



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

# Cross-Country Skiing

## Loon Lake

### Eldorado National Forest

### Pacific Ranger District



**You may enjoy** a variety of winter recreational opportunities, including back-country skiing, snow play, snowshoeing and ski mountaineering. The greatest asset of the Loon Lake area lies in its potential for providing many miles of marked and unmarked cross-country ski touring. Good-to-excellent snow conditions exist from December to May and offer a range of ski touring from easiest to most difficult.

#### Area Description

**Loon Lake's special beauty** is characterized by open bowls, ridges and wooded drainages surrounded by mountain peaks. Ridges and peaks offer panoramic views of Loon Lake, Crystal Basin and the Crystal Mountain Range. 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.

The road to Loon Lake is paved, but storms can render it impassible to all vehicles, including four-wheel drives. Roads are often icy, and snow-plowing is done on an intermittent basis by the Sacramento Municipal Utility District. **Ice House road may not be plowed on weekends or holidays.**

#### Loon Lake Chalet

A **warming room for public use** is located at the Loon Lake Chalet. It is staffed with Forest Service employees or Ski Patrol personnel on winter weekends from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. It is available for overnight rental year-round through the National Recreation Reservation System at 1-877-444-6667. The warming room is equipped with picnic tables, hot and cold water, a small kitchen area, and is electrically heated 24 hours a day. Restrooms are accessed from the outside of the building and are always open. Pets are not allowed inside the building.

#### Parking Areas

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

#### Trail Etiquette

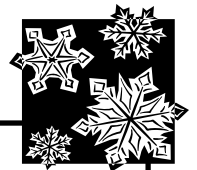
Snowshoes should travel on the outside edge of the trail. Pick one side or the other rather than both. Snowshoe tracks and skis do not mix well especially for beginning skiers or on icy days.

**Dogs, while having a good time**, can be a hazard to other skiers, ruin ski tracks, and be messy, so please keep your dog under control.

#### 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:** Under Loon Lake is a SMUD powerhouse. This means that underneath the frozen surface of the lake, the water level changes. Ice fishing and travel across the seemingly frozen lake is not advised.



Forest Service  
Pacific Southwest  
Region



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[www.fs.fed.us/r5/eldorado](http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/eldorado)



## Planning Your trip

### ✿ Checklist

A travel checklist should be followed to guarantee a safe and well-planned trip, and to reduce the possibility of needing to be rescued. Clothes, sunglasses, sunscreen, food, water, emergency survival equipment, vehicle service supplies (anti-freeze, tire chains, ice-scraper, something for traction) should all be part of your equipment.

### ✿ Food Supplies

Food supplies should include items that are lightweight but loaded, meaning loaded with calories. Plan your meals to insure a diet of high-energy foods.

### ✿ Water

Water is often difficult to find in winter. All that is available may be what you can carry in containers or melt from snow. The body loses as much as two to four quarts of fluid per day under exertion. Replacement of fluid loss is very important for maintaining good physical condition. Eating snow provides only limited water (10 to 20 percent), drains energy, and cools the body temperature. Avoid melting snow by body contact. Be equipped to melt snow.

### ✿ Clothing

Clothes should be chosen for warmth, weight and wind-protection. Daytime and nighttime temperatures may have a spread of 80 degrees F. in winter snow country. To adjust to the change, dress in layers that are warm, lightweight and can be added or removed according to temperature. A typical outfit might include the following:

- Light polypropylene underwear that will breathe.
- Trousers and medium weight shirt as an insulating layer (wool or polypropylene preferred).
- Heavy wool sweater.
- Wool watch cap or similar head-covering. Parka hood, or waterproof hat. Mittens and gloves (several pairs).
- Two pairs of socks: light 'breathers' and heavy wool.
- Boots according to the activity, plus extra waterproof packs.
- Each person should have a complete change of clothes as extras.
- 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.

## Be Prepared

**Before leaving home**, notify a responsible person of your travel plans; including a map with your route clearly marked. Check back with this person when you return.

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

The nearest phone to Loon Lake is an outdoor pay phone available at the Crystal Basin Information Station on Ice House Road, 19 miles south of the Chalet. There is cell phone communication on Ice House Road approximately 1 mile south of the Chalet.



### Visitor Information

General Forest Information . . . . (530) 644-6048  
Pacific Ranger District . . . . . (530) 647-5415

### Emergency Numbers

Highway Patrol, Sheriff, Ambulance . . . . . 911  
or (530) 621-5562

## Avalanche Hazard

**There may be danger** from avalanche conditions. Be aware that snow on slopes may slide when temperature, snow, and topographical conditions are right. Narrow clearings running with the steep axis of slopes are possible avalanche paths and should be avoided.

**The safest routes** are on ridgetops and slightly on the windward side, away from cornices. If travel on the ridges is impossible, the next safest route is out in the valley, away from the bottom of slopes.

