

# D. L. Bliss Emerald Bay State Parks



## Our Mission

The mission of the California Department of Parks and Recreation is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.



California State Parks supports equal access. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should contact the parks office at (530) 525-3345. This publication is available in alternate formats by contacting:

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**Sacramento, CA 94296-0001**

For information call: (800) 777-0369

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**Discover the many states of California.™**

**D.L. Bliss & Emerald Bay State Parks**

**P. O. Box 266, Tahoma, CA 96142**

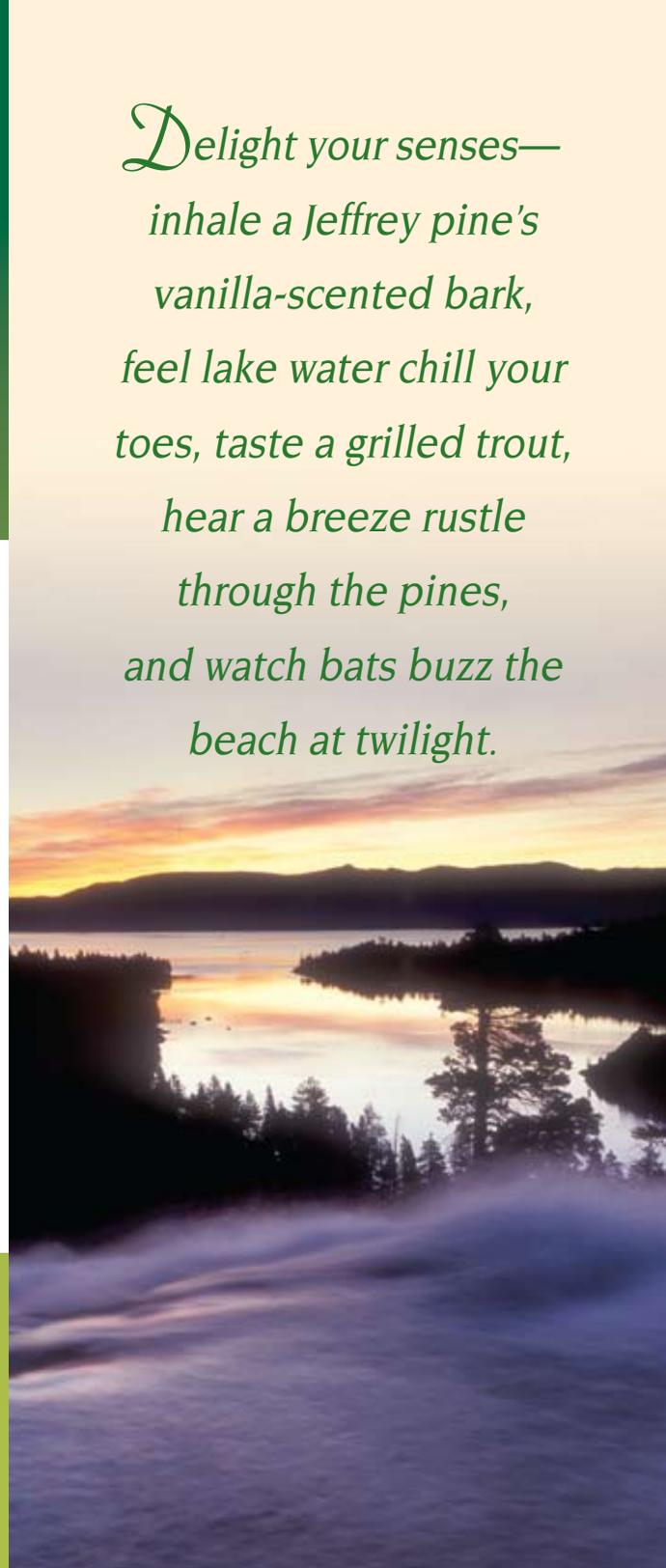
**D. L. Bliss (530) 525-7277**

**Emerald Bay (530) 541-3030 (summer only)**

**Lake Sector Headquarters (530) 525-3345**

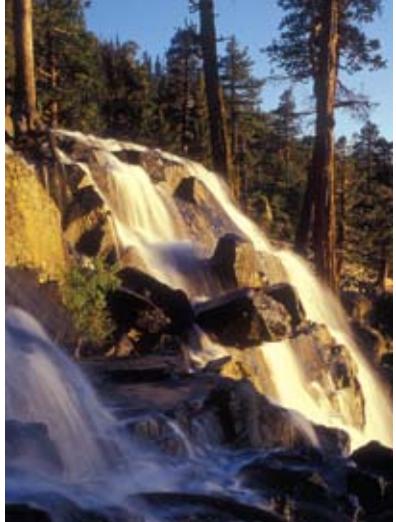


*Delight your senses—  
inhale a Jeffrey pine's  
vanilla-scented bark,  
feel lake water chill your  
toes, taste a grilled trout,  
hear a breeze rustle  
through the pines,  
and watch bats buzz the  
beach at twilight.*



## D. L. Bliss and Emerald Bay

**State Parks** include more than six miles of magnificent Lake Tahoe's west shore, covering 1,830 acres in California's Sierra Nevada. From the scenic overlook on Highway 89, you can see a brilliant panorama of Emerald Bay, Fannette Island, Lake Tahoe and the distant Nevada shore. Nearby Eagle Creek cascades over three falls and disappears into the lake.



*Eagle Falls*

