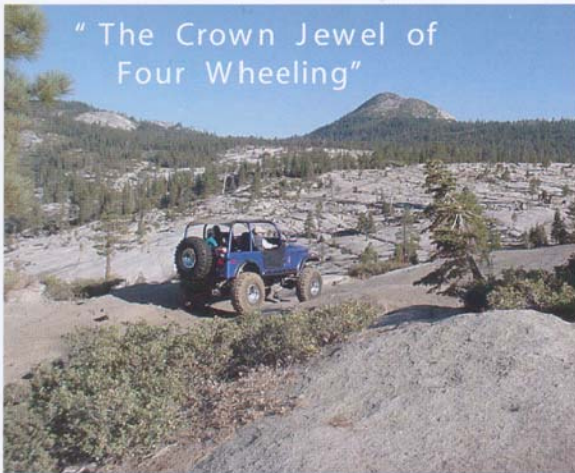




## El Dorado County Parks & Recreation

### A Guide to the

# Rubicon Trail



Tread Lightly

### Location

The Rubicon Trail is located in El Dorado and Placer Counties in the California High Sierra, due west of Lake Tahoe, approximately 80 miles east of Sacramento and 35 miles east of Placerville. This world-renowned 4-wheel drive route is generally accepted to be the oldest and the premier recreational off-highway vehicle (OHV) trail in the United States. The Rubicon Trail leads from Georgetown to Lake Tahoe (near Tahoma), and parts of the trail pass through national forest and private lands. The section of the trail from Georgetown to Wentworth Springs (also known as the McKinney - Rubicon Springs Road) is a maintained County road while the OHV section of the trail from Wentworth Springs to Lake Tahoe is an unmaintained County road. The trail is typically run west to east (traveling east to west is often referred to as "running backwards"). The western end of the Rubicon Trail has two trailheads. One is the historic trailhead located at Wentworth Springs campground and the other is located at Loon Lake. The eastern end of the Rubicon Trail also has two trailheads. One is the historic trailhead located at near Tahoma and the other is located near Idlewild.

### History

Originally a Native American trail connecting the Sacramento Valley and Lake Tahoe, the Rubicon Trail was rediscovered by European immigrants in the 1840s. In 1887, The El Dorado County Board of Supervisors declared the Rubicon Trail from Wentworth Springs through Hunsucker Springs (Rubicon Springs) to be a "public highway." To ensure that the trail remained open for public use, in 1989, the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors reconfirmed the Rubicon Trail's status as an unmaintained County right-of-way. Placer County's Board of Supervisors approved a similar resolution in 2006.

By the 1890 the trail had become an actual road (by the standards of the day) and was used to reach the Rubicon Mineral Springs Resort and Hotel. The first car into Rubicon Springs arrived in 1908, driven by a woman from Lake Tahoe. In the 1920's, cars (Dodges and Stars) could travel the route from Georgetown to Rubicon Springs if they used "ropes and planks" to cross some of the rougher spots. In 1952, several residents of Georgetown met to discuss the possibility of hosting an organized Jeep tour from Georgetown to Lake Tahoe using the Rubicon Trail. On August 29, 1953, 55 Jeeps with 155 participants left Georgetown on a two-day trip that is now known as the "Jeepers Jamboree." Every year during the last week end of July, 4-wheelers follow the tradition established by these pioneers of the Rubicon.

### Current Trail

The Rubicon Trail is now widely recognized as the premiere OHV route in the United States and has been called the "crown jewel of all off-highway trails." At one time it was revered as the most difficult OHV trail, rated a 10 on a scale of 1 to 10 due to its numerous narrow passages and steep, rocky climbs. Because of its difficulty, the trail is recommended for short wheelbase vehicles with all skid plates in place. The Rubicon Trail attracts both street legal and "green sticker" off-highway motor vehicles. Users travel the trail in a wide range of off-highway vehicles, including dirt bikes and a variety of 4-wheel drive vehicles. Because the trail lies adjacent to the Desolation Wilderness, the Rubicon Trail is also used as an access route by hikers, backpackers, and anglers.

### Regulations

- All vehicles must stay on the Trail. Travel off the trail, including cross country travel, is not permitted and is subject to citation.
- "Pack it in, pack it out" - all human and solid waste shall be collected by Trail users and transported to an appropriate disposal receptacle outside of the Trail areas.
- The Rubicon Trail is a County Road surrounded by public and private lands. As such, state law applies for such offenses as driving while under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol.
- Vehicles shall not generate excessive noise.
- No motor vehicle shall exceed 15 m.p.h. within 50 feet of any campground, campsite, or concentration of people or animals.
- Motor vehicles cannot be operated in a manner that endangers the safety of other persons or their property.
- Drivers with suspended driver's licenses shall be prohibited from operating a motor vehicle on the Trail.

### Registration and Vehicle Code

- The California Vehicle Code (CVC) shall be enforced.
- All vehicles operated off-highway on the Rubicon Trail are required to be street-licensed ("Street Legal" [CV CS4000]) or registered as an off-highway vehicle ("Green Sticker" [CV CS3810-3812]).
- All vehicles using the Rubicon Trail shall operate in compliance with pollution control standards defined by CVC S38390-38397.
- Any vehicle operated between sunset and sunrise must display at least one headlight that enables an operator to see clearly 200 feet ahead and one red taillight visible for 200 feet.

### Required Equipment

- Trash bags or similar for packing out trash.
- Oil spill kit which includes oil spill pads (PIG Absorbent Ground Tarp or similar) and hydrocarbon clean up material (Zorbit Technologies Peat Sorb or similar) and disposal means for packing out contaminated material.
- Fire extinguisher and shovel.

### GPS Coordinates (WGS84 datum)

- Loon Lake Dam (N39 00.1658 W120 18.6136)
- Wentworth Springs City (N39 00.7690 W120 20.3720)
- Ellis Creek (N39 01.3738 W120 18.4094)
- Little Sluice (N39 01.2100 W120 16.4600)
- Old Sluice (N39 00.5050 W120 15.8750)
- Buck Island Dam (N39 00.3210 W120 15.3035)
- Big Sluice (N39 00.2800 W120 14.7980)
- Rubicon River (N39 00.7530 W120 14.6960)
- Rubicon Springs (N39 01.0778 W120 14.7596)
- Miller Creek (N39 01.6278 W120 15.1230)
- Cadillac Hill (N39 01.8500 W120 15.0630)
- Observation Point (N39 02.0802 W120 15.2387)

Every user of the Rubicon Trail has a responsibility to conserve and protect this valuable natural resource for present and future generations. Trail users who follow will appreciate and value your responsible recreation ethics. These ethics are vital in maintaining the Rubicon Trail as a special place. Please be a committed and conscientious member of the OHV community.



This Trail Guide Sponsored by:



El Dorado County  
Department of Transportation



California  
State Parks

For additional information regarding the Rubicon Trail, contact us at:

El Dorado County Department of Transportation  
3000 Fairlane Court, Suite 1  
Placerville, CA 95667  
(530) 621-5864  
<http://co.el-dorado.ca.us/Rubicon/index.html>