

The Waterhouse Lake Hike

This hike is somewhat demanding although not very long. It takes the hiker into the South Fork Canyon four miles east of Pinecrest Lake. There are many variants of this hike; they will be described below.

The easiest way to get into the canyon from Pinecrest Peak starts at the trailhead at mark 1 in the map in Figure 1.

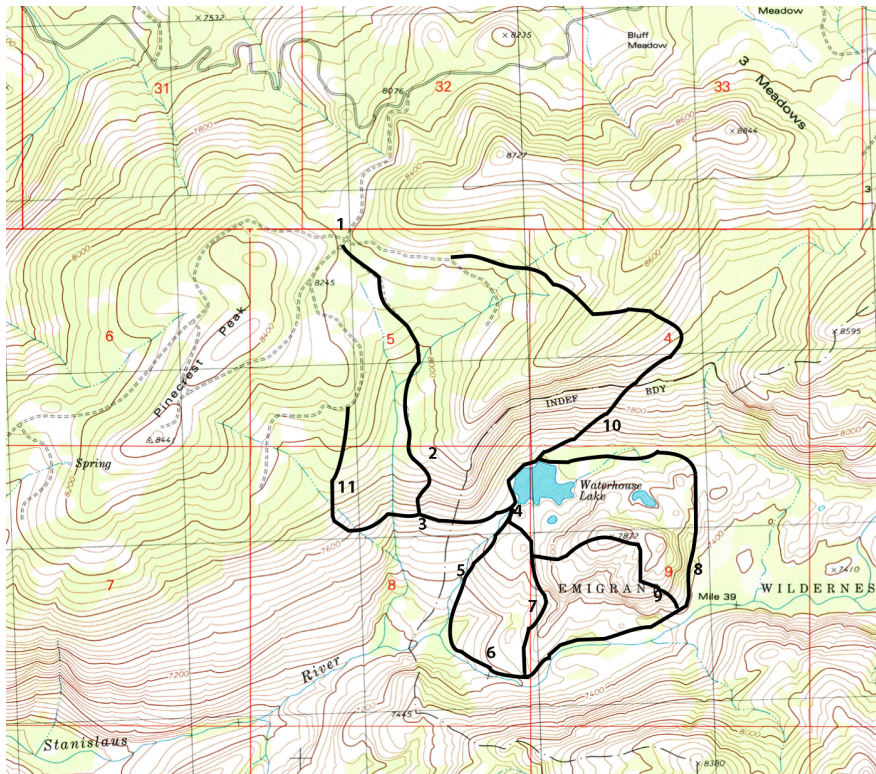


Figure 1: Waterhouse Lake and Its Surroundings.

To get to the trailhead by car, one should find it on the Forest Service map of the Stanislaus National Forest. The trailhead is accessible by a 2-wheel drive car if it has fairly good ground clearance. The beginning of the trail to Waterhouse Lake is marked at the trailhead, and this trail can be followed until mark 2, when it leaves the forest.

At mark 2, the trail starts down a steep stretch into the canyon (see Figures 2 and 3). There are yellow spray paint markers on rocks at intervals down this stretch.



Figure 2: Steep Terrain.



Figure 3: Hikers Descending the Trail.

At mark 3, the terrain levels off (see Figures 4 and 5). In Figure 4, Waterhouse Lake can be seen near the center of the picture. The walk from here to the lake is very easy.



Figure 4: Looking Towards Waterhouse Lake.



Figure 5: Below Waterhouse Lake.

There are many different routes one can take upon reaching the lake at mark 4. One route is shown on the map at mark 10. This route comprises another way back to the trailhead. The route climbs the wall north of Waterhouse Lake (this wall can be seen in Figure 6). The climb begins at lake level at the left side of this picture, and goes diagonally upwards to the right. One should aim for the horizon just to the right and below the light green patch. Once this horizon is reached, one can walk up to the top of the ridge, go down the other side, and eventually reach a dirt road that comes from the trailhead.



Figure 6: Waterhouse Lake.

Of course, one can return to the trailhead by retracing one's steps. A third route is shown at mark 11.

If one wants to explore the area further, one can hike down towards the Stanislaus River, via the routes at marks 5 and 7. Figure 7 shows some hikers on the route at mark 5. Figure 8 shows the terrain encountered when hiking along the route at mark 7.



Figure 7: Walking Towards the Stanislaus River.



Figure 8: Another Route to the Stanislaus River.

Figures 9 and 10 show the Stanislaus River at mark 6. This is an incredibly beautiful section of the river.



Figure 9: In the Stanislaus Canyon(1).



Figure 10: In the Stanislaus Canyon(2).

If one continues up the river from mark 6, one eventually reaches a flat area filled with willows (see Figure 11). This can be traversed by staying on the south side of the river, but we will not continue our description of this route.



Figure 11: Willows.

Instead, we present two options for returning to Waterhouse Lake. The first one, shown at mark 9, involves climbing a granite bump and then continuing on to the lake. This bump is shown in Figure 12. It is not very difficult to climb.



Figure 12: The Bump.

The second route, shown at mark 8, goes to the right of the bump and along the margin of the willowed area. Once the bump has been passed, one turns to the west and hikes to Waterhouse Lake. There is a small lake just to the south of this route at this point; it is easy to detour to this lake.