So yeah I'll just get started talking about stuff on the slide show.
So the topics that I thought would be most helpful are where to go, what to bring, what’s going on when you’re there, and when you leave; so just kind of like a broad scope of what we're going to talk about.
So the first spot of course I went straight to Bidwell Park and I brought all these maps because they're really cool and they're free and they're laminated so they hold up well in your backpack, and I've been trying to give them away in the AO office for a long time but we have tons of them. But, you can see this is Upper Park, and all the trails are marked by difficulty level and whether, whether they're for bikes or paved or pedestrians, whether they're smaller connecting trails or like really maintained major trails. So it's a really, really detailed map and it gives like some bicycling safety tips too. You don't even really need to use it for biking though, I would use this for hiking in upper park. So I think this is a really good resource to going into the park. I definitely encourage you to take one. Have you guys gone to upper park at all since you've been in Chico? Yeah? Well you should check it out. This time of year it's pretty, pretty brown and gold. But in this picture you could see it's kind of springtime. Some of the things to remember about the park is that there is, there are two gates; one when you're first coming off of Wildwood Road and into Upper Park Road. The first gate is open from an hour before sunrise until 11 p.m. And then there's a second gate right by the Horseshoe Lake parking lot and that one is open I believe every day except for Monday and Sunday and it closes at 7 p.m. and it opens at, sunrise I think. But it's also closed on really wet days. So those kind of like influence probably your decision on where you're going to go in the park, like oh I was going to drive to Bear Hole but it's Monday so I guess we'll bike instead. So it's just good to be aware of those things and there's a lot of websites, you know like Chico website of friends of Bidwell Park that are really, really helpful for all the info on the park.
And so this is one of the more popular areas. It's a picture of Bear Hole, really good for swimming. Early in the spring the flow there is really, really high and can be dangerous so just be confident of your swimming skills. There's a lot of undercut rocks; that's something to be aware of. There's been a lot of accidents there in past years but it's a beautiful, beautiful spot and if, as long as you're like aware and you know cautious of the dangers, it's a great way to get out of the heat in Chico 'cause as you probably know it gets really hot here.
And here's some pictures of Lower Park and One Mile, so it's called Sycamore Pool. And you can see on January 1st at 1 p.m. everyone runs and jumps into One Mile. It's the annual Polar Bear Swim. So, I've never actually participated for those who don't mind the cold, it's a pretty cool experience. And then the pool is open pretty much year-round. In the winter months which is basically the middle of November until mid-April you can actually take non-motorized watercraft on One Mile. So if you want to try a kayak, like a hard shell kayak or even an inflatable one or you want to take like a little row boat or something, you can actually do that there. Most people don't know that, and rarely do you see boaters out there so it's kind of cool. But there's no life guard on duty so.
So another really good thing to do at night in Chico is to go to the Chico Observatory keeping in mind that that gate does close at 11 p.m., so to get to the observatory you have got to go before 11. But it's open Thursday through Sunday and it's actually really, really cool. There's some volunteers and some paid staff that work there and they can show you all sorts of planets and stars, things like that. It's a really fun date actually. I've used it as a date before, and it's really cool and there's hardly ever anyone there. It's really neat that Chico has an observatory so I would really recommend using that resource.
And here's just another map that I found online. It's a topo map, a topographical map so it shows the elevation change on all the trails that you can see. So in that Chico bike map, this one here doesn't really show necessarily the elevation gain that you would have from these trails, but this one I found really easily online, you can see these kind of lines are called contour intervals, and the closer they are together, like right here, that means the steeper incline it's going to be. So you can see that the trail difficulty when you're up on North Rim Trail, it's going to be more difficult than if you're hiking down on the Yahi Trail. So that one's yellow 'cause it's easy. And another thing to keep in mind is if you're taking a dog in the park, and I do have some slides on that later, but as long as we have the visual here, I believe that the Park Road is this right here going up through the park and it goes all the way up to a gate. If you ever go back that far it gets really steep and you can bike up it quite far. But with that Park Road, on the north side of it, you can have dogs off leash. So if you want to take your dog and let them run around and run free and you trust them to not run off, it's a great place to take dogs and they can meet other people and dogs. It's really fun for them. And then on the south side of the Park Road, or if you're walking them on the road, they do need to be on leash. So just a fun place to take dogs. I like to take them there better than the dog park because the dog park's pretty small and this way I think that there's more like animals and smells for them. I think they like it better. If you guys have questions at any time, please just say hey Rachael, I have a question.
