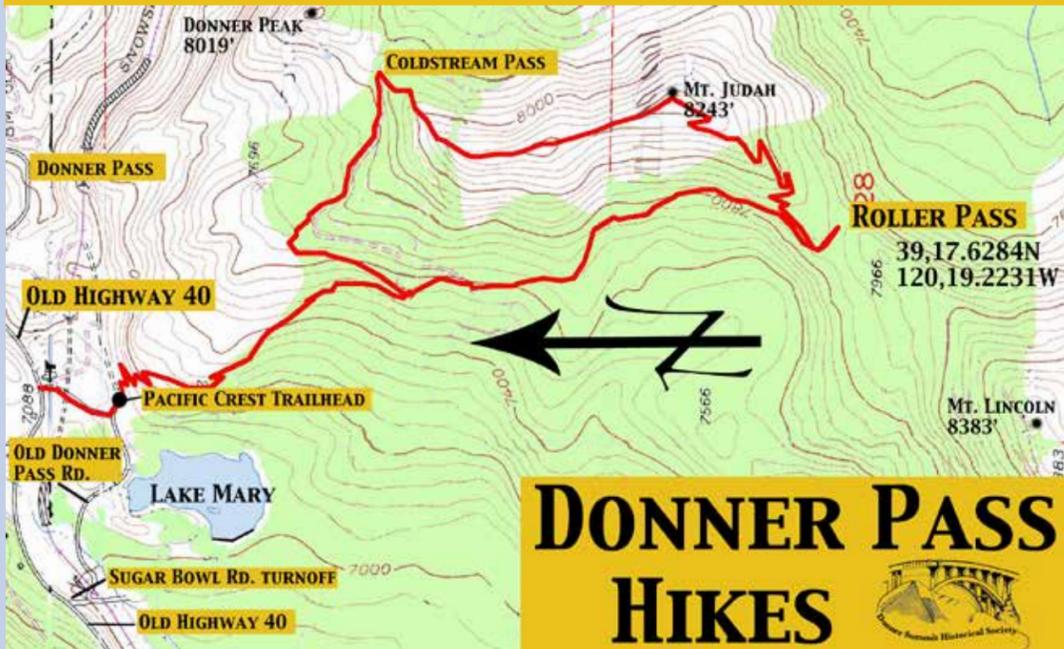


Historic Hikes of Donner Summit



marker there as well. Where you see the first Judah Loop turnoff from the PCT you are directly above the current railroad tunnel. It is about 666 feet beneath you through solid rock.

Scramble up the granite to the top of Donner Peak and then look down a thousand feet to Donner Lake.

On the way up you probably noticed snow banks on the shady side of Judah. If you brought some fruit punch and snow cups, you can make some good snow cones.

Access

Access the Pacific Crest Trailhead

Access for these hikes begins at the Pacific Crest trailhead (PCT). Just opposite Donner Ski Ranch is the Sugar Bowl Road. Just down that, past the overpass and Tunnel 6 is Old Donner Summit Rd. Turn left and drive up to the parking area. The trailhead is at the sharp 90° turn just beyond.

There is no water on these routes.

One of the variations of this hike, the Mt. Judah Loop, is the most popular hike on Donner Summit.

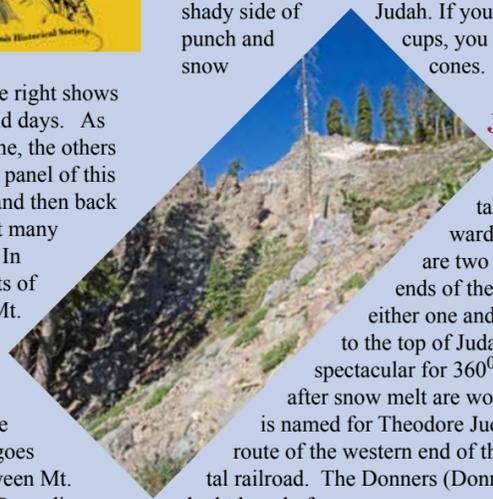
Roller Pass (4 miles RT)

The Roller Pass hike is a fun hike. You have nice views of Summit Valley (top photo here) as you go up and you find a piece of California history at the top. You also have a great view of Coldstream Valley. Then it's all downhill on the way back.

