

Stay on Ridge Rd. (this is the route from 1914-1928) going past Lake Alta and you will run into the freeway (Alta exit 146) but you want to turn left just prior, on Alta Bonnybrook Rd. [14.2] Alta Bonnybrook Rd. will lead you to Alta [14.5], just over the railroad tracks in Alta. Continue on Alta Bonnybrook. Turn left onto Baxter Rd. [16]. You will come to Baxter which will lead you to the freeway [16.6]. Baxter overpass (exit 148B): (39 12.429 120 48.639)



The Old route 40 meandered along the I-80 route until Cisco Grove. You will stay on the freeway over the hill past Blue Canyon, Nyack, Site of Nyack Lodge (there is a view spot north side of freeway), Laing's Crossing, Emigrant Gap, and the turnoff for Highway 20.

At Eagle Lakes exit you can pull off the freeway. In between the west and eastbound routes, along the river, is a stretch of Old 40. Fishermen and picnickers stop here. Take the dirt road on the south side and take the right turn just up the hill and you will find yourself on the earlier Lincoln Highway.

Imagine yourself traveling it in an old Model T. You can follow that up to the railroad tracks but on the other side of the tracks the Lincoln Highway route disappears into private property. There are two 20 Mile Museum signs at the Eagle Lakes exit north of the freeway and around the corner.

On the north side of the freeway is Red Mountain which was an island in the Pacific 65 million years ago. At the top is an old stone house used as a railroad lookout to check for fires in snowsheds. There is a spectacular 360 degree view but the road up from Indian Springs campground is very steep and rough. The hike is 3 miles but goes up 2000 feet. There is no connection to Cisco on Old 40 so you must get back on the freeway.



## Leg 4: Cisco Grove to Donner Summit & Truckee

At Cisco Grove exit the freeway (exit 165), 16 miles from Baxter, and turn left to cross the overpass. We'll start leg 4 here at 0 miles. Cisco was the end of the line for the railroad while the Summit tunnels were being dug. Behind the Cisco gas station and up the hill was a bustling town. Today there is nothing left. Later, the lower portion of Cisco became a ski center where the Auburn Ski Club was headquartered until I-80 took the land and the club moved to Boreal. Just over the overpass is Cisco Gould Park which has restrooms.



Turn right on Hampshire Rocks Rd. (Old 40 and Donner Pass Rd) and head to Big Bend (2 miles from Cisco). Just after the turn you will see some stone buildings on the left (above), the old Forest Gift Shop dating from the 1930's. The buildings now belong to Placer County. If you look closely on both sides of the road as you go towards Big Bend, you will see the remnants of old building foundations (above) dating from when Highway 40 was the main route. There were inns, gas stations, and restaurants – all gone now.



As you drive along from now on, you will come across more of the 20 Mile Museum interpretive signs.

As you go under east bound lanes of I-80 look to the right along the river and you see the original Lincoln Highway, the first transcontinental highway. At Big Bend [1.8] there is a fire station with commemorative markers. Across the street and behind the garage is a Lincoln Highway marker and a short stretch of the old highway to walk. You can also take a nice walk out of Big Bend across from the fire station and a bit west. You will walk along the river on the old Lincoln Highway. Look at the old stone houses, the river, the forest, and old bridge abutments

Big Bend was the "bend" in the river where wagon trains rested and one of the first white babies was born (1844). There are rust marks from wagon wheels still on rocks nearby. Later there were inns and a gas station.

Up the road from Big Bend is the Loch Leven Lakes trailhead [1.9]. There are restrooms at this very popular hiking spot.

Rainbow Tavern and Lodge (below) [2.3 miles from Cisco]. Here is good food, a classic lodge from 1927, and historical photographs. (39 18.612 120 30.554)



Stay on Old 40 going east and uphill going left under the freeway and the road becomes Donner Pass Rd.

Continue to Kingvale [5.7 miles from Cisco], Pla-Vada [6.1], and Soda Springs [9.3].

In Soda Springs [2.4 miles from Kingvale and 9 miles from Cisco] are the Soda Springs Store, Donner Summit Lodge (meals), and the Donner Summit Historical Society (DSHS) [9.5 from Cisco and .8 miles from the Soda Springs exit.]