So this is kind of branching out, out of Chico and getting into kind of nearby places that you can check out. This is the Feather River. It's a branch of the Feather River actually coming down around the backside of Paradise, and there's some flumes that were built there to transport logs from up in the foothills down into Chico down to the mill where they would be processed. So, that flume still exists. It's kind of that water channel that you see in the picture with the grading over it and they would just put huge logs on that and send them down. And so now it's not used for anything and you can hike along there and you can actually swim in the flume. It's not recommended but you can. And the river has some great swimming holes with really big rocks you can jump off of into the river. I'd say the best time to go there is May, late May through now. Now is probably like the end of when you'd want to go there. The river's probably at the lowest that it's going to be but it's still just barely warm enough where it'd be fun. But a little bit later it's going to be really cold. And this is a very mellow hike too. It's not strenuous at all.
Feather Falls is a little bit more strenuous. Talking about, about 8 miles round trip, so there's actually two routes you can take to the falls. One is 3.5 miles and the other is 4.5. So you can make a loop of it or you can go there and back on one of the trails; either way. Usually not that many people out there. Really beautiful, mostly a shaded trail. I was there a couple weeks ago and there were thousands of ladybugs on this little wooden bridge over a creek on the way there so, which is really neat. You can see all sorts of things when you're out there unexpected, and it's actually the 6th highest waterfall in the United States. Yeah, pretty surprising. Most people don't, you know, go towards Oroville to look for adventure but there's all sorts of stuff up in the foothills and it's beautiful. This time of year it's not quite flowing that huge. The springtime is probably the best time to do that hike. You do have to be cautious of bees and things like that. Sometimes it's buggy on the trail, but honestly that's the best time to go because there's hardly ever anyone else out there in the springtime. I would say like, early March even, really beautiful out there. And that's when you're going to see a huge, huge waterfall like that. And, yeah dogs are okay on that trail. And it's definitely a little bit more steep of a hike than the flumes or what you would get in Upper Park but great, great day hike. And bring lots of water 'cause there's no water at the trailhead.
And then of course there's Lake Oroville. It's been a little bit low in the past year as you can see but there's all sorts of recreational opportunities there; boating, wakeboarding, sailing, hiking. There's actually campgrounds around there and I have a little sheet with Chico area campgrounds on it. You'd be surprised how many campgrounds there are in the near vicinity of Chico, so if any of you guys would like to take a look at that later. There's a few around Lake Oroville and I think they're state-run so they're pretty inexpensive, I think like $15 or $16 a night. Yeah Lake Oroville is actually really beautiful, great fishing and really close to town. It takes like 20, 25 minutes to get there so definitely something worth looking into. And also, if you've never checked it out, the Forebay Aquatic Center on the Forebay over Lake Oroville is run by the Associated Students and it's a really cool program. They do open houses a couple times a year where there's free gear rentals to students. All you have to do is like get yourself out there and then you can go do something really fun like try a standup paddle board, or, I learned how to sail there. I'd never really been in a boat in my life, a small boat in like that, and I learned how to capsize and like turn the boat back over which is actually really fun. So, and they have like wakeboarding and windsurfing and more kind of like high adrenaline sports too so I would highly recommend checking that out. And look for the days when they have the, like free gear rentals, the open houses because that's when it's the best time to get out there. Try something new for free.
