

BAKER LAKE HIKE #5634 & #234

(Moderate to Strenuous – walking sticks recommended)

DIRECTIONS TO TRAILHEAD: From Triple Creek's driveway, turn left on West Fork Road and drive about 1.3 miles (just past mile marker 7). You'll see a National Forest Access sign indicating Baker Lake on the right side of the road. Turn left here, onto Pierce Creek Road. At the intersection of Baker Lloyd Road and Pierce Creek Road, you will see signs to Baker Lake. Stay to the right on Pierce Creek Road. Drive another mile to a second junction. Take the right fork again and drive to the end, another 7.5 miles. This road gains a considerable amount of elevation, climbing the flank of the mountain via switchbacks. Follow this road until it ends at the trailhead. **Total driving distance 14 miles, which takes approximately 40 minutes from Triple Creek.** Note: ½ mile before the trailhead, you will come to an overlook. (There is no sign but there is a giant rock the size of a small house situated on a U-curve) Park on the right side of the rock and walk out for an incredible view of Trapper Creek Canyon and the Bitterroot Valley. A must see!

ELEVATIONS: (approx.) Trailhead 6,900 ft; Baker point 7,400 ft; Baker Lake 7885 ft; Middle Lake 8100 ft; Gem Lake 8360 ft.

MILEAGE: Wilderness Boundary to Baker Lake about 1 ¼ miles; Middle Lake 1 ¾ miles; Gem Lake - 2 miles

TRAIL DESCRIPTION: This trail is rough but well defined. Prepare for 20 to 40 minutes of vigorous hiking, uphill through Lodgepole pine forest (the amount of times depends on your hiking ability). This steep climb is over when you reach Baker Point, a large rock outcropping just to the left of the trail. Once you catch your breath, be sure and walk out between the two largest rocks and enjoy the panoramic view of Triple Creek Ranch and 50 miles in most directions of the valley below you. A must see! Continue on to Baker Lake. Keep in mind that you will be approaching the lake from below and thus will not see the lake until you almost step in it. (The small pond about the size of Triple Creek's dining room is not Baker Lake.) Although the trail is rough, it passes through attractive country. Some of the trail is in timber, but at several openings there are excellent views of Trapper Peak looming above to the west and of the Bitterroot Valley below. Every once in awhile, it's a good idea to stop and check your surroundings, especially when terrain seems to change slightly. Whenever you stop, completely turn around, surveying your surroundings. This is helpful when coming back down a trail and sights become familiar.

To reach Middle Lake, follow Baker Lake's south (left) shore to the creek inlet (climb down the fallen tree to your left to get to the lake edge). Some years there may be a more defined trail around the right side of the lake. Your goal whichever way you choose is to reach the stream feeding into Baker Lake. The trail is on the right side of the creek. The trail to Middle Lake is rough and poorly defined. Do not get discouraged. Just stay on the right side of the creek and follow it for .6 to Middle Lake. From Middle Lake you can actually see the rim of Gem Lake above it. The trail continues along the right side of Middle Lake and follows the stream up a short, steep, rocky canyon about .2 miles to Gem Lake. From Gem you can follow a stream to the flanks of Trapper Peak, where even in the heat of summer, "red snow" lies in long, steep fields.

HAVE A GREAT HIKE AND ENJOY!