

In its simplest outline, this tour follows beautiful State Highway 89 all the way from the shadow of 14,162' Mount Shasta to the south shore of Lake Tahoe and beyond...into the High Sierra. Along the way it visits Burney Falls, Lassen National Park, Lake Almanor, and many other, less well-known scenic jewels. Two additional days are included that connect this tour to the Three Parks Tour, which explores the Southern Sierra via Yosemite, Kings Canyon, and Sequoia National Parks. These days can be used to link the two tours or can be ridden simply to extend this tour.

In addition to the marquee sights listed above, expect miles of quiet roads through the tall trees, high-mountain meadows, tumbling streams and waterfalls, alpine lakes, and the occasional serene river valley. Explore a cave on Day 2, steaming geysers and fumaroles on Day 3, or a fascinating railroad museum on Day 5. In spite of being a “mountainous” tour, it’s one of the easier rides we offer, at least if one chooses the shorter options each day. (This is very much a two-tier tour, with distinct shorter and longer options on most days, making it a trip that can be shared by cyclists of differing abilities and ambitions.) The route climbs and descends many mountain passes, but most of them are traversed on long, gentle grades, and there are only a few really steep pitches.

This was one of the first tours we ever led, but we didn’t initially plan the route. We borrowed it from another cycling club—trusting them to have laid out a good set of stages—and we rode it sight unseen. We ended up having a great tour, with no significant problems. Now however, we know a little bit more about staging tours, and we’ve gone back over the course and have changed a number of things to substantially improve the original package. Even with the improvements though, we will note some reservations about a few roads along the way. As is so often the case, the problems have to do with traffic...too much of it and too little shoulder to get away from it. The congestion is the worst around Lake Tahoe, but it pops up from time to time elsewhere along the route as well. I take every opportunity to veer the route off the busier highways onto deserted backroads. That reduces the unpleasant bits considerably, and scheduling your trip for after the peak tourist season will help to do so even more.

Because the roads are often still closed by snow until mid-July over the top of the mountains in Lassen National Park, this tour cannot be scheduled any earlier than the last week of July. Given the concerns about traffic, I would advise you to plan the trip for after Labor Day to cut down on the congestion...not only cars on the roads but campers in the parks.

The tour begins in the town of Mt. Shasta, about five hours north of the Bay Area on Interstate 5. Because some of my misgivings about traffic and narrow roads include stretches of Hwy 89 on the first stage from Mt. Shasta to Burney Falls, I am including an alternate first stage that follows a loop route around the park and out through the beautiful, peaceful Fall River Valley. It uses a combination of parts of both the long and short routes from Day 1 and eliminates most of the busier highway miles. I will explore the pros and cons of each route and you’ll have to choose which one works best for you.

This tour can be linked to either the Three Parks Tour or the Gold Country Tour, although, for reasons I explain in the text, I only provide detailed instructions for the link to the Three Parks Tour. I will briefly discuss the possible route for connecting to the Gold Country Tour when we get to that point. Putting the Northern Sierra and Three Parks Tours together would make for an absolutely epic adventure...a journey of a lifetime. It would essentially be a tour down the entire length of California’s spectacular, mountainous backbone. 13 riding days, 900 miles, and 64,000' of elevation gain.

## Day 0: Arrive in Mount Shasta

### Optional prologue ride: 29 miles, 4400'

The town of Mount Shasta is about five hours north of the San Francisco Bay Area on Interstate-5. Check the Day 1 map to find your way from the freeway to the campground. (It's easy.) The camp is a typical example of the KOA system, with all the usual RV-resort facilities, as well as a large area for tent and group camping...all of it with a great view up to the magnificent snow-mantled peak of 14,162' Mount Shasta (*page 1*).

You can't ignore "the mountain" when visiting this region. It dominates the landscape, rising 10,000' above the surrounding forested hills in majestic, solitary splendor. Wherever you go, it's always there, sparkling in the sun or wreathed in cloud. Even when it's hidden behind the trees, you can still feel its presence. "Lonely as God and white as a winter moon," is how writer Joaquin Miller described it, and when John Muir first saw the peak in 1874, he said, "all my blood turned to wine."

Shasta has been inspiring writers, artists, climbers, and regular tourists for hundreds of years. Many people with new-age, mystical leanings consider it to be a great source of concentrated spirit power...a perception rooted in the legends and beliefs of the Native Americans, who hold it to be sacred. There are even myths that tell of a secret civilization living in vast caverns deep in the heart of the mountain.

A good number of seekers attracted by the mysterious energy of the place—or just by its pure, clear beauty—have moved to the area or visit often, and the town reflects this with a growing number of alternative commercial enterprises, from health food stores to healing workshops. And in addition to the regular, middle-class population of the region, there are significant numbers of extremely wealthy landowners in the nearby forests with fabulous vacation retreats hidden at the ends of long private roads...people like the publishing Hearsts and assorted Hollywood moguls and merchant princes. It all adds up to a little more sophistication and panache than you might expect to find in a small, backwoods town. Shasta is big enough to support full-service supermarkets where you can do one last supply run before heading for the woods. (Actually, the route passes through or near big towns with decent markets on every day of the trip, so resupply shouldn't be a problem.)

If you arrive in town early enough on your travel day, you might want to tackle a fairly challenging prologue ride. Less than half a mile south of camp, route A10 turns left and heads up the flanks of the mountain. At first the road is called Alma Street, but soon becomes the Everitt Memorial Highway (right). This beautiful road gains almost 4500' in the 14 miles it

takes to get to its terminus at Panther Spring... from an elevation in town of 3500' to 7900' at road's end. Panther Spring is one of the few moist, green, alpine meadows on the barren, rocky slopes of this extinct volcano. It's a beautiful spot, and the views are everything you'd expect them to be. And then of course, you get to zoom back down the hill all the way to town for a 29-mile round trip.

One warning about the campground: it's only a few hundred yards from the main north-south rail line, and the big trains come roaring through in the middle of the night. Some of them are quite astonishingly loud, making the ground shake under your tent.

## Day 1: Mount Shasta to Burney Falls

**To Burney Falls: 60 miles, 3000' up, 3500' down**  
**To McArthur: 60 miles, 2800' up, 3300' down**  
**Bonus miles: 3 miles**

As I noted in the introduction, I have some reservations about some of the miles on this stage...enough so that I've set up an alternate Day 1 route. The hero and villain of this drama are both played by Hwy 89. It is a beautiful road, but it carries more traffic than is ideal for a peaceful backroads experience. What's more, the speed limit on the two-lane highway is 65-mph—at least through the Day 1 section—and in many places there are no shoulders at all. This is not a terrible road, and as I noted earlier, we ran a club tour through here and no one had any problems with the traffic. I wouldn't recommend it at all, with or without this disclaimer, if I considered it to be really dangerous. For the most part, the road is quite straight, with good sightlines for drivers...except over the tops of the many rollers that give the road the look of an immense washboard.





Okay...that's my disclaimer about Hwy 89. If I've scared you off, go to Plan B, the Day 1 alternate route. Personally, Plan B is the one I will opt for the next time I do this tour. But if you really want the experience of starting at the northern end of California's mountainous spine, in the shadow of Mount Shasta, then do this stage. (Mount Shasta and Lassen Peak to the south are technically the last two outposts at the southern end of the string of volcanic peaks that constitute the Cascade Range. But from a cyclist's point of view, it all feels rather like one continuous mountain range from here south, and it makes a good starting point for a journey down the length of the Sierras.)

After leaving camp, you glide gently downhill along the main drag through the town of Mount Shasta. At three miles, your boulevard through town turns into what appears to be a freeway on-ramp, but if you follow the signs to Hwy 89, you'll curve around the freeway interchange and roll out onto the two-lane at the base of the first climb of the tour...a 5.5-mile grade to 4470' Snowmans Hill summit. This is an easy grade, and at this point, the road has smooth, wide shoulders. Over the top though, the shoulders disappear. You'll fly down the other side on a fast, wide-open glide for 3.5 miles. By the way, all of this stretch—and almost all of the rest of the day's run on 89—is through dense fir and pine forest, which crowds right up to the road and doesn't offer many opportunities for scenic panoramas, although the forest is beautiful in its own way.

At mile 12, you need to be looking sharp for a left turn off the highway onto Colombero Road. It's well marked, but you'll be flying when you get to this point, and you may feel like hammering right on by. If you do, you'll end up at the same point eventually, as Colombero is the beginning of a short scenic bypass that will deliver you back to 89 in a couple of miles. However, I hope you can muster up the will power to grab the brakes and make the turn...and if you're worried about being cheated out of the rest of your descent, don't be. Colombero picks up the downhill theme just around the bend, and really, it's a better descent: a smaller road, with more twists and turns to keep you entertained.

The purpose of this bypass is to explore the village of McCloud. At the bottom of the Colombero descent, turn right on Main Street and drop into the center of this charming town. McCloud is the former home of the McCloud River Lumber Company, and up until the 1960s, all the buildings were occupied by employees of the company. As is the case with most lumber company towns, they didn't scrimp when it came to using wood to build their homes and community buildings. The result is a picturesque collection of grand old structures, which have now been converted to private homes, bed-&-breakfasts,

stores, restaurants, and one immense hotel that would look right at home in one of our national parks. There is also a train depot here with old trains that make occasional sight-seeing runs through the woods up around Mount Shasta.

Cruise through town, and if you can pry yourself off the bike, peek into a few of the beautiful old buildings. Then it's back on the road again, heading on down Hwy 89. But you'll hardly get a smooth rhythm going before you come to the next scenic diversion.

At mile 19, you come to a turn-off to the Falls of the McCloud River, a National Forest Service site. This is *probably* going to be an out-&-back for those of you who choose to do it. The "probably" refers to the fact that there is a loop route out of here, reconnecting to 89 about five miles up the road. The only problem is, it's a gravel road. There are three big waterfalls on the McCloud River here. The road to the first of them—the lower falls—is paved. That's the out-&-back...a 2.5-mile round trip. To see the middle falls (below), you can ride into the nearby campground on a paved road and hike a short distance to the bottom of the falls. You can also hike a short distance to see this waterfall from above, but that's off the gravel road. And the upper falls is also off the gravel road, about a mile from the end of the pavement. At which point, you can backtrack to the paved road and return to the highway, or you can continue east on the gravel loop and reconnect to the highway up the road a few miles. Confusing? The map should help clear things up.



Now...how do you feel about waterfalls? If you love a good cascade, you might be willing to put up with some of this gravel abuse to visit the assorted sites. I rode all through this section when I toured here, and I even rode back and forth between the falls a couple of times because I was having so much fun. Altogether, I probably logged seven or

eight miles on gravel roads...all on my skinny-tired Merlin. Looking back on it, I can't quite believe I did that, but I did, and it was fine. Some of it was quite bumpy and tiresome, but not pure hell. However, I'm not recommending that you do it.

All three falls are worth a look though, and if the road were paved, I'd insist you visit every one of them. All of them are formed by the river passing through a vast jumble of jagged basalt blocks. Each of the falls tumbles into a pretty pool. On hot summer days, there is a lot of swimming hole action here, especially at the most accessible lower falls, with bold youngsters diving from the high cliffs into the deep pool. The middle falls are by far the tallest...maybe 100'. The upper falls are the most remote, and as a result are often deserted, so that you can have the place all to yourself. Then again, you may be visiting beautiful Burney Falls (below) later, so if one waterfall will fill your quota for the day, you can skip this whole detour.



So much for the falls. Eventually, you'll return to the highway and more miles of rolling terrain and dense forest. Every so often the walls of trees thin to reveal a boggy meadow, and sometimes a vista to distant mountains, including at one point a great view back to the northwest of Mount Shasta...now quite far away, but still looking very massive and imposing. The road is almost never level. It rolls up and down constantly in long, lazy undulations,

gaining or losing 50 to 100 feet every few miles. At mile 35, you cross 4505' Dead Horse summit—up from around 3200' near McCloud—but it hardly stands out as a significant mountain summit. It's just the highest hump in an endless series of rollers.

At mile 43, you have to make a decision. Well, if you're at all organized, you will have thought this through ahead of time and made your decision before you even started riding. Here's the problem: when we did this tour the first time, we started in Shasta and ended at McArthur Burney Falls State Park, camping in a really neat environmental campsite they offered, which was great for either large groups or small. Recently however, those in charge at the park have decreed that this great campsite is now reserved strictly for the use of equestrians. That means that if you camp at the park, you have to stay in the conventional, individual campsites...not the worst thing that ever happened, but not nearly as nice as staying in the environmental camp. When we began planning a second tour along this route and found the group site closed to us, we began casting about for an alternative, and we found it at the Intermountain Fairgrounds in the little town of McArthur, out in the Fall River Valley, east of Burney Falls.

In fact, once we latched onto the idea of camping in McArthur, we came up with our alternate Day 1 route, which is a loop ride that incorporates most of the nicest miles on the regular Day 1 route from Shasta with some delightful miles in the Fall River Valley. All in all, we prefer it: the scenery on the loop ride is more varied; the traffic on most of its roads is lighter; and the loop day allows us to camp for two nights at the Fairgrounds, meaning one less day of packing and unpacking and pitching tents, etc. Also, there is a nice 22-mile prologue out of McArthur that you can do on your arrival day. (And lest you think we have now forfeited the right to say this tour begins "in the shadow of Mt Shasta," let me note that there are great views of the mighty mountain on the prologue ride.) Camping in McArthur also sets up the Day 2 route with a nicer beginning: winding around on quiet backroads as opposed to a straight run along Hwy 89.

However, because we have the route all worked out for the start in Shasta (and have all this copy already written), we have included it here anyway, in case you have reasons of your own for starting there. We provide you the route to Burney Falls State Park—to the main campground now, and not the environmental camp—but we also offer an alternate finish to the ride that goes to McArthur. Mileage for the two routes is the same.

Please note that if you ride from Shasta to McArthur, you will bypass Burney Falls entirely. This would be a shame, as the falls are certainly magnificent (if you care about waterfalls). There are two ways to camp in McArthur and still visit the Falls. First, allow an extra day and do the Day 1 alternate—the loop route—as your second day of riding.



Second, do the Burney Falls portion of the loop route as an add-on to the end of the Shasta stage. This would yield a ride of approximately 86 miles...a challenging day, but not unrealistic for fit riders. You'd just follow the Day 1 route around Clark Creek Road and then follow the balance of the alternate loop route onward to McArthur.

Okay! I expect you're thoroughly muddled by now, but hang in there, study the maps, and you'll eventually figure out what works for you. So here you are at mile 43 of the Day 1 route from Shasta and you have to decide whether to go to McArthur or Burney Falls. Let's do the McArthur option first...



You turn left off 89 onto county road A19—also known as McArthur Road—and in less than a mile, you emerge from the thick forest and drop down a hillside into the Fall River Valley. This is a nice descent: almost four miles long and not too steep, but plenty of easygoing downhill fun. At the bottom of the hill, you pass through the town of Dana, which used to have a nice little store—and not much else—but it has recently closed, so now Dana is almost a ghost town.

For the next 11 miles, you roll across the Fall River Valley where the road wanders over an almost flat plain through grassy meadows and pastures, with small groves of trees scattered about. From time to time, you catch glimpses of the Fall River meandering lazily through the fields. This is supposed to be an angler's paradise...a legendary fishing stream. It certainly is a cycling paradise: quiet, empty miles through the middle of nowhere. At around mile 60, you come to the town of McArthur, home of the Intermountain Fairgrounds...campsite for the night. Like many county fairgrounds, this one has plenty of shady lawns for pitching tents, and excellent bathrooms with showers.

Now let's go back up the hill to Hwy 89 and follow the

route to Burney Falls, which means continuing on Hwy 89. The highway is almost level for the next two miles, and then slopes off downhill for five fast miles on a grade of around 6%. At the bottom of the hill, watch out for a right turn on Clark Creek Road.

The state park, which is here because of impressive Burney Falls, sits just south of a big reservoir named Lake Britton. Both the main access to the lake and the front gate to the park are located on Hwy 89 just a few miles south of this junction, but we don't want to go to the park that way. Instead, we're escaping from the traffic on 89 by using delightful Clark Creek Road, which loops out around the western perimeters of both the lake and the park.

After leaving 89 on Clark Creek, you cross some railroad tracks, climb very briefly and then begin a nifty little descent, which starts out with a gradual downhill and then becomes quite steep and twisty...lots of fun. Somewhere in here there are pretty vistas out over Lake Britton and the surrounding woods. At the bottom of the downhill you pass Clark Creek Lodge, which serves as a rest stop on the Fall River Century, a beautiful tour staged here each July. Climb a little after the lodge and then descend some more to a level run along the shore of the lake, including riding across the top of the dam at the end of the lake (left). It's an interesting dam: don't know its vintage, but by western American standards, it looks quite ancient... probably a 1920's era project. Shortly after crossing the dam, you begin a one-mile climb to where the road becomes almost level, and in another couple of miles, you've returned to Hwy 89. Turn left and ride north for a little more than a mile to the main entrance to the park.

McArthur-Burney is a conventional state park with all the usual stuff, including showers for our hot and sweaty riders. There are 128 typical tent/RV spaces and two hiker-biker spaces.

The main attraction at the park is Burney Falls, a 129' spill of water tumbling over a basalt cliff on Burney Creek. Actually, some of the water tumbles over the top of the cliff, but a great portion of the total flow spurts directly out of the porous basalt cliff face, jetting from underground springs just upstream from the cliff. The water from the springs is wickedly cold, and the pool at the bottom of the falls is a shocking 40°. Amazingly though, just upstream from the place where the underground springs add their flow to the stream, the above-ground Burney Creek water is quite warm...delightful for an after-ride soak. This warmer section of the creek is often overlooked by the visitors to the park who don't stray far from the center of things near the big falls. One disclaimer about the creek: farmers further upstream have riparian rights to the water, and sometimes in the dry season, they may pull enough water out of the creek that it is little more than a trickle by the time it reaches the park. This doesn't affect the falls, where

the underground springs keep pumping out a huge volume of water all year 'round, but it may curtail your swim.

If you don't plan on staying in the park and hiking to the falls from your campsite, you can easily visit the falls from an unofficial side entrance to the park off Clark Creek Road (see map).

### **Day 1 (Alternate): Fall River–Clark Creek Loop**

**60 miles, 3300' up, 3300' down**

**66 miles, 3400' up, 3400' down**

**Bonus miles: 12 miles, 600' up & down**

Some of the text in the write-up of this stage will be redundant if you have already read the copy for the stage originating in Shasta. But in case you skipped that section, I'm repeating it here.

This option follows most of the route of the Fall River Century, a popular ride held each July. It's a wonderful loop, with great scenery, light traffic, and only moderately challenging terrain. About the only thing not to like about starting the tour with this loop is missing Mount Shasta, McCloud, and the falls of the McCloud River. Oh well...so many roads, so little time.

Before exploring the loop route, I have to insert a brief mention of the little prologue ride that's on offer for those who need or want a little leg-loosener on their arrival day. The 22-mile loop is complicated enough that I have provided a map and route slip for it, although no elevation profile. There is some climbing, but of an extremely easygoing nature.

The ride heads out around a counter-clockwise loop east from McArthur, working its way uphill unto an elevated slope known as the Lassen Bench. Scenery is a blend of quiet valley floor, rolling, rocky hillsides, and scattered oak and pine forest. And mint. Mint? Yes...acres and acres of the sweetest smelling fields you'll ever encounter (right). I've never ridden anywhere before where mint was grown as a large-scale commercial crop, but that's what they do here, and it smells the way you would expect mint to smell: refreshing! If you're interested in birdwatching, and if you're lucky, you may spy flocks of Sand Hill Cranes out in the mint fields. Not only did I see those wonderful huge cranes while riding here, I also was treated to a magical vision of a vee of White-faced Ibis cruising by, only about 30' above the ground and directly over my head.

The high point of the loop is on Old Highway, traversing a sprawling, stony slope—the Lassen Bench—and as noted earlier, there are grand views back to majestic Mt Shasta from this high point of the ride.

There is an easy way to shortcut the prologue and end up with a nearly flat ride of around 12

miles. This is pointed out on the map.

Now, back to the main ride... You begin the loop ride at the Intermountain Fairgrounds in the little town of McArthur and head west and north along McArthur Road (also known as County Route A19). For the first 11 miles, this road stays as close to level as anything in the mountains can, as it zigs and zags across the flat, fertile plain of the Fall River Valley. At the town of Dana, the road tilts up into a 4-mile long grade that climbs out of the valley and up to the tableland where Hwy 89 resides. This climb is never difficult...always an easy grade. Turn left on 89 and head south. The highway is almost level for the next two miles, and then slopes off downhill for five fast miles on a grade of around 6%. At the bottom of the hill, watch out for a right turn on Clark Creek Road.

The state park, which is here because of impressive Burney Falls, sits just south of a big reservoir named Lake Britton. Both the main access to the lake and the front gate to the park are located on Hwy 89 just a few miles south of this junction, but we don't want to go to the park that way. Instead, we're escaping from the traffic on 89 by using delightful Clark Creek Road, which loops out around the western perimeters of both the lake and the park.

After leaving 89 on Clark Creek, you cross some railroad tracks, climb very briefly and then begin a nifty little descent, which starts out with a gradual downhill and then becomes quite steep and twisty...lots of fun. Somewhere in here there are pretty vistas out over Lake Britton and the surrounding woods. At the bottom of the downhill you pass Clark Creek Lodge, which serves as a rest stop on the Fall River Century.

