

Tahoe Rim Trail's breathtaking views highlight Trails Day

By Jessie Marchesseau

STATELINE – For the most part, the trek was silent, save for the sounds of nature and the crunching of crusty snow beneath nearly a hundred snowshoes.

The troupe of 37 participants and six guides traveled single file along the already packed down trail. The snow was unusually deep for this time of year, with a crunchy crust on top from the sunny days of the previous week.

Tahoe Rim Trail Association volunteer trail designer and builder Clay Grubb took the lead, stopping periodically to share interesting tidbits about the trail and its natural environment such as the species of trees growing in the surrounding forest, the type of animals making tracks in the nearby snow or where any forks in the road may take you.



Winter Trails
Day introduces
three dozen
people to the
Tahoe Rim
Trail.

Photos/Jessie

Marchesseau

The 2.8-mile guided snowshoe hike Jan. 8 was hosted by Explore Tahoe and the Tahoe Rim Trail Association. Participants departed the Kingsbury North Trailhead at 9am to hike the Castle Rock loop that follows the Tahoe Rim Trail part of the way and then switches to the Castle Rock Trail.

Starting under blue skies and morning sunshine it was perfect conditions for a jaunt on the Tahoe Rim Trail in honor of the 16th annual National Winter Trails Day.

As the tour neared its destination of Castle Rock, clouds began to roll in, turning the morning bluebird skies a soft gray. The clouds, however, did little to wilt the cheery demeanor of the hikers or the beauty of the views from the series of vistas along the way.

“One thing we try to do when we build a trail is make sure it leads to great view points,” said Chuck Kelley, a volunteer trail builder for the Tahoe Rim Trail Association and guide for the day. “It makes it attractive to hike to and keeps people on the trail.”

There is no shortage of spectacular view points on the Castle Rock loop. With the overall pace for the day being rather leisurely, participants took full advantage of the numerous photo ops along the way, especially from the top of Castle Rock.

Jared Odell of Brentwood and Mary Visceglia of San Mateo had their photo taken at the top of Castle Rock with Lake Tahoe glistening in the background. The couple was in town celebrating Odell's 40th birthday and testing out his new snowshoes. They had learned to cross country ski at Kirkwood last year on National Winter Trails Day and wanted to give snowshoeing a try this time.

“I'm liking it,” Odell said halfway through the hike. “I'm

thinking we might try Yosemite in the winter next year.”

By the time the trek was over, Visceglia was in full agreement. “It was awesome,” she declared. “We’re addicted.”

That was exactly the outcome Lauren Thomaselli from Explore Tahoe was hoping for. She said the whole point of National Winter Trails Day is to “promote winter recreation and the health and social benefits of winter recreation.”

Thomaselli pointed out how this coincides with Explore Tahoe’s focus “to encourage people to be involved in the natural environment and outdoor recreation opportunities right out our backdoor.”

“This is the kind of recreation really in demand right now,” she said. “People want to have a deeper connection to the environment.”

This was evident in the fact that the event had originally been limited to 15 participants. However, the overwhelming response prompted organizers to open it up to everyone interested, resulting in more than twice the original expectations.

The second goal for the event was to inspire people to get involved in the Tahoe Rim Trail and other stewardship projects. That goal was reached as well.

“People at the end, they didn’t care about the refreshments or anything else,” Thomaselli said. “They wanted to know how to sign up and make donations.”

Odell and Visceglia were among those ready to donate time to trail building this summer. Since they enjoy using the trails, Odell said it would be a great way for them to give back. He also pointed out that any excuse to come to Tahoe is worth taking.

This was the inaugural Winter Trails Day event on Lake Tahoe’s

South Shore, but, considering the success of the event, Thomaselli predicts more National Winter Trails Day events on the South Shore in the future.

Meanwhile, locals and visitors to the Lake Tahoe area may enjoy free guided snowshoe hikes on the Tahoe Rim Trail every Saturday through the end of March. Visit the website for more information.

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