

DONNER PEAK/MT. JUDAH LOOP

Thursday August 20, 2026

GENERAL LOCATION: Donner Summit near Donner Ski Ranch

DIFFICULTY: Moderately strenuous

HIKE DISTANCE: 6.8 miles

ELEVATION/ELEVATION GAIN: Trailhead at 7,060 feet; gain 1,300 feet

PACE: Moderate

TRAIL CONDITIONS: Steep, rocky switchback ascent first 0.4 mile and return decent. Shady forested paths and areas of full sun exposure. Short off-trail section with some loose rock to Donner Lake overlook. Hike to Mt Judah has steep drop offs on both sides of the trail and windy conditions.

Excessive heat may cancel hike – check the website the night before the hike.

DESCRIPTION: Steady pace up rocky switchbacks, shady forested areas and a beautiful view of Lake Mary. We travel along the Pacific Crest Trail on the scenic Mt. Judah loop to the base of Donner Peak. We climb a steep rocky path at the top of Donner Peak with great views. Back tracking a bit, we continue across ridgeline to top of Mt. Judah which opens to more spectacular views in every direction. Most of this trail is in full sun. We rejoin the PCT near Roller Pass. This is where emigrants partially disassembled their wagons to winch them over the brink. After Roller Pass we start our decent and continue on the loop. Once we hit the tree lines, we are shaded for a bit.

FACILITIES: Rest stop at Cisco Grove Exit 165 – Gould Park on north side of I-80. Porta-potty at trailhead.

TRAVEL TIME/DISTANCE: 1 hour 20 minutes travel time each way/about 72 miles. Expected return to SCLH about 3:30 p.m. (depending on traffic and construction on Highway 80) The suggested contribution for the driver is \$15.

HIKE LEADER/SWEEP: Laura Hamilton/Leah Bridgman

MEETING TIME:

Meet at 7:15 a.m. for 7:30 departure.

Estimated return to Sun City 3:30pm (depending on traffic and construction on Highway 80)

PREPARATION FOR HIKE:

Being prepared physically as well as having the right equipment makes for a better experience, not only for you, but for your fellow hikers.

IF YOU HAVE ANY HEALTH ISSUES, PLEASE CONSIDER YOUR CONDITION BEFORE HIKING.

WHAT TO BRING:

- **PLENTY OF WATER!** Recommend 50 oz. /1.5 liters minimum for 5-mile hike – more if longer. Electrolytes suggested. Higher altitudes are dehydrating even when cool.
- Bring a copy of your driver's license, health insurance card, and an emergency contact name and phone number with you on the hike.
- Always bring 2 pairs of shoes, along with a plastic bag to store your dusty hiking boots after the hike. DO NOT get your driver's car dirty by wearing your dirty boots on the drive home.
- Trekking poles strongly recommended for steep, rocky trail and off- trail areas. Bring plenty of water, lunch, sunscreen, bug spray and windbreaker. Electrolytes are recommended.

RISKS: High altitude (to 8,200 ft.), rocky trail, steep drop-offs along exposed ridgeline.

QUESTIONS: Contact Laura at 925-586-5411

AllTrails Map: [AllTrails Map](#)

Driving Directions to Donner Peak/Mt. Judah

Take favorite route to I-80 East.

Rest Stop for Pit Toilets: Exit 165 Cisco Grove for Gould Park rest stop (about 60 miles from SCLH). Left under freeway, then immediate right to Gould Park.

Continue East on I-80 to Exit 174 SODA SPRINGS/NORDEN (about 70 miles from SCLH). Turn right to head East on Donner Pass Road (old US 40) towards Sugar Bowl and Donner Ski Ranch about 3 1/2 miles to top of hill. TURN RIGHT at steep-roofed metal shed by Sugar Bowl Academy. Drive down narrow Sugar Bowl Road about 1/4 mile past PCT trailhead (sign says No Parking-Fire Lane), then park perpendicular on widened right side of road past trailhead. Portapotty at trailhead. If parking full, park at upper lot and walk down to trailhead.

Or navigate to: Pacific Crest Trail and Donner Peak Trailhead, 96161 Old Donner Summit Rd, Truckee, CA 96161