

Hope Valley yurt is gateway to miles of cross country skiing

By Kathryn Reed

HOPE VALLEY – Walking into the yurt, Joyce Coker greets a family of four by name. They are regulars at Hope Valley Outdoors, even though they visit just once a year.

“We are not downhill skiers. We like the nice family time,” Nancy Vernon said of being able to cross country ski together.



Joyce Coker finds equipment for Isaac and Annabel Vernon.
Photos/Kathryn Reed



Joyce Coker

She and her husband, Walt, have been making the trek from the Bay Area to this outdoor playground at the junction of highways 88 and 89 since before their twins were born 12 years ago. They stay at Sorensen's Resort down the road and then ski on Coker's trails with her equipment.

"We come back every year at Christmas," Vernon said. "We love to cross country ski."

Cocker has been in the business for about 25 years, with this being her third year in the yurt. This season started the weekend before Christmas. Usually she is open until about Easter. Snow dictates actual opening and closing dates.



The yurt --
home to Hope
Valley
Outdoors.

More than 25 miles are groomed – including Secret and Hope Valley meadows. What's incredible is that she doesn't charge to use all this acreage. She takes donations, though.

In the round contraption that takes several people multiple days to erect each year are a slew of snowshoes and cross country skis. They are for rent and for sale.

The lousy economy has helped Coker's business.

"People come up for a week and can't afford to downhill ski

for the whole time,” Coker said. “My prices are so cheap they can afford it.”

She even posts what it costs to ski/snowshoe at other locations in the basin so people know the deal they are getting at Hope Valley Outdoors.

Inside the yurt is a propane-fueled stove that gives off a little heat. A skylight keeps the place bright – at least on sunny days.

Phone service is nonexistent at the yurt, so Coker returns calls at night when she gets home.

A multitude of activities are planned throughout the season. For more information, go to www.hopevalleyoutdoors.com.

Events:

Dec. 30, 10am-3pm; Learn the history of Nordic skiing and the differences of skiing groomed and ungroomed snow. Meet at the yurt.

Dec 31, 10am-1pm; Snowshoe Day. Learn about different snowshoe styles, technique and safety measures with winter terrain, and Leave-No-Trace principles. Meet at the yurt.

Dec. 31, 5-7pm, Blue Moon Tour. Meet at the yurt. After the tour, return to Starlight lodge to bring in the New Year, listen to music, or hot tub or sit out and enjoy the moonlight.

Jan. 1, 10:30am-3pm, Backcountry Lesson Ski Tour. Let those skis show how they are capable of performing with the terrain that surrounds the center. Meet at the yurt.

Reservations required – call (530) 694.2266.

Directions: From South Lake Tahoe, take Highway 50 toward the Bay Area, turn left onto Highway 89 toward Kirkwood, after

crossing Luther Pass you descend into Hope Valley; at the stop sign go straight; the yurt will be in front of you on Burnside Lake Road.