D. L. Bliss State Park is named for a pioneering lumberman, railroad owner and banker from the region. The Bliss family donated 744 acres to the California State Park System in 1929. The nucleus of Emerald Bay State Park, including Vikingsholm, was sold to the State for half the appraised value by Placerville lumberman Harvey West in 1953. The Save-the-Redwoods League helped raise funds to acquire the land.

Summer temperatures at Tahoe range from about 75 degrees during the day to the low 40s at night. Winter temperatures average from a high of 40 to a low of 20 degrees. During extremely cold winters, Emerald Bay freezes over. Depending on the weather, the parks are open from late May through September and are closed during the winter. Heavy Sierra snowfall closes Highway 89 in winter.

### **PARK HISTORY**

#### **Native People**

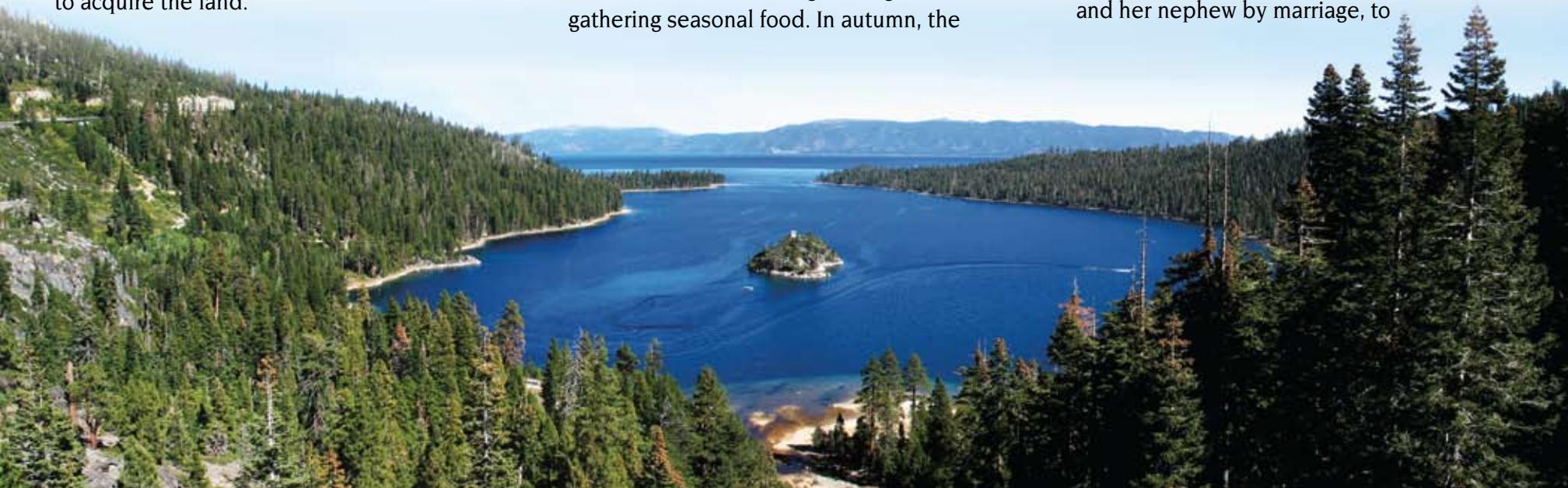
The Washoe (aboriginal *Washo*) natives were the first humans to inhabit the Lake Tahoe basin and the nearby Sierra Nevada range. Historians and archaeologists estimate that Washoe have lived in the Tahoe basin for nearly 10,000 years. They lived as nomads, hunting, fishing and gathering seasonal food. In autumn, the

