

Alpine Alphorn Locations

Traveler's Guide Near Reno



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Ease Of Access

1. Donner Summit -- Drivable	Easiest to Get to
2. Woods Lake -- Drivable	
3. Kirkwood Lake -- Drivable	
4. Echo Lake -- Drivable or 1-Mile Hike	
5. Caples Lake -- 0.4 Mile Walk	I
6. Noble Canyon -- Drivable or 2-Mi Hike	I
7. Crater Lake -- Drivable or 2-Mi Hike	I
8. Flora Lake -- 2.5 Mile Easy	I
9. Shealor Lakes -- 1.2 Mile Hard	I
10. Eagle Lake -- 1.9 Mile Hard	I
11. Winnemucca Lake -- 2.7 Mile Easy	V
12. Lake Margaret -- 2.9 Mile Easy/Moderate	
13. Dixon Canyon -- 3.5 Mile Moderate	
14. Round Top Lake -- 2.6 Mile Hard	Hardest to Get to
15. Round Lake -- 3 Mile Moderate/Hard	
16. Emigrant Lake -- 4.3 Mile Hard	

Playing Experience

1. Crater Lake	Best Playing Experience
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2. Emigrant Lake	
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3. Donner Summit	
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4. Lake Margaret	
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5. Shealor Lakes	I
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6. Winnemucca Lake	I
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7. Echo Lake	I
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8. Round Lake	I
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9. Eagle Lake	I
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10. Round Top Lake	I
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11. Noble Canyon	V
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12. Flora Lake	
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13. Woods Lake	
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14. Caples Lake	Acceptable Playing Experience
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15. Dixon Canyon	
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16. Kirkwood Lake	
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Crater Lake

Location: Hope Valley, California on Highway 88

1 hour, 15 minutes from N. Reno

50 minutes from Carson City

It is possible to drive to this lake with a good 4WD car on a 3 mile dirt road. Alternatively it is a 2.1 mile fairly steep hike starting by the side of HWY 88 in Hope Valley.

A beautiful high alpine lake set in an ancient volcanic bowl. There are 180° of cliffs forming a massive amphitheater, which results in excellent acoustics and echo. The setting is serene and beautiful, disturbed only by the barking of the sierra pika. There is a convenient flat area at the end of the road, perfect for setting up the horns. The trail/road to the lake offers lovely views of Hope Valley, winding up the side of the mountain through pine and fir forests. In addition there are aspens and willows providing good opportunities for fall color.



Emigrant Lake

Location: Caples Lake, California on Highway 88

1 hour, 30 minutes from N. Reno

1 hour, 5 minutes from Carson City

This lake is accessed from a trailhead at Caples Lake next to the dam. There is a 4.3 mile hike to the lake.

Located in the valley next to Kirkwood Ski Resort, Emigrant Lake is a large, clear lake surrounded on three sides by granite cliffs. The shoreline is dotted with convenient flat granite rocks and sandy coves for setting up the horns. The Emigrant Trail winds along, following the shore of Caples Lake for about 2 miles before turning south and following a canyon, climbing steeply up to the lake at the canyon's end. The trail to the lake features views of Caples Lake and Round Top Peak.



Donner Summit

Location: Old Donner Pass Road, California

50 minutes from N. Reno

1 hour, 15 minutes from Carson City

This location is found at the summit of Old Donner Pass Road. There is a short walk to the playing site, requiring around a hundred feet of walking up a steep service road.

This scenic overview of Donner Lake is enhanced by neighboring cliffs, giving a stunning vista and great acoustics. The playing location overlooks the Pacific Crest Trail where it follows an old series of railway tunnels high above the valley floor. The location is somewhat lumpy and uneven, making arranging a group of alphorn players a small challenge, but the beautiful vista and excellent echo make this worth the effort.



Lake Margaret

Location: Lake Margaret Trailhead near Caples Lake, California on Highway 88
1 hour, 30 minutes from N. Reno
1 hour, 5 minutes from Carson City

This location is accessed from a trailhead a few hundred feet down the road from the dam at Caples Lake. There is a 2.9 mile relatively easy hike to the lake. There are a couple of areas where the trail nearly disappears and you are doing some minor rock-scrambling, but overall it is not too strenuous.

The playing location is on top of a large rock right next to the lake, playing toward the slope of the mountain. There is nothing spectacular or overly dramatic about the setting, but something about the shape of the bowl that the lake sits in gives a very nice reverberance to the music, even at lower volumes.



