

Car-Free Skiing in Tahoe

Accessing Lake Tahoe from the Bay Area without Driving a Personal Car

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Snowriders International

Snowriders International is an organization of skiers, boarders, and mountain recreation enthusiasts. We are dedicated to the promotion of winter sports and protection of the environment across the globe, through service, education, research and advocacy.

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We are dedicated to protecting our air, water and open spaces. We investigate problems, craft solutions, educate the public and decision-makers, and help the public make their voices heard in local, state and national debates over the quality of our environment and our lives.

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For most Bay Area skiers, a trip to the mountains around Lake Tahoe means a long drive on crowded roads in a personal car. Such dependence on personal vehicles to transport people along busy corridors is damaging to the environment and harmful to the health our communities. As demand for public transit and rideshare programs grows, options other than driving alone are beginning to appear. This guide highlights fifteen options available to Bay Area skiers hoping to get the mountains without driving a personal car. The guide demonstrates that skiers and boarders can choose shared transportation and decrease their carbon footprint. However, the expense and inconvenience of many of the bus and train options show a clear need for better transportation solutions between the Bay Area and Lake Tahoe ski resorts for next season.

THE PROBLEM WITH THE RELIANCE ON PERSONAL AUTOMOBILES:

Though residents of the Bay Area have access to transit and rideshares in their daily lives, skiers from the region still have to depend on personal cars to reach the mountains. All these cars hitting the road on weekends and holidays along I-80 and I-50 harm local air quality and are an inefficient, unsustainable and outdated means of transportation.

For skiers, over the long term, dependence on personal cars is catastrophic for the future of their sport. So many people driving their own cars is unsustainable compared to taking public transportation or participating in ride share programs. In order to protect the future of skiing and snowboarding, the irony that a trip to participate in these sports threatens the snow they rely upon, must be corrected. As climate change poses a more and more visible threat to the future of skiing, snowboarding and other snow sports, developing transportation options that get people to the slopes without endangering the climate is paramount.

An estimated 10 million cars visit Tahoe every year, most taking the same roads: I-80 or I-50.¹ This puts massive of strain on corridors that must also carry local vehicles, and the trucks that supply our state. What's more, so many personal cars on the road has a negative impact on mountain communities. Vehicles flooding in from out of town creates a massive parking problem for mountain towns, costing them money and forcing them to build ever more lots to meet

¹ □The Associated Press. "Planners call Lake Tahoe parking shortage a big problem." The News & Observer, <<http://bit.ly/2nHwWRT>> (23 Mar, 2017.)

the need for parking.² So many idling cars on the roads also contributes to local air pollution, threatening the public health of local communities.

The reliance on personal vehicles also makes roads more dangerous. In 2016, 57 road accidents were recorded on one small segment of I-80 alone, between Truckee and Reno.³ Depending on personal vehicles, which are sometimes unsuitable for traversing icy roads, as the primary means of transportation into Tahoe contributes to preventable collisions, injuries and even deaths.

THE GUIDE AND CURRENT TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS:

Californians need a transportation system that provides sustainable, affordable and convenient options connecting the Bay Area to the ski slopes in Lake Tahoe. This guide highlights seven transportation options and eight rideshare services currently available to Bay Area skiers.

Some of these options are better than others. Three of the buses and all eight of the rideshare services in the guide can provide service directly to the slopes. These options provide round-trip transportation in a single day, and many include food, entertainment, and the opportunity to meet new friends. Meanwhile, Amtrak, Greyhound, Megabus and the Capitol Corridor Train provide service to and from Tahoe to the Bay Area, but not regularly enough to make it a convenient day-trip option for skiers.

Smaller private companies like the Bay Area Ski Bus offer great but limited choices for skiers hoping to ditch their cars, but public or shared transit to the mountains remains out of reach for the majority of skiers due to the expensive, complicated or inflexible nature of most of the larger public options.

In addition, skiers who arrive in the Lake Tahoe area via public bus or train do not have good local transportation options for reaching ski areas. Local public transportation does not fully link the northern and southern shores of the lake. Incomplete local service, combined with the infrequency of the regional routes (which were not set-up with mountain recreationists in mind), re-

² Bizjak, Tony. "Tahoe officials tackle congestion, say wider roads not part of the solution." The Sacramento Bee, <<http://bit.ly/2mUPMR0>> (23 Mar, 2017)

³ Rhoades, Amanda. "I-80 wrecks: If you thought there were more than usual at Floriston, you're right." Sierra Sun, <<http://bit.ly/2nMVUj2>> (23 Mar, 2017)

quires travelers to make complicated and time consuming transfers, in some cases taking four modes of transportation and full day to make it from front-door to slope.