natives moved from near the lake, which they called *da ow a ga*, to Washoe Lake in Carson Valley for the winter. Between 1848 and 1862, the Washoe people's estimated 10,000 square miles of lake and surrounding land were taken during the gold and silver rush. New settlers logged off the Sierra range for mine and dwelling construction.

The natives' descendants, the Washoe Tribe of California and Nevada, are now trying to reclaim portions of their land. Tribe members run the Meeks Bay resort campground and concession north of D.L. Bliss State Park. The Washoe are reviving their native language, teaching it to preschoolers, while pursuing traditional arts like basketry, dancing, and drumming.

#### **Vikingsholm**

In 1928, Mrs. Lora J. Knight of Santa Barbara purchased this isolated site at the head of Emerald Bay. Knight instructed Lennart Palme, a Swedish-born architect and her nephew by marriage, to



design a home for her. Following a trip to Scandinavia, the two decided to use elements found in Norwegian farmsteads and wooden stave churches without disturbing a single one of the Emerald Bay site's magnificent trees.

Vikingsholm's construction methods and materials, including granite boulders in the foundations and walls, are the same as those used in ancient Scandinavia. Towers, intricate carvings and hand-hewn timbers were used to create the castle-like home. The sod roofs, with their living grass and flowers, are copied from sites in Norway. Many of the furnishings that Mrs. Knight wanted for Vikingsholm were so historically significant that their export was forbidden by the Norwegian and Swedish governments. She had authentic furnishings duplicated in detail, down to the measurements, colorations and aging of the wood. Vikingsholm was completed

in September 1929. Mrs. Knight spent her summers at the home until her death in 1945.

You can take a guided tour of Vikingsholm, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, for a nominal fee from Memorial Day through September. The building is about a mile down a steep pedestrian trail from the parking lot at the Emerald Bay Overlook. Call the D.L. Bliss office in advance at (530) 525-9529 for information about accessibility at Vikingsholm.

#### **Fannette Island**

Emerald Bay's Fannette Island is the only island in Lake Tahoe. A sparsely timbered, brush-covered upthrust of granite that rises 150 feet above the water, Fannette Island was not always known by that name. During the past 100 years, it was known as Coquette Island, Baranoff Island, Dead Man's Island, Hermit's Island, and Emerald Isle.

Captain Dick Barter, "the Hermit of Emerald Bay," lived on Dead Man's Island from 1863 to 1873. He built his own wooden chapel and tomb on the island's summit. In 1873, the captain's boat was found wrecked at Rubicon Point above deep water; his body was never recovered.

In 1929 Captain Dick's chapel remnants were replaced by a stone tea house built for Lora Knight. It looked like a miniature castle. Mrs. Knight and her guests would take a motorboat to have tea on the island. The tea house had a small corner fireplace with a large oak table and four oak chairs. Vandalism has taken a toll on the tea house; only its stone shell remains.

