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FOCUS ON: OUTDOORS



An old wooden bridge is part of the scenery along the Tahoe-Pyramid Bikeway between Squaw Valley USA and Tahoe City. The well-maintained trail is about five miles one way. JACKIE GREEN/RGJ

Family-friendly ride

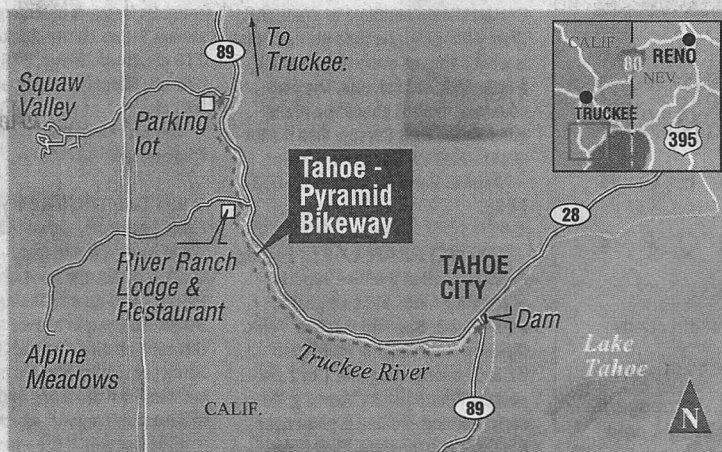
Biking with kids on the Tahoe-Pyramid Bikeway

By Jackie Green

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When we want to get away but don't have time to go far, my daughter, who's 8, and I like to grab our bicycles and head for the Tahoe-Pyramid Bikeway between Squaw Valley USA and Tahoe City.

This leg of the trail, which is paved and well-maintained, is about five miles each way and, while it has a few grades, is generally flat. My daughter and I have attempted it many times in the past. But, probably



STEPHEN REICH/RGJ

because of her young age, we never quite made it all the way. One recent Sunday, we did.

For families with small children, it's a pleasant ride no matter how far you go. The tree-lined trail mostly hugs the Truckee River and offers many shady spots, as well as easy access to the river. In the past, we would stop for snacks, water breaks and lunch, then turn back whenever my daughter got tired.

On weekends, the trail can be somewhat crowded. Be cautious when approaching a family with small children; experience has taught me they can dart suddenly into the oncoming bike lane.

For this ride, we met up with some friends at the parking lot at the California 89 turnoff to Squaw Valley USA, right behind the living flame and Olympic rings. (Don't forget to stop and get a picture of yourself in front of the rings, at least the first time.)

This starting point is handy for its two important features: A set of bathrooms and a playground, where my daughter usually plays while I'm unloading and loading the

IF YOU GO

» From Reno-Sparks, take Interstate 80 west. Exit at California 89, proceed through the roundabout and back under the freeway toward Squaw Valley USA. The turn for Squaw Valley is about 8 miles from the exit.

» Turn right toward Squaw Valley, then make the first left into the parking lot. There is a children's playground, bathrooms and a place to park.

» The bike path goes along the outside of the parking lot. Follow it to the left toward California 89.

TIPS FOR BIKING WITH KIDS

» Wear a helmet. Children are required to wear them by California law. Adults also should wear them for safety and to set a good example for their children.

» Don't wear headphones and don't let children wear headphones while biking. Bicyclists must be aware of what's around them at all times.

» Don't ride directly behind your child. No matter how many times you tell them, at some point, they will stop suddenly and you will crash into them.

» Bring a spare hand pump in case a tire loses air.

» Check your and your child's bike before starting to make sure the tires are pumped up and the seat is the right height.

Source: RGJ and championsforhealth.org.

bikes. There also is a US hop and convenience store just across the street.

Once we were ready to go, we headed left down the bicycle path back toward the highway. (You also can turn right onto the path and head up toward Squaw Valley USA's ski resort.) The

crosswalks at the light give my daughter and me some degree of comfort, so we don't have to dash across the highway to the bike path.

The path hugs California 89 at first, but within a few minutes,

See **BIKING, 3B** »

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Biking/Keep young riders close

From 1B

you'll ease to the left and head into the trees. There's a strong uphill grade right after the turn; it can wind you if you're not watching for it.

The ride into Tahoe City is slightly uphill, but not enough that you notice. Our group — all recreational riders, including a couple of beginners — pulled off a few times to tweak our bikes, get water and snacks, skip some rocks into the Truckee River and pose for pictures.

The paved trail crosses several small roads; follow the rules of the road and good sense when

approaching them.

The one dicey spot along the trail comes when crossing the parking lot at River Ranch Lodge & Restaurant. Cars veer quickly into the parking lot or to head up to Alpine Meadows.

Make sure to keep young riders close; we usually ride with an adult in front of my daughter and one behind.

The hill just past River Ranch has a steep incline on both sides. My daughter walked her bike partway up. Whenever she got off to walk hers, I walked mine, too, so she would know it's OK to walk when you need

to and, besides, I wanted her to be safe.

Including breaks, it took us about an hour to get to Tahoe City. The trail passes by the dam where Lake Tahoe feeds the Truckee River. Pictures inside the dam windows tell the story of how it was built and completed in 1913.

Nearby, Gatekeeper's Park and Museum offers a pleasant respite after the ride.

We locked our bikes and took some time to walk around Tahoe City, getting treats at Poppy's Frozen Yogurt and using the restrooms at Commons Park and Beach. Next time,

we'll bring our swimsuits and stay longer.

The ride back to Squaw Valley was much faster because it's mostly downhill. My daughter raced ahead of the adults and set a pretty good pace on her Barbie bicycle.

Back at the parking lot, we spread our blankets and enjoyed a picnic with sandwiches and artichoke dip near the Olympic rings before packing up the bikes and heading back to Reno with high spirits and tired muscles.

And, a sure sign of a good ride? My daughter fell asleep in the car on the way home.