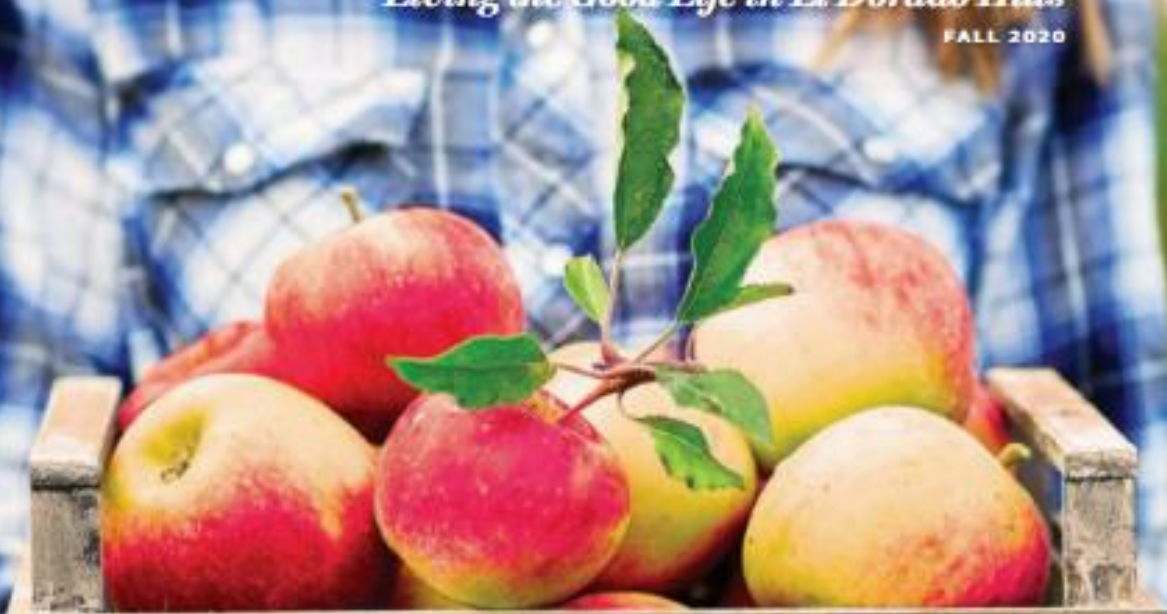


SERRANO

Living the Good Life in El Dorado Hills

FALL 2020



Apple Hill

EXPLORE AND ENJOY SAFELY

Highway 88

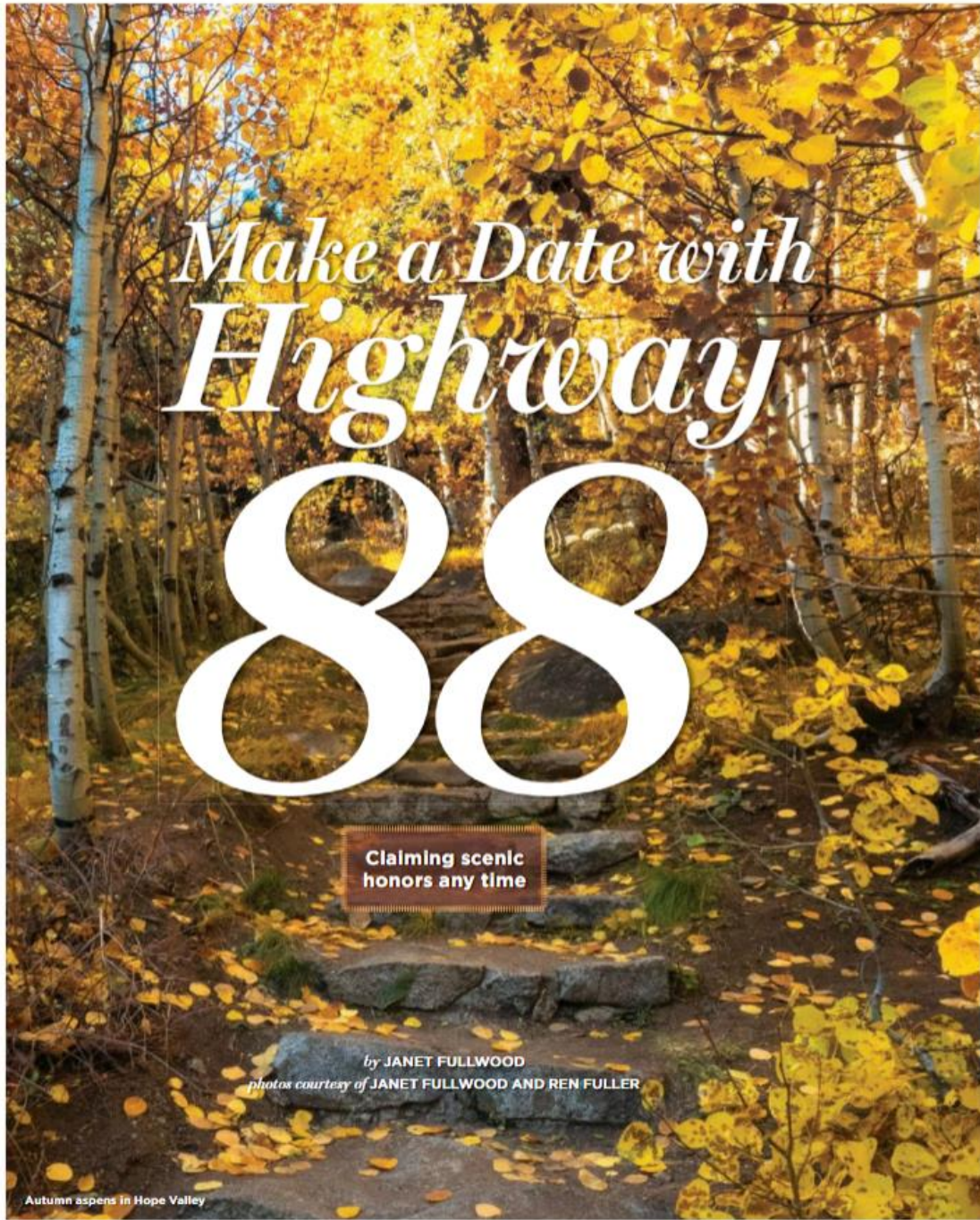
CLAIMING SCENIC HONORS

Community Heroes

GOING ABOVE & BEYOND

*Island of Black
and White Band*

MUSIC AT YOUR DOORSTEP



*Make a Date with
Highway*

88

Claiming scenic
honors any time

by JANET FULLWOOD
photos courtesy of JANET FULLWOOD AND REN FULLER

Autumn aspens in Hope Valley



A cabin at Wylder Hotel Hope Valley

Californians (and visitors to California) know coastal Highway 1 and Highway 395 in the Eastern Sierra as perhaps the two most scenic roadways in the state. But there's a third byway that's also a contender for "most scenic" honors: Highway 88, particularly the 81-mile stretch between Markleeville in Alpine County and Jackson in Amador County, with a little dip into El Dorado County along the way.

It's hard to keep your eyes on the road as you crest Carson Pass, elevation 8,652 feet, and pass a chain of lakes rimmed by craggy volcanic peaks, some of them snow-streaked well into summer. The hiking and fishing opportunities are endless, and the fall color, particularly in aspen-rich Hope Valley at the junction of Highways 88 and 89, about 20 miles south of Lake Tahoe, is worth planning an early October trip around, especially for photographers.

