

The Mt. Tallac Mystique



You get the location in your head and it doesn't want to move on. Maybe you see a photograph, read something about it, or talk to someone who expounds on its mystique. You have no choice but to act on it no matter what the consequences. This place is unique and unavailable to the masses and attaches to your thoughts like an infection. You have to find it and experience it. One such recent infection could only be treated with a hike to the highest peak rising from the serene shores of beautiful Lake Tahoe, Mt. Tallac. We had recently moved to Reno after years of living and hiking in the mountainous regions of Tennessee and North Carolina. What better way to break in to hiking our new surroundings in Reno, Nevada?

Day hiking can be fairly spontaneous if you have some hiking experience, are in good physical shape and have good information on the trail's conditions and directions. However Mt. Tallac carries a little more mystique for the average hiker

because of its elevation and difficult conditions. Its beautiful topside panoramic views of the Sierras and its surrounding beautiful lakes would come only after a few challenges. This Tallac hike infection started with an earlier hike to Grass Lake where we saw a trail marker engraved with what sounded like an impossible peak.. After a trail map review and some discussion with a group returning from Tallac that day on the trail, the seeds were planted. Local bookstores are loaded with hiking information and we also searched out a topo map of the Mt. Tallac area before we made the hike on July 3rd.



The stunning visuals available to you at the top of Mt. Tallac become obvious from the images. It is a most unusual and engaging location that begs you to stay for hours of investigation and documentation. But there is no lodge at the top and there are only so many hours of photographic and hiking daylight. The one thing that rings clear in your mind as you soak in this amazing beauty on the surrounding horizon is that this is a privilege not available to many.

As a photographer, I consider myself experienced in the art of difficult hiking routes to unusual images. However this hike held its share of required determination. It is clear that many go up to a point and turn back. When hiking in July with snow to be traversed, this point most likely occurs about a half mile above Cathedral Lake as you climb (yes climb, not hike) a swath of loose rock covered in snow. There is no trail so you can choose your vertical route over this rocky ridge that leads to wildflower meadows, alpine



lake overlooks, more snow crossings and finally to an unbelievable panorama at the summit of Mt. Tallac.

This is not an adventure for everyone. We came away exhausted after nine hours on the trail through Desolation Wilderness. The rewards came in many good memories and some unique and beautiful photographic images for others to enjoy. Our confidence increased in



our wilderness hiking skills enough to plan another photo adventure to the top of Mt. Tallac next year with the digital camera.



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