

# SIERRA MOUNTAIN CYCLING

## SQUAW VALLEY – TAHOE CITY – JUNE LAKE

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The Sierra Nevada Mountains (Spanish for snowy mountain range), spanning eastern California from Fredonyer Pass near Susanville in the north to Tehachapi Pass north of Mojave in the south, are a breathtaking natural wonder. Towering at 14,505 feet, Mt. Whitney stands as the range's highest peak, while treasures like Yosemite Valley, carved by a retreating glacier, Mammoth Mountain, and Lake Tahoe showcase its raw beauty. The Sierra Nevada can be divided into three distinct regions: the West Slope, the Tahoe Basin, and the East Slope.





On the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada, Coloma marks the site of the 1849 gold discovery. Nearby, Placerville, dubbed "Old Hangtown" for its swift justice against fraudulent gold prospectors, still features

the historic Hangman's Tree in its downtown. Fans of *Bonanza* will recognize Placerville as the town the Cartwrights frequented for business. Also on the western slope, Yosemite National Park showcases the region's breathtaking beauty.



Echo Lake

In the Tahoe Basin, towns like Truckee, Incline Village, Tahoe City, and Emerald Bay offer a relaxed pace, while Lake Tahoe and Stateline buzz with energy. The basin is also home to premier ski resorts, including Squaw Valley, Northstar, and Heavenly.



The Eastern Slope of the Sierra Nevada hosts Bridgeport and Lee Vining, nestled along Mono Lake, providing a paradise for outdoor enthusiasts. Mono Lake, on the Eastern Slope of the Sierra Nevada, boasts spectacular natural tufa formations, making it a must-stop for visitors to admire.



Traveling north on U.S. 395 from Mono Lake, you'll find Bodie, a must-visit gold mining ghost town where John Wayne filmed *Swing*

*Out Sweet Land* in 1970. Picture above is of the Ghost town.

Nestled on the Eastern Slope of the Sierra Nevada, the Whoa Nellie Deli at Tioga Gas Mart is a culinary treasure, perched at the corner of Highways 395 and 120, just outside of the Tioga Pass entrance to Yosemite National Park. This unassuming deli surprises with bold, gourmet dishes served against a backdrop of Mono Lake's shimmering tufas and rugged peaks, making it a



must-stop for hungry adventurers. Nearby, Mammoth Lakes and June Lake beckon as outdoor meccas, where cyclists carve through aspen-lined trails during the summer and skiers chase thrills on powdery slopes during the winter. Anchored by Bishop and Mammoth Lakes, the region is the vibrant hub of the Eastern Slope, blending wild beauty with memories for a lifetime.



View from Mammoth Mountain

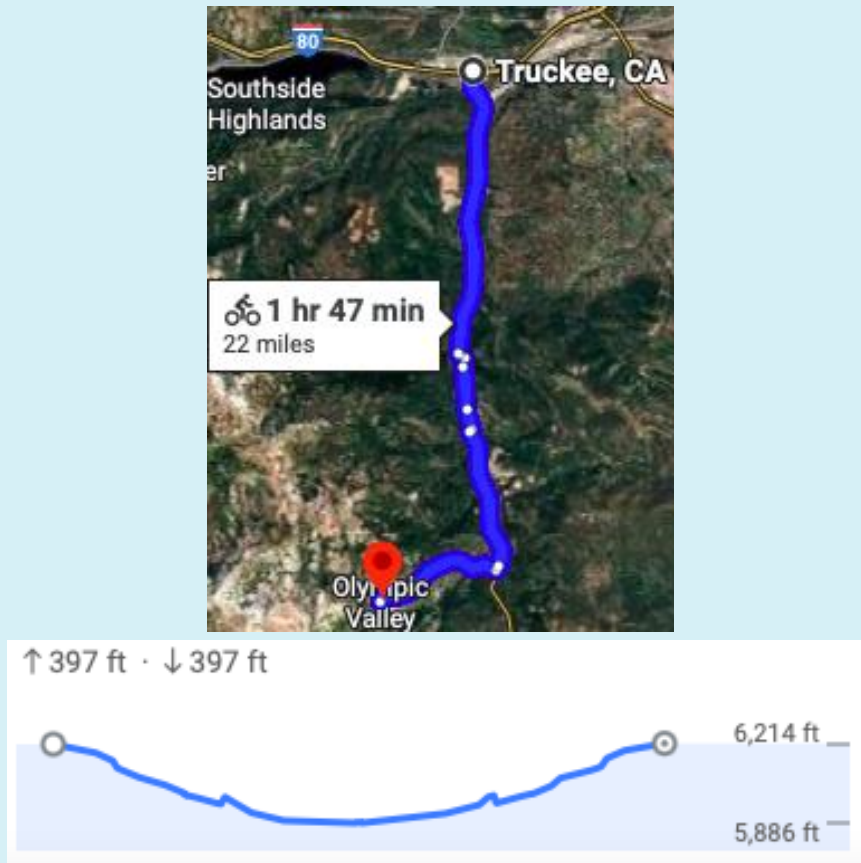
Every Sierra Nevada adventure leaves our family spoiled for choices: thrilling trails, snowshoeing paths, kids' skiing, and, for me, exhilarating cycling routes all beckon.

