

Closed Highway 89 allows for spectacular snowshoe

By Kathryn Reed

Cascade Lake looks like it needs a Zamboni machine to clear off the snow to make it a perfect skating rink. Emerald Bay is eerily black, as though perhaps some creature of the lake lurks below.

Tahoe Tessie?

It's one of those rare winter opportunities when Highway 89 is closed to vehicles and open to foot traffic.



Sun peaks
through on a
frozen Cascade
Lake.

Photos/Kathryn
Reed

Parking at the gate near the entrance to Eagle Point Campground, we strap on snowshoes to make the trek to appropriately named Inspiration Point.

Fortunately, someone beat us there last weekend so we didn't have to break trail. Only one path heads up the road – wide enough for snowshoes, but a definite single file approach.

Meandering up the hairpin turns, going slower than the 10mph

limit, we come to one of the most scenic areas in the Lake Tahoe Basin. The private Cascade Lake is to our left, Emerald Bay on our right and behind us Lake Tahoe.

Cascade looks frozen – like a hockey game or figure skating competition should be under way.

As the M.S. Dixie II churns into Emerald Bay, the normal blue waters look foreboding. Ice lingers on the edge near Vikingsholm castle, signaling just how cold the water is. Fannette Island is dusted in snow from the recent storm, making the teahouse almost look like a gingerbread house sprinkled with powder sugar.

The snow is light, but the air is cool. Traipsing up we are warmed by the sun. But as soon as we pause at the lookout area, we are chilled in the shade. We don't linger long – having many times before read the informative interpretive signs explaining what we are looking at and how glaciers formed these bodies of water.

We turn around.

Heading back it's as though we are surrounded by water now that Lake Tahoe is in front of us. I smile.

Meeting people along the way from Seattle and Southern California it makes me pause to appreciate I get to see this oasis every day.

Highway 89 opens and closes throughout the winter, so it's hit or miss when this snowshoe route is an option.

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