

West Slope waterfall hike flows with fun



The Park Creek Waterfall near Jenkinson Lake is raging. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

POLLOCK PINES – A gentle roar could be heard in the distance. There is no mistaking the sound of a waterfall.

With California finally having a relatively normal winter in terms of snow and rain, waterfalls everywhere are raging and will continue to as the white stuff melts.

Park Creek Waterfall brought out the masses last Sunday. Of course it was also a three-day weekend.

This 5.6-mile round trip hike isn't for those who want seclusion and the silence of nature. It is for anyone who wants to be surrounded by people having fun, enjoying the outdoors. It's bound to be a popular destination every summer

weekend.



Most of the Bumpy Meadows trail is shaded.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

Most of the trail is alongside Jenkinson Lake in the Sly Park Recreation Area. The cackles of people being pulled on an inner tube drifted across the water. Fishermen were anchored, waiting patiently for a nibble from a trout.

On the other side of the 5 mph zone was where most of the kayakers were.

The dirt trail is covered in pine needles. Conifers and oak dominate the landscape, with the latter's scent distinct at times. Shrubs are growing closer to the ground. A few ferns were spotted as well as some wildflowers.

On such a warm day it was a relief to have 95 percent of the trail shaded.

Being right next to the lake made it convenient for AJ to cool off whenever she wanted to. I was a bit jealous; at times wishing I had my swim suit along.

People are swimming in the pool of water at the bottom of the falls. Others are wading in the icy waters.



Jenkinson Lake provides the opportunity for various recreation activities. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Much of the trail is flat. The few uphill/downhill sections are steep, but short. Side trails in these areas allow for mountain bikers and equestrians to go around the hikers to avoid user conflicts.

Most people walked to the falls from the campground – a much shorter trek, albeit more crowded. A bridge built in 1994 links the two sides.

It's possible to climb to the top of the falls. It's a short, steep, slick scamper.

(The trail all the way around the lake is $8\frac{1}{2}$ miles.)

In the mid-1950s, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation built the dam that impounds Sly Park Creek, which is a tributary of the middle fork of the Cosumnes River. Today El Dorado Irrigation District operates the lake.

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Getting there:

From South Lake Tahoe take Highway 50 west. Take the Sly Park exit. Go left off the exit.

Go left on Mormon Emigrant Trail. Pass two dams. The trailhead (Bumpy Meadows) is on the left.

Parking is \$5.