

D. L. Anderson

Photography

Hurricane Creek and Echo Lake

This hike up the steep and narrow canyon offers either a moderate day hike along the crystal clear waters of Hurricane Creek or an overnight camping trip to the alpine wonders of Echo Lake.

Directions

From La Grande follow US-82 north 65 miles to Enterprise. Turn right onto Hurricane Creek Road and follow it 9 miles, following the Hurricane Creek signs, to the roads end at the trailhead parking area.

The Trail

The trail begins on the south end of the parking area and passes through a small grove of aspen. Just a hundred yards from the trailhead is a junction. A $\frac{1}{4}$ mile hike to the right will bring you to the edge of Falls Creek and a great view of the 80 foot high Falls Creek Falls as it tumbles of the barren rock face that has been scoured clean by spring floods and winter avalanches. Snow capped Sawtooth Peak and Twin Peak are high in the distance. After viewing the falls turn back and re-join the main trail where, after another few hundred yards, you ford Falls Creek.

As you continue your hike along the creek, notice the barren channels carved down the steep canyon walls, which are caused by avalanches in the winter. After $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles you come to the boulder field of Deadman Creek where you again have to ford the small creek.

Approaching the 3 mile mark, the trail switchbacks up to Slick Rock Gorge. Here Hurricane Creek and Slick Rock Creek combine and carve a dramatic 200 foot deep slot through the rock. The trail crosses the scoured rock canyon of Slick Rock Creek just above the confluence with Hurricane Creek.

Traveling along for another $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles brings you to the junction for Echo Lake. From here the trail becomes much more difficult as it climbs over 2,300 feet in 3 miles. If you have planned on just a day hike, stay to the left and continue along the creek for another $\frac{1}{4}$ mile to the meadow where the trail crosses Hurricane Creek and then turn back to complete an $8\frac{1}{4}$ mile moderate hike.

For those who are a bit more adventurous and in shape, turn right and begin the climb to Echo Lake. For the first $\frac{1}{2}$ mile the trail climbs the ridgeline between Granite Creek and Billy Jones Creek before veering north to Granite Creek, which it follows up and out of the steep Hurricane Creek Canyon. As you continue on a little further, you reach a small pond on your left, which makes for a good spot to rest before continuing on the remaining 1 mile to the lake. After several more switchbacks you finally come to the clear, clean waters of Echo Lake just below Hurricane Divide and nestled in an east facing glacial moraine. At an elevation of more than 8,300 feet you are likely to encounter snow regardless of the season so be prepared for all kinds of weather.

Photographing the Natural Pacific Northwest

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P h o t o g r a p h y

Wildlife in the area includes Columbian ground squirrels, marmot, bighorn sheep, and the occasional black bear. The chirping of pika can be heard in the rocks next to the lake as they dry their food in the sun in preparation for winter which, up here, is never far away.

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