



nileGUIDE

ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



A ski-weekend in Tahoe

Lake Tahoe, 4 Days

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Guide Description



AUTHOR NOTE: This was the Tahoe weekend that my friends and I always strive for - a mix of local and hip, of outdoor adventure and relaxation. This trip is fairly budget friendly, but it is easy to spend money in Tahoe (what with the trendy shopping and tempting snow gear all over the place), so be warned. You just might head home with a killer new pair of skis and a bear carved out of a tree trunk.

The people who came on this trip are all recent college grads and we don't have the money for gorgeous hotel rooms and yearly ski passes, but we still manage to have a blast in the mountains. Tahoe has plenty of upscale venues to visit, but don't forget to appreciate the natural beauty of your surroundings while you're there. Making your own sled run can be just as fun as paying for a groomed course at a ski resort.

Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

Day 1

DAY NOTE: Take Friday off from work (or school, or parenting, or whatever obligations you might have) and drive up to Alpine Meadows for a day of skiing. Buy a two day ticket if you plan on two days of skiing; this will save you a few bucks. Alpine has some of the shortest lift lines, the cheapest tickets and the best variety of runs in Tahoe. Aim to get there early because even though you'll be missing the bulk of the weekend crowds, why wouldn't you want a few runs on virgin snow? It's your decision if you want to pack a lunch or buy it at the Alpine lodge (food is notoriously expensive at ski resorts), but my friends and I usually bring sandwiches in a backpack and store it in a locker at the lodge until it's time to eat. After a full day on the slopes, drive to the rustic cottages in North Lake. These homey little cottages really give you a feel for Tahoe – more than a five star hotel or expensive room at the ski resort can. Some have kitchens, and we often stop by the grocery store for breakfast and lunch supplies. Take a quick shower, leave your ski or snowboard gear to dry by the heater and head out for dinner to Las Panchitas. Everything tastes more delicious after a day of exercise in the mountains, but I don't think Las Panchitas needs the help. If you're feeling energetic enough and want to go rub shoulders with some of the other locals and weekend visitors, head over to Pete 'n Peter's for a beer and a game of pool afterwards.

Day 2

DAY NOTE: Wake up again, and head over to Alpine Meadows (or another resort if you feel like branching out and haven't already bought your two day pass for Alpine). The lines will be longer no matter where you go, but that's just part of ski season in Tahoe. Stay away from the bunny slopes and lunch rush (11:45-1:00) to avoid the worst crowds. After another day of playing in the snow, try Jason's Beachside Grille for a great view of the lake while you eat dinner. Fortify yourself for a night of dancing at Blu... we went Saturday night because we weren't planning on skiing Sunday. Stay late, sleep in and plan to take Sunday off for a day of seeing some Tahoe sights and avoiding the Sunday ski crowd.

Day 3

DAY NOTE: Sunday morning treat yourself to breakfast at Café 333. The food is delicious, plus it will help erase any ill effects from a late night at Blu. Next, drive over to Tahoe city for a leisurely morning of wandering the streets, shopping and people watching. Try the Tahoe House Restaurant & Bakery for some traditional German food for lunch, or hit up the Black

Bear Tavern. You can pack up and go home early to avoid the weekend traffic, or you can go back to the cottage and spend the afternoon building snowmen, reading by the fireplace or tubing at one of the resorts (Northstar has a great tubing course). My recommendation: buy some cheap plastic saucers or sleds, find a steep hill and make your own killer sled run.

Day 4 - Lake Tahoe



Northstar-at-Tahoe

Thrill in the snow

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Day 4 - Lake Tahoe

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OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

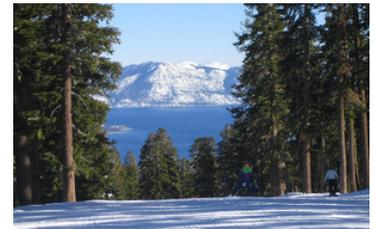
Free skating at the Village skating rink!

DESCRIPTION: Truly a skier's paradise, this resort offers a wide range of activities and events for everyone. You can even find mountain photographers that will capture your best run on the slope. You can enjoy recreational racing, cross country runs and snowshoeing. Ski at the crack of dawn with a Fast Track pass. If you're not an early riser, then Polaris Park is just for you. The adventure park is located mid-mountain and has something for everyone after the sun goes down.

For you Olympic fans, Northstar now offers the West Coasts only biathlon range. Ski and shoot to your heart's content, or sign up for biathlon lessons.

A day of skiing can work up a big hunger, so don't forget to try one of the five restaurants located on the mountain. For the warmer months, Northstar also opens up a Mountain Bike Park offering more than 100 miles of trails. The resort also contains a golf course and driving range, a Tennis Center and offers several activities including horseback riding, fly-fishing and hiking.

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rysac1/Flickr

Lake Tahoe Snapshot

Local Info

Lake Tahoe is an original. The "Jewel of the Sierras" is the third deepest lake in the world at 1,645 feet, and its crystal blue water shines brightly in both winter and summer inviting visitors to relax and enjoy the beauty. The Lake Tahoe area was recently voted the best ski area in the United States by Orbitz. And the locals couldn't agree more.

Lake Tahoe straddles two states, Nevada and California. And each portion of the lake has a different vibe. Like the Native Americans who summered in the region and called it "big sky lake", we will come up from the Nevada side, drop into California and then back into Nevada.

Nevada and Highway 50

For your first view of "The Lake", nothing is better than taking Highway 50 up from Carson City, the capital of Nevada. Even people who have lived here for years, still catch their breath when witnessing this blue beauty hovering among mountains and pine forests. The trip continues with a tour around the 72 miles of shoreline. Each place you go, you will not lose sight of the lake that Mark Twain called the "fairest picture the whole earth affords".