Shealor Lakes

Location: Silver Lake, California on Highway 88

1 hour, 40 minutes from N. Reno

1 hour, 15 minutes from Carson City

The trailhead is located by Silver Lake just off the highway. There is a 1.2 mile steep hike to the playing location.

This hike begins with a steep climb up the side of a large granite escarpment, followed by an equally steep descent down the other side to the lakes. The playing location overlooks Lower Shealor Lake, which is the larger of the two. The location is about 300 feet above the lake, offering excellent echos from both the cliffs surrounding the lake itself, as well as the rest of the canyon in which the lake is located. The return hike to the trailhead offers beautiful views of Silver Lake and Thunder Mountain.



Winnemucca Lake

Location: Carson Pass on Highway 88
1 hour, 20 minutes from N. Reno
55 minutes from Carson City

The trailhead is located at the summit of Carson Pass. There is a 2.7 mile fairly easy hike.

This hike begins with a somewhat steep climb up from the trailhead through fir and pine forest, then it levels out as the trail passes by Frog Lake. The trail winds along the side of the Elephant's Back, meandering through small stream beds and patches of willows. There are wonderful wildflowers at the right time of the year, and there are always stunning views of the mountains to the south and Caples Lake to the west. The playing location is on the north side of the lake, playing into the 1500 foot high cliffs on the side of Round Top Peak. There are more 1000 foot cliffs extending to the left, creating a large bowl that gives great echo.



Echo Lake

Location: Just past Echo Summit on Highway 50

1 hour, 35 minutes from N. Reno

1 hour, 10 minutes from Carson City

There is a nice meadow at the outlet of the lake that one can drive to and play. Alternatively there is a better playing location halfway down the length of the lake, accessible via a 1 mile easy hike.

This hike begins at the parking lot near the outlet of Echo Lake, crossing the dam and then climbing somewhat steeply for a couple of hundred feet. The trail then levels out for the remaining 95% of the hike, winding along the mountainside on the north side of the lake. There are many twisted old trees clinging tenaciously to the granite, and great views of the lake to your left. The playing location is on the north side of the lake where the mountainside levels out into large, flat slabs of granite near the water's edge. Anybody who is canoeing or boating on the lake is likely to stop and listen!



Round Lake

Location: Big Meadow Tahoe Rim Trail Trailhead on Highway 89

1 hour, 20 minutes from N. Reno

55 minutes from Carson City

There is a large parking lot with (unusually) plenty of parking available and 4 clean, well-stocked bathrooms. There is a 3 mile moderately difficult hike to the lake.

This hike begins with a steep climb up from the trailhead following Big Meadow Creek. There are good opportunities for fall color, with many large aspen trees following the creek up the canyon. The trail then turns to the right and passes through Meiss Meadow. The second half of the hike meanders up and over what appear to be several glacial moraines, before you finally arrive at the lake. The playing location is on the north side of the lake, playing into a very striking 1000 foot high rock formation to the east. The lake has no outlet during the late summer, so the water can get a bit green with algae from staying put for so long.



Eagle Lake

Location: Emerald Bay, Lake Tahoe

1 hour, 30 minutes from N. Reno

1 hour, 10 minutes from Carson City

The trailhead is located by the road as it passes around Emerald Bay. There is a small parking lot which is virtually guaranteed to be full on any day of the week, so it is likely that it will be necessary to park between .25 and .5 of a mile up the road and walk to the trailhead. The hike to the lake is only 1.2 miles, but it is steep and difficult.

This hike begins with a flat, waddling meander for several hundred feet until it reaches the Eagle Falls view. At this point there is a nice bench under a tree, and it would be perfectly possible to stop here and play for the public on the bridge and around the very picturesque falls. After the bridge the trail begins to climb steeply, consisting almost entirely of stairs. Once the lake is reached it is necessary to wander through dense shrubbery along small use-trails until a suitable location is found where there is a space by the water large enough to set up the horns and play. However, all this struggle becomes more than worth it at this point, because the acoustics are wonderful and the view is absolutely beautiful.



Round Top Lake

Location: Woods Lake Trailhead off Highway 88

1 hour, 30 minutes from N. Reno

1 hour from Carson City

There is a trailhead on Woods Lake Rd. before it reaches the picnic area, but it is also possible to park at either the campground or the picnic area and walk to the trail from there. The trail is a 2.6 mile long difficult hike.

