

POPULAR HIKES



from

Stanford Sierra Camp

The following rating system will help you assess the difficulty of each hike

=Easy, =Moderate, =Difficult, = Extreme

When hiking, we recommend you wear layered clothing, bring plenty of drinking water and exercise caution when attempting difficult grades. Hiking in Desolation Wilderness requires a permit. Day-use permits are available at our Office, or at the Glen Alpine Trailhead. Overnight permits can be obtained at the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit at Camp Richardson (ask the Office for directions). Anyone found by a ranger within wilderness areas without a permit will be issued a violation notice and/or a fine of \$500.

Welcome to Desolation Wilderness

In 1969 Desolation Wilderness became part of the National Wilderness Preservation System by an Act of Congress. Desolation Wilderness is an amazing natural area carved out 10,000 years ago by receding glaciers. The glaciers left dimples, which have now become hundreds of backcountry lakes. These lakes can be reached by many hikes from Stanford Sierra Camp. The average elevation of this area is 7000-8000 feet, with some peaks reaching 10,000 feet above sea level.

SHORT HIKES

Lower Falls and Lily Lake - round trip 0.7 - 1.4 miles; 0.50 - .75 hours

Leave Stanford Sierra Camp via the main road, continue past the tennis courts, and over Eagle Creek Bridge towards the Firehouse. To your right you will see a narrow paved road, follow this road to Lower Falls, located just off the road on your right near the first hairpin turn. (Round trip: 0.7 miles; 0.50 hours). Continue along the road until you reach a small concrete bridge. On your left is Lily Lake. (Round trip: 1.4 miles; 0.75 hours).

NO PERMIT REQUIRED

Upper Falls - round trip 2.6 miles; 1.75 - 2.50 hours

Follow the hike directions above for Lower Falls and Lily Lake. Near the end of the hiker's parking lot at Lily Lake you will see a Forest Service gate and a rock road, continue along the road for roughly 1 mile to Upper Falls. The falls will be on your left.

PERMIT REQUIRED

Cathedral Lake - round trip 2.6 miles; 1.75-2.50 hours

Begin your hike at the far end our parking lot at the Mt. Tallac trailhead. Follow the trail past an area of loose rock (this area is referred to as The Chute). The trail will fork about 1/8 mile after The Chute. Take the left fork heading up hill. The climb up is fairly steep, 1,260 feet in 1.3 miles, and will lead you to a beautiful, secluded mountain lake. The lake is named for its proximity to Cathedral Peak, which is really the shoulder of Tallac's southeast ridge. The trail is rugged, but offers wonderful views of Fallen Leaf Lake and Lake Tahoe.

PERMIT REQUIRED

Angora Lakes and Fire Lookout Loop- round trip 4 miles; 3.50 hours

Cross the bridge out of Camp and find the trail marker -- about knee height -- near the St. Francis Church. Follow the trail uphill from behind the Church. You will reach a crest; continue onward until you arrive at a parking lot. At the end of the lot, take the 0.50 mile trail towards Angora Peak, passing Lower Angora Lake and reaching Upper Angora Lake and the Angora Resort. From the parking lot, walk 0.75 mile on the road to the Fire Lookout (on the left). After taking in the spectacular views, look between the two lookout buildings for a trail marker for the Clark Trail -- knee height. Follow this trail down to Fallen Leaf Road-- the trail is fairly steep with a series of switchbacks and an elevation loss of 1,000 feet from Angora Ridge.

NO PERMIT REQUIRED

MEDIUM HIKES

Fallen Leaf Lake- circular route of 8.6 miles; 4.5 hours

This pleasant, fairly flat hike takes you around Fallen Leaf Lake. Begin your hike at the far end our parking lot at the Mt. Tallac trailhead. Follow this trail around the lake, keeping to your right. Once the trail ends, follow the Forest Service Public Trail to Fallen Leaf Road, crossing over Taylor Creek. Follow Fallen Leaf Road back to Camp.

