

Trails Overview

Plumas National Forest
Beckwourth Ranger District



Visit the Beckwourth Ranger District office for maps and more information about each of the trails listed here. The office is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m..

Trails In and Near Lakes Basin Recreation Area

Camping outside developed campgrounds in the Recreation Area is only allowed north of Mt. Elwell

Reminder about Preparation

Many intersecting trails; locations with multiple trailheads; and trail naming differences between the Forest Service and local enthusiasts, have resulted in confusion for hikers in the Lakes Basin Recreation Area. In fact hikers have lost their way and exited miles from their starting location. Of course, the primary mitigating factor in this is inadequate preparation. Preparation should include knowing where you are going and how to get back.

Short and Easy Hikes

One mile or less each way and a gradual grade

Frazier Falls Trail—Fee Area

- .5 mile each way
- Elevation - 6200' to 6240'
- Open to foot traffic and accessible vehicles only (i.e. wheelchairs and carts)
- Located 4 miles up County Road 501 (Frazier Falls Road) off of Gold Lake Highway

From the forested trailhead this paved and accessible trail meanders over glacially carved granite to an overlook across from the falls. Wooden benches provide opportunity to rest along the way. Interpretive signs offer details about this area. The trailhead has a picnic area, trash service and a restroom available.

Fern Falls Trail—Bridge at trail is closed

- .1 miles each way
- Elevation - 6200'
- Open to foot, bike and equestrian traffic
- Located Gold Lake Highway .7 miles past Lakes Basin Campground

The trail crosses Gray Eagle Creek and leads to a scenic overlook on top of a rock knoll. A picnic table is available.

Red Fir Nature Trail

- .5 miles each way
 - Elevation - 7040'
 - Open to foot, bike and equestrian traffic
 - Located on Mills Peak Lookout Road
- Has interpretive signs telling about this spectacular Red Fir Forest.

Grassy Lake Trail—Trailhead is in a fee area

- .8 miles each way
- Elevation - 6320' to 6400'
- Open to foot, bike and equestrian traffic
- Trailhead located in the Lakes Basin Campground

The trail passes Grassy Lake, crosses Gray Eagle Creek and connects to Long Lake Trail about .75 miles below the dam.

Bear Lakes Connector

- .5 miles each way
- Elevation - 6480' to 6600'
- Open to foot, bike and equestrian traffic
- Use the Round Lake Trailhead from the parking area near Gold Lake Lodge

This trail is the return leg of the Round Lake Loop. It descends 120 feet in .5 miles to intersect with the Bear Lakes Loop. Turn left to visit Big Bear Lake.

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Plumas National Forest
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Hikes Requiring Moderate Effort

Up to 4 miles with moderate grades

Round Lake Trail

- 1.7 miles to site of Round Lake Mine
- 2.4 miles each way to Pacific Crest Trail (PCT)
- Elevation - 6560' to 7300'
- Open to foot, bike and equestrian traffic
- Wheeled vehicles prohibited on the PCT
- Located from the parking area near Gold Lake Lodge

This trail has an easy grade to the mine site passing close to snow-melt ponds and meadows of wild flowers. Interpretive signs at the mine tell of mining activities in the area. At the mine site, the uphill trail continues to meet the PCT and the downhill fork connects to the Silver Lake Trail passing Round and Silver Lakes.

Bear Lakes Loop

- 2 miles round trip
- Elevation - 6360' to 6640'
- Heavy use open to foot, bike and equestrian traffic
- Located at the end of the turnoff from Gold Lake Highway to Lakes Basin Campground. This narrow winding road does not allow trailers and large vehicles

This is the most popular hike in the area. Starting at the south trailhead and returning on the west trailhead has an easier uphill grade than the reverse direction. Along the way experience Big Bear, Little Bear and Cub Lakes. Many interconnecting trails are available. Picnic table, water and restroom available in the parking area.

Silver Lake Trail

- 3.2 miles each way to the Pacific Crest Trail (includes 1.25 miles on Bear Lakes Loop)
- Elevation - 6700' to 7320'
- Open to foot, bike and equestrian traffic
- Wheeled vehicles prohibited on PCT
- Located at the end of the Lakes Basin Campground turnoff from Gold Lake Highway. Narrow winding road does not allow trailers and large vehicles.

This trail does not have a trailhead. Access it using the west leading trailhead for Bear Lakes Loop. Silver Lake Trail begins after 1.25 miles and .25 mile below Silver Lake. This trail offers wonderful views of Long and Silver Lakes and ascends to the Pacific Crest Trail.