Climb a little after the lodge and then descend some more to a level run along the shore of the lake, including riding across the top of the dam at the end of the lake. It's an interesting dam, built in the 1920s in the monumental art deco style of the period. I'm offering a bonus-miles out-&-back along this section of Clark Creek Road. It's a run





downhill (mostly) along the Pit River on the access road to one of PG&E's hydroelectric powerhouses down below the dam. The powerhouse, known as Pit 3, displays the same grandiose, art deco styling as the dam. This is a very pretty run (below)—sometimes up on the hillside and sometimes right along the river—and about the only bad thing one could say about it is that it's downhill on the way out and uphill on the way back...kind of like deficit spending or eating your cake before your spinach. (When we did this road, we found the climb on the way back to be extremely easy.) The out-&-back leaves Clark Creek Road about a mile after Clark Creek Lodge and before crossing the dam.

Back on Clark Creek Road... Shortly after crossing the dam, you begin an easy one-mile climb to where the road becomes almost level, and in another couple of miles, you've returned to Hwy 89.

If you're doing this loop as drawn up, you won't be riding into the state park. But you can still see the park's namesake waterfall via a short hike off Clark Creek Road (see map). There is a little parking lot at mile 30 and a trail head from there that leads directly to the falls. I'm not sure of the mileage to the falls from here, but it's not much, and is definitely worth doing. I'm not going to repeat every line of copy I cranked out in the earlier section about the falls. If you want to know more about them, consult the section on Day 1 (the stage from Shasta).



Back on the route... Turn right (south) on Hwy 89 for a bit over four miles, then turn left (east) on Hwy 299 for another two miles. This 6-mile stretch is the least pleasant, or at any rate least interesting portion of the loop ride. Both highways are arrow straight and either flat or slightly rolling, with nothing for scenery but walls of firs and pines. Both carry a fair amount of traffic. On the other hand, if these were the worst roads you ever had to ride in this life, you'd count yourself very lucky.

But things will improve soon...as soon as you turn right off

299 onto Cassel Road. This begins one of the best parts of the ride. From here (at mile 39) to the finish of the ride, you'll be on quiet backroads that undulate and twist over a constantly changing landscape. Moderately challenging climbs and wiggly-worm descents are mixed together with large helpings of rollers and dipsy-doodles...sometimes in a pretty forest of mixed hardwoods and firs and sometimes out along the edges of meadows. It's a landscape into which bikes fit very comfortably. Riding here is a treat.

At about mile 42, after passing through the little one-store town of Cassel, you begin the last big climb of the day. If you check the elevation profile for the stage, it looks as if the climb out of the Fall River Valley earlier in the ride is a harder piece of work. I don't think so. The earlier climb was just a long, steady grade, whereas this one has a few steep pitches that will get most riders out of the saddle, if only briefly. Local riders tell me that, given the choice, they would rather go the other direction on this road, as the climb feels easier that way. We run the loop this way for various reasons, not least of which is that we will use this road going the other direction tomorrow on our way to Lassen National Park. After you've done it that way too, you can decide which way you liked best.

As is only fair, the payoff after the climb is an entertaining descent. Pay attention for two things on this downhill: the nice views to the north into the canyon of the Pit River, and the next turn onto Dee Knoch Road (a right turn almost at the bottom of the hill, just before Cassel Fall River Road crosses the Pit and rolls into the town of Fall River).

I'm offering another option at this junction. Dee Knoch Road—on the basic route—will be part of tomorrow's stage, going in the other direction. If you want to cut down on the repeated miles, and if you want to explore one more nice road, stay on Cassel Fall River Road, cross the bridge over the Pit, and head for the town of Fall River. Just as you hit the city limit, turn left on Bridge Street and climb (steeply but briefly) to a junction with Hwy 299. Cross the highway and continue on Glenburn Road (see map). This virtually flat road meanders along the bank of the beautiful Fall River, ending up back in the little town of Glenburn, where you were at mile 5 on the loop. From here, just retrace the first miles of today's ride back to McArthur. This detour adds five miles and one very pretty road to the day's total. Elevation gain is virtually the same on both routes.

But back to the basic route... Dee Knoch Road is at least as pretty as Glenburn Road, and if it weren't for the fact that you'll be doing it tomorrow, I would definitely choose it as the one road to do in this neck of the woods. It skirts along a wide open meadow, often in sight of the old irrigation canal that waters the Knoch ranch. As the road is up along the high edge of the meadow, there are pleasant views spilling away to the north, all down the length of the valley. Dee Knoch tees into Jim Day Road. If you did the prologue,



good sampling of big boulders thrown in for variety. It's a very pleasing environment. After the biggest of the descents, the road continues to bump up and down over more rollers to the little wide spot in the road that is Cassel...nothing here but one little store.

Turn left in Cassel and follow the southern leg of Cassel Road toward Hwy 89. This is another excellent cycling road: nearly level, passing through woods and meadows and over pretty Hat Creek (left). Cassel Road tees into Hwy 89. Turn left and head south for Lassen National Park.

you've been here before. Follow Jim Day back up the hill and into the town of McArthur.

But wait: there's more! Or there could be. If you didn't have time to do the Prologue on your arrival day, and if you don't mind logging a few more miles today, you can tack it onto the end of today's ride. Instead of turning left on Jim Day Road and riding two miles into town, turn right and do the loop up onto the Bench. Cutting the two miles on Jim Day off of both today's ride and the Prologue route will net you a loop of about 78 miles. Add in the Pit 3 bonus miles (12 miles), and now you're looking at a fairly stout ride of 90 miles and 3500 feet of gain.

## Day 2: McArthur to Lassen NP

### 66 miles, 5600' up, 2000' down

This ride leaves McArthur exactly as the Prologue did: across 299 and downhill on Jim Day Road to Dee Knoch. This time, turn right on Dee Knoch and retrace the miles at the end of the Day 1 loop. Should I apologize for having all these redundant miles? Nope! I offered the Glenburn Road alternate yesterday, but that pretty much exhausts the inventory of other roads in this neck of the woods. And really, Dee Knoch and Cassel Fall River Roads are so nice, you won't mind doing them again, especially in the opposite direction. And doing them in the morning instead of the afternoon will help to make them seem completely fresh.

To review the two roads: Dee Knoch snuggles along the uphill edge of a long, open meadow sloping down to the Pit River. It climbs gently to its junction with Cassel Fall River Road. Cassel Fall River begins climbing in little steps and rollers, eventually gaining several hundred feet before losing all that elevation gain in a wild, twisty descent. Every so often on the climb, you can look out through the trees on your right and catch glimpses of the beautiful Pit River snaking through the canyon below. The landscape here includes mixed woods of fir, pine, and broadleaf trees, with lots of open glades and meadows, and a

As you head south along this stretch of Hwy 89, it becomes more and more cycle friendly. The road acquires shoulders from time to time, giving riders a little more elbow room. The speed limit drops to 55, and then 45 and 35 when you get to the national park. Also, the scenery improves. The vast tracts of unending forest are more frequently broken up by grasslands and meadows and open vistas, and the forest itself shows a little more style, with fewer solid walls of fir and pine and more stands of larger, more widely spaced ponderosas, with shrubs and leafy trees intermingled.

Hat Creek dances along next to the highway for 30 miles, from near the intersection with Cassel Road all the way to the last big climb up to Lassen NP. Sometimes the creek is near the road, with its rapids singing a happy serenade as you cruise along. Sometimes it wanders off across a verdant valley and can be seen off in the distance, looking picture-postcard pretty. At first, the road rolls along on a nearly level plain, with just a few gentle rollers breaking things up, but as the miles go by, you begin to notice more and more of an upward trend. Tomorrow will take you to the







8512' summit near Lassen Peak, and you'll do a large chunk of that climbing today. Between miles 30 and 38, there is a good deal of steady uphill...never too steep, but gaining close to 1000' along the way. Before that climbing begins, I throw in one little detour off 89, just to give you a break from the straight run south along the highway. It's just a little two-mile scenic bypass on the east side of the highway—the Doty Road Loop—that wanders off into the woods and meadows before returning to the main drag. If you were to miss the turn, you wouldn't have missed much, but I do recommend it, if only for the break it gives you from the long run along the highway. As with all little loops of this sort, be sure you turn onto the first end of the loop! If you're asleep at the wheel and miss the first turn, and then turn left onto the southern end of the loop, you'll get even more bonus miles, and with all the climbing at the end of today's stage, you really don't need that.

After the gradual climbing between miles 30 and 38, the terrain levels out, and in that first flat section, you pass the turn-off to Subway Cave (photo, previous page). This is a nice place to stop for a regroup, and is a nice place to get off the bike and explore as well—at least if you have any interest in caves. This is a lava tube cave. Lava tubes are formed when lava flows from a volcano down a river-like channel. The lava exposed to the outside air cools and forms a hard outer crust, but the lava under the crust—insulated from the outside air, continues its molten flow. (No doubt you've seen images of such underground flows on the active volcanos in Hawaii.) Eventually, the molten lava in the underground flow runs out and leaves its empty channel behind...the tube cave. As caves go, lava

tubes are some of the least interesting, usually having no stalagmites or 'tites or other fancy frills that make some cave systems so intriguing. But still, a cave is a cave, and it's fun just to venture down into the still, cool, darkness. This tube is about a third of a mile long and the total hike through will add up to about half a mile. You'll need walking shoes and a flashlight for the trek, which could be brought here by your sag driver, if such a creature exists in your scheme of things. The cave is just a few yards off the highway on a paved drive. There is no entry fee.

Just beyond the cave is a junction where Hwy 89 meets Hwy 44. There is a little settlement at the intersection called Old Station, including a small store and cafe where you can snag some chow. After Old Station, the climbing resumes: a six-mile, 600' rise, followed by a five-mile climb that gets steeper as it goes, eventually gaining nearly 1000' to 5933' Eskimo Hill summit. Now you get to fly downhill for a mile, but as you're flying, you have to get ready to turn left, following Hwy 89 as it enters Lassen NP.

Lassen Volcanic National Park (both photos this page) is one of the highlights of this tour...perhaps the foremost attraction on the entire ride. (Not that the rest of the tour is lame...far from it...but Lassen is something really special, both on its general scenic merits and as a killer bike ride.) The borders of the park enclose miles of gorgeous wilderness, but the reason the park is here is because of the various volcanic and geothermal wonders associated with Lassen Peak, or perhaps more accurately with the late Mount Tehama, a formerly large volcano that blew its top 600,000 years ago...like Mount St. Helens, only bigger. Many of the rugged peaks in the park's high country are remnants of the original volcano...the ragged fringes of its





exploded caldera. 10,457' Lassen Peak is not. It's considered the world's largest plug dome volcano. I'm not a geologist, but I believe this means a vent formed in the remnants of Tehama's collapse, spewing out assorted volcanic crud which over time built up a 2000' high cone before becoming plugged up, more-or-less like a giant, geological zit. The park literature will do a better job of explaining all this.

You enter the park on its northwest corner, and after paying \$5 to ride into the park—\$10 for your sag wagon—you pedal past pretty Manzanita Lake at about mile 43. The shore of the lake is a great place to regroup before the final run up to the camp at Summit Lake. There is a large campground here and also a little village that constitutes park headquarters. This is the only place in the park where there are such amenities as showers and a laundry. That's right: the campground at Summit Lake does not have showers. I considered stopping here because of this, but the miles don't work well...too few today and too many tomorrow. As the name implies, there is a very nice lake at our camp of choice (above), as well as piped water and flush toilets. A plunge in the lake will have to suffice for washing off the road grime on this day. We were surprised to find the water in this high mountain lake not all that cold...quite pleasant, in fact.

Campgrounds in Lassen are first-come, first-served. The rangers tell me it shouldn't be a problem finding a few empty sites on a weekday, but plan to send a sag ahead to dibs a few spots early in the day, just to be safe. There is one exception to the no reservations policy, and that is the Lost Creek group camp, which we will pass today at mile 58. When we first toured here, this is where we stayed, and it was close enough to the showers at Manzanita Lake that we all jumped on our bus and rode back there for showers before dinner. If you want to, you can do the same, but I chose the camp further up the road because it divided the miles between the two days more evenly: 66 today and 61/71 tomorrow, as opposed to 58 and 69/79. Also, there is no

source of water at Lost Creek other than faucets, so if you can't get back to the showers, you don't have the option of jumping in a lake to freshen up.

After leaving Manzanita Lake, the road tilts up into a quite substantial ascent through the park. Although my notes indicate a gain of only around 250' in a mile and a half, I recall it felt like a pretty good pull. Once over the top of this first climb, you are rewarded with a two-for-one return on your investment: a downhill twice as long as the climb (three miles) and losing twice as much elevation (500'). It's a honey of a descent, on sweet pavement through a fabulous setting. All day long, the scenery has been steadily improving, and now, the landscape is everything you would expect it to be inside a national park: great masses of rugged rock, majestic trees, towering

peaks, babbling brooks and pristine lakes, and deer, squirrels, and other fauna going about their business.

When you hit the bottom of this great descent, you're ready for the final climb to camp. Lost Creek group camp is down here at the bottom of the hill. That's another reason why I opted to continue to Summit Lake camp: the climb you're starting now is 16 miles long. By continuing for another eight miles, you cut the climb into two, more manageable







finish of your ride in sight! Hold on though...you have some fantastic miles to ride before you're done today, and perhaps the best miles of all are ahead of you right now. Collectively, the first 35 miles of today's stage—25 on the short route—have to rank as one of the most stunningly beautiful and most cycle-friendly stretches anywhere. I know I'm often guilty of flights of overly fancy prose when I'm describing a great ride, but in this case, I doubt I could find the words that would overstate or exaggerate the grandeur of this stretch.

As I noted in the introduction, the snowpack in the high country in this park is often so deep that the road can't be cleared until mid-July or occasionally even later. It's quite exciting to ride here when the snow is still so deep. I've ridden over the summit when the snow was piled so high on the sides of the road that it was like riding down a white slot canyon (left...photo taken in August). Most of the time, it won't be that extreme, but you're quite likely to find vast snowfields right up to the edge of the road and aqua-blue ice in the snow banks on the shady sides of the hills or on the surface of Helen Lake (below...photo taken in a different August), just beyond the summit.

The road twists and turns in carsick loops as it climbs to the summit and again as it thrashes its way down the other side. It looks very much like one of those classic alpine ascents we all goggle at when watching the Tour de France. It's the sort of road where you could talk to a rider a quarter-mile behind you on the road...as you pass one another on different tiers of a switchback climb. Once over the top you're embarking on a long, delicious feast of more-or-less continuous downhill. If you take the short route, there is one small climb not far from the bottom and the whole descent is *only* around 16 miles. If you take the long route, the descent is pretty much uninterrupted madness for 19 miles, from the summit (8512') at mile 9 to the roll-

chunks, rather than having to do it all tomorrow morning. None of this is brutal climbing. You'll gain about 1100' in the eight miles from Lost Creek to Summit Lake, and that includes a few nearly level or even slightly downhill spots.

There are two campsites on either side of Summit Lake. I have figured the miles based on stopping at the first camp, on the north side of the lake. The only thing it has that the southern camp doesn't: flush toilets (as opposed to latrines). The lake itself is much like hundreds of other small, rock-ribbed alpine lakes in the region...in a word, exquisite. There are trails leading out of camp to explore the high country, including hikes to larger, more remote backcountry lakes above the camp. Your official park map and other park handouts will give you all the details.

### Day 3: Lassen NP to Lake Almanor

**71 miles, 3500' up, 5700' down**

**61 miles, 3000' up, 5200' down**

I'm not quite sure why they call it Summit Lake. It's not anywhere near the top of the hill. As I noted before, you still have eight miles to go to reach the summit at 8512' under the shoulder of Lassen Peak, and Summit Lake is at around 6700'. Climbing is the name of the game at the start today. It's not tough climbing, but it does go on for a long time. However, even if the climb were steeper than it is, one would be hard-pressed to find anything to complain about in scenery this wonderful. At 2.5 miles, the road runs out along an open mountain slope with an uninterrupted panorama stretching away to the south. Far, far below in the middle distance, Lake Almanor glitters in the morning sun. That's your destination today. Just think: not three miles into the ride and you already have the





out into the town of Mineral (4796') at mile 28. And not only is the road a superb, E-ticket ride in terms of its twists and turns—as well as its scenery—but the pavement is generally superb as well...silky smooth and free of potholes and other booby traps. To trot out the tired old cliché: this is as good as it gets (above).

Take a break or two on this descent. This wondrous world is too fascinating and picturesque to speed past in a blur. There are of course endless vistas to grand mountain landscapes, but closer at hand, there are various roadside attractions worth a look, such as the Sulphur Works, where geothermal fumaroles vent clouds of steam...just next to the road. This is thought to be the original volcanic blow hole for ancient Mount Tehama. (This area is still an active geothermal region. Lassen Peak last erupted in 1916, and until Mt. St. Helens lost her head, that had been the most recent volcanic eruption in the contiguous United States.) There is also a nice visitor center near the southern park gate.

You exit the park at mile 16 (still descending, although very gently at this point), and at mile 21, Hwy 89 meets Hwy 36. This is where the two routes diverge. The short route turns left and follows the combined 89/36 up a small hill to Morgan summit (5753') before resuming its descent for another three, fast, slinky miles. The bottom of the descent is the point at which the long route rejoins, so let's back up and follow the other riders on their extended journey. The long route turns right at the junction and heads west on 36, logging another four and a half miles of fast downhill frenzy before bottoming out in the small town of Mineral. Right in the middle of town, you turn left on Hwy 172.

I wonder how such a dinky, unassuming, off-the-beaten-path backroad could have ended up with an official state highway number. It's almost as if the highway guys at CalTrans got together after work over a few beers and said, "Let's have some fun: let's do one little road up in the hills that's an absolutely

perfect cycling road!" And then they threw in all the things they knew cyclists like: zero traffic, pretty meadows and leafy woods, a short, mildly challenging climb, and a descent that's much longer than the climb up to it. Add in smooth pavement, perfectly banked corners (lots of them), and a downhill gradient that's steep enough to be fast and fun, but not so steep that you have to be cranking on the brakes all the time. I know the CalTrans staff doesn't build roads just for bikers, but that's what this little gem feels like. After a flat, one-mile run along beautiful Battle Creek Meadow at the start, the road climbs for a little over a mile to Mineral summit at 5264' and then topples off the other side of the mountain in a delightful downhill of 3.5 miles, leveling out near Mill

Creek Resort at mile 31.5. After a brief, rolling climb, the road settles out next to another beautiful meadow and finishes up with a level run back to Hwy 89, where it rejoins the short route.

Both routes stay together for the balance of the stage, and most of that balance is spent on Hwy 89. This is a decent section for cycling, but it does suffer in comparison to the dreamlike miles that have preceded it...a tough act to follow. Here, the road is generally wide, often with wide shoulders. Scenery is a pleasant but not spectacular blend of forest and meadow. For 20 miles, the terrain floats up and down, gaining or losing two to three hundred feet at a time in five or six-mile chunks...not steep enough to be "hills" and too big to be "rollers."

After one last downhill glide, you approach Lake Almanor and a fork in the road near the town of Chester at the north end of the lake. At the fork, Hwy 36 continues straight, passes through Chester, and eventually works its way around to the east side of the lake. You turn right and follow 89 south along the west side of the lake (below). This







is nothing special as a cycling road, although there are wide shoulders and the scenery is decent. However, there is a scenic bypass off the main highway for part of this stretch—through the resorts of Plumas Pines and Prattville—and also, a very nice bike path has recently been constructed right along the lakeshore down much of the west side of the lake: the Lake Almanor Recreation Trail.

Generally, I don't recommend bike paths for faster, more advanced riders, as they often seem under-engineered and too crowded for any speed above a dawdle. I have similar reservations about this path. If you really want to hammer, it's probably too twisty and cute, but if you're willing to relax a bit and enjoy the sights, it will be a big improvement over the highway. (The fact that Chester resident Chuck Bodfish, a well-known cycling writer and advocate, had oversight on the project probably had a lot to do with this being a better-than-average bike path.) I propose a compromise: to get off this rather boring stretch of 89 as soon as possible, use the first section of trail—which is the little bypass you come to—and then switch to the little backroad when you get to it in a couple of miles. Turn onto the bike path at its beginning, at a junction with Humbug Road. (Humbug Road turns right off the west side of 89 and the bike path turns left off the east side.) There is a big sign announcing the trail, although at first you might wonder, as the access road is dirt for the first few hundred yards before the actual paved trail kicks in. I like this trail through the state park along the lake. It is quite well engineered, but there are a few corners that are built more for walkers than fast riders, so you'll have to relax and ride easy for awhile.

This section of trail winds through the woods for 2.6 miles until it tees into Almanor West Drive, the scenic bypass off 89. (If you really don't want to mess with the bike path, you can stay on 89 for a couple of miles and then turn left onto this road. By the way, when looking for the trailhead off 89, don't turn left on anything if it does not have Humbug

Road and the big trail sign right there. We discovered another Almanor West exit that pops up before our turn...very confusing and definitely not the right road. I even got suckered into turning here, and I was the ride leader.) The bike path continues beyond this junction at 2.6 miles. It continues almost all the way down the west side of the lake. However, Almanor West Drive is every bit as pretty as the bike path, and is really better for faster riders...less cluttered with walkers and less likely to ambush you with tight turns. So I suggest you leave the path for the road at this point. Whether you stay on the path or switch to the road, you eventually rejoin 89 north of the town of Canyon Dam. Just before the town, you turn left and ride about three miles north up the east side of the lake on Hwy 147 to our camp at Lake Cove Resort. Even with the three-mile backtrack up the east side, this route is still three or four miles shorter than it would be going through Chester's

congestion and around the northeast side of the lake, and it's a good deal more pleasant.

Lake Cove Resort is a private campground which caters primarily to RVs and trailers, some of which have that hunkered-down look of permanent installations. But they do have a nice area set aside for tents, and it just happens to be the best part of the camp. The main RV part of the camp is on the east (or inland) side of the road, while the tent meadow is across the road, right down on the lakeshore. There is a little beach and a long dock, and when we were here, many of the riders ended up going for a refreshing swim and then lolling about on the dock in the afternoon sun. Remember when you were looking down from Lassen Peak to the lake this morning? Now you can turn that view around and look back at the mountain. I don't know whether it's a regular occurrence, but the first time we were here, we enjoyed one of the most impressive, technicolor sunsets I've ever seen, with the last rays of the sun illuminating the snowcapped tip of Lassen Peak, far away above the north end of the lake. It was almost as spectacular the second time we camped here (above).

