

Clear Creek Trail System Information

OVERVIEW: The Clear Creek Trail, Clear Creek Connector, Jacks Valley Loop and James Lee Loops make up the 30-mile Clear Creek Trail System. All are open to hikers, mountain bikers, equestrians and dogs. The Clear Creek Trail is about 22 miles long. The highest section begins at the Spooner Summit Trailhead behind the restroom on the south side of Highway 50. The lowest section begins at the James Lee Park Trailhead. Access via the Clear Creek Connector is 2 miles long from the Clear Creek Connector Trailhead. The Jacks Valley Road Trailhead, Jacks Valley School Trailhead and James Lee Park Trailhead provide direct access to the lower Clear Creek Trail, James Lee Loops and Jacks Valley Loop, which offers anywhere from around 2-12 miles of loop opportunities with little to no overlap.

PARKING: At the lower end, the James Lee Park Trailhead provides space for dozens of autos in the marked stalls next to the ball field before the cul-de-sac. The trail begins at the opposite end of the cul-de-sac. Equestrian parking is not allowed in the park and vehicles are discouraged to park in the cul-de-sac so that buses and emergency vehicles have enough space to park and turn around. The Jacks Valley School Trailhead is a large area where equestrians can park on the north side of the fenced solar panel area. Autos can park on the south side of the fenced solar panel near the kiosk or along the school fence line. Posted signs mark where to park in this general area. The Jacks Valley Road Trailhead is a long pullout for around 15 autos along the north side of Jacks Valley Road, located 0.3 miles west of the school. Heavy auto parking use and adjacent traffic on the road does not make this a safe equestrian parking area. The Clear Creek Connector Trailhead is located at the interchange of Highway 50 and Golf Club Drive. There is still no formal trailhead but a half dozen autos can squeeze carefully next to the detention basin at the southwest side of the interchange tunnel. The trail begins directly on the south side of this small parking area. The Spooner Summit Trailhead can accommodate around 15-20 autos on the south side of Highway 50. Horse trailers can sometimes park here if space is available; however, trailers can also park along the large pullout shoulder directly west of the Spooner South Trailhead entrance, or by parking at a dirt pullout location a quarter mile east of Spooner Summit on the north side of the highway.

LAND OWNERS: Cooperative partnerships with various public, private and non-profit entities have allowed this trail system to occur. Various private and tribal properties surround much of the trail system. Trail users should be courteous and respectful of adjacent landowners by using the designated trail only and staying off cross roads.

SEASONAL USE: This trail system has both low and high elevations. In general, spring and fall are optimal times to use much of the trail system. Summer is often very warm to downright hot on the lower half of the trail system. During winter, snow prevents access on the middle and upper

portions, particularly above Knob Point. The first three miles of the Clear Creek Trail on the north side of Jacks Valley Road and a fair portion of the trail system on the south side, usually melt relatively quickly after a snowstorm and is more accessible during the winter months. The trail usually becomes passable between Knob Point and Clear Creek Junction in mid April, and then upward to Spooner Summit around the beginning of June.

[LANDSCAPE:](#) The trail system goes through a mix of chaparral and wooded landscapes with the lower half all located in a general mix of sagebrush, rabbitbrush and bitterbrush while the upper half goes through a wooded landscape of mostly Jeffrey Pine and white fir, and to a lesser extent, incense cedar, sugar pine, aspen and willow. There are panorama views on much of the lower half along with great viewpoints on the upper half from places like Knob Point and Cliff Rock. Tall brush is the sole source of any shade on the lower half of the trail system.

[TRAIL CONDITIONS:](#) The trail is generally considered easy to moderate at around 5% grade along most of its length. The elevation ranges between 4,800 feet at the James Lee Park Trailhead to 7,270 feet about a mile before reaching Spooner Summit. The trail is mostly a mix of packed soil and sand. A few short, loose sections of sandier soils are present.

Water is only available year-round at Clear Creek Junction, and on the Clear Creek Connector. A seasonal water source is sometimes present at a bridge located just over 3 miles above the Jacks Valley Road Trailhead. There is also a seasonal water crossing about two miles below Spooner Summit. Plan to carry plenty of water as the trail can be quite hot during the summer months. As is the case with all other Carson Valley Trail Systems, be watchful of rattlesnakes which are sometimes encountered particularly on the lower half of this trail system.

[Hikers and Joggers:](#)

Watch for mountain bikers and equestrians also using the trail system. Make yourself clearly visible on the trail when encountering other trail users. Horses can be easily spooked, so when approaching equestrians, it is courteous to slow down and speak to the rider in advance so they are aware of you. Then safely move typically to the downhill side of the trail and let them pass. Do not stand quietly along the trail or approach quietly from behind as this can startle many horses and their riders. In some cases, equestrians may ask you to step to a specific area so that their horse will not frighten or more safely pass. Remember to watch for rattlesnakes which are sometimes encountered on the lower half of the trail system.