Lily lake Trail

- .8 miles each way
- Elevation - 5800' to 6000'
- Open to foot, bike and equestrian traffic
- Located at a pullout parking area 3.5 miles up Gold Lake Highway

Skirting Lily lake, this trail descend to Gray Eagle Lodge. Lily Lake is fed by springs and snow melt. Lower trail near creek floods in the spring.

Long Lake Trail

- 3 miles each way
- Elevation - 5720' to 6560'
- Open to foot, bike and equestrian traffic
- Located 3 miles up Gold lake Highway turn right toward Gray Eagle Lodge. Then, turn right just before the gate to the lodge

Long Lake Trailhead is at the south west corner of the parking area. Long Lake Trail ascends past Hawley Falls to the dam at Long Lake. The trail continues on the west side of Long Lake to the intersection of Mt. Elwell and Mud Lake Trails. A short connector trail links these trails.

Smith Lake Trail

- 2.8 miles each way
- Elevation - 5720' to 6200'
- Open to foot, bike and equestrian traffic
- Access to Mt. Elwell Trail, Smith Creek Trail and Jamison Creek Trail
- Also the starting leg of the Mt. Elwell Loop
- Located 3 miles up Gold Lake Highway turn toward Gray Eagle Lodge. Turn right just before the gate to the lodge

Smith Lake Trailhead is at the north west corner of the parking area. Smith Lake Trail goes into the Plumas Eureka State Park and ends at the intersection with Jamison Creek Trail 2.5 miles away. It is only 1 mile to Smith Lake. Along the way the trail intersects with the Smith Creek Trail (.5 mile) and Mt. Elwell Trail (.75 mile). At about .8 miles the trail splits to access Smith Lake. A ridgeline section of the trail presents panoramic views of nearby peaks, valleys and Smith Lake.

Gray Eagle Creek Trail

- 2.0 miles each way
- Elevation - 5720' to 5365'
- Open to foot, bike and equestrian traffic
- Accesses a private trail to the town of Graeagle
- Starting leg of the Gray Eagle Creek/Smith Creek Loop
- Located 3 miles up Gold lake Highway turn right toward Gray Eagle Lodge. Then, turn right just before the gate to the lodge

Gray Eagle Creek Trail is at the south east corner of the parking area. The trail descends next to Gray Eagle Creek through areas abundant in wildlife and seasonal wildflowers. After 1.9 miles the Gray Eagle Creek / Smith Creek Connector intersects from the left. Loop hikers should take this trail. Another .1 mile, this Forest Service trail turns to cross the creek and climb to Gold Lake Highway. Also at this .1 mile turn is a trail through private property normally available for use that continues mostly on a dirt road to the town of Graeagle.

More Hikes Requiring Moderate Effort

Frazier Creek Trail

- 1.4 miles each way
 - Elevation - 5920' to 5600'
 - Open to foot, bike and equestrian traffic
 - Located about 3 miles up County Road 501 (Frazier Falls Road) from Gold Lake Highway
- The trail descends to Frazier Creek. Fallen logs and other hazards. Trail needs repair.

Longer Length Hikes Requiring Higher Effort

All day hikes over 4 miles with steep grades

Jamison Creek Trail

- 3.7 miles each way (from the trailhead in Plumas Eureka State Park to the PCT)
- Elevation - 5280' to 6280' (from Plumas Eureka State park)
- Open to foot, bike and equestrian traffic
- Wheeled vehicles prohibited on the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT)
- Located at the Jamison Mine in Plumas Eureka State Park
- Camping is allowed in this area.

From Jamison Mine in the state park, this trail quickly ascends toward the PCT. After 1 mile in the State Park the trail soon intersects the Smith Lake Trail from the left. Along the way it skirts Grass Lake and passes near connecting trails to , Jamison Lake, Rock Lake, Wades Lake and Mt. Washington. Each has its own character and each is worth visiting.

Mt. Elwell Trail

- 5.2 miles each way (from Smith Lake Trailhead)
- Elevation - 5720' to 7812' (from Smith lake Trailhead)
- Open to foot, bike and equestrian traffic. Wheeled vehicles prohibited on the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT)
- This is part of the 7.2 mile Mt. Elwell Loop
- Located 3 miles up Gold lake Highway turn toward Gray Eagle Lodge. Just before the gate to the lodge turn right.