A side trip from Soda Springs on Soda Springs Rd. will take you to the Serene Lakes (old Ice Lakes) in 2.1 miles. Ice harvesting was done on the lakes there for a few years until it was realized that the 35 foot average snowfall made it just too hard. You can read about the history there.

Back on Old 40 leaving Soda Springs, you are going east heading up to the Summit. Look to the right and admire Van Norden Meadow, or Summit Valley (far right panel bottom), the route of the wagon trains and the source of the Yuba River. Native Americans used the valley for thousands of years leaving behind grinding rocks, metates, and cupules. 11.8 miles from Cisco and 2.3 miles from the DSHS is

the Sugar Bowl lookout. Donner Pass is 12.6 miles from Cisco and 3.3 miles from DSHS.

At the Pass you are at 7135 feet. There are great hiking opportunities here. Pick up information at the Historical Society in Soda Springs. If you like hiking pick up the "Historical Hikes of Donner Summit" brochure.

Across from Donner Ski Ranch there are two 20 Mile Museum signs and the portal to Tunnel 6 (left) carved out of the Sierra granite in 1868 by Chinese workers. It is one of 15 Sierra tunnels of the transcontinental railroad.



The Chinese worked from both ends at once and from the inside out as well, via a shaft down the center.

At 3.1 miles from DSHS look to the right and see the creative rock sculptures next to the house. (39 19.027 120 19.704)

Continuing over the Pass, admire the view of

Yuba Gap

Cisco

Big Bend

Donner Lake and head for the visitors' parking at Donner Summit (Rainbow) Bridge [13.1 from Cisco and 3.7 miles from DSHS].

Donner Pass is unique. It is historically the most important square mile in the State. Standing on Donner Pass you see where the Native Americans crossed for thousands of years moving from summer to winter grounds. It's the site of the first wagon train crossing, the Stephens-Murphy-Townsend Party in 1844 (led by 80 year old Caleb Greenwood). The peak immediately north of the bridge is named for Elisha Stephens of that party. The remnants of the Donner Party crossed in 1846 and Mt. Donner, immediately south is named for them. The peak immediately east of Stephens is Stewart Peak, named for the George Stewart who wrote so many books\*\* about Donner Summit and Highway 40.

The first formal road crossed the Pass here followed by

the first transcontinental railroad (Mt. Judah, just north, is named for Theodore Judah who designed the route – and it makes a great hike). The first transcontinental highway, the Lincoln Highway, followed in 1913. The first transcontinental air route went overhead. There are also a gas pipeline and fiber optic cable that cross the Summit here in modern times.

You can see walkable traces of the Lincoln Highway and Dutch Flat Donner Lake Wagon Rd. Note the interpretive signs on the bridge and in the parking lot. Watch the rock climbers, extreme snowboarders, and lunatics on bungee cords. Look for the historic China Wall [13.3 miles from Cisco and 3.9 miles from DSHS] built by the Chinese workers in 1867 (39 19.052 120 19.226), the Native American petroglyphs, the snowsheds, and the original transcontinental railroad tunnel #6.

The last four have interpretive signs as does Rainbow Bridge. Hike across the rock faces looking for petroglyphs which are thousands of years old. Walk up

to the China Wall and imagine splitting the rocks and stacking them. See if you can see tool and drill marks.

Continuing on Old 40 you are heading for Truckee. At 6.1 miles from the DSHS and 15.6 from Cisco is the West End Beach of Donner Lake, a good place for picnicking, boating, swimming, and playing in the playground.

At 9.3 miles from DSHS and 15.8 from Cisco you will come to the Donner State park which has a museum with bookstore, beach, and campground.

Historic Downtown Truckee is 12 miles from DSHS and 21.5 from Cisco. In Truckee you will find all the conveniences of modern life: fast food, supermarkets, restaurants, and shops. In the historic downtown you will also find the visitors' center in the train station, the



The old Lincoln Hwy on Donner Summit cutting across the face of the granite. You can walk it.

Truckee Donner Historical Society at the old jail on Jibboom St. and a small railroad museum next to the train station. Downtown Truckee is a nice stop to walk around, explore, and get some refreshments.

