

Wilderness waterfall worth the walk



Galena Creek falls in September.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

INCLINE VILLAGE – Waterfall season is usually a late spring ritual. Not this year.

With the abundance of snowfall last winter in the Sierra, it meant water flowing long past when it normally would be a

trickle.

Taking advantage of a Sierra Club hike, I ventured with a group to the Galena Creek waterfall in the Mount Rose Wilderness several weeks ago. What a treat. I didn't even know this 60-foot high waterfall existed until then.

In mid-September it was more like summer hiking. With this weekend's storm, it's hard to know what the access will be like or if snowshoes would be the better choice of footwear.

Part of the hike is along the Tahoe Rim Trail. From here it's also possible to get to the summit of Mt. Rose.



Lake Tahoe is visible near the start of the hike. Photo/Kathryn Reed

It didn't take long for expansive views of Lake Tahoe to come into view, along with the meadow that spans both sides of the highway. Winding around, the south part of Reno then comes into view.

The guide points out Tamarack Lake to our right, which through the trees could easily be missed. Tamarack Peak (9,897 feet) is nearby, though Mt. Rose (10,776 feet) is the most dominate

feature as it looms large for much of the walk.

It's a single-track trail that at times is wide-open and other times is closed in by the forest.

While beauty is everywhere, the waterfall really is what makes this hike so outstanding. Looking at the rocks, it's easy to imagine how thundering the water must have been in the summer. It makes me want to return next year, closer to peak flow.

Looking in the other direction is a lush, verdant meadow fed by these waters.

To the waterfall it was 2.4 miles, a 557-foot elevation gain, and 328-foot elevation loss. Our guides took us a bit farther, through the meadow with its gentle creek and wildflowers still vibrant. This added about another mile to our trek.

It had been a while since I had hiked with a group of mostly strangers. On the one hand it's nice to meet others and be led, on the other hand the pace is inevitably slower and dogs are less likely to be allowed off leash. Still, the Sierra Club is to be commended for offering these free hikes and allowing non-members like myself to participate. All that's asked is a \$1 donation that goes for the guides to get first aid training without out-of-pocket costs.



A lush meadow is fed by Galena Creek. Photo/Kathryn Reed

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Getting there:

From South Lake Tahoe, go east on Highway 50. Go left onto Highway 28 at the top of Spooner Summit. At the roundabout in Incline, go right onto the Mount Rose Highway. Park at the summit on the left. The trail starts to the left. The starting elevation is 8,911 feet – the highest year-round pass in the Sierra.