#T5-2026 “Tahoe Five Peaks”

Lake Tahoe

California

Route Summary

Location: Lake Tahoe, Sierra Nevada NV / CA
Distance: 51 miles
Estimated Time: 24 hours
Elevation Gain: 14,036 ft
Difficulty: 5 / 5
Route Type: Out-and-Back (x5)

“The Hardest Day Hike in America”

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OFF YOU POP: A BLISTERPOP ADVENTURE PODCAST

EPISODE 12: T5 – The Hardest Day Hike in America

GUIDE LAST UPDATED 04/02/2026

How To Use This Guide

WHAT THIS GUIDE IS

This guide is designed to give you everything you need for a safe, confident, and meaningful day on the trail. It blends logistics, storytelling, and practical tools so you can focus on the experience—not the admin. Each section is built to be skim-friendly, field-ready, and structured around the natural rhythm of the hike.

THREE STEPS TO READY

The first section of this guide provides three easy steps to book your adventure in about 30 minutes:
Step 1: **When To Go**
Step 2: **How to Get There**
Step 3: **Where to Stay**

HOW TO NAVIGATE THE REST OF THIS GUIDE

- Read **The Route** to understand the segments, download gpx files for your hike
- **Risk Management** helps you understand the dangers you may encounter on this hike
- Learn more about the **Local Intel** to shape your journey
- Use the **Trail Ready Checklist** the night before your hike
- Refer to **Additional Resources** for real-time conditions and local support.
- Check out what to do when you **Post Hike** to register your effort
- Finally, we added a **Route History** section to provide you the geological, biological and human history of this route.

Everything is modular — jump to the section you need.

FINAL NOTE

This guide is here to empower you. Use what's helpful, ignore what isn't, and shape the day into your own story. The trail belongs to you now. If you find any information in this guide is incorrect, please let us know at contactus@blisterpopadventures.com

How To Use This Guide

LEGAL DISCLAIMER

All information in this guidebook is provided for general informational purposes only. Trail conditions, weather, access roads, closures, and safety considerations can change at any time without notice. Hikers are responsible for verifying current conditions, carrying appropriate gear, and making decisions based on their own judgment, experience, and abilities. The authors and publishers assume no responsibility or liability for any injuries, losses, or damages that may result from the use of this guide or participation in any activities described herein. Outdoor travel involves inherent risks; proceed with caution and at your own discretion.

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Route conditions change frequently. Users are responsible for their own safety, navigation, and decision-making. Blisterpop Adventures LLC assumes no liability for injuries, losses, or damages resulting from the use of this guide.

Welcome

Welcome to the Tahoe Five Peaks Challenge

The Tahoe Five Peaks (T5) is one of the hardest single-day hiking challenges in America — a 51 miles, 14,036 ft vertical odyssey linking five of Tahoe's most iconic summits in one continuous push. It's a test of grit, planning, pacing, and mountain awareness. And now you're stepping into it.

BlisterPop's mission is to make epic one-day adventures accessible to anyone willing to take on the challenge. As part of the BlisterPop community, you get the tools, clarity, and support to move through big landscapes with confidence. This guide distills everything you need to complete the T5: logistics, timing, route intel, safety systems, and the rules that make the challenge real.

The BlisterPop Value

Your purchase of this challenge provides you with:

- Complete route logistics and planning
- Base-town and lodging recommendations
- Driving, timing, and sequencing guidance
- Trail-ready checklist
- Emergency and risk-management planning
- A one-of-a-kind finisher's Challenge Card
- Entry on the official T5 Completion Board
- Access to our online community
- Off You Pop: Podcast Guides
- Hero status
- A lifetime of stories

Why We Built the T5

The T5 was born from a simple belief: the Sierra shouldn't only belong to ultrarunners, elite athletes, or people with endless time to plan. This challenge exists to give everyday adventurers a clear, structured path into something extraordinary — a day that feels impossible until it isn't.

We built the T5 to be more than a route. It's a narrative. A rite of passage. A way to see Tahoe the way only the bold ever do.

"I created the T5 because I believe people are capable of far more than they think — they just need a map, a mission, and a reason to start." – Philip Clark, Founder

Welcome

T5 CHALLENGE FORMATS

1. T5: The Hardest Day Hike in America (Official Format)
The original, definitive version of the challenge.
You summit all five peaks — Rose, Granite Chief, Tallac, Freel, Genoa — in a single calendar day, driving between trailheads and managing your own pacing, hydration, and navigation. This is the format that earns you a place on the Official T5 Completion Board.
What defines it:
• All five peaks
• One calendar day
• Self-supported or supported driver
• GPS proof + summit photos
• The hardest single-day hiking challenge in Tahoe

2. T5 Casual
A more accessible version that lets you finish the hikes on your schedule.
You complete all five peaks, choosing your own sequencing and pacing. Perfect for strong hikers who want the full experience without the single-day time pressure.
What defines it:
• All five peaks
• Completed with a **Total Hiking Time of 24 hours**
• Flexible order
• Still earns a finisher card
• Ideal for hikers building toward the full T5

Welcome

THE RULES OF THE T5 CHALLENGE

The T5 is a self-supported, self-navigated challenge. To earn an official finish and a place on the Finisher Board, your day must follow these rules:

1. Summit All Five Peaks
   - Mt. Rose
   - Granite Chief
   - Mt. Tallac
   - Freel Peak
   - Genoa Peak

2. Complete All Five in the allotted time
   - T5 Hardest Hike in America: 24 hours (midnight to 11:59am) Total elapsed time
   - T5 Casual: 24 hours total elapsed hiking time (complete in one calendar year)

3. Drive Between Trailheads
   - This is a multi-segment challenge.
   - You may drive yourself or have a support driver.
   - No off-road shortcuts or closed-road access.

4. Follow Established Trails
   - No bushwhacking, no illegal shortcuts, no closed areas.
   - Respect wilderness boundaries and seasonal restrictions.

5. Record Your Effort
   - Summit photos on the BlisterPop Facebook Page
   - Start/finish timestamps

6. Respect the Land
   - Leave No Trace
   - Stay on trail
   - Pack out everything
   - Respect wildlife and seasonal closures

7. Safety First
   - You are responsible for your own navigation, hydration, and pacing.
   - Weather, smoke, and trail conditions can change rapidly — adjust accordingly.

Welcome

WHAT MAKES THE T5 ONE OF THE HARDEST DAY HIKES IN AMERICA?

- 50+ miles of mountain terrain
- 13,000+ ft of vertical gain
- Five distinct ecosystems
- Five separate trailheads
- Heat, wind, altitude, and exposure
- A full day of decision-making and pacing
- A finish that demands everything you have left

This is not a race. It's a personal summit day multiplied by five — a full-value mountain experience that pushes your endurance, your planning, and your mindset.

WELCOME TO YOUR NEXT BIG STORY

You're not just signing up for a challenge — you're stepping into a narrative that only a few people on earth will ever complete. The T5 is a day you'll talk about for years, a story that becomes part of who you are.

