

OTHER THINGS TO DO/PLACES TO VISIT

LAKE TAHOE

Background - Lake Tahoe, in the Sierra Nevada mountain range, has a surface elevation of 6,225 feet and is the largest alpine lake in North America. It is bisected by the border between California and Nevada. It is about 22 miles long and 12 miles wide. Lake Tahoe has great weather and breathtaking scenery!

The Tour - From Sacramento, head east on I-80 toward Reno. The town of Truckee is about 100 miles east of Sacramento on the far side of Donner Summit. Just before you reach the town of Truckee, exit I-80 southbound onto Highway 89 toward Squaw Valley and Lake Tahoe. Tahoe City is about 44 miles south on Highway 89. Along this highway, you'll be following the Truckee River, the only outflow from Lake Tahoe. During the summer, this is a popular river for rafting and fishing. During the winter, the large ski resorts of Squaw Valley (home of the 1960 Winter Olympics) and Alpine Meadows (west of the highway) attract thousands of daily ski enthusiasts. Much of the highway itself was once the roadbed for the narrow gauge [Lake Tahoe Railroad and Transportation Company](#) which ran from an interchange with the SP at Truckee to a wharf at Tahoe City.

If you find yourself traversing this section of Highway 89 around lunch time, consider the upscale [River Ranch](#) for lunch which overlooks the Truckee River. Originally called the Deer Park Inn, the resort was built in 1888 and grew into a fashionable watering spot on the LTR&TC narrow gauge railway, which ran along the Truckee River here.

Tahoe City also has numerous options for lunch as well as shopping. If you are hungry when you reach Tahoe City, continue straight on Highway 28 and take your pick. Otherwise, you can continue on our tour by turning right/south at the Highway 89/28 intersection to continue on southbound Highway 89 around the west side of the lake. But for a short but interesting detour, continue straight through the traffic signal and turn right at the first street beyond the traffic signal onto Macinaw Road (just beyond the True Value Hardware store). There are several parking spots just before the road intersections Highway 89. Park and walk south to the highway bridge over the Truckee River. Locals label this "[Fanny Bridge](#)" because of the back view of numerous tourists who bend over the bridge railing to view the enormous trout which hang out in the river below. They are off-limits to fishing but obviously entertaining to tourists!

From Tahoe City, Highway 89 continues southerly along the western shore of the lake 30 miles to South Lake Tahoe. If you didn't have lunch in Tahoe City or earlier, consider upscale [Sunnyside Restaurant and Lodge](#), two miles south of Tahoe City, which has a dining room deck right on the lake.

About 18 miles south of Tahoe City, you'll circle around Emerald Bay. This beautiful area is one of the most regularly photographed views of Lake Tahoe and never fails to awe its visitors with its amazing scenery.

As you reach South Lake Tahoe, Highway 89 merges into Highway 50; continue straight here at the traffic signal onto Highway 50/89 toward Placerville and Sacramento. Leaving South Lake Tahoe, two-lane Highway 50 climbs up the grade to Echo Summit. The highway generally follows the route originally walked by Colonel John Calhoun "Cocked-eyed" Johnson, a Placerville rancher between his ranch and Lake Tahoe sometime between 1848 and 1851. The "Johnson Cut-off" became a well-used passage to California for westbound overland emigrants and many 49ers. In 1860, toll stations were franchised to develop road improvements, and the Pony Express became operational using Johnson's cutoff.

The area to the north of Echo Summit at the top of the grade out of South Lake Tahoe is the Desolation Wilderness area. Beautiful Echo Lakes, at the edge of the wilderness area, is two miles north of

Highway 50; turn right onto Echo Summit Rd/Johnson Pass Road and follow the signs. Echo Chalet on the lake at the end of the road has a soda fountain and deli.

Continue on Highway 50 west toward Placerville. The two-lane highway will eventually widen into a four-lane highway near Pollack Pines. Highway 50 continues to Placerville and eventually Sacramento, which is about 95 miles from Echo Summit.

Time Allowance - This can be a day-long tour—expect a little over 5 hours of driving to follow the complete loop tour. If you don't mind backtracking, you can travel as far as Tahoe City on the north end of Lake Tahoe and then backtrack to Sacramento which reduces the trip to about 4 hours of driving total.

Note - *These directions are fairly general. You should carry a good map and/or GPS.*