## Day 4: Lake Almanor to Portola

### 72 miles, 3600' up, 3200' down

Today's stage combines some really great miles with some that are just so-so. Not terrible...not even close...just a little less than wonderful. The best miles occur early and the so-so ones come later, which tends to make the day drag a little near the end. At least it did for me when I rode it.

You begin by retracing the three miles down the lake to the tiny town of Canyon Dam, at which point you turn left and rejoin our old pal Hwy 89. Just beyond the town, the highway heads downhill. It seems counter-intuitive to be riding along the shore of a big lake and then to leave the lake via a downhill—lakes generally being in the bottoms of



hills crowding up against the road on the left. This is cycling the way it was meant to be: a quiet road with decent pavement and no traffic; green, grassy meadows and pastures; scattered groves of oak and pine; lazy little meandering streams; and on the far side of the valley, majestic mountains towering over everything. The road is almost flat, with just a few little lumps that won't get you out of your big ring but might get you out of your saddle...if you're feeling energetic. Cross two cute little iron bridges and ride into the town of Taylorsville. At almost 25 miles, this might make a good

basins—but that's the case here. I guess the name of the town says it all: Canyon Dam. You're dropping down the canyon of Wolf Creek below the dam, and it's no small downhill either: a thousand feet of descent in 6.5 fast miles. I have fond memories of our first tour here, where a group of us—flush with early morning energy—really shredded this run, hammering our brains out, just for the sheer, lunatic joy of it all...sling-shotting past one another, carving the corners, maxxed out in our biggest gears, gone round the bend in a red rush of dancing-dervish speed...a great way to start the day! (Note: I wrote that passage after our first tour, several years ago. Having been back since, I have to say this hill does not look quite that wild nor all that fast. Pleasant, but not extreme. Either I'm getting slower as I get older, or we were really jacked up on coffee that one morning.)

At the bottom of the hill you glide out onto an open level meadow, and a roadside sign welcomes you to Indian Valley. In just a bit, you'll be in the little town of Greenville, where our route leaves Hwy 89 for a detour around the valley. A quick glance at the map will show you that if you wanted to, you could lop 11 miles off the stage here by staying on Hwy 89 through Greenville. We even offered it as a short option on our first tour. However, I have since removed that as an official option because that section of 89 is not so nice, and the detour is so good. The shortcut is just not worth it in this case. You first have to ride through the cluttered commercial part of the town of Greenville, and then along the edge of a stretch of 89 that is busy and no-shoulder. If that weren't enough, you also have to climb a fairly substantial hill that the longer route avoids.

The scenic bypass on the other hand is cycling perfection (both photos). It leaves Hwy 89 by turning left up the main street of the old town, heading through town and out into the country beyond. Hwy 89 essentially runs a straight course down the middle of the valley, while the bypass bumps along the eastern edge of the valley, with the open valley rolling away on the right of the road and the wooded

spot for a regroup. At mile 29, the bypass rejoins Hwy 89.

Near the junction with 89, you begin riding along the bank of Indian Creek. This creek collects all the streams that have been meandering around the valley, and as the wide valley narrows to a deep canyon at its southern end, it carves a wild, white-water course down the gorge, and you go downhill with it. This is another 6.5 mile descent that is almost as much fun as the one below Canyon Dam. It





doesn't drop as steeply, but it does have the robust river in its spectacular, rocky canyon to keep you company: waterfalls, cataracts, deep green pools; jagged, snaggle-tooth standing stones in midstream, and sheer rock cliffs looming over the water. Some of this grade is only mildly downhill, but three miles of it are steep enough to let you grab a tuck and savor a little more of that high-speed haze.

But high-speed fun notwithstanding, do take the time to stop and enjoy this beautiful river canyon. We were so caught up in jamming the downhill (on our first tour) that we flew through here like a runaway freight and never even slowed down. I tried to get the guys to take a break, but they were in a zone, and before we knew it, we'd left this great gorge behind and were riding through a landscape that wasn't nearly as interesting. I had to come back later on my own on another trip to really appreciate the place. Once you leave this canyon, the best miles of the day are done. The rest of the route is decent, but nothing to match this, so enjoy it while you can. You may never come this way again.



At around mile 35, Hwy 89 comes to a junction with Hwy 70, and you turn left and follow the combined 89/70 over the creek and up the far side of the canyon. This is a junction for the waters as well: Indian Creek and Spanish Creek join forces here and together become the east branch of the north fork of the Feather River, which flows away down its deep canyon to the southwest. You've just descended along Indian Creek. Now, as you climb from the junction, you'll be ascending the canyon of Spanish Creek. It's not as easy to see down into this canyon as it was along Indian Creek...too many bushes or something...but when you do get the occasional glimpse of it, it's just as impressive. As you're now climbing steadily, you're soon high above the creek. This climb gains 500' in a little less than two miles, and then you level out and soon leave the creek behind. Between miles 37 and 40, the road dips and dives through the woods in a series of largish rollers, losing and gaining one or two hundred feet on each pitch. What you're

doing is dodging over the ridgeline from the watershed of the north fork of the Feather River and eventually descending into the drainage of the middle fork of the same system. This section, carrying the combined loads of Highway 89 and 70, and heading for the large town of Quincy, has a little more traffic on it than is ideal.

This is one of the places on the trip where we want to mention the traffic. Hwy 89 can be busy. The first time we toured here, traffic wasn't a problem here at all. On a more recent tour, we were left a bit frazzled by the passing trucks, some of which gave us rather close shaves. Whether things have deteriorated in general in recent years, or whether we just caught a bad day, with more trucks than normal, I don't know. We speculate that the truck traffic—mostly log trucks—varies depending on where they're logging at any given time.

When we first did this tour, we rode right through Quincy, stopping for a huge brunch at the wonderful Morning Thunder Café. Quincy sprawls along the highway for about five miles. The old downtown is pleasant enough, but the outlying commercial clutter is unappealing. Fortunately, I have since discovered a very nice road that bypasses the town altogether and also cuts a couple of miles off the route. This is Chandler Road (left), and it shuffles along the edge of the valley much as the scenic bypass out of Greenville did in Indian Valley, with the open, grassy plain to the right and the wooded foothills snuggling up to the road on the left. This shortcut/bypass is definitely an improvement, even though it means missing the great food in town. You'll need to be looking sharp for the left onto Chandler, as it pops up in the middle of nowhere. It is well marked.

Chandler runs along its quiet valley for about six pleasant miles and then rejoins 89/70 on the far side of town. There is one confusing corner midway along the road, where you have to turn hard right over a little bridge, and where the road straight ahead only goes to a dead end. Turn left on 89 and continue south. This is not a classic cycling road. The general terrain and the engineering of the road all seem to be scaled to fast motor traffic: long, sweeping curves and long, rolling grades. Aside from this picky and highly subjective assessment of the road as being slightly out-of-scale for bike travel, I really can't fault it too much. The scenery is nice: rolling hills and scattered oaks alternating with denser forest.

The miles between 50 and 66 are fairly equally divided between long, gentle climbs, long, gentle descents, and level traverses across the hillsides. Well... actually, not quite equally divided: the elevation at the end of this run is a thousand feet higher than it was in Quincy, so the climbs must be a little longer than the descents. That probably accounts for the feeling of the stage seeming to drag a bit at

the end...the subtle but persistent uphill trend. Then again, maybe it was that three-egg omelet, sausage, and cottage fries at the Morning Thunder Café that made the afternoon ride seem to drag.

At around mile 66, Hwys 89 and 70 split, and when 89 goes straight, you bear left and follow the signs to the town of Portola along Hwy 70. You're getting close to the end of the ride, and you could just stay right here on 70 all the way to camp, but I'm suggesting one more scenic bypass off the main road. Less than a mile after turning toward Portola, turn left again on Mohawk Vista Drive. This is a winding, somewhat hilly, residential road that wanders around in the trees above the highway for 2.5 miles before dumping you back onto 70. If you skipped it, it wouldn't be a disaster, but I do think it's a better bike road than the highway, which is a long, straight, boring uphill grade at this point. Once back on 70, it's a little over two miles to the Feather River Resort, a facility that caters to RVs but has plenty of beautiful wooded acreage for tents, away from the more motorized parts of the resort. It's a clean, well-run camp, and has a large swimming pool as well as showers and laundry.

The Feather River is just beyond the camp, and although I have not done so, the camp owners tell me it's easy to hike right down to the Feather River from camp. This is the Middle Fork of the Feather River, and is a designated Wild and Scenic River, so the hike might be worthwhile.

## Day 5: Portola to Alder Creek

**73 miles, 6800' up, 5800' down**

**55 miles, 4000' up, 3000' down**

**55 miles, 3000' up, 2000' down**

This just might be the hardest day on the tour, at least if you do the long route. It certainly has the most elevation gain, and the hills keep coming at you right up to the end of the ride. But you get what you pay for: not only some of

the most beautiful high country scenery this side of Lassen, but some of the slickest downhill as well. Before you get too far into the ride, I hope to persuade you to do a little off-the-bike sight-seeing, because early in the stage, you'll be riding right past a great railroad museum in Portola.

There are two short options proposed as well: one of which stays mostly on Hwy 89 (and is hillier), and one of which explores a remote valley east of Portola (and is flatter).

You start by turning right out of the Feather River Resort and heading up Hwy 70 into Portola. The first five miles into town are rather boring: a broad, straight highway, gently rolling terrain, and the ragged fringes of commercial and residential development surrounding the town. In Portola, follow the signs to the Railroad Museum. Although you turn right and left through a maze of little city streets, the signs are always there...not only for the museum, but also for county road A15, which is the road you'll take out of town after your visit to the railroad yard. Unless you're doing the flatter short option. That route stays on Hwy 70 right through Portola.

Because this flat route stays on 70, I'm going to deal with it here, before going to the museum. If you intend to do it and also visit the RR museum, you'll have to backtrack through town to Hwy 70 after visiting the museum. That will add 1.2 miles to the flat route, but it will still be the easiest of the day's options. So...stay on 70 through Portola. Just beyond town and just before Hwy 70 tilts up on a long climb, leave the highway for a neat little bypass called Rocky Point Road. This is a great road that I wish could be on all of today's routes. It dodges the big hill on 70 by hugging the bank of the Feather River in the bottom of the canyon...a very quiet and enjoyable 2.6-mile escape from a busy highway and a big hill. It eventually tees back into 70 on the far side of the hill. Turn right on the highway and go a mile and a half to a right turn onto Beckwourth Calpine Road. This nearly flat road and its continuation, Westside Road, roll down the length of Sierra Valley, a broad, level plain that has all the characteristics of a classic eastern

Sierra landscape: open, dry, austere, and lovely (left). Hayfields and ranch lands are most of what you see, with rugged hills ranging along the borders of the valley. There are a few very gentle ups and downs along this 16-mile stretch, but it's as close to being level as a mountain road can be.

You're heading for the town of Sattley, but don't follow the sign to Sattley at the junction with Calpine Road. Continue straight from Beckwourth Calpine Road onto Westside Road, and that will take you directly to the town. In the town, you turn left on 89 and get back together with the other routes. Because the miles on the two short routes are so close to being the same—25.2 for this route and 25.6 for





the other one where they meet in Sattley—I have only listed the balance of the mileage breakouts based on the other route. In any event, there are only a handful of turns from here on, so you'd be unlikely to get too lost.

Now, back to the other routes. We left them at the Railroad Museum in Portola... This is not a fancy railroad museum like the one in Sacramento (which I highly recommend, by the way). Rather, this is just a sprawling switching yard for the Union Pacific RR that has been filled, over the years, with more and more old trains...a vast, mothballed fleet of engines and rolling stock from all over the country. Nothing fancy...just a lot of trains. And perhaps it's inaccu-



rate to say “mothballed,” because many of the engines are still in good working order and can be seen rumbling around the yard or venturing out into the real, modern world. Unlike “look, but don't touch” museums, this one is very much a hands-on experience. We had a great time here, clambering all over the engines (above), sitting in the engineers' seats, pulling on levers, and just generally acting like a bunch of kids. No one tells you what you can't do (within reasonable limits, I suppose), and as I recall, no one even asks you for an admission fee, although donations are gratefully accepted.

Once you've had your fill of trains, it's time to stoke up your own boiler and head on down the line. A15 leaves town just beyond the museum and heads down the opposite side of the Feather River from Hwy 70. A15 is a dandy bicycle backroad. It climbs slightly after it leaves Portola, does a couple of miles of mostly level stuff on the top of the ridge, and then heads downhill in a hurry: first, two miles of gentle grade, and then two and a half miles of frisky, twisty free fall.

Right at the bottom of this snappy descent, A15 tees into Hwy 89 (at mile 13), and this is where the two routes diverge. The short route turns left and heads south on 89. Let's do that first. The first two miles on 89 are mostly flat, as the road crosses a wide meadow. Then you plunge into the forest and the road begins bucking up and down in a series of short, steep humps. This micro-roller coaster ride continues for a couple of miles, and then you settle in for a long, steady climb, gaining 1000' by the time you reach mile 20. After the 5441' summit, there is a saddle to a second, lower summit before you launch off in a fast, 2-mile descent through the trees, rolling out at the bottom into another broad, flat meadow. From here, it's a 3-mile run across the flat meadow to a junction with Hwy 49, where the long route rejoins.

This was my first take on a shorter, flatter option to the highland route. Later, on another visit to the area, I checked out the other short route listed earlier, through Sierra Valley. Looking at them both now, I think my preference would be for the Sierra Valley route. But because I have all the information for the route down Hwy 89 already prepared, I'm including it here. This route—south on 89—is really a compromise between the other two options. It has more climbing than the flattest route, but also more fun descending. Take your pick!

Back to A15... the long route turns right off A15 and heads north on 89, rolling out across the open meadow, just like the short route, but in the opposite direction. In this case, the flat run lasts for three miles, until you reach the turn-off for Gold Lake. This is called the Gold Lake Forest Highway, although I don't

believe the sign at the intersection says that. All I remember is a small National Forest sign saying Road 24, and a larger sign directing you to Gold Lake. This is the beginning of a major climb: a gain of 2100' in a little over seven miles. This is a modern road, with wide, smooth lanes, broad, sweeping curves, and no sudden changes in grade. I could make the same quibble about not being scaled to a bicycle that I made about that stretch of highway yesterday, but somehow, this road never made me feel that way, in spite of its modern, textbook engineering. Perhaps it's because the surrounding countryside is so gorgeous, or perhaps it's because I spent the whole climb in my own private purgatory, sweatin' like a pig and trying to make it to the top without a complete loss of dignity.

The second time I did this route I explored an alternate to this long climb. I didn't keep accurate notes on this detour, but I'm mentioning it anyway because I enjoyed it so much. About two miles into the climb—that is, after turning uphill off Hwy 89—there is a left turn onto a smaller road with signs pointing to Frazier Falls. My AAA maps call this



Gold Lake Road, as opposed to Gold Lake Forest Highway, which is the main road. I can't recall if there was a street sign on this corner that listed the road name, but the Frazier Falls sign is definitely there. Anyway, up you go, on a dinky, rather badly paved, very twisty, very remote road. It's about as quiet as it can be and absolutely gorgeous. Although it climbs just as much as the main road, I found it to be a more enjoyable climb because the road and the scenery around it were more interesting and more scaled to bike travel. Near the high point on this road, there is a well marked trail that follows a little creek (above) to Frazier Falls. The hike is a large fraction of a mile and is entirely paved. Bikes are not permitted on the trail though, so if you want to do the hike, which is very nice, to see the pretty waterfall, you'll need walking shoes and a place to secure your bike.

Back on the road, you encounter the only fly in the ointment for this otherwise delightful detour: the last couple of miles are unpaved, and some of this dirt and gravel section is pretty lumpy. It's a mildly uphill section, so the bad surface doesn't interrupt anything like a fun downhill, but it is rather heavy going for a few minutes. Nothing that can't be done on a road bike, but a bit of a chore.

Back to the basic route... The scenery is definitely hard to ignore, especially near the summit (right), as

you begin to pass great masses of naked granite—cliffs and monoliths—standing tall out of the trees. Gold Lake summit itself is nothing too remarkable... just a flattening out of the grade. But what lies ahead is very special indeed. There is an immediate descent of one mile (with the short access road to Gold Lake right at the bottom), and then a brief climb to a one-mile level stretch. Gold Lake is the biggest of all the small lakes clustered together in this region, but my personal favorites are along this level stretch: Goose Lake, Haven Lake, and Snag Lake... all just off the road to the right. They're all quite tiny, but each has a quiet, jewellike beauty, with the magnificent peaks of the Sierra Buttes (next page) reflected in their still waters. They're just visible from the road, but their special charms are mostly obscured. You'll have to get off your bike and walk a few yards through the trees to really see them. These lakes come up at around mile 26, which—coupled with the fact that you just completed a major climb—makes this an obvious spot for a regroup or rest stop.

After your lakeside reverie, it's time to shift gears—literally as well as figuratively—for just beyond the lakes, the road plummets off the mountain in a fantastic downhill flier, dropping over 1300' in five fast and furious miles. If you like going fast, you'll love this one. This descent is so smooth and easy, I found myself—in mid-descent—gazing off across the valley at the beautiful view in the most relaxed, nonchalant manner...something I rarely do while clocking over 45-mph. And that's when a few of my buddies came flying up from behind and blew past me like I was chained to a stump...power pancelining at something on the high side of 50-mph. The express-speed downhill thrills don't stop until the road tees into Hwy 49 at Bassetts.

There is a nice old cafe at Bassetts, where we ordered the biggest ice cream cones I have ever seen. I think this must be the only time in my life I could not finish a single-scoop







cone.

Now that you've hit the Hwy 49 junction, you have to remember how to pedal again. Hwy 49 is a legendary California road...the lifeline running the length of the gold country. If you turned west at Bassetts, you would soon be passing through the gold rush era towns of Downieville and Nevada City.\* But our route goes the other way...uphill toward 6701' Yuba Pass. It's seven miles from Bassetts to the pass and you'll gain 1300' over that stretch for an average grade of 3.5%...an easy, steady incline. This is great riding, for the wild Yuba River is never far away, splashing along on the right side of the road, keeping you entertained with its happy chatter and pretty curves. And speaking of pretty curves, just wait until you crest the pass and start down the other side...my, oh my! This descent is even more fun than the one from Gold Lake, dropping 1800' in seven sexy miles. Where the previous descent was all about high speed and hanging on for the ride, this one requires more in the way of handling skills. As it scrambles down the rocky mountainside, it twists itself up into a tangle of twitchy switchbacks and slithery s-bends. It's almost as convoluted and kinky as the demented drop you did a couple of days ago in Lassen.

Just as this mind-messing descent is petering out, you fly through the junction where Hwy 89 and the short route rejoin. By the time you hit the little village of Sattley at 26/46 miles, the road is crossing the wide, flat grasslands of the Sierra Valley. This is where the second, flatter short option rejoins. Sattley has a small store and might make a good spot for a regroup and munchie break. If you don't stop here, do it for sure in the next town five miles up the line: Sierraville, where there is a nice cafe. Since the junction with Hwy 89, the road has been carrying the dual designations of both 89 and 49. In Sierraville, 49 continues straight, but you turn right and follow the signs to Truckee on 89. One mile past Sierraville, the flat miles end and you have to get to work again. You're facing a 7.5-mile climb,

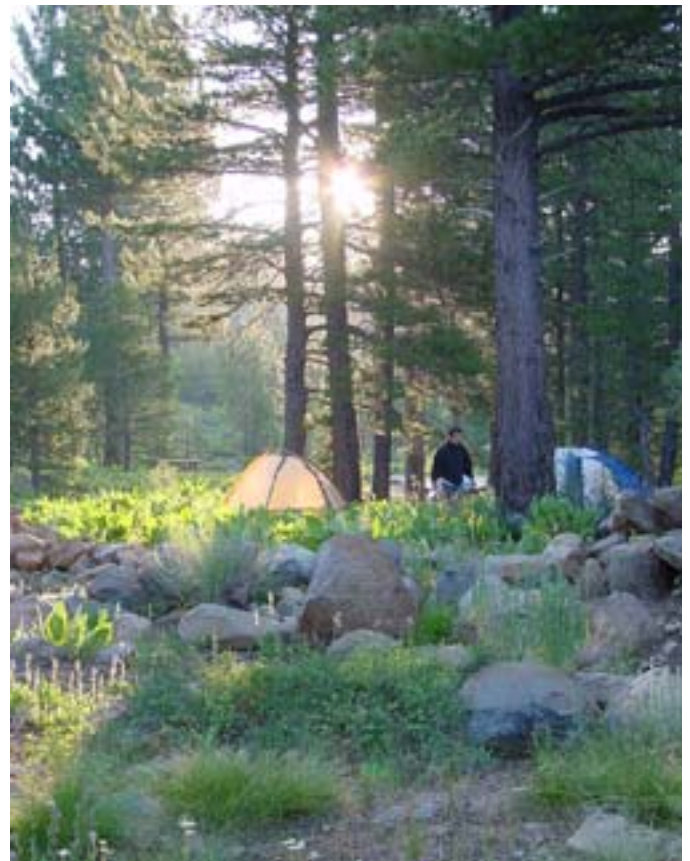
which will gain at least 1400' to its main summit. Those numbers are similar to the climb from Bassetts to Yuba Pass, but somehow, I think this climb is tougher, if for no other reason than that it comes later in the ride and you may be wearing down.

