



Cross-Country Skiing

Loon Lake Area

Eldorado National Forest

Pacific Ranger District



Cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and snow camping are a few of the winter activities you may enjoy in the Loon Lake area when it's covered in snow. The Loon Lake area provides many miles of marked and unmarked cross-country ski touring. The best snow conditions are generally between December and May. During this time, the Loon Lake area offers ski touring for beginners to advanced skill levels.

Area Description

Loon Lake's beauty is characterized by open granite bowls, ridges and wooded drainages surrounded by ridges and peaks which offer panoramic views of the Crystal Mountain range and the surrounding areas. Elevations range from 6,410 feet at lakeshore to 6,863 feet at the summit of Wentworth Peak.

Access

Loon Lake is 45 miles northeast of Placerville on the Pacific Ranger District of the Eldorado National Forest. To reach this beautiful area, travel 20 miles east of Placerville on Highway 50 to the Ice House Road (8.5 miles east of Pollock Pines), then north on Ice House Road 30 miles to Loon Lake.

Although paved, the roads to Loon Lake are often icy and storms can make them impassible to all vehicles, including four-wheel drives. The Sacramento Municipal Utility District plows the access roads on an intermittent basis, which means that **Ice House road may not be plowed on weekends or holidays.**

Loon Lake Chalet

A large deck with picnic tables is open to the public during the day. The restroom is accessed from the outside of the building and is always open. Pets are not allowed inside the building and smoking is prohibited. The Chalet can be rented for over-night stays year-round. For more information, or to make reservations, visit Recreation.gov or call the National Recreation Reservation System at 1-877-444-6667.

Parking Areas

The Loon Lake Chalet parking lot gives easy access to several of the trails. There is also limited parking at two other locations, as shown on the map.

Trail Etiquette

Snowshoers should travel on the outside edge of the trail. Pick one side or the other rather than both. Snowshoe tracks make skiing difficult especially for beginning skiers or on icy days.

Dogs

While sharing your outdoor experience with your dog can be rewarding for you and your pet, it can cause problems for other people: Dog tracks in the snow can ruin ski tracks; uncontrolled dogs can be a hazard to skiers/snowshoers; and dogs can be messy. If you choose to bring your dog on a winter adventure to Loon Lake, please be considerate of others by keeping them under control and cleaning up after them.

Trail Signing

Look for trail signs with the trail name, distance in kilometers and difficulty. Trails are rated "Easier", in green, "More difficult" in blue and "Most difficult", in black. Trail route markers are blue diamonds. Skiers should be aware that trails are not groomed.

Please Note: Because Loon Lake is a reservoir the water level changes, breaking up the ice. Ice fishing and travel ice for any reason is not advised.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



Planning Your Trip

Pre-Trip Checklist

A checklist can help you remember supplies which will reduce the possibility of needing to be rescued. Include extra clothes, sunglasses, sunscreen, food, water, emergency survival equipment, vehicle service supplies (anti-freeze, tire chains, ice-scraper, something for traction) should all be on your list. Remember to include prescription medications and other items you or your group may need if you are delayed by weather or road conditions.

Food Supplies

Trail food should include items that are lightweight but high in calories. Plan your meals to insure a diet of high-energy foods. Carry extra meals and snacks in case your trip takes longer than expected.

Water

Winter temperatures can freeze the water you bring with you in your pack or car. Protect the water you have from freezing by using insulated containers and storing it in a warm place. Be prepared to melt snow with a small camping stove. Although water may be readily available in snow or ice form, choosing to eat frozen water can lower your core temperature. Use a stove or fire rather than your body heat to melt ice and snow.