From February 1 through June 15, the island is closed to all visitors because several pairs of Canada geese nest there. By late spring, visitors can see whole families of geese swimming near the Vikingsholm shore.



*The Vikingsholm tour includes the restored summer lodge and interior rooms and concludes with a visit to the sod-roofed garage and carport.*

## Underwater Park

Emerald Bay is an enclosed fjord long recognized for its spectacular natural beauty. Steep Sierra cliffs plunge into the narrow bay. The underwater park extends around the entrance to the bay and includes Rubicon Point and Eagle Point.



*Underwater park, Emerald Bay*

Archaeological data from the 1930s indicates that this prehistoric site includes bedrock mortars, six known shipwrecks and eight other vessels reported to have been lost in the underwater area.

As California's first underwater shipwreck park, Emerald Bay's underwater state park was officially opened to the public in September 1994. Wooden cargo barges, constructed of massive Ponderosa pine timbers, can be located by a historic site marker buoy on the surface; underwater, the barges are marked with a monument. The historic former site of Kirby's Resort, now the park's boat camp, has four small craft sunk offshore at their moorings: a skiff, a metal hourglass stern rowboat, a kayak and a wooden rowboat.

## NATURAL RESOURCES

The grandeur of the parks and their setting came from successive upheavals of the mountain-building processes that raised the Sierra Nevada. Lake Tahoe (from an Indian word interpreted to mean "Lake of the Sky") lies east of the main Sierra crest

at more than 6,200 feet elevation. After the mountains rose to the east and west, the lake's basin was completed by glaciers and lava seeping from volcanic vents, especially to the north.

Emerald Bay was gouged out by glaciers thousands of years ago. Geologists believe that the granite of Fannette Island resisted the glacial ice. The lake is over 22 miles long, 12 miles wide and

more than 1,600 feet deep. You can see approximately 70 feet into its depths from promontories such as Rubicon Point. The lake level is controlled by a small dam on the Truckee River at Tahoe City. More than 60 streams feed water into the lake, but the Truckee River is the only outflow.

The Lake Tahoe area has a wide variety of trees and plants. Majestic sugar pines grow on the thin granitic soil in the center of D.L. Bliss. The parks also contain ponderosa and Jeffrey pines, firs, incense cedar, Sierra juniper and black cottonwood. Along the streams grow a lush combination of alders, quaking aspen, mountain dogwood, service berry and bitter cherry. As for wildflowers, columbine, leopard lily, lupine, bleeding heart, yellow monkey flower and nightshade bloom in season. Brush is composed of ceanothus, chinquapin, currant, gooseberry, huckleberry oak and manzanita.

## RECREATION

### Camping, Water Sports & Hiking

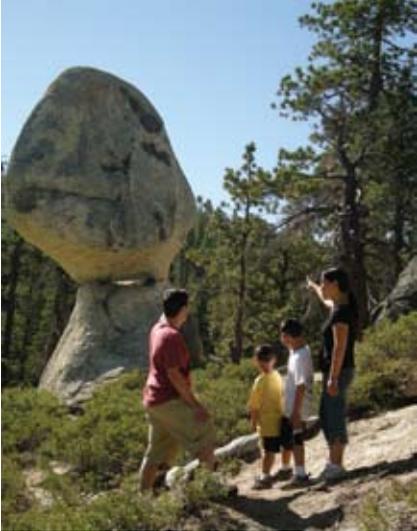
The parks have 268 family campsites, each with a table, food locker and stove, plus nearby restrooms and hot showers. Although there are no hookups, some sites at D.L. Bliss will accommodate trailers up to 15 feet or motor homes up to 18 feet. Emerald Bay can accommodate trailers up to 18 feet or motorhomes up to 21 feet. The D.L. Bliss group campground will accommodate up to 50 people, with a limit of 10 cars. Reserve all campsites by calling (800) 444-7275 or visit [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov).

Twenty primitive campsites are reachable by boat. While the parks themselves have no launching facilities, boats can be launched from private facilities about 6 miles to the north or south. Scuba diving is allowed in the underwater park.

