

Kayaking; My New Favorite

By Anne Groebner



I bought a kayak a few years ago. I could picture myself heading out to the several lakes around the Mountain and enjoying the peaceful feeling of floating on water surrounded by incredible scenery. My dream of weekly or even daily kayaking was broken, however, by the fact that every time I wanted to bring the kayak up the mountain, I was lacking some sort of mechanism to attach it to my car. First of all, the car I originally had didn't have a rack. No problem, right? So, I found out we already had a rack. Then I realized that that type of rack didn't work because I didn't have anything to tie the kayak to in the front or back of my car. So, the kayak sat in Tempe at my son's house for a couple of years where the only time it ever saw water was when he tested it in his pool. Then I just focused on hiking instead. It was easier to strap on a pack and a pair of hiking shoes than to figure out how to get that kayak on my car. Finally, with a little nudging, my son figured out how to strap it to his Jeep and, this year, brought up for me. Since then, I have purchased a Thule rack and it is pretty amazing how simple loading it is.

My first trip to water was to Show Low Lake, located on Show Low Lake Road by Summit Hospital. The Lake is a good size at about 100 acres and has a 75-site campground including some with electricity. It has a convenience store that rents boats and sells fishing permits, a dump station and shower facilities. And right now, there is an eagle's nest with eaglets perched in the surrounding trees. Show Low Lake is a great lake if you need to be close to town or don't want to travel long distances to a more remote area. It is still pretty peaceful if you paddle out to the outer shores away from the main boat launch. There is a lot of fishing happening and it's a great place to test the waters on a paddle board too.

Show Low Lake is managed by Recreation Resource Management of America. One of the perks of camping at Show Low Lake is what they call "EZ Camping." All you need is a sleeping bag and they will provide the rest. Rent a 14 X 14 cabin tent and it comes equipped with cots, lanterns and a propane gas stove. Recreation Resource Management of America starts taking reservations for Show Low Lake Campground on March 1st of every operating year. Peak reservation period will start the first of May and end the last day of September. Any other time, the park will be in its walk-in season only and campers must camp on a first come, first serve basis. To make reservations, call 888-537-7762. To find the lake and campground, plug in *5800 Show Low Lake Road, Show Low AZ to your GPS unit.*

The next place I kayaked was in Greer. If you haven't been to Greer, you are, pardon the pun, missing the boat. It was named after Americus Vespuccius Greer and has been around since 1879. Greer has a few campgrounds (Benny Creek, Rolfe C. Hoyer and Greer Lakes) but they are famous for their cabins and hospitality. Whether it's summer or winter, you can find a cozy cabin to stay in that is surrounded by the incredible mountain scenery that hosts a variety of hiking trails as well as three lakes and is only 12 miles from the local ski hill and even closer to two of the biggest Nordic ski trail systems in the state. Now,

because of the monsoon rains that have been unusually persistent this year, the Mountain is very green and liberally sprinkled with color from the many wildflowers it has produced. So, when we drove to Greer last weekend, we were greeted with spectacular vistas.

From Pinetop, we drove south on AZ Route 260, passed Sunrise Park Resort and the Railroad Grade Trail, until we reached AZ Route 373 and the turn off to Greer. Just before you reach the Town, there is a turn off (FR 87B) to Greer Lakes. We drove through the area to see which lake we wanted to kayak on and decided on what seemed like the biggest lake, called Bunch Reservoir. It was on the first turn-off road to the left before you get to Tunnel and River Reservoirs. Although the clouds seemed billowing and some were even dark grey, we didn't hear thunder or see lightning and, as it turned out, it was a beautiful, if not perfect, day to kayak. The temperature was in the 70's and there was a slight breeze that kept us cool.

I met a couple and their two kids who had rented a cabin from Cabin Butlers and they said they got two hours of free kayaking for renting a cabin from them. So, I called them to get the information and found out that they provide, not only their guests but to anyone interested in partaking in outdoor activities in the Greer area. (see side bar)

Cabin rentals include 2 hours of kayak rentals for free but anyone can check them out for a fee. Kayaks
1 hour-\$10
4 hours-\$30
all day-\$50

They also have bike rentals.

1 hour-\$15
all day-\$50

Fishing pole rental for both regular fishing or fly fishing is \$15 for all day.

In the winter, they will be providing sleds and tubes but the prices are yet to be determined at this time. Call 928-735-7617. Our office location is 103 Main St, Greer, AZ."

Another great place to rent cabins is Lazy Trout, which has 15 cabins (9 of their own) and 8 motel rooms. They also have a great convenience store that has groceries, all kinds of cool "necessities," t-shirts and other souvenirs to remind you of your incredible visit to Greer.

After kayaking, we headed over to one of our favorite restaurants, Molly Butler's, for lunch. When we walked in, it was pretty crowded so we decided to go sit in the bar where we met the bartender, Sandy. She was great and went out of her way to get our food and drinks even though it was pretty packed. After lunch, we hiked the walking path and then stopped for ice cream at the 92 Beans Coffee House. Our last venture for the day was a drive to the end of the road where we got out and explored the Little Colorado River.

I would also suggest kayaking at Big Lake, Crescent Lake, Lee Valley Reservoir, Horseshoe Cienega (on the White Mountain Apache Reservation - need a permit but worth it) and many, many other lakes in the White Mountains. They are all beautiful. I have a long list and I can't wait until my next trip.