**For West Side Sierra Avalanche Hazard Ratings, call: (530) 587-2158**











[www.sierraavalanchecenter.org/today.html](http://www.sierraavalanchecenter.org/today.html)

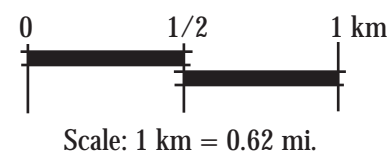
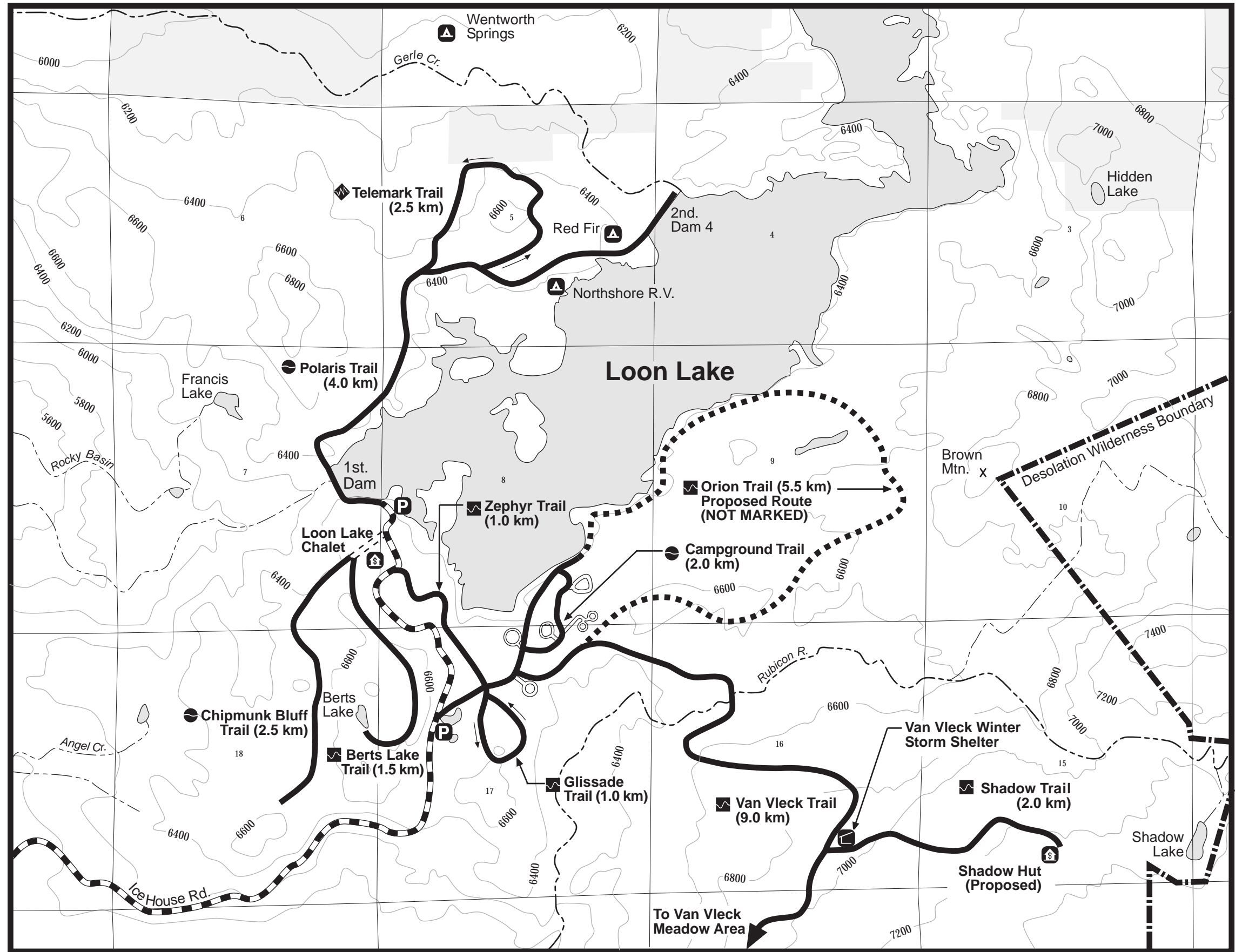
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# TRAIL DESCRIPTIONS

(Trail distances given are one way)

- 
**Chipmunk Bluff Trail (2.5 km)**  
 The trail starts on the west side of Loon Lake Chalet parking lot and heads southwest along the road to the ridge.
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**Berts Lake Trail (1.5 km)**  
 The trail starts at the west side of the Loon Lake Chalet parking lot. Ski around the pond and climb the ridge to the lake. Look for flag poles in open areas.
- 
**Polaris Trail ( 4.0 km)**  
 Follow the road across the first dam, then continue north along the road to the second dam.
- 
**Telemark Trail (2.5 km)**  
 Ski north on the Polaris Trail 2.5 km. Turn left at the second sign and ski counterclockwise uphill through the saddle then down through a large open bowl and return to the road.
- 
**Zephyr Trail (1.0 km)**  
 Walk or ski on the edge of the road 150 meters south from the parking lot along Loon Lake Road to the trailhead on the east side of the road near the powerhouse. Ski southeast to the Campground Trail.
- 
**Campground Trail ( 2.0 km)**  
 This is an easy trail, excellent for beginners. Travel east from Loon Lake Road into the campground. The trail skirts the east edge of the boatramp and follows looping roads through the campground.
- 
**Glissade Trail (1.0 km)**  
 Follow the trail south from the Campground Trail. Ski the trail counterclockwise onto the ridge and return to the Campground Trail.
- 
**Orion Trail (5.0 km) - Proposed Route (not marked)**  
 This trail heads northeast from the Van Vleck Trail towards Brown Mtn. It loops north to the south shore of Loon Lake, returning to the Campground Trail.
- 
**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 this trail you must be aware of weather and snow conditions. It is highly recommended that you establish a turn around time so you have enough daylight to return.
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**Shadow Trail (2.0 km)**  
 This trail travels east to the proposed Shadow Hut site. You will enjoy distant views of Loon Lake.



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|--|---|--|
|  County Road (plowed)                     |  Parking (limited)             |  Easiest Trail        |
|  Ski Trail (marked with Blue $\diamond$ ) |  Campground                    |  Moderate Trail       |
|  Recommended Direction of Travel          |  Lodging (by reservation only) |  Most Difficult Trail |
|  Proposed Route (NOT MARKED)              |   |  |