Let's get you ready.

Step 1
When To Go

Best Seasons

Primary Window: July – October
T5 Season: July 1 – October 31
Recommended Time: Late August – Early October

The T5 spans five major peaks across the Tahoe Basin, each with its own weather, snowpack, and access considerations. Early summer can still hold snow on Granite Chief and Freel Peak, while late fall brings cold mornings and early storms. The season is only recognized between **July 1 and October 31**, when all peaks are reliably accessible and conditions are safest.

Weather At-a-Glance

<u>SNOW & ACCESS (May–July)</u>
• Granite Chief and Freel Peak often hold snow into late June
• Cornices and lingering drifts on north aspects
• Muddy, unstable trails during melt
• Mosquitoes heavy in early season
TIP – Competitive attempts should not begin before July 1.

<u>HEAT & EXPOSURE (July–Sept)</u>
• High temps on exposed ridgelines
• Strong sun at altitude (8,000–10,000 ft)
• Dehydration risk increases on Tallac and Freel
• Afternoon thunderstorms possible
TIP – Start early and manage hydration aggressively.

<u>WILDFIRE SMOKE (July–Oct)</u>
• Smoke can reduce visibility and air quality
• Sudden trail closures possible
• Heat + smoke = increased exertion risk
TIP – Check AQI and regional fire updates before committing.

<u>THUNDERSTORMS (July–Aug)</u>
• Fast-building Sierra cells
• Lightning risk on exposed summits
• Sudden temperature drops
TIP – Avoid all high ridges during active storm cycles.

Step 1
When To Go

WIND (Year-Round)
• Strong ridge winds on Rose, Freel, and Genoa
• Gusts 30–50+ mph common
• Wind chill significant above 9,000 ft
TIP – Carry a wind layer even on warm days.

COLD & EARLY STORMS (Oct–Nov)
• Freezing mornings on all peaks
• Early snow possible on Granite Chief and Freel
• Shorter daylight window
• Ice on shaded sections
TIP – Late October is still valid for competitive attempts, but be prepared for winter conditions.

DRYNESS & ALTITUDE (Year-Round)
• No water sources on most peaks
• High elevation increases fatigue
• Full sun exposure on 80% of the route
TIP – Carry all water for each segment; refill only between trailheads.

Road Access

All T5 trailheads are accessible by standard vehicles during the competitive window, but conditions vary:

• Mt. Rose: Reliable access all season
• Granite Chief: Parking fills early on weekends
• Tallac: Glen Alpine and Spring Creek lots can close due to fire or storms
• Freel Peak: Access via High Meadow or Armstrong Pass may be affected by washouts
• Genoa Peak: Kingsbury access is reliable; Genoa Peak Road may close after storms

Check local USFS and county road status before committing.

Permits

Day Permit required for Tallac (it's free, but don't forget to fill out at the trailhead)

You're Good to Go

Step 2
How To Get Here

WARNING! MULTI-TRAILHEAD CHALLENGE: YOU MUST DRIVE BETWEEN PEAKS
NO SHUTTLE SERVICE AVAILABLE

Base Camp

Reno, Nevada
Reno is the most efficient base for the T5 — fast access to Mt. Rose, direct highway connections to all other trailheads, full lodging options, and 24-hour services for early starts and late finishes. Long drive back to Reno after finishing Genoa.

Map Link (Reno)
https://maps.app.goo.gl/4q9p7c6VtZ2nJ8xE9

Best Airports

Reno–Tahoe International Airport (RNO)
https://www.renoairport.com/
Drive Distance (South Lake Tahoe): 58 miles (1 hr 15 min)

Sacramento International Airport (SMF)
https://sacramento.aero/smf
Drive Distance (South Lake Tahoe): 113 miles (2 hrs)

Car Rental

Any standard rental car works for the T5. All trailheads are accessible via paved or well-maintained roads.
We recommend renting from Enterprise, Hertz, or Budget at RNO for the fastest access to the lake.

Trailhead Transportation

The T5 requires **driving between all five peaks**. There is no shuttle service, and rideshare coverage is unreliable around the lake, especially early morning or late evening.

Recommended System
• Drive yourself
• Or have a support driver

• Or use two vehicles staged strategically

Trailhead Information

MT. ROSE SUMMIT TRAILHEAD
Google Maps Link
https://www.google.com/maps/search/?api=1&query=39.31346,-119.89745

Parking Notes: Large paved lot on Mt. Rose Highway (NV-431). Fills on weekends. No overnight restrictions.

GRANITE CHIEF (GRANITE CHIEF TRAILHEAD)
Google Maps Link:
https://www.google.com/maps/search/?api=1&query=39.200101418372846,-120.23732949661864

Parking Notes:
Park in the main Olympic Valley lot in front of the Conference Center. Take the trail by the Ropes Course.

MT. TALLAC TRAILHEAD
Google Maps Link:
https://www.google.com/maps/search/?api=1&query=38.92139,-120.06819

Parking Notes
Small lot; fills early. Overflow parking available along Mt. Tallac Road. No fee.

FREEL PEAK — HORSE MEADOW TRAILHEAD
Google Maps Link:
https://www.google.com/maps/search/?api=1&query=38.829722006203724,-119.90072941490851

Parking Notes
Trailhead at the end of Horse Meadow Road (dirt). Usually passable in a standard vehicle in dry conditions, but rutted and rough in spots. Limited parking; do not block the road or private driveways.

Step 2
How To Get Here

GENOA PEAK — KINGSBURY NORTH TRAILHEAD
Google Maps Link:
https://www.google.com/maps/search/?api=1&query=38.99606,-119.89651

Parking Notes
Park at the TRT Kingsbury North Trailhead. Reliable access year-round. No fees.

ROUTE ORDER & DRIVING LOGISTICS

The official T5 route requires a specific order:

1. Mt. Rose
2. Granite Chief
3. Mt. Tallac
4. Freel Peak
5. Genoa Peak

This order minimizes backtracking and keeps the longest climbs earlier in the day, and keeps you on the safer trails at night. For casual participants, you may complete in any order.

Driving Time (Typical Flow)
- Rose → Granite Chief: 45–55 min
- Granite Chief → Tallac: 45–55 min
- Tallac → Freel: 25–30 min
- Freel → Genoa: 20–25 min

Step 2
Where to Stay

Base Town: Reno, Nevada

https://www.visitrenotahoe.com/

Reno is the ideal base for the Tahoe Five Peaks Challenge. It sits just 25–30 minutes from Mt. Rose — the most common starting peak — and offers fast highway access to all other trailheads. With full-service hotels, 24-hour food, reliable parking, and the region's primary airport, Reno gives you the smoothest logistics for early starts, late finishes, and multi-peak sequencing.

Accommodation Booking Platform

We recommend using Booking.com for a wide selection of hotels across Reno. For the T5, a two-night stay is ideal: one night before your challenge and one night after for recovery.

