

# A walk in the woods without a defined end point



AJ and Cody with Red Lake Peak in the background.  
Photos/Kathryn Reed

**By Kathryn Reed**

HOPE VALLEY – Sometimes it's not about where you go, but who you are with and being in the moment. Such was the case earlier this month on a hike out of Hope Valley.

A fresh dusting of snow covered the parking lot at Pickett's Junction, as well as along the trail. The temperature was so cold at the start Rosemary and I both guessed the other was going to cancel.

Nope. We just bundled up and looked a bit like we were on a winter excursion. Such is Tahoe in May – unpredictable.

While the original intent was to hike to Burnside Lake, we opted to set a time instead. We said two hours.

For runners out there, this is plenty of time to make it to the lake. Bri, Rosemary's daughter, made it to Burnside and back to the car in the two hours. Her 13-plus miles also included a few detours off the main route.

We, too, were lured off trail. There are a multitude of U.S. Forest Service roads. Even the main trail we are on is really a road. This road in the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest is closed about a quarter mile from the parking area in the winter – or when conditions are still wet and muddy.

The topo map – which we didn't have with us – shows Burnside Lake pretty much a straight line from the highway. In reality there are turns in the main trail with a ton of off-shoot options. Don't take them if you want to make it to the lake.



Remnants of the Burnside Fire from a few years ago are still visible.

I had my four-legged daughter, AJ, and Rosemary had her four-legged grandson, Cody. It was Mother's Day, after all. And this was AJ's first real hike since hiking in the Carson Valley that ended with several stitches after she splayed her hindquarters on something sharp.

She was running wild, like this could have been her first romp in the woods. With being part greyhound, I'm sure she is faster than California Chrome. At least it looked that way as I watched a sleek blonde streak through the forest.

The part of the trail we did was for the most part a gradual uphill climb. It's a dirt road – plenty wide for all of us when the dogs chose to join us.

It didn't matter that we didn't reach the lake. The beauty captivated us – as did our conversation. Sometimes a hike in the woods is more about friendship and what is right there than what is at the end of the trail.

One of our forays off the main road led us to a wonderful meadow with a spectacular view of Red Lake Peak. At 10,061 feet, it's hard not to notice it at various points.

The first people, outside of native Americans, to have talked of hiking the peak were John C. Fremont and Charles Preuss. They did so in February 1844. It was from Red Lake Peak that Fremont first saw Lake Tahoe.

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### **Getting there:**

From South Lake Tahoe, take Highway 50 west. Turn left in Meyers past the bug station onto Highway 89. At the T go straight into the parking lot. Start walking.