

Genoa Trail System Information

The Genoa Trail System is about 16 miles of trail in the Genoa area open to hikers, mountain bikes, equestrians and dogs. The two main trails are the Discovery Trail and Sierra Canyon Trail. The Genoa Loop and Eagle Ridge Loop comprise portions of these two trails with the lower sections following roads in and around Genoa to complete the loops. No fires are allowed throughout the year. Dispersed camping is not practical because of the steep terrain, however flat areas near the Tahoe Rim Trail offer opportunities. Standard camping guidelines along trails are to camp at least 300 feet from the trail and 200 feet from water sources. There is no water on the upper half of the Sierra Canyon Trail and usually nowhere on the Tahoe Rim Trail between Kingsbury North and Spooner Summit Trailheads. The town of Genoa is a great place to relax before or after your trail excursion where you can find places to eat and drink, shop and learn about the rich history of the area.

Discovery Trail:

The Discovery Trail is 5.7 miles long with a north terminus at Eagle Ridge Trailhead. The south terminus is currently just a spot on the Genoa Loop, 2 miles above the Genoa Canyon access point at the uppermost switchback. At this location, the trail may continue further south at a future time connecting to Pine Basin. Continuing down the Genoa Loop to Genoa Canyon will add an additional 2 miles. Returning to the Eagle Ridge Trailhead can occur by following roads through Genoa, along Jacks Valley Road and back up Eagle Ridge Road for a 10.3-mile loop hike.

Sierra Canyon Trail:

The Sierra Canyon Trail connects to the Tahoe Rim Trail west of Genoa Peak and is 10 miles long one-way with nearly 4,000 feet of elevation gain. The lower end begins from the Sierra Canyon access point at the junction of Centennial Drive and Snowshoe Lane. Parking is designated on the east side of Centennial Drive across from Snowshoe Lane. A second option is to begin from the Eagle Ridge Trailhead which is about the same distance to the Tahoe Rim Trail, but 250 feet less elevation to climb. Keep in mind that views of Lake Tahoe are about another mile north or south on the Tahoe Rim Trail. If going to Genoa Peak, it's another mile of hiking and 700 feet elevation gain, so yeah, it's a long ways.

Anyone planning a round trip hike to the Tahoe Rim Trail should be prepared for a long day, 20 miles round-trip and substantial elevation changes. A much less strenuous alternative is to carpool and begin your trip from either the Kingsbury North Trailhead or South Spooner Summit Trailhead on the Tahoe Rim Trail. A one-way trip to either the Eagle Ridge Trailhead or Sierra Canyon Trailhead is approximately 15 miles from the Kingsbury North Trailhead or 16 miles from the South Spooner Trailhead.

Genoa Loop:

The Genoa Loop is 8.2 miles long. The lower 1.4 miles of this loop goes through the town of Genoa, following the roads between the Sierra Canyon and Genoa Canyon access points. Those wanting to shuttle vehicles between the two access points would have a 6.8 mile hike. Parking is available just about anywhere on the Genoa streets such as near Genoa Park and Mormon Station State Historic Park. The least strenuous direction to do the loop by bike or foot is likely counterclockwise starting in Sierra Canyon (or alternatively from the Eagle Ridge Trailhead).

There is just over a half mile of trail in lower Genoa Canyon that is narrow with very steep drop offs, tight switchbacks and limited sight lines. Though allowed, this section of trail is not advised for equestrians because of this challenging terrain. Only experienced horses and riders should use this portion of trail. Mountain bikers should also take caution, particularly at switchback locations where it's highly advised to walk your bike through the turns. Scout the trail ahead of time to determine if you are comfortable biking or horse riding this section.

Eagle Ridge Loop:

This loop is 6.5 miles long, however the lower 2.2 miles of this follows the graveled Centennial Drive down to Jacks Valley Road, then north on Jacks Valley Road and back up Eagle Ridge Road to the Eagle Ridge Trailhead. This loop has the least amount of snow during winter months. If you just want to travel the 4.3-mile trail portion between the trailheads, you can shuttle vehicles. For those wanting a very short 1.5-mile loop with nice views, one can park at the Eagle Ridge Trailhead and walk a combination of old road and constructed trail segments.

River Fork Ranch Trails:

Two flat trails are located at The Nature Conservancy's River Fork Ranch located about one mile east of Genoa on Genoa Lane. No dogs are allowed here. The East Brockliss Loop is a 0.7 mile, nearly flat, natural surface trail with two short 24" wide boardwalks over water part of spring. The West Fork Trail is a 2-mile long, flat and wide trail also used as a ranch road that connects Genoa Lane and Muller Lane. Both trails are considered easy hikes with excellent panorama views of the Carson Range.

