

Chapter 7

In the Footsteps of Mark Twain

The Tahoe Basin and nearby areas have massive amounts of public lands managed as national forests and state and local parks. The Tahoe Basin is 87% publicly owned and nearby Alpine County, briefly visited by Twain in 1864, is 96% in public ownership. This provides the unique opportunity for Twain scholars and enthusiasts to visit most of the sites associated with Sam Clemens and Mark Twain that are mentioned throughout this book. A bonus is the public land protections and strict environmental protection measures on the public lands have preserved the surrounding environment so that it resembles in many ways the conditions in the 1860s. The opportunity to stand where Twain stood, see what Twain saw and experience the same feelings that Twain felt adds new dimensions to the appreciation of the author's works.

Refer to the area map (Figure 99) for the general locations and identification of the Mark Twain sites. Use the written directions and

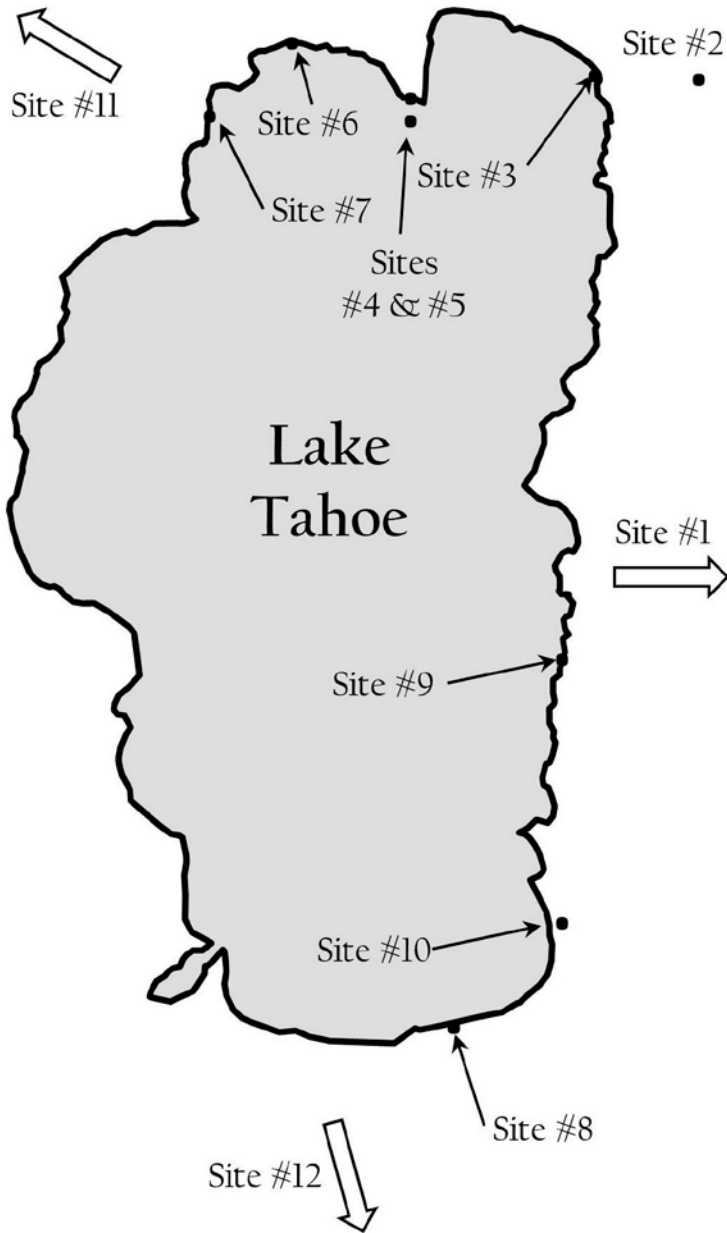


Figure 99. Area map showing points of interest associated with Mark Twain.

detail maps to find the site. Consult online maps and guide books to get specific directions to many of these locations.

Site #1 Ash Canyon Road-Washoe Trail from Carson City to Lake Tahoe

For the most adventurous and physically fit traveling across the route from Carson City to Lake Tahoe is a major challenge and not recommended for many people. Maintenance of the Ash Canyon road is largely nonexistent, and many parts are downright dangerous for vehicles. There are no services. Using existing dirt roads, interested persons can drive a portion of the Ash Canyon road using a 4WD vehicle, ride all of it on a mountain bike, or simply hike the distance, as Clemens and Kinney did in 1861.



Figure 100. Entrance to Ash Canyon from Wellington West Road

Motor vehicles will encounter a locked gate at the boundary to Lake Tahoe Nevada State Park, just past the Franktown Creek-Ash Creek watershed divide. Check on road conditions with the Carson City Public Works Division before attempting this route. Only persons that are knowledgeable on outdoor survival skills, carry emergency



Figure 101. Topographic map showing Ash Canyon-Washoe Trail route between Carson City and Lake Tahoe (Nat. Geo. Holdings)

