

Granite Lake trail worth the initial drive



Granite Lake lives up to its name. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

HOPE VALLEY – Hiking is supposed to be about getting away from the masses and being immersed in nature. That’s why the chaos of Blue Lakes Campground was a bit of a turnoff and caused us to wonder why we were there on Labor Day weekend.

Fortunately, the campers seemed to think the campground and immediate lakes provided enough entertainment.

Upper Blue Lake is being drawn down and Middle Creek Campground is closed to reduce the risk of flooding if an earthquake were to occur. Seismic analysis of Upper Blue Lake Dam has necessitated these actions by PG&E, which has the rights to this body of water.

As soon as we got onto the trail near upper Blue Lake it was

like we were in a different world. Civilization, so to speak, was completely behind us.



Upper Blue Lake is not full because of seismic concerns regarding the dam. Photo/Kathryn Reed

We took the advice of backpackers to walk across the earthen dam, then go down a little hill to hook up with the trail. This meant not having to cross the creek.

The superlatives ran off our tongues. None of us had been there before. There being the trail to Granite Lake. This is the Granite Lake in the Mokelumne Wilderness, not the one in Desolation Wilderness.

A pleasant surprise was the dazzling display of wildflowers not far from Granite Lake. I can only imagine what they might have looked like a couple weeks earlier.

From the trail we could see the backside of Round Top. It's the highest peak in this wilderness area at 10,382 feet.

The trail is a gradual climb – about 700 feet total elevation

gain. It meanders by a lake without a name, before taking a short, steeper climb toward our final destination. A couple splotches of snow remain to the side.



Looking toward the mountains near Ebbetts Pass. Photo/Kathryn Reed

In some places the trees are dense, other locations the foliage is lush from the ample flow of water, while other areas have rock outcroppings.

The lake is aptly named because it is essentially in a bowl surrounded by granite, though it's not as rugged as some areas in the Sierra.

Several people were there, many with fishing poles. They were hoping to catch golden or Lahontan cutthroat trout.

While Granite Lake is hardly a secret, it was a special little gem that until then the three of us knew nothing about.

Rosemary and I have a history of extending hikes or experiencing weird mishaps. This particular Sunday was no different. A vehicle appeared to block the road just past Lower Blue Lake so we parked there. Plus, the road appeared to get a little sketchy. (Walking on it proved it was fine, and passenger vehicles had made it to the upper campground.) So,

this mileage added to what we were planning on.

In total, we walked eight miles. The actual trail, according to my mileage tracker was 5 miles round trip. The sign says it's 2 miles to Granite Lake.



Granite is one of the dominate features in this area of the Mokelumne Wilderness. Photo/Kathryn Reed

—

Getting there:

From South Lake Tahoe, take Highway 50 west. In Meyers, go left onto Highway 89. At Picketts Junction, go right onto Highway 88. Blue Lakes Road will be on the left; and not too far. Follow the road – it's long – and park near the Grouse Lake trailhead. There is a trailhead sign.