



Van Vleck Bunkhouse

Eldorado National Forest

Pacific Ranger District



Built in 1957, Van Vleck Bunkhouse sits nestled in a red fir forest on the edge of a meadow near the Tells Creek Trailhead into the Desolation Wilderness and offers a spectacular view of Tells Peak. The bunkhouse is the last remnant of the Van Vleck Ranch site, which was operated as a cattle ranch from the 1860's to the 1960's. Popular activities include hiking, backpacking, bird watching, fishing, mountain biking, horseback riding, backcountry skiing and snowshoeing.

Amenities

This rustic Bunkhouse has one bedroom, one bathroom and a living room/ kitchen combination with a small deck outside. *Do not expect hotel luxuries.*

Parking: 6 car maximum. RVs and trailers are not recommended due to limited space for parking and turn around. No vehicle access in the winter.

Sleeping: Queen bed and bunk bed in bedroom. Bunk bed and sleeper sofa in living room.

Heat & Lights: Propane fireplace with thermostat. Propane lights. **No electricity.**

Cooking: Propane oven and cook top. Dishes, pots, and pans. Refrigerator in the summer.

Water: During the summer the bunkhouse is supplied with tested well water. Hot water and shower available in the summer. Please conserve water as the supply is limited and can run out during dry periods. Due to freezing temperatures, the water system is shut down during the winter. Melt and boil snow for water during winter months.

Route Finding

Even though the roads and the trail to Van Vleck Bunkhouse may be marked these should not be relied upon by travelers in this remote backcountry area. Natural events and storms can remove or obliterate signs and trail markers. You are responsible for finding your way by reading topographic maps and using a compass or GPS unit. The Van Vleck Ski Trail maps attached have GPS information in either UTM or latitude and longitude in degrees, minutes and seconds. Confirm that your GPS unit is using WGS 1984 datum.



Location and Access

The Bunkhouse, situated at 6,549 feet above sea level, offers extremely different recreational experiences between summer and winter use.

Summer Season directions (July through September)—Summer access is generally by paved road except for the last 0.5 mile which is a dirt road. To reach the bunkhouse:

- Highway 50 east 21 miles from Placerville (8.5 miles east of Pollock Pines). Left on Ice House Road north **23 miles**. Right on Cheese Camp Road (13N22) 4 miles to fork in the road. Stay right for 1.5 miles to left turn at locked gate. The Bunkhouse is a half-mile past the gate on the left side.

Winter Season directions (January thru April). Winter drastically changes the complexion of the Sierra Nevada and the Crystal Basin is no exception. Snow depths from a single storm can exceed two feet. When snow covers the Sierra, the Van Vleck Bunkhouse can only be accessed by a challenging **6 mile long ski/snowshoe trail** through the backcountry marked by blue diamonds. To reach the trailhead at Loon Lake:

- Highway 50 east 21 miles from Placerville (8.5 miles east of Pollock Pines). Left on Ice House Road north **28 miles** taking the right fork to Loon Lake. Continue 5 miles on Ice House Road to the plowed trailhead parking area on the right at the turnoff to the Loon Lake Campground. Do not obstruct traffic or snowplows on Ice House road.
- ◆ Because of the unpredictable weather and road conditions, there is no guaranteed access to Van Vleck Bunkhouse.

Important

Renters must contact the **PLACERVILLE Ranger District in Camino at (530) 644-2324** to arrange for the permit and access. Check on current conditions before you leave the house.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Check-In

Renters must contact the **PLACERVILLE Ranger Station** (530) 644-2324 **as far in advance as possible** to arrange for check-in, access, and to receive a current condition report. Permits must be picked up in person. Failure to do so will result in a cancellation of your reservation.

Placerville Ranger Station

4260 Eight Mile Road
Camino Ca. 95709
8:00 am to 4:30 pm
Call for schedule.

DIRECTIONS: Travel 8 miles east of Placerville on Highway 50 and take exit 54 (Cedar Grove). Turn right on Eight Mile Road, then another immediate right to the Ranger Station.

Things to Take With You

- ✓ Food
- ✓ Sleeping bag/bedding/towels
- ✓ Garbage bags
- ✓ Water
- ✓ Water Purification Device
- ✓ Cooking utensils
- ✓ Toilet paper and paper towels
- ✓ Map, compass, or GPS unit
- ✓ Sunscreen/sunglasses/hat
- ✓ Matches
- ✓ Flashlight
- ✓ First-aid supplies
- ✓ Climbing Skins (Winter)
- ✓ Backpacking stove with pot (Winter)
- ✓ Tent or Bivouac sack (Winter)
- ✓ Fire starting materials (Winter)
- ✓ Avalanche equipment: beacon, shovel, and probes. (Winter)
- ✓ Tire chains and snow shovel for vehicle (winter)

Know Before You Go

- ◆ **Winter use is recommended for experienced backcountry users only.** This trip is recommended for intermediate ability level or better skiers/snowshoers in excellent physical condition who are skilled in winter backcountry survival including navigation by map and compass or GPS.
- ◆ Be prepared to **postpone your trip in the event of a storm** rather than subject your group to unnecessary risk. Breaking trail on skis or snowshoes in deep snow conditions can be exhausting and roads can become impassable to all vehicles including 4WD.
- ◆ **Depending on terrain conditions, the trip can take between 3 to 7 hours from trailhead to Bunkhouse.** Depart from the trailhead no later than 10:00 a.m. The party must be prepared to bivouac overnight in the snow in the event of emergency. Skiers will need climbing skins.
- ◆ One **emergency shelter** is available along the trail, approximately two miles from the trailhead, if needed, to take refuge from bad weather or as a rest stop.
- ◆ The **summer route is not recommended for winter access** as the **road and turnoffs are not marked with diamonds.**
- ◆ **Cell phone** communication from the Bunkhouse is marginal.
- ◆ Vehicles are not allowed beyond the **gravel parking surface at the Bunkhouse.**
- ◆ **Pets** are not allowed in the building and are best left at home.
- ◆ No **open flames**, candles, backpacking stoves or Coleman stoves, etc., are permitted inside the building.
- ◆ The **propane fireplace** is operated entirely from a wall thermostat above the dining table.
- ◆ **Cleaning:** In backcountry facilities, renters are expected to clean up after themselves and prepare the hut for the next group. Cleaning supplies are available. Snow shovels are provided to clear the deck and entryways of snow.
- ◆ **Remove food & garbage when you leave:** Be sure to take all remaining **food** with you when you leave, even unopened items. Boxes and packages of food attract mice. Cans of food will freeze, causing the seams to unseal and the contents to spoil.

Make Your Reservation Today

RECREATION.gov

Toll Free: (877) 444-6777

- ◆ Reservations can be made from 4 days to 6 months in advance of your first night's stay by anyone 18 years or older.
- ◆ Fee: \$75.00 per night for up to 6 people. Fees may change at any time. Available year-round.
- ◆ Maximum stay length is 6 days. Availability is July to the end of September, and January through mid April.
- ◆ Expect to pay a reservation and cancellation fee when appropriate.
- ◆ No pets or smoking is allowed in the building.
- ◆ Check-out time is 1:00 pm, and check-in time is 2:00 pm.
- ◆ No refunds for bad weather unless Ice House Road is not passable.

Be Prepared For All Winter Emergencies

Notify a responsible person of your planned stay and your time of return. Make sure that you check back with this person. **If you are overdue**, this person should notify the El Dorado County Sheriff's Department at (530) 626-4911 or call 911.

In the event that a storm could snow you in, **be prepared to stay until the road is plowed.** Carry a snow shovel to dig your vehicle out.