Scenery along the climb is typical Sierra forest, with the added bonus of a pretty creek dancing along beside the road much of the time. As the roads draw closer to Truckee and the Lake Tahoe area, there is the potential for traffic to start to build, with most of it being tourists. I wouldn't want to ride here on a weekend, but on a weekday it shouldn't be too bad.

Over the top of the highest summit, you get to blast downhill for most of five miles on a smooth run along the Little Truckee River before the road tilts uphill again. This is what I meant about the hills coming at you right up to the end. From here on—over the final 12 miles to the camp—the

roads tilt up and down repeatedly. There are four more climbs in those miles, each at least a mile in length, sometimes quite a bit more, and all with substantial elevation gain. They can be very wearing at the end of a long ride.

At mile 52/72, turn right off Hwy 89 onto Alder Creek Road. This very nice road skirts a large residential development outside of Truckee call Tahoe Donner. The Tahoe Donner owners' association maintains a campground on the edge of



their neighborhood, and that's our destination for the night (below). They have nice, modern, free showers and pleasant campsites, including a good group site at the top of the camp. Getting to the camp requires one last climb of three miles on Alder Creek Road.

### **\*Linking this tour to the Gold Country Tour**

If you plan to link this tour to the Gold Country Tour, you would turn right at Bassetts junction and head west on Hwy 49. This would mean missing the latter half of Day 5 and all of Day 6 on this tour though...not an ideal situation, in my opinion.

Simply put, you follow Hwy 49 until the turn for Nevada City and then work your way on local streets through that town and downhill to Grass Valley. Going all the way from today's ride start in Portola to Grass Valley would be a challenging ride: something on the order of 95 miles, with a lot of climbing. There are numerous Forest Service camps along Hwy 49—on the banks of the Yuba River—where you could break the journey up into two shorter chunks. I have ridden this section and can tell you it's a great ride...always pretty, and with some really fun de-



scents. But I haven't surveyed it in detail as a tour stage, so I'm unable to give you precise information on where to stay or how the miles break out.

### **Day 6: Alder Creek to South Lake Tahoe**

**55 miles, 3600' up, 3300' down**

**45 miles, 2200' up, 1900' down**

**Bonus miles: 15 miles, 1100' up and down**

Turn left out of the camp and head uphill on Alder Creek Road. The climb at the end of yesterday's stage continues for another mile or so, quite steeply, to a summit amidst the homes of the development, mostly widely scattered ski chalets. A left on Fjord Road leads to an immediate left onto Northwoods Blvd, the main artery through the Tahoe Donner tract. Northwoods descends over the next four miles. Sometimes it's almost level and sometimes, in

particular in the last mile, it's very steep. Warning signs on the road call it a 10% grade, and it's all of that...a real scorcher. You'll need to be awake on this one, because it ends abruptly at a stop sign at Donner Pass Road, the main road through Truckee.

Welcome back to civilization! This will be the most traffic and urban, commercial clutter you will have seen on the entire trip. Once you buy into the premise of riding to Lake Tahoe, you have to make your peace with a certain amount of congestion and development. Truckee is not Tahoe, but it serves as the gateway to Tahoe, and also as a very busy waystation on Interstate-80 between California and Nevada. Everything funnels through here, and cyclists needing to come this way have to reconcile themselves to being part of the mix. You may not like riding through this on a pleasure tour, but it's probably no worse than miles of roads in your home town or city which you ride along on your way to your favorite backroads or when cycle-commuting to work. In the case of Truckee, you're only in the bad stuff for a mile or two.

But before heading into Truckee, I want to discuss the bonus miles option on the day. This is a run up to Donner summit on Donner Pass Road. You'll note that the base miles for today's stage are quite low: 45 or 55 miles. Not a bad thing, those low miles, in light of how hard yesterday's stage was and how hard tomorrow's stage may be. But still, if you want a little more bulk in your diet today, consider this add-on. When the main routes turn left on Donner Pass Road, turn right instead and head for Donner Lake. The first mile or so works you through a zone of commercial crud around the I-80 interchange...not great, but unavoidable. After that, you have about three flat miles along the north shore of the pretty lake, with a not-too-wonderful blend of residential and commercial development along the lake...sort of a microcosm of what you'll see later at Lake Tahoe...resort cabins and the occasional store. But all of these first four miles are just leading up to the payoff: the climb up to the summit, the view from the top, and the descent back to the lake.

The climb begins just as you leave the lake, and right away the scenery improves, or at least the development tapers off abruptly, leaving you in a wild and scenic setting. The climb gains 1100' in 3.5 miles. I would never call any of it brutally steep, but it is a substantial climb, no question. But worth it. Definitely! As you climb, the landscape becomes increasingly extravagant in its display of soaring granite cliffs, polished moraines and house-sized boulders... quintessential high Sierra geology that would look right at home in Yosemite. At every turn in the road (and there are many turns) you get better and better panoramas back down the mountainside to Donner Lake. About a half-mile below the summit, there is an official vista point (above),





and I suggest you stop here. Either make this the goal of your climb or stop first, enjoy the view, and then go on the last bit to the summit. There is no view at the summit...just a level spot before the road heads west down the other side of the mountains. And you won't want to stop at the vista point once you've started back down the hill. You'll be having too much fun with the descent, which is a wild one...3.5 miles of maximum excitement. So by all means, do stop at the vista point on your way up. The view down to the lake is spectacular, as is the view to all the surrounding high granite peaks and walls. There is also a great view to the elegant, curving bridge that leaps a chasm just uphill from the vista point. The larger-than-life landscape along this three-mile section makes this an epic road. The flat miles at the bottom of the hill may not be anything special—although riding along Donner Lake is certainly pleasant—but this high country adventure more than justifies the miles it took to get up here.

Back to the main routes... One half mile after turning left (east) on Donner Pass Road, you turn right on Hwy 89, scoot under I-80, and head south for Lake Tahoe. Less than a mile after turning onto 89—still in the Truckee zone—the long and short routes part company. The short route stays on 89 and heads directly to Tahoe. Hwy 89 runs alongside the Truckee River (above)—Lake Tahoe's outflow—all the way to the lake. The fact that you'll be traveling upstream along a river should tell you that this will be mostly an uphill run, but the climbing is about as gentle as it is possible for an uphill to be. You gain around 400' in the 13 miles to the lake. The river is beautiful and I'd call this a great stretch if it carried a little less traffic. However, for

the first 11 miles on this stretch, there are immense shoulders on the road—up to 12 feet across—that easily accommodate bike travel. In spite of the traffic, I can recommend this stretch without reservation.

At mile 17.7, you come to a junction with the access road to Squaw Valley, the huge ski complex that hosted the Winter Olympics in 1960. This marks the beginning of an excellent bike path that allows cyclists to get off Hwy 89 and to ride peacefully along the bank of the river (below). You have to cross to the left across the intersection to pick up the trail head. This path extends, in one form or another, all the way to Sugar Pine State Park, near Meeks Bay, half way down the west side of Lake Tahoe, approximately 15 miles further along our route. It provides cyclists with an alternative to the shoulder of the road. The local folks have clearly spent a lot of time and money planning and developing this path. It's in good condition and is an above-average example of its sort. The first section, from

Squaw Valley to Tahoe City, is definitely worth using, because it is wide and not too technical, because the views from the path are better than from the road, and because Hwy 89 narrows and loses those big, comfy shoulders just beyond Squaw.

As for the balance of the path that runs beside the highway along the west shore of the lake, you'll have to decide where your priorities lie. It is not a place to hammer. It is often tight and twisty and dipsy-doodly on a scale that is too constricted for fast riding. Worst of all, the path crosses back and forth across the highway a few times and also crosses many side streets as they tee into the highway, and at each one, cyclists are expected to stop...often at one-block intervals. Anyway... it's not great, but if you're unlucky enough to find yourself here on a day with extra heavy traffic, you can escape. Perhaps the key to having a good time on the path is to call a 15-mile time-out over this section. Dial it back for awhile and just relax and enjoy







things at a quieter, more sedate pace. (This is exactly what we did when we rode here.)

But I've gotten way ahead of myself here. I need to go all the way back to Truckee and look at the long route. It turns left off 89 in Truckee and heads right into the heart of old town, downtown Truckee, which is a moderately interesting district, if you're into small-town tourist stuff. Right in the heart of downtown, you turn right and head south on Hwy 267. In theory, this road to Tahoe—over Brockway summit—carries less traffic than 89. No doubt traffic counts on the roads will bear this out. For cyclists, the reality is that both are quite busy. You climb briefly leaving town and then descend a long, easy grade before beginning the big ascent on Brockway. This is a long, steady climb, gaining about 1500' in a little over six miles to the 7179' summit. Scenery on the climb is mostly ho-hum: lots of forest. The downhill to Kings Beach on the north shore of Lake Tahoe is a screamer: almost 1000' down in a little over three miles. Bold descenders will easily top 50-mph on this run.

Your arrival in Kings Beach means a return to traffic and commercial clutter. A local group up here puts on an annual bike ride around the lake that they bill as "the most beautiful ride in the world." Quite a claim! Even the most shameless promoter in the world wouldn't make such a claim without some grounding in reality, and it's true that many parts of the journey around Lake Tahoe are very pretty, and a

few stretches are absolutely spectacular. But there are other sections—and the north shore is one—that are decidedly mediocre. I know many cyclists who love to ride around this lake, and who take the assorted stretches of built-up, tacky trash in stride. I guess I shouldn't be too cranky about it, but I have high standards for these tours, and I'm not convinced this part of the stage measures up. However, we don't really have a choice if we expect to get to the nicer parts of the lakeshore further south. I will also grudgingly concede that, as tacky trash goes, the stuff along our route is better than average. At least most of the little restaurants and gift shops have been designed to blend in at least a little with the region's traditional rustic, log-and-boulder, mountain-lodge look.

The road around the northwest corner of Lake Tahoe is mostly level, with a few rollers and one or two small hills of over one hundred feet. Usually you're riding past either commercial or residential developments, but from time to time, vistas open up that allow clear views over the beautiful lake (left). Seven miles on Hwy 28 along the north shore bring the long route riders to Tahoe City, the point where Hwy 89 hits the lake after its run along the Truckee River. Now both routes head south on 89 along the west side of the lake. If you'd like to see some really big trout—I mean, really, really big trout—stop on the bridge where 89 crosses the Truckee as it flows out of the lake. Fish congregate just below the spillway to feed, and no fishing is allowed here. The pool below the spillway is like a piscatorial old boys club, and the trout lounging around below are positively obese. Fisherman come here to gaze wistfully into the waters and dream.

Once the routes rejoin in Tahoe City, conditions for the first few miles on 89 along the west shore are similar to those along the north shore: a mix of residential and commercial with a decent ration of trees and waterfront views. Traffic can be heavy, especially on weekends. That's







when the bike paths might start to look more appealing.

South of Meeks Bay, things improve. There are still some residential neighborhoods, but the commercial clutter fades away and it all begins to feel more like a backroad sort of ride again. The level/rolling road finally ramps up into a real climb, leaving the lakeshore and gaining around 700' in two miles. You're now riding through D.L. Bliss State Park, with Emerald Bay State Park to follow. Together, these two large parks have preserved a section of Lake Tahoe shoreline that is as grand and spectacular as anything on this tour...and that's saying a lot. If the entire lake front—or even most of it—looked like this, I might agree with the promoter's "most beautiful" claim. This is sensational stuff, and from a cyclist's perspective, one of the best things about it is how the road is integrated into the rugged landscape.

Most of the climb is in the trees, and there is little hint of the amazing vistas that will open up on the summit, but once you pop out onto the top of the ridge, the whole lake is spread out below, with exquisite Emerald Bay doing a star turn at center stage (previous page). You simply must stop at one, if not all, of the available vista points in the next few miles to take in this lovely prospect. You need to stop because the scenery is so compelling, and also because you really shouldn't be rubbernecking while negotiating this technical descent (above). I doubt there's another "major" highway in the state that has such tight, steep contours. You have to admire the audacity of the planners and builders who first envisioned a route over this rocky promontory, and who then managed to

hang this tiny road on the side of the sheer cliff. It's quite a piece of work.

There are several hairpin turns stitched together to make the whole thing work, but one stands out vividly for me: you come flying downhill on a road that's tightrope along a tiny, granite spine. You can see water dead ahead and off both sides of the narrow point, and the road ahead of you appears to simply fly straight off into space. It really does look like the end of a mammoth ski jump. Then, at the last second, you see the road snap around to the right and double back on itself to slither down the cliff. Spend even a few extra seconds admiring the view at this juncture and for you, the road very likely *will* turn into a ski jump.

Lake Tahoe is the largest lake in California. I know... the Salton Sea has a slightly larger surface area, but Tahoe is so much deeper, and holds so much more water, that I don't want to hear any hairsplitting on the subject. Someone figured out that if you could take all the water in this lake and spread it out evenly over California, it would cover the entire state in several inches of water. And while the local planners and environmentalists bemoan the fact that the lake is not as clear and pure as it used to be, from the vantage points overlooking Emerald Bay, it still looks like a sapphire jewel in an exquisite setting of granite peaks. This breathtaking little corner of the lake makes all those busy, congested miles worthwhile.

The corkscrew descent from high above Emerald Bay is one mile long, ending at a bridge over impressive Eagle Falls, where I urge you to stash your bike, take off your shoes, and wade around in the pretty pools above the falls. It's a lovely spot. But wait: there's more! Like a band brought back on stage for one more encore, this stage has one more nice downhill for you. After a one-mile climb—to another great vista point—you're treated to one last, curling, slashing descent of three miles. When you bottom out at





you come to a rustic neighborhood in the trees. Although you'll be back on Tahoe Mountain Road in a minute, for some reason, it never was completed all the way through here. You dink around on a couple of little residential streets—see detailed inset on map—following the signs to South Lake Tahoe, and eventually end up going downhill on Tahoe Mountain again. All this happens in a short space: by mile 4.4, you're over the mountain and through the woods, and have arrived at Lake Tahoe Boulevard. Stop following the signs to South Lake Tahoe at this point (which would be a left). Instead, go right and follow the boulevard as it rolls up and down through mildly suburban neighborhoods. Bear right as it flows into North Upper Truckee Road and follow that similar road to a junction with

the lakeshore, just two miles remain to Camp Richardson Resort, today's destination (below). If you look sharp, you can pick up another section of bike path along the left side of the road for these last miles.

This is a private camp, with hundreds of campsites scattered over 120 acres on both sides of the road. They do a lot of RV business, but also handle a huge volume of tent campers. They can make special arrangements for groups, and rates for groups are negotiable, but it's unlikely any special group discount will kick in for fewer than several dozen campers. They also have cabins and hotel accommodations, a marina, a beautiful beach, hiking trails, a store, bar and grill, ice cream parlor, gift shops, and so on. And of course, showers...very much a full-service resort. It is located smack on the southern end of the lake, just a few miles from all the glitz and glitter of South Lake Tahoe, with its casinos and dancing girls, over the Nevada line.

Hwy 50.

Jog left on 50 for just a few yards and then peel off to the right on South Upper Truckee Road...at mile 8. It's almost straight across the highway. This is where you encounter the bonus miles option for the day. Just after turning onto South Upper Truckee Road, there is a right turn onto Meyers Road that marks the beginning of an uphill spur that eventually goes to Echo Lakes, well up on the mountainside across Hwy 50. I have not done this road myself, and I usually do not recommend roads I haven't at least driven. But this one was suggested to me by folks whose judgement about cycling roads I trust, so I pass it along here. I don't actually think this day needs any bulking up, but a few of you out there might feel that frisky, and if you do, here's your option. I'm not sure it's any more spectacular or pleasant than the ten-mile out-&-

## Day 7: South Lake Tahoe to Jenkinson Lake

**72 miles, 5800' up, 8600' down**  
**Bonus miles: 10 miles, 1300' up and down**

From Camp Richardson Resort, you have to double back on Hwy 89 for just over half a mile to Fallen Leaf Road. Fallen Leaf Road heads south toward Fallen Leaf Lake, climbing very gradually through a mix of forest and meadow on patchy pavement. Our route turns off and climbs into the hills before you see the little lake, but you can add as much as ten miles to the day by continuing past our turn-off on an out-&-back along the shore of the lake. (That is not the designated bonus miles option.)

Turn left on Tahoe Mountain Road and begin climbing more steeply—for just a half-mile—until







back along Fallen Leaf Lake. On paper, they both look inviting, or at least they would on a day that was not already fairly long and challenging.

Back to the basic route... South Upper Truckee starts out as a fairly wide, striped street through a mix of rural residential properties and open woods (above). Before too long though—at mile 12—it narrows to one lane, loses its stripes, and becomes a wildly twisting mountain track, climbing very steeply up through the forest, gaining almost 500' in one, tight, switchbacking mile. In spite of the severity of the climb, this is a really nice section, and you'll be diverted from the hard work by the great scenery. In particular, at one hairpin turn near the top, a lovely waterfall plunges into a pool just a yard or two from the road before splashing off down the hill. (Note: I wrote that about the waterfall after visiting here in the year of el Niño, with lots of rain. In a more recent visit, in a drier year, the waterfall was reduced to a wimpy trickle.)

At mile 13, you come to a junction with our old friend Hwy 89. Almost directly across the highway from South Upper Truckee is a little road that winds on deeper into the forest. Cross the highway and take this road. I don't know if it has a name. There is no sign on the corner and no name listed on any map I've ever seen. Perhaps it's just a continuation of South Upper Truckee. In any event, it goes where we want to go, it's decently paved, and it's more interesting, prettier, and quieter than being on Hwy 89. And in spite of the fact that it winds around in the woods for awhile, it's actually a bit of a shortcut, nipping a tenth or two off the day's total. It finally returns to the highway, and now you turn left and continue uphill toward Luther Pass, climbing steadily, if not too steeply, for more than a mile. At the end of the ascent, you roll out into a beautiful meadow with pretty little Grass Lake in

its basin (previous page). This is not the summit, although it seems as if it should be. You ride along the meadow for most of two more miles, with a brief climb at the far end before hitting the official 7740' high point at 17.4 miles. From the top of Luther, you get to enjoy almost five miles of fast, non-technical descending to Pickett's Junction, where Hwy 88 flows down from Carson Pass and joins 89. Turn right on 88.

Now you're in for one of the bigger climbs of the tour: uphill to the high point of the week at 8573' Carson Pass (just a few feet higher than your summit on Lassen Peak a few days ago). The climb nets 2500' of gain in a little less than nine miles. Some of it is very gentle and some is good solid climbing. None of it is brutal, except in the cumulative sense, coming as it does at the end of a week of riding. The road is cut along the

side wall of the canyon, carved out of the soaring granite face, and scenery is everything you would expect it to be this high in the Sierra, with wide, sweeping vistas overlooking Red Lake (left) and the Carson River, down in the rocky chasm of Faith Valley.

Once over the summit, you begin a series of downhills that will fill most of the rest of today's dance card. There are several more little uphill of around 100 feet each, and one more significant climb, but from here on, you'll be doing more descending than anything else. The first drop is two miles long and spills out along the shore of beautiful Caples Lake, a classic rock-ribbed Sierra lake (below). After riding along the shore of the pretty lake for a mile or so, there is another brief descent, and equally brief climb, and then a real screamer of a downhill—800' in about three miles—to Silver Lake. This lake is every bit as pretty as Caples, but is not quite as close to the road and so not quite so spectacular as a roadside attraction. It marks the beginning of the last substantial climb of the day: three miles up from the lake (at 7196') to a summit that is marked on maps as Tragedy Springs (7900'). After that, the highway rolls along





the top of the ridge for three or four miles on a nearly level or slightly downhill run until the right turn onto Mormon Emigrant Trail, the road that will take the tour to its conclusion at Jenkinson Lake.

The turn off from 88 at mile 46.6 is at almost 7800' of elevation and Jenkinson Lake is at 3471', so you know these final 25 miles are going to include a lot of downhill. But as you can see from the elevation profile, there are up to half a dozen spots where the downhill excitement is interrupted by small climbs or by flats through which you will have to pedal. I had heard what an awesome downhill this was for years before I got around to doing it, and I admit I was a little disappointed when I got here and discovered these uphill bits at regular intervals all the way down the mountain. Nobody had mentioned them! But this is a little like a spoiled child crying about only getting most of the candy instead of all of the candy. It really is a great descent, and a great way to end the tour.

Scenery on the downhill is mostly forest of pine, fir, and, as you reach the lower elevations, more and more broadleaf trees. There are some panoramic vistas, but mostly you're enclosed in the tree cover. But who has time to look at the view on a descent like this? Pavement is generally good. The grade is usually steep enough to make it exciting, but never so steep as to make it tiring or extreme, nor are the twists and turns overly convoluted. There are places that will require braking and close attention to detail, but for the most part, you can just let it run and enjoy the ride.

Jenkinson Lake (right) is a reservoir surrounded almost entirely by Sly Park, an extensive regional park, with day use areas, many overnight campsites, and a handful of group sites. The group sites

are off by themselves on the side of the lake you reach first, right at the bottom of the descent. If you're heading for the main camp, you have to climb briefly on Sly Park Road to the main park entrance, then descend along the lakeshore to wherever you plan to end up. It's a decent campground, similar to a typical state park layout. They do not have showers, so a plunge in the lake will have to do for freshening up after the ride.

As this is fairly close to Sacramento and only a few hours from the Bay Area, some of you may choose to do what we did: jump in the lake at the end of the ride, have a quick picnic, and then head home in the late afternoon. The photo below is of the reservable day use group area, which we used for our splash-n-go picnic. If you have a further distance to go to get

home, you can stay in either the main camp or—if you have a bigger group—in the group sites. One warning about the group sites: they can be reserved up to one full year in advance, and dates on weekends in the busy summer months will be locked up almost instantly. If you want one of these sites, you need to jump on it the moment your date rolls around. Reservations for individual campsites must be for two nights minimum. If you only plan to stay one night, this might be irksome. You can take your chances on finding a vacant site on your arrival, or you can pay for the two nights and just figure it's the cost you pay for the peace of mind of knowing your site is there for you.

