-shirt and access to members-only pages. Or make 2014 the year you conquer the complete Tahoe Rim Trail. TRTA, partnering with Shuttle Around Tahoe to report people to trailheads around the area, tahoerimtrail.org

Law and Noteworthy Eats

Brews, Blues and Barbecue

Backyard Bar at the Ritz-Carlton, Lake Tahoe, located at Northstar, features St. Louis-inspired smoked ribs, brisket and led pork, house-made sauces, wood-fired tater, traditional burgers and brutwurst. King to step behind the scenes? Join the party general manager, Joseph Mattioli, former Ritz-Carlton executive chef, for a do-on-cooking class. ritzcarlton.com

Seafood Shack

Seafood flown in daily. **Morgan's Lobster Shack & Fish Market** on Truckee's West River is where locals flock for grilled, seafood-themed scallops, shrimp, halibut, salmon

and specials. Of course Morgan's offers lobster: lobster rolls, lobster mac and cheese, and a delectable, too-rich-not-to-share grilled cheese with chunks of lobster. morgan'slobstershack.com

Keep It Local

On-site blended fruit and veggie juices and signature sandwiches plus wholesome "grab and go" items make **Tahoe Central Market** at Kings Beach the place to pick up tasty bites and groceries. The small space is stocked with organic produce, microbrews and regional favorites including Sugar Pine Bakery's grain-free chocolate chip cookies, Truckee Sourdough bread, Wolfside's smoked trout and Sierra Valley Farms' cocktail mixes. tahoecentralmarket.com

Farm to Peak

Savor a glass of bubbly while riding the Quail chairlift to the top of **Homewood Mountain Ski Resort**, where chefs will prepare a five-course seasonal dinner with beer or wine pairings on July 5 and August 9 and 30. Complete your west-shore mountain experience, and work off those calories, with

a short 20-minute hike to the top of Eagle Rock. ahomewood.com

Body Treats

Mamma Knows Best

There is no one I'd rather get a facial from than Mia Cimarrusti, affectionately known as "Mamma Mia." Tahoe City's **Pure Skin**, her tiny studio across the street from Commons Beach, is an authentic skin treatment cocoon. Cimarrusti's fascination with product ingredients and wealth of knowledge (hooned over 15-plus years) keeps her datebook filled. Custom offerings based on skin type include microdermabrasion, microcurrent treatments and organic botanical peels. 530.422.0446

Bliss at the Ritz

The Ritz-Carlton Spa, Lake Tahoe offers profound luxury that will inspire you to leave your phone and cares behind. From the soothing scents and hydrating effects of facials with Eminence products (made with ingredients from organic farms in Hungary) to a comforting massage, the Ritz-Carlton brings the spa experience to a higher level. The spa's newest offering, the Ashitsu Massage, uses deep pressure created by a barefoot therapist — let someone walk all over you. ritzcarlton.com

Find Your Balance

With a signature massage featuring chamomile, lavender, sage and just the right amount of pressure, the **Stillwater Spa** at the Hyatt Regency Lake Tahoe at Incline Village is a pampering oasis and a destination in and of itself. The spa's dry cedar sauna, eucalyptus steam rooms and numerous treatment options make the trip to the scenic east shore more than worthwhile. lake Tahoe.Hyatt.com

Beautify at the Coup

Talent, a passion for hairstyling and concern for the environment distinguish Melissa Cox's **Coupe Sixty-One** in Truckee, a must-stop for a blow-out before a special event or night out. Her eco-friendly hair salon boasts exceptional products and service. coupesixtyone.com

Follow our Tahoe blog for the latest adventures of freelance writer Nicole Cheslock, who's lived in the area since 2004. mnrinmagazine.com/tahoe