

## **Ski Jaunts from the Red Corral**

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Three miles west of Pickett's Junction (the junction of Hwy 88 and Hwy 89) there is a spot on the road locals call "Red Corral". At Red Corral there are, indeed, a beautiful old deep red corral and a holding pen that were used by the ranchers when rounding up their cows. In the early 1990's the Friends and several other groups were instrumental in getting Congress to appropriate millions of dollars to purchase lands in Hope Valley. These lands belonging to ranchers were under threat of



development as ranching became less lucrative. Since that time, this area and adjacent land have become National Forest, and the corral is no longer used. Because fences and gates still remain, many people don't realize that this is now public land and are reluctant to venture into this area. Red Corral is a great starting point for ski tours into this portion of Hope Valley.

The newly developed Alpine Winter Recreation Project proposes to improve Red Corral to provide a one-acre off highway parking area and a year-round non-motorized trailhead. Once the Forest Service receives the funds to develop the area, there will be parking, toilet facilities and an information kiosk at this site. Presently it is just a pull off on the highway; parking is available on either side of the road.

Once you have climbed over Red Corral via the old steps, your adventure begins. First ski down the road to the creek; this is Red Lake Creek, a popular fishing spot. At the creek you can either go left and follow Red Lake Creek or cross the creek and follow the road towards Blue Lake Road.

Turning left (south) at Red Lake Creek, ski down-stream into a large open meadow. Watch for coyotes, red tail hawks and golden eagles hunting for small critters in the meadow. After enjoying the meadow continue along the creek to other meadows further on. The little ups and downs on sides of the meadows are great places to practice turning or to just enjoy the free rides downhill. Eventually when the creek becomes narrow and turns east, it's time to turn back, or you will end up on Blue Lakes Road with all the snowmobilers. On the return be adventurous; it's wide-open country, so pick a different route back. Try hugging the west side of the valley climbing over knolls between the meadows

If you choose to cross Red Lake Creek, you can usually find a place to ski across or take your skis off and hop across on the rocks. Follow the road (the beginning of this road is the opening in the trees) through the forest to a higher meadow. The road climbs a bit above the valley floor, eventually ending up on Blue Lakes Road.

In about three miles the road runs into a narrow snowmobile trail, which is a good place to turn around. The turn around point is just before Blue Lakes Road, so you will miss mingling with snowmobiles. This route is out-and-back on the same trail. On the return the views are very different. Looking west you will see beautiful Red Mountain and Steven's Peak looming over Hope Valley.

Have an adventure this winter. Take time to enjoy the winter environment and experience Hope Valley under a blanket of snow. Follow Edward Abbey's recommendation: "So get out there...ramble yonder and explore the forest... breath deep of that yet sweet and lucid air, sit quietly for awhile and contemplate the precious stillness, that lovely mysterious and awesome space."