

South Lake to Bishop Lake Hike

By the Parchers Resort Crew

Bishop Pass Trailhead at South Lake
(8.6 Miles Roundtrip and 1450 Vertical Ft.)

Catch the trail as it leaves the lower end of the South Lake parking lot. There are some nice wildflowers during the first 100 yards of trail. The trail ascends into the open, following above the shoreline. There are some spectacular views of the Sierra Crest and South Lake Island to be had in this stretch.

The trail then moves into a draw before making a hairpin turn back toward the lake. At this point, the trail enters the John Muir Wilderness. There is a long straight stretch of trail through the forest before coming to the Treasure Lakes Trail Junction.

At the junction, take the trail to the left, marked Bishop Pass. Follow the path onto a wooded bench that slowly ascends as it moves southeast. Continue to follow the trail as it makes some gentle switchbacks, then straightening out again. Look for the trail marker denoting the Marie Louise Lakes Trail. The trail steepens as it make a hairpin turn that will soon provide a view down on Hurd Lake.

The trail moves straight across a rocky outcropping before making about a half dozen steeper switchbacks. The trail straightens out moving up a shallow draw, crosses to the other side and then finally comes to a cove of Long Lake. The trail works its way back to the lake and follows the shoreline to the lake inlet. The trail then ascends above and in back of Long Lake.

In a few hundred yards, Spearhead Lake comes into view. The shape of the lake gives it the distinctive name. The trail ascends above the lake and at a point almost in line with the outlet, the trail makes a series of rocky switchbacks.

After a short straight stretch, the trail reaches Timberline Tarns. Timberline Tarns consists of two small lakes. The trail walks the shoreline of the lower lake. It then ascends parallel to a beautiful cascading Bishop Creek. At the top of the cascade you are at Saddlerock Lake. This lake is named after the distinctive shape of the island.

Cross the footbridge over the outlet and follow the trail around the southeast shore of the lake. There is a small climb as the trail leaves the Saddlerock Basin. Continue on the trail a couple of hundred yards. Look for a trail moving to the right as the main trail goes to the left. The trail to the right will take you to Bishop Lake.

Bishop Lake is above timberline for the part but presents a stark beauty all its own. The fishing can be good for small brook trout.