Step 2
Where to Stay

Recommended Hotels / Motels (Reno)

Whitney Peak Hotel
Modern, non-gaming hotel in downtown Reno with quiet rooms and easy parking.
Booking.com: https://www.booking.com/hotel/us/whitney-peak.html

Renaissance Reno Downtown
Upscale riverfront hotel with spacious rooms and reliable early-morning access.
Booking.com: https://www.booking.com/hotel/us/renaissance-reno-downtown.html

Aloft Reno-Tahoe International Airport
Perfect for fly-in athletes — walkable to the terminal with clean, modern rooms.
Booking.com: https://www.booking.com/hotel/us/aloft-reno-tahoe-international-airport.html

Hyatt Place Reno-Tahoe Airport
Quiet, consistent, and close to both the airport and Mt. Rose Highway.
Booking.com: https://www.booking.com/hotel/us/hyatt-place-reno-tahoe-airport.html

South Reno (closer to the trailhead)

PREMIUM

Element Reno Experience District
Modern, quiet, and closest premium option to Mt. Rose Highway.
Booking.com: https://www.booking.com/hotel/us/element-reno-experience-district.html

MIDRANGE

SpringHill Suites by Marriott Reno
Reliable, clean, and 10 minutes from Mt. Rose Highway.
Booking.com: https://www.booking.com/hotel/us/springhill-suites-reno.html

Hampton Inn & Suites Reno
Consistent midrange option with early breakfast and quiet rooms.
Booking.com: https://www.booking.com/hotel/us/hampton-inn-suites-reno.html

Step 2
Where to Stay

BUDGET

La Quinta Inn by Wyndham Reno South
Affordable, clean, and closer to the trailhead than downtown options.
Booking.com: https://www.booking.com/hotel/us/la-quinta-inn-reno.html

Optional South Lake Tahoe Lodging

If you prefer to stage the middle peaks (Tallac, Freel, Genoa) closer to the lake, South Lake Tahoe offers excellent secondary lodging options. This is not the primary base for the T5, but it can be useful for multi-day formats.

Hotel Azure
Lakefront hotel with modern rooms and easy access to Tallac.
Booking.com: https://www.booking.com/hotel/us/inn-by-the-lake.html

Basecamp South Lake Tahoe
Boutique, adventure-oriented lodging near Stateline.
Booking.com: https://www.booking.com/hotel/us/basecamp-south-lake-tahoe.html

Recommended Campgrounds & RV Parks

Davis Creek Campground (Washoe Valley)
Closest camping option to Mt. Rose with shaded sites and easy access.
https://www.washoecounty.gov/parks/campsites/davis_creek.php

Nevada Beach Campground (Lake Tahoe)
Scenic lakeside camping with quick access to Tallac, Freel, and Genoa.
https://www.recreation.gov/camping/campgrounds/232493

Zephyr Cove RV Park
Full-service RV park near Stateline with showers and hookups.
https://www.zephyrcove.com/rv-camping/

Local Intel

This is a curated list of places to eat, gear up, and take care of last-minute logistics while you're staying in Reno — the official base town for the Tahoe Five Peaks Challenge.

Got additional feedback or recommendations for this base town? Email us: contactus@blisterpopadventures.com

Coffee & Breakfast

Early-start friendly spots for pre-trail fuel.

Café Breve (South Reno)
Typical hours: 5:00 AM – 6:00 PM
Info: https://www.cafebreve.com
Great coffee, breakfast sandwiches, and fast service. One of the best early-morning options close to Mt. Rose Highway.

Sips Coffee & Tea (South Reno)
Typical hours: 5:30 AM – afternoon
Info: https://www.sipsreno.com
Drive-through friendly, quick breakfast burritos, pastries, and strong coffee.

Perenn Bakery (Midtown Reno)
Typical hours: 7:00 AM – 3:00 PM
Info: https://www.perennbakery.com
Not early enough for a T5 start, but perfect for a "day before" carb load or a recovery morning.

Food & Post-Hike Fuel

Where to refuel after a massive day in the mountains.

Great Basin Brewing Co. (South Reno)
Info: https://www.greatbasinbrewingco.com
Burgers, pizza, and hearty plates. Excellent for groups and celebration dinners.

Laughing Planet (South Reno)
Info: https://www.laughingplanet.com
Healthy bowls, burritos, and smoothies — perfect if you want clean fuel after a long day.

Local Intel

Gear, Supplies & Logistics

Local support for last-minute needs, gear, and weather intel.

Tahoe Mountain Sports ****official BlisterPop Partner****

Use code "tahoe5peaks" to get a 15% discount
https://tahoemountainsports.com/
Fantastic selection of hiking gear both online and at their store location in Truckee, CA. Great spot if you're driving in from California, and you forgot something.

Bangarang CrossFit ****official BlisterPop Partner****

https://www.crossfitbangarang.com/
Big day hiking fitness doesn't just happen, and functional fitness preparation is at the very core of this gym's ethos. If you don't feel ready, connect with this gym for total body training for your big day hike.

REI Reno
Hours: typically 10:00 AM – 8:00 PM
Info: https://www.rei.com/stores/reno
Your primary stop for gear, layers, poles, hydration systems, and last-minute fixes.

Scheels (Sparks)
Hours: typically 9:00 AM – 9:00 PM
Info: https://www.scheels.com
Huge selection of outdoor gear, nutrition, and footwear.

Raley's O-N-E Market (South Reno)
Info: https://www.raleys.com
Great for last-minute food, water, and early-morning grab-and-go.

Local Intel

Fuel, Water & Essentials

Gas Stations
Top off before you start — you'll be driving all day.
• Chevron (South Reno, Mt. Rose Hwy)
• Shell (South Reno, S. Virginia St.)
• Maverik (Damonte Ranch Pkwy)
• 7-Eleven (multiple locations)

Water
• Whole Foods – bottled water + jugs
• Raley's – bottled water + hydration drinks
• REI – water bladders, filters, electrolytes
• Gas stations – emergency water only

Ice
• Raley's, Whole Foods, Maverik, 7-Eleven

Local Notes for T5 Athletes

Shop the day before
Buy water, electrolytes, and calories before your early-morning start. Most stores don't open early enough for a 3:00–4:00 AM departure.

Check weather for all five peaks
Conditions vary dramatically between Rose, Tallac, Freel, and Genoa. Use NOAA point forecasts for each summit.

Parking fills early
Tallac and Granite Chief trailheads fill quickly on weekends — plan pre-dawn arrivals.

Fuel between peaks
You'll burn more calories than you expect. Eat at every trailhead transition.

Driving fatigue is real
If possible, use a support driver for the later peaks.

Local Intel

Local Things to Do — Reno & Tahoe

If you're spending extra time in the region, here are a few worthwhile stops.