Use the Smith Lake Trailhead at the north west corner of the parking area. Mt Elwell Trail intersects from the left at .8 miles. From here the trail ascends to the summit of Mt. Elwell through a mixed conifer forest. After Maiden Lake the trail steepens and proceeds through loose rocky areas before reaching the craggy summit. Be wary of steep drop-offs and high winds when adventuring to see the spectacular views available here. The debris from an old fire lookout can also be found. Leave all artifacts as you found them. From the summit the trail descends to meet with Long Lake and Mud Lake Trails via a short connecting trail. Further along is a short connector to the Silver Lake Trail. Stay on the Mt. Elwell trail to access the PCT.

Mt. Washington Trail

- 4.7 miles each way (from Plumas Eureka State Park)
- Elevation - 5280' to 7369' (from Plumas Eureka State Park)
- Open to foot, bike and equestrian traffic. Wheeled vehicles prohibited on the nearby Pacific Crest Trail.
- Mt. Washington Trail begins 3.3 miles from Jamison Mine in Eureka State Park

Though Mt. Washington Trail by itself is only 1.4 miles in length, the hike actually begins 3.3 miles away in the State Park. After 1 mile in the park, Jamison Creek Trail continues 2.3 miles to the intersection with Mt. Washington Trail. The ascent continues the last 1.4 miles to near the summit of Mt. Washington. Reaching the summit is a scramble up the steep, rocky terrain where there are spectacular views in all directions.

Mills Peak Trail

- 7 miles each way
- Elevation - 4800' to 7300'
- Open to bike, foot and equestrian traffic
- Located either from 1 mile up Gold Lakes Highway then .5 mile up Mohawk Chapman Road or 10 miles up Gold Lake Highway to Mills Peak Turnoff and 2.5 miles to the lookout

This is one of the most popular mountain biking trails in the Northern Sierra. From the lower trailhead, the trail ascends to the Mills Peak Fire Lookout. Along the way are many spectacular viewpoints.

Pacific Crest Trail

This trail extends from the Mexican Border to the Canadian Border which includes a 2.6 mile section through the Beckwourth Ranger District. Information about this trail is available at the Pacific Crest Trail Associations website at <http://www.pcta.org/>

All motorized vehicles and wheeled vehicles including bicycles are prohibited by Federal Law from entering the Pacific Crest Trail.

Trails In and Near Lake Davis Recreation Area

Lake Davis Trail

- 7 miles each way
- Elevation - 6000'
- Open to foot, bike and equestrian traffic
- Trailhead located at the intersection of County Road 126 (West Street in Portola) and Forest Road 24N10. Several access points along County Roads 126 and 112 and at the dam

From the trailhead the trail meanders through pine forest and meadows with spectacular views of the surrounding mountains. Expect to see wildlife and wildflowers along the way. The trail crosses the Lake Davis Dam and continues to cross County Road 112. From here the trail once again crosses County Road 112 before going to Lightning Tree Boat Ramp. Raised walks can be slippery.

Catfish Cove Accessible Trail

- 1 mile each way
- Elevation - 6000'
- Open to foot and accessible vehicles
- Located .75 miles east of the intersection of County road 126 and Forest Road 24N10

This trail intersects with the Lake Davis Trail and continues to Catfish Cove. At trails end is a picnic table and a wonderful view of the lake.

Trails In and Near Frenchman Lake Recreation Area

Frenchman Dam Overlook Trail—Fee Area

- .2 mile each way
 - Elevation - 5600'
 - Open to foot and accessible vehicle traffic
 - Located at the Frenchman Dam parking area
- This short paved accessible trail leads to a location overlooking Frenchman Lake. When the lake is full this is close to waters edge. During years of lower rainfall, the overlook may be well above the water.

Big Cove Connector

- .8 miles each way
 - Elevation - 5600' to 5640'
 - Open to foot and bike traffic
- This trail connects Big Cove and Spring Creek Campgrounds.

Big Cove Enabler Trail

- .2 mile each way
 - Elevation - 5600' to 5640'
 - Open to foot and bike traffic
- This trail leads from Big Cove Campground to the lake

Spring Creek Connector

- .2 mile each way
 - Elevation 2640' to 5660'
 - Open to foot and bike traffic
- Connects the Spring Creek Campground to the Frenchman Picnic Area.

Other Trails in the Beckwourth Ranger District

East NelsonCreek Trail

- 3.7 miles each way
- Elevation - 6340' to 5150'
- Open to foot, bike and equestrian and motorized vehicles
- Located at McRea Campground. Take County Road 506 from Blairsden to Plumas Eureka State Park. Then, take County Road 507 toward La Porte for 2 miles to McRea Campground

This trail descends through meadows and aspen groves along Nelson Creek to an old logging road.