"Most Californians would say to me, 'You're kidding! There's fall color here? I thought it was only in New England,'" says John Poimiroo, editor/owner of CaliforniaFallColor.com, a website that tracks the change of seasons throughout the state. "What we have in California is a contradiction. In New England, there's brilliant color set around quaint villages. Here we have brilliant color set against stunning landscapes."

The large stands of aspens in Hope Valley—a sprawling, high-elevation area on the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada—normally peak during the first week of October, he adds. "If you don't hit it right, you miss it."

But regardless of the time of year, you won't miss the soul-soothing scenery that attracts outdoorsy types from Sacramento, the Bay Area and beyond. And while nature is the star, there are also creature comforts to be enjoyed year round.

Among them is a new name, Wylder Hotel Hope Valley, for the former Sorensen's Resort, a classic, 165-acre cabin complex and Highway 88 landmark that John and Patty Brissenden operated for almost 40 years before recently retiring. The new owners have retained the resort's storied Old Tahoe ambience, but upped the amenities, from modernizing and winterizing the 30 on-site cabins (most with kitchens) with slick new interiors, to adding a large deck and picnic areas for outdoor, socially distanced dining. A couple of miles down the road, at what is now Wylder Campground, seven yurts and a 1951 Spartan RV have been added alongside more traditional campsites. (There are also two vacation homes for rent.) Come winter, the former Hope Valley Outdoors operation, now called the Outpost, will supply cross-county skis, snowshoes and other winter gear to snow lovers.

