

Alternatives to Royal Gorge XC Resort

December 22, 2008, part 1

Royal Gorge Cross Country (XC) resort offers many miles of prepared pistes, useable by both classic and skate skiers in a safe environment, which are well worth the money it charges for the privilege to access them. Additionally, there are many rest huts spread along the pistes with beautiful sight seeing.

This note documents existing and planned skiing alternatives to the Royal Gorge XC Resort. It is a follow-up on the [open letter to the Royal Gorge Principals](#) dated December 13, 2008, and is motivated by the real possibility that Royal Gorge LLC. owners may chose to close their resort in 2009-10. This season only a subset of the trails are groomed and the resort is closed on Tuesdays and Wednesdays in an attempt to restore profitability. But will profitability degrade further, given the unchanged prices of day and season passes and continued inept marketing?

Besides groomed XC pistes, ski touring/mountaineering trips are also included; they involve objective dangers, including death, resulting from getting lost, being ill-equipped or ill-prepared for bad weather and extreme cold, or from avalanches. The author and this web site's owners do not make any claim with regard to accuracy of information, nor assume any responsibility for any accident resulting from any activities described or implied below. You are on your own!

The Auburn Ski Club - 15 kms of XC ski trails on the Summit

The [Auburn Ski Club Associates](#) is a 501(c)3 non profit organization dedicated to foothill winter sports. The club covers the full range of skiing activities at both amateur and competitive levels.

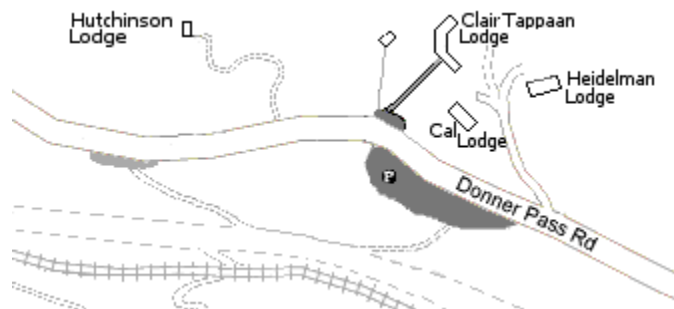


The club maintains over 15 kms of cross country (XC) ski trails on Donner Summit at the west end of the Boreal Ski Area's parking lot. The trails are groomed every day, except Monday and Tuesday, with state of the art equipment for both classic skiing and ski skating. The club offers many classes and has very active [youth and junior programs](#). It is open to anybody willing to respect a code of conduct, sign a waiver, register as an associate, and purchase a trail pass. Membership fees are \$40 a year for the first family member (2008-09), \$20 for each additional family member. Trail passes are \$60 a year, and free for youth under 18 years old. Trail passes are available only to associates and are not sold at the summit.

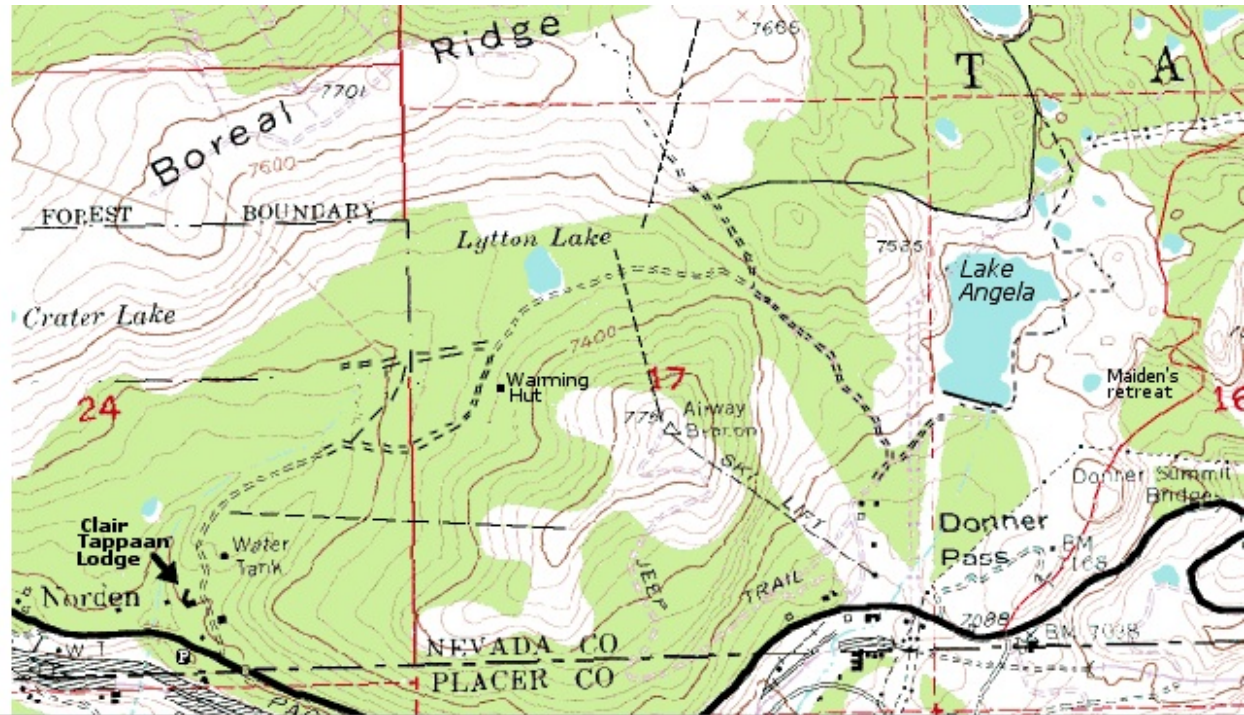
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Clair Tappaan Lodge's XC ski trails

The Sierra Club owns and operates the [Clair Tappaan Lodge](#) on the north side of Donner Pass Road (midway between the I80 Soda Springs exit and Sugar Bowl).