Take the Pacific Crest Trail (see the "Access" sidebar in the right hand column) two miles to the saddle between Mt. Judah and Mt. Lincoln. Instead of continuing on the PCT along the side of Mt. Lincoln, head further into the saddle, east. You will find markers for the Emigrant Trail. Take a look down the steep incline leading up from Coldstream Valley. They actually took wagons up that! The picture to the right shows the slope. They were a lot tougher in the old days. As wagons waited to be pulled up one at a time, the others camped down below (pictured on the front panel of this brochure). You can hike down the incline and then back up to see what it was like. Imagine doing it many times as you helped oxen pull the wagons. In early summer after snow melt, there are lots of wildflowers further along the PCT below Mt. Lincoln.

Donner Peak (2 miles RT)

Instead of heading for Roller Pass, take the first Judah Loop turnoff from the PCT. It goes left and will take you up to the saddle between Mt. Judah and Donner Pk. That's Coldstream Pass, discovered after Roller Pass had been in use. There is a trail



Judah Loop

To take the Judah Loop trail (4 miles), take the PCT up towards Roller Pass. There are two turnoffs for the two ends of the Judah Loop. Take either one and wind your way up to the top of Judah. The views are spectacular for 360° and the wildflowers after snow melt are wonderful. Mt. Judah is named for Theodore Judah who laid out the route of the western end of the first transcontinental railroad. The Donners (Donner Peak), you've no doubt heard of.

Roller Pass in 1852

About nine o'clock we doubled teams and began the ascent for the summit. While the teams were slowly toiling up the summit, Father, Mr. Buck, Margaret and I climbed one of the highest peaks near the road [Donner Peak] and were well repaid for our trouble by the splendid view. On one side the snow-capped peaks rise in majestic grandeur, on the other they are covered to their summits with pine and fir, while before us in the top of the mountains, apparently an old crater, lies a beautiful lake [Donner lake] in which the Truckee takes its rise.

Eliza McAuley 1852



Crater Lake and Rhino Rock

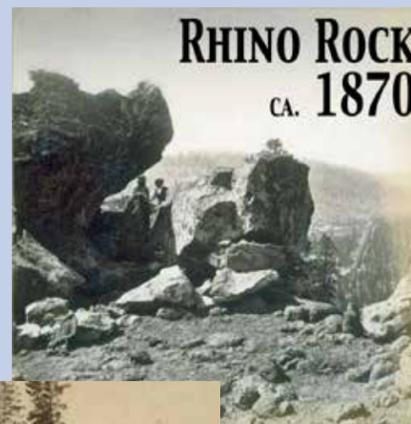
Crater Lake - remarkable geology

On top of Boreal Ridge there are some great views. There are also two surprising features: Crater Lake and Rhinoceros Rock. You've seen slow motion videos of something splashing into a liquid. For a short time there is a crater in the liquid. That is exactly what Crater Lake looks like. It is really slow motion because the crater is not moving. Splashed in a ring around the outside are the rocks from the interior. In the early morning, with the water still, it's beautiful (above). Rhino Rock is a quarter mile further along. The rock looks like a Rhino head and has a nice view of Devil's Peak beyond it.

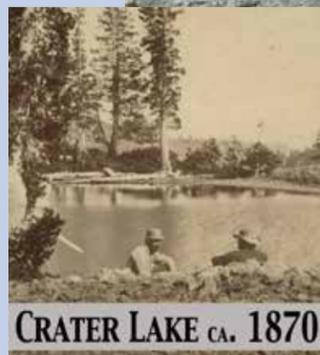
Eadward Muybridge (spellings vary) visited both features in the 1870's as you can see here. To get to the top of the ridge, start at Sierra Club's Clair Tappaan Lodge on Old Highway 40 a couple of miles east of the Soda Springs exit from I-80. Park in the large parking lot on the south side of the road. Head up the paved driveway, not the dirt walkway. At the top of the driveway take the dirt path past the Nature Friends lodge on the right and the Cal Lodge on the left. You will pass the front door of Clair Tappaan. Stay on the wide trail, called, "Main Drag." Go past the backside lifts of Donner Ski Ranch. You will pass Lytton Lake on the left and a new log lodge. Just past the last lift on the right you will go uphill to a saddle. The other side drops to Donner Ski Ranch's front side. Go left on the road and head up to the ridge top. On the ridge top you will pass two lifts on the left, the back of Boreal,