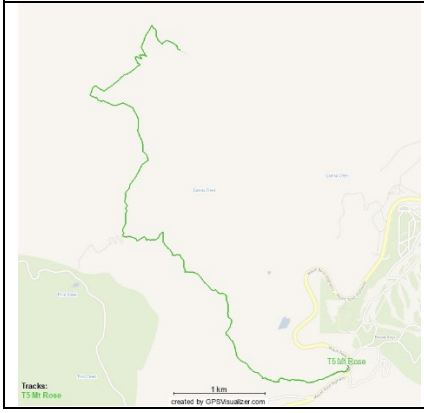
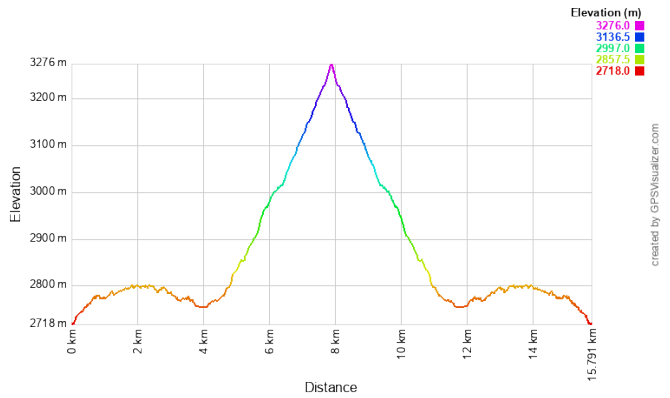
Lake Tahoe Overlooks
https://www.livelikeitstheweekend.com/best-views-in-lake-tahoe/
- Sand Harbor (Incline Village)
- Logan Shoals Vista Point
- Emerald Bay State Park

Reno Highlights
- Midtown District (coffee, food, shops)
- Truckee Riverwalk
- Nevada Museum of Art

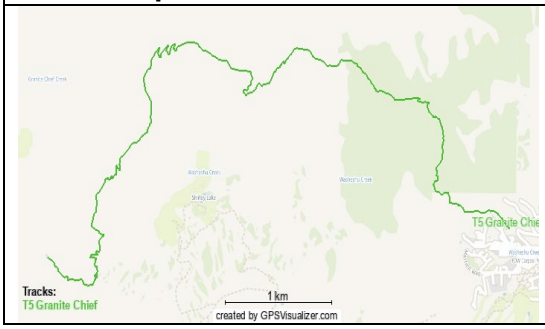
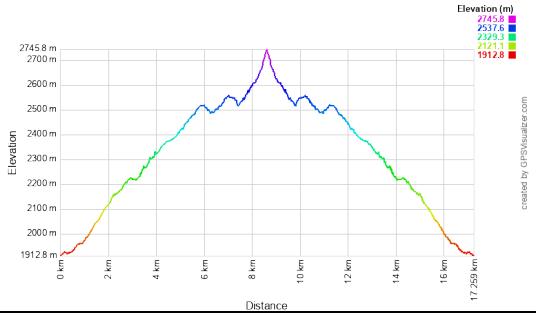
South Lake Tahoe
- Heavenly Village
- Zephyr Cove Beach
- Tallac Historic Site

The Route

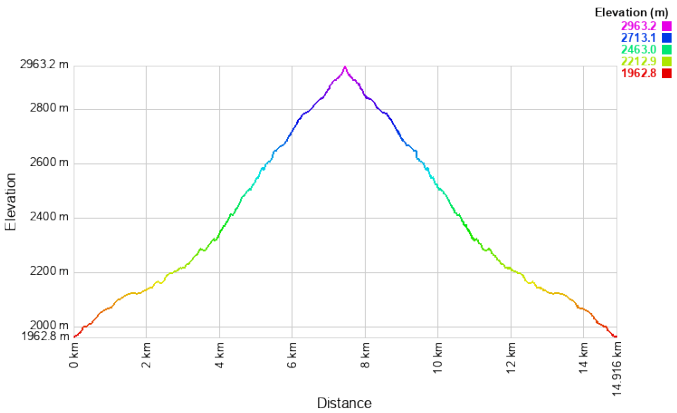
Mt Rose

Route Map	Elevation Profile
	

~~Granite~~ Chief

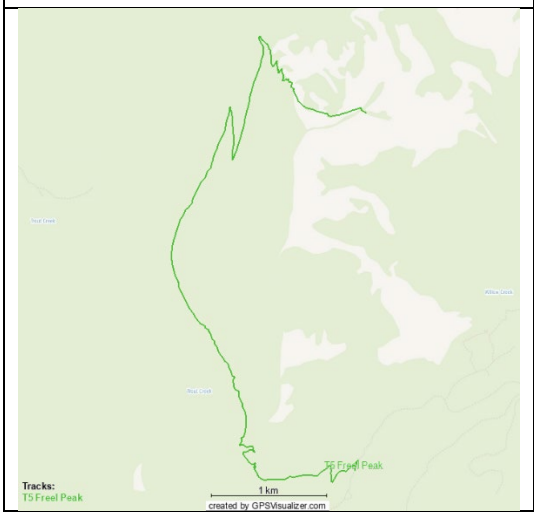
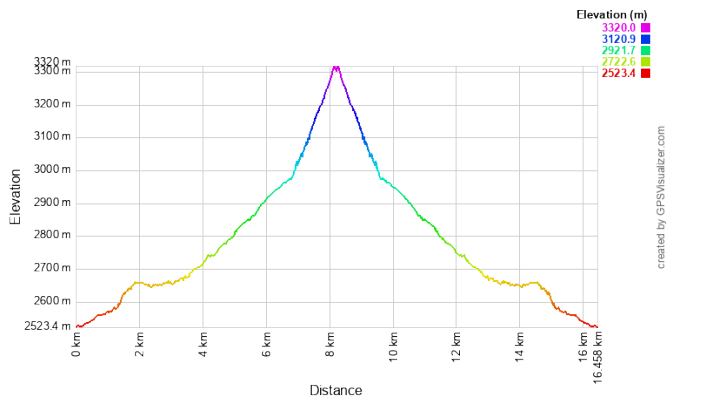
Route Map	Elevation Profile
	

Mt Tallac

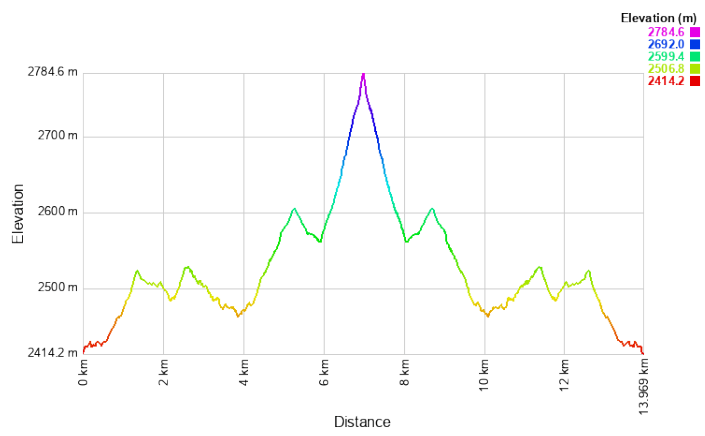
Route	Elevation Profile
	

The Route

Freel Peak

Route	Elevation Profile
	

Genoa Peak

Route	Elevation Profile
	

GPX File: [Download]

The Route

ROUTE OVERVIEW — THE TAHOE FIVE PEAKS (T5)

The Tahoe Five Peaks Challenge links five iconic summits around the Tahoe Basin in a single day, each climbed as an out-and-back from its own trailhead. The rhythm of the T5 is unlike any other mountain challenge: short, sharp ascents stacked back-to-back, with fast transitions, shifting terrain, and a constant sense of forward motion as you circle the lake from the Carson Range to the Sierra Crest and back again.