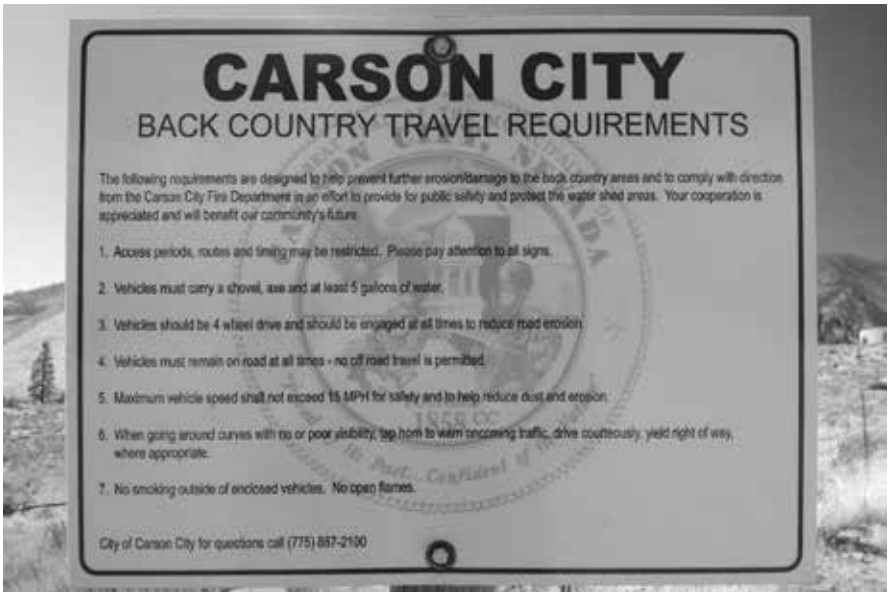


Figure 102. A sign at entrance to Ash Canyon gives many precautions for persons using the Ash Canyon Road.

equipment and supplies and are familiar with the terrain should consider this trip. The entrance to Ash Canyon is west of Carson City through an easement from Wellington West near the intersection of Ash Canyon Road and Wellington West. The GPS coordinates at the entrance are 39.1739° N, -119.7975° W.

Site #2 Fairest Picture Vista Point and Washoe Trail

On a public easement to Lake Tahoe Nevada State Park, one can hike 1.4 miles to the point where Sam Clemens emerged from the forest to see Lake Tahoe for the first time. It was this magical view from the Washoe Trail (approximated by the modern-day Tunnel Creek Road) that inspired him to write that Lake Tahoe is the “fairest picture the whole earth affords.” The Incline Village-Crystal Bay Historical Society and Nevada State Parks installed an interpretive panel and bench there with sponsorship by Tunnel Creek Lodge.



Figure 103. Interpretive panel on Tunnel Creek Road marking the approximate location where Sam Clemens first sighted Lake Tahoe.

Where legal to do so, park on the Highway 28 roadway shoulder near the intersection of Lakeshore Drive in Incline Village, Nev. Start at the intersection of Ponderosa Ranch Road near the Tunnel Creek Café and follow the Tunnel Creek Road that starts on the right. There is a \$1.00 per person fee to enter the park after about one-half mile and watch for oncoming mountain bikes completing the Great Flume Trail ride. The vista point is at GPS coordinates 39.22747° N, -119.92019° W.

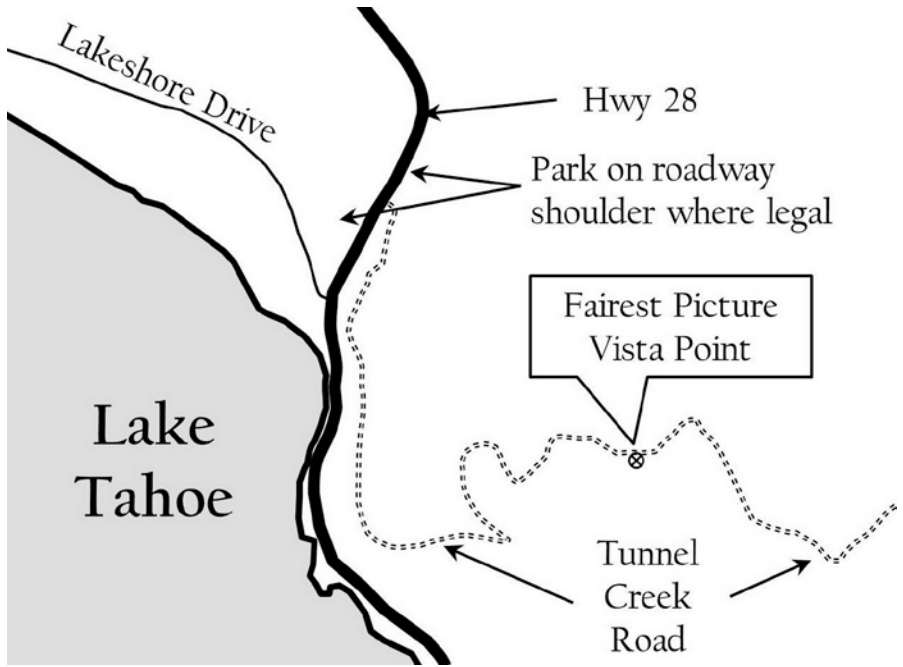


Figure 104. Detail map for hiking to the Fairest Picture Vista Point

Site #3 Hidden Beach (Found a Skiff)

The beach where Sam Clemens and John Kinney found the skiff they used to cross Crystal Bay is a public beach now called Hidden Beach and part of Lake Tahoe Nevada State Park. Looking westward from the beach, one can see “across a deep bend of the lake [Crystal Bay] toward the landmarks [Stateline Point] that signified the locality of the camp.” One can visit the beach after a short walk from the roadside parking area, about one-half mile south of the intersection of Highway 28 and Lakeshore Drive. Look for parking on the lakeside of the road only and past the last house. From the parking areas, follow a path 0.4 to 0.6-mile on the lakeside just inside the highway guardrail and look for interpretive signs about Lake Tahoe. The GPS coordinates for Hidden Beach near Incline Village are 39.22132° N, -119.92893° W.

