

The Hackenbush Ridge Hike

This hike climbs the infamous Hackenbush Ridge, which is the right-hand ridge in Figure 1. The hike is best done as a one-way hike, and can be started from either end. The author has a decided preference for starting at the lake and walking up to the top of the ridge. The hike is fairly difficult, and at least half of it is walking on steep granite. There is very little exposure and the hike is not dangerous. If one makes it to the top of the ridge, one will be greeted by the view shown in Figure 2.

1 Uphill Direction

The description that follows is for the uphill direction. We also give a description of the first part of the downhill direction. Before entering into these descriptions, we note that at the top of the Hackenbush Ridge, there is a 200-yard band of very nasty manzanita that separates the top of the ridge from the pine forest above it. This band can be seen as a light-green patch to the left of mark 10 in Figure 4, and to the left of mark 1 in Figure 6. Luckily, there is a trail through this band. The north end of this trail is at the previously mentioned marks. Neither end of this trail is easy to find, but we will do our best to describe how to find the appropriate end below. The first part of the hike is the standard hike from the lake to Cleo's Bath. The Bath is shown in Figure 4 at mark 2. To hike up the canyon, one should start at the flat area shown as mark 1 in that figure. At mark 3, the cross-country portion begins.

A more detailed map of the route is shown in Figure 5. In this figure, one sees that until mark 6 is reached, one stays quite a ways above the river. The reason for this is that this section of the canyon is too steep to safely negotiate near the river. Although the route at marks 3 and 4 looks steep, it is fairly easy to negotiate, and there is no exposure here. Once mark 5 is attained, one can go down to near the river level. It is easy to know when one has gotten to mark 5, because the granite becomes much smoother (as can be seen in the figure). At mark 6, one should stay as close to the bottom of the cliff as possible. Once again, there is very little exposure here. At mark 7, one continues to the left if one is hiking up the canyon, but for the present hike, one should turn right here and start climbing the ridge. It should be pointed out that one can avoid some of the route just mentioned by starting to climb at mark 5 in the figure (see Figure 4; note the fork at mark 6 in this figure). This alternate route is a little steeper than the one described above.

Continuing with our description using Figure 4, the ridge at mark 9 is steep but rises at a fairly constant angle. One can move to the left in places if one wants, but the nose of the ridge is climbable. At the top of the granite portion of the ridge (just to the left of mark 10), one encounters the manzanita band noted earlier. The Hackenbush trail goes through this band (its approximate location is shown in Figure 3 at mark X). We now refer to Figure 6. From the top of the granite at the left of the figure, the route goes horizontal and slightly



Figure 1: The Infamous Hackenbush Ridge.

downward. At mark 1, there is a clearing that one should walk through. There is a cliff at mark 2; one should stay well back from the edge here.

Upon reaching the manzanita at mark 3 above the cliff, one should find the north end of the trail through the manzanita. This trail heads toward more open forest at mark 4. Note that there is a small granite rise (mark 5) to the west of the trail; this is easily seen when one is near mark 3.

The trail through the manzanita is easy to follow. After about 200 yards, one emerges into a pine forest with a much-lessened amount of floor vegetation. There are ducks (stacks of rocks) that one can follow until the deeper forest is reached. Referring to Figure 3, the south end of the manzanita band is at mark 4 and the ducks are along the route at mark 3. The rest of the route is straightforward. One simply climbs (steeply) through the deep forest until the ridge is reached. Then one descends the other side of the ridge until one reaches the Gooseberry Road at mark 1. At this point, one hopes that, by planning ahead, one is met by someone with a vehicle. The road is a good gravel road; a 4-wheel drive vehicle is not needed.



Figure 2: View from the Top of Hackenbush Ridge.