Genoa Vista Trail:

This is an approximate 1.3-mile fairly level paved trail between the town of Genoa and David Walley's Hot Spring Resort.

Hikers:

Be aware of bikers and equestrians also using the trail system. Make yourself clearly visible on the trail when encountering other trail users. Bikers should yield to hikers but be prepared to step to the side of the trail if necessary. 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 to the downhill side of the trail and let them pass. In some cases, equestrians may ask you to step to a specific area so that their horse will not frighten, or ask that you move to a certain area to more safely pass. In lower Genoa Canyon, you may need to backtrack a ways to a safer passing location.

Bikers:

These are more challenging mountain biking trails. For your safety and the safety of other trail users, always wear a helmet, make sure your brakes are in good condition and always be on the lookout for other trail users. Keep your speed under control at all times. Use extreme caution on trail downgrades to avoid rock obstacles or loose dirt that can easily make you crash. Many switchbacks are tight and have loose soil throughout the turn radius, so turn very slowly or stop completely and walk through the turn. To help protect turns, please avoid skidding into and through the turns by slowing down in advance.

Continuous downhill grades such as on the Sierra Canyon Trail can be fatiguing; always stay alert with both hands firmly on your handlebars. Bikes can easily spook horses, especially around blind corners and when you 'suddenly appear' out of nowhere. Bikers should always yield to hikers and horses which means always being prepared to stop with short notice. 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 to the downhill side of the trail and let them pass. Equestrians may ask you to step to a specific area so that their horse will not frighten or ask that you move to a different area to more safely pass.

The trails are challenging, but are probably most challenging in lower Genoa Canyon on the Genoa Loop. This area has extremely steep drop offs, tight switchbacks and limited sight lines. The trail itself is not much different than elsewhere but be cautious at the switchbacks. Several of these are very tight and almost impossible to turn on. It's very much advised to walk your bike through these turns! Go slowly around blind corners where other trail users may be approaching from the other side. Be extremely cautious of approaching equestrians, you will almost certainly need to backtrack a ways to safely provide a passing location for horses.

Equestrians:

Know the ability of your riding skills and the experience level of your horse. Steep trail drop offs are common throughout the entire trail system. Riders should be comfortable with these steep drop offs and not be afraid of heights. Be aware of oncoming mountain bikers on the trails and make your presence known if you see and hear bikers coming. A horse that easily spooks when encountering other trail users should not be ridden on these trails. If you are not comfortable in a passing situation, let the approaching trail user know what you want them to do. There are several water sources available on the trail.

About 65% of this trail system was constructed with a trail dozer to increase trail tread width and provide a safer equestrian opportunity. The other 35% was built by hand. Four areas are more narrow: 1) short sections just above the Eagle Ridge Trailhead (which can be by-passed by staying on the old road portion); 2) most of the lower 1.8 miles of the Sierra Canyon Trail (which can also be bypassed using the old road section); 3) the upper 0.3 miles before the Tahoe Rim Trail (but is on flat terrain); and 4) over a half mile in lower Genoa Canyon, by far the most challenging section for horses. Scout this section of trail ahead of time to determine if you are comfortable riding here. This section is narrow with extremely steep drop offs and limited passing areas. You may have to back up your horse if you encounter another horse. Walking your horse is a safer option here. If you don't have a trained trail horse, don't ride this section.

The main equestrian parking area is signed along Eagle Ridge Road at the junction of Timberline Road just below the Eagle Ridge Trailhead. There are no turnaround areas available at the Eagle Ridge Trailhead, Sierra Canyon access or Genoa Canyon access points. Though not signed, a secondary parking area near the bottom of Sierra Canyon is along the east side of Jacks Valley road across from Centennial Drive, however riders should be comfortable loading and unloading here with passing traffic of 25-35 m.p.h. Additional parking areas in and around Genoa on public roads are also possible but limited. Cleaning up after your horse at parking areas is appreciated.

Dogs:

Dogs should be leashed everywhere within Genoa, residential areas and at trail parking areas to avoid conflict with other dogs and wandering on to private property. Once away from residential areas, dogs should remain under your control or leashed to minimize conflicts with other dogs, horses, mountain bikers and hikers. Rattlesnakes are not uncommon on these trails, so keeping your dog leashed is advised. Water locations are shown on the map where dogs can drink. Please pick up after your dog when in town and at parking areas. Dog waste stations are located at certain parking areas and around Genoa.