

GCTC ROYAL GORGE RIDE

On July 7th, four of us, Jamie Canon, her daughter Rebecca, Jacqueline Debets and myself had a lovely ride. The weather was perfect. We had clear skies, wildflowers were in bloom, and we had light winds. The 360° views up on top where the lava rock outcroppings are were spectacular. Our lunch stop had green grass for the horses with lots of shade trees. There were several streams for the horses to get water along the ride.



~ Suzanne Vaccaro

Tahoe Donner Equestrian Center & Trails

We recently spent 4 nights mid-week with their horses boarded at the Tahoe Donner Equestrian Center, while staying at a vacation rental cabin a mile away. It's about a 90-minute haul from Penn Valley on a good day. Tahoe Donner is a membership-based residential community, but it opens its Equestrian Center to non-member overnight borders when it is open for the season, from May-September. Tahoe Donner also has a campsite with hook-ups that is open to the public less than 2 miles from the Equestrian Center.

Maps are provided and you can ride out onto trails that are well-marked and graded in 3 levels, which they would say run from little gradient and decent footing to some gradient and some rocks, but not a serious challenge for those GCTC members who have very experienced and fit horses. You can ride on everything from loops that never stray far from the center to rides that go down into beautiful Euer Valley and back. We used to horse camp in the Euer Valley before it was closed to the public. Our horses are now 23, and we don't like to overface them, so we did not make the Euer Valley trek, but we thoroughly enjoyed the variety of scenery on the various trails that we rode during our visit.

The boarding area of the Equestrian Center has been expanded since we last saw it and is now located nearer the beginning of the dirt rode where we used to haul down to the Euer Valley. The ridge-top rides we rode gave us beautiful, expansive views that we hadn't seen when we camped in the valley. Riders will encounter some cyclists, but they have clearly been told to respect

horses. It was our experience that cyclists generally stopped while we passed, so it's a good learning opportunity for young horses.

We found the Equestrian Center, which is at 6650 feet, to be well-run with friendly staff. It has half-roofed 12x24 pole paddocks with absorbent, sandy footing and some shade trees. They clean once a day and feed twice, two flakes, your choice of grass or alfalfa, and the large water holders are topped up daily. There are nice lockable cupboards for your tack, about the size of a porta potty, with two saddle racks and some hooks. Trailer parking is close by. There is also a wash rack with rubber mats and a large wood-sided round pen. If you want to work your horse in a fenced arena there are several, of small to medium size, and a clubhouse with a snack bar for refreshments after you ride.

Boarding costs \$44 a night, but for 5 nights it's better to go for the \$184 weekly rate. If you don't want to board the trail day use fee is \$15. The Tahoe Donner Equestrian Center's website is: <http://www.tahoedonner.com/amenities/equestrian/equestrian-center/>

~ Michael Brook and Cathy Blake

