

Trails lead everywhere except to destination



Pam Valentine, from left, Tom Ward and Sue Wood are having a hard time finding natural hot springs. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

MARKLEEVILLE – Mystery hot springs between Markleeville and Gardnerville are still just that – a mystery.

I know they exist. I've seen pictures. I've heard stories. I've talked to someone who has been in the springs. I even had directions. But the four of us never found them.

I had been told about the springs from Linda who I volunteer with at Bread & Broth. These are part of the directions she gave me: "... continue for a couple of blocks along the fence, but you will eventually have to go cross country up to the ridge where you will find a trail. Follow it and it will

eventually go downhill toward the river, which you'll be able to see from the top. Two nice hot pools at the bottom of the road right on the river."



The terrain, even at 5,500 feet, is much different than the Lake Tahoe Basin.

We hit many ridges. We saw three women on one who asked us if we knew where the hot springs were. This encouraged us. We might be in the right area – or we were all lost.

We never saw the trio again despite eventually heading in their direction.

Others have said getting to the springs from the Leviathan Mine side would be an option. Maybe we'll try another day. Or maybe we'll just hike along the river and skip the whole ridgetop thing. Someone else suggested a rafting trip would be a way to find the springs.

What we did find on the last Sunday of January was new territory to explore. While the trails are now covered in snow, on this particular day we were able to wear hiking boots to tromp through the sagebrush and chaparral for what was about a 5.5-mile hike.

I don't know how distinct the trails are for snowshoeing.

There are no trail markers or signs to know where you are or

where you are going. That's why it is important to pay attention to your surroundings so you'll be able to find your vehicle at the end of the day.

Trails are single-track and may see more cow traffic than human beings based on the amount of dung in the dirt.



Snow covered mountains in the distance.

Sweeping views are visible from various high points. The contrast was stunning. At times the ruggedness of the Sierra penetrated the sky, while other times the parched Carson Valley unfolded below us.

It was an interesting trek to an area none of us had explored before. With its being lower in elevation than the Lake Tahoe Basin, the terrain was completely different. I could see how during summer this would be an unbearably hot place to hike because there would be little or no shade. Even two weeks ago Pam and I were in short-sleeves for part of the hike.

Getting there:

From South Lake Tahoe go west on Highway 50. Turn left onto Highway 89 toward Hope Valley. At Picketts Junction, go left onto Highway 88. Turn right onto Highway 89 toward Markleeville. Turn left onto Diamond Valley Road. Cross the river and park on the left. Cross the road and enter through

the cattle gate. Start exploring. (There are cattle gates on both sides of the road, but we only explored in one direction.)