

## [Good bet for walks](#)

- Connie Emerson

Sunday, October 15, 2006

Some cities were made for walking. Reno is one of them.

Spread out in a vast valley and spilling over the surrounding hills, the city (along with the adjacent municipality of Sparks) covers about 100 square miles. Throughout the area, walkways and trails pass by myriad streams and ponds, encircle lakes and meander through an arboretum and a nature preserve. But most impressive is a series of paths that extends for more than 7 miles along the Truckee River.

The most accessible portion of the trail, Reno's River Walk, follows the Truckee from the National Automobile Museum (Mill and Lake streets) west to the Booth Street Bridge, about 1.3 miles away. On fine days -- and autumn days in Reno are among the best -- there's plenty of action along the downtown portion of the concrete promenade.

On the water, kayakers in wetsuits paddle despite the weather. On land, a scattering of stores and restaurants, Wingfield Park and mansions on the south bluff downstream provide plenty to look at. Then there are the unexpecteds -- an art show on the patio outside the Lofts, a concert in the park's band shell or a lone dancer in black leather accompanied by a bagpiper on an otherwise quiet corner.

Another well-traveled route along the river, the Crooked Mile at Idlewild Park, begins near River Walk's western end. Farther west, Oxbow Nature Area (off West Second Street at the end of Dickerson Road) lets strollers experience the river's natural environment of decades ago.

Although a 1/3-mile interpretive trail is Oxbow's main feature, a two-story observation tower offers you an eagle's-eye view of the surrounding wilderness. Mule deer, coyotes, raccoons, skunks and several species of waterfowl are among the area's residents. Fish, turtles and frogs live in the channel where the river formerly flowed -- the oxbow that gave the preserve its name.

Another favorite walkabout, just a half-dozen blocks north of the casinos on Virginia Street, the Quadrangle at the University of Nevada-Reno looks as if it has been transplanted -- bricks, ivy and shade trees -- from the East. The campus was popular with Hollywood movie studios in the 1940s as the backdrop for boy-gets-girl musical extravaganzas. Farther north at Rancho San Rafael Park, the paths through Wilbur D. May Arboretum and Botanical Gardens traverse 12 acres of memorial groves, gazebos, cascading water, meadows and gardens.

Among the latter are gardens with plants that attract songbirds and butterflies as well as several rockeries. Publications include guides to common wildflowers and medicinal plants as well as a trail map and suggestions on how to walk through the Labyrinth Garden.

For the best residential walks, meander along these streets -- Marsh Avenue, Manor Drive and



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Brett Harte in the area, south of California Avenue and west of Arlington, known as Old Southwest. Here you'll find a number of architectural gems, ranging from 1930s bungalows to gracious homes designed by the world-renowned Reno architect Frederick de Longchamps. This part of town illustrates why author Walter VanTilburg Clark, who taught at San Francisco State during the mid-'60s, called his hometown "the city of trembling leaves."

As the area has grown, so have the number of hiking trails. Caughlin Ranch, an upscale residential development on the west side of the city, covers 2,300 acres, which include 26 miles of maintained paths. Trails along the ridges that award hikers with panoramic views of downtown and the surrounding city are among the most spectacular in Reno. One regular hiker, however, prefers another aspect of strolling through the area of posh homes. "The part I like best," she says, "is looking at the backyards."

Among the dozens of additional trekking options are trails in the various subdivisions in south Reno such as Double Diamond and in the Galena Creek area. One gated community under construction plans to incorporate a public trail system, marked by bronze statues of bighorn sheep, mountain goats and other animals.

About two-thirds of Reno's more than five dozen public parks have paths and/or trails. Tourists staying in Sparks may want to stroll around the Sparks Marina, a delightful man-made lake that was formerly a gravel pit just off Interstate 80.

As in most cities, it's not a good idea to walk alone at night or in any area where safety is in question. Just don't forget to bring your walking shoes to Reno.

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TRUCKEE RIVER TRAIL MAPS can be found at College Cyclery, 622 S. Virginia St., Reno; (775) 323-1809. For a campus map of the UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, visit [www.unr.edu/tour](http://www.unr.edu/tour). RENO AREA PARKS INFORMATION, [www.cityofreno.com](http://www.cityofreno.com) (click on Parks and Recreation) and [www.washoecountyparks.com](http://www.washoecountyparks.com).

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