As of this writing (December 2016), a paved multi-use trail is under construction that will connect the intersection of Highway 28 and Lakeshore Drive with Sand Harbor State Park and pass through

Hidden Beach. Plans call for installation of an interpretive panel at the beach telling the story of Clemens and Kinney finding a boat there and rowing across Crystal Bay to their camp on Stateline Point.

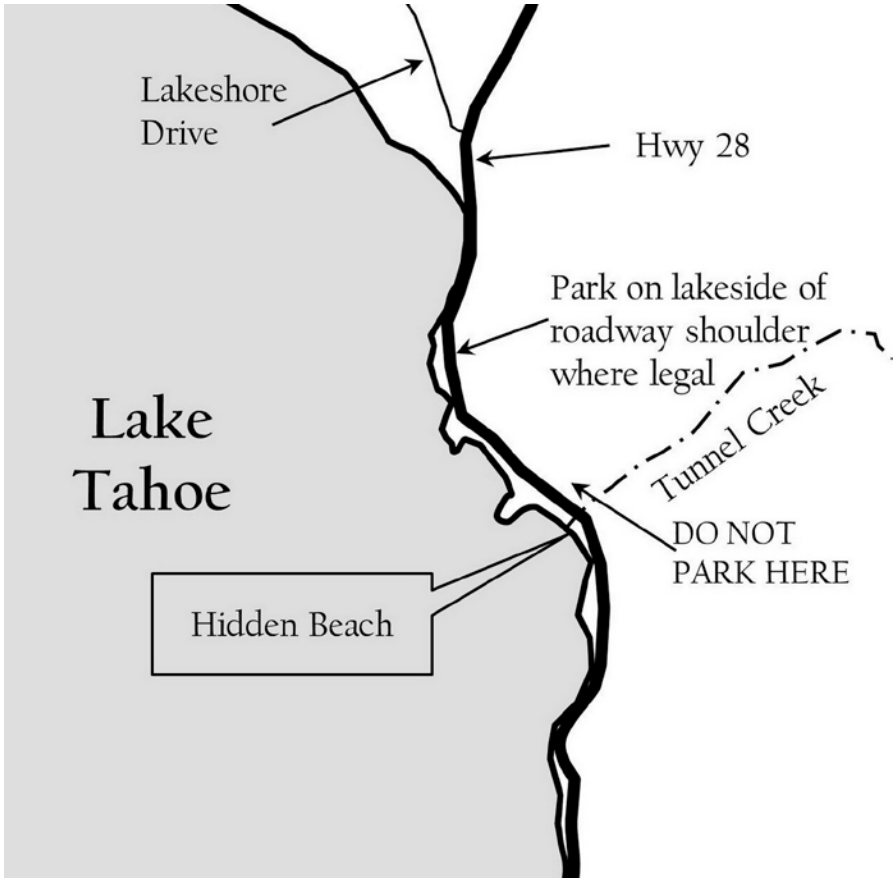


Figure 105. Detail map for locating Hidden Beach

Site #4 Speedboat Beach (Supply Cache Campsite)

At the tip of Stateline Point is a small public beach owned by Placer County. It was here that Clemens and Kinney found the Brigade's cache of food and supplies and played faro on a flat rock. The public beach is entirely in California. Once on the beach, you may move westward along the public trust zone below the approximate high-water rim of Lake Tahoe. No such public trust zone exists in Nevada,

and you will encounter “no trespassing” signs east of Speedboat Beach. Please respect private property by obeying the signs.

You may visit Speedboat Beach by turning south off Highway 28 onto Harbor Avenue. Follow Harbor Avenue until it ends near Lake Tahoe. Park where legal on Harbor Avenue or Speedboat Avenue. The GPS coordinates for Speedboat Beach on Stateline Point are 39.22296° N, -120.00722° W. Parking is very limited, so arrive early or park on the state highway and walk in if you wish to visit this site. Be aware that all on-street parking on Speedboat and Harbor Avenues is prohibited between November 1 and May 1 due to snow removal