Traveling toward Stateline, and home to the gaming center of Tahoe you will drive passed the Logan Shoals Vista Point and through the tunnel at Cave Rock, which is sacred to the native tribes in the area. You will then pass by Zephyr Cove where you can camp, rent water and snow toys, eat at numerous restaurants or just enjoy one of the nicest beaches in the area. Zephyr Cove is also where you can catch a ride on the MS Dixie II, a full-size paddlewheeler (that Mark Twain would be proud of) or the Woodwind II, a catamaran that sails during the summer months. Stateline is home to Harrah's, Harvey's, Montbleau and the Horizon casino resorts. Here you can eat, game, relax in a spa, golf at the Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course or enjoy the lake without having to leave the area.

California and Highway 89 North

As you leave Stateline and head into California and South Lake Tahoe you will pass by Heavenly Village and Heavenly Ski Resort which has gondola with some

of the best views of the lake. Coming into South Lake Tahoe you will find numerous hotels, resorts, restaurants and other ways to enjoy Tahoe and the views.

South Lake Tahoe is known for the South Lake Tahoe Recreation Area and has several bike and pedestrian trails that run alongside the road. As you head out of SLT, onto Highway 89 North and into the Tahoe National Forest and Tahoe Basin, you drive through some of the more rugged and beautiful areas of the lake. Here you will find less restaurants, but beaches like Pope Beach and Baldwin Beach, camping or dining at Camp Richardson, the Mt. Tallac Trailhead and the Spring Creek Recreation Area. All this beauty leads up to Emerald Bay, at the southern tip of Tahoe. This deep green bay embraces the only island on the lake, Fannette Island. From here you can hike down to Vikingsholm Castle as well as get great views of both Emerald Bay and the nearby Cascade Lake. The Eagle Falls trailhead and access to the Desolation Wilderness is here as well. This area can be precarious during snowstorms and sometimes the road will be closed due to avalanches.

California and Highway 28

As you continue up Highway 89 to the West Shore, you will come across D.L. Bliss State Park, Meek's Bay and campground, Sugar Pine Point State Park, Tahoma, Homewood Mountain Ski Resort and the tiny but local favorite, Granlibakken ski resort. Most of the West Shore is privately owned and the piers inviting you to take a stroll over the water are gated. However, this area also has several bike-friendly trails that run from here to Tahoe City and up to Alpine Meadows Ski Resort. Tahoe City is "at the Y" of Highway 89 and 28. Highway 89 heads north towards Truckee on Interstate 80 and passes by Alpine Meadows and Squaw Valley USA, home of the 1960 Winter Olympic Games, and Highway 28 heads back toward Nevada. Tahoe City is a laid back town near the outlet of the Truckee River and offers dining and bars, rafting, golfing and shopping.

Back to Nevada

Beyond Tahoe City, Tahoe Vista and Carnelian Bay, the turnoff for Highway 267 also goes to Truckee over the Brockway Summit and passes by Northstar-at-Tahoe

ski resort. If you stay on 28 you will head back into Nevada through Kings Beach which offers hotels, restaurants and a public beach. Highway 431, or the Mount Rose Highway, passes by the local favorites of Tahoe Meadows, the Mount Rose Summit trail, Mount Rose Ski Tahoe resort and into the Galena area of South Reno, home to Jack Nicklaus's Montreaux Golf and Country Club.

The quiet, laid back town of Incline Village has some of the local favorites in food and drink. Ski Diamond Peak, play a round of golf at the Incline Village Golf Course or access the lake at the Lake Tahoe State Park from Hidden Beach or Sand Harbor. Sand Harbor is the prettiest beach on the lake and home to the annual Lake Tahoe Shakespeare Festival. Farther along the road you will see a parking area for Secret Harbor, a clothing-optional beach about a mile hike from the road.

This is near the end of your circle of Tahoe. You can drive back down Highway 50 to Carson City which connects along Highway 395 to Reno and Sparks, or you can take the loop again! Lake Tahoe is big and full of out-of-the-way treats. It might be best to take the lake in sections. But after your first visit, you are bound to come back and join the locals in helping to "Keep Tahoe Blue."
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Fun Facts

1. Donner Pass and Donner Lake are named after the ill-fated Donner Party. This group of settlers attempted to cross the mountains in the winter of 1846-47. Most of them were trapped by the snow and several of them resorted to cannibalism to survive.
2. Strange Fact: Truckee, California often registers the lowest temperature in the nation, but not during the winter season. During the spring/summer seasons of 1991, 1993 and 1994, Truckee claimed the honor of coldest spot in the nation, excluding Alaska.
3. The deepest snowpack recorded at Tahoe was over 30 feet deep in 1890.
4. Interesting Fact: If Lake Tahoe was tipped over, the water would cover California to a depth of fourteen and a half inches.

Lake Tahoe Snapshot continued

5. Weird Fact: Many drowning victims are never recovered from Lake Tahoe. The cold water at lower depths preserves the bodies and prevents the formation of gases that would otherwise float them to the surface.

6. Interesting Fact: As an "interstate navigable waterway," Lake Tahoe is protected by the U. S. Coast Guard and

is reputed to be the most desirable Coast Guard duty station in the world.

7. Tahoe has nine mountains with peaks over 10,000 feet including Mt. Rose, Jobs Peak and Freel Peak.

8. The Tahoe area averages more than 300 days of sun each year.

9. Tahoe has 18 alpine and cross country ski resorts and over 50 championship golf courses.

10. Random Fact: Virginia City is known as "The Liveliest Ghost Town in the West."

11. The floor of the Tahoe basin (the bottom of the lake) is near the 4,580 foot elevation, lower than the surface of the Carson Valley to the east.

12. Fun Fact: Sixty three streams flow into Lake Tahoe.

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