

Flowers create colorful path to Showers Lake



Showers Lake is a popular overnight spot for PCT hikers.
Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Showers Lake is so idyllic that it is one of the more sought after resting points for hikers on the Pacific Crest Trail.

The terrain is flat, which is ideal for pitching a tent. While the water is colder than Lake Tahoe, one guy said it felt warm to him because he had been swimming at lakes even higher in elevation. Showers Lake is at 8,560 feet.

Kim and Susan arrived before us. A woman asked them if they minded nudity. Nope. And off she went for a skinny dip.

We had hiked in with Lisa and Ken, whom we unexpectedly ran into at the trailhead. Lisa likes the start of the hike because it doesn't seem like the typical Tahoe trek because of the expansiveness, greenery and volcanic rock.

Sue and I had to agree with her impression.

There were plenty of wildflowers to gawk at on Saturday, though Lisa and Kim – two veterans of this hike – said what we were seeing was nothing compared to a non-drought year. After the last heavy snow year there were flowers reaching 6-feet into the air. Nothing was close to that this year.

It's bound to be a short wildflower season this year because of the lack of moisture for consecutive years. Plus, the temperatures are higher than normal in and around the Lake Tahoe Basin. It's supposed to remain into the 80s into next week, with the hottest day being Sunday at 89 degrees in South Lake Tahoe.

Still, Kim counted 23 flowers plus a puffball, which is a fungus. She said it's edible, but would only choose to eat it if she had to.

Already the unusual monument plant has flowered and what's left is a tall green stalk that looks out of place in the Sierra.

Some of the flowers along the way included: lupine, Indian paintbrush, bluebells, phlox, sulphur buckwheat, scarlet gilia, Alpine daisy, groundsel flower and larkspur.

From the top of the ridge we turn around to see the runs at Kirkwood Mountain Resort.

In front of us and to the right is Meiss Meadow, which hasn't dried out yet. Meiss Lake is to the left and then Round Top Lake with its distinctive buttress. And then Lake Tahoe is to the far left.

Just below the ridge is a strip of snow that AJ laps at to quench her thirst.

The descent into Showers Lake is a little steep. The rocks on the soft dirt make paying attention necessary. It's the one spot where poles would have been nice.

Boulders around the lake are perfect lunch and lounging spots. A fisherman has waded out to one of the rock islands in hopes of catching a more substantive meal. He didn't seem to be having much luck.

And while we had the trail to ourselves, the lake became crowded by the afternoon. I'm guessing that midweek would be the most tranquil time to visit.

There are multiple ways to reach Showers Lake. Deciding which route to take will depend on how much time you have, how far you want to go, and if you want a one-way or round-trip excursion. Going in from Echo Summit you will be on the Tahoe Rim Trail part of the time. Starting at Big Meadow trailhead, the trek goes through Meiss Meadow. Carson Pass has a few connections that lead to Showers Lake.

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