[Mountain Bikers:](#)

This is a fairly gentle and flowy trail that can be enjoyed going up or down by most rider skill levels. There are some short sandy sections but you will find the trail relatively flat going across these sections. There are very few rocky areas, and only a few short steep pitches. There are

about seven switchbacks/climbing turns between Jacks Valley Road Trailhead and Clear Creek Junction, and about a dozen more above Clear Creek Junction. There are none on the upper three miles of the Clear Creek Trail or on the Clear Creek Connector, and only a couple just above the James Lee Park Trailhead.

Switchbacks may need to be walked through depending on your skill level. There are a few that are tight and on loose soils. Please ride slowly through switchbacks by not skidding through them or when approaching them. Skidding either ruts the turns or loosens the soil, making it more difficult to ride up or down next time. In general, the section of trail between Clear Creek Junction and Cliff Rock is the most challenging, with several switchbacks/climbing turns over a 1.5-mile distance.

Bikers should always yield to hikers and horses. Always ride cautiously and keep speeds under control, which will lessen your chance of crashing, prevents user conflicts, and protects the trail tread. When approaching equestrians, it is courteous to slow down and speak to the rider in advance so they are aware of you. Do not stand quietly along the trail or approach quietly from behind as this can startle most horses at close range. Make your presence known in advance as best you can by talking to them from a distance. Then safely move typically to the downhill side of the trail and let them pass. The trail does have some limited sight lines and sudden turns, so ride cautiously at all times.

Equestrians:

This is a relatively gentle trail for equestrians; especially on the south side of Jacks Valley Road; however, there are some short sections of trail that are narrow or have modest drop-offs above Jacks Valley Road and below Spooner Summit. There is a wooden bridge that must be crossed just over 3 miles above the Jacks Valley Road Trailhead. A second bridge must also be crossed just above Clear Creek Junction. Unless you're riding a trail horse that has experience going over wooden bridges, you should walk your horse across them because the hollow surface sound and different surface can spook a horse, possibly throwing a rider from the saddle. A third narrow bridge crossing is located directly at Clear Creek Junction but this has an adjacent ford crossing that should be used for a safe crossing and to provide an accessible water source for the horse.

Safe equestrian parking is available at the Jacks Valley School Trailhead on the north side of the fenced solar panel area. Dismounting and leading your horse at road crossings, particularly Jacks Valley Road, is highly advised for the safety of the horse, rider and passing vehicles.

At Spooner Summit, it is possible to find a space in the South Spooner Trailhead parking area, but it often fills with autos. There are two other options. One is to park directly on the west side

of the entrance to the Spooner South Trailhead in the large shoulder pullout adjacent to the highway. Though the pullout is quite wide, adjacent traffic is fast and busy. The other option is to park on the north side of the highway about a quarter mile east of Spooner Summit at an existing equestrian dirt pullout area. This is a little further off the highway and is used as the starting point to ride the Kings Canyon Road or the Tahoe Rim Trail usually northbound. From here, you ride the connector trail west to the Tahoe Rim Trail, then you'd have to walk your horse across the four lanes of Highway 50. Not ideal and is dependent on the skill and comfort of you and your horse.

Please keep a clean parking area; picking up after your horse is appreciated. Know the ability of your riding skills and the experience level of your horse. This is a popular trail for mountain bikers so be aware of oncoming mountain bikers and make your presence known if you see and hear bikers coming. There are some poor sight line corners on the trail. Be prepared for other trail users at these locations. There are numerous old roads on both sides of the highway in the Jacks Valley area for additional and less crowded trail riding opportunities but be aware these often lead into private or tribal properties that do not allow public use.

Dogs:

Dogs are required to be leashed on the south side of Jacks Valley Road from November 15-March 30th to protect wintering deer herds. If sheep are in an area grazing, dogs must be leashed during those times as well. Dogs should always be under the control of their owner. They should be leashed if they present a conflict with other dogs, wildlife, trail users or tend to wander around on private property. Rattlesnakes are seen somewhat regularly, especially the lower half of the trail system. Dogs are bitten every year by rattlesnakes on trails in the Carson Valley so if this concerns you, keep them leashed and by your side. During hotter temps, bringing water for your dog is highly advised. The only permanent water locations on the trail are at Clear Creek Junction and on the Clear Creek Connector. Please pick up after your dog on the trail, especially near trailheads.

ENJOY THE TRAIL!