

Beauty of fall lingering throughout Tahoe area



Aspen medallions dance in the breeze. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

HOPE VALLEY – Vibrant. Dazzling. Stunning. The superlatives runneth over when it comes to describing the autumn colors throughout the Lake Tahoe Basin.

While the peak is over, Mother Nature isn't quite done. There is still some beauty to captivate.

One of the benefits of such a moisture-heavy winter a year ago is the richness of this fall's colors.

Last weekend driving into Hope Valley, going past Sorensen's and hiking off Burnside Road it was a feast for the eyes.

Bursts of orange and yellow were almost electrifying, especially as the branches seemed to want to scratch the cobalt blue sky.



AJ, Rosemary and Carolyn along Burnside Road. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Burnside Road – that’s about all we had planned. We drove until Rosemary said she had enough. And from there we started exploring. We sauntered onto an offshoot from the main road that we thought looked pretty. It was, but the trail petered out.

We continued on the main trail, which opened up onto some small, glorious groves of aspens. With how the sun was, it was even more magnificent on the trip back. The color was more majestic and worthy of stopping for photographs and to gawk at the splendor before us.



Aspens are super lush because of last winter's moisture. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Going out we came across a sign that helped us decide if we were to keep wandering toward Burnside Lake or if a side route should be taken. Knowing we had no desire to put in the miles to get to the lake, we went onto Forest Service Road 31053 toward Pickett Peak (9,148 feet).

Good choice.

Red Lake Peak (10,063 feet) was the main mountain we saw on much of the trek. It still has a couple distinct splotches of snow left over from last winter.



Aspens dance toward the sky. Photo/Kathryn Reed

At various points we could look out into Hope Valley, with the mountainside on the other side of Highway 88 looking like a painter's palette.

We got to the top, which gave us a wonderful view of Pickett Peak. Climbing the peak will be saved for another day.

Vehicles of different types were able to make it up the road. While four-wheel drive was not necessary, a rugged type vehicle would be recommended. Mountain bikers and dirt bike riders were also out.

In all, we did about $6\frac{1}{2}$ miles. It was a steady climb up, but not strenuous. Coming down Rosemary and Carolyn had an easier time navigating the loose dirt because they had poles.



Pickett Peak is the focal point during a stop for lunch.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

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Getting there:

From South Lake Tahoe, take Highway 50 west. Turn left onto Highway 89 in Meyers. At the intersection with Highway 88, go straight. That is Burnside Road. Drive however far you want. Vehicle access is not allowed in the winter.