Visitors can swim at D.L. Bliss State Park's Lester and Calawee Cove beaches. Fish for rainbow, brown and Mackinaw trout or Kokanee salmon (a landlocked form of the Pacific sockeye), all successfully introduced into the lake. During the summer, interpretive programs are scheduled.



*Lakeview campsite*



*D.L. Bliss visitors at Balancing Rock*



*Black bear*

## BEAR ENCOUNTERS

### Never approach a bear!

The American “black bears” that inhabit the region may be colored black, brown, cinnamon, or even blonde. Strict regulations protect the bears and can reduce encounters between humans and bears.

- Bear-resistant food storage facilities are available at park campgrounds. Cars and coolers are not bear-proof.

- All food and refuse, while not actively being used or transported, must be stored in the bear-resistant facilities provided.
- Do not store scented items—food, toiletries or refuse—in vehicles in campgrounds or day-use areas.
- Food and refuse that cannot be stored in bear-resistant facilities provided must be discarded in a bear-proof dumpster.
- If you see a bear in the campground, do not run. Be aggressive; assert your dominance by standing tall and making loud noises to scare the bear away.
- In the woods, respect the bear’s territory. Make eye contact, but don’t stare. Pick up small children. Make yourself appear as large as possible. Stay calm and quiet; back away slowly. Bears will often climb a tree if frightened and usually won’t come down as long as humans or leashed dogs are present.

## NEARBY STATE PARKS

- Tahoe State Recreation Area, 1/4 mile east of Tahoe City on Highway 28 (530) 525-3345
- Ed Z’berg-Sugar Pine Point State Park, 10 miles south of Tahoe City on Highway 89 (530) 525-3345

These parks receive support in part from a nonprofit organization. For more information, contact: Sierra State Parks Foundation  
PO Box 28, Tahoe City, CA 96145  
<http://www.sierrastateparks.org>

The Rubicon Trail for hikers follows the scenic lakeshore from Calawee Cove at D.L. Bliss past Vikingsholm to Upper Eagle Point Campground at Emerald Bay. The Cascade Trail at Emerald Bay gives hikers vistas of the west and south shores of Lake Tahoe.

## ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

Parking and restrooms at D.L. Bliss are barrier-free; tour videotapes and visual guides are available at the visitor centers. Both parks have some wheelchair-accessible campsites. An accessible viewing platform is available 846 feet from the Lighthouse trailhead at D. L. Bliss. Accessibility is continually improving; for updates, visit <http://access.parks.ca.gov>.

## PLEASE HELP

Emerald Bay area was designated as a National Natural Landmark by the U.S. Department of Interior in September 1969. Please help us to keep it unspoiled for the generations to come.

