

Sawtooth Trail, north of Robie Park

Truckee area, Tahoe National Forest

by Robert H. Sydnor, Action Coalition for Equestrians (ACE); August 2010

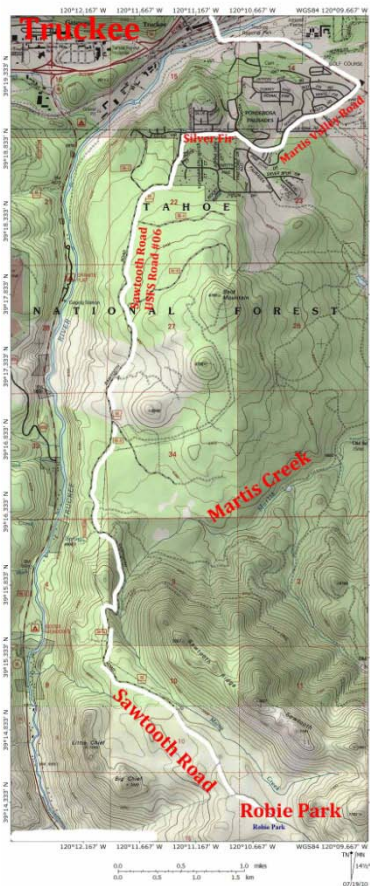
Location

The Sawtooth Trail is a multi-use trail (equestrian, hiking, mountain biking) that is located within the Tahoe National Forest, near Truckee. It is attractive for horsemen who want to escape the torrid summer heat of the Sacramento Valley by riding at cooler elevations (6,600 to 6,800 feet elevation) near Tahoe. Refer to the U.S. Weather Service website for the Truckee area for reliable weather forecasts. Because of the high altitude, expect large diurnal fluctuations in temperatures, and always bring a horse-blanket for cold evening temperatures following a hot ride during the daytime.

Take Interstate 80 to Truckee, drive past U.S. Highway 89, then turn south on U.S. Highway 267 toward Brockway Summit and Lake Tahoe (refer to a highway map for the Tahoe Basin). Turn right (westward) on Martis Creek Road which changes name to Ponderosa Road. Turn left (westward) onto Silver Fir Drive, then left (south) onto Thelin Drive. Look for signs for U.S. Forest Service Road #06 and a green metal gate (closed in wintertime). See attached maps for distances and directions. For detailed street names, refer to a Truckee street atlas, or print one from the Internet.

The Sawtooth Trail is located within the Martis Creek drainage which is split between Placer County and Nevada County. The Sawtooth Trail is several miles north of Robie Equestrian Park, so it is of interest to equestrians who want to ride looped trails that conveniently return to the horse-trailer.

Robie Park is well-known to Tevis riders as the starting point for the Tevis Cup. Horsemen who camp at Robie Park typically enter through Brockway Summit and the Mount Watson Road because it is paved (except for the last few miles of gravel) is therefore much better for horse-trailers. The middle segment of the graveled Sawtooth Road is moderately steep and sometimes rutted after Spring snowmelt. However, the lower elevations of the Sawtooth Road (closest to Truckee) are satisfactory for horse trailers.



Topographic map at left, with general annotations for horsemen. Trail map at right. Both cover the same area, but are slightly different scales. Horsemen can print the trail map (at right) at full-page size, since there are no paper copies at the trailhead. There are private cartographers at REI Roseville and the Truckee area that sell detailed custom maps to trail users (.pdf or copies on plastic map-sheets).

Logistics for Horsemen

The northern and central parking lots (see red "P" symbol on maps) are better for horsemen. The south parking lot is too small for horse trailers. These are not fully-equipped equestrian assembly areas. There are no hitching posts, no horse watering-troughs, no water, no free trail maps, no dumpsters, and no portapotties. Bring your own equestrian supplies and expect no amenities beyond a graveled parking lot in the forest.... and a well-engineered trail. You can purchase last-minute supplies in nearby Truckee.

