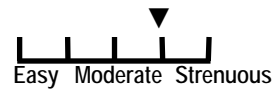


# Paynes Lake (Russian Wilderness)

Moderate-to-strenuous, 4.8 miles



Paynes Lake, and nearby Albert Lake, are in the Russian Wilderness, north of the Alps, west of Etna in Scott Valley. This small wilderness area has several pretty lakes, and Paynes Lake is a lovely lake tucked into granite cliffs. It is a wonderful spot for hiking or camping, and it is an easy-to-moderate short hike to Albert and Upper Albert Lakes.

## Hikes

- ◆ **Paynes Lake** (41° 20.626'N, 122° 57.614'W, Elev. 6,515')

Total Length (round-trip): 4.8 miles

Elevation Gain: 2,095'

Difficulty: Moderate-to-strenuous

## Topo Map

- ◆ *Eaton Peak*

## Directions to Trailhead

53.1 miles to Paynes Lake Trailhead

Take Hwy 3 north from Trinity Center about 43 miles, over Scott Mountain, to French Creek Road (Siskiyou County mile marker 17). Turn left and follow French Creek Road all the way until it ends at a T intersection with FS Rd 40N22, about 6.9 miles from Hwy 3. French Creek Road is paved for the first 5.4 miles, and then turns to gravel. Turn right on 40N22 and proceed 0.6 mile to FS Rd 41N14. Turn right onto 41N14 and proceed 2.6 miles to the Paynes Lake Trailhead. There is plenty of parking.

## Paynes Lake Trail

There are multiple ways to Paynes Lake. The shortest, but steepest, is from the Paynes Lake Trailhead. This trail is only a bit over two miles, but has a significant vertical gain. Nevertheless, this is a great hike to a very picturesque lake. The easier, but longer route is along the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) from Etna Summit.

The trail starts climbing immediately from the trailhead, along a ridge dividing the North Fork of French Creek from Paynes Lake Creek. After about a mile and a quarter, the climb eases for a bit and the trail eventually descends to a crossing of Paynes Lake Creek.

After the crossing, the climb resumes in the forest. Within a half mile or so, the forest thins out for the last quarter mile before you reach the PCT. The lake is only a couple hundred feet past the intersection.



*Paynes Lake*

Paynes Lake is about 17 acres and lies in a cirque. There are campsites along the north shore, and the fishing is quite reasonable.

To reach the upper two Albert Lakes, follow the trail along the north shore, and then up the drainage. You will make out a trail through the trees, but just keep heading up through the rocks to Albert Lake.

Upper Albert lake is to your left (southwest) when you arrive at Albert Lake. This will be essentially a cross country scramble. Both lakes are worth the effort.



*Albert Lake*

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# Paynes Lake (continued)

