



The springs bubble up near a building called the Assembly Hall at the site of the Glen Alpine Springs Resort.
PHOTO/JERI DAVIS

Take a hike

Glen Alpine Springs Resort

The remains of the Glen Alpine Springs Resort—just a ways south of Fallen Leaf Lake—are often referred to as the Lake Tahoe basin's only ghost town. And the hike it takes to reach them is often referred to on trail websites as one of the region's easiest day hikes. The former may be true, but the latter is debatable—starting with the logistics of getting to the trailhead.

To reach the trailhead leading to Glen Alpine Springs, one must first travel several miles down a one-lane, poorly maintained road running along the east side of Fallen Leaf Lake. Unlike the narrow roads that lead to many other ghost towns, however, this one is not lightly trafficked. Its twists and turns are Lake-Tahoe-packed with everything from small cars to huge campers, which have to pull to the rutted and often crumbling sides of the road to allow one another to pass—not a task for the fainthearted driver. After making it to the trailhead, most probably have enough adrenaline coursing through their systems to run the single mile up the trail to the resort.

The trail to the resort is listed on most websites as easy and suitable for any hiker, but don't mistake it for a walk in the park. People with hip, knee or ankle problems will find large sections of the trail littered with granite in various stages of decay difficult to navigate. It's also worth noting that large portions of the trail can be flooded during spring and early summer. As of June 23, many stretches were under ankle-deep water that flowed down the trail like a stream

for several hundred feet at a time. Regardless of the conditions, though, the resort is worth the trek for any lover of history.

According to the Glen Alpine Springs Resort website, run by a nonprofit that helps manage the site, the resort there was established by a man named Nathan Gilmore. He came from Ohio to pursue wealth as a miner during California's Gold Rush and later sought silver alongside the other pioneers on the Comstock Lode before opening a general store and then becoming a cattle rancher. Gilmore explored the Lake Tahoe basin with gusto and stumbled upon the naturally carbonated springs in 1863. By 1871, he'd filed a deed for 10,000 acres stretching from Fallen Leaf to Mt. Tallac in Devil's Valley Wilderness—now Desolation Wilderness. (Gilmore later gave up his claim to Devil's Valley so that it could become a national forest preserve.) He opened Gilmore Springs Resort in 1878 and later renamed it Glen Alpine Springs Resort in honor of his wife's love for Sir Walter Scott's 1810 long poem, "Lady of the Lake."

People flocked to the resort throughout the late 19th century to explore trails Gilmore established and to enjoy the springs' waters—a particularly popular pastime of that era. After the turn of the century, the resort changed hands many times but remained open into the 1960s. The U.S. Forest Service acquired the site in the '70s and—in the '80s—partnered with a nonprofit group that helps preserve its handful of remaining buildings, which were designed by famed architect Bernard Maybeck. □

Learn more about Glen Alpine Springs Resort here:
glenalpsprings.org.

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