

South Lake to Timberline Tarns

By the Parchers Resort Crew

Bishop Pass Trailhead at South Lake
(7 Miles Roundtrip and 1300 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, Timberline Tarns comes into view. This consists of two small lakes. The trail walks the shoreline of the lower lake. As it ascends above the lake, it is a good strategy to leave the trail here and cross the creek. On the rocky knoll between the two Timberline Tarns is an excellent campsite. Both lakes hold small brook trout.



