

**A Bark In The Park -
The 40 Best Places
To Hike With Your
Dog In The
Reno/Lake Tahoe
Region**

SHERRIL STEELE-CARLIN
illustrations by
ANDREW CHESWORTH



Cruden Bay Books

A BARK IN THE PARK: THE 40 BEST PLACES TO
HIKE WITH YOUR DOG IN THE RENO/LAKE TAHOE
REGION

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Region**

*“Dogs are our link to paradise...to sit with a dog on a hillside
on a glorious afternoon is to be back in Eden, where doing
nothing was not boring - it was peace.”
- Milan Kundera*

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Introduction

The Reno and Lake Tahoe areas are amazing places to explore hiking trails with your dog. The area is so diverse, you can experience high-mountain trails, sandy desert paths, and leisurely river walks, all within an hour or so drive from each other. Along the way, you can discover the region's varied history, from old mining towns to blackjack tables, all the while taking in the clean, fresh air of the High Sierra. The air is a little crisper in this high altitude, and the sky is definitely bluer. It is the perfect place to see the sights on foot, whether you are a novice canine hiker or a seasoned professional, there are trails for every dog!

This book highlights the 40 best parks in the Reno and Lake Tahoe region where you can enjoy a day out with your dog. I have ranked them according to subjective criteria, including the variety of hiking available in each park, scenic beauty, opportunities for your dog to swim, their proximity to Reno, and the pleasure of the walks. The rankings include a mix of parks featuring long rambles along with parks that contain short walks. I've also included another list of 50 other great places to walk your dog.

For dog owners it is important to realize that not all parks are open to our dogs (see page 115 for a list of parks that do not allow dogs). Thankfully, there are only a handful of parks in the area that ban our friends! Rules pertaining to dogs in parks can change rapidly, so it's always a good idea to check with a park beforehand if you are not sure about your dog's being welcome. Please be aware that when you visit a California State Park, you will need a rabies certificate or dog license to bring a dog into a State Park, and dogs are not allowed on the trails or beaches in local California State Parks.

When you visit a park, don't forget to keep your dog under control and clean up any messes, or more and more area parks will be closed to dogs. Most of the dogparks listed in this book provide plastic gloves and waste receptacles for doggie messes, be sure to use them.

So grab that leash and hit the trail!

Hiking With Your Dog

So you want to start hiking with your dog. Hiking with your dog can be a fascinating way to explore the region around Reno and Lake Tahoe from a canine perspective. Some things to consider:

Dog's Health

Hiking can be a wonderful preventative for any number of physical and behavioral disorders. One in every three dogs is overweight and running up trails is great exercise to help keep pounds off. Hiking can also relieve boredom in a dog's routine and calm dogs prone to destructive habits. And hiking with your dog strengthens the overall owner/dog bond.

Breed of Dog

All dogs enjoy the new scents and sights of a trail. But some dogs are better suited to hiking than others. If you don't as yet have a hiking companion, select a breed that matches your interests. Do you look forward to an entire afternoon's hiking? You'll need a dog bred to keep up with such a pace, a retriever or a spaniel for instance. Is a half-hour enough walking for you? It may not be for an energetic dog like a border collie. If you already have a hiking friend, tailor your plans to his abilities.

Conditioning

Just like humans, dogs need to be acclimated to the task at hand. An inactive dog cannot be expected to bounce from the easy chair in the den to complete a 3-hour hike. You must also be physically able to restrain your dog if confronted with distractions on the trail (like a scampering squirrel or a pack of joggers). Have your dog checked by a veterinarian before significantly increasing her activity level.

Weather

Heat and sun do dogs no favors. While the weather in Reno and Lake Tahoe is rarely very humid, the summer temperatures can reach over 100 degrees in the valleys. With no sweat glands and only panting available to disperse body heat, dogs are

much more susceptible to heat stroke than we are. Unusually rapid panting and/or a bright red tongue are signs of heat exhaustion in your pet. Always carry enough water for your hike. Even days that don't seem too warm can cause discomfort in dark-coated dogs if the sun is shining brightly. In the wintertime, temperatures at these higher elevations can drop well below zero in only a few minutes. In cold weather, short-coated breeds may require additional attention.

