

# Olmstead Loop

## Auburn State Recreation Area

village of Cool, Highway 49, El Dorado County

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### Introduction

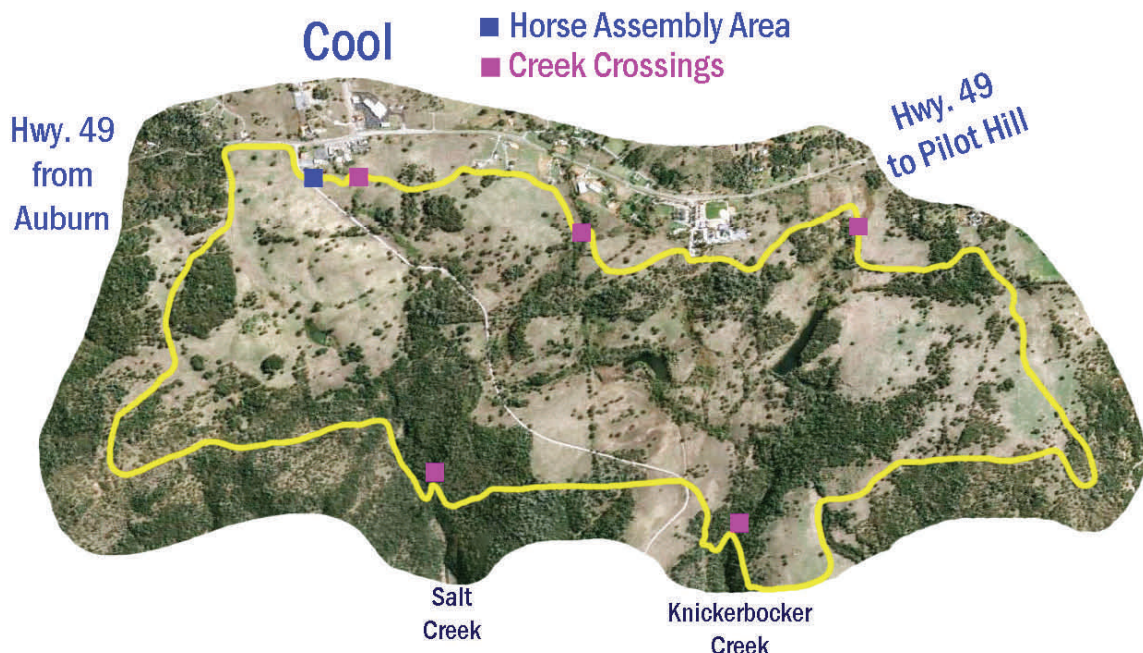
One of the most popular multi-use trails in the Sierran Foothills is the Olmstead Loop. It is operated by the California Department of Parks and Recreation, and used by equestrians, mountain bikers, and hikers. There is a \$10 fee for parking, or use your annual "Poppy Pass."

The equestrian assembly area has a horse trough, three water faucets with hoses, a half-dozen hitching posts, a portapotty, and several concrete picnic tables.

Access is from Highway 49; turn at the Cool Fire Station. The nearby village of Cool has retail stores where horse feed, logistical supplies, diesel fuel, and groceries can be purchased. The nearest hospitals are Sutter Auburn Faith Hospital and Sutter Roseville Medical Center with a Level 2 Trauma Center via helicopter ambulance (=CalStar). Cell-phone coverage is reliable in Cool, but locally not available in deeper canyons.

## Olmstead Loop      8.6 miles

### Auburn State Recreation Area



## Oblique Aerial View of Equestrian Assembly Area with Olmstead Loop shown in yellow



Retail Stores at  
village of Cool,  
El Dorado County



There is a network of paths and non-maintained trails within the plateau that forms the Olmstead Loop—Knickerbocker Creek area.

For a practical map that you can take along in the saddle, equestrians may purchase a silk-screened bandanna from Echo Valley Ranch Supply or order through [www.CoolHorseTrails.com](http://www.CoolHorseTrails.com). There are a number of paths and abandoned ranch-roads within the interior of the Olmstead Loop that are shown on this cloth trail map, although not further described in this concise report.

As shown on the aerial photograph on the first page, there are several large earth reservoirs within the Knickerbocker Creek area. These former stock-ponds are now wildlife refuge areas for birds, bats, and owls. There are 50 species of birds within this sector of the Auburn State Recreation Area. In the springtime, there are lots of wildflowers around the reservoirs, with notable blue lupine in the adjacent meadows where deer enjoy grazing. We saw several coyotes during our ride, and these help to keep the local rabbit population in check.

*At left:* The Quarry Trail is an important connector route on the north side with the Wendell Robie Trail and the Western States Trail.

*At right:* The steep “Training Hill” Trail ascends and joins the Olmstead Loop. This route is part of a 50-mile endurance ride, the AERC American River Classic, that is held each spring.



*At left:* The Olmstead Loop crosses Knickerbocker Creek in a deeply shaded oak forest. At the ford, the footing is good for horses with gravel composed of foliated Jurassic metavolcanic rocks. The creek is one to two feet deep, depending on whether spring-runoff or minimal flow in the autumn.

*At right:* The Olmstead Loop in the southern segment traverses wide meadows that were formerly fenced pastures for cattle and sheep during the Gold Rush era and extending until the 1960's. The colorful mining history of El Dorado and Placer Counties is published in a number of history books available in the Auburn Library.

This parcel of land was originally acquired by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation for the unbuilt Auburn Dam. For over a decade, Daniel Olmstead, a multi-sport athlete from Auburn worked tirelessly to get this parcel of former ranches set-aside as looping trail system for equestrians, mountain bikers, and hikers within the Auburn State Recreation Area. He died prematurely of cancer in 1993 at age 56, and the Olmstead Loop was subsequently named in his honor.



Views along the 8.6-mile Olmstead Loop. There are five creek crossings where both hands are needed on the reins, so regrettably there were *no* photographs at those particular situations.

In deference to winter-time temperatures, our horses were walked-in for the last half-mile so that they could properly cool-down. We had horse-blankets awaiting in the trailer to keep them warm on the trip back home.

For much of the Olmstead Loop, we set the pace at a fast-trot and canter so that our horses received a proper workout.