In this writeup, I spotlight the two locations that I have biked in the Sierras: Squaw Valley (now known as Olympic Valley) in the Tahoe Basin and June Lake on the Eastern Slope. Here are the rides.





## SQUAW VALLEY – TRUCKEE



Source: Google Maps

22.20 miles out and back, Total ascent 509 feet

I started my cycling adventure at Squaw Valley Resort, a legendary alpine haven cradled by the soaring peaks of Squaw Peak, Granite Chief, KT-22, Emigrant Peak, Snow King, Ward Peak, and Silverado. I felt the excitement of a place forever etched by the 1960 Winter Olympics. The resort contains sleek hotels, cozy restaurants, and lively shops that cater to skiers and snowboarders in winter and hikers, mountain bikers, and road bikers in summer, all chasing the Sierra's call of the wild. The

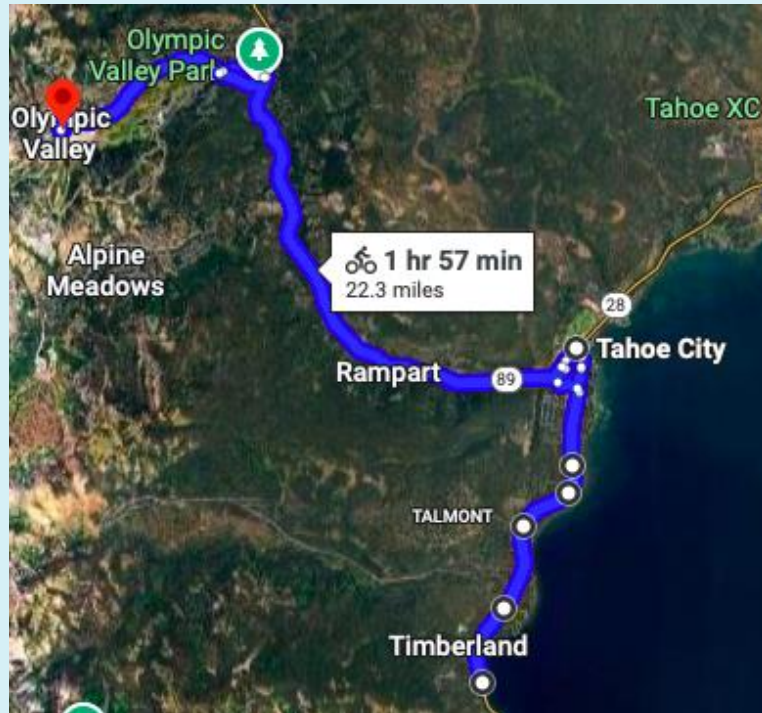


name "**Tahoe**," comes from the Washo language spoken by the Washoe tribe, where *dá aw* means "the lake."

From the resort, I hopped on my bike and swung left onto CA 89 toward **Truckee**, the open road sparking a surge of adrenaline. The name "Truckee," originating from a settler's mispronunciation of Tru-ki-zoo, a Paiute chief who guided pioneers across the Sierra in the 1840s, adorns the river and town of Truckee.

Towering ponderosa pines framed the route, their spicy resin scent mingling with the crisp mountain air, while the Truckee River rushed alongside. The highway, though, presented its challenges: as traffic roared past from Truckee to Tahoe City, I rode on a narrow shoulder that required me to remain sharp. My tires hummed on the edge of the asphalt. Rolling past the I-80 interchange, I cruised into Truckee's rustic charm before spinning around for the return leg. I enjoyed the ride back, as the river's sparkle and the pines' towering silhouettes energized me as Squaw Valley's iconic peaks loomed closer.

## SQUAW VALLEY – TAHOE CITY - TIMBERLAND



Source: Google Maps

22.47 miles out and back, Total ascent 563 feet

I launched my 22-mile cycling adventure from the Village at Squaw Valley. Instead of heading north, I veered south on CA 89 toward Tahoe City, as the Tahoe Basin's crisp air filled my lungs.