Ticks

Lyme disease rarely occurs in the Northern Nevada area. The first reported case in Washoe County occurred in 2001. Lyme disease attacks a dog's joints and makes walking painful. The good news is that a tick needs to be embedded in the skin to transmit Lyme disease. It takes 4-6 hours for a tick to become embedded and another 24-48 hours to transmit the Lyme disease bacteria. When hiking, walk in the middle of trails away from tall grass and bushes. If your walk includes fields or meadows, consider long sleeves and long pants tucked into high socks. Wear a hat - ticks like hair. By checking your dog, and yourself, thoroughly after each walk, you can help avoid Lyme disease. Ticks tend to congregate on your dog's ears, between the toes, and around the neck and head.

Altitude

Altitude is a big factor when you hike in the Reno and Lake Tahoe areas. The Reno area is not quite 5,000 feet in altitude, and as you climb into the foothills, you will quickly hike above one mile in elevation. If you are hiking at Lake Tahoe, the altitude starts at over 6,000 feet, and many of the trails included here top out at 7,000 or 8,000 feet, or even higher. If you are not acclimated to the altitude, take it easy, and allow plenty of time for rest, so your body can get used to the thinner air up here.

Bears

Yes, there are bears in Northern Nevada. We don't see them often, but they are there, and you need to be aware of them. Once in a while in drought years we see a stray bear in Reno, but most of the time they stay in the high country around Lake Tahoe. Tahoe has experienced problems with bears getting

into garbage but they are rarely seen on hiking trails. Just in case, there are some things you can do to make sure you and your dog don't have a run in with a bear.

First, it is a good idea to contact the local Forest Service or Fish and Game Department to find out about recent bear activity in the area where you plan to hike. If you take food along, don't pack in smelly, greasy foods like bacon and fish. Bears are most active in the cooler parts of the day, so avoid hiking at dawn and dusk, and you'll have less chance of encountering a hungry bear. They scatter at the sound of noise so tying a bell on your dog's collar can scare away a bear, and let you know where he is right away. If you should stumble across a bear on the trail be aware that you will not outrun a bear and bears do climb trees. Try to remain calm, avoid direct contact, and back slowly out of the area. Keep your dog close at hand - dogs often antagonize bears.

Rattlesnakes

Rattlesnakes are a hazard on any Northern Nevada trail, especially in the spring and summer months. They often hide under large rocks and crevices, and their sandy coloring helps them blend in with their surroundings very well. A rattlesnake bite to a human is painful and dangerous, and even more dangerous for your dog.

In the heat of a summer day, snakes will probably be lounging in the shade, but even in winter they will come out on sunny days to warm themselves. If you run into a rattler on the trail, first, leave it alone. Snakes don't have to be coiled to strike, and they don't always rattle before they strike. Snakes can't see well, so they will simply react to anything unknown by defending themselves. Don't go reaching under rocks, crevices, or loose pieces of wood without looking for snakes first. Don't let your dog nose around in those areas, either. Walk "heavy." Do not shuffle your steps when you walk in rattlesnake country. Snakes feel the vibrations if you put down your feet heavily, and will leave the area.

If your dog is bitten, go to your veterinarian immediately, and make sure they have antivenin on hand. This is the only thing that can save your pet in the event of a rattlesnake bite. Early morning and early evening hours are the most likely times to encounter snakes, they are more active during

those times of the day. During the hottest parts of the day, snakes prefer to slumber. If you follow these precautions, your hike with your dog should be snake free. You can also sign up for a snake-avoidance course for your dog, sponsored by the Nevada Wildlife Federation and Reno's German Shorthaired Pointer Club. For more information, call Lorna Weaver at (775) 677-0927 or Quail Unlimited's Rudy Hindelang at (775) 267-5269. The course costs \$50.

Other Trail Hazards

Dogs won't get poison ivy but they can transfer it to you. Some trails are littered with small pieces of broken glass that can slice a dog's paws. Nasty thorns and thistles can also blanket trails that we in shoes may never notice. Tumbleweeds are also very thorny and prickly in their natural state, and even more so when they are dried and blowing. They can stick in a dog's coat, and cut fingers as we try to extract them.