THE SOLUTION IS MORE OPTIONS:

A shared transportation system that can actually take the place of personal vehicles must provide enough choices that travelers can depend on there being an option that works for them.⁴ Cities are increasingly recognizing the importance of comprehensive public transportation and walkability within their borders, but we need the same investment in making longer journeys possible without a personal car, including providing the 21st century transportation option to the slopes that skiers and snowboarders are demanding.

In Colorado, where skiers traverse roads similarly congested with personal cars on their way to the ski slopes, Amtrak has recently launched a highly successful ski train, The Winter Park Express, which brings skiers and boarders from downtown Denver directly to Winter Park Resort on winter weekends. Similarly, skiers from the Boston Metro area are able to ride a commuter rail from Boston's North Station to Wachusett Mountain for less than \$12 each way. These are the type of simple solutions Bay Area skiers need.

The good news is that in February, 2017, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) released a Regional Transportation Plan with the goal of addressing many of the issues raised by this guide. TRPA intends to improve "non-automotive access to heavily-visited recreation areas," in part by expanding inter-regional transit options, including connecting the north and south shore with free buses and shuttles.⁵ We applaud their vision for the future of transportation to and from, as well as within, the Lake Tahoe region.

As the 2016-2017 ski season begins to wind down, now is the time for public and private entities to start working together on improved transportation solutions for next season, so that skiers and snowboarders can make it to the slopes without threatening the natural resources that make Lake Tahoe a national treasure.

⁴American Public Transportation Association. (2013) *Millennial Generation Desires Multi-Modal Transportation System* [Press Release]. Retrieved from <http://www.apta.com/mediacenter/pressreleases/2013/Pages/131001_Millennials.aspx >

⁵ Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and the Tahoe Metropolitan Planning Organization. (February, 2017) "Executive Summary: Linking Tahoe: Regional Transportation Plan." Stateline, NV, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. <<http://bit.ly/2mUNX6z>>

In conclusion, the Guide to Car-Free Skiing in Tahoe demonstrates a number of options currently available to skiers concerned about their carbon footprint, as well as the work still needed to make transportation out to Tahoe more convenient and sustainable in future seasons. California needs a transportation system that provides safe, convenient, affordable options to connect the Bay Area to Lake Tahoe ski areas. Expanding bus, shuttle, van and carpool options will increase the overall efficiency of our system, and get people to slopes without threatening the natural places they are there to enjoy.

While this report highlights the need to better transportation to the Lake Tahoe for skiing, it also reflects a more serious need for California to review all of its public transportation. Every year Californians spend hundreds of hours a year stuck in traffic and millions of people are breathing dirty and dangerous air. California needs a transportation system that gets people out of their cars and into safe, convenient and affordable options. We need this not only to get to work and school but also to get to the places we all enjoy.