and three lifts on the right, Boreal's front side. You are on National Forest land. Keep going past the last lift heading west and go to the trees. Just beyond the trees is Crater Lake. You can't miss it. Leaving Crater Lake, go to the south side and drop down then head west a quarter mile and look for the rock that is shaped like Rhino head. You'll have to look around unless you have a GPS.

There are Geocaches on Boreal Ridge.



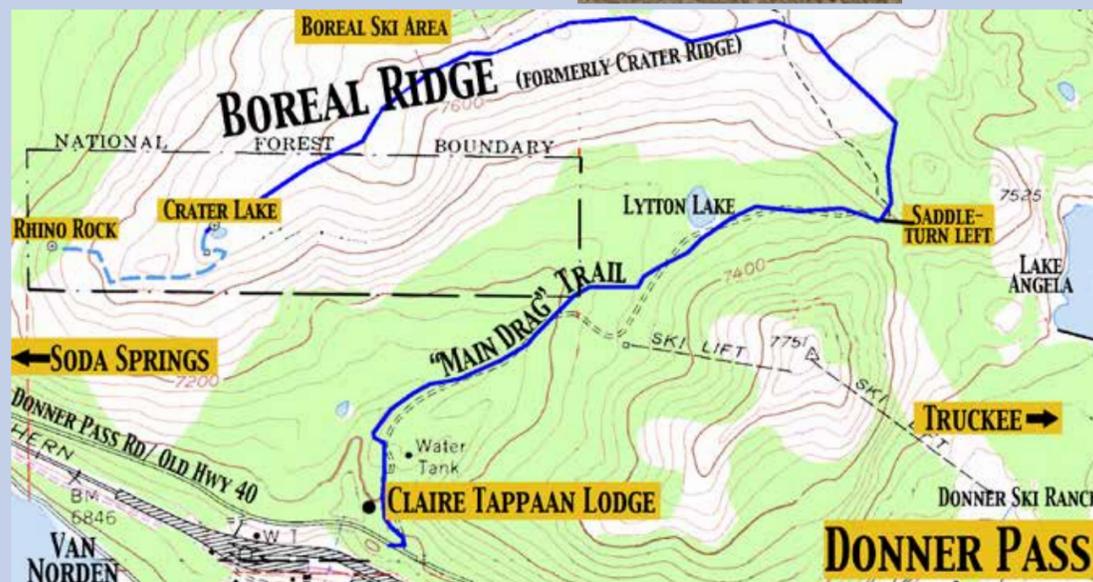
RHINO ROCK
ca. 1870



CRATER LAKE ca. 1870

Rhino Rock:
39° 19.467'N
120° 21.710'W

Crater Lake:
39° 19.478'N
120° 21.408'W



Hiking Donner Summit in the Old days

A Trip to Donner Peak

Last Wednesday morning a party of sixteen from Donner Lake united in a picnic expedition to Donner peak [sic]. Following up the summit road as far as Lake Mary, some engaged in gathering flowers, and others admiring the grand scenery of the summit peaks, towering up like some grand castle, far above the snow sheds. After leaving Lake Mary the party proceeded a short distance, when lunch was served out under pine trees, which aided the mountain air as an excellent tonic for sharpening appetites. The party then proceeded up the mountain trail near the summit of Donner peak, passing over large banks of snow. Here a gay game of snowballing was indulged in by the entire company. After fully ascending Donner peak some grand scenery was presented to view. In the distance could be seen Truckee, Martis Valley, Tinker's Knob, Castle peak, Summit Valley, Red Mountain, Devil's peak and six lakes. From off this peak fair Donner reminds one of a mirror spread out beneath amid the mountains.

The party, satisfied with sightseeing, returned to former levels, greatly pleased with the trip.

[Sacramento Daily Union](#) July 31, 1885



DUTCH FLAT RD. ca. 1867