Panoramic views of Desolation via snowshoes

Sue, AJ, Cody, Rosemary and Donna make their way to Granite Lake. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

EMERALD BAY STATE PARK – Maggie's cleavage took our breath away.

That's what we called the saddle of Maggie's Peak because, well, these two peaks in Desolation Wilderness are named for a woman who was well endowed. And that strip of land in between the peaks has some outstanding views.

Desolation Wilderness appears to go on forever. So expansive it seems a bit foreboding – even though we were immersed in it for nearly the entire snowshoe.

No wonder Eagle Lake is chilly in the summer – it's frozen right now.

On this particular day Emerald Bay could have been renamed

Sapphire Bay because of the rich, deep blue hue that spilled forth.

Snowshoeing to Granite Lake was pretty; making the final push to the saddle of Maggie's Peak was spectacular. Granite Lake was our original destination last Saturday.

Getting there was more of a vertical ascent than a leisurely switchback. I could tell I had been fighting off a cold because I needed to stop more than usual. But this was not a trek to set speed records, so Donna, Rosemary and Sue – and dogs AJ and Cody – were fine with a few extra stops.

The path is well worn with plenty of snowshoers having been there before us. It's single track. At times all we can hear is the crunching of the snow beneath the claws strapped to our boots.

Large boulders near the lake and protruding from the ice provided a lunch spot. Plenty of tracks across the frozen mass proved the ice was thick. Not a cloud could be seen. It was one of those idyllic Tahoe blue skies. One of Maggie's Peaks rises from the far end of the lake.

Donna and Sue peruse the map, figuring out the cleavage isn't that much farther, so we carry on.

The trailhead is at 6,890 feet. Granite Lake is at 7,700 feet and the saddle is at 8,330 feet. It's about 1½ miles to the lake and another eight-tenths of a mile to the saddle.

While there had been wonderful views along the way, the best were definitely at the saddle.

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Getting there:

From South Lake Tahoe go north on Highway 89. Park at the Bayview Campground on the left. This is before you reach the

parking lot for Vikingsholm. Walk through the campground. There will be a sign going left for Cascade Falls, to the right for Desolation Wilderness. Go right.

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