



At stores like Reno Bike Project, 216 E. Grove St., you can sometimes find fat bikes to rent or buy for snow biking. This bike has 3.5-inch tires, which are an inch or more narrower than most fat bikes. PHOTO/JERI DAVIS

Blaze the trail

Fall bicycling

Mountain biking is often said to be a summer sport—and it is. However, as avid bikers are quick to mention, some of the best biking of the year can be done in the fall, when the trails firm up again and the weather loses its edge.

Anthony Cupaiuolo, an outdoor sports photographer who has snowboarded and mountain biked around the Lake Tahoe Basin for nearly 20 years said that Cold Creek, Scotts Lake and Clear Creek Trails are good places to start. They're family friendly, and, thanks to an abundance of Aspen trees, great for enjoying the last vestiges of fall color.

"The fall is awesome because we usually get some moisture," Cupaiuolo said. "Two weeks ago we got a couple inches of snow that helped reset the trails a bit. There's just less people, too, and good temperatures."

Tasha Thomas, a professional mountain bike racer who lives in South Lake, also recommended the Scotts Lake Trail but said that, for a more intense and difficult ride, her favorite was Mr. Toad's Loop.

"I really love Toad's," said Thomas. "It offers a lot of rocky and technical terrain. There's drops, flow, good corners, and the soil is little bit different. The higher terrain doesn't get as much traffic, so the soil isn't as blown out. It's one of my hands down favorites."

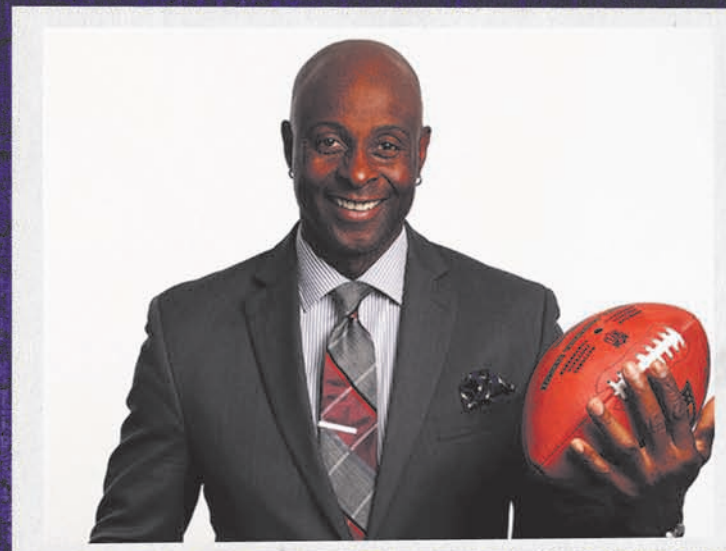
Now, suppose just a couple days after you've read this article, a storm rolls in and dumps a heap of snow on all the aforementioned trails. Season's over, right? Not so fast. If you're not ready to trade out the two-wheeler for a pair of skis just yet, snow biking has got your back.

Snow biking, or "fat tire" biking, is all about the tires. The bike's anatomy is similar to a standard mountain bike, but with little or no suspension and wider front forks to accommodate oversized, cartoonish, wheels. These are typically between four and five inches in width and work like a snow-shoe for your bike, keeping you above the snow.

"It's a really soft, quiet feeling," said Doug Couture, a retired teacher and fat tire aficionado. He and his wife, Sharon, usually ride at least five days a week. "You're just out in the snow," he said. "It's very similar to powder skiing. It's the best."

Although fat tire biking won't get you out on many of the steeper, single track rides, there are a number of easily accessible fat tire trails to check out in the winter. Tahoe-Donner, Northstar, Kirkwood and Diamond Peak ski resorts all rent and provide terrain for fat tire biking. Another—and less expensive—option is to rent a bike from any number of shops around the lake or in Reno and find your own path.

"It took me a couple years to get into it," said Cupaiuolo. "I just didn't know what we had out here, and I think that's the case for a lot of people that just don't realize the amount of trails available in Tahoe. Regular mountain biking is still my main thing, but I remember my first time borrowing one of those bikes. I just felt like a little kid again."



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