The lodge maintains up to 10 kms of XC ski trails and a warming hut in the Lytton Lake valley south of Boreal Ridge on the Summit and provides access to the public for a small fee (\$7 per day as of Dec 08).



This season, the lodge has organized several [group activities](#):



- *"Backdoor to the Backcountry: Nordic Ski Tour"*: the tour starts on groomed trails and gets off the beaten path to explore the area fully. Intermediate: 7 miles, 5 to 6 hours.
- *"Backdoor to the Backcountry: Intro to Snowshoe Tour"*: an introduction to snowshoeing and the backcountry. Beginner: 3 miles, 500 feet, 4 hours.
- *"Castle Peak Backcountry Ski/Ride Tour"*: climb Castle Peak, ski down to round valley, experience the Peter Grubb Hut. Intermediate/advanced: 8 to 10 miles, 2500 feet, 7 to 8 hours.

- *"Silver Peak Backcountry Ski/Ride Tour"*: climb the long and steep slopes of Silver Peak for spectacular views of the Sierra Crest and the Truckee River Valley. Advanced: 9 miles, 3000 feet, 8 hours.



Castle and Basin Peaks
photo: Peter Lehmkuhl

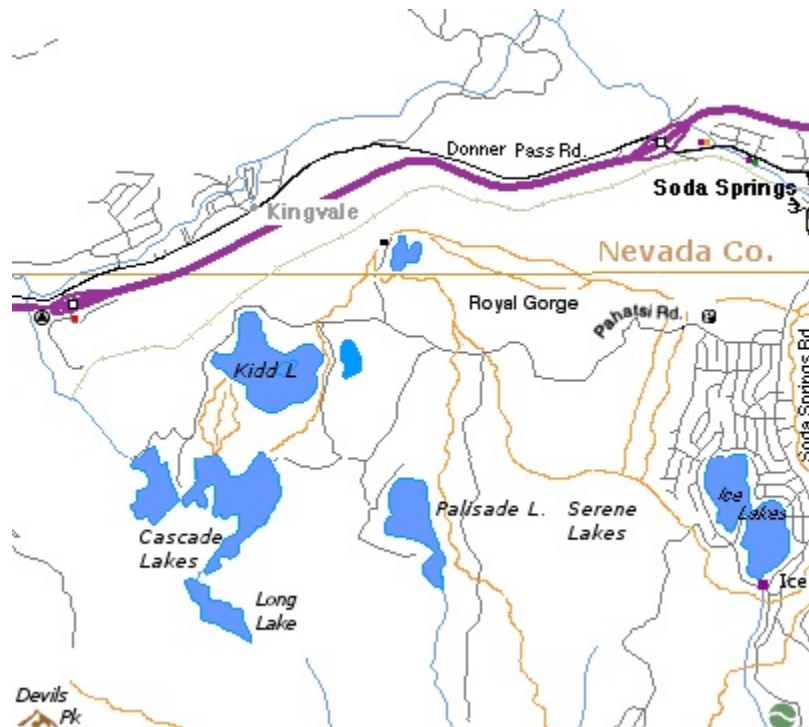


Silver Peak
photo: Peter Lehmkuhl

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Ski Touring to Kidd Lake and Cascade Lakes

The Pahatsi road marks the northern boundary of the Serene Lakes subdivision and in the winter is plowed from Soda Springs road to the Royal Gorge XC Resort summit station. The road keeps on going up west to Kidd Lake and Cascade Lake and provides in the winter great mountaineering skiing and snowshoeing terrain. Royal Gorge LLC. often sets up a barrier at their summit station to discourage the public from entering, but the access is public, though un-patrolled and un-groomed (expect no track).



You may have to make your own track through the snow, but must stay on the road as the property on both sides is RG LLC.'s. This is true [ski touring](#), not for beginner skiers, and you have to prepare yourself and your party for any eventuality, including deep snow and getting lost. You are assuming all risks. Take a back pack with warm cloth, food, water, the topo map of the area, a compass, and a cell phone (but there is not cell phone coverage everywhere). Use classic or touring skis (obviously no skate skis). Depending on snow conditions, you may be more comfortable with wide and short touring skis. Staying on the road is not too difficult as it is wide and delimited for the most part by forests.

Kidd Lake is about 3.5 miles from the summit station, and Cascade Lakes another 1.5 miles. The way out is downhill, so remember that you will have to climb back up to return to civilization.

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Serene Lakes

Serene Lakes offer a spectacular playground for beginner and intermediate XC skiers. Refer to a previously published note: Planning for a [Community-Maintained XC Piste on the Lakes](#).



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End of Part 1

Part 2 will cover:

- Ski Touring on Public Roads

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- The Immigrant Trail

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- Planning Community-Maintained XC Pistes To be continued.

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- Three Great Mountaineering Trips

1. Sugar Bowl to Squaw Valley
2. Boreal Ridge to Carpenter Valley
3. Tahoe City to Truckee

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