Or perhaps you can skip no-shower Sly Park altogether and drive to one of the many motels or inns near Placerville, about a half-hour's drive from the lake. This is prime Gold Country tourist territory, and any web search will turn up dozens of places to stay in the region.





## Linking the Northern Peaks Tour and the Three Parks Tour.

Earlier, I discussed the possibility of linking this tour with the Gold Country Tour. Now I'd like to consider the notion of linking this tour with the Three Parks Tour, which explores Yosemite, Kings Canyon, and Sequoia National Parks and all of the southern Sierra.

I couldn't offer precise information on the Gold Country link. (I know how I would do it, but I haven't had a chance to do the field work to precisely nail down all the details.) However, I have done that research on connecting to the Three Parks Tour, and some of that information may be of interest to you even if you don't plan to piggyback the trips. You could just add the extra days to this tour.

The Three Parks Tour starts at Twin Lakes, nine miles up from Hwy 395, near the town of Bridgeport. To get there from the south shore of Lake Tahoe by bike-friendly roads would take around 112 miles, with a good deal of serious climbing. That's more than I'm willing to propose as a single day's ride, so that means breaking it up into two, more reasonable stages. After much study, I've decided the best campground for a layover is Grovers Hot Springs State Park, near Markleeville. Unfortunately, Grovers isn't anything like midway between the two tours. It's 37 miles from Tahoe and 75 miles from Twin Lakes. You could ride it that way and think of the short day as a quasi-rest day...which you may need on this proposed, two-week mega tour.

Another option worth considering is skipping the overnight at Tahoe and tacking the 37-mile ride onto the final day of this tour. Combined with the 45-mile short route, it would make an 81-mile day with around 5000' of climbing. (It's one mile less than 37 + 45 because the road south takes off before you get to Camp Richardson.) That's a challenging ride, but well within the limits I try to set for my tour stages. This would save a day of your time and would also save you all the expenses associated with that day: the Camp Richardson fees and the cost of a day's worth of meals, rental fees on vehicles, etc.

There are six days on the basic Three Parks Tour. The tour packet also includes suggestions for an off-the-bike layover day in Yosemite Valley and/or a layover day in Kings Canyon, as well as a loop day near Bass Lake. Ending the Northern Sierra Tour at Grovers and adding in the link day to Twin Lakes would make it a total trip of 13 days, and if you add in the rest day in Yosemite Valley, 14 days. (That rest day might start looking really attractive after nine days of cycling.) That would leave you two days for travel...one each at the beginning and end of a two-week, three-weekend cycle.

Putting these two tours together would make for an absolutely epic adventure...a journey of a lifetime. It would essentially be a tour down the entire length of California's spectacular, mountainous backbone. 16 days total, 13 riding days, 900 miles, and 64,000' of elevation gain... Quite an intriguing idea, isn't it? Add in the Bass Lake loop day, and a few of the bonus miles options, and you just might top 1000 miles for the two weeks. Epic indeed!

## Link day 1: Lake Tahoe to Grovers Hot Springs 37 miles, 2900' up, 3150' down

Follow the directions for the beginning of Day 7 until you get to Pickett's Junction.

Turn left at Pickett's Junction and follow the combined 88/89 east for more downhill fun, descending Woodford's Canyon along the banks of the Carson River. At around mile 26, Hwy 88 continues straight, but you turn right on 89 and follow the signs to Markleeville. Not too long after the turn, you have to start climbing again, but this is a small bump compared to Luther...just a few hundred feet up to the top of the hill at Turtle Rock Park (official start/finish area for the Death Ride). Keep going straight, and enjoy one last, zippy downhill to the town of Markleeville... a fast three-mile plunge down a rocky gorge.

Just in the center of town, you turn right on Hot Springs Road, following the signs to Grovers Hot Springs State Park (below). This pretty road starts out almost level, but soon tilts up into a steady, but not too brutal climb to the park. There are even a few level and downhill bits thrown in along the way. Grovers is a state-of-the-art state park, with four dozen regular campsites but no group sites. One potentially troublesome detail: although the camp is open all year, they stop taking reservations for campsites after



the first week in September. This could get a little tricky if you plan this tour for after Labor Day, which is when I recommed doing the Three Parks Tour. The camp is pleasantly situated in a hilly forest, but the real attraction here is the hot springs, open to park users for a fee.

## Link day 2: Grovers Hot Springs to Twin Lakes 75 miles, 5000' up, 4000' down

This link day route is very straightforward. In the simplest terms, you head south on Hwy 89 from Markleeville until it hits Hwy 395. Turn right and head south on 395 until the town of Bridgeport. Turn right in Bridgeport and take Twin Lakes Road to Doc and Al's Resort, the camp at the start of the Three Parks Tour.

That stretch of 89 includes climbing Monitor Pass (below), one of the more notorious Sierra summits...a standard item on the Death Ride. From Markleeville (5501'), you climb a little alongside the Carson River in the five miles leading to the beginning of the Monitor ascent, and then you climb steadily for eight miles to the 8314' summit. Like most Sierra passes, the climb is long but rarely steep. The descent to Hwy 395 on the eastern side of the mountains is reckoned to be one of the fastest, wildest rides around, dropping over 2200' in ten miles.

You'll be on 395 for over 40 miles, and you'll climb—in rolling increments—from a low point of around 5000' near the base of the Monitor descent to a high point of 7519' atop Devil's Gate summit, about 12 miles north of Bridgeport. Over those final 12 miles, you descend over 1000', sometimes quite speedily but more often on long, nearly level roll-outs. Most of the run along 395 is okay, with nice scenery and the Walker River running beside the highway for many miles. But the highway carries a little too much traffic to be absolutely ideal. The landscape is typical of the Eastern Sierra: everything a little drier and rockier, and the

tree cover a little thinner, than on the western side of the mountains. There are three little towns along 395: Topaz, Coleville, and Walker. All three are fairly marginal as towns go, but you should be able to pick up some food and water in at least one of them if you need it.

The run up to Twin Lakes starts out level and then climbs at a moderate grade to the resort. Doc & Al's is a private RV resort which also has little cabins and an area for tent camping. There is more detailed information about this camp, Twin Lakes, and everything that follows in the Three Parks Tour packet.

### • Details •

#### Day 0 (Mount Shasta):

Mt. Shasta KOA  
900 N. Mt. Shasta Blvd.  
Mt. Shasta City, CA 96067

Reservations 800-562-3617

#### Camp fees:

Individual site (two people)	\$17.90
Group rate (per person)	\$5.50

Camp facilities: restrooms, showers, laundry, swimming pool, snack bar, games.

#### Nearby lodging (in Mt. Shasta City):

Alpine Lodge Motel	916-926-3145
Mountain Air Lodge	916-926-3411
Pine Needles Motel	916-926-4811
Strawberry Valley Inn (B&B)	916-926-2052
Swiss Holiday Lodge	916-926-3446
The Tree House Best Western	916-926-3101

#### Nearby restaurants

Lily's	916-926-3372
Michael's	916-926-5288
Serge's	916-926-1276
Tree House Restaurant	916-926-3101

#### Day 1 (Burney Falls):

McArthur-Burney Falls Memorial State Park  
24898 Hwy 89  
Burney, CA 96013

Open all year. 128 individual sites, 2 hike-&-bike sites. All reservations through Park.Net.

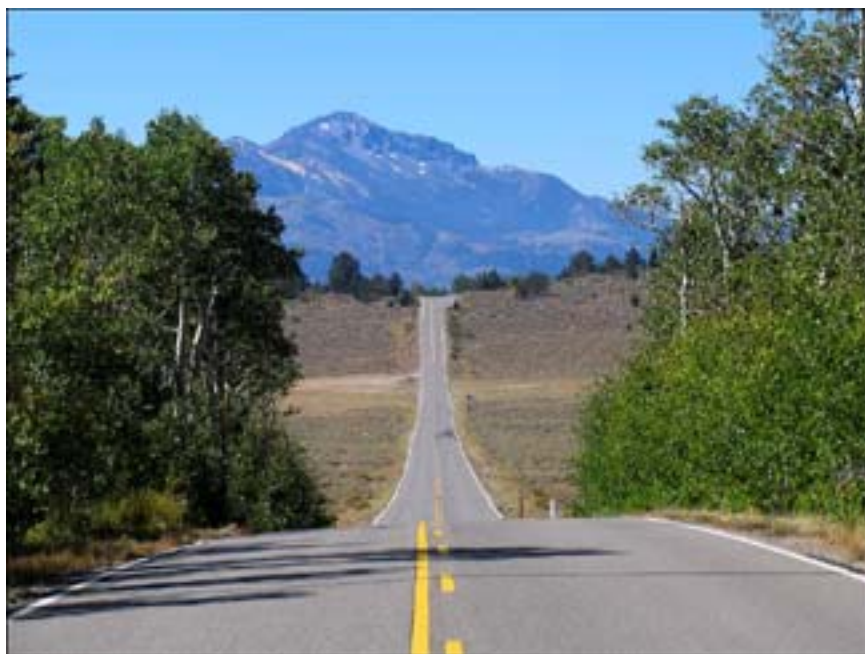
Local rangers	530-335-2777
Park.Net	800-444-7275

#### Camp fees:

Individual site (8 people max)	\$16.00
Park.Net service charge (per site)	\$7.50
Hike-&-Bike site	\$3.00

#### Camp facilities:

Showers, nature trails, store, waterfalls,





swimming.

There are no nearby motels or restaurants.

**Day 0,1 (McArthur, Fall River alternate):**

Inter-Mountain Fairground of Shasta County  
PO Box 10, McArthur, CA 96056

Dennis Hoffman, Manager

530-336-5695

530-336-6845 (fax)

Several camping areas on shady lawns within fairgrounds. Showers and large barbecues. The Inter-Mountain Fair of Shasta County is on Labor Day weekend...not a good time to camp here. Camping fees negotiable...approx \$3.00 per person. Reservations accepted up to a year in advance.

There are no nearby motels.

**Day 2 (Lassen Volcanic National Park):**

Lassen Volcanic National Park  
PO Box 100, Mineral, CA 96063

530-595-4444

Website: [www.nps.gov/lava](http://www.nps.gov/lava)

Six camps in park operate on a first-come, first-served basis, including our choice, Summit Lake Camp. The Lost Creek group camp may be reserved by calling 530-595-4444, x5155 or 5151. There are seven group sites at Lost Creek.

Camp fees:

Individual site (6 people max)	\$12-14.00
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Group site (10 minimum, 30 maximum)	\$45.00
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Camp facilities: piped water, flush toilets, nature trails, swimming (at Summit Lake); showers, store (at Manzanita Lake).

There are no nearby motels or restaurants.

**Day 3 (Lake Almanor):**

Lake Cove Resort & Marina

3584 Hwy 147

Lake Almanor, CA 96137

530-284-7697

Camp fees:

Individual site (4 people max)

\$16.06

Group rates negotiable.

Camp facilities: showers, store, swimming, laundry.

Bike shop:

Bodfish Bicycles, 152 Main St., Chester

530-258-2338

There are no nearby motels or restaurants, but there are many not too far away around Lake Almanor.

**Day 4 (Portola):**

Feather River RV Park

PO Box 1355

71326 Hwy 70

Portola, CA 96122

Jerry & Leslie, owners, managers

888-836-2183 (toll free)

Open all year. 32 RV sites and 36 tent sites on 20 wooded acres.

Camp fees:

Individual tent site

\$15.00

Group rates negotiable.

Camp facilities: showers, laundry, swimming pool, barbecues, game room, playground, meeting room.

There are no nearby motels are restaurants but there are several of each in Portola, five miles east.

**Day 5 (Alder Creek):**

Tahoe Donner Association

Manager's office

530-587-9462

Open May through September. 42 sites, some with RV connections. Group site for up to 50.

Camp fees:

Individual sites

\$16.00

With hook-ups

\$23.00

Group camp

\$??

Camp facilities: Flush toilets, showers (free), laundry, assorted game courts, barbecues.

There are many motels and restaurants in Truckee, five miles to the south.

**Day 6 (Lake Tahoe):**

Camp Richardson Resort

PO Box 9028

So. Lake Tahoe, CA 96158

800-544-1801

Hundreds of RV and tent sites, as well as cabins, on 120 wooded acres on the south shore of Lake



Tahoe.

Camp fees:

Individual site (two tents) \$17-19.00

Group rates negotiable.

Camp facilities: showers, nature trails, swimming, a marina, shops, restaurants, store.

There are many restaurants and motels nearby and scattered all around Lake Tahoe.

#### **Day 7 (Jenkinson Lake):**

Sly Park Recreation Area

PO Box 577

Pollock Pines, CA 95726

Managed by the El Dorado Irrigation District

530-644-2545 (park)

530-644-2792 (office, reservations)

530-644-1003 (fax)

slypark@eid.org

159 individual campsites in a hilly, wooded, lakeshore setting, some with RV connections. Five group sites.

Camp fees:

Individual site \$15.00

Premium site (hook-ups) \$20.00

Extra vehicle (not bicycle) \$9.00

Group site \$110.00-150.00

Group Day Use Picnic Area

\$65.00

Individual Day Use (per vehicle...not bike)

\$6.00

Reservation fee

\$7.00

Camp facilities: swimming in lake, bathrooms, trails, fire pits.

There are no motels or restaurants immediately adjacent to the park, but there are many of both in Placerville, approximately 15 miles west.

#### **Link day 1 (Grovers Hot Springs):**

Groves Hot Springs State Park

PO Box 188

Markleeville, CA 96120

76 campsites in a hilly, wooded setting. Reserved through the state park's booking service, Park.Net. No reservations 9/7-5/14.

Park.Net 800-444-7275

Camp fees:

Individual site \$16.00

Reservation fee \$7.50

Camp facilities: showers, nature trails, hot springs.

There are no nearby motels or restaurants, although there are some places to eat in Markleeville.

#### **Link Day 2 (Twin Lakes):**

Doc and Al's Robinson Creek Cabins

Twin Lakes Road (8 miles SW of Bridgeport)

PO Box 266

Bridgeport, CA 93517

619-932-7051

Open late April through October. 34 tent/RV sites. No reservations. Groups accommodated.

Camp facilities: flush toilets, piped water, fire pits, showers, laundry.

Camp fees:

Individual site (two people) \$13.00

Each additional person (up to six total per site) \$2.00

(For a group that works out to \$3.50 per head.) \$7.50

Nearby lodging/food (in Bridgeport):

Best Western Ruby Inn 760-932-7241

The Cain House B&B 760-932-7040

Silver Maple Inn 760-932-7383

Walker River Lodge 760-932-7021

There are several restaurants in Bridgeport.



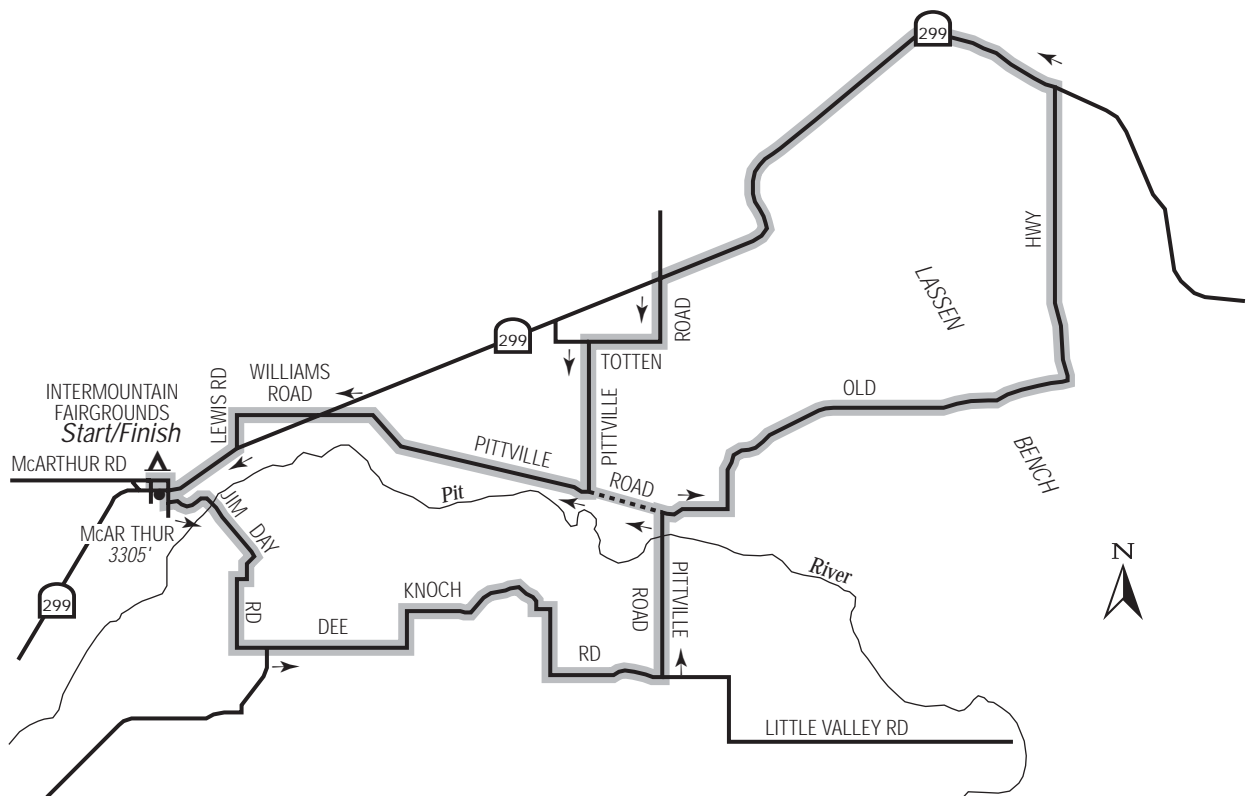


# The Northern Peaks Tour

## Prologue: Pittville-Lassen Bench Loop

22 miles or 12 miles

MILE	DIR	ROAD	COMMENTS
0.0	L	A Street	Leave Fairgrounds.
0.1	R	Main Street	Cross Hwy 299
0.3	L	Jim Day Road	
2.0	S	Dee Knoch Road	Jim Day turns into Dee Knoch.
5.7	L	Pittville Road	
6.9	R	Old Highway	Or left on Pittville Road for shortcut.
12.5	L	Hwy 299	High point of ride: up on the Lassen Bench.
16.4	L	Pittville-Totten Road	At "Pittville Little Valley" sign.
17.5	L		Bear left on Pittville-Totten Rd.
18.5	R	Pittville Road	Shortcut rejoins.
20.5	S	Williams Road	Cross 299 to new road.
21.1	L	Lewis Road	
21.4	R	Hwy 299	
22.0	R	Main Street	In town of McArthur.
22.1	L	A Street	
22.2	R	Into Fairgrounds	Finish



# The Northern Peaks Tour

## Day 1: Fall River Valley-Clark Creek Loop

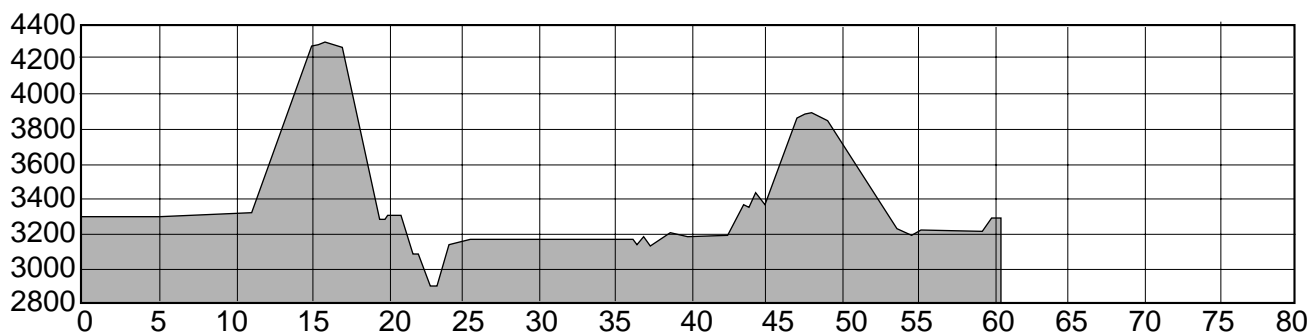
60 miles, 3000' up, 3000' down

66 miles, 3100' up, 3100' down

Bonus miles: 12 miles, 500' up and down

MILE	DIR	ROAD	COMMENTS
0.0	R	A Street	Leave Fairgrounds in McArthur (3305').
0.1	S	McArthur Road (A19)	
5.0	R	McArthur Road	Town of Glenburn (3315').
11.7	S		Town of Dana (3340'). Begin long climb.
16.8	L	Hwy 89	
24.1	R	Clark Creek Road	Easy to miss this turn!
26.6	S		Clark Creek Lodge.
27.8	R	(optional)	Pit 3 Powerhouse bonus miles out-&-back.
	S		Pit River Dam (★).
30.0	S		Hike to Burney Falls (★).
32.3	R	Hwy 89	
36.6	L	Hwy 299	
38.8	R	Cassel Road	
42.8	L	Cassel Fall River Road	Town of Cassel (3200'). Begin long climb.
54.5*	R	Dee Knoch Road	Just before bridge into Fall River Mills. Long route diverges.
58.3	L	Jim Day Road	
60.0	R	Main Street	Town of McArthur. Cross Hwy 299.
60.2	L	A Street	
60.3	R	Into Fairgrounds	Finish
*Long route:			
54.5	S	Cassel Fall River Road	Stay on Cassel Fall River Road into Fall River.
54.8	L	Bridge Street	Short, steep uphill to Hwy 299.
55.3	S	Glenburn Road	Cross 299 to Glenburn Road.
61.0	R	McArthur Road	Town of Glenburn.
65.9	S	A Street (in McArthur)	McArthur Rd bears right. You go straight on A St.
66.0	L	Into Fairgrounds	Finish

Bonus miles: Out-&-back to Pit 3 Powerhouse along the bank of the Pit River.