Water

Surface water, including fast-flowing streams, is likely to be infested with a microscopic protozoa called *Giardia*, waiting to wreck havoc on a dog's (and human's) intestinal system. (We call it "beaver fever" in Northern Nevada.) The most common symptom is crippling diarrhea. Algae, pollutants and contaminants can all be in streams, ponds and puddles. If possible, carry fresh water for your dog on the trail - your dog can even learn to drink happily from a squirt bottle.

With summer temperatures commonly reaching over 100 degrees on the valley floors, and 80 to 90 degrees in the upper elevations, water on the trail is a must in Northern Nevada, even for very short hikes. The humidity level is low, but the altitudes are 4,500 feet and up in Reno and Sparks and 7,000 feet or more at Lake Tahoe, so you and your pet may tire more easily, and need more water.

Outfitting Your Dog For A Hike

These are the basics for taking your dog on a hike:

- ▶ **Collar.** It should not be so loose as to come off but you should be able to slide your flat hand under collar.
- ▶ **Identification Tags.**
- ▶ **Bandanna.** Can help distinguish your dog from game in hunting season.
- ▶ **Leash.** Leather lasts forever but if there's water in your dog's future, consider quick-drying nylon.

🐾 *I want my dog to help carry water, snacks and other supplies on the trail. How do I choose a dog pack?*

To select an appropriate dog pack measure your dog's girth around the rib cage to determine the best pack size. A dog pack should fit securely without hindering the dog's ability to walk normally.

🐾 *How does a dog wear a pack?*

The pack, typically with cargo pouches on either side, should ride as close to the shoulders as possible without limiting movement. The straps that hold the dog pack in place should be situated where they will not cause chafing.

🐾 *Will my dog wear a pack?*

Wearing a dog pack is no more obtrusive than wearing a collar, although some dogs will take to a pack easier than others. Introduce the pack by draping a towel over your dog's back in the house and then having him wear an empty pack on short walks. Progressively add some crumpled newspaper and then bits of clothing. Fill the pack with treats and reward your dog from the stash. Soon he will associate the dog pack with an outdoor adventure and will eagerly look forward to wearing it.

🐾 *How much weight can I put into a dog pack?*

Many dog packs are sold by weight recommendations. A healthy, well-conditioned dog can comfortably carry 25 percent to 33 percent of its body weight. Breeds prone to back problems or hip dysplasia should not wear dog packs. Consult your veterinarian before stuffing the pouches with gear.

🐾 *What are good things to put in a dog pack?*

Low density items such as food and poop bags are good choices. Ice cold bottles of water can cool your dog down on hot days. Don't put anything in a dog pack that can break. Dogs will bang the pack on rocks and trees when they wiggle through tight spots in the trail. Dogs also like to lie down in creeks and other wet spots so seal items in plastic bags. A good use for dog packs on day hikes around Northern Nevada is trail maintenance - your dog can pack out trash left by inconsiderate visitors before you.

🐾 *Are dog booties a good idea?*

Dog booties can be an asset, especially for the occasional dog hiker whose paw pads have not become toughened. Many trails around Northern Nevada involve rocky terrain. In some places, broken glass abounds. Hiking boots for dogs are designed to prevent pads from cracking while trotting across rough surfaces. Used in winter, dog booties provide warmth and keep ice balls from forming between toe pads when hiking through snow.

"Dogs' lives are too short. Their only fault, really"
- Agnes Sligh Turnbull

The Canine First-Aid Hiking Kit

Even when taking short hikes it is a good idea to have some basics available for emergencies:

- 🐾 Bandage material, vet wrap, cotton padding. If your dog burns or abrades his paws on hot or abrasive surfaces, you can pad his feet so he can walk.
- 🐾 Antihistamine. If your dog is bitten by a snake or stung by a bee or wasp, administer antihistamine, about a milligram per pound.
- 🐾 Cortisone tablets or aspirin as an anti-inflammatory. Also have a topical wound disinfectant cream available.
- 🐾 Needle nose pliers. Use these for plucking out stickers or cactus spines.
- 🐾 Petroleum jelly (to cover ticks).
- 🐾 Your veterinarian's phone number.