The day begins in the high desert air of Mt. Rose, where the trail rises quickly into open ridgelines and early sun. Granite Chief follows with a rugged Sierra feel — granite steps, forested switchbacks, and a summit that looks straight into the heart of the range. Tallac is the emotional centerpiece: a steep, iconic climb with sweeping views of Lake Tahoe that feel almost unreal in morning light.

Freel Peak, approached from the Horse Meadow Trailhead, is the crux of the day — a long, sandy, high-altitude grind up the highest point in the Tahoe Basin. The footing is loose, the air thin, and the summit ridge wide open to the sky. Genoa Peak closes the loop with the shortest ascent of the five, using the direct ATV-road approach from Kingsbury North. It's a fast, efficient final climb that delivers a huge view over Carson Valley and a clean, satisfying finish.

Why is this Route Epic?

Because it compresses the entire Tahoe Basin into one day: high desert ridges, granite cirques, volcanic summits, alpine forests, and five distinct mountain personalities. It's a challenge defined not by any single climb, but by the cumulative weight of all five — a test of pacing, resilience, and the ability to reset again and again.

The Story You Will Earn

The day you circled the Tahoe Basin on foot — five summits, five landscapes, one continuous arc of effort. A story of grit, altitude, and the moment you stood on Freel Peak knowing you were still not done.

The Route

Suggested Itinerary

SUGGESTED ITINERARY — RENO → ROSE → GRANITE CHIEF → TALLAC → FREEL → GENOA

PRE-DAY SETUP
Start in Reno with a full tank, preloaded GPX files, and a car stocked for fast transitions. Parking fills early at Tallac and Granite Chief, so pre-dawn arrivals are recommended. Freel Peak via Horse Meadow requires a short dirt-road approach; a standard vehicle is usually fine in dry conditions. Genoa Peak uses the Kingsbury North access road — the ATV route is the shortest and most efficient finish.

Trail Segments

Times assume a 12:00 a.m. start at Mt. Rose. All times are estimates based on moderate fitness; allow 3–5 hours of buffer depending on conditions and pacing.

SECTION 1: Mt. Rose (Out & Back)	
Smooth singletrack rocky steps exposed ridge	Distance: ~10.5 miles Elevation Gain: ~2,300 ft Estimated Time: 3 hrs 30 mins Start: 12:00 a.m. Arrival Back at Car: ~3:30 a.m.
"This is your cool, quiet warm-up — steady climbing, fast descent, and a clean start to the day."	

SECTION 2: Granite Chief (Out & Back) Drive to TH: ~60 minutes >> Start: ~4:30 a.m.	
Forested switchbacks granite slabs rugged upper ridge	Distance: ~11.2 miles Elevation Gain: ~3,000+ ft Estimated Time: 4 hrs 15 mins Arrival: ~8:45 a.m.
""Classic Sierra terrain — technical in places, but deeply rewarding."	

The Route

SECTION 3: Mt. Tallac (Out & Back) Drive to TH: ~50 minutes >>Start: ~9:35 a.m.	
Steep granite exposed ridges iconic lake views	Distance: ~10 miles Elevation Gain: ~3,300 ft Estimated Time: 4 hrs 45 mins Arrival Back at Car: ~2:20 p.m.
"The emotional centerpiece — steep, scenic, and demanding."	

THIS IS YOUR BEST CHANCE TO CONVERT TO THE WEEKENDER

SECTION 4: Freel Peak via Horse Meadow (Out & Back) Drive to TH: ~30 minutes Start: ~2:50 p.m.	
Sandy volcanic slopes loose footing high-altitude ridge	Distance: ~10 miles Elevation Gain: ~3,000 ft Estimated Time: 4 hrs 45 mins Arrival Back at Car: ~7:35 p.m.
"This is the crux — loose sand, thin air, and the highest point in the basin."	

SECTION 5: Genoa Peak via ATV Road (Out & Back) Drive to TH: ~25 minutes >> Start: ~8:00 p.m.	
ATV road moderate grade wide-open views	Distance: ~8.7 miles Elevation Gain: ~2,200 ft Estimated Time: 3 hrs Arrival Back at Car: ~11:00 p.m.
"A short, efficient final climb — the cleanest finish to a massive day."	

FINISH WINDOW: ~11:00 p.m. (± 2–4 hours depending on pacing)
TOTAL DISTANCE: ~50+ miles
TOTAL ELEVATION GAIN: ~13,500+ ft
TOTAL TIME: ~23 hours – 24 hours (moderate pace)

Elevations and distances will vary depending on your actual hiking route and are estimates

Risk Management

A high-commitment, multi-peak mountain challenge with major elevation gain, rapid weather shifts, and no single bailout that covers the entire day. This page outlines the major risks and the systems you need to manage them.

The Risk Management section is your quick-scan safety net — use it before, during, and after your challenge to stay ahead of changing conditions. Start by reviewing the key hazards and decision points so you know what to expect, then follow the simple checklists to confirm you're prepared with the right gear, weather awareness, and turnaround criteria. When you're on the route, treat this section as your anchor: if conditions shift, energy dips, or anything feels off, return to these guidelines to make clear, confident choices that keep the day safe and successful.

1. FATIGUE STACKING & OVEREXERTION

The primary risk on the T5.
Five major peaks in one day creates cumulative fatigue — even strong athletes underestimate how quickly the effort compounds. Early pacing errors, dehydration, or poor fueling can cascade into late-day collapse on Freel or Genoa.

Key Hazards

- Early fatigue on Rose or Granite Chief
- Bonking on Tallac's summit ridge
- Inability to maintain pace on Freel
- Slow recovery due to altitude + dry air
- Poor decision-making late in the day

Mitigation

- Pace conservatively on the first two peaks
- Fuel every 45–60 minutes
- Hydrate at every trailhead transition
- Use trekking poles to manage load
- If you're struggling on Tallac, reconsider continuing — Freel is significantly harder

2. NAVIGATION ERRORS

Each peak has its own trail system, junctions, and decision points. Getting off-route wastes time and energy, especially on Tallac's upper slabs or Freel's sandy ridge.