Clothing

Dress in layers that can be added or removed according to temperature. Clothes should be chosen for warmth, weight and wind protection. Choose wool or polypropylene clothing rather than cotton for winter activities and camping. Cotton absorbs moisture, does not dry quickly, and loses its insulating properties when wet. A typical outfit might include the following:

- Light, breathable, long underwear.
- Medium weight insulating pants and shirt
- Heavy sweater.
- Stocking cap, parka hood, waterproof hat, or similar head-covering
- Gloves or mitts and glove liners, (several pairs).
- Layered socks: thin socks to wick moisture away from your feet, coupled with thicker insulating socks.
- Waterproof boots or shoes appropriate to your planned activity.
- A dry set of clothes to change into for each person in your group.
- Cotton clothing is not recommended because it will absorb perspiration and moisture from the snow. The resulting wet clothing will conduct heat away from your body instead of insulating you and retaining your body warmth.



Visitor Information

General Forest Information
(530) 644-2324

Emergency Numbers

Highway Patrol, Sheriff, Ambulance
911 or (530) 626-4911

Avalanche Hazard

There may be danger from avalanche conditions. Educate yourself about these dangers and how to avoid them before your winter backcountry trip.

To learn more about avalanche safety and to check avalanche hazard ratings, visit the Sierra Avalanche Center website at:

www.sierraavalanchecenter.org/

or call 530-587-3558.

Be Prepared, Tell A Friend

Before leaving home, let someone know where you're going and when you'll be back. In the event of an emergency, it is helpful to have someone not with you to have a map with your planned travel route clearly marked. Remember to check in with this person when you return.

If you are overdue, this person should notify the El Dorado County Sheriff at the number below.

There is spotty cell phone communication throughout the Crystal Basin.



TRAIL DESCRIPTIONS

(Trail distances given are one way)

Berts Lake Trail (1.7 km)
The trail starts at the west side of the Loon Lake Chalet parking lot. Climb along the east side of the ridge then turn west. Berts Lake is in the saddle. Look for marked poles in open areas.

Campground Loop Trail (2.5 km)
This is an easy trail, excellent for beginners. Travel east from the Loon campground parking area into the campground. The trail skirts the east edge of the boat ramp and follows looping roads through the campground.

Chipmunk Bluff Trail (2.2 km)
The trail starts on the west side of Loon Lake Chalet parking lot and heads southwest along the Forest System road to the ridge.

Glissade Trail (1.3 km)
Follow the trail south from the Campground Trail. Ski the trail counterclockwise onto the ridge and return to the Campground Trail.

Orion Trail (5.5 km) - This trail heads northeast from the Van Vleck Trail or east from the Campground Trail. It forms two loops leading to the base of Brown Mtn.

Polaris Trail (4.0 km)
Follow the county road across the first dam, then continue north along the road to the second dam. Please note the county road provides access to the Rubicon Trail. OHV traffic to be expected.