Lassen, it's like my bread and butter. I love Lassen Volcanic National Park. This is a really gorgeous picture of it. It shows Lassen Volcano, the actual peak in the wintertime and it's definitely one of those gems that's really close to town that most people don't take advantage of. It's $10 to get into. You can pay that to something like Yosemite National, Yosemite National Park and it's so much more expensive, such a longer drive. So Lassen is really one of those places that I feel like more people should have experiences there, especially when they're in Chico. There's, I think 7 different types of volcanoes within the park boundaries. It's surrounded by a huge amount of national forest as well. There's all sorts of day hikes you can do there. Mount Harkness which is a fire lookout tower, it's only about 3 or 4 miles, and beautiful views. You can see Mount Shasta, you can see Lassen Peak, you can see Lake Almanor, you can see the Warner Valley which is just beautiful area. And you can see cinder cones and stuff, all the evidence, geologic evidence of the volcanic activity there which is kind of cool to see if you're into geology at all. There's Bumpass Hell which is kind of a fumaroles so that you can hike to or like boiling hot springs. There's Mount Brokoff Hike which is something I did actually a couple weekends ago too for AO and that's a pretty strenuous hike; kind of kicked my butt. It's about 7 miles to the top and back and you gain 2,000 vertical feet in 7 miles. So it's just a trek to the top, but it's really cool to see. We got to the top and you could see Mount Diller was a mountain kind of to the north of us and there's all these like scraping and like striations in the rocks from where glaciations occurred like 200,000 years ago. So there's just all this really cool evidence of how the park was formed, and all the cinder cones.
remaining. It's just beautiful. And then in the wintertime if you're into snowshoeing, cross country skiing, back country skiing or snowboarding, there's really not a better place, a closer place or a cheaper place than Lassen because I've spent a couple weekends up there in the wintertime and I've seen like two or three other people the whole time. And I saw a couple guys who were back country snowboarding and one dude who was out doing his little cross country ski thing and nothing else. It was just like completely pristine. It looks like this. It's so, so beautiful up there and it's not very far. So if you can rally a group of friends, definitely go up to Lassen, even in the wintertime because they do guided ranger hikes up to the hot springs or what are they called, boiling pots, the things like that. All that volcanic activity stuff. They do guided hikes up to those and it's only like a mile but it's really, really informative and interesting. They know way more about geology than I do, and it's totally worth it. And snowshoeing is really good exercise too, really good exercise. So, highly recommend Lassen.
Whiskeytown Falls actually kind of has a cool story behind it. It's, looking at about a 2 hour and 45 minute or 3 hour drive to get up there, but once again one of those places most people don't know about. It was actually kind of rediscovered in 2004. Someone had gone through the area and mapped out kind of the terrain and made topographical maps. And for some reason, it was mis-charted so no one knew that this falls was there. And then like in 2004 some people hiked out there and were like, oh there's a beautiful waterfall here. And it's actually a series of kind of cascading falls. That just kind of shows the bottom of it. But it is gorgeous there and you can take your dog. It's only $5 to park and it's just a beautiful day hike. Not too bad of a drive. I did it the day after Christmas one time and we saw like no one else out there. There's really cool little ice formations and crystals and little icicles because some of the water flowing had frozen. So it's just a really beautiful place as you can see by the picture. And once again, really close, inexpensive, and no one else is there. So, total gem.
Table Mountain. Has anyone seen it driving through Oroville, or heard of it? It has a big O on the side of it for Oroville. I think it's the prettiest part about Oroville. But as you can see it has amazing wildflowers in the spring. It's actually where I learned how to fly a kite. If you go out there there's hardly any trees and it's perfect kite flying location. So you go south on Highway 99 and then take, take a left onto Highway 70 and go up that a little ways to Cherokee Road, and then it's this winding narrow road up to the top. And there's a parking lot there, you can take your dogs out there too. Bring lots of water, there's not any spigots out there. But bring like a picnic, bring your friends. There's some waterfalls you can hike to out there. You can really just wander free and there are some cows that graze out there, but the people who own the property don't care if people use it for recreation. Once again a really cute date spot, you know go fly a kite and have a picnic and things like that. Mid-March to mid-May even at the latest is when you're going to see really beautiful wildflowers there. And if kind of depends on how warm of a spring we're having but anytime in March would really be a good time to be out there when everything is still green and beautiful. So, highly recommend it.