*"If there are no dogs in Heaven,
then when I die I want to go where they went."
- Anonymous*

Low Impact Hiking With Your Dog

Everytime you hike with your dog on the trail, you are an ambassador for all dog owners. Some people you meet won't believe in your right to take a dog on the trail. Be friendly to all and make the best impression you can by practicing low impact hiking with your dog:

- 🐾 Pack out everything you pack in.
- 🐾 Do not leave dog scat on the trail; if you haven't brought plastic bags for poop removal bury it away from the trail and topical water sources.
- 🐾 Hike only where dogs are allowed.
- 🐾 Stay on the trail.
- 🐾 Do not allow your dog to chase wildlife.
- 🐾 Step off the trail and wait with your dog while horses and other hikers pass.
- 🐾 Do not allow your dog to bark - people are enjoying the trail for serenity.
- 🐾 Have as much fun on your hike as your dog does.

*"What counts is not necessarily the size of the dog in the fight
but the size of the fight in the dog."*

- Dwight D. Eisenhower

Camping With Your Dog

Many of the parks in Northern Nevada and Lake Tahoe have campsites right there, along with miles of hiking trails, so it is natural you might want to spend the night after a long day on the trails. If you decide to camp with your dog, here are some tips:

- 🐾 Camp only in areas that are approved by the U. S. Forest Service, Washoe County, or Bureau of Land Management (BLM).
- 🐾 Be sure your dog is wearing I.D. tags, and has all current shots.
- 🐾 Take along plenty of food and water.
- 🐾 Have private sleeping arrangements, and camp in a shady area.
- 🐾 Don't let your dog run loose in the campsite.
- 🐾 If your dog swims, make sure he has a way out of the water. Dogs can drown because they try to climb out a bank or ledge that is too steep for them.
- 🐾 Rinse off your dog with fresh water when you are done hiking and /or camping, and look for ticks and fleas.

Happiness is dog-shaped.
-Chapman Pincher

Summer Safety Tips For Your Dog

One of the biggest killers of dogs in hot weather is being left in a car for too long. Even as little as 10 minutes can be too long for a dog left in a closed car on a hot day. In that short a time, the inside temperature of the car could reach 160 degrees! Heat like that can cause heat stroke in your pet, and within moments it could cause permanent brain damage - and if you don't get your dog to a veterinarian fast enough, she could die. It is best to leave your dog at home if you are not going straight to the hiking trail and back again on hot summer days. Here are some more tips for summer safety:

- 🐾 Make sure your dog has shade or shelter if he is outdoors during the day.
- 🐾 Make sure there is plenty of fresh water to drink.
- 🐾 Groom your dog's coat for summer weather.
- 🐾 Protect against sunburn, especially on the nose and ears.
- 🐾 Be careful of hot pavements on tender paw pads.
- 🐾 Don't let your dog ride without a harness in the back of a pickup truck.

*To err is human, to forgive, canine.
-anonymous*

Skiing With Your Dog

In the Lake Tahoe area, many cross-country ski areas know that dogs love to ski just as much as their owners, and are allowing them on trails. If you would love to ski with your dog, here are some resorts that allow dogs on their trails. Many have specific times dogs are allowed, so call to find out the days and times you can bring your dog. There are also nominal fees for allowing your dog on the trails.

- 🐾 **Tahoe Cross Country**
(530) 583-5475 or <http://www.tahoexc.org>.
- 🐾 **Royal Gorge Cross Country Resort**
(800) 500-3871 or <http://www.royalgorge.com>.
- 🐾 **Spooner Lake Cross Country**
(888) 858-8844 or <http://www.spoonerlake.com>.
- 🐾 **Hope Valley Cross Country**
(530) 694-2266 or <http://www.sorensensresort.com>.
- 🐾 **Kirkwood Cross Country**
(209) 258-7248 or <http://www.skikirkwood.com>.

Dogs are also welcome on many Forest Service ski trails: Taylor Creek, Echo Lakes, Grass Lake Meadow, Angora Road, and Fallen Leaf Lake. See the entries for these hikes, and follow the same directions to find the cross-country ski areas.

Skijoring

If your dog is 35 pounds or up, you might enjoy trying Skijoring, a Norwegian sport where skiers in a special sled are pulled by their dog over the snow. You can find out more about this sport at: <http://www.ptialaska.net/~skijor/>. Skijoring lessons are offered at Royal Gorge Cross Country Ski Resort or from Debbie McMaster at Sierra Ski Joring (530) 587-2732.

