

East and Upper Boulder Lakes

Easy-to-moderate, 3.5 to 8.8 miles



Most folks are in awe of the “White Trinities”, that is, the white granite peaks with their spectacularly beautiful alpine lakes. Rightfully so. But the peridotite “Red Trinities” can be equally beautiful, and the hike into the Scott Mountains from the East Boulder Trailhead is one of the best examples. This trail brings you through the very pleasant, shaded forest; delightful, open meadows; along a sometimes babbling, sometimes roaring creek; into the heart of the sparsely treed red mountain basin at the headwaters of East Boulder Creek.

This hike is very rewarding, and when the wildflowers are in bloom, this may be the prettiest valley in red rock country. Large East Boulder Lake is clear — perfect for swimming or fishing. The waterfalls along the way are wonderful, but tear yourself away and make it up to the lake.

If you continue to Upper Boulder Lake and its two sister ponds, you will find good fishing and a wonderful view of the ridge separating this drainage from the Tangle Blue Creek and Eagle Creek drainages. The Pacific Crest Trail runs right behind that ridge. If you’ve come this far, make the short ascent up to the saddle between Upper Boulder and the upper reaches of the Tangle Blue drainage at Big Marshy Lake. The view is simply spectacular.

To add some hiking to your day, take the loop to Middle Boulder Lake that brings you back to East Boulder Lake. You will hike about two miles of the Pacific Crest Trail, with spectacular views into the heart of the Alps. If you like, make the side trip down to Middle Boulder Lake for a cool dip. The loop adds about five miles to your hike to East Boulder.

Hikes

- ◆ **East Boulder Lake (41° 14.000’N, 122° 47.000’W)**
Total Length (round-trip): 3.5 miles
Elevation Gain: 910’
Difficulty: Easy-to-moderate
- ◆ **Upper Boulder Lake (41° 13.527’N 122° 46.941’W)**
Total Length (round-trip): 4.8 miles
Elevation Gain: 1,048’
Difficulty: Easy beyond East Boulder Lake
- ◆ **Big Marshy Trail Saddle (41° 13.562’N 122° 46.683’W)**
Total Length (round-trip): 0.7 miles from Upper Boulder
Elevation Gain: 290’ above Upper Boulder trail
Difficulty: Moderate beyond Upper Boulder Lake
- ◆ **Middle Boulder Loop (41° 12.756’N 122° 47.386’W)**
Total Length (loop): 5.2 miles from East Boulder Lake
Elevation Gain: 754’ above East Boulder Lake
Difficulty: Moderate beyond Upper Boulder Lake



East Boulder Lakes — 6/3/14

Photo by Jeri Rangel

Topo Maps

- ◆ Callahan
- ◆ Billys Peak

Directions to Trailhead

42 miles to East Boulder Lake Trailhead

Take Hwy 3 north from Trinity Center 33.4 miles over Scott Mountain to Callahan-Cecilville Road. Turn left and proceed 1.2 miles to South Fork Road. Reset your trip odometer here. Turn left and in 1/4 mile bear right onto McKeen Road (FS 40N17). At 2.5 miles (at the McKeen Divide) bear left to remain on 40N17. At 5.35 miles, turn left on 39N10, then turn onto 39N63 at 6.6 miles. The parking area is at 7.35 miles, and the trailhead is just a few feet further up the road. Don’t miss the waterfall just across the road from the parking area!

East Boulder Lake Trail

The trail begins at the mileage sign that says 2 miles to East Boulder Lake. It’s not quite that far, so they must have rounded up. The trail starts up a mild slope for a couple tenths of a mile before leveling off. You will have already crossed a small meadow by that point. At 0.4 miles is another, larger meadow. After this point you’ll be in mostly trees for nearly a mile. Listen for the creek and make side trips to view the rapids and small falls.

You break out of the trees at about 1.3 miles after which you are mostly in scrub or meadow the rest of the way to



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the lake. You will undoubtedly stop for photos of the falls along the way leading to the dam.

At the dam, you've arrived at the north shore of the lake. We've seen many Eastern Brook Trout taken along the north shore. To the left along the north shore, you can follow a trail that eventually takes you to Mill Creek Lake. You will see the switchbacks going up the hill to the saddle.

To continue to the upper basin lakes, however, you need to cross the creek at the dam. You can cross the dam itself, but be careful in the middle where the trees may or may not offer solid footing. Just below the dam are some boulders that make an easy crossing.

Once across the creek, the trail follows the lakeshore closely to the marsh at the south end where the creek from the upper basin drains into the lake. You will likely lose the trail, but make your way across the marsh and look for the trail some 500 feet from East Boulder Lake. If you can't find it, just head cross-country southeast and you will be fine.

Upper Boulder Lake is smaller than East Boulder Lake, but it is pretty in its own right. The two unnamed ponds just east of Upper Lake are equally pretty, and all three make for good fishing.

The trail to the east leading to the Big Marshy/Tangle Blue drainage is the continuation of the trail from East Boulder to Upper Boulder. Find it just northeast and close to the northern pond. There are only two switchbacks on the trail to the saddle, and it is only a 290-foot climb, so



Looking north toward the dam on East Boulder

head on up. The view from the top is spectacular! You'll see Mt. Shasta, the peaks above Bear Basin and Tangle Blue Lake, Big Marshy Lake, and so much more.

Looking back toward the East Boulder Creek drainage, you have the view in the photo on the front page of the four main lakes (plus a small pond near East Boulder). If it is early enough for the grass in the valley to be green, you will wonder why someone didn't build a golf course here!

Just below you on the east side of the saddle is the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT). Having made it to the saddle, you hiked a mile from East Boulder. That only leaves 4.2 miles to continue around the Middle Boulder Lake loop back to East Boulder. If you want to take in this route, descend the short distance to the PCT, and turn right.

Follow the PCT about 2 miles to another saddle where you'll be facing north. Along the PCT, the views of the White Trinities are spectacular as you'll be hiking well above 7,000'. From the 2nd saddle, you see into the West Boulder Creek basin, where you can see Middle Boulder Lake peeking out below you from behind an outcropping.

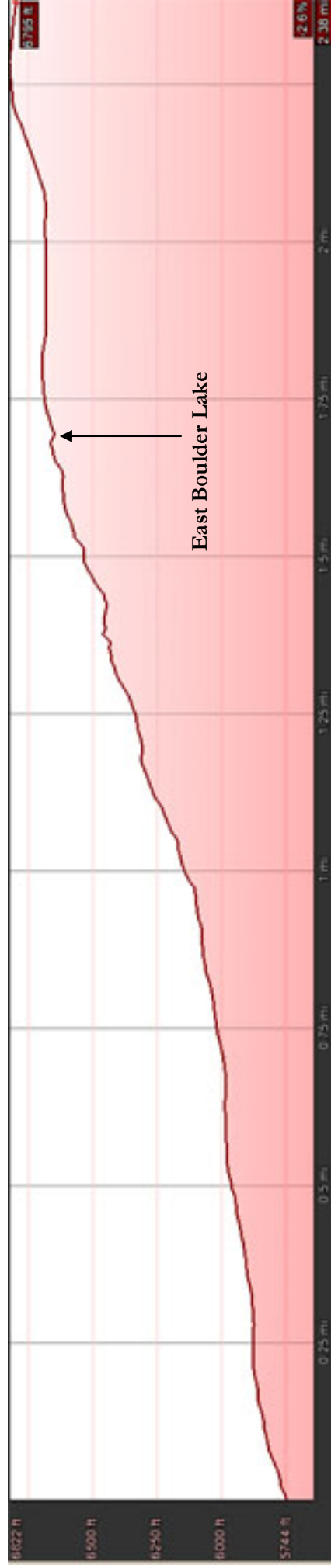
Leaving the PCT, continue along the fairly level trail above the lake around the ridge dividing this basin from East Boulder drainage. (If you are ambitious, take the side trip from the trail down to Middle Boulder Lake.) You will come out at a fork in the trail at the west side of East Boulder Lake, from where you can return to the trailhead.

If you have never experienced the "White Trinities" vs the "Red Trinities" vs the "Green Trinities," then this hike definitely introduces you to the Red Trinities!

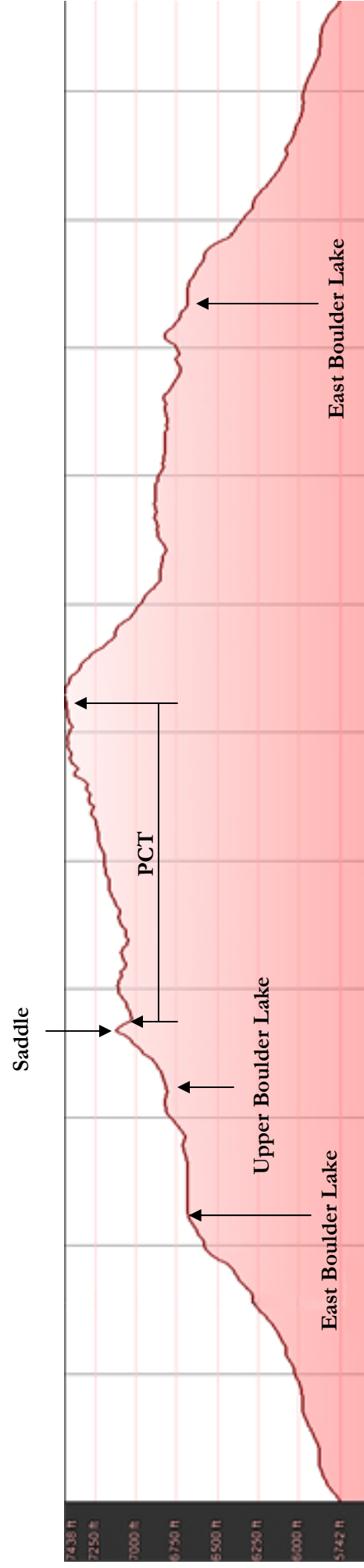


The White Trinities in the Heart of the Alps from the PCT

East, Upper and Middle Boulder Lakes



East and Upper Boulder Lakes Hike



East and Upper Boulder Lakes with Middle Boulder Lake Loop Hike

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