

It's all about the water along the Rubicon

By Kathryn Reed

EMERALD BAY STATE PARK – It says something about a trail when the camera still comes out and the *oohs* and *ahhs* are endless even after being on it so many times.

That's the thing about the Rubicon Trail; it never gets old. It connects Emerald Bay State Park to D.L. Bliss State Park.

It's all about the scenery on what turned out to be a 7.5-mile one-way trek. It's a mile down from the parking lot at Vikingsholm to the trailhead, then 4.5 miles along the water's edge. The worst part of the hike was the end. It was an unexpected 2-mile climb from the beach to the Jeep. D.L. Bliss State Park does not open until June 15 (because of budget cutbacks), so right now it's not possible to park closer.

Still, Sue, Brenda and I would do it all again, just like we have before.

We are still in awe of the endless hues of blue and the depths to which we can see the floor of the lake.



Plenty of photo opportunities along the Rubicon Trail.

Photos/Kathryn Reed

It's calm on this particular day. The lake looks inviting, but we don't even want to dip our toes because we know how cold it is.

A motorboat goes along the shore. Kayakers are in Emerald Bay.

A treat was discovering what we think was an osprey's nest. Brenda pulled out her binoculars, which showed us there was movement in the nest perched on top of a dead tree.

Only a few yards down the trail and overhead we see an osprey. We guessed she was hunting for her little one.

The odd-looking snow plant is out. Otherwise, not much colorful flora. This hike really is about the water.

It's a great early season trek, especially in heavy snow years, because it is at lake level. Plus, there are no crowds. On a weekend day in mid-May we saw a handful of other people.

And no one is in the boat-in campground.

It's not a difficult hike, but there also aren't a ton of places to take a break. Much of the route is flat, though there are spots with slight undulations.

Closer to the D.L. Bliss side is an offshoot trail to an old lighthouse. We opted to skip it this time. The Rubicon Point Lighthouse is the highest elevation lighthouse in the United States.

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Nuts and bolts:

This can be a roundtrip trek starting at either state park or a one-way if a car is left at each park.

It costs to park at each state park. Some free parking can be

found near Eagle Falls on the other side of Highway 89.

From South Lake Tahoe, take Highway 89 north, through the hairpin turns, around Emerald Bay and park in the Vikingsholm lot on the right. Go down the paved trail toward the castle. Before reaching the castle, the Rubicon Trail is to the left.

Dogs are not allowed.

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