Day 1: Fall River-Clark Creek Loop  
60 miles, 3000' up, 3000' down  
66 miles, 3100' up, 3100' down  
Bonus miles: 12 miles, 500' up and down

60 miles, 3000' up, 3000' down

66 miles, 3100' up, 3100' down

Bonus miles: 12 miles, 500' up and down

Map of the Shasta National Forest area, showing roads, trails, and geographical features. The map includes a legend for symbols: a star for 'Point of interest' and a triangle for 'Campsite'. Key locations marked include Summit 4250', Dana 3340', Soldier Mtn 5540', Lake Britton 2732', Burney Falls, Clark Creek, Rock Creek, Pit 3 Powerhouse, Pit, Burney Creek, Burney CMR 3130', Brush Mountain 3812', Casse 3200', Casse Creek, Rising River Lake 3197', Six Mile Hill 3941', Saddle Mountain 4981', Glenburn 3315', Fall River, Bridge Street, Fall River Mills 3320' CMR, McArthur 3305', and Intermountain Fairgrounds Start/Finish. Roads shown include McArthur Rd, Brown Rd, Archie Rd, Glenburn Rd, A19, A20, 89, 299, and Jim Dyer Rd. The map also shows the Shasta National Forest boundary and the Shasta River.

# The Northern Peaks Tour

## Day 1: Mount Shasta to Burney Falls

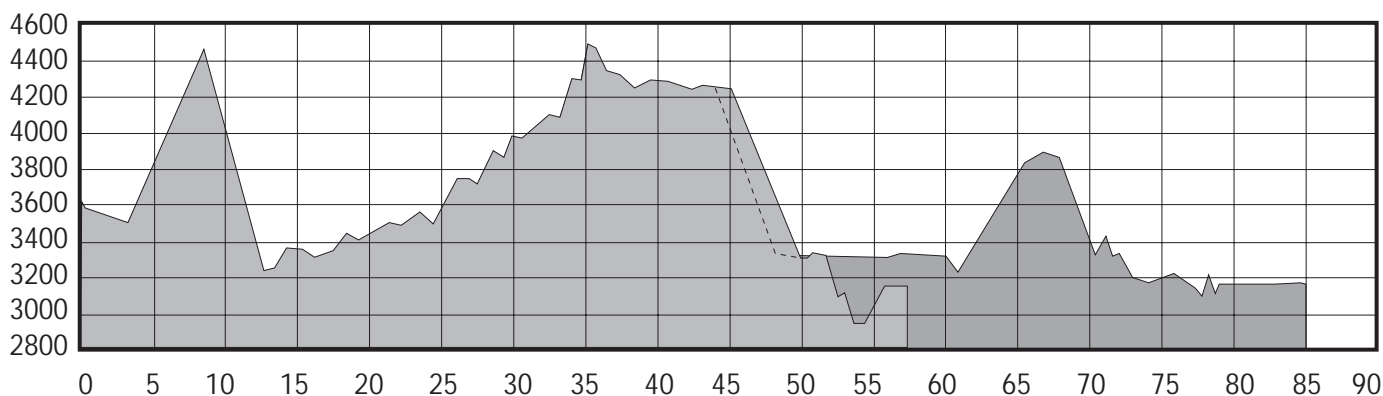
Finish at Burney Falls: 60 miles, 3000' up, 3500' down

Finish at McArthur: 60 miles, 2800' up, 3300' down

MILE	DIR	ROAD	COMMENTS
Burney Falls route:			
0.0			Leave KOA tent camp area.
0.2	R	Hinkley Street	
0.3	L	N. Mt. Shasta Blvd.	Through town. Becomes S. Mt. Shasta Blvd.
3.0	L	Hwy 89 East	Through I-5 freeway interchange. Begin climb.
8.5	S		Snowmans Hill summit (4470'). Long descent.
12.0	L	Colombero Road	Begin scenic McCloud bypass.
12.9	R	Main Street	Downtown McCloud (★).
13.2	L	Minnesota Avenue	
13.7	L	Hwy 89	End of bypass.
19.0	R?	Access road	Optional out-&-back to Falls of the McCloud River (★). Paved portion: approx. 3 miles total.
29.5	S	Hwy 89	Town of Bartle. Cafe.
35.0	S		Dead Horse summit (4505').
42.9*	S		Long route diverges @ A19 junction.
49.9	R	Clark Creek Road	
57.8	L	Hwy 89	
59.3	L	Into McArthur-Burney Falls Memorial State Park	

### McArthur route:

42.9	L	McArthur Road	Also known as County Route A19. Downhill ahead.
48.2	S		Town of Dana (3340'). Bottom of descent.
55.0	L	McArthur Road	Road turns left in town Glenburn (3315').
60.0	S	A Street	McArthur Rd bears right. You go straight onto A.
60.1	L	Into Intermountain Fairgrounds in town of McArthur (3305').	





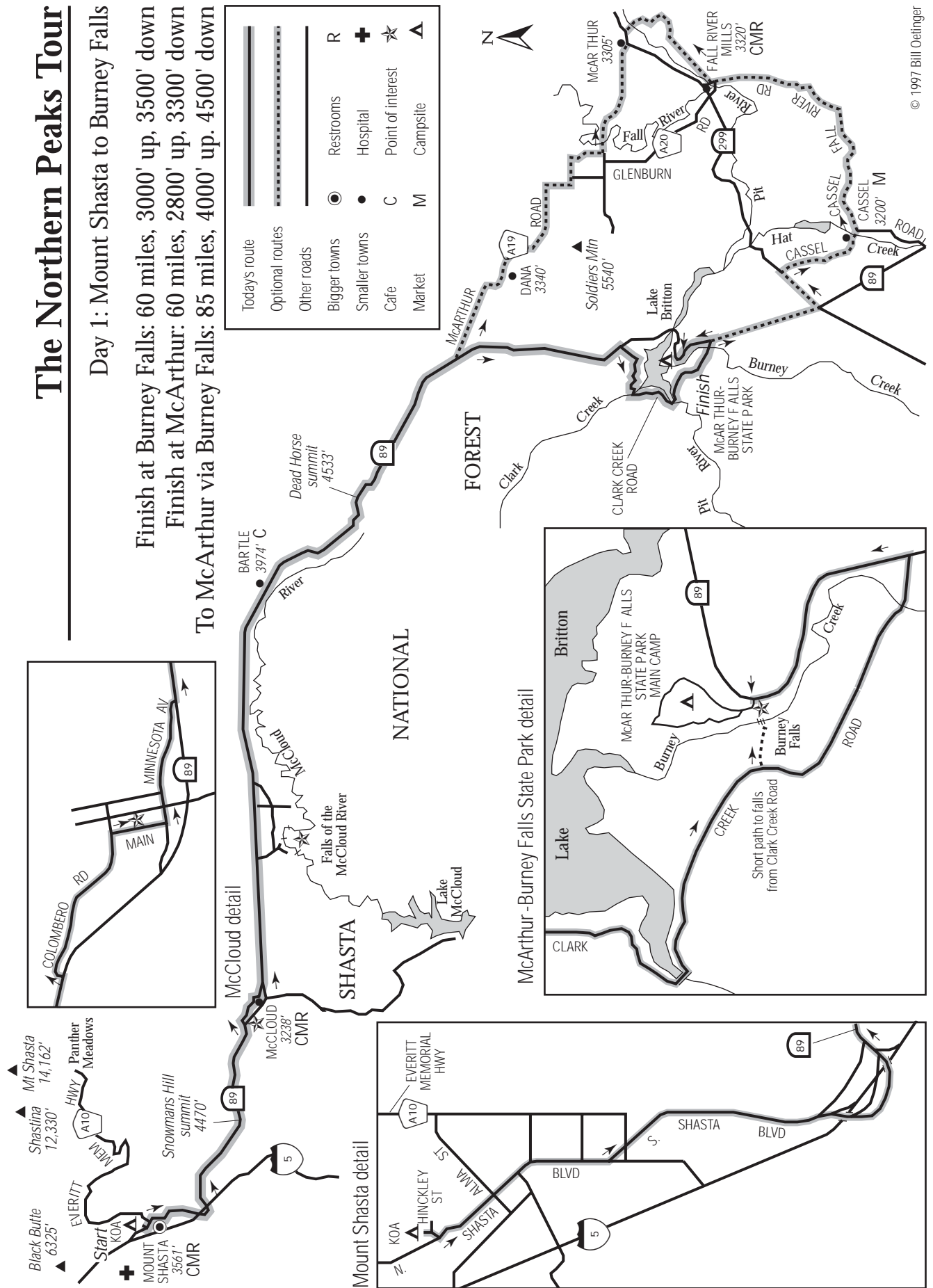
# The Northern Peaks Tour

## Day 1: Mount Shasta to Burney Falls

Finish at Burney Falls: 60 miles, 3000' up, 3500' down

Finish at McArthur: 60 miles, 2800' up, 3300' down

To McArthur via Burney Falls: 85 miles, 4000' up, 4500' down



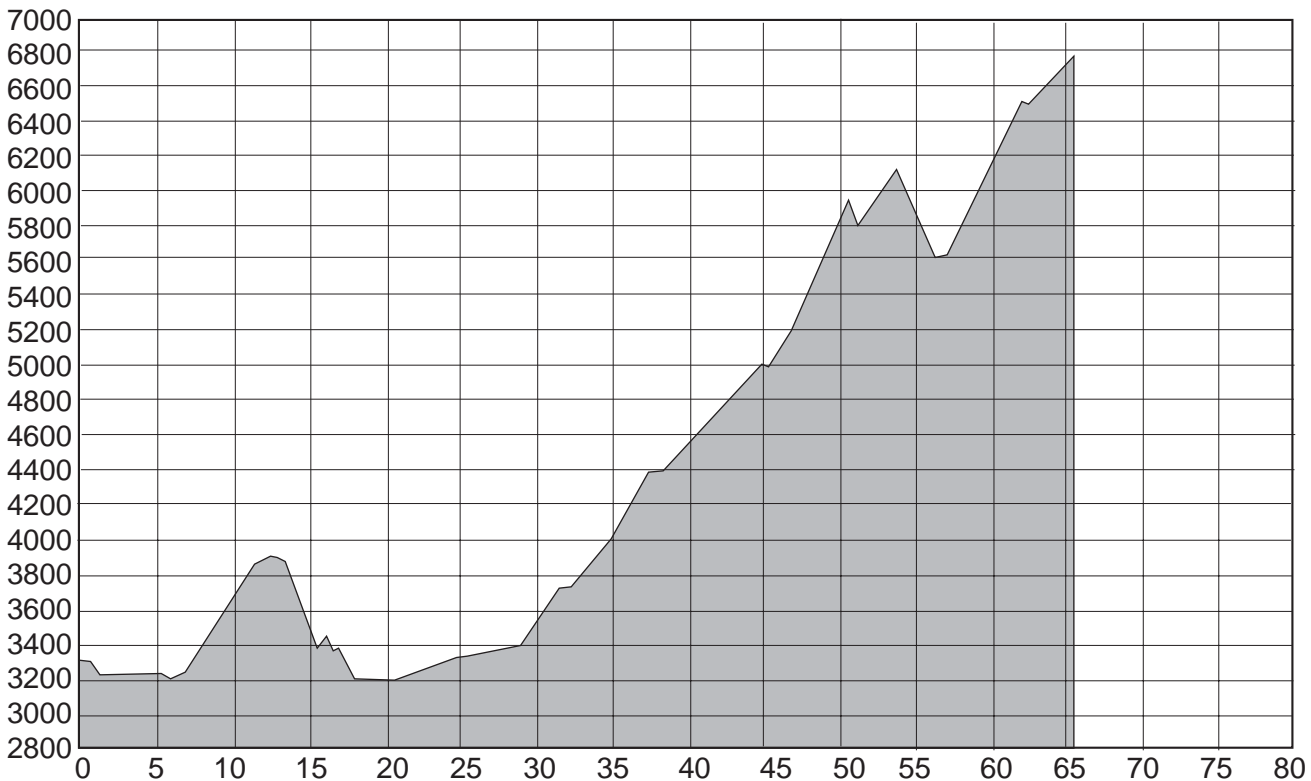
# The Northern Peaks Tour

Day 2: McArthur to Summit Lake, Lassen National Park

66 miles, 6000' up, 2400' down

MILE	DIR	ROAD	COMMENTS
0.0	L	A Street	Leave fairgrounds. Town of McArthur (3305').
0.1	R	Main Street	Cross Hwy 299
0.3	L	Jim Day Road	
2.0	R	Dee Knoch Road	
5.8	L	Cassel Fall River Road	Begin long climb.
17.5	L	Cassel Road	Town of Cassel (3200'). Store.
20.8*	L	Hwy 89	
25.4	L	Doty Road loop	Scenic bypass off Hwy 89.
27.7	L	Hwy 89	
38.4	S		Subway Cave (★).
38.6	S	Hwy 89/44	Town of Old Station (4380'). Store, cafe.
			Hwy 44 junction. Long climb ahead.
50.9	S		Eskimo Hill summit (5920'). Descent ahead.
52.3	L	Hwy 89	Into Lassen Nat'l Park. Climbing again.
52.8	S		Manzanita Lake (5847')(★).
53.3	S		Manzanita Lake Village. Store, park services.
57.7	S		Lost Creek Group Camp. Big climb ahead.
65.6	L	Into North Summit Lake camp.	Finish.

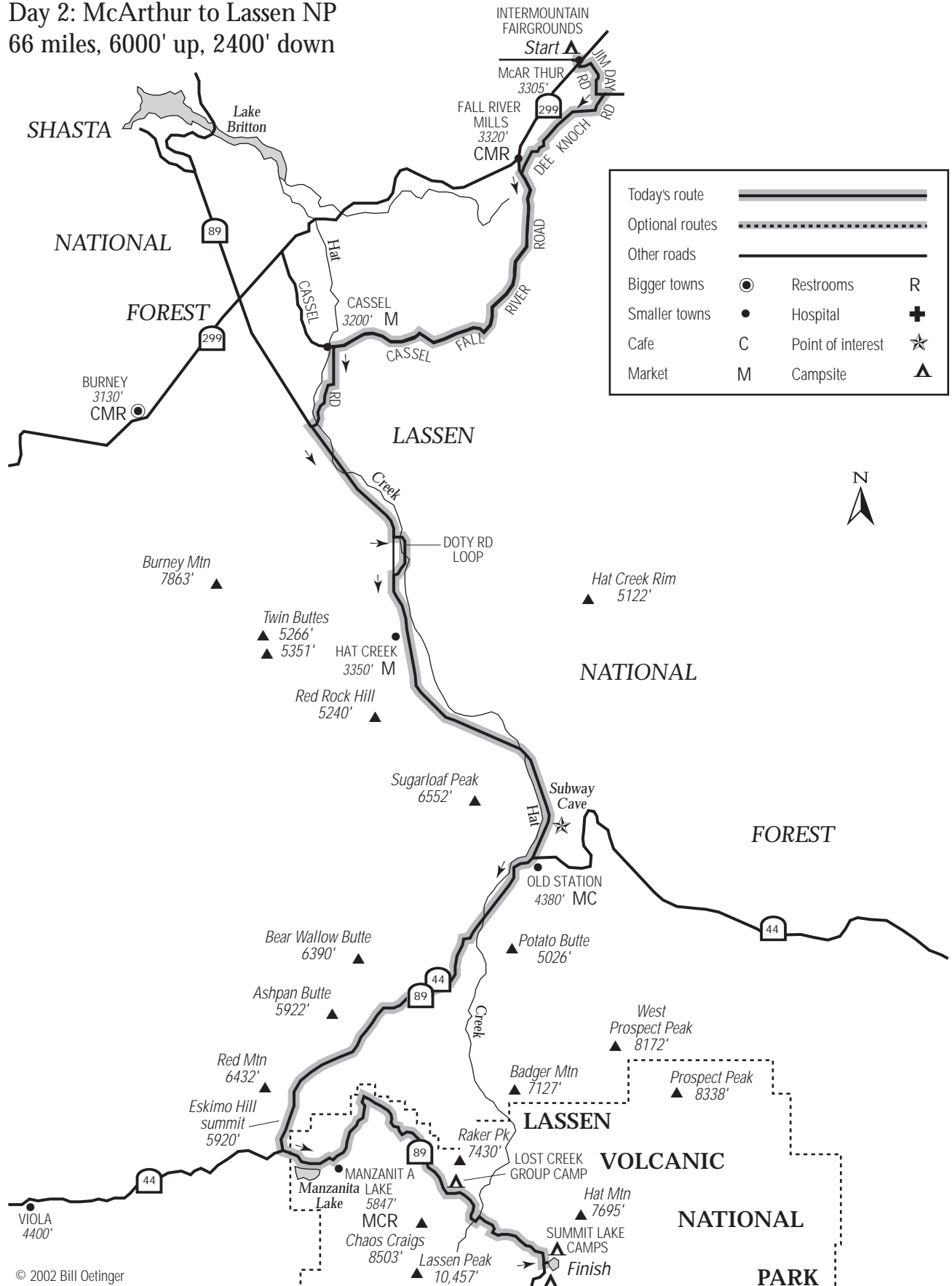
\*From start at Burney Falls to Cassel Road junction on Hwy 89: 6.3 miles.





# The Northern Peaks Tour

Day 2: McArthur to Lassen NP  
66 miles, 6000' up, 2400' down



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# The Northern Peaks Tour

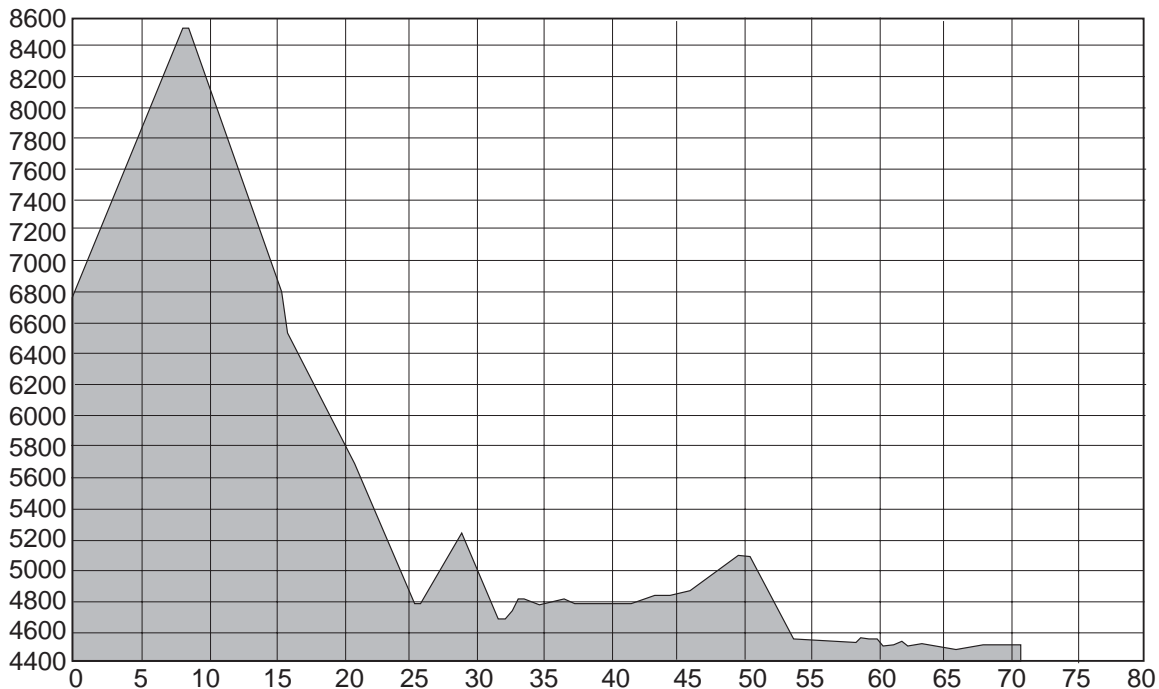
## Day 3: Lassen National Park to Lake Almanor

61 miles, 2300' up, 4500' down or 71 miles, 2800' up, 5000' down

MILE	DIR	ROAD	COMMENTS
0.0	L	Hwy 89	Leave Summit Lake Camp. Long climb ahead.
2.5	S		Great view over Lake Almanor (★).
8.7	S		Lassen summit (8512'). Big descent ahead.
14.9	S		Sulphur Works (★).
15.9	S		Park exit. Visitors center (★).
21.3*	L	Hwy 89/36	Long route diverges on Hwy 36.
21.5	S		Morgan summit (5753'). More downhill.
25.0/34.6	S		Mill Creek junction. Long route rejoins.
26.0/35.6	S		Childs Meadow Resort. Store.
32.0/41.6	S		Fire Mountain. Store.
37.0/46.6	S		St. Bernard Lodge. Cafe.
44.3/53.9	R	Hwy 89	Hwy 36 goes straight into Chester. You go right.
48.7/58.3	L	Lake Almanor Recreation Trail	At Humbug Road junction.
51.3/60.9	L	Almanor West Drive	Town of Plumas Pines (4519'). Store.
54.7/64.3	L	Hwy 89	
57.9/67.5	L	Hwy 147	Just before town of Canyon Dam (4590').
61.1/70.7	L	Into Lake Cove Resort	Finish. Tent camping by lakeshore.

\*Long route:

21.3	R	Hwy 36	Continue downhill.
25.7	L	Hwy 172	Town of Mineral (4796'). Store, cafe.
28.0	S		Mineral summit (5264').
31.5	S		Mill Creek Resort (4707'). Store.
34.6	R	Hwy 89/36	Rejoin short route.