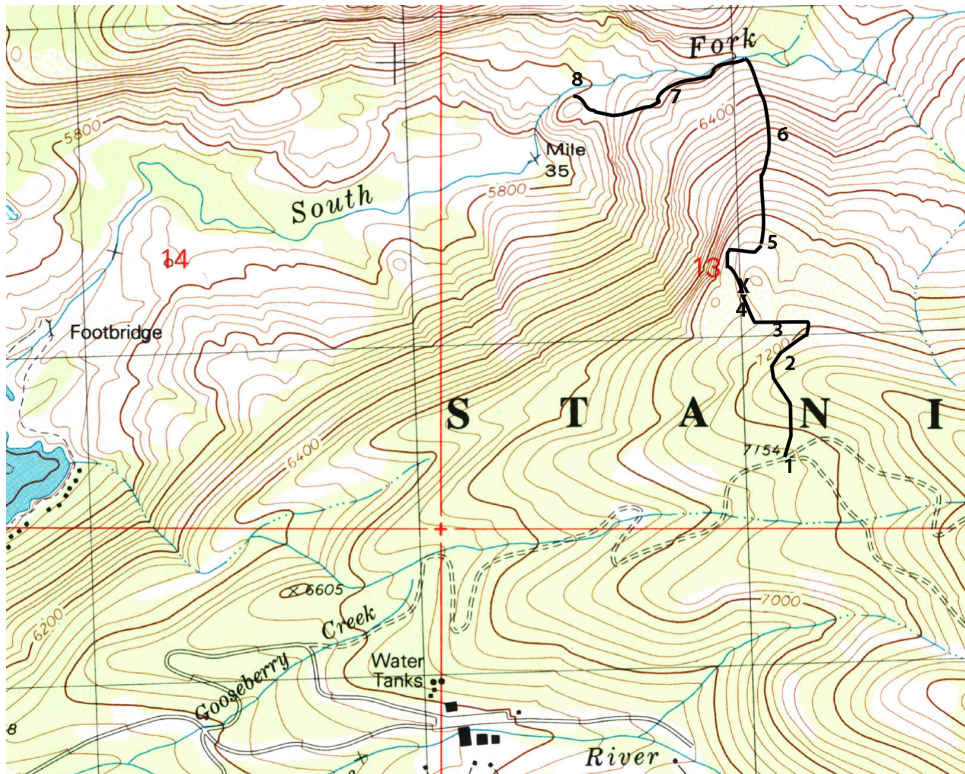


Figure 3: The Hackenbush Ridge.

2 Downhill Direction

This hike can be taken in the downhill direction as well. In the author's opinion, walking downhill on the main granite section of the ridge is more difficult than walking uphill. We will describe how to get from Gooseberry Road to mark 2 in Figure 6. To get to the starting point for the hike, one should drive up Gooseberry Road a little more than a mile (see Figure 3). The beginning of this road is easy to find; it is on the return part of the Dodge Ridge Ski Area loop. On Figure 3, one sees that at mark 1, the road splits (for the first time). There is a crosscountry ski sign that says "Zig-Zag" at this split. One should park (or be let off) at this split.

The route goes north through the forest until the top of the ridge (which is cleared of trees) is reached. One can then continue north into the forest on the other side of the cleared strip. In about 200 yards, the hill starts to drop steeply to the north (this can be seen at mark 2 in Figure 3). One should angle to the left (northwest) as one is climbing down the hill. At the bottom of the hill, one reaches a draw that has quite a bit of brush in it. If one is observant, some ducks can be found that delineate a path through the brush. Looking to the north, one should see two knobs; these are visible in Figure 6 as the bumps above and to the left and right of mark 1. One should aim between the knobs. Upon encountering the dense band of manzanita (and other species), one can, with a little effort, find the beginning of a path that has been cleared through the brush. By following this path, one will eventually reach mark 2 in Figure 6. One should be very careful when emerging from the brush at the end of this path, as there is a very high cliff nearby. One should avoid this cliff by turning right as soon as it is feasible to do so. From this point, the route is easy; one should just walk towards the top of the granite which is to the east.



Figure 4: The Hackenbush Ridge.