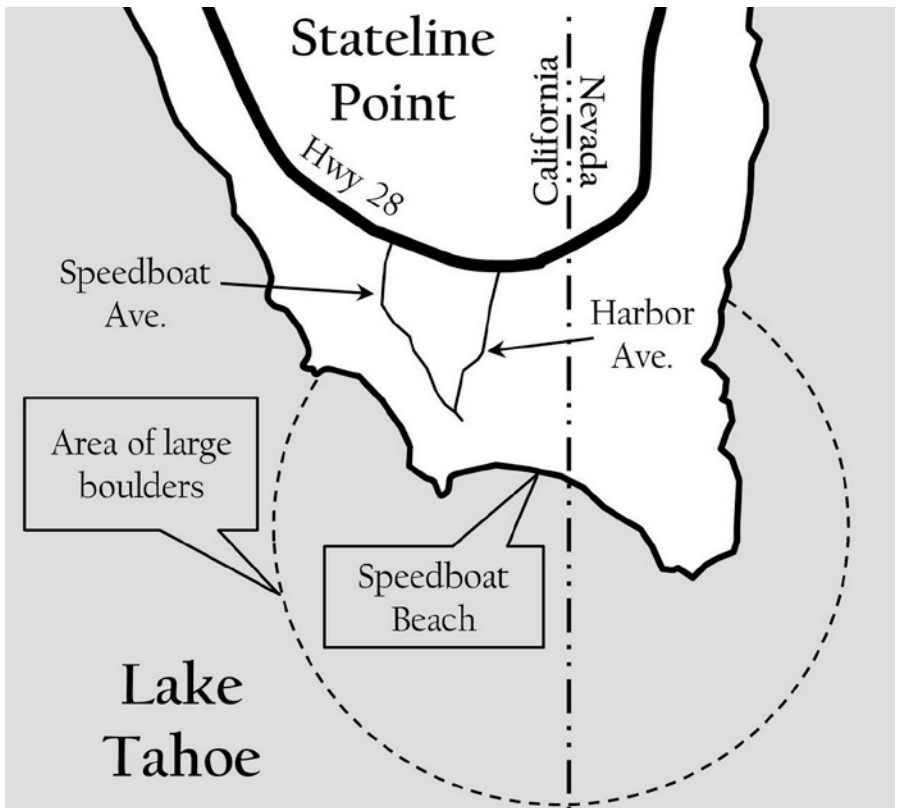


Figure 106. Detail map showing location of Speedboat Beach and the offshore area where large submerged boulders occur.

requirements. When Lake Tahoe is at or near its high-water level, there is no exposed beach to visit.

As of this writing (December 2016), Placer County will make improvements to the beach and nearby parking. The project includes interpretive panels presenting the details of Clemens and Kinney's campsite there and their "balloon voyage" experience as they drifted over the offshore submerged rocks. While visiting the site, look for the "flat granite rock" that served as Clemens' dining table. You will find it close to the bank near the access stairway. A photo of the rock appears on Figure 65.

Site #5 Recreate Sam Clemens' Balloon Voyage over the Submerged Boulders (Offshore of Stateline Point)

If you brought an inflatable boat or a small kayak, you can drift offshore of Speedboat Beach on Stateline Point. Here you can see the massively large boulders that Mark Twain wrote about in *Roughing It* as his "balloon voyages." Alternatively, you can rent a kayak at one of the several Kings Beach locations and paddle out to Stateline Point yourself. Refer to Figure 106 for the general location of the large submerged boulders. The GPS coordinates for the submerged boulder field are 39.2208° N, -120.0071° W.

Site #6 Sandy Beach (Timber Claim Campsite and Wildfire Location)

Although we do not know the exact location of Clemens and Kinney's campsite and brush house, you can get a feel for the area at Sandy Beach, on public land owned by the California Tahoe Conservancy. The public beach lies on the lakeside of the highway between Anderson Road and National Avenue in Tahoe Vista, Calif. You may park on the shoulder of Highway 28 where legal to do so. As of this writing (December 2016), interpretive panels explaining the Mark Twain related historical events that happened there are proposed for installation. The GPS coordinates for Sandy Beach are 39.23966° N, -120.05111° W.



Figure 107. Photo of Sandy Beach showing large boulders offshore

It was in this area that Clemens and Kinney staked their timber claim. Later, their untended campfire ignited a wildfire. The boulders you see out in the water may be or are like the two protecting boulders that the two men slept between during the fire. Recall that the shoreline extended much farther out than today and was heavily modified over the last 100 years. You may move east and west along the shoreline in this area below the approximate high-water rim of Lake Tahoe. Across Highway 28 and on private property, you will see some examples of the large trees more than five feet in diameter about which Twain wrote.

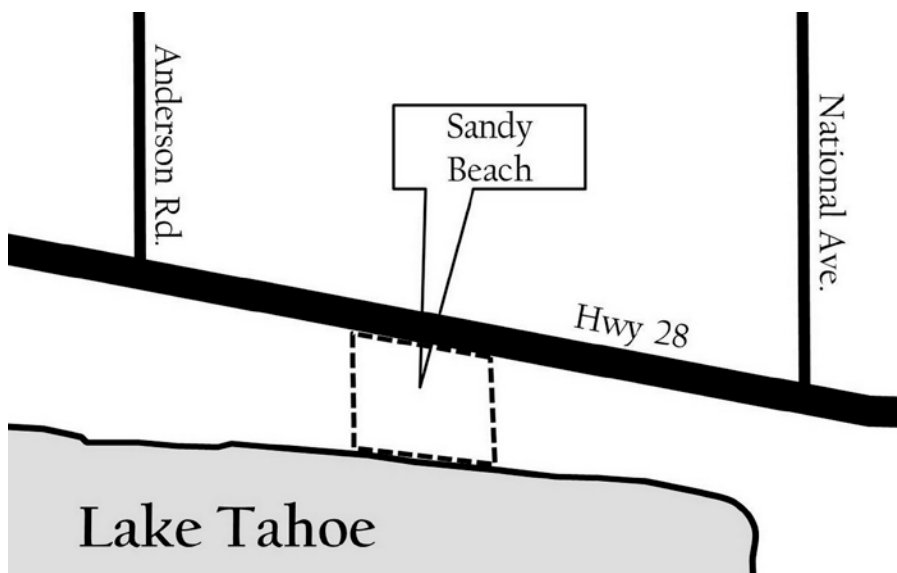


Figure 108. Detail map showing the location of Sandy Beach in the Tahoe Vista area and on or near the timber claim and wildfire locations