Special Dog Events in Reno and Lake Tahoe

Art Paws in the Park

During Artown, a month-long celebration of the arts in Reno each July, a local art gallery sponsors “Art Paws in the Park.” This fanciful event is an art fair for dogs (and their owners). One booth features pen and ink drawings of your pet while you wait; another allows your dog to get her paws wet and paint her own masterwork. There is also a pet psychic on hand to “talk” to your dog, a booth where you can create customized placemats for your dog, an agility course, and much more. Some events are free and some require a donation, which benefits a local organizations. To find out more about the current Art Paws in the Park, call Artown at (775) 322-1538.

4 Paws Festival

The Reno Society for the Protection of Animals (SPCA) holds these festivals throughout the year. Dogs and their owners are welcome to take part in a “pooch parade.” You can also enjoy food and drinks, live music, and adopt animals. Call (775) 324-7773 or visit the website for more information: <http://spcaofnn.org>.

Snowfest

Each March, North Lake Tahoe sponsors a fantastic snow festival called Snowfest. During this 10-day celebration, there are several dog events scheduled so your pet can also join in the fun. The “Nawty Dawg” sponsors the “Monstor Dawg Pull,” and there is a “Dress up Your Dog” contest. Call (530) 581-1283 for more information about the current festival.

The Other End Of The Leash

Leash laws are like speed limits - everyone seems to have a private interpretation of their validity. Some dog owners never go outside with an unleashed dog; others treat the laws as suggestions or disregard them completely. It is not the purpose of this book to tell dog owners where to go to evade the leash laws or reveal the parks where rangers will look the other way at an unleashed dog. Nor is it the business of this book to preach vigilant adherence to the leash laws. Nothing written in a book is going to change people's behavior with regard to leash laws. So this will be the last time leash laws are mentioned, save occasionally when I point out the parks where dogs are welcomed off leash.

As a general rule, dogs should be kept on a leash in all city and state parks. (You will be fined if caught violating this rule.) On land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (clearly indicated in each hike), you may let dogs off the leash unless otherwise indicated at the hiking trail itself.

“And sometimes when you'd get up in the middle of the night you'd hear the reassuring thump, thump of her tail on the floor, letting you know that she was there and thinking of you.”

- William Cole

The Best of the Best...

The 10 Best Places To Hike With Your Dog In The Reno/Lake Tahoe Area

(Blue Ribbon) Rancho San Rafael Park (city of Reno)

A Reno showcase, beautifully landscaped Rancho San Rafael Park serves up several enticing canine hikes: a self-guided nature trail through the many plant zones of the Great Basin, a gravel footpath that circles the wide open spaces of the park, and access to the trails of Peavine Mountain. This park is a favorite for exercising your dog.

(#2) Virginia Lake (city of Reno)

This quiet 21-acre park feels much as it must have when it was founded more than 60 years ago. Little has been altered around the edges of Virginia Lake. One thing that has changed - to the delight of dog owners - is a fenced-in, off-leash dogpark at the northern end of the park.

(#3) Sparks Marina Park (city of Sparks)

The conversion of an abandoned quarry into a popular lake has earned the City of Sparks national recognition. A concrete walking path surrounds the Sparks marina and covers almost two miles. The trail system is lighted for evening walks with the dog. The dogpark is the only off-leash dogpark in the Reno area for dogs to play in the water.

(#4) Mount Rose Wilderness (Lake Tahoe - North Shore)

Even if you decide not to complete the 6-mile, 2000-foot ascent to the summit of Mount Rose, there is plenty here to thrill canine hikers. More than 20 miles of designated trails are available through the canyons and ridges of the high country of the Carson Range. This is the closest wilderness area to Reno.

(#5) Prey Meadows/Skunk Harbor (Lake Tahoe - East Shore)

One of the prettiest canine hikes in Lake Tahoe is the 1.5-mile trek to Prey Meadows and Skunk Harbor. Stroll through thick pines to the meadow, stealing glimpses of the lake as you go. Skunk Harbor is a charming cove with a sandy beach. Beside the path lie remains of an old railroad built in the 1870s to haul timber from Lake Tahoe to Virginia City.