At the Bookshelf at Hooligan Rock at 11310 Donner Pass Rd. before you get to downtown Truckee, you will find a fine selection of local books.



\*\*Stewart's books: Ordeal by Hunger (Donner party), Donner Pass, Names on the Land - A Historical Account of Place-Naming in the United States, The California Trail, Storm, Fire, U.S. 40, Earth Abides, and more.



## Old Time Sunday Drive Rocklin to Donner Pass & Truckee

Think back to Grandma and Grandpa. Think back to the old days when cars had lots of chrome and huge tail fins. Water bags hung from their fronts for the radiators. Burns and Allen or Jack Benny and Rochester were on the radio. There were Burma Shave signs along the roads and lots of billboards. There was plenty of time to read them too because traffic went more slowly. There were roadhouses and fruit markets and meat markets. There were even service stations with real service and air!

Take an old time Sunday drive at slow speed along Old Highway 40 from Rocklin to Truckee.

And be sure to take Grandma and Grandpa!

# Old Time Sunday Drive Hwy 40 Scenic Byway

### Museums Along Highway 40

Sierra Nevada Virtual Museum Sierra College  
5000 Rocklin Road, LRC 442 Rocklin, CA 95677  
<http://www.sierranevadavirtualmuseum.com>

Roseville Historical Society  
557 Lincoln St. Roseville, CA 95678  
(916) 773-3003 [www.rosevillehistorical.org](http://www.rosevillehistorical.org)

Roseville Telephone Museum  
106 Vernon Street Roseville, CA - 95678 916-786 1621  
[rosevilletelephonemuseum.org](http://www.rosevilletelephonemuseum.org)

Maidu Interpretive Center  
1970 Johnson Ranch Drive Roseville, CA 95661  
916 774-5934 [www.roseville.ca.us/indianmuseum](http://www.roseville.ca.us/indianmuseum)

Roseville Fire Museum  
400 Lincoln St. Roseville 916-538-1809

Rocklin History Museum  
3895 Rocklin Rd. Rocklin 916-624-3464  
916-786-1621 [www.rocklinhistory.org](http://www.rocklinhistory.org)

Friends of Griffith Quarry  
Taylor & Rock Springs Rd. Penryn, CA 95663-0326  
916-889-6500

Loomis Basin Historical Society  
Loomis, CA 95659-2195 916-652-7844  
[www.ppgn.com](http://www.ppgn.com)

Joss House Museum and Chinese History Center  
200 Sacramento Auburn, CA 95603 530-823-0373

Placer County Historical Society  
P.O. 5643 Auburn, CA 95604  
[www.placercountyhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.placercountyhistoricalsociety.org)

Lincoln Area Archives Museum  
640 5th St. Lincoln 916-645-3800

Bernhard Museum  
291 Auburn-Folsom Rd. Auburn 530-889-6500

Placer Co. Museum Auburn Courthouse  
101 Maple St., Auburn, CA 95603  
<http://www.placer.ca.gov/departments/facility/museums> 530-889-6500

Gold Country Medical History Museum  
219-100 Maple St. Auburn 530-887-1915

Gold Country Museum 601 Lincoln Way  
Auburn 530-889-6500



Foresthill Divide Historical Society  
[www.foreshillhistory.org](http://www.foreshillhistory.org) 530-367-3998

Colfax RR Museum  
99 Railroad Ave. P.O. Box 185  
Colfax, CA 95713-0185 530-389-2549  
<http://www.foothill.net/colfax/history/>

Golden Drift Historical Society  
32820 Main St Dutch Flat, CA 95714 (530) 389-2126

Western Ski Sport Museum  
Boreal exit from I-80 530-426-3313

Truckee Donner Railroad Society  
Little red caboose next to the train station  
Truckee, CA 96160

Truckee-Donner Historical Society  
Jibboom Str. downtown Truckee  
[truckeehistory.org](http://truckeehistory.org) (530) 582-0893

Newcastle Portuguese Hall  
690 Taylor Rd. Newcastle, CA 95658 530-885-9113

Lincoln Highway Association  
Fair Oaks, CA 95628-2554 (916) 962-1428  
[www.lincolnhwy.org](http://www.lincolnhwy.org)