Site #7 Carnelian West Beach (Cabin and Dugout Canoe Site)

The Carnelian Bay cabin where Clemens and Kinney played cribbage and then paddled back in the cabin owner's canoe is long gone. However, the location is on a Placer County roadway right-of-way that parallels the Lake Tahoe shoreline with parking and access at the California Tahoe Conservancy Carnelian West Beach. Please stay on the defined pathway and do not cross onto private property, including the pier. The area below the approximate high-water rim of Lake Tahoe is a public trust zone, and you may cross over this to the lake.

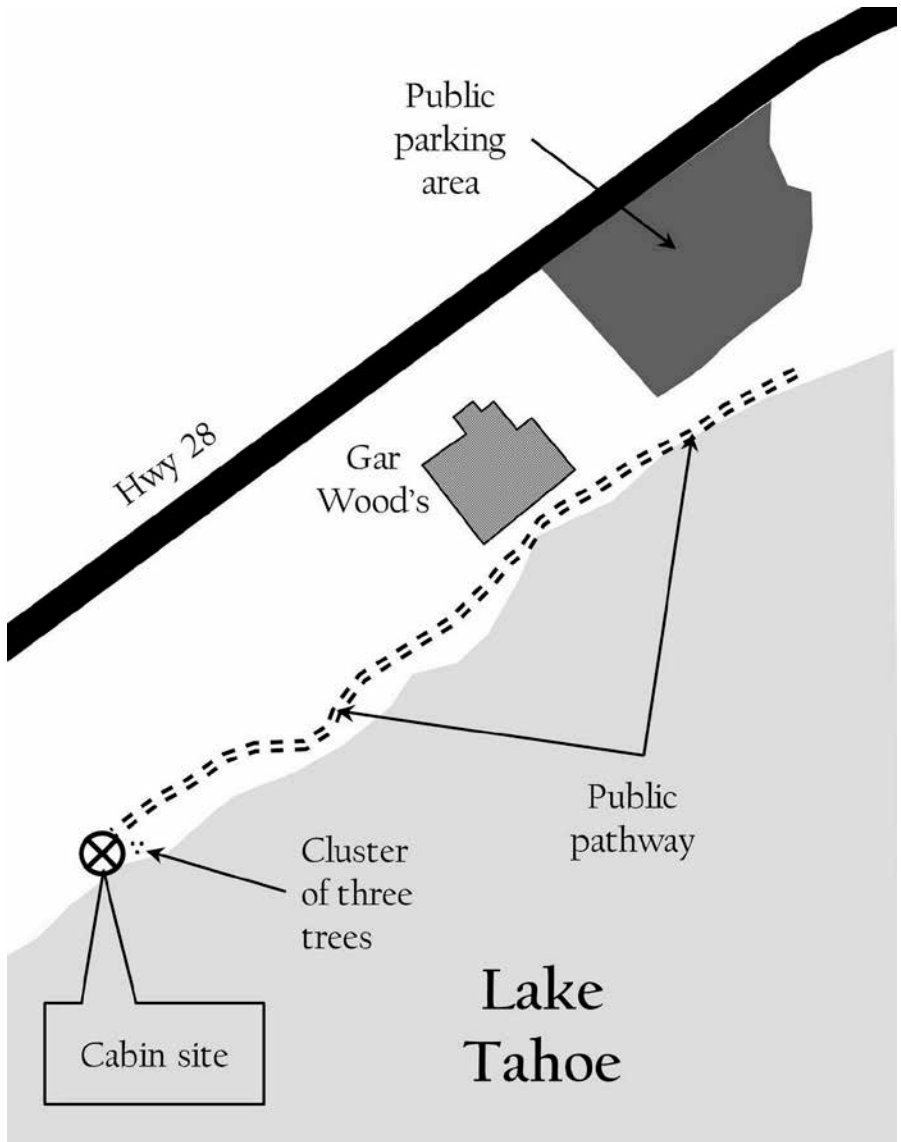


Figure 109. Detail map showing approximate location of the Carnelian Bay cabin site near Carnelian West Beach

Walking about 450-500 feet southwest of Gar Wood's pier, you will come upon a cluster of three old-growth trees – two cedars and Jeffrey pine. See Figure 110 for a picture of these trees. These trees mark the approximate location of the cabin. Keep in mind the shoreline

extended much farther out than today and has receded because of erosion caused by the Tahoe Dam. If you look towards the east, you can imagine Clemens and Kinney watching for the moonrise over the Carson Range before beginning their canoe trip back to camp at Stateline Point. The GPS coordinates for this site are 39.22433° N,-120.08466° W.



Figure 110. Cluster of old-growth trees (center) that mark the approximate location of the cabin site.

