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Butte County celebrates winter harvest, bird migration and outdoor recreation

BUTTE COUNTY, Calif. (Jan. 5, 2018)—Butte County welcomes ‘explorers’ to a unique winter season of olive oil and citrus harvest, boutique winery and brewery tours, snow goose migration and outdoor recreation. Because of the region’s temperate climate and natural amenities, visitors can access the outdoors and seasonal cuisine year-round, while other destinations are inhibited by snow and fog.

“Butte County is one of northern California’s last frontiers for hiking, hunting, fishing and locally-sourced dining—especially during the winter months.” said Bruce Spangler, President of the Explore Butte County Board. “In just a weekend trip, visitors can experience the top of Table Mountain, the serenity of Lake Oroville, the boutique tasting rooms of wineries and breweries, and freshly harvested olives and citrus. The diversity of terrain, activities and cuisine in a 60-mile radius is unmatched.”

As a national leader in olive growing and olive oil production, Butte County’s olive harvest can be enjoyed Dec. - Jan. through agricultural tours and tastings. Home of the California Olive Ranch—the largest olive producer in the world—the region’s warmer climate allows for a later-season harvest, creating a sweeter fruit and rich tasting olive oil. Locally sourced olive oil can be found in boutique storefronts throughout Chico, Oroville and Paradise.

Mandarins, which also headline the winter harvest, are available in farmers markets, including the weekly Chico Saturday Farmers Market. They can also be purchased directly from the farm.

Butte County sits on the Pacific Flyway, one of the four major migratory bird routes in America that extends from Patagonia to Alaska. Butte’s diverse ecosystem of lakes and

rivers attracts more than 350 species of migratory birds and birders annually. Birders can visit the Gray Lodge Wildlife Area during migration season, located 8 miles south of Gridley. As a celebration of this unique ecosystem, Butte County enjoys the annual Snow Goose Festival, Jan 24 - 28, celebrating this journey of millions of waterfowl and raptors. Jon L. Dunn, keynote speaker and author of National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America, headlines the five-day festival.

Winter outdoor recreation attracts hikers and backpackers to Butte County's natural landmarks, including Phantom Falls—a disappearing, seasonal waterfall that runs during the winter months. Similarly, hunters and anglers can enjoy open spaces throughout the Oroville Wildlife Area, Upper Butte Basin Wildlife Area and various water systems within the region.

Named “the next big thing in winemaking” by the Sacramento Bee, the region is home to over 14 wineries with boutique tasting rooms. Open year-round, these watering holes are ideal for visitors to explore during winter months.

Sierra Nevada Brewing, Co. in Chico has been a national leader in the craft beer movement since its advent in 1980. The brewery has catalyzed the emergence of new breweries, including Miner's Alley Brewing in Oroville, and recently opened Secret Trails Brewing in Chico.

Since the launch of the region's tourism initiative in June, Explore Butte County promotes awareness of untrodden California terrain, historically-recognized farms, ranches and landmarks, locally-crafted goods, arts and festivals. ExploreButteCounty.com offers curated itineraries for the outdoor enthusiast, the beer lover and the local food lover, among others.

See below for more information about the top activities, products, events and entertainment in winter 2018.

Olive Oil & Citrus Season

Olive harvest lasts from December to January, and visitors can taste locally-sourced products from Lodestar Farms, Chaffin Family Orchards and Berkeley Olive Grove 1913. Home of the California Olive Ranch—the largest olive oil company in the world—Butte County is a leading producer of olives, including Olio Nuevo and Mission Olives. In Dec. 2017, the California Olive Ranch received \$35 million, the biggest equity investment ever made to a domestic olive oil company. The funds will help double its acreage and continue sustainable olive oil production. Unlike colder destinations, Butte's temperate climate allows for a later harvest and sweeter tasting product.

The historically-recognized Mother Orange Tree is the oldest living orange tree in Northern California, and can be found in Oroville where winter mandarins and oranges are in season. Visitors can purchase fresh-picked citrus at each farm location, or in local farmers markets.