CAR-FREE SKIING IN TAHOE

NAME	DAY-TRIP POSSIBLE?	DAYS OF OPERATION	SERVICE FROM:	DEPARTS:	SERVICE TO:	MOUNTAIN ACCESS:	RETURNS:	COST (round-trip)	PERKS?	DISCOUNTS?	WEBSITE
Bay Area →Tahoe-Area Ski Resorts											
North American Charter Ski	YES	Fri, Sat, Sun	7 Bay Area locations.	4:30-6:10 am depending on location.	Alpine Meadows, Heavenly, Kirkwood, Northstar, Sierra-at-Tahoe, Sugarbowl, Squaw Valley	Direct to-mountain service		from \$54	wifi, outlets, snacks	On: rentals, food vouchers, lessons, lift tickets and more	NACski
Bay Area Ski Bus	YES	Mostly Sat and Sun with some week day trips. Check schedule on website.	14 Bay Area locations.	4-5:30 am depending on your location, arriving at the mountain by 8:15 or 9am	Heavenly, Kirkwood, Northstar, Sierra-at-Tahoe, Sugarbowl, Squaw Valley	Direct to-mountain service	Departs from mountain between 4-4:30pm, arriving home between 7 and 9:30 pm	from \$89	Differ depending on trip. All include: a meal, wifi and movie on-board, and an apres ski party before returning home.	On: rentals, lodging, lessons and lift tickets	Bay Area Ski Bus
Santa Rosa Ski and Sport Bus Trips	YES	Weekends, two weeks apart. Schedule on website.	Sonoma County Veterans Center	5:00 AM	Northstar, Sierra-at-Tahoe, Sugarbowl, Squaw Valley/Alpine Meadows --- depends on the weekend	Direct to-mountain service	5:00 PM	from \$60	Snack, T-Shirt, on-board movie	On: Lift tickets	Santa Rosa Ski & Sports Bus Trips
Capitol Corridor Train	NO	Everyday	Several locations including: Fremont, Oakland, San Francisco (via bus to either Oakland or Emeryville), Davis	Depends on location, check website for schedule and to purchase tickets.	Sacramento, Roseville/Auburn	Heavenly via Amtrak to South Lake Tahoe from Sacramento and a local shuttle bus* from there; Squaw Valley/Alpine meadows and Northstar via transfer to California Zephyr in Roseville, and then a local TART bus* from Truckee	Depends on location, check website for schedule and to purchase tickets.	from \$50 (one-way)	Wifi, restrooms, food for purchase	X	Capitol Corridor Train
Amtrak California Zephyr	NO	Everyday	San Francisco&Oakland (via bus to Emeryville), Emeryville, Martinez, Davis	Departs 9-10am from Emeryville, and 11:09 from Sacramento. Arrives in Truckee at 2:38 pm. Check schedule for details and to purchase tickets.	North Tahoe Resorts via local TART bus* from Truckee; South Tahoe via bus from Sacramento	Squaw Valley/Alpine meadows and Northstar via local TART bus* from Truckee; Heavenly via Amtrak to South Lake Tahoe from Sacramento and a local shuttle bus* from there	Departs Truckee at 9:37am and Sacramento at 2:13 pm. Arrives back in Emeryville at 4:10pm. Check schedule for details and to purchase tickets.	from \$58 (one-way)	restrooms, food for purchase	X	Amtrak California Zephyr
Megabus	NO	Everyday	San Francisco Caltrain Station	Multiple times daily, check website for details and to purchase tickets.	Sacramento and Reno	Heavenly via Amtrak to South Lake Tahoe from Sacramento and a local shuttle bus* from there; or Squaw Valley/Alpine meadows and Northstar via transfer to California Zephyr in Reno, and then a local TART bus* from Truckee	Multiple times daily, check website for details and to purchase tickets.	from \$10	wifi, outlets	X	Megabus
Greyhound Bus	NO	Everyday	Multiple bay area locations.	Depends on location, check website for schedule and to purchase tickets.	Sacramento, Truckee and Reno	Heavenly via amtrak to South Lake Tahoe from Sacramento and a local shuttle bus* from there; or Squaw Valley/Alpine meadows and Northstar resorts via local TART bus* from Truckee	Depends on location, check website for schedule and to purchase tickets.	From \$54	wifi, outlets, food for purchase	X	Greyhound



NAME	ABOUT	WEBSITE
Rideshare/Carpool		
Skeddadle	Website and app that allows you to create and join 'trips' to a certain destination at a particular time. Once 3 or more people sign up for the trip, Skeddadle provides a van or bus and driver. Prices vary based on the trip.	Skeddadle
Carpool World	International ridesharing website with an active rideboard of people driving from Denver Metro Area to the mountains.	Carpool World
Zimride by Enterprise	Rideshare program run by enterprise. Tahoe skiers use the service to book and offer rides to the slopes.	Zimride
Mountain Rideshare	International rideshare website where skiers can book and offer rides to ski mountains.	Mountain Rideshare
		<p>Ski and snowboard meetup groups offering carpool services to California resorts include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reno-Tahoe Ski & Snowboard Meetup Group Sactown Snowboarders Northern California PowderHounds SF Ski & Social Meetup Group The San Francisco Skiers and Snowboarders Bay Area Skiing and Snowboarding East Bay Ski & Snowboard East Bay Ski and Snowboard Meetup Group "Uber Mammoth" Ski and Snowboarding Group
Meetup	Meetup allows people to create and invite others to social groups in their area. There are a number of ski groups that meetup and share rides to the slopes.	Big Bear and Snow Summit Snowboard/Ski Meetup Group
Craigslist	General resource board where individuals can post requests and find people from their area with whom to carpool.	Craigslist.com
NorCal Snowboarders	NorCal Snowboarders runs carpool trips from two locations in the Bay Area and Sacramento to Tahoe resorts.	NorCal Snowboarders
SnowPals	Free ride-share service where bay area skiers and boarders can offer and find rides between the bay area and Tahoe.	SnowPals

NAME	ABOUT	WEBSITE
* Local Transportation Resources		
Tahoe Truckee Regional Transit (TART)	Local bus with direct service to Northstar and Squaw Valley/Alpine Meadows.	TART
Heavenly Winter Shuttle	Shuttle bus from South Lake Tahoe	Heavenly Shuttle