Bike ride is mostly about the Truckee River

By Kathryn Reed

TAHOE CITY – It was a bit like being on sensory overload.

Endorphins are going with each rotation of the pedal. Sounds of the river rippling and people playing on it are inviting. The aroma of pines and other foliage make breathing deep desirable. The scenery – well, it's breathtaking and challenges one to take pictures and ride at the same time.

Cycling the 8.03 miles from Tahoe City to Squaw Valley's village is pretty easy – even for people who don't often pedal. The most challenging part is avoiding all of the other people.

The four of us set out early to bypass the brunt of the heat on the last Saturday in June as well as the people. But this is a popular trail, so it's impossible in the summer to have to the trail all to ourselves.

Besides the cyclists, some of whom were pulling children in trailers, people are jogging, walking (some with dogs), and others are on inline skates.



Much of the trail between

Tahoe City and Squaw Valley is along the Truckee River. Photos/Kathryn Reed

There are definite spots on the trail that are jarring, especially on a road bike with those skinny tires. And it's obvious this is an old trail not built to current ASHTO standards that call for the trail to be 10-feet-wide with 2-foot shoulders. This one doesn't seem much wider than 6-feet, if that. This plays into the congestion problem at times.

But most people are courteous and recognize this is a shared use trail.

Off to the side are interpretative signs that had we not been on bikes we probably would have stopped to read. There are also permanent maps that point out the various recreation amenities on this side of Lake Tahoe.

A few rafters are floating down the river on our way to Squaw. Coming back they seem to be everywhere. Some are part of a company that guides people and provides larger rafts, some brought their own for a group, while others are in individual blow-up devices. And some have floating coolers. One guy is on a stand up paddleboard going upstream.

Considering we are doing this ride on a weekend that has the temps well above normal, it's great having so much shade.

We get to the junction of Highway 89 and Squaw Valley Road where a light has us crossing to go to the village. There's something about staring at those Olympic rings, that flame – I never get tired of it.

The road up is wide, but the shade is gone. Beyond the Resort at Squaw Creek the bike trail is on the left.

That meadow with Squaw Creek and the Resort at Squaw Creek's golf course just beyond are so lush. And Squaw – the mountain

– in some ways I feel like I am back riding in Switzerland. While the Alps and Sierra are so different, Squaw is the one place in the Tahoe area that even comes close.

Stay on the “wrong” side of the road for a short jaunt and then follow the parallel blue lines that lead cyclists into the village. At that hour of day we all opted to get smoothies as a refresher, lounging in chairs in the village. Bike racks seem to be outside most of the businesses.

Then it was time to get back on the saddle to head out. We retrace our steps out of Squaw and along the river.

We cross our starting bridge and ride through the two roundabouts that are just for bikes or pedestrians, and wind up at the Bridgetender restaurant in Tahoe City. It’s a perfect spot next to the Truckee River to refuel for the rest of day’s activities.

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Getting there:

From South Lake Tahoe, go north on Highway 89. Just before the Fanny Bridge in Tahoe City is the transit center parking area on the left. Pull in and park.

The bike trail is on the north side. Cross the bridge, go left and keep pedaling.

The trail comes out at a light to cross Highway 89 to be able to ride up to the village at Squaw.

The transit center is also an area from which the Tahoe Rim Trail may be accessed as well as the Truckee River. Plus, it’s a place to park – for free – that provides walking access to Tahoe City.

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