## PLEASE REMEMBER

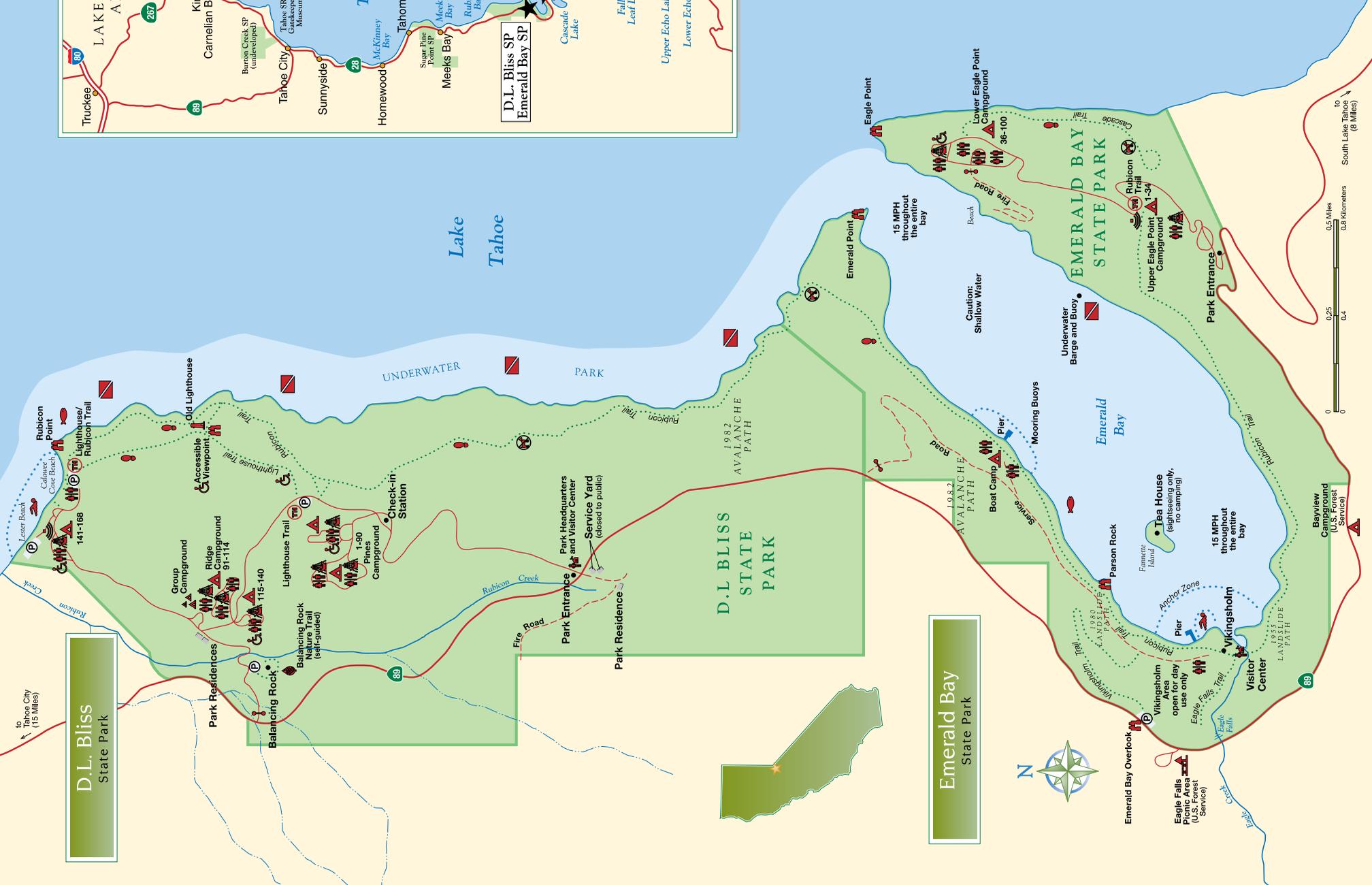
- Hikers must stay on marked trails.
- Smoking is prohibited on trails because of fire danger.
- Campfires must be confined to fire rings and stoves provided. Do not gather dead wood that is recycling back to the earth. Camp hosts have firewood for sale.
- All natural and cultural features are protected by law and should not be disturbed, altered or removed.
- Dogs are allowed in the parks. They must be kept on a six-foot leash during the day and in an enclosed vehicle or tent at night. Dogs are not permitted on the trails, on beaches or in the Vikingsholm area.



**Legend**

- Major Road
- Paved road
- Unpaved road
- Trail
- Underwater Park
- Accessible Feature
- Campfire Center
- Campground
- Campsites
- Diving
- Fishing
- Group Campground
- Group Picnic Area
- Hiking
- Lighthouse
- Locked Gate
- Nature Trail
- No Dogs Allowed
- Park Building
- Park Headquarters
- Parking
- Restrooms
- Showers
- Swimming
- Trailhead
- Viewpoint
- Waterfall

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Map by Ethel Cunningham, Berkeley, CA



**D.L. Bliss State Park**

**Emerald Bay State Park**

0 0.25 0.5 Miles  
0 0.4 0.8 Kilometers  
to South Lake Tahoe (8 Miles)