Key Hazards

- Missing junctions in the dark
- Drifting off the Tallac summit line
- Losing the Freel ascent ridge
- Confusing TRT spurs near Genoa
- Overcommitting to wrong gullies or slabs

Mitigation
- Carry a GPX track for all five peaks
- Preload offline maps
- Confirm major decision points before each ascent
- Use Gaia, OnX, or equivalent
- Reorient at every trail junction — don't assume

3. WEATHER EXPOSURE (HEAT, WIND, STORMS)
Tahoe's peaks sit between 8,000–10,800 ft and can swing 30–40°F in a single hour. Afternoon thunderstorms, ridge winds, and intense sun exposure are common.
Key Hazards
- High heat on Tallac and Freel
- Strong winds on Rose and Genoa
- Sudden thunderstorms (July–Aug)
- Cold exposure on late-day summits
- Smoke reducing visibility and breathing capacity

Mitigation
- Start early to avoid afternoon heat
- Bring a wind layer and light insulation
- Check mountain forecasts for all five peaks
- Avoid ridgelines during active storm cycles
- Monitor AQI — smoke can shut down an attempt

4. ALTITUDE EFFECTS
The T5 repeatedly pushes you above 9,000 ft, with Freel topping out at 10,881 ft. Even if you're acclimated, the repeated ascents increase respiratory demand and fatigue.
Key Hazards
- Headache, nausea, dizziness
- Shortness of breath out of proportion to effort
- Reduced power output on later peaks
- Poor decision-making due to fatigue + altitude

Why It Happens Here
- Multiple high-altitude efforts in one day
- No recovery time between peaks
- Dehydration amplifies symptoms
- Heat + altitude = increased strain

Mitigation
- Hydrate and fuel consistently
- Take short breaks above 9,000 ft
- Pace conservatively on Freel
- Avoid alcohol the night before
- If symptoms appear, stop ascending

Turn Back If
- Persistent headache
- Nausea or vomiting
- Difficulty walking straight
- Confusion or altered behavior

5. HEAT & DEHYDRATION

Even at altitude, Tahoe can be hot — especially on Tallac's exposed granite and Freel's sandy ridge. Dehydration is one of the fastest ways to derail the day.

Key Hazards
- Rapid water loss on exposed climbs
- Electrolyte imbalance
- Heat exhaustion → heat stroke
- Inability to cool down on south-facing slopes

Mitigation
- Carry 2–3 liters per peak
- Refill at the car between peaks
- Use electrolytes every hour
- Wear UPF layers and a sun hat
- Turn back if you stop sweating or feel chills

6. TERRAIN HAZARDS

Each peak has its own terrain challenges — from Rose's rocky steps to Tallac's slabs to Freel's loose volcanic sand.

Key Hazards
- Slips on granite slabs (Tallac)
- Loose scree and sand (Freel)
- Rocky steps and roots (Rose, Granite Chief)
- Steep, exposed sections near summits
- Rolling ankles on uneven terrain

Mitigation
- Wear stable footwear
- Use poles on steep or loose sections

• Test holds before committing
• Slow down on Tallac's upper slabs
• Stay centered on Freel's main ridge

7. WILDLIFE & ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS
Not major, but present across the basin.
Key Hazards
• Black bears near trailheads
• Rattlesnakes on lower Tallac approaches
• Wasps/bees near water sources
• Mosquitoes early season
• Mountain lion (rare but present)
Mitigation
• Keep food sealed at trailheads
• Watch footing in warm, rocky areas
• Avoid brushy edges
• Carry basic first-aid supplies

8. BAILOUT LIMITATIONS
The T5 has no single bailout that covers the entire challenge. Each peak is its own commitment, and fatigue late in the day can make even "easy" peaks feel extreme.
Key Hazards
• No mid-peak extraction options
• Long descents when fatigued
• Weather shifts mid-day
• Injury risk increases on later peaks
• Driving between peaks while exhausted
Mitigation
• Build clear timing windows for each peak
• Reassess after every summit
• Stop if behind schedule after Tallac
• Carry a satellite communicator
• Have a support driver if possible

9. EMERGENCY PROTOCOL

If something goes wrong:

Immediate Actions

- Stop exertion
- Move to shade or shelter
- Hydrate slowly
- Take electrolytes
- Assess ability to continue

If You Cannot Continue

- Return to the trailhead you came from
- Contact your support driver (if applicable)
- Activate satellite communicator
- Provide coordinates and stay put
- Expect rescue to take several hours

Additional Resources

USEFUL LINKS FOR T5 ATHLETES

Essential resources for planning, safety, navigation, and real-time conditions across the Tahoe Basin.

OFFICIAL TRAIL & LAND MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (USFS): https://www.fs.usda.gov/ltbmu

Tahoe National Forest: https://www.fs.usda.gov/tahoe

Humboldt–Toiyabe National Forest (Mt. Rose area): https://www.fs.usda.gov/htnf

Desolation Wilderness (Mt. Tallac):
https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/ltbmu/specialplaces/?cid=stelprdb5193330

Tahoe Rim Trail Association: https://tahoerimtrail.org

MAPS & NAVIGATION

Gaia GPS (Topographic Maps + GPX): https://www.gaiagps.com

AllTrails (Trail Overviews + GPX): https://www.alltrails.com

WEATHER & CONDITIONS

NOAA Point Forecast – Mt. Rose Summit
https://forecast.weather.gov/MapClick.php?lon=-119.897&lat=39.305

NOAA Point Forecast – Granite Chief
https://forecast.weather.gov/MapClick.php?lon=-120.240&lat=39.195

NOAA Point Forecast – Mt. Tallac
https://forecast.weather.gov/MapClick.php?lon=-120.080&lat=38.925

NOAA Point Forecast – Freel Peak
https://forecast.weather.gov/MapClick.php?lon=-119.900&lat=38.820

Additional Resources

NOAA Point Forecast – Genoa Peak
https://forecast.weather.gov/MapClick.php?lon=-119.900&lat=39.020

Mountain Forecast – Sierra Nevada Peaks
https://www.mountain-forecast.com

Air Quality Index (Smoke Conditions)
https://www.airnow.gov

SAFETY & EMERGENCY RESOURCES

Douglas County Search & Rescue (Genoa / Kingsbury): https://www.douglascountynv.gov

El Dorado County Search & Rescue (Tallac region): https://www.edcgov.us/sar

Washoe County Search & Rescue (Mt. Rose region): https://www.washoesar.org

Leave No Trace Principle: https://lnt.org/why/7-principles/

InciWeb (Wildfire Information): https://inciweb.wildfire.gov

ROUTE & PEAK INFORMATION

Mt. Rose Trail Overview: https://www.alltrails.com/trail/us/nevada/mount-rose-trail

Granite Chief / Shirley Canyon: https://www.alltrails.com/trail/us/california/shirley-canyon-trail (not the official route)

Mt. Tallac Trail Overview: https://www.alltrails.com/trail/us/california/mount-tallac-trail

Freel Peak via Horse Meadow: https://www.alltrails.com/trail/us/california/freel-peak-via-horse-meadow

Genoa Peak via TRT: https://www.alltrails.com/trail/us/nevada/tahoe-rim-trail-kingsbury-north-to-gardner-gap (not the official route)

