

# Birch Lake and Red Lake Trailheads

## Inyo National Forest

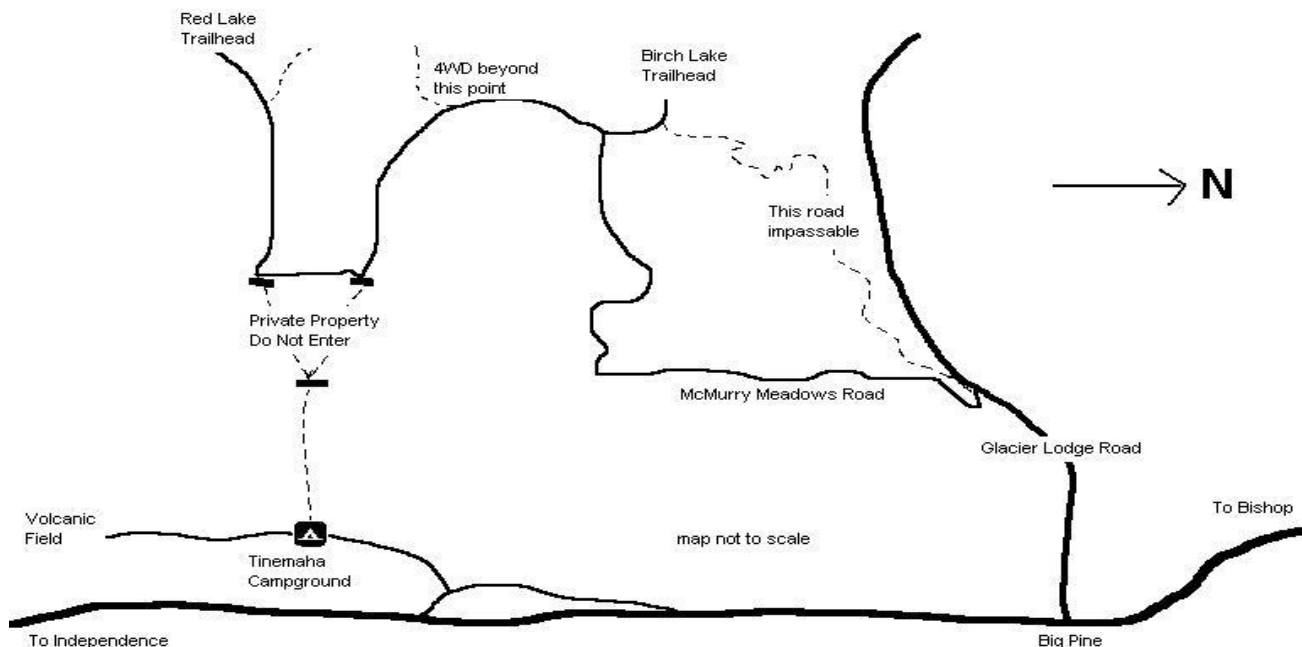


**To Access the Trailheads:** Both of these trails are accessed via McMurry Meadows Road west of Big Pine. At the flashing yellow light in Big Pine, turn west onto Crocker Street (Glacier Lodge Road). After 2.5 miles, just after crossing Big Pine Creek, turn left onto McMurry Meadows Road and immediately turn left again. The road will soon turn to the south/southwest. **McMurry Meadows Road is 2WD-accessible for the first 7.3 miles; beyond this point a high-clearance 4WD vehicle is required. A high-clearance 4WD vehicle is also required to access the Birch Lake trailhead once leaving McMurry Meadows Road.**

**Birch Lake Trailhead:** From the Glacier Lodge Road/McMurry Meadows intersection, drive 5.9 miles and turn right. Drive another 0.6 miles and turn left at a second sign for Birch Lake. Past the fence (0.1 mile further) the road is impassable even for 4WD vehicles. It is recommended that vehicles park before the final junction as it can be difficult to turn around at the gate. Please leave the roadway clear. Hike along the road for 0.5 miles past the gate until the road forks. Do not take the left fork toward the stream. Follow the road to the right into a draw until it turns into a trail. The distance from here to Birch Lake is approximately 5 miles. Trailhead elevation is 6,600 feet; Birch Lake elevation is 10,800 feet.

**Red Lake Trailhead:** From the Glacier Lodge/McMurry Meadows intersection, drive 7.7 miles. You will come to a T-intersection; turn left (east) and drive approximately 1.5 miles. The road turns south for 0.6 mile. The road will turn again to the west/southwest for 2.3 miles to the trailhead. The drive takes 1 to 1.5 hours from Big Pine. Park the car and walk toward the birch trees. Approaching the trees, stop and look to the left. The trail goes straight up the slope to the west. After a few hundred yards the trail starts to switchback, entering Red Mountain Creek canyon. Stay high on the north side of the canyon. The distance to Red Lake is about 5 miles. Trailhead elevation is 6,500 feet; Red Lake elevation is 10,500 feet

Note: You cannot reach the Red Lake Trailhead from US Hwy 395 through Tinnemaha County Campground. Beyond the campground is private property and locked gates. The owner of the property asks that hikers not trespass on his land.



**General Information:** Birch Lake and Red Lake are in the John Muir Wilderness. A wilderness permit is required for overnight trips into the wilderness. For overnight stays outside of the wilderness, a California Campfire Permit is required. This applies to all open campfires, stoves and lanterns. Both of these permits can be obtained from the White Mountain Ranger Station in Bishop or at any of the Inyo National Forest Ranger Stations.

This section of the Inyo National Forest is a low-use area. The trails are not maintained and hikers should carry topographic maps and a compass. Recommended maps are listed below. These can be obtained at the White Mountain Ranger Station.

Please be aware of dangers on the trails. Rattlesnakes are common in the lower elevations. Rock falls and avalanches can occur in the higher elevations, along with extreme weather conditions at any time of the year. Be aware of potential flash floods and high-water stream crossings. As always, it is best to filter any water taken out of backcountry streams.

Landmark	Elevation	Distance
Birch Lake Trailhead	6,600 feet	----
Birch Lake	10,800 feet	5.0 miles
Birch Mountain	13,603 feet	CCR
The Thumb	13,356 feet	CCR
Red Lake Trailhead	6,500 feet	----
Red Lake	10,500 feet	5.0 miles
Split Mountain	14,058 feet	CCR

Note: CCR=Cross Country Route. Distance depends on the route taken.

For more information on climbing the peaks in this area, the following may be helpful:

### GUIDEBOOKS

The High Sierra: Peaks, Passes and Trails by RJ Secor. The Mountaineers, 1992.

The Climber's Guide to the High Sierra by Steve Roper. Sierra Club Books, 1976.

California Fourteeners by Stephen Porcella & Cameron Burns. Chockstone Press, 1995.

### MAPS

Inyo National Forest (road and trail map): USFS

John Muir Wilderness (topo map): USFS

Split Mountain 7.5-minute quad (topo map): USGS

Mt. Goddard (topo map): Wilderness Press

Trail Map of the Kings Canyon High Country (topo map): Tom Harrison Cartography



USDA Forest Service  
Inyo National Forest  
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