



# PRESS RELEASE

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## **California's First Maritime Heritage Trail Opens at Emerald Bay Underwater Park in Lake Tahoe**

*Scuba Divers Can Now Explore Newly Revealed Dive Sites*

*LAKE TAHOE, Calif.*— California State Parks and the Sierra State Parks Foundation are proud to debut California's first maritime heritage underwater trail devoted to showcasing Lake Tahoe's historic recreational watercraft and barges that now rest below the surface of Emerald Bay. Starting today, October 1, scuba divers can explore three newly revealed dive sites under Emerald Bay in addition to the Barge Dive Site established in 1998. The new Emerald Bay Maritime Heritage Trail (Emerald Bay Underwater Trail) is the first of its kind in California.

Emerald Bay, situated on the western side of Lake Tahoe, is and has been an American tourist destination for well over 150 years. It was designated a National Natural Landmark in 1969 for its brilliant panorama of mountain-building processes and glacier carved granite. Translucent blue-green water surrounded by vertical cliffs, green conifers, and granite boulders creates the quintessential Tahoe experience and one that has drawn people to the bay specifically for recreation since the 1860s.

"It's no secret that Lake Tahoe is a world renowned tourist destination year round," said Denise Jaffke, Associate State Archaeologist with California State Parks. "Now, visitors will be able to experience the beauty and wonders of Emerald Bay and learn about its fascinating past through this underwater trail."

The Emerald Bay Underwater Trail celebrates the history of Emerald Bay and Lake Tahoe's culture of recreation by way of shipwrecks. The bay is the final resting place of several recreational boats, launches, and barges used on the lake during the early 20th century. This was the heyday of the Emerald Bay Resort (1920s and 1930s) and the construction of the Scandinavian "castle," Vikingsholm (1929). These boats were purposely scuttled (sunk) when they outlived their usefulness, but now serve as reminders of the golden age of recreation in Tahoe. This collection is the largest, most

diverse group of sunken small watercraft, in their original location, known to exist in the nation.

The Sierra State Parks Foundation, the non-profit partner with seven state parks in the Lake Tahoe-Donner region, helped fund the Emerald Bay Underwater Trail.

“The Sierra State Parks Foundation is honored to be a part of this significant milestone and the impact it will have in the preservation of these underwater cultural sites,” said Heidi Doyle, Executive Director of the Sierra Parks Foundation. “This maritime heritage trail will provide a unique recreational opportunity for our visitors and offer educational opportunities for students and future scientists.”

The four dive sites of the Emerald Bay Underwater Trail at Lake Tahoe range in depth from 10 to 60 feet. Underwater interpretive panels have been placed at the four dive sites so divers can learn about the sunken ships they are exploring. Waterproof information cards created for divers will be available at the park’s visitor centers, local dive shops, and on [State Parks](#) and [Sierra State Parks Foundation’s](#) websites. Because of the remote location, access by boat is advised.

Scuba divers are advised to invent their adventures safely and responsibly at the Emerald Bay Underwater Trail. Use caution and adhere to safe diving practices at all times. Lake altitude is over 6,000 feet in elevation. Divers should be prepared for extreme cold water temperatures year round.

Please help prevent diving accidents by observing the following safety precautions:

- Be properly trained and equipped for conditions.
- Always dive with a buddy.
- Ensure altitude diving safety practices are followed.
- Check weather and diving conditions ahead of time.
- Be prepared to render assistance in case of emergency.
- Follow boating safety guidelines and regulations.

On Friday, September 28, State Parks dive teams introduced the Emerald Bay Underwater Trail across its social media platforms from one of the four dive sites, using remote audio and video technology. Scuba divers are encouraged to view the video to get a sense of what their experience at the underwater trail will look like. The video and

additional information on the Emerald Bay Underwater Trail are available on State Park's website at [www.parks.ca.gov/EmeraldBayUnderwaterTrail](http://www.parks.ca.gov/EmeraldBayUnderwaterTrail).



Photo by Mylana Haydu, Indiana State University, Center for Underwater Science.

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**Sierra Parks Foundation (SSPF)**

The mission of the Sierra State Parks Foundation is to provide critically needed financial and professional support to the Lake Tahoe-Donner California State Parks for education, restoration, and cultural and environmental preservation. We fund projects and educational programs that connect visitors with our rich natural resources and cultural heritage. Because of this work and advocacy, our parks will continue to be places of education and inspiration for future generations. To learn more, visit [www.SierraStateParks.org](http://www.SierraStateParks.org).