

Echo to Sierra – spectacular hiking terrain



Reflections in one of the pools of water along the route.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

ECHO SUMMIT – Casually walking along the Pony Express Trail we wonder how pioneers had the gumption to push on through the Sierra.

Hiking with ample water and modern clothing is a breeze. And we had a map. To have done so with wagons, cumbersome clothing and at times with inadequate supplies on roads, that well, weren't roads, is a bit mindboggling.

These thoughts crossed our minds as the three of us hiked a

stretch of land none of us had been on before. We did a 7.5-mile out-and-back from Echo Summit to the road that goes to Sierra-at-Tahoe. This stretch is part of the Pony Express Trail, Pacific Crest Trail and links to the Tahoe Rim Trail. The trail is to the south of Highway 50.



A wall of granite is visible at the start of the trail.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

And while it is part of wildly popular trails, on the Sunday of Labor Day weekend we only saw a handful of people.

Besides being relatively secluded, what made this hike a bit unique was the changing terrain. Staring out we were treated to a wall of granite. The grandeur made us pause.

At times we were on a road, other times single-track dirt. Signs posted for a trail run that is now over kept us going in the correct direction. But even without them I know we would

not have gotten lost.

It didn't take long for Lake Audrain to come into view. It looked like quite a descent – which meant an even more strenuous climb out. We opted to forego that side trip and headed forward.



This was the most unusual vegetation on the hike.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

Much of the trail is up and down, with nothing too extreme either way.

Bushes with spiky berries were something new for each of us to see. Ferns filled several sections. With this lushness, meant there were a couple spots where AJ could get running water. Massive sugar pines covered part of the landscape.

We were treated to a couple eagles soaring overhead. Their

screech is what first got our attention.

Once we got to the road at Sierra we thought we'd walk up to the resort to have lunch. Then we realized that road is longer than we had remembered. Bees kept us from sitting for lunch, so we ate and walked back to our starting point. We could have gone farther; the trail picks up on the other side of Sierra's road.

Rosemary, Sue and I agreed this would be a great snowshoe trek this winter – starting from either location. Parking that time of year will be different because the sledding operation charges and none of us could remember if no parking signs are posted on Sierra's road in the winter.



At times views are expansive, other times it's closed in with trees. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Getting there:

From South Lake Tahoe, take Highway 50 west to the top of Echo Summit. Park at Adventure Mountain, which is on the left. The trail is to the right, almost immediately as you turn in.