

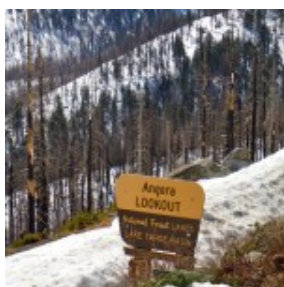
Trek to top of Angora Ridge provides stunning views

By Kathryn Reed

What a difference a week makes. Last Sunday the trek to Angora Ridge was all about the claws on our snowshoes. Today it would likely be about making first tracks or hoping a snowmobiler got there first.

It's a climb, no doubt about that. But the views – oh, they are worth it.

The 1.8 miles feel a bit longer than that, but I'm blaming it on the ridge being a thousand feet higher than lake level.



The Angora burn area from the ridge.

Photos/Kathryn Reed

It's five of us and a dog on this particular day going to the lookout at an elevation of 7,256 feet.

The start is deceiving because of how flat it is – meadow-like, really. With this being a road, it's wide enough to walk side-by-side.

My mom indulges me as I take pictures. It's been a few years since I've been up here in winter. I wonder why because the

views are spectacular, not to mention it being a good workout.

The others are in front of us chattering away. Their loss because mom and I are sure it's an eagle that is flying overhead with its distinctive wingspan and white markings. Bald eagles are common in this part of Tahoe.

Up we go in almost a straight path. No switchbacks to contend with.

Gradually some charred trees come into sight to our left – remnants of the 2007 Angora Fire that burned about 3,100 acres – mostly U.S. Forest Service land. And it's this federal property that we are on.

Mount Tallac is visible to our right through the looming conifers.

Onward.

Finally, we are on Angora Ridge. The old fire lookout remains. A Forest Service forester built it in 1924. It was converted into a residence for Civilian Conservation Corps members who in 1935 built a larger lookout nearby. No longer is this an active fire lookout. However, the buildings are eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.

From the ridge, the Angora burn area is unmistakable. New houses prove the resilience of the 254 homeowners who lost their houses in the 2007 fire. But many of the matchstick-like trees remain. Now that environmentalists have sued the Forest Service, they may be there for years.

Looking in the opposite direction is Fallen Leaf Lake, with the base of Mount Tallac seeming to touch the far shore. A small part of Lake Tahoe is also visible from here.

Up another mile is the parking lot for the resort and its two lakes. During the summer the eight cabins are available for rent. Dogs must be leashed and are not allowed in the lakes.

Angora Lakes Resort, which opened in the 1920s, is so popular that it's booked for the 2011 season.

Getting there:

From South Lake Tahoe, go through the Y on Lake Tahoe Boulevard. Turn right on Tahoe Mountain Road. Go to the top turn right and follow the signs toward Angora.

Parking is horrendous. If you get there early enough, the gate in front of the trail is your best bet to avoid being towed.

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