So just some basics of what to bring with you on whatever adventure you choose to embark on. Bring a water bottle or two. If you're not feeling like you have to pee ever 2 to 4 hours you're probably getting dehydrated and it's really common. It's the most common ailment. You'll start getting a headache, start feeling kind of lethargic like I don't want to do this anymore. So the best way to prevent that is drink a lot of water. Especially in Chico. It gets so hot, it's a pretty dry environment so I put a picture of a bottle there that's about 32 ounces so, bring like one or two of those at the minimum. I would say 2 at the minimum, and drink it all. So that's just one way to make sure you have a really good time. Don't mess up with the water thing. The other thing is sunscreen and a hat. Nothing more miserable than finding out the next day that you like sunburned your part in your hair or your nose or your lips. Those are all terrible, terrible spots to get sunburned, and speaking from experience it's so much easier to just wear sunscreen and do a little preventative action there. Bring some snacks just depending on how long you're going to be out for. Don't cut yourself short. When you're doing physical activity often you get more hungry than you would expect, so bring something along, be it lunch or a few snacks, things like that. Bring your friends. I don't necessarily recommend going out hiking by yourself in some places. Upper Park is not really that big of a deal. There's usually enough traffic through there, through that area that if you ran into some trouble or got in an accident of some kind, you know rolled your ankle, someone would come along and you would be able to seek some help. But other hikes it's just nice to have company and it's just safer so I would recommend inviting a few people along and then they
can split the gas and it's fun to go somewhere far. Bring a small first aid kit. It seems like oh you're you know maybe being a little too prepared but when you start wearing those shoes that you're not used to hiking in and they start giving you a blister, then it can make the whole day miserable. And after you've, you know, gotten everyone together and you've gotten yourself all prepared and made this game plan only to have the day kind of marred by having a sore spot on your foot is just a huge bummer. So bring a little first aid kit. Bring, top things that I usually bring is some triple antibiotic ointment like Neosporin, band-aids, duct tape is actually amazing for everything. Like if you're getting a hot spot you can put duct tape over it and it just kind of reduces the friction cause it's so smooth. Yeah, or mole skin. Mole skin is like the typical way of dealing with a blister. So those are the things I would definitely recommend. Maybe a small Ace bandage if someone rolls their ankle. Really basic first aid stuff. Appropriate shoes. Just think about where you're going to be hiking. Upper Park is like a huge lava flow. It's basaltic rock. It's pretty rough, so wearing shoes that have kind of a thin sole, it might end up hurting your feet at the end of a long day of hiking, so wear some sturdy shoes or something with a thick sole; something that isn't going to start hurting your feet after the first hour of walking you know? And appropriate clothing. So, that just means, I like to recommend not wearing anything cotton. Not, maybe not for a walk in the park, but if you're going to go hike up Mount Brokoff, don't wear anything cotton. And we always say cotton kills and the reason why is because, if I was wearing a t-shirt like this and I'm sweating or it starts raining and it get wet, it's just going to suck all the body heat out of me. But if
What to bring

- Water
- Sunscreen/hat
- Snack
- Friends!
- Small 1st aid kit
- Appropriate shoes
- Appropriate clothing

you're wearing kind of like a wicking material or like exercise type clothing, anything synthetic, polypropylene, Capilene, there's different types of materials. Also wool, or fleece will keep you warm even if it's wet. So those are just recommendations especially for longer hikes or hikes where you think you'll come into some weather. On a day hike, it's not really a big deal if you wear a cotton t-shirt so. And if you think it's going to be raining, bring a rain coat 'cause, once again, easy way to make sure you're not miserable.