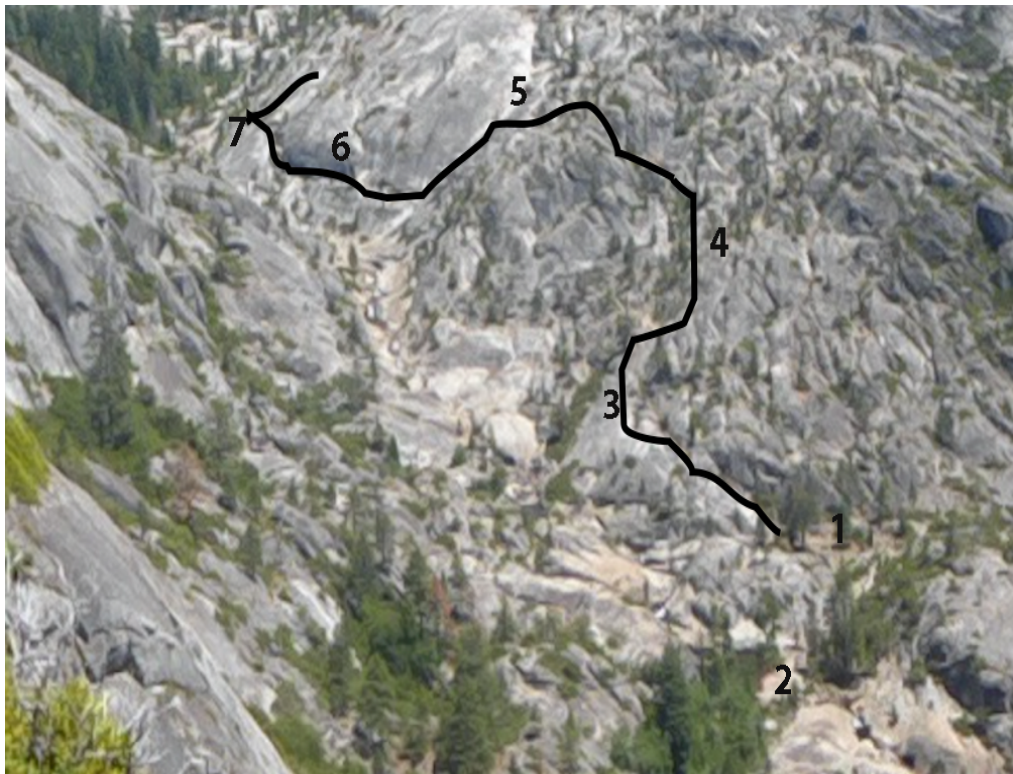


Figure 5: Close-Up of Lower Part of Hackenbush Ridge.

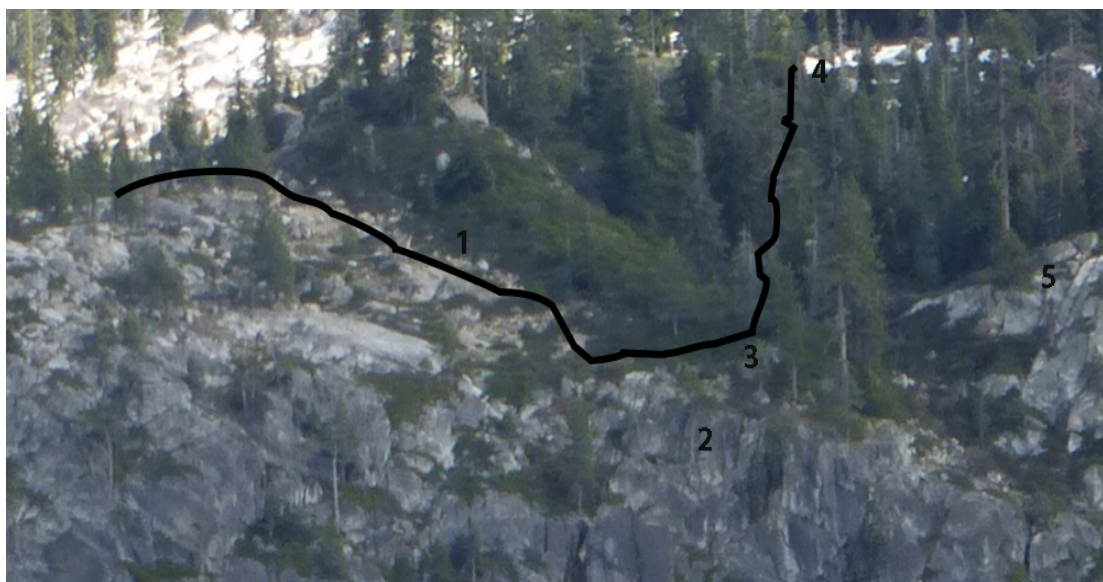


Figure 6: North Entrance to Hackenbush Trail.