

Omstead Loop Equestrian Staging Area

Auburn State Recreation Area; U.S. Highway 49 at the town of Cool, El Dorado County

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This narrative describes the equestrian staging area and trailhead at the Olmstead Loop at Cool. Another subsequent article will describe the trail itself. In the autumn, winter, and spring months, the Olmstead Loop is heavily used by equestrians because it is always below the snowline, the trail conditions are generally favorable, and the Omstead Loop links with many other trails, including the Western States Trail (=Tevis) and the Wendell Robie Trail. The Olmstead Loop is part of the AERC American River Classic, a fifty-mile endurance ride from Lake Natoma, to Rattlesnake Bar, to the Auburn Overlook, to the Olmstead Loop, and back across No-Hands Bridge to the Auburn Overlook.

Location

From Auburn, take U.S. Highway 49 eastward, cross the north fork of the American River, proceed southeastward, ascend the steep and narrow gradient to the village of Cool, within El Dorado County. Allow 30 to 40 minutes to drive from the Loomis Basin to the Omstead Loop.



Left to Right: Auburn SRA sign along Highway 49; Cool is at elevation 1,518 feet, so is well below the snow-line during winter months; the Cool Fire Station is the key landmark to find the equestrian staging area; Saint Florian Court is the official name of the short driveway that leads to the equestrian staging area. This place name can be used on GoogleEarth or MapQuest to create an index map.

Biography of Dan Olmstead

A native Californian, Dan Olmstead was born in 1937 and died prematurely of cancer in 1993 at age 56. But in his life, he accomplished a splendid legacy of lasting value: the Olmstead Loop Trail. Dan Olmstead purchased the Auburn Bike & Hike Shop in 1979 and was a pioneer user of mountain bikes. Dan was also a horseman and earnestly wanted harmony on the trails with horsemen, hikers, and bikers. In the early days of the newly-formed Auburn State Recreation Area, Dan Olmstead realized that the interconnected ranch roads and old mining trails west of Cool would form a natural loop on the elevated plateau of western Knickerbocker Creek. It took years of advocacy within the state park system to finally establish this looped trail system. At his death in 1993, the trail loop was named as a fitting memorial to Dan Olmstead. So the place-name for the trail was not for a historic miner or pioneer from the Gold Rush Era; instead, Dan Olmstead was an early advocate for trails in the El Dorado and Placer Counties. Dan Olmstead realized that bikers and horsemen needed separate parking lots to minimize predicaments, and this successful insight is now manifest at Cool.

Day-Use Fees, Hours; Closure for Special Events

Beginning September 1, 2009, the Auburn State Recreation Area charges a \$10 day-use fee for the Olmstead Loop. Frequent users may elect to purchase a Golden Poppy Vehicle Day-Use Annual-Pass for \$90. The Golden Poppy Pass pays for itself in only nine trips, and is also valid at Granite Bay Equestrian Staging Area,

and Rattlesnake Bar Equestrian Staging Area within Folsom Lake State Recreation Area. Olmstead Loop is open year-around, from 7:00 AM until 9:00 PM. However, there are several events each year that will entirely close the use of the Equestrian Staging Area. These include Ride & Tie and several mountain bike marathons. So be prescient and check ahead with the Auburn State Recreation Area on holidays (either the website: www.parks.ca.gov or telephone 530-885-4527).

Horse Facilities

The Cool Equestrian Assembly Area can accommodate perhaps two dozen truck & horse-trailers in an open graveled parking lot. Dogs must be on leash at all times. There are a half-dozen vertical hitching posts to tie-off your horse while tacking-up and grooming your horses.

There are two LBHA water-troughs with hoses, and several other hoses mounted on posts whereby you can wash-off your horse. Members of Loomis Basin Horsemen's Association have donated the money for these horse-troughs, and our LBHA name is properly displayed on the side of the fiberglass tubs. Please bring a scrub-brush to wash-out the horse troughs and refill them with clean water for our horses.

On the western side is one large portapotty. On holiday weekends, it is adroit to bring your *own* roll of toilet paper, in case they run-out of this "vital" item.

On the southwest side, there is a narrow passageway through the fence, and riders can walk 50-yards to the backdoor of the nearby pizza parlor to purchase food, cold drinks, and ice-cream....while your horse munches on green grass or a tub of hydrated mash (corn-oats-barley plus rice bran & beet pulp)

On the eastern side (nearest the Fire Station) is a separate parking lot for bikers and hikers. The bulletin board has a good trail map of the Olmstead Loop. Horsemen often post informal messages about horses and tack for sale. There are several concrete picnic tables and recycle-bins for your trash. The fragile meadow on the north side of the assembly area is closed to horses, so just stay on the marked horse trails.