This hike begins with a steep climb up out of the bowl surrounding Woods Lake, following an old mining road. About 0.3 of a mile into the hike the road splits, with the road going to the right and a trail going to the left. It is not important which of these directions is chosen, as they both are the same length and go to the same place. The trail and road meet back up 0.4 of a mile later at the location of an old mining works, where there are a couple of very old car chassis and engines that were once used to power some mining equipment. The trail continues climbing steeply past several very pretty meadows and follows the creek from the outlet of Round Top Lake for the final mile or so. The playing location is on the west side of the lake, playing into the cliffs surrounding the lake.



Noble Canyon

Location: Noble Canyon Trailhead on Highway 4

1 hour, 35 minutes from N. Reno

1 hour, 10 minutes from Carson City

The trailhead is located off to the side of the road at the end of a hairpin turn. It is easy to miss, as there is only a small dirt parking lot and a very small sign. There are no bathrooms, but there are bathrooms about 1 mile before you get to the trailhead at Silver Creek Campground. There is a 2 mile easy hike to the playing location in the canyon, or alternatively the location at the trailhead is also a very nice spot to play.

This hike follows Noble Creek up the canyon through a forest with a very different character than any of the other forests in the area. The playing location is at a place where the trail temporarily climbs through the trees to a bluff overlooking the creek below, with the exposed granite of the canyon wall giving good acoustics. There are aspens, cottonwood trees, willows and small currant bushes giving good opportunities for fall color.



Flora Lake

Location: Trailhead at Donner Summit California State Snopark

50 minutes from N. Reno

1 hour, 15 minutes from Carson City

This location is found near Boreal Ridge, close to where the Pacific Crest Trail crosses HWY 80. The trail winds through alpine Sierra forest, and is fairly flat for the majority of the distance to the lake. There are nice views of the valley overlooking Donner Lake as the trail meanders along, making for a very pleasant and easy hike.

The lake itself is set in a shallow bowl a short distance from the main trail. Locations suitable for playing alphorns near the lake are limited, but there is a spot where the ground gently slopes down to the water's edge. The opposite side of the lake has some nice rock faces which make for lovely acoustics.



Woods Lake

Location: Woods Lake Picnic Area off Highway 88

1 hour, 30 minutes from N. Reno

1 hour from Carson City

Take Woods Lake Rd. all the way to the picnic area, where there is parking available as well as a restroom. There is an \$8 fee per vehicle. The picnic area extends along the North shore of Woods Lake, with a paved path connecting the different picnic sites. It is possible to set up the horns right at the water's edge only a few feet away from the tables.

The valley in which the lake is located leads up the slope all the way to Winnemucca Lake, so it is possible for hikers who are coming down the trail to hear the horns long before they come into view! The lake has very nice acoustics, and a selection of trails leading around the lake shore make it fairly straightforward for a group of players to separate into two small ensembles for antiphonal playing.



Caples Lake

Location: Caples Lake, California on Highway 88

1 hour, 30 minutes from N. Reno

1 hour, 5 minutes from Carson City

This location is accessed from a trailhead at Caples Lake next to the dam. There is a 400-500 foot hike to the playing location, which is located up the trail a short distance. The lakeshore is a wide and gentle slope, making setting up the horns very simple. There is a large rocky outcropping across the lake which might make for nice acoustics if the group of players is large enough. The playing location would be next to the trail on the South side of the lake. The pine forest extends right down to the edge of the lakeshore, so on a hot summer's day there should be plenty of places to stand or sit in the shade while playing.



Dixon Canyon

Location: Carson Pass on Highway 88
1 hour, 20 minutes from N. Reno
55 minutes from Carson City

The trailhead is located just past the summit of Carson Pass on the North side of the road. There is a 3.5 mile moderately difficult hike.

This hike begins by following the contours of the mountainside west for about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile, then it turns and heads north over a wide mountain pass. The trail switchbacks steeply up to the top where there is a small lake, then it switchbacks steeply back down the opposite side, crossing several small streams (which are the source waters of the Upper Truckee River) where there are patches of monkey flower, indian paintbrush and mule-ears. The trail then winds down to the bottom of the valley, where there are grassy meadows and a picturesque tumbledown cabin. The playing location is in a field next to the Upper Truckee River, about half a mile West from the junction between the Pacific Crest Trail and the Tahoe Rim Trail.



Kirkwood Lake

Location: Kirkwood Lake, California on Highway 88

1 hour, 30 minutes from N. Reno

1 hour, 5 minutes from Carson City

This location is accessed by turning north from HWY 88 onto Kirkwood Lake Rd. There is a 1.1 mile loop trail that goes around the lake, or you can set up and play right near the parking.

