

Sand Ridge Lakes

3 miles, ±500 ft elevation

Very easy 4 hour round trip from Castle Pass

Take the Castle Peak/Boreal Ridge exit from I-80 at Donner Summit. On the north side of the freeway, drive 1/3 mile beyond the end of pavement to the south end of Castle Valley, then up and left over the first rough section of road. At the fork about 1/2 mile beyond, bear left and slightly up. When the road gets too rough, pull off to park and walk the remaining distance to the base of Castle Pass. Vehicles with excellent clearance can get all the way to the end of the road (about 2 miles); four-wheel drive can be helpful, but clearance is the key.



Lunch at Sand Ridge Lakes (IMG_5461.JPG)

The climb from the end of the road to Castle Pass is only about 150 vertical feet, but it's a good way to get the cardiovascular system running. On the north side of the Pass, the trail dips slightly, then continues about 1/2 mile to where it begins the descent into Round Valley via a series of switchbacks. About a mile from the start, after leveling out, it passes historic Peter Grubb Hut on the left, then crosses Castle Creek.

About 100 yards beyond Castle Creek, take a left at a trail junction and head west, then down and away from Round Valley. After about 1/2 mile, the westbound trail joins the Hole-in-the-Ground Trail, a popular route for bicyclists. Head right (northwest), cross a pleasant valley, and climb gently via switchbacks to a junction, where a sign announces that Sand Ridge Lakes are 1/4 mile farther via the left trail.

The trail drops down to a campsite on the middle lake. You can walk around its shore to the right to some granite slabs between the middle and northwest lakes. These two are large enough for swimming; the third lake (to the southwest) is slowly becoming part of the surrounding meadow. You can look east across the lakes to the volcanic summits of Basin and Castle Peaks.



Peter Grubb Hut, built in 1938-39, has provided shelter for generations of skiers and snowshoers (photo by Joel Henner).



GPS Readings				
Location	Time (UTC) 2009-08-15	Elevation	Latitude (N)	Longitude (W)
Castle Pass	17:17	7942'	39° 21.522'	120° 21.898'
Peter Grubb Hut	17:40	7857'	39° 22.077'	120° 22.051'
Jct, Sand Ridge Lakes Trail	17:45	7841'	39° 22.180"	120° 22.032'
Jct., Hole-in-the- Ground Trail	18:00	7671'	39° 22.339"	120° 22.427"
Jct., Sand Ridge Lakes spur	18:27	7810'	39° 22.588'	120° 23.120'
Sand Ridge Lakes	18:39	7820'	39° 22.578'	120° 23.361'

By R. Simpson, August 17, 2009