Pedaling into **Tahoe City**, once simply called Tahoe, I swung right onto West River Road, riding into the lively business district where the Truckee River, the lake's lifeblood, begins its journey. Commons Beach and Tahoe City Public Beach beckoned with their sandy shores and dazzling lake views, tempting me to pause and soak in the shimmering blue expanse framed by pine-clad peaks. The old Tahoe City Jail (picture on right), a quirky historic gem, stood proudly with its jaw-dropping lake backdrop, whispering tales of rowdy prospectors. From the business district, I rolled



south onto West Lake Road, merging back into CA 89, where the Truckee River Bridge hummed with pedestrians. I dodged the crowds near the Lake Tahoe Outlet Gates and the Gatekeeper's Museum, where rustic exhibits of Washoe baskets and pioneer relics offered a taste of local history, adding charm to the bustle.

Cruising past Sunnyside Resort and Restaurant, I stole glances at Lake Tahoe's glassy surface, its sapphire hues glinting under the sun—a sight that made my heart skip. Traffic thickened near

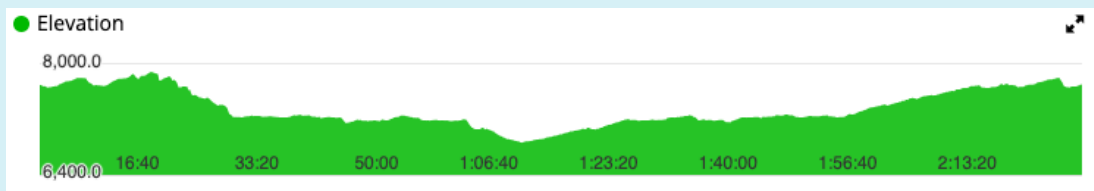


Timberland Lane, so I spun around, retracing my path along West Lake Road and then Lake Road to CA 89, the Truckee River's silvery rush and the lake's stunning expanse fueling my ride back to Squaw Valley Village. Unlike the frenetic pace of driving, this ride let me absorb Tahoe's magic at a cyclist's rhythm pine-scented breezes, the river's gentle roar, and the Sierra's towering embrace.



## JUNE LAKE LOOP





Map Route's source: Google map - Garmin Edge 705, Software 3.30  
32.24 miles out and back, Total ascent 1,445 feet



June Lake, also known as “Switzerland of California,” is a horseshoe-shaped gem in Mono County’s Eastern Sierra. This 32.24-mile cycling adventure along the June Lake Loop is etched in my heart, as our son rode beside me, his determined grin lighting up the journey as

we tackled the high Sierra’s breathtaking landscapes. Dropped off at June Lake Junction on U.S. 395, we pedaled on June Lake Loop (CA 158) onto North Shore Drive, sagebrush scent filling the air as June Lake’s turquoise waters and Gull Lake’s serene glint unfolded in spectacular vistas. The rugged Carson Peak, a 10,000-foot sentinel, loomed over aspen groves, their leaves flickering like gold in the morning light. Turning right back onto CA 158, we climbed to 7,844 feet, which is the highest altitude I’ve ever cycled. The thin air made our breathing heavy, and my Garmin flashed with an elevated heart rate. To manage the effects of the thin air, we sipped water steadily to stay hydrated, the crisp mountain air urging us onward.

At the loop’s bend, we rolled toward Silver Lake and Grant Lake, passing the Double Eagle Resort and Spa, where our family would soon gather for lunch. The scenery was a feast for the soul—high Sierra lakes sparkling like jewels, aspens whispering in the breeze,

and craggy peaks piercing a cobalt sky. Silver Lake buzzed with kayakers, fishermen, and pedestrians near the lively Silver Lake Resort, adding a vibrant hum to the ride. We pushed past Grant Lake's wide, sandy shores, framed by stark hills glowing amber under the sun, before reaching the U.S. 395 intersection. Here, the high elevation and merciless sun began to weigh on us, our legs burning as we turned for the return.

The ride back was memorable, as the towering Sierra peaks of Mt. Lewis, Kuna Peak, and Carson



Peak came into our view, their grandeur amplified as we rode toward them. Opting for the main June Lake Loop instead of North Shore Drive, we cruised through the bustling heart of June Lake's community, alive with shops and cabins exuding small-town charm. The gradual climb back to June Lake Junction, with 1,445 feet of elevation gain behind us, left us weary but elated. At the junction, our family awaited, and we celebrated with a delightful lunch at Double Eagle Resort and Spa, swapping stories as we ate - a moment as unforgettable as the ride itself.

(The next day, the family hiked the nearby Parker Lake Trail, which provided us with memories of the rugged beauty of sagebrush and distant waterfalls.)



Grant Lake, Kuna Peak beyond the lake, Mt Lewison the right side