# The Northern Peaks Tour

Day 3: Lassen NP to Lake Almanor  
61 miles, 2300' up, 4500' down  
71 Miles, 2800' up, 5000' down



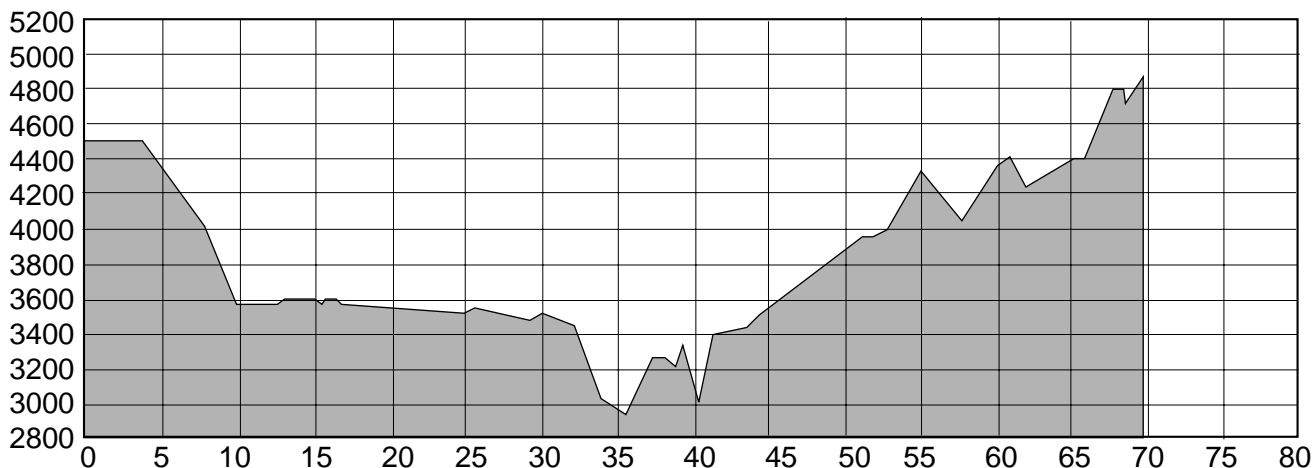
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# The Northern Peaks Tour

## Day 4: Lake Almanor to Portola

70 miles, 3400' up, 3000' down

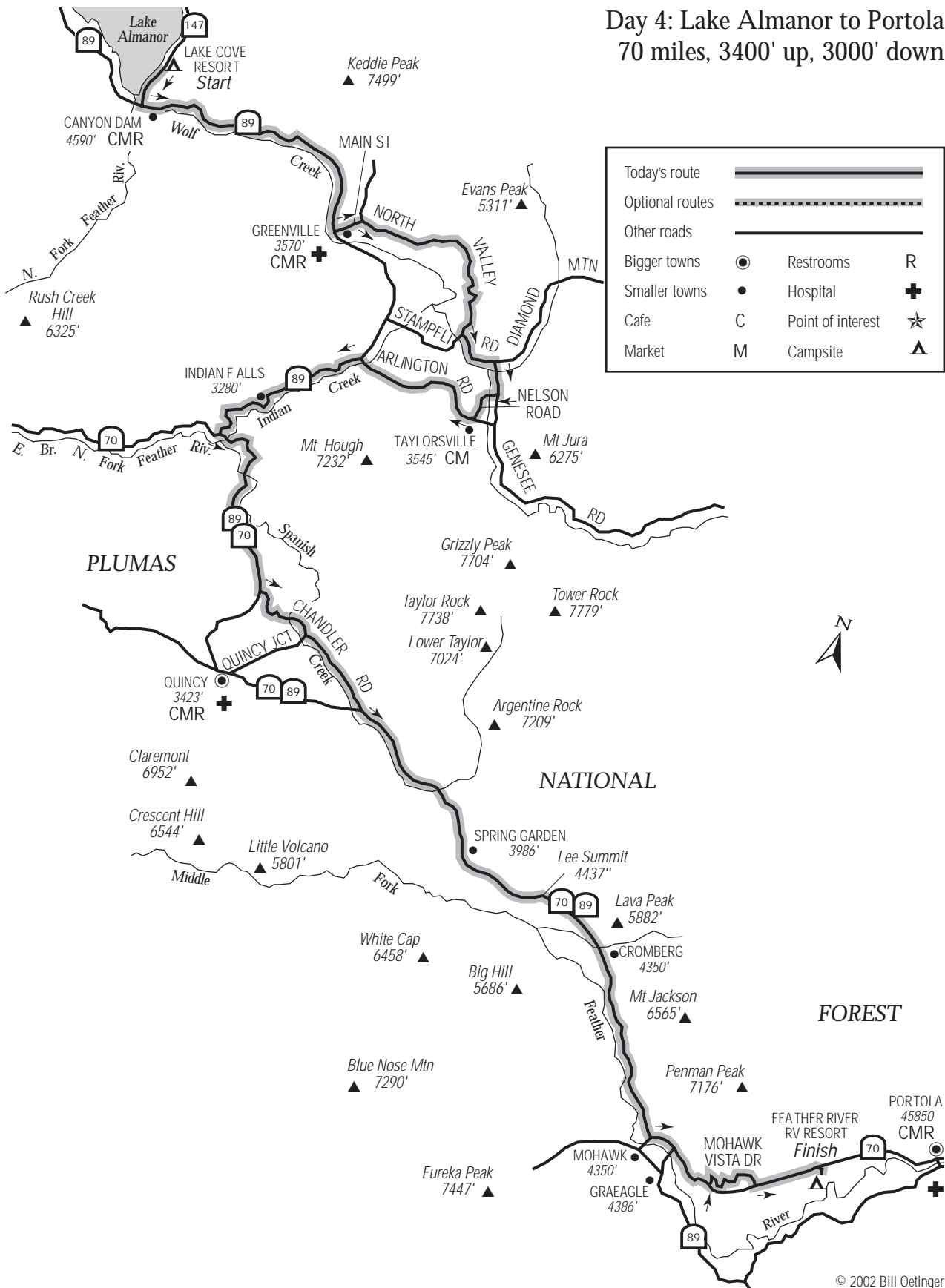
MILE	DIR	ROAD	COMMENTS
0.0	R	Hwy 147 (south)	Leave Lake Cove Resort.
3.2	L	Hwy 89	Town of Canyon Dam (4590'). Downhill ahead.
12.4	L	Main Street	Town of Greenville (3570'). Scenic bypass of Hwy 89.
13.3	R	North Valley Road	
22.2	R		Bear right on N. Valley Rd at Diamond Mtn jctn.
23.3	R	Nelson Street	Street not posted. Follow sign to Taylorsville.
24.4	R	Main Street	Town of Taylorsville (3545'). Store. Main Street becomes Arlington Road.
29.1	L	Hwy 89	Descending along Indian Creek.
35.4	L	Hwy 89/70	Climbing along Spanish Creek.
41.9	L	Chandler Road	Scenic bypass around town of Quincy.
44.2	R	Chandler Road	Bear right over one-lane bridge...not straight ahead.
48.0	L	Hwy 89/70	End of bypass.
55.3	S		Lee summit (4339').
66.5	L	Hwy 70	Hwy 89 goes straight. You go left toward Portola.
67.5	L	Mohawk Vista Drive	Scenic bypass off Hwy 70.
69.1	L	Hwy 70	End of bypass.
69.6	R	Into Feather River RV Resort.	Finish.





# The Northern Peaks Tour

Day 4: Lake Almanor to Portola  
70 miles, 3400' up, 3000' down



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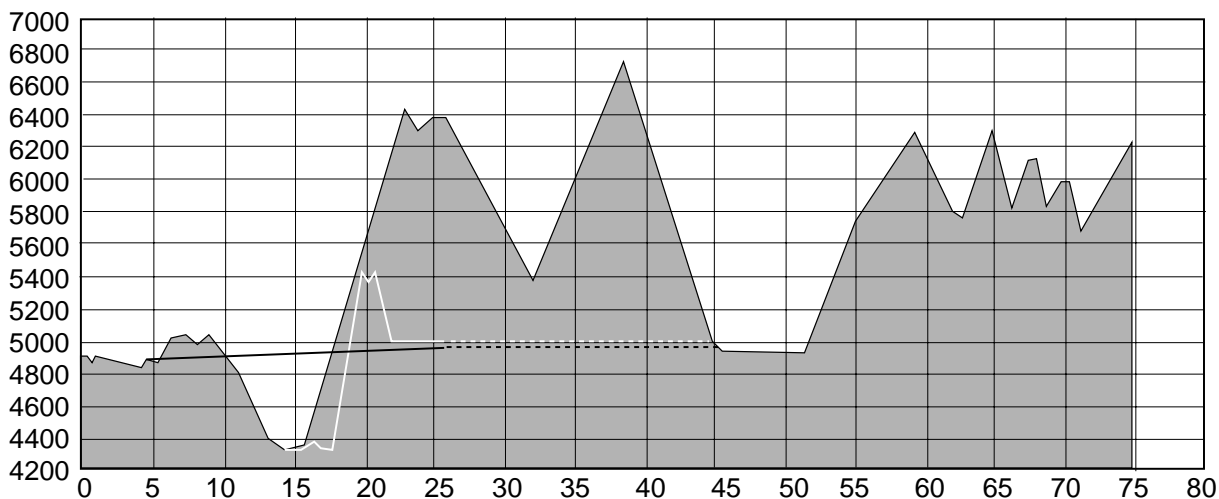
# The Northern Peaks Tour

## Day 5: Portola to Alder Creek

55 miles, 4000' up, 3000' down or 55 miles, 3000' up, 2000' down (Flatland route)

75 miles, 6600' up, 5600' down

MILE	DIR	ROAD	COMMENTS
0.0	R	Hwy 70	Leave camp. Head for Portola.
4.6*	R	Gulling Street (A15)	Town of Portola (4850'). Follow signs to RR Museum. Flatland route goes straight on Hwy 70.
4.8	R	Commercial Street (A15)	
5.1	LR	Pacific St/Western Pacific St	Jog left on Pacific to a right on Western Pacific.
5.2	L	Main Street (still A15)	Or go right into RR Museum (★).
5.3	R	Third Street (still A15)	Leave Portola, head for the the country.
13.1**	L	Hwy 89	Long route goes right on Hwy 89.
19.6	S		Summit (5441'). Long descent ahead.
25.6/45.0	L	Hwy 89/49	Long route rejoins.
26.2/45.6	S		Town of Sattley (4935'). Store.
30.6/50.0	R	Hwy 89	Town of Sierraville. Hwy 49 goes straight.
52.0/71.4	R	Alder Creek Road	
55.3/74.7	L	Into Alder Creek Campground	Finish. Uphill to group site.
*Flatland route:			
4.6	S	Hwy 70	Through Portola. (Go to RR Museum? If yes, add 1.2 mi.)
5.4	R	Rocky Point Road	Scenic bypass off Hwy 70 along Feather River.
8.0	R	Hwy 70	End of bypass.
9.6	R	Beckwourth Calpine Road	
21.6	S	Westside Road	Name changes, road goes straight ahead.
25.2	L	Hwy 89	Town of Sattley (4935'). Store. Rejoin other routes.
**Long route:			
13.1	R	Hwy 89	
16.1	L	Gold Lake Forest Hwy	Follow sign to Gold Lake. Long climb ahead.
24.6	S	Access road (to the right)	To Gold Lake (★).
25.8	S		Goose, Haven, & Snag Lakes (★).
			Summit (6700'). Big descent.
31.9	L	Hwy 49	At Bassetts junction. Store. Long climb...
38.8	S		Yuba Pass (6701'). Big descent.
45.0	S	Hwy 89/49	Rejoin short routes.





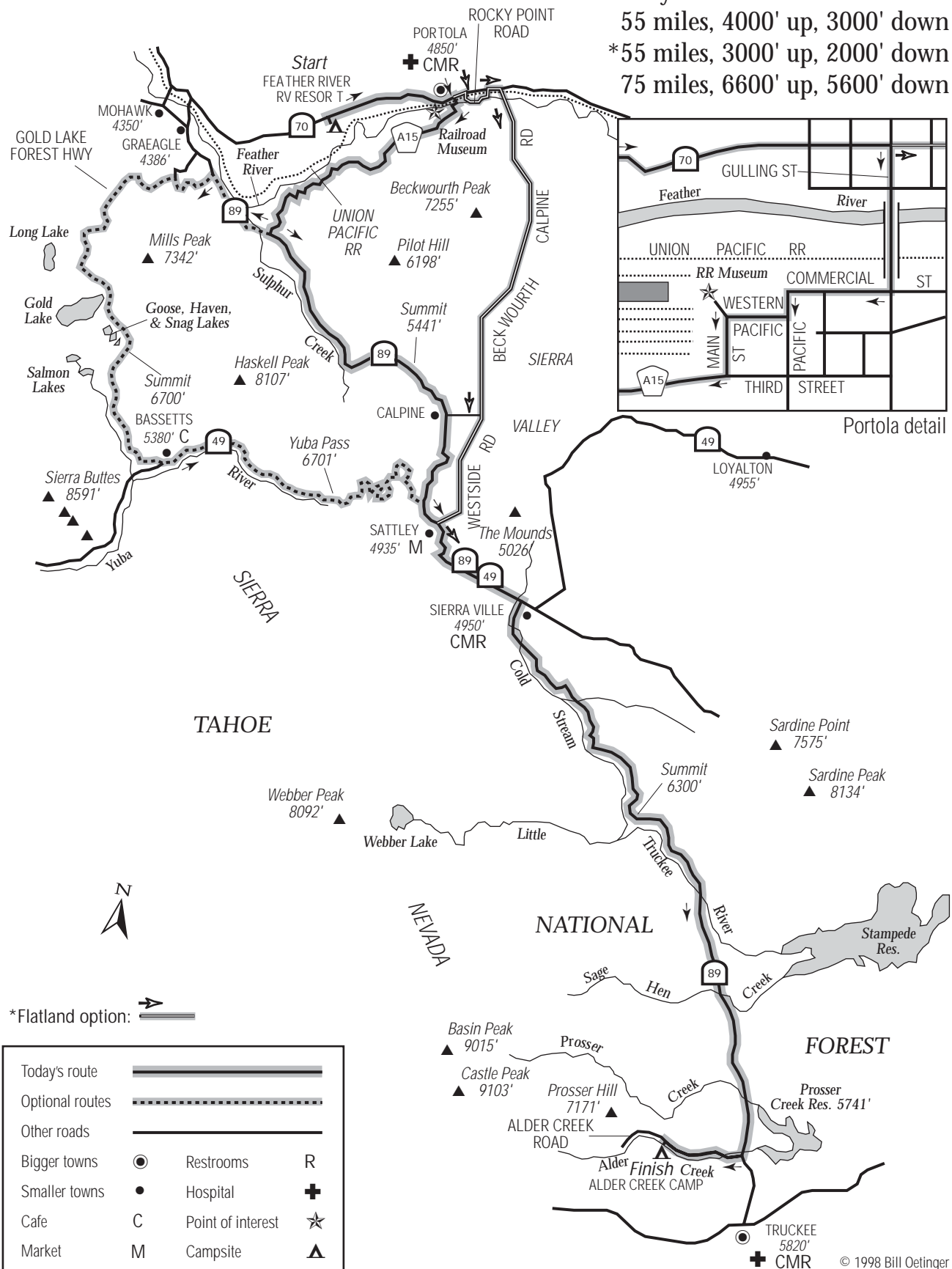
# The Northern Peaks Tour

Day 5: Portola to Alder Creek

55 miles, 4000' up, 3000' down

\*55 miles, 3000' up, 2000' down

75 miles, 6600' up, 5600' down



# The Northern Peaks Tour

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Day 6: Alder Creek to South Lake Tahoe

45 miles, 2200' up, 1900' down

55 miles, 3600' up, 3300' down

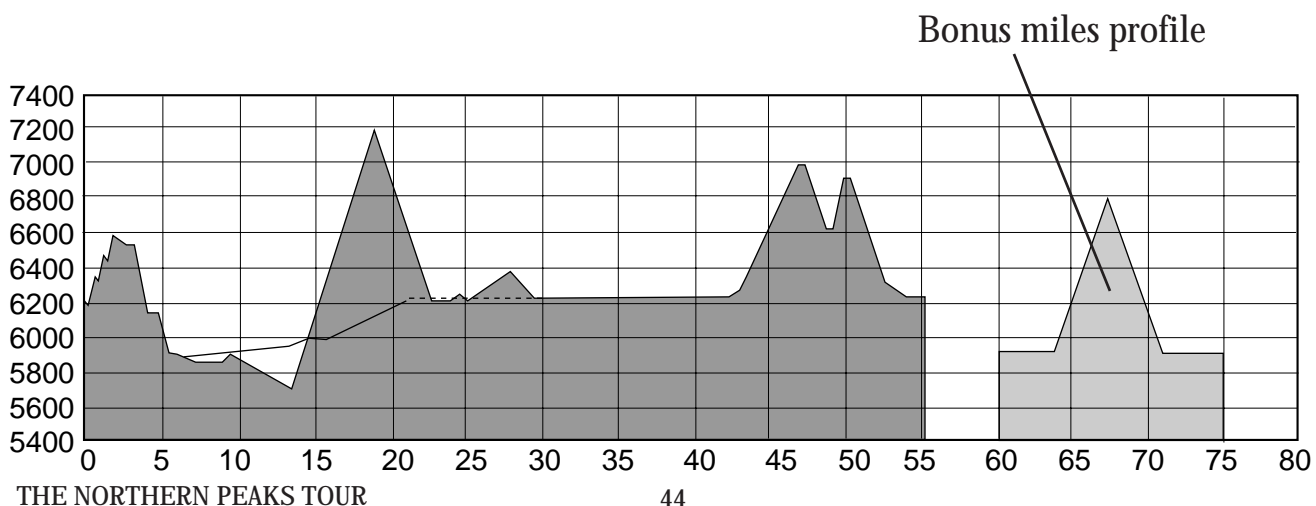
Bonus miles: 15 miles, 1100' up and down

MILE	DIR	ROAD	COMMENTS
0.0		Park access road	Leave Alder Creek group site.
0.2	L	Alder Creek Road	Leave camp. Uphill.
1.5	L	Fjord Road	
1.6	L	Northwoods Blvd.	
5.5	L	Donner Pass Road	Town of Truckee (5820'). Busy, commercial.
6.1	R	Hwy 89	Under I-80. Follow signs to Lake Tahoe.
7.0*	S		Long route diverges.
17.7	L	Optional: onto bike trail at Squaw Valley junction. Trail follows Hwy 89 all the way to Sugar Pine State Park (approx. 15 miles).	
20.0/30.0	R	Hwy 89	Bear right over bridge on 89 in Tahoe City (6253').
37.0/47.0	S		Summit above Emerald Bay. Vista point (★).
39.4/49.4	S		Eagle Falls (★).
40.3/50.3	S		Vista point (★).
45.3/55.3	L	Into Camp Richardson Resort	Finish.

\*Long route:

9.7	L	West River Street	Into downtown Truckee.
11.2	R	Hwy 267	Head south out of Truckee.
22.0	S		Brockway summit (7179').
25.4	R	Hwy 28	Town of Kings Beach (6245'). Ride around lake...busy.
32.7	L	Hwy 89	Rejoin short route.

Bonus miles: At mile 5.5, turn R on Donner Pass Road and ride to summit of Donner Pass. Four flat miles along Donner Lake, then 3.5-mile, 1100' climb to summit. Great views and great descent on return leg.





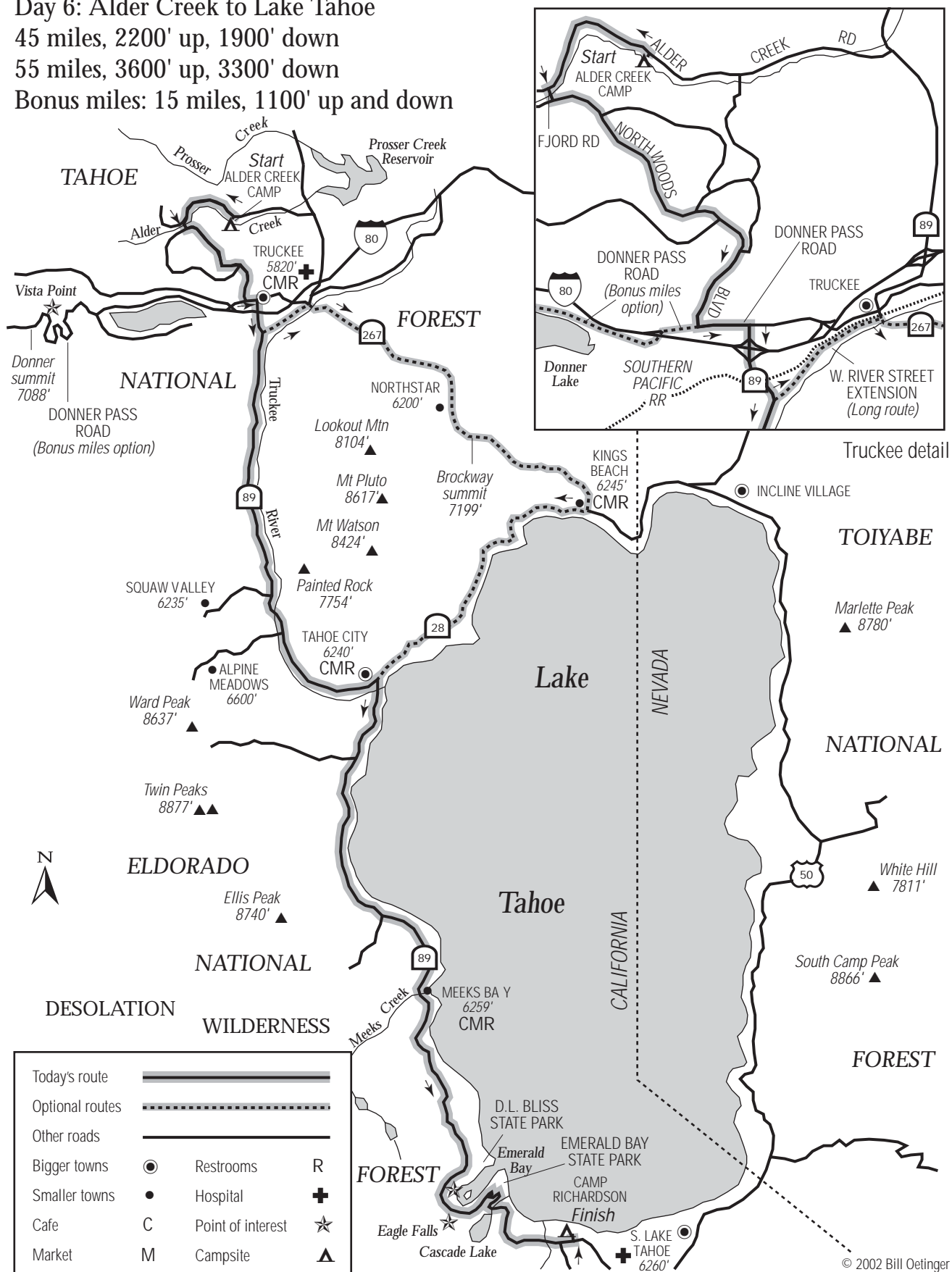
# The Northern Peaks Tour

Day 6: Alder Creek to Lake Tahoe

45 miles, 2200' up, 1900' down

55 miles, 3600' up, 3300' down

Bonus miles: 15 miles, 1100' up and down



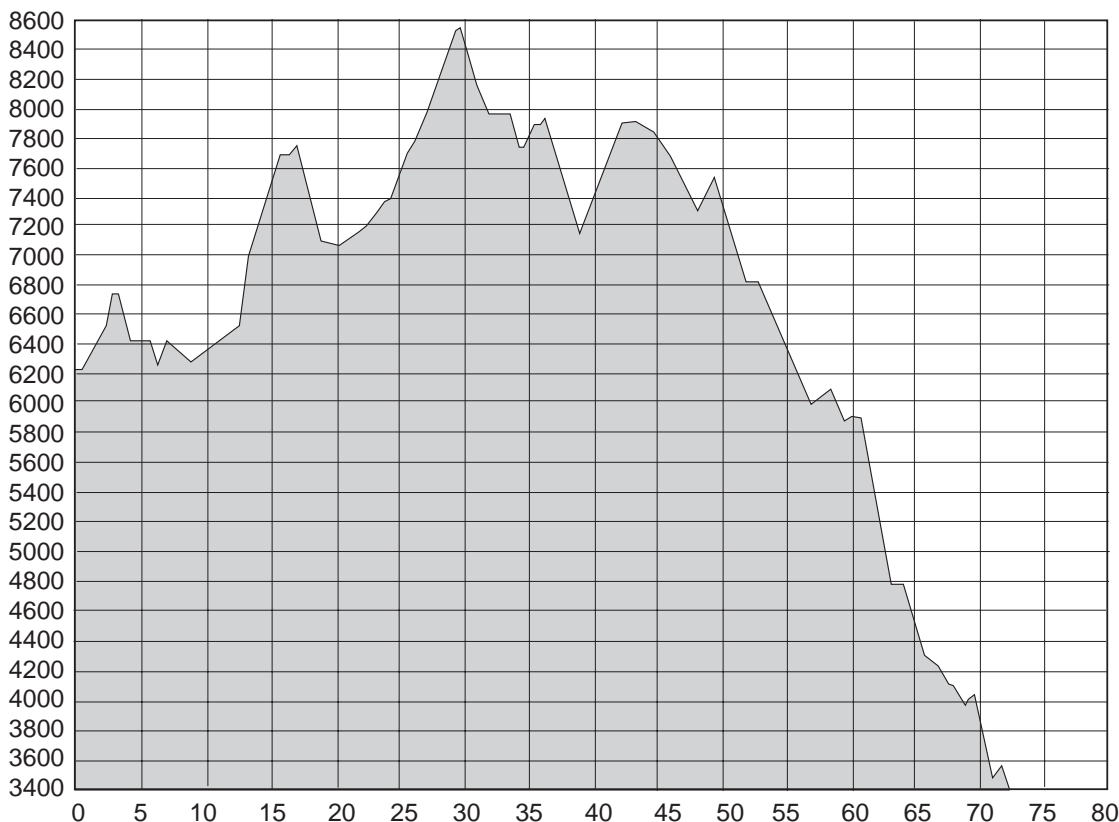
# The Northern Peaks Tour

## Day 7: South Lake Tahoe to Sly Park, Jenkinson Lake

72 miles, 4800 up, 7600 down; Bonus miles: 10 miles, 1300' up and down

MILE	DIR	ROAD	COMMENTS
0.0	R	Hwy 89	Leave Camp Richardson Resort.
0.6	L	Fallen Leaf Road	
2.6	L	Tahoe Mountain Road	Steep climb.
3.1	R	Dundee Circle	Follow signs to South Lake Tahoe.
3.3	RL	Glenmore Way/Tahoe Mtn Rd.	Jog right on Glenmore to a left on Tahoe Mtn.
4.4	R	Lake Tahoe Boulevard	Do not follow sign to South Lake Tahoe now.
5.7	R	N. Upper Truckee Road	
8.1	LR	Hwy 50/S. Upper Truckee Rd.	Jog left on Hwy 50 to a right on S. Upper Truckee.
12.0	S		Begin steep climb.
13.0	S	Nameless forest road	Cross Hwy 89 and continue climbing.
14.2	L	Hwy 89	End of scenic bypass.
17.4	S		Luther Pass (7740'). Long downhill.
20.1	R	Hwy 88	Pickett's junction. Begin long climb.
28.9	S		Carson Pass (8573').
32.0	S		Caples Lake (7953')(★).
38.0	S		Silver Lake (7196'). One more big climb.
46.6	R	Mormon Emigrant Trail	Lots of downhill ahead!
70.7	S		Jenkinson Lake (3471').
71.6	R	Sly Park Road (Hwy 50 alt)	Uphill to park entrance.
72.0	R	Into Sly Park	Bear left downhill to group picnic area.

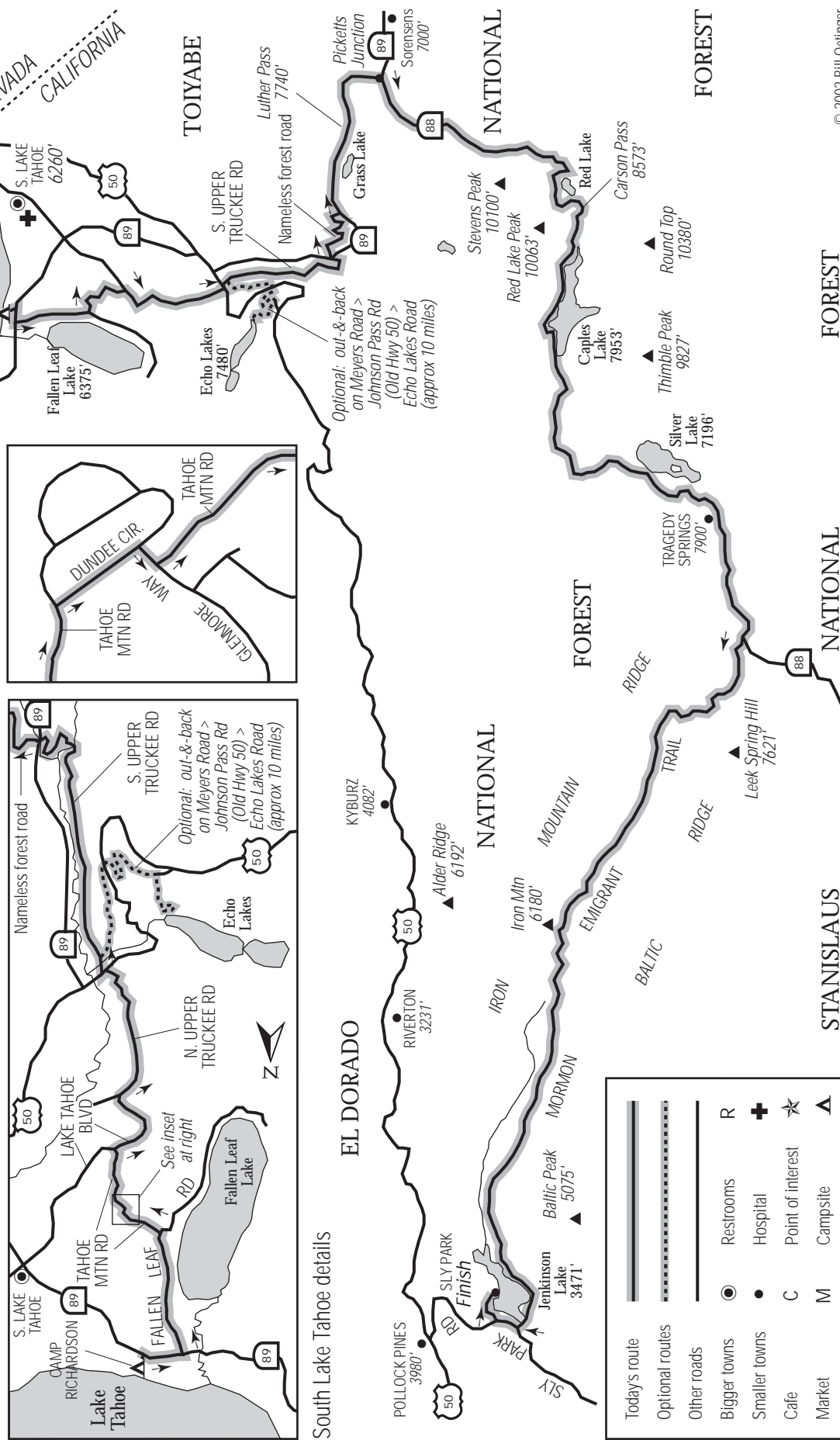
Bonus miles: up-&-back from South Upper Truckee Road on Meyers Rd, Johnson Pass Rd (Old Hwy 50), & Echo Lakes Rd to Echo Lakes. Approximately 10 miles round trip, 1300' of elevation gain.





# The Northern Peaks Tour

Day 7: Lake Tahoe to Sly Park, Jenkinson Lake  
 71 miles, 4800' up, 7600' down  
 Bonus miles: 10 miles, 1300' up and down



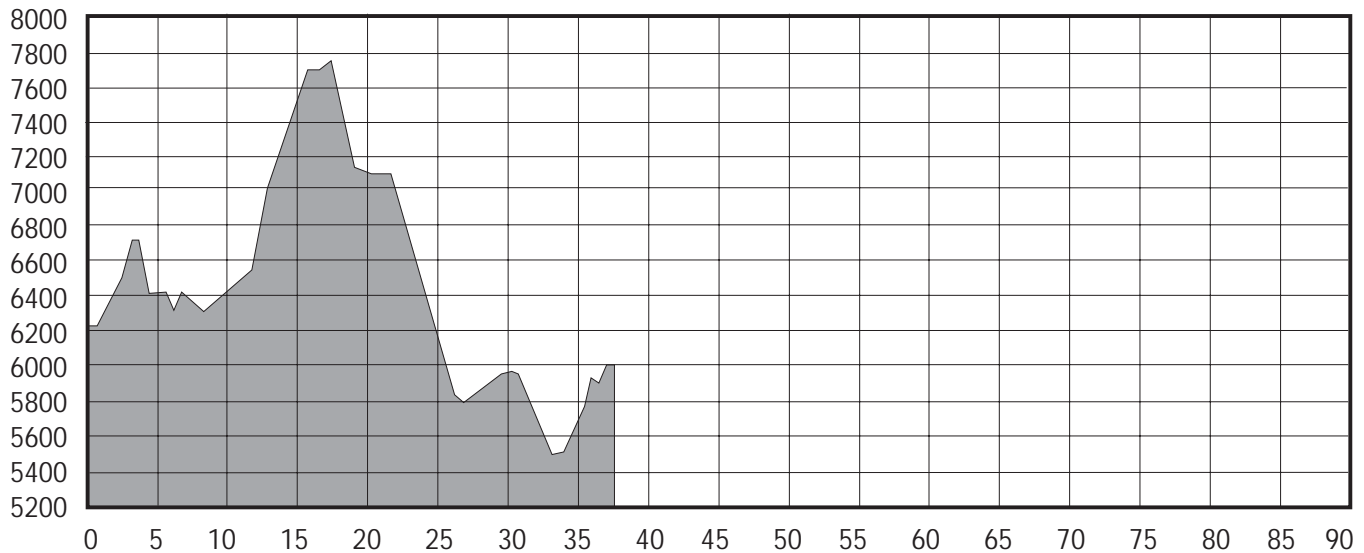
# The Northern Peaks Tour

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Link day 1: Lake Tahoe to Grovers Hot Springs

37 miles, 2900' up, 2650' down

MILE	DIR	ROAD	COMMENTS
0.0	R	Hwy 89	Leave Camp Richardson Resort.
0.6	L	Fallen Leaf Road	
2.6	L	Tahoe Mountain Road	
3.1	R	Dundee Circle	Follow signs to South Lake Tahoe.
3.3	RL	Glenmore Way/Tahoe Mtn Rd.	Jog right on Glenmore to a left on Tahoe Mtn.
4.4	R	Lake Tahoe Boulevard	Do not follow sign to South Lake Tahoe now.
5.7	R	N. Upper Truckee Road	
8.1	LR	Hwy 50/S. Upper Truckee Rd.	Jog left on Hwy 50 to a right on S. Upper Truckee.
12.0	S		Begin steep climb.
13.0	R	Hwy 89	Long climb.
17.5	S		Luther Pass (7740'). Long downhill.
20.2	L	Hwy 89/88	Pickett's junction. More downhill.
26.2	R	Hwy 89	Hwy 88 goes straight. You go right.
33.2	R	Hot Springs Road	Town of Markleeville. Store, cafe.
36.8			Into Grovers Hot Springs State Park

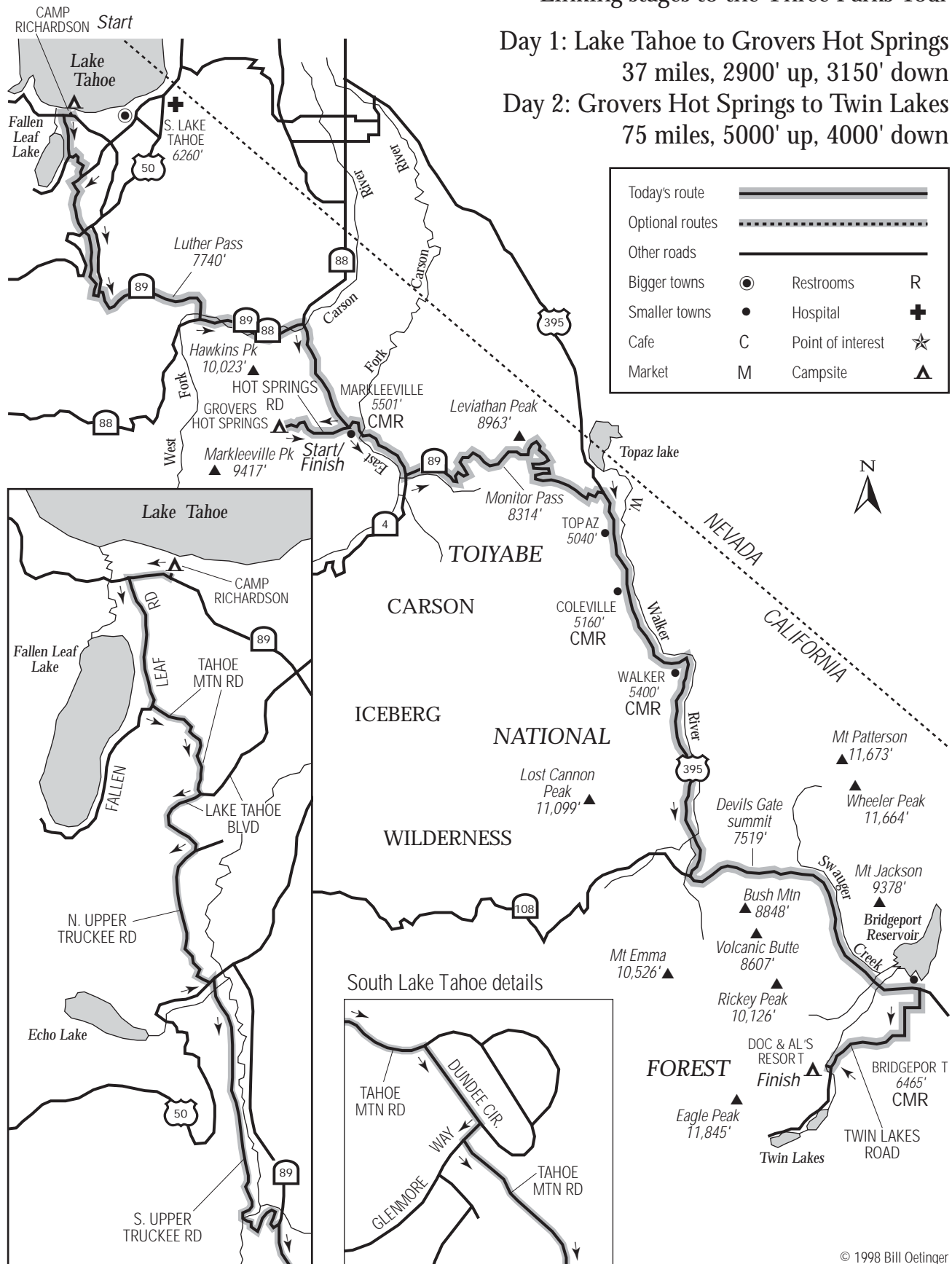


# The Northern Sierra Tour

Linking stages to the Three Parks Tour

Day 1: Lake Tahoe to Grovers Hot Springs  
37 miles, 2900' up, 3150' down

Day 2: Grovers Hot Springs to Twin Lakes  
75 miles, 5000' up, 4000' down



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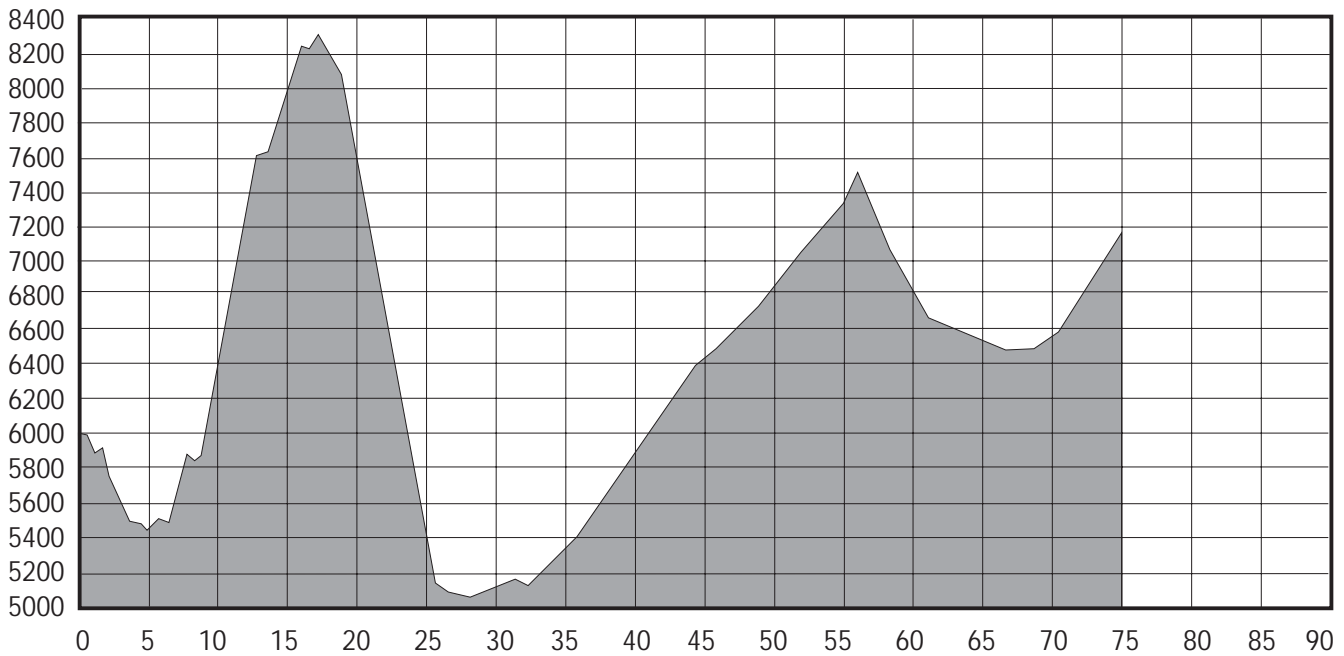


# The Northern Peaks Tour

Link day 2: Grovers Hot Springs to Twin Lakes

75 miles, 5000' up, 4000' down

MILE	DIR	ROAD	COMMENTS
0.0	L	Hot Springs Road	Leave Grovers Hot Springs SP.
3.6	R	Hwy 89	Markleeville.
8.6	L	Hwy 89	Bear left on 89 at Hwy 4 junction. Big climb.
16.9	S		Monitor Pass (8312').
26.5	R	Hwy 395	
27.8	S		Town of Topaz.
31.8	S		Town of Coleville.
35.8	S		Town of Walker. Store, cafe.
55.9	S		Devils Gate summit (7519').
67.4	R	Twin Lakes Road	Town of Bridgeport. Store, cafe.
74.7	R		Into Doc & Al's Resort.



# The Northern Peaks Tour