TRAILHEAD PLANNING CHECKLIST: TAHOE 5 PEAKS

1. TRAVEL & LOGISTICS

- Confirm start time (recommended: 3:00–4:00 AM)
- Confirm vehicle readiness (full tank, reliable brakes, daylight headlights)
- Save offline directions to all five trailheads
- Preload Google Maps links for each peak
- Confirm route order (recommended: Rose → Granite Chief → Tallac → Freel → Genoa)
- Check parking restrictions for Tallac and Granite Chief
- Screenshot trailhead coordinates for all five peaks
- Preload Gaia GPS with all five GPX tracks
- Pack a car "transition kit" (food, water, socks, layers, electrolytes)
- Confirm support driver (optional but recommended)
- Check competitive window (July 1 – October 31)

2. WEATHER & CONDITIONS

- Check NOAA point forecast for each peak:
    - Mt. Rose
    - Granite Chief
    - Mt. Tallac
    - Freel Peak
    - Genoa Peak
- Confirm summit wind speeds (avoid >40 mph)
- Check for thunderstorms (July–Aug)
- Check AQI (wildfire smoke)
- Confirm overnight lows (late-season frost possible)
- Check sunrise/sunset times to plan headlamp use
- Monitor road conditions on Mt. Rose Highway and Kingsbury Grade

3. MAPS & NAVIGATION

- Download Gaia GPS (primary)
- Download AllTrails offline maps (backup)
- Load GPX files for all five peaks
- Organize GPX tracks in order of ascent
- Carry a battery pack (fully charged)
- Carry a paper topo map (optional but smart)
- Confirm watch navigation is working (if applicable)

4. GEAR & PACKING

Water & Fuel

- 2–3 liters per peak (refill at car)
- Electrolytes (1 dose per hour)
- 3,000–5,000 calories total
- Salt tabs (optional)

TRAILHEAD PLANNING CHECKLIST: TAHOE 5 PEAKS

Clothing

- UPF sun shirt
- Sun hat + sunglasses
- Light insulation (puffy or fleece)
- Wind shell (non-negotiable)
- Gloves + beanie (late season)
- Extra socks for transitions

Navigation & Safety

- Headlamp + spare batteries
- Satellite communicator (inReach / ZOLEO / SPOT)
- First-aid kit
- Emergency bivy
- Sunscreen + lip balm
- Knife or multitool
- Whistle
- Trekking poles
- Fully charged phone + battery pack

Optional but Smart

- Gaiters (Freel's sand)
- Blister kit
- Cooling towel
- Small towel for car transitions

5. SAFETY & COMMUNICATION

- Tell someone your full T5 plan + ETA + turnaround logic
- Share your route order and expected summit times
- Confirm limited cell service around Tahoe Basin
- Turn on satellite communicator before leaving the car
- Preprogram emergency contacts
- Review altitude symptoms and heat strategy
- Review bailout logic (below)

6. BAILOUT OPTIONS (CRITICAL)

Each peak has its own bailout — there is no single exit for the entire challenge.

Primary Bailout (Per Peak)

→ Descend back to the trailhead you started from

Safest, fastest, most reliable option.

Non-Options (Do NOT attempt)

- Cross-country shortcuts
- Dropping into unknown drainages
- Trying to traverse between peaks on foot
- Leaving established trails to "cut time"

- These are dangerous, slow, and often impassable. Stick to known routes.

7. PERSONAL PREP

- Eat a solid breakfast
- Hydrate aggressively the night before
- Avoid alcohol
- Stretch / warm up
- Bathroom stop before leaving Reno
- Set phone/watch to Do Not Disturb
- Confirm you slept enough for a 14–20 hour day
- Pack your car transitions the night before

8. FINAL TRAILHEAD CHECK (MT. ROSE START)

- Water volume matches your plan (2–3 liters)
- GPX track running + offline maps confirmed
- Satellite communicator on + tracking enabled
- Headlamp brightness checked
- Layers accessible
- Poles ready
- Quick body check: hydrated, alert, no red flags
- Take a “start photo” for your story

READY TO GO

You’re set for a safe, epic traverse of five iconic Tahoe summits — one of the hardest single-day hiking challenges in America.

Post Hike

CLAIM YOUR PLACE IN BLISTERPOP HISTORY

STEP 1: POST YOUR HERO SHOT: FACEBOOK / INSTAGRAM

After you've caught your breath and soaked in the moment, share your finish with the community. Post a photo or quick recap in the BlisterPop Facebook Group so others can cheer you on, learn from your experience, and feel inspired to take on their own challenge. Your story becomes part of the collective momentum that keeps this whole thing alive

Tags: #BlisterPop #T5

Follow Us on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/BlisterPop

STEP 2: COMPLETE YOUR FINISHER FORM

Once you've wrapped up your adventure, take a moment to complete the Finisher Form so we can verify your times and officially record your completion. This is where you'll upload your summit photos, confirm your route details, and share anything notable from the day. Submitting the form ensures your effort is recognized, your swag gets queued for fulfillment, and your achievement becomes part of the BlisterPop community story.

T5 Hikers Finisher Form: **Link to Finisher Form**

Route History

The History section gives you the deeper story behind this landscape — how the Sierra Nevada rose from the earth, who moved through these mountains long before us, and why the five peaks of the T5 hold meaning beyond the miles. We added it because understanding the past adds weight to the present; it turns a challenge into a connection point, grounding your adventure in the people, forces, and moments that came before. Every summit sits inside a much larger narrative, and now you're becoming part of it.

GEOLOGY OF THE TAHOE BASIN & SIERRA NEVADA

A granitic mountain range uplifted by faulting, carved by glaciers, and shaped by fire, ice, and deep time.
The five peaks of the T5 — Rose, Granite Chief, Tallac, Freel, and Genoa — sit along the eastern crest of the Sierra Nevada and the rim of the Lake Tahoe Basin. Their story is a blend of ancient magma chambers, Ice Age glaciers, and ongoing tectonic uplift that continues to shape the region today.

Geology Resources
USDA Forest Service: https://www.fs.usda.gov/r05/laketahoebasin/natural-resources/geology

1. A GRANITIC MOUNTAIN RANGE (MESOZOIC)

The Sierra Nevada formed as a massive granitic batholith — a chain of magma chambers that cooled deep underground during the age of dinosaurs.

Key Features

- Granite, granodiorite, and diorite dominate the range
- Hard, erosion-resistant rock creates steep ridges
- Vertical jointing forms cliffs, slabs, and talus fields

This is why Tallac's summit ridge feels like a granite fortress and why Freel's upper slopes are a mix of volcanic remnants and decomposed granite.

2. THE BIRTH OF THE TAHOE BASIN (FAULTING & UPLIFT)

The Tahoe Basin is a giant down-dropped block created by faulting along the Sierra crest.

Key Features

- Mt. Tallac sits on the edge of a major fault scarp
- Mt. Rose and the Carson Range continue to rise
- The basin floor dropped, forming the cradle for Lake Tahoe

This tectonic activity is ongoing — the mountains you climb are still rising.

