

Ascending to a world of majestic views



Mount Shasta is the focal point for much of the Gray Butte hike. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

MOUNT SHASTA – It seemed like if we would extend our arms, we could scoop a snowball off Mount Shasta – we were that close.

While this majestic mountain dominated our view, it wasn't the only thing that captivated our attention. From our perch we had a 360-degree view of the North State. This included Mount Lassen, Lake Siskiyou, Trinity Alps, Mt. Shasta Ski Resort and the town of McCloud.

In getting to the starting point at Bunny Flat it seemed like the Everitt Memorial Highway might take us to the top of Mount Shasta. (The highway is named after John S. Everitt, a forest supervisor for the Shasta National Forest who died in 1935 fighting the Bear Springs Fire.)



Scenery is incredible along the trail and from the top.

The road continues three miles farther and 900 feet higher, but it is not open year-round. It was already closed in early November. There is a gate there – which is where we started. It's about a 7.5-mile round-trip excursion from the parking lot.

Tom had intended to lead us on a different hike, but dogs are not allowed. People in the parking area told us we could walk up the road to Panther Meadows with AJ and Britton, then take a dirt trail to Gray Butte. (There are five colored themed buttes on Mount Shasta. The others are black, red, green and yellow.)

The pavement is a steady climb. To our left Mount Shasta is in view much of the way, so that compensates for being on asphalt for a hike. The other positive is that Pam, Tom, the dogs and I have the route to ourselves.



Pam Valentine and Tom Ward hiking Gray Butte trail.

At the campground we veer off to the right and finally feel like we are truly hiking.

Not far out of the campground is Panther Meadow. The view from there of Mount Shasta is stunning.

The trail is marked fairly well. It traverses through old-growth red fir, with hemlock near the summit. At times we are on dirt, sometimes rocks. A few patches of snow indicate we are probably lucky to even be on it. I'm sure some Novembers this isn't the place you'd want to be hiking.



The top of Gray Butte provides a 360-degree view.

Bunny Flat is at 6,950 feet; Gray Butte is 8,119 feet. We were still a ways from the summit of Mount Shasta, though from our vantage point it was hard to believe we would have another

6,000 feet to climb. Shasta is 14,163 feet – the fifth highest peak in California and the second tallest mountain in the Cascade Range.