Site #8 Lake House Location

The now vacant site where Lake House once stood is easily accessible by a surface street in the Al Tahoe area of South Lake Tahoe. In 1863, Mark Twain stayed here while attempting to cure a severe cold.

A short walk along a pleasant trail bordering Upper Truckee Marsh takes you to an area enclosed by a low fence. The meadow and access trail is on public land managed by the California Tahoe



Figure 111. Modern-day photo showing the site of Lake House marked by the rustic fence.

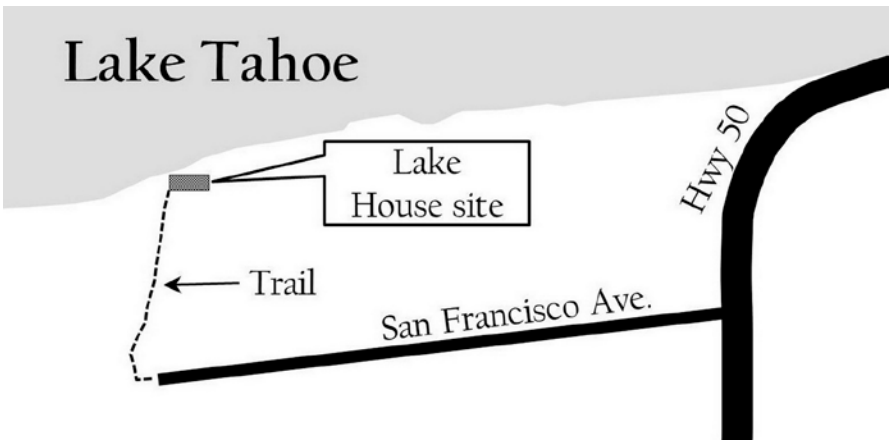


Figure 112. Detail map showing public access and trail to the Lake House site on Upper Truckee Meadow in South Lake Tahoe

Conservancy. This is the probable site of Lake House. To the west of this site, was the location of the Lake House pier that docked the excursion sailboat boarded by Mark Twain.

To access the site of Lake House for U.S. Highway 50, follow San Francisco Ave. to its end and park where legal. Enter the meadow through the gate at the end of the street and follow the trail toward Lake Tahoe and the site of Lake House. The GPS coordinates for the trailhead at the end of San Francisco Ave. are 38.93945° N, -119.99137° W and the coordinates for site of Lake House on the edge of Upper Truckee Meadow are 38.94314° N, -119.99111° W.

Site #9 Lake Tahoe Wagon Road Remnant near Logan Shoals

The United States Forest Service operates a Lake Tahoe vista point and lake access at Logan Shoals on the East Shore. Here, you can hike down to a surviving remnant of the Lake Tahoe Wagon Road, traveled several times in a stagecoach by Mark Twain. The road is still passable, and one can walk it about one-third mile until it ends at

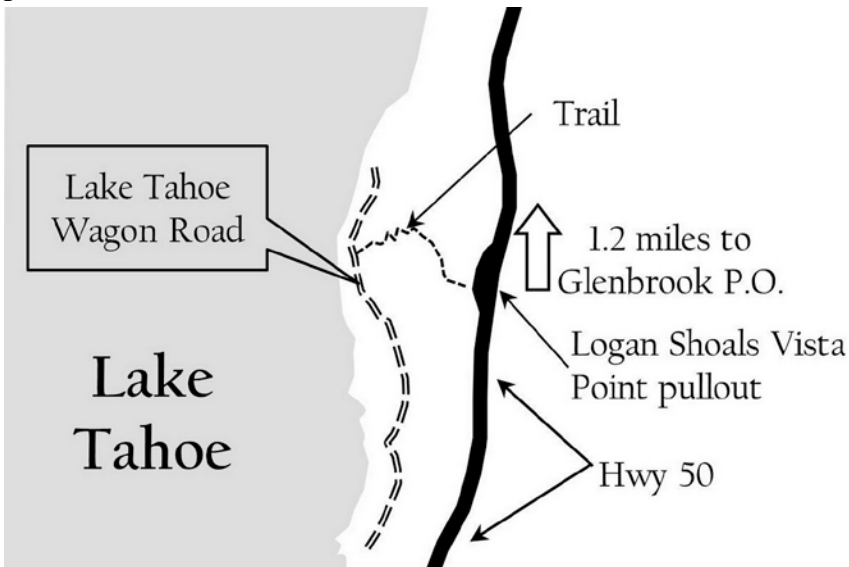


Figure 113. Detail map showing the location of the Logan Shoals Vista Point and access to the Lake Tahoe Wagon Road remnant

private property. Imagine rumbling along in a stagecoach while absorbing the magnificent Lake Tahoe scenery as Mark Twain did.

From Highway 50 on the East Shore, watch for the Logan Shoals Vista Point sign on the lakeside of the highway about 1.2 miles south of the Glenbrook Post Office at 1785 U.S. Highway 50. One may park along the highway at the vista point pullout where legal. Follow one of the several steep trails leading down to the lake; these trails will intersect with the remnant of the Lake Tahoe Wagon Road. The GPS coordinates for the Logan Shoals Vista Point on the East Shore are 39.05802° N, -119.94324° W.



