

Viewpoints

Discovering and rediscovering the Top of Utah

Last month, my house was turned into a temporary motel for a group of relatives visiting Utah for a ski vacation. One of the benefits of playing host to out-of-state visitors is the opportunity to vicariously view our community through the eyes of a newcomer. My relatives commented on the beauty of the snowcapped mountain peaks, the grandeur of the rock formations in Ogden Canyon, the magnificent view from Allen's Peak, and the luster of the sun over the Great Salt Lake. Every time we stepped outside the house I heard remarks about the natural beauty of the Top of Utah.

My guests' perspectives wakened me from the complacency that comes from living in a community for many years. We often forget how fortunate we are to live in the Top of Utah.

We are surrounded by beautiful vistas. An extensive menu of outdoor recreational opportunities is found a short distance from our homes. We can also enjoy the benefits of the mountains while having access to cultural and economic benefits of a

Top of Utah Voices



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Commentary

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moderately-sized urban city.

I speculate that even avid outdoor enthusiasts can find unexplored treasures in our community. I want to mention three gems worthy of discovery or rediscovery. I will begin with the Great Salt Lake Shorelands Preserve which is a wetlands located in Northern Davis County. A project of the Nature Conservancy, the Shorelands Preserve is a habitat for thousands of migrating birds.

A unique feature of the preserve is a mile-long boardwalk that winds through marshes and ponds. Suspended several feet above terrain which would

be tough to slog through, the boardwalk provides an excellent path for a quiet walk. Halfway along the boardwalk, you will find a 30-foot observation tower offering excellent views in every direction. The Shorelands Preserve is open throughout the year, but the late fall, winter and early spring are excellent times to visit the Shorelands Preserve. The mosquitoes, which are ubiquitous in the summer, disappear in the cooler months.

Nearby is Antelope Island, a common focal point on the western horizon. While almost everyone living along the Wasatch Front has seen Antelope Island, a much smaller number of people have actually visited Antelope Island State Park. I had lived in Northern Utah a decade before I found my way onto Antelope Island. Antelope Island offers a little bit of everything in the form of recreation. The perimeter of the island can be navigated by boat and the interior explored by car, foot, mountain bike or road bike. The last option is especially enjoyable because the wide roads and light car traffic provide an opportunity to ride a road bike

without the anxiety of urban traffic.

On the island, there are coyotes, deer, dozens of birds and waterfowl, a small herd of elk, antelope and bison. The bison were first introduced to the island in 1893 and now number some 600 animals. The namesake antelope were reintroduced to the island in 1993.

The final treasure I will mention is the Ogden Nature Center. The Ogden Nature Center's location, at 966 W. 12th St., disguises a wildlife sanctuary within the city. On 152 acres the Ogden Nature Center is a home for deer, fox and scores of different birds. Walking trails are an excellent way to enjoy the Nature Center.

A recent addition to the Nature Center is the Peery Education Building. The building provides classroom space, but the building itself is also an educational tool showcasing environmentally responsible design. The cabinets are made of renewable resources like hulled sunflower seeds and straw. The efficiency of the heating and cooling system is state-of-the-art.

Educational signs explain the many aspects of sustainable design. The Peery Building provides a preview of how many buildings will be designed in the future.

I could continue my list of underappreciated destinations with descriptions of the Spiral Jetty and the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge.

You probably have your own list of hidden gems. Of course, if you have yet to enjoy the Bonneville Shoreline Trail, Waterfall Canyon, Ogden Valley's ski areas, Pineview Reservoir, Ben Lomond Peak and other better-known recreational amenities, these should be near the top of your "must-do" list.

The British writer, G.K. Chesterton, once reflected on the pleasures of waking from a deep dream which had provided a rousing adventure without leaving the comfort of an armchair. Northern Utah provides residents with an expansive range of recreational options within minutes of their homes. Spring is a perfect time to explore some of the natural jewels in the Top of Utah's crown.