3. ICE AGE GLACIATION (LAST 2 MILLION YEARS)
Glaciers carved many of the iconic features you see today.
Glacial Signatures
• Tallac's bowl-shaped cirques
• Granite Chief's U-shaped valleys
• Polished slabs and erratics around Desolation Wilderness
These glacial remnants define the rugged beauty of the T5.

4. VOLCANIC INFLUENCE (FREEL PEAK)
Freel Peak — the highest point in the Tahoe Basin — is part of the ancient Carson Range volcanic arc.
Key Features
• Rhyolite and volcanic sand
• Loose, decomposed slopes
• Distinct reddish-brown summit rock
This is why Freel feels so different underfoot compared to the granite of Tallac or Rose.

FLORA & FAUNA OF THE T5 PEAKS

A high-elevation ecosystem shaped by snowpack, fire, and the Sierra rain shadow. The T5 traverses multiple ecological zones, from subalpine forests to windswept ridgelines.

FLORA

California Native Plant Society: https://www.cnps.org/chapters/tahoe-sierra-valley

1. Subalpine Forest (7,000–9,000 ft)
• Jeffrey pine
• Red fir
• Lodgepole pine
• Mountain hemlock
These forests dominate the approaches to Tallac, Granite Chief, and Rose.

2. Upper Montane & Alpine (9,000–10,800 ft)
• Whitebark pine
• Sierra juniper
• Alpine grasses and wildflowers
• Krummholz (wind-shaped trees)
Freel Peak's upper slopes showcase some of the most resilient plant life in the Sierra.

Route History

FAUNA

- Black bears (common near trailheads)
- Mule deer (mid-elevation forests)
- Clark's nutcracker (high ridges)
- Pikas (rocky talus fields)
- Marmots (Granite Chief & Tallac)
- Rattlesnakes (lower Tallac approaches in warm months)

Authoritative Wildlife Resources — Tahoe Basin

1. USDA Forest Service – Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (LTBMU)
Primary land manager for much of the Tahoe Basin. Excellent for species lists, habitat descriptions, and conservation notes.
https://www.fs.usda.gov/ltbmu

2. California Department of Fish & Wildlife – Sierra Nevada Wildlife
Reliable overview of mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians found in the Sierra Nevada.
https://wildlife.ca.gov/Regions/2

3. Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) – Eastern Sierra & Tahoe Region
Covers the Carson Range side of the T5 (Rose, Freel, Genoa). Great for large mammals and predators.
https://ndow.org

Field-Ready Species Identification

4. iNaturalist – Tahoe Basin Species Lists
Real-time wildlife observations with photos, GPS, and habitat notes.
Lake Tahoe Basin Species: https://www.inaturalist.org/places/lake-tahoe-basin

Large Mammal & Predator Information

5. BearWise – Sierra Nevada Black Bear Behavior
Excellent for understanding Tahoe's black bear population.
https://bearwise.org

6. Mountain Lion Foundation – Sierra Nevada Range
Covers lion behavior, territory, and safety guidelines.
https://mountainlion.org

Herpetology (Snakes, Lizards, Amphibians)

7. California Herps – Tahoe Region
The most complete reptile & amphibian database for the Sierra.
https://www.californiaherps.com

Ecology & Habitat Resources

8. Tahoe Institute for Natural Science (TINS)
The best local organization for Tahoe ecology, wildlife, and natural history.
https://www.tinsweb.org

9. UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center (TERC)
Excellent for understanding the broader Tahoe ecosystem.
https://tahoe.ucdavis.edu

HUMAN HISTORY

INDIGENOUS HISTORY OF THE TAHOE BASIN
A homeland shaped by deep knowledge of seasons, elevation, and movement.
The T5 peaks sit within the ancestral lands of the **Washoe Tribe**, whose territory spans the Tahoe Basin, Carson Valley, and surrounding mountains.
Washoe Presence
• Summer camps near high meadows
• Pine nut harvesting in the Carson Range
• Hunting routes across the Sierra crest
• Travel corridors linking Tahoe to the Great Basin

Freel Peak, Genoa Peak, and the Carson Range hold particular cultural significance as part of traditional food-gathering and seasonal movement patterns.
Learn More
Washoe Tribe of Nevada & California: https://washoetribe.us

SETTLER HISTORY & EARLY EXPLORATION
The 1800s brought waves of explorers, loggers, and miners into the Tahoe Basin.
Key Historical Threads
1. Logging the Sierra
Tallac, Granite Chief, and Rose all bear the legacy of 19th-century logging that supplied timber to the Comstock Lode mines in Virginia City.
2. Early Trail Building
Many of the routes you hike today began as:
• Logging roads
• Mining access paths
• Early recreation trails built by the CCC (1930s)
3. The Rise of Tahoe Recreation
By the mid-20th century, Tahoe became a hub for hiking, skiing, and mountaineering — setting the stage for modern endurance challenges.

TAHOE RIM TRAIL
The Tahoe Rim Trail is one of the great modern trail-building success stories in the American West — a 165-mile loop built almost entirely by volunteers, stone by stone, over the course of four decades. Conceived in the early 1980s as a way to link the high ridgelines surrounding Lake Tahoe into a single continuous path, the project required thousands of hours of hand-cut tread, rockwork, and forest restoration across some of the most rugged terrain in the Sierra. The Tahoe Rim Trail Association (TRTA) coordinated crews of hikers, students, conservation groups, and local residents who returned year after year to carve switchbacks, build retaining walls, and connect isolated segments into a unified whole. By 2001, the loop was officially completed, but work has never really stopped — reroutes, fire recovery, and sustainability upgrades continue to refine the trail. Today, the TRT stands as a testament to community stewardship and the belief that big landscapes become more meaningful when people help build the paths that move through them.

Tahoe Rim Trail Project: https://tahoerimtrail.org/

Route History

THE MODERN T5 CHALLENGE

A contemporary endurance route built on ancient mountains and layered histories.
The Tahoe Five Peaks Challenge emerged from a simple idea: link the five most iconic summits around the Tahoe Basin in a single day. What began as a local endurance test evolved into one of the hardest single-day hiking challenges in America.

Why These Peaks

- Mt. Rose — gateway to the Carson Range
- Granite Chief — rugged Sierra crest
- Mt. Tallac — the Tahoe icon
- Freel Peak — highest point in the basin
- Genoa Peak — panoramic finish above Carson Valley

Together, they form a natural arc around the lake — a geographic story told in five chapters.

A CHALLENGE WITH DEEP ROOTS

When you take on the T5, you're stepping into a landscape shaped by:

- Ancient magma chambers
- Ice Age glaciers
- Indigenous movement
- Logging and mining history
- Modern trail stewardship
- The enduring pull of the Sierra Nevada

It's a route where geology, ecology, and human history intersect — a reminder that every summit is part of a much larger story, and now you're becoming part of it.