Figure 114. Lake Tahoe Wagon Road remnant near Logan Shoals Vista Point

Site #10 Lake Tahoe Wagon Road Remnant near *Lam Watah*
The *Lam Watah* interpretive site, operated by the United States Forest Service, honors a historic Washoe cultural site where families camped for centuries. Here again, another surviving segment of the Lake

Tahoe Wagon Road and a small section of the Lake House Road, both traveled by Mark Twain, is visible and accessible.

You can reach the *Lam Watah* cultural site, by turn onto Kahle Drive from U.S. Highway 50 near Stateline, Nev. Park in the small parking area to the right. Looking out toward the meadow, you will see a dirt road that threads between two sets of boulders. This is the remnant of the Lake Tahoe Wagon Road. Another dirt road leads to the lake. This is possibly the remnant of a meadow road/trail that led to Fish & Ferguson's landing for the freight schooner *Iron Duke*.

In the meadow toward the highway is a large grouping of boulders. You will find evidence of ancient Washoe encampment here in the form of well-worn grinding rocks use to process seeds and nuts. The GPS coordinates for the *Lam Watah* cultural site entrance are 38.97058° N,-119.93524° W.



Figure 115. Remnant of the Lake Tahoe Wagon Road

Relive Mark Twain's western experience as portrayed in *Roughing It* by the Ghost of Mark Twain, McAvoy Layne

Noted Mark Twain impressionist McAvoy Layne regularly performs Mark Twain monologues in a Chautauqua-style setting at various venues throughout the Lake Tahoe and Western Nevada region. Layne has been preeminent in preserving the wit and wisdom of “The Wild Humorist of the Pacific Slope,” Mark Twain. Visit the website www.ghostoftwain.com for location information and a schedule of performances.



Figure 116. A Washoe family circa 1870s (Wikimedia Commons)

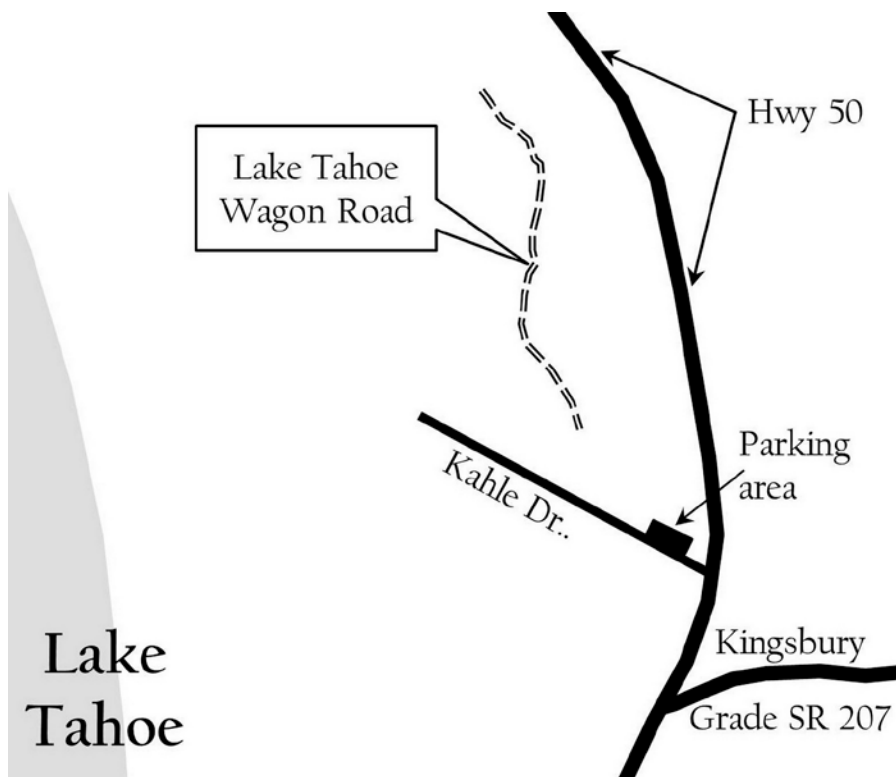


Figure 117. Detail map showing the location of Lam Watah cultural site and the Lake Tahoe Wagon Road remnant

Site #11 Dutch Flat-Donner Lake Wagon Road Route Over Donner Summit

You can drive your car or ride your bike along a section of old Highway 40 where it closely followed the Dutch Flat-Donner Lake Wagon Road. Mark Twain came over the snow-covered wagon road by horse-drawn sleigh in April of 1868.

Your route will follow Hampshire Rocks, Donner Pass, and Prosser Dam Roads. Check highway conditions in winter, as these roads can close for brief periods due to snow. Consult online road maps for more detailed mapping information.

To follow the Dutch Flat-Donner Lake Wagon Road historical alignment, begin by taking the Big Bend Exit #166 off ramp from

Interstate 80 (east bound) about 32 miles west of Truckee, Calif. and at GPS coordinates 39.30430° N, -120.52045° W. (If west bound on Interstate 80, take the Cisco Grove Exit #165 and follow Hampshire Rocks road east toward Big Bend.) From Big Bend, drive east bound on Hampshire Rocks Road. This road follows the old route of the wagon road. Continue under the freeway to Donner Pass Road; it follows the wagon road alignment to about Soda Springs. From Soda Springs, the wagon road alignment was south of Donner Pass Road in the broad meadow called Summit Valley, or formerly, Lake Van Norden.

