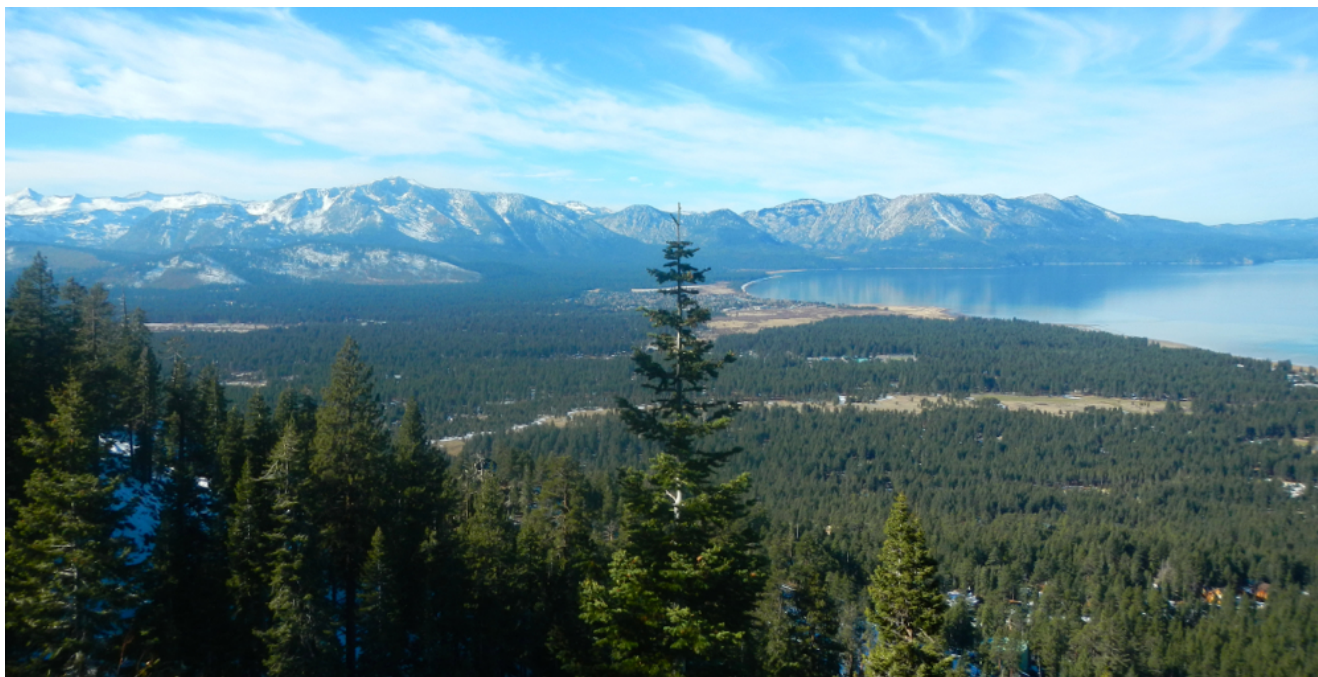


Roundabout snowshoe delivers awesome views



Views along the Roundabout trail are expansive, with Mount Tallac a constant icon. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Solitude. Blue. Calm. Incredible. Inspirational. Awe.

This are just a few of the words that came to mind as I sat looking at Lake Tahoe from the top of Gunbarrel at Heavenly Mountain Resort last Saturday.

Now is the time to snowshoe at Heavenly – before the entire mountain is open to skiers and snowboarders.

Roundabout lives up to its name. The circuitous route is usually the easy way down the mountain to California Lodge. Going up on snowshoes, ascending about 1,600 feet to an elevation of more than 8,200 feet cannot be described as easy. The beauty, though, takes one's breath away – or maybe it was the climb or the altitude.

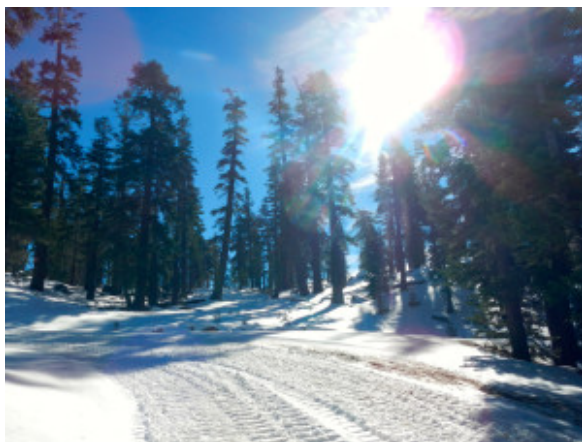


AJ makes her way down Gunbarrel.