On the plus side, there are no entrance fees, no posted hours, and no reservations on this public USFS land. However, avoid the same weekend of the Tevis Cup because of congestion from 150+ horse-trailers and riders. Refer to www.teviscup.org for the precise calendar date (typically the weekend in late July closest to the full moon). Seasonally, the best time to ride here is late-June through October (depending on snowfall conditions of the previous winter).

These trailheads are used by mountain-bikers, but because the area is outside of the Tahoe Basin proper, the Sawtooth Trail is not as heavily used as other trail systems in the Lake Tahoe - Truckee area.

Many horsemen prefer to stay at Robie Equestrian Park, then ride downhill (northward towards Truckee), ride these looping trails in the Bald Mountain area, then return (uphill) to Robie Park in the afternoon. There are many connecting equestrian trails: Bob Watson Loop Trail, Deer Creek Trail, Tahoe Rim Trail, Cena Lar Trail, Shaffer Camp Trail, and of course the world-famous Western States Trail for the Tevis Cup.

For equestrian information, road maps and directions to Robie Equestrian Park, go to the official website of the Robie Foundation: <http://www.robiefoundation.org/home.html>

Additional logistical photographs for horsemen are posted on GoogleEarth at this hyperlink:

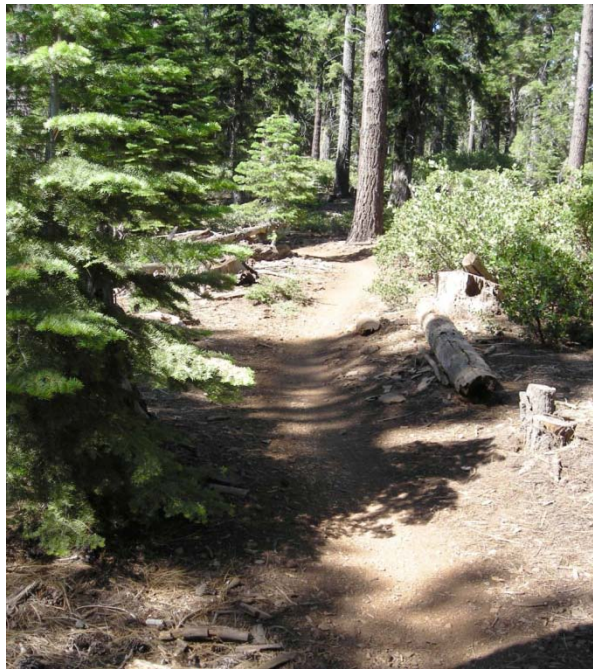
<http://www.panoramio.com/user/1521778/tags/Sawtooth%20Trail%3B%20Tahoe%20National%20Forest%3B%20Placer%20County%3B%20California>

Sawtooth Trail

The Sawtooth Trail takes its name from Sawtooth Ridge, a minor ridge of rugged volcanic rocks that is located west of Northstar ski resort area. The 9.1-mile looped trail was especially constructed at a taxpayer cost of \$108,000 in 2002 by Jerry Morrison, Inc., professional trail builder, under contract to Tahoe National Forest.

The cogent point is that this is considered a "modern" multi-use trail. That means it is not a deer path.... that evolved into a cattle path.... that evolved into a logging skid-road..... that evolved into a recreational trail over the course of one century. (This historical evolution of steep rutted trails is all-too-familiar.)

We horsemen appreciate newly-constructed multi-use trails that have an authentic engineering geology basis, out-sloped drainage, proper lineal gradient, minimal use of water-bars, looped configuration back to our horse-trailers, with scenic views in a shady second-growth forest.



Typical views of the trail-bed along the Sawtooth Trail within Tahoe National Forest. This is a wandering looped-trail system that is mostly shaded by second-growth forest, with good footing and moderate terrain for our beloved horses.