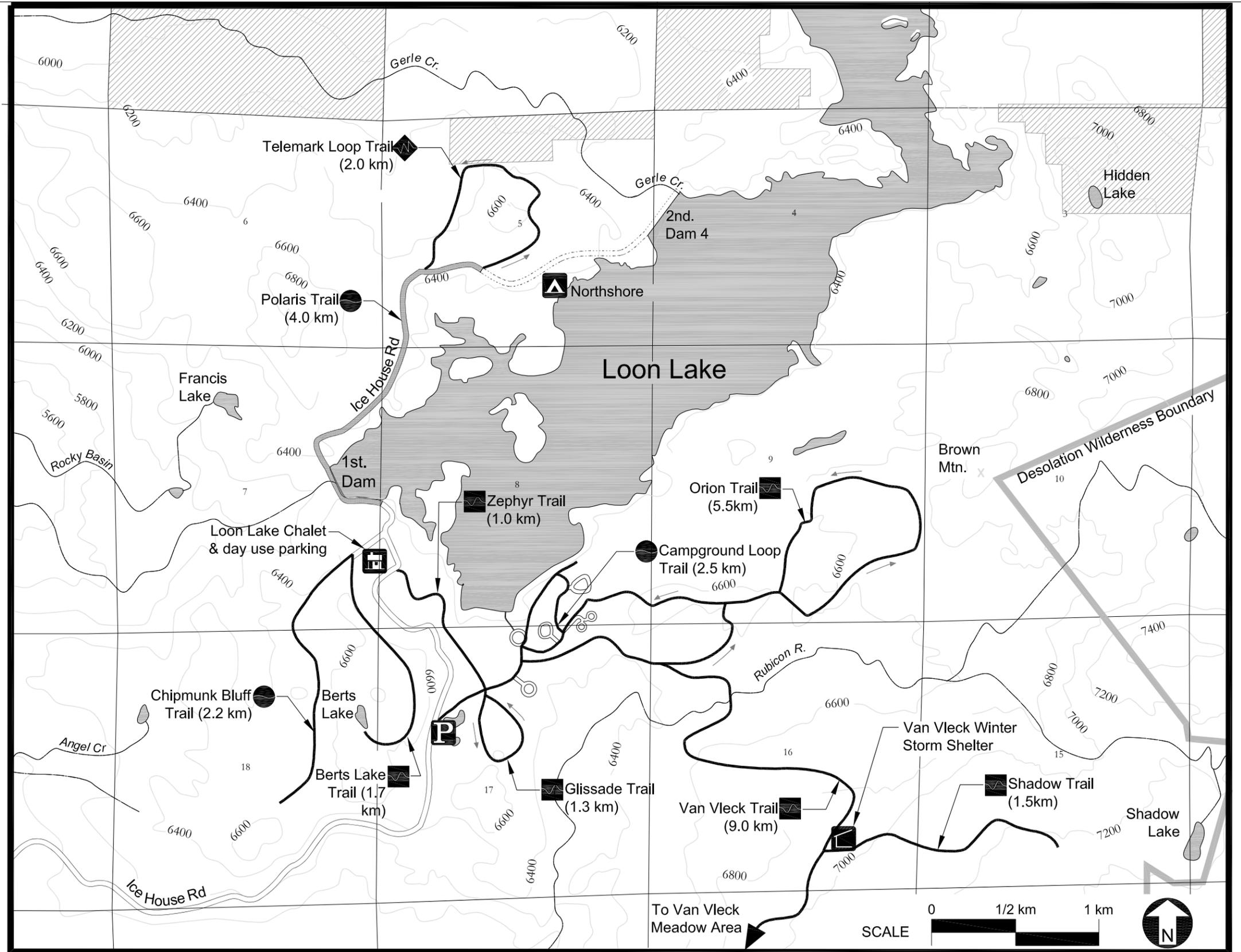
Shadow Trail (1.5 km)
This trail travels east from the Van Vleck winter storm shelter. You will enjoy views of Loon Lake.

Telemark Loop Trail (2.0 km)
Trail starts west of Northshore CG. Start at the second sign and ski counterclockwise uphill through the saddle then down through a large open bowl and return to the road. Look for marked poles in open areas.

Van Vleck Trail (9.0 km)
This trail heads east from the Campground Trail to the trail bridge at the Rubicon river. Travel southeast on the trail to the ridge and follow the blue diamonds to the Van Vleck meadow area. This is an intermediate to advanced trail. When skiing on this trail you must be highly aware of weather and snow conditions. There is a winter storm shelter for emergencies. It is highly recommended that you establish a turn around time so you have enough daylight to return.

Zephyr Trail (1.0 km)
Walk or ski on the edge of the road 150 meters south from the parking lot along the plowed paved road to the trailhead on the east side of the road near the concrete building. Ski southeast to the Campground Trail.

Please do not block plow lines, paved roads or building entrances when parking. Thank you!



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| County Road (Plowed) | Ski trail (marked with blue) | Easiest Trail | Parking (limited) |
| County Road (not plowed) | Private Property | Moderate Trail | Campground |
| County Road (not Plowed, shared use: OHV & Polaris Trail) | Recommended direction of travel | Most Difficult Trail | Lodging (by reservation only) |