Once over Donner Pass, the wagon road follows a circuitous route between the paved road and railroad. A 3.5-mile remnant of the Dutch Flat-Donner Lake Wagon Road east of Donner Pass is still visible and accessible on foot and mountain bike. Refer to Figure 118 to see an area map of this section of the historic roadbed. Check with Truckee area trail websites (tdlandtrust.org) for updates to mapping and directions to follow this section of the road from Donner Pass to just west of Donner Lake. Your driving route will bypass this old alignment.

Continue along Donner Pass Road until you reach the west end of Donner Lake where the wagon road route rejoins the paved road. Donner Pass Road approximately follows the wagon road to Historic Downtown Truckee. It was here that Mark Twain left his horse-drawn sleigh, sent a telegram to Virginia City and boarded a stage for the last leg of his final trip to Nevada.

Continue along Donner Pass Road through Truckee to its intersection with Highway 89. Turn left onto Highway 89 and follow it about three-quarters mile to the junction of Prosser Dam Road, which continues to follow the alignment of the wagon road. Follow Prosser Dam Road about 2.5 miles until you reach Prosser Reservoir at GPS coordinates 39.37671° N, -120.14142° W. This concludes your 25-mile journey retracing Mark Twain's route.

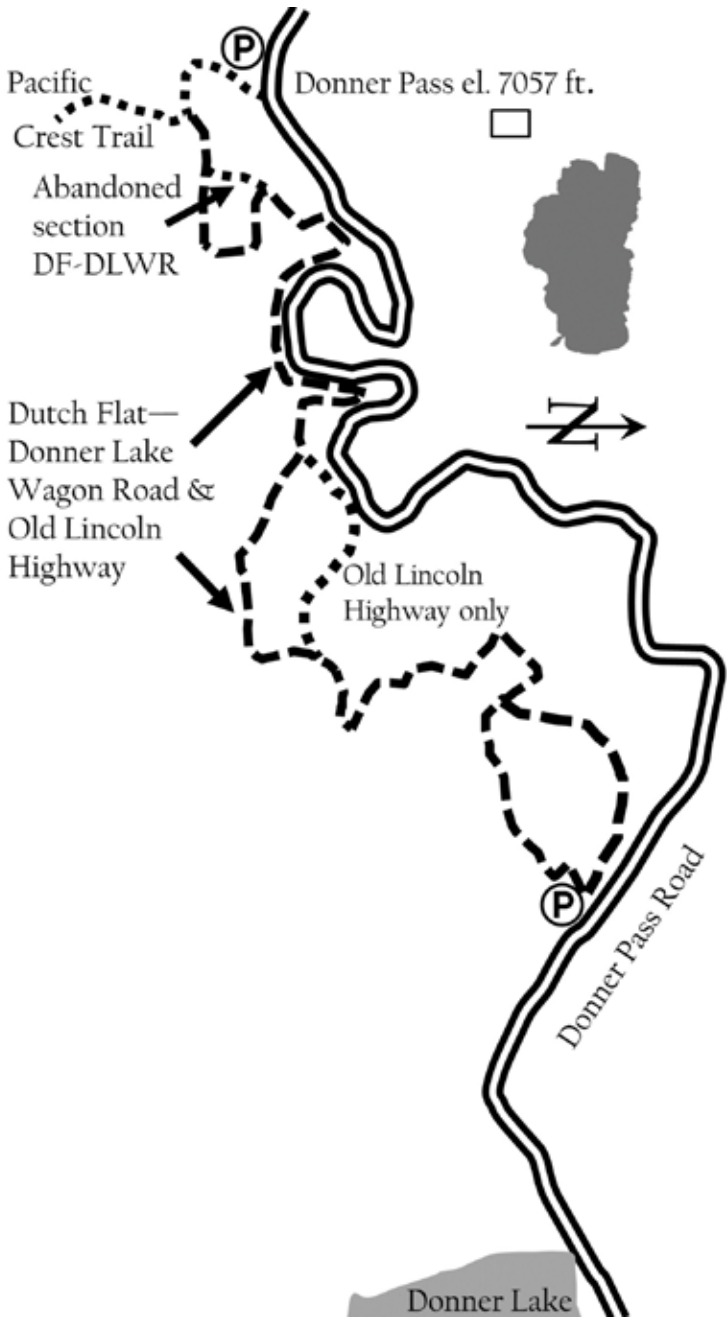


Figure 118. Map of Dutch Flat - Donner Lake Wagon Road hike (not to scale)

Site #12 Silver Mountain City Town Site

The town site for Silver Mountain City, visited by Mark Twain in 1864, is easy to find on Highway 4. Look for a few interpretive signs and remnants of the old rock-walled jail.



Figure 119. Interpretive panel and site marker at Silver Mountain City

Consult online road maps for more detailed mapping information. Begin at the junction of Highways 88 and 89 in Woodfords, Alpine County, Calif. Take Highway 89 south to Markleeville. Your route will follow the general corridor of the wagon road and stagecoach route to Silver Mountain City. About 4.8 miles past Markleeville, Highway 4 begins. On Highway 4 and about 10.5 miles from Markleeville is the location of the abandoned town of Silver Mountain. As you enter the town site, watch for a Forest Service sign and interpretive information marking its former location. The GPS coordinates for the site of Silver Mountain City in Alpine County are 38.55998° N, -119.8100° W.