This would be an impossible snowshoe during the ski season. Too many people are on skis on what seems like a narrow path. On snowshoes its like being on a road – wide, with plenty of room.

With the recent snow, conditions are apt to be different. A week ago it was dirt and slick to begin with. Snowshoes were not needed until crossing World Cup. The need for snowshoes a week ago was to have the claws grip the icy, hard pack spots. There were a few bare stretches, but the snowshoes stayed on.

While it wasn't necessary to have poles, it would be a good idea for anyone with knee or balance issues.



Much of the trail is graded from a snowcat.

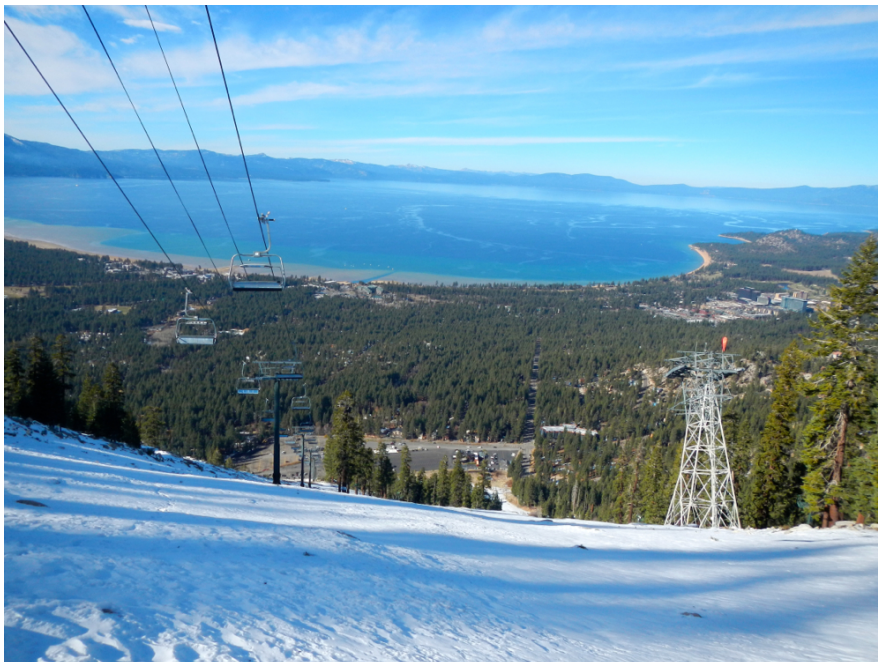
Other than the crunching of the snowshoes against the terrain

there was silence. Be sure to pause to hear the stillness and appreciate the beauty that seems to change at every corner. Various views of Lake Tahoe spill forth. Mount Tallac and Pyramid Peak stand out at various times. The casinos, while dominant in some ways, seem so insignificant from this vantage point.

The amount of snow at Powderbowl looks like this chairlift will be spinning in no time.

The end point is the top of Gunbarrel and the tram. This is one view I never get tired of seeing. The whole lake unfolds in a breathtaking view that almost seems surreal.

Instead of going back the same way it's time to see what it's like to snowshoe The Face. A zigzag approach seems best so as not to tumble and become a snowball that careens to the bottom. It took some patience and focus because some rocks weren't far beneath the snow.



Looking out onto the South Shore from the top of Gunbarrel and the tram at Heavenly.

At times the snow was powdery – making the snowshoes a much-needed tool. Too bad the poles were in the garage. Other spots

are crusty, making the trek more of a challenge.

Instead of going all the way down this route, just like on skis, it's possible to hookup with Roundabout to make it out on a less steep grade.

Roundabout is a great hike in the summer, too. Even then it's rare to see other people.

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Getting there:

From Highway 50 in South Lake Tahoe turn onto Ski Run Boulevard. Turn left on Needle Peak Road, right on Wildwood Avenue, left on Saddle Road, right on Keller Road, and a right on Sherman Way. The road dead-ends at Sherman. There is a gate there. Just start walking.