Meanwhile, Wylder's full-service restaurant has maintained the Sorensen's Café name plus a handful of popular dishes, including burgundy beef stew and "famous berry cobbler."

"We're breeding new life with new dishes, adding a cocktail program and lots of personality," says Wylder founder and CEO John Flanagan. Adjacent to the campground, the General Store offers more choices, including a beer and wine selection, along with breakfast items and an assortment of fresh-baked, mouth-watering pies, cookies, scones and such.

Flanagan, who comes to the property with 25 years of experience in the hospitality industry, as well as with a Wylder hotel in Maryland, says the company's goal is "to look for surprising locations that have history and soul that we can reimagine while maintaining the charm."



The Wa'She Shu cabin at Wylder Hotel Hope Valley



Wylder Campground



Sorensen's Café





Mountain biking in Hope Valley



Autumn aspens in Hope Valley



We're breeding new life with new dishes, adding a cocktail program and lots of personality.

—John Flanagan, Wylder founder and CEO

Outdoor dining at Wylder Hotel Hope Valley

Where to Stay on Highway 88

- **Wylder Hotel Hope Valley** is kid- and dog-friendly. Prices vary according to the season and day of the week. wylderhotels.com/hope-valley.com
- Several seasonal resorts also welcome guests into mid-October. Among them: **Kit Carson Lodge on Silver Lake** (cabins, lodge and an excellent restaurant, kitcarsonlodge.com); **Caples Lake Resort**, capleslakeresort.com and **Silver Lake Resort**, silverlakeresort.net.
- **Kirkwood Mountain Resort** (a well-known ski area) had lodging open at press time, and there are many private homes and condos offered through airbnb.com, VRBO and other online resources. kirkwood.com

*Visit each resort/lodge's website to determine availability and restrictions due to COVID-19.

Management also wants to make the property more experiential, adding summer and winter workshops in outdoor activities from kayaking to fly-fishing, plus snowshoe and cross country ski outings, “paint and sip” sessions and guided nature walks, “the point being to offer guests a lot to do, or make it comfortable for them to do nothing at all.”

“Doing nothing” might include a scenic hike along the West Carson River in Hope Valley, or a drive up Highway 88 to admire the chain of lakes—Red Lake, Silver Lake, Caples Lake and others—that spangle the sides of the road. The Carson Pass summit is transited by the Pacific Crest Trail, a 2,650-mile foot route between Mexico and Canada that is very popular for day hikes. It’s a moderately easy foray to Lake Winnemucca, about three miles in, while the path gets more extreme as it dips down to Fourth of July Lake or up to Round Lake. Get there early, as the parking lot fills fast. (A second staging area, popular with equestrians, is across the road at the trailhead to Showers Lake, another alpine beauty spot.)

Other Resources

- CaliforniaFallColor.com—Tracks fall color around the state
- CarsonPass.com—Information on camping, hiking, boating, snow play and other activities. (Note: The Carson Pass Information Station at the summit is not open this season due to the COVID-19 pandemic.)
- FriendsOfHopeValley.com—A nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting and preserving the scenic beauty, recreational opportunity and historic value of Hope Valley and the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada in Alpine County, California.



One of seven yurts at Wylder Campground



Yurt interior



A dog-friendly cabin at Wylder Hotel Hope Valley



The 1951 Spartan RV at Wylder Campground

Know Before You Go—Hope Valley Wildlife Area in Alpine County has a rich history due to the Gold Rush and its location on the Emigrant Trail. It consists of almost 3,000 acres, most above 7,000 feet in elevation, and is known for fly-fishing opportunities, as well as fall foliage, drawing hikers and photographers. It is part of the Carson Ranger District of Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest. Some private inholdings within the valley are not signed but should be respected as private property. There are multiple entrances and small parking pull-offs on Highway 88, but unless you hold a California hunting or fishing license, you will need to obtain a lands pass from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to legally access the reserve. Purchase online (\$4.58 per day) and print: wildlife.ca.gov/licensing/lands-pass.



Highway 88 in Markleeville