That's my brother's puppy. [laughing] So if you want to bring your dog, just make sure you clean up after them and check beforehand whether or not dogs are allowed in the area and what the rules are on leashes. National parks you can have a dog on a leash but not on the trail. So basically, in a parking lot, on a road. Not really worth bringing them along 'cause they're not going to be able to have fun. In a national forest area you can take a dog out hiking with you as long as it stays on its leash, so that's kind of cool to know. And then also I told you about the boundaries in the park. Lower Park around One Mile, that kind of area, they do require that you have your dog on leash. So that's just something to keep in mind. He's pretty cute, huh?
So something for when you're there, when you're actually out doing your hike and oh here comes a bicyclist down the trail coming at me really fast, what do I do? So they're actually supposed to yield to you. Bikers yield to hikers and hikers and bikers both yield to horseback riders. So if you see a horse coming down the trail, just step aside and let them go ahead on their way. And then if you're hiking uphill and someone is walking downhill, you actually have the right of way so, most people you know they just are super polite and step aside. But it's just good to know what is expected when you're going out on the trail.

Yeah, make sure you yield to people and be aware of other people enjoying the trail. If you have a big group of people that you're hiking with like 5 or 10 friends and here comes a little family with little kids, it's nice to maybe have your group step aside and let them go by. It's just, you know, nice to not like be too dispersed along the trail and be annoying to kind of have to walk past each other and go off the trail.
Other things to look out for are poison oak and rattlesnakes. Really, really common in northern California. Upper Park, rattlesnakes always a concern. Poison oak, this time of year they're really falling off, all the leaves are falling off and what's left behind are kind of reddish colored stems and twigs. So, but you can still actually get the oil on you from the poison oak and get poison oak. So just be aware of that. I have a picture of it on the next slide. And the last thing I put was noise pollution. So sometimes it's fun to have a good time and like give a big war cry right when you're going to jump into a swimming hole and you know it's going to be cold but don't be overly loud and zealous because other people are out in nature trying to enjoy it too and you don't want to kind of overstep that boundary 'cause you're in a public place and everyone's enjoying the park or the trail. So just be aware of other people and try not to make their day, you know, go out of plan because your group is being too crazy. It's fun to be crazy sometimes but. All right so there's an example of what to look out for. You have your rattlesnake up there. You can see the coloring. They're kind of tan colored with little markings with whiter colors and they have that, you know, classic rattle and their head is kind of shaped like this. It's kind of like a heart shape or a spade, and other snakes have more of a rounded head like this. So theirs is more like a triangle or a spade, so that's what you're looking out for. If you hear them start rattling, it's good to just stop moving and wait, see where they're at and then hopefully it will calm down or you can move away very quickly. When they're really, really young they haven't shed before and then they don’t have a rattle because each time they shed, another little bar is added to their rattles. That's how they get bigger rattles actually
and so the baby ones, it's definitely a huge concern because not only do they not have a rattle but they haven't really developed a mechanism for measuring how much venom they inject when they bite. So I would just say there's certain times of year when you should be super, super cautious for rattlesnakes and that would be I think right around May, beginning of June, even like the first few hot days of spring where it starts to get really hot in the summer, in the afternoon when it's coming towards summer because that's when they start coming out and laying out on rocks to sun themselves. And you know you can always just walk around them and let them be and not get close to them. But yeah if they don't have a rattle, it's probably because they're really, really young rattlesnakes; adolescents. And that's an example of what poison oak looks like. It has those three leaf kind of set-up and the edges of the leaves are just like slightly ruffled and usually they have kind of a shiny color to them. In early spring they don't and then later in the season they start to get more of a shiny kind of oily look to them and that's the oil on the leaves that will get on you and cause you to have a rash. So when you're hiking keep an eye out for that. There's a lot of it on the Feather Falls trail. I've seen it in Lower Park everywhere and even in Upper Park too so, it's just something to keep your eyes peeled for. Not fun. And I actually would recommend if you hike somewhere and you see it but you don't think you stepped in it, when you get home go ahead and just wash your clothes and take a shower anyway because the oil could get you're your clothes and then if you go and touch that later then you could still get poison oak so, it's better to just go home, take a shower, get all cleaned up and then be more certain that you didn't come in contact with it.
