Locals Only!

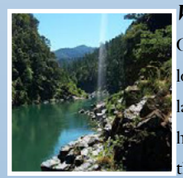
No-Hum Summer Swim Spots

Story and Photos by Dave Feral

Last week I asked my Facebook friends to share their secret spots, and this was the reply; John said "I'll never tell!,"... Joan said, "Yeah, last time I told mine, hundreds of people started showing up and trashing the place now my kids don't even like to go there. I'm keeping it to myself, people can do their own self-discovery..." Bobby said, "I think it's in Siskiyou." (Note: Names changed to protect the innocent commenters!) Comments like this went on and on for over 20 posts! So, I got a clue...secret swim holes are for locals only. Nobody wanted to share...so, I decided it would be O.K. to share some of the not-so-secret swim spots for the newcomers and those folks visiting for the summer. The following not so secret swim spots are all within one hour drive of the Arcata, Eureka area.

River Spots

DEVIL'S ELBOW



Willow Creek

One of my favorite swim spots on the Trinity River is located at Devil's Elbow. My son and I spent a day there last week and had a great time! When we arrived we had the place to ourselves, and within an hour we had the incredible experience of an adult bald eagle gliding right over our heads. Not much later an osprey came and began mobbing the bald eagle. As if that wasn't enough excitement, an enormous areal predator, a golden eagle, flew over and landed on a rock ledge and hung out for a while. The tranquil Trinity water was clear and cool, the perfect temperature for chilling off in the 95 degree heat! It was a treat to share this beautiful place and experience with my son, you are almost guaranteed a natural delight or two if you get to this spot early in the day.

To get to Devil's Elbow

- Drive east on highway 299 to Willow Creek
- Then take a left on highway 96 toward Hoopa, and drive for about 5 or 6 miles until you see a large pull out on the right hand side of the road, and park.
- To get to the river you must hike down a fairly steep trail about a quarter of a mile, stay on the main trail due to copious amounts of poison oak off the trail. Though the trail is steep, you will be rewarded with, cool clear water, great natural beauty, and ample places to swim and soak up some vitamin D. Caution should be taken when entering the Trinity River, there are deaths every year due to drowning, the Trinity is a strong cold river, so be sure everyone has solid swimming skills, bring a personal flotation device, and be safe!

MAD RIVER

Swim Hole Above Mad River Hatchery, Blue Lake

Another well know local dipping pool is located just a short 20 minute walk upstream of the Mad River Hatchery. To find this particular pool is pretty easy.

From Highway 101 near Arcata:

- Take Hwy. 299 east to the City of Blue Lake,
- Take Hatchery Rd to the California Department of Fish & Wildlife's fish Hatchery.
- Park then walk to the south end of the parking lot.
- At the south end of the hatchery compound you will find a foot path leading further south, after about 30 yards you will see a foot path leading you down to the river.
- Once at the river cross to the east bank, then stroll up stream.

You will find many nice private sandy spots along the way, and you might run into a person laying out in the nude. Don't worry, it's a Humboldt tradition to skinny dip these waters, and people are respectful. To get to the swim spot depicted in the picture above you will walk about 20 minutes up steam of the main beach at the hatchery, and if you keep walking further upstream you might find a secret swim spot of your own. During the weekdays, few people frequent these emerald pools of water warmed by the sun (up to 70

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Beach Spots

COLLEGE COVE

Trinidad

As the name implies this is a favorite spot for students from Humboldt State University, College of the Redwoods, and local families. A quiet beach with gentle waves due to offshore rocks that help dissipate offshore ocean energy, so this is a good place to come when wave are too big or blown out in other places. Traditionally the south end of the cove is clothing optional allowing you the opportunity to lose that tan line!

From Eureka, take US 101 north:

* Take the turnoff for Trinidad and go toward the ocean on Main Street
* Where the road curves leftward, turn right onto Stage Coach Road
* Go past the entrance to Trinidad State Beach, 0.7 miles total
* Turn left where you see a small sign (that says College Cove) at the entrance to a dirt parking lot

The trail begins at the north end of the parking lot. In about a quarter of a mile you will see a path to your left going down towards the beach. The path has steps to make it easier but it still is a little challenging.

BAKER BEACH

Trinidad

Baker Beach is similar to College Cove but a bit more relaxed. Generally known as the best local spot for clothing optional sunbathing it is a very peaceful playa and a great place to enjoy the warm sand and soft sound of the surf, as you let your mind unwind with a good book or a nap. Baker Beach is also one of the best spots to go tide pooling on a good low tide, or if you like rock fishing there is a great opportunity for that too!

To get to Baker Beach from Arcata:

- Head North on Hwy. 101
- Take the exit toward Westhaven Dr.
- Turn left onto Westhaven Dr.
- Turn right onto Scenic Dr.
- Find parking near Baker Ranch Rd.
- One trail down to beach in good shape, just cleared of brush.

MOONSTONE BEACH

Trinidad

Moonstone Beach is the quintessential family beach, it has easy access, is dog friendly, on shore surf, rock climbing, kayaking in Little River, and caves! What more could you ask for? O.K. due to the fact that it has so many great attributes it is also the most popular local beach in our area, which is great when you have kids. Every time our family takes a trip to Moonstone we run into friends and have the best unplanned social time. Moonstone is a community beach!

To get to Moonstone from Arcata,

- Head North on Hwy. 101
- Take the exit toward Westhaven Dr.
- Turn left onto Westhaven Dr.
- Turn left onto Scenic Dr.
- Then take a right onto Moonstone Beach Rd.
- The beach is just a few steps away!

I would like to share more of the best not so secret swim holes with you, but I'm already over my word count for this article, and it is way overdue, so for more information on where to go and how to get there check out Albert Miller's A guide to Natural Swimming Holes in the Eel River Valley and Mad River wilderness, and remember when visiting these Humboldt treasures, leave no trace... and pack it out!