NO PERMIT REQUIRED

Grass Lake- round trip 6.3 miles; 4 hours

Follow the Glen Alpine trail past Lily Lake and Upper Falls. Just beyond Glen Alpine Springs you will arrive at a signed junction marked Grass Lake trail. The route leads to a rockbound lake with an impressive cascade on the cliffs beyond. Rising only 800 feet, the trail passes pretty meadows -- great for wildflowers in the spring and early summer months. The lake's warm water is fine for a midsummer's afternoon swim.

PERMIT REQUIRED

Susie and Heather Lakes- round trip 8.2-10 miles; 5-6 hours

These lakes are nestled in a glacial tract just below Cracked Crag, at 7,800 and 7,920 feet, respectively. Follow the Glen Alpine trail to the Grass Lake trail marker. At the Grass Lake trail junction, take the trail segment that switchbacks north up a slope. When you will reach a signed trail fork, take the left fork. Heather Lake can be easily identified by its massive island.

PERMIT REQUIRED

Gilmore Lake- round trip 8.4 miles; 5 hours 

You can reach this Lake via the Glen Alpine trail -- it breaks off at the Grass Lake turnoff -- or the "Mid-Tallac" trail. The latter is not on any topographic maps, but climbs along the shale rock of Cathedral Peak. Pick up the Mid-Tallac trail by turning right onto the "Fire Road" just after entering the parking lot at Lily Lake. Watch for the homemade sign "trail" nailed to a tree on the right, pointing to the trail's beginning -- on the left. The 1,930-foot ascent and Lake itself are worth the climb.

PERMIT REQUIRED

LONG HIKES

Half Moon Lake- round trip 9.4 miles; 6-7 hours 

This lake requires a 1,750-foot climb up the Glen Alpine trail -- go past Upper Falls and follow the signs. Not only is Half Moon one of the most beautiful of all nearby lakes, set majestically at the base of 9,974 foot Dick's Peak, it also is the deepest and largest cirque in Desolation. The lake is surrounded on three sides by dark, steep rock wall and is usually stocked with brown trout.

PERMIT REQUIRED

Mount Tallac - round trip 6.8 or 11.4 miles; 7-8 hours 

For those daring enough to raise your bodies another 3,300 feet, Mt. Tallac offers one of the most breathtaking views of Lake Tahoe and the Crystal mountain range. There are three possible routes: one via the Cathedral Lake Trail (follow directions to Cathedral Lake, then continue up towards the right); another route is via the Glen Alpine trail (follow the signs to Gilmore Lake); lastly, you can take the Mid-Tallac trail (see Gilmore Lake). The classic route is to ascend via the Mid-Tallac trail and return to Camp via the Cathedral Lake trail. Recommended for those in good physical condition.

PERMIT REQUIRED

Lake Aloha - round trip 11.6 miles; 7-8 hours 

A 5.8 mile trek up the Glen Alpine trail will lead you to this large, shallow moonscape created by an inconspicuous dam. The lake is 8,116 feet high, great for swimming or lying just in front of towering Pyramid Peak. The trail is lovely and not too steep.

PERMIT REQUIRED

Haypress Meadows and vicinity- round trip 7 miles; 5-6 hours 

The Tamarack trail to this area is steep and poorly maintained. Catch the marked trail for "Triangle Lake"-- just before Lily Lake, off the road to the left. You will make a quick climb of 1,700 feet before leveling off a mile and a half before the meadows.

PERMIT REQUIRED

Pyramid Peak- round trip of 17-20 miles; 10 hours (best as an overnight) 

The quickest routes to the peak of Pyramid are the Tamarack trail, or up the Tamarack trail and down the Glen Alpine trail. Either way, it is a long and challenging hike (with the most challenging part being the last hour to the top.)

PERMIT REQUIRED

*Hiking in Desolation National Wilderness area is a wonderful way to enjoy our setting. Topographic maps of the Fallen Leaf Basin may be purchased in the Fountain. Be sure to carry drinking water, as water from the streams may carry unsafe bacteria. While in Desolation, please stay on the trails and leave only footprints. Permits are available at the Camp Office. **Fires are prohibited.***