So when you leave, make sure you leave no trace. And a law of outdoor programs, or outdoor enthusiasts like to follow kind of this methodology of leave no trace outdoor ethics. And basically, what it says there's, you know, 7 main points to leave no trace but I'm not going to tell them all to you right now. But the basic idea of it is have a minimum impact the area that you're traveling in. So the garbage that comes from the lunch that you ate, make sure you collect it all and take it with you. Try not to leave pieces of food on the ground even if you think they're going compost or be biodegradable. The thing is, animals that live in that area might come along and be attracted to that. They might start depending on food from humans and so it's just going upset kind of the natural order of what's normal in that area. So you don't want to attract more animals to an area, you don't want to leave behind things like that because other people are going to see it and they don't want to see leftover lunches. Another really important thing is don't cut trails. And what I mean by that is a lot of times on, if a trail is particularly steep, it will angle one direction up a hill and then angle back another direction up the hill and those are called switchbacks. Basically makes it an easier incline for hiking. If you are walking up it and instead of going all the way to the point, you cut up the hill to get to the trail sooner, that's actually going to cause a lot of erosion, and eventually if enough people do it, the trampling will kind of kill whatever plants live there and those are holding the topsoil in place. So if there's no plants there to hold the soil then in the winter season or the rainy season, water's going to start using that as a pathway and then it's just going to start eroding and that's part of the reason why the Lassen Peak Trail is closed right now. You can hike about halfway up it, and then from that point on it's closed because there's been a lot of trail erosion. So the park's doing a lot of maintenance right now.
But it's kind of the downside of people misusing the trails like that is that, now the trail has to have a lot of maintenance done on it. So if you just stay on the already established trail, it, it seems like a really small thing to do but in the long run, not only does it have less impact on the area of like less scars from paths that have been trampled in, but long-term the erosion won't occur there. And so the whole hillside that you're walking on will be more beautiful for a long-term so. And don't forget to clean up after your dog. Bring a bag or whatever you need for him or her. And yeah overall just try to have the minimum impact possible. Take only pictures, leave only footprints is only the saying so.
Wellness Center

Discovering Chico: More Than Just a College Town

Last but not least, have fun, be smart, explore. This is a picture from an AO trip I did a couple springs ago and we were inflatable kayaking on the Trinity River. AO does a lot of the trips that I talked about today and even more, I hardly talked about rafting at all but Northern California is home to some of the most beautiful rivers you'll ever see. I know the Sacramento down here in the valley is kind of this big, fat, lazy river but the Upper Sacramento is some really cool whitewater rafting. Like cool, cool class 3 crazy river. So if you are a water person I recommend getting into rafting this spring because we do trips on the Trinity River and on the Upper Sacramento and hopefully on the south fork of the American too. And I can tell you that rafting totally changed my life. I didn't really get in the water before. I was more of a backpacking and hiking person but rafting is really, really fun and it's great in the summertime when it's hot and you can just, you know, flop out of your boat and go for a swim and then hop back in and charge through a rapid. So definitely highly recommend that. And then, like I said, the sister program to Adventure Outings if the Forebay Aquatic Center and really cool way to try something new, really inexpensive as well. If you went to another raft guide company on the south fork of the American or something like that it's going to cost you like 125 bucks for a day of rafting. With Adventure Outings because some of it is subsidized by your student activity fee, it's like $56 or something like that to go rafting for a weekend. And so that's camping, transportation, guides, boats, everything. So, I would highly recommend everyone take advantage of living in Chico and being close to all of those activities I just talked about.
And Adventure Outings is one way to do that, but I mean, any given day if you have an afternoon off of classes or even a morning, really recommend people go just check out the park, check out the trails around here and really get a feel for this place 'cause it definitely has a lot to offer. So, thank you for listening to my talk. If you guys have questions about any of the places that I talked about or about something you've heard about and you're curious to find out more, please ask me 'cause I, like I said, I grew up in Chico, I know a lot about it and I like to talk about it.