Wine and Beer Tours

Butte County supports over 20 craft winery and brewery operations, some with tasting rooms and hosted pairings. Sierra Nevada Brewing Company in Chico has led the craft brew movement in northern California since 1980, and is revered by many as the birthplace of modern American craft brewing. Additional locales, including Almendra Winery and Spirits, La Rocca Vineyards and Feather River Brewing use home-grown products and offer boutique tasting experiences. Visitors can plan a self-guided tour by visiting: www.explorebuttecounty.com/plan.

Fishing and Hunting

Anglers can catch bass, salmon and trout along the Feather River, Lake Oroville, Paradise Lake, Sacramento River, Butte Creek and other water systems. The Feather River Fish Hatchery raises Chinook salmon and steelhead trout, which can be seen through underwater viewing rooms. Winter hunting season includes various species of waterfowl, which can be found throughout the Oroville Wildlife Area and Upper Butte Basin Wildlife Area. For tags and permitting, visit: www.wildlife.ca.gov.

Hiking + Biking

Popular hikes include Feather Falls (410-feet), which can be found after a 9-mile hike from the Feather River. Along the way, Frey Creek is a popular stopping-point for hikers, as millions of ladybugs can be seen during winter migration season. A hike up Table Mountain offers a 7.3-mile trail to the illusive Phantom Falls. This waterfall disappears during the summer months, and runs Nov. - May. Popular road biking loops include Bidwell Park, the Durham Loop and the Table Mountain Loop. Lesser-known biking paths can be found through the Chico Velo Cycling Club.

Events

Jan. 24 - 28: [Snow Goose Festival of the Pacific Flyway](#)

This five-day festival celebrates millions of snow geese and other fowl, and attracts more than 200,000 bird watchers to Gray Lodge each year. The event includes field trips, workshops, youth activities, guest speakers and more.

Feb. 11: [Velo Love Ride](#)

This couples' bike ride offers 40, 60, or 100 mile adventure courses around the famous Sutter Buttes.

Chico Theater Company

- **Jan. 19 - Feb. 11:** A Chorus Line
- **Mar. 2 - 25:** 9 to 5, The Musical

Theater on the Ridge

- **Jan. 25 - Feb. 10:** Living on Love
- **Mar. 1 - 10:** Every Brilliant Thing

Chico State Performing Arts

- Jan 10 - Kris Kristofferson
- Jan 26 - Spotlight Performances
- Feb 4 - Guitar Festival
- Feb 9 - Sleeping Beauty: Moscow Festival Ballet
- Feb 13 - Cirque Eloize: Saloon The Wild Wild West Comes Alive
- Feb 18 - Lucrezia Borgia San Francisco Opera Grand Opera Cinema Series
- Feb 25 - Almost Vienna (NSS)
- Feb 27 - Stepping Out: Dublin Irish Dance
- March 1 - Movie: Singin' in the Rain
- March 3 - Jad Abumrad, Producer and Host of Radiolab
- March 4 - The Pacific Guitar Ensemble
- March 8 - 15 - Spring Theater: A Midsummer Night's Dream (SOA)
- March 9
 - The Songs of Stevie Wonder: Uncle Dad's Art Collective
 - Chico Bach Festival: Scarlatti to Schumann (SOA)
- March 10
 - Chico Bach Festival: Vivaldi and Beyond (SOA)
 - The Songs of Stevie Wonder: Uncle Dad's Art Collective
- March 11 - Chico Bach Festival: Frescobaldi & Friends (SOA)
- March 18 - Goitse: Celtic Music
- March 30 - Black Arm Band

Lodging

Various lodging options can be found in Chico, Oroville and Paradise. Visit: www.explorebuttecounty.com/stay/lodging/ for a full list.

About Explore Butte County

Adventure awaits in Butte County, Calif., located in the Sierra Foothills, 75 miles north of Sacramento. The county offers countless opportunities for outdoor recreation, authentic local

food, culture and events, and nearly 300 days of sunshine a year. It encompasses 1,677 square miles of farmland, lakes, rivers, foothills and urban areas. Named after the Sutter Buttes, Butte County was the northernmost gateway of the California Gold Rush, and incorporates land from original Mexican Land Grants. Rich in history, agriculture and outdoor exploration, Butte County celebrate its identity through expressive arts and locally-grown products. For more information visit www.ExploreButteCounty.com.

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