

Sample hike from Trails of Eastern Idaho, by Margaret Fuller and Jerry Painter

52. WEBBER LAKES

Round trