

Laurel Lake hike worth the effort, detour

By Adam Blauert, Sacramento Bee

To John Muir, the Sierra Nevada was “The Range of Light.” This year, it has become “The Range of Water.”

The waterfalls are better than ever. Creeks and rivers are running higher and faster than they have in years. Meadows are flooded and water plummets, splashes and drips down nearly every rock face.

On a few parts of the Tioga Pass Road the runoff is overloading the culverts and flowing onto the road. Not enough to close the road, but enough to make drivers cautious. While this week’s high temperatures will melt more snow, many popular areas are still difficult to reach.

Last weekend my buddy John and I backpacked to Laurel Lake on the northwestern edge of Yosemite. At 6,490 feet, this large pine-ringed lake is peaceful and just warm enough for a comfortable swim. It’s a good destination for a year when snow lingers in the higher elevations.

The easiest access point is from Lake Eleanor. The road is paved up to Cherry Lake, but becomes gravel and dirt as you cross the dam. Follow signs for another three miles to a parking area just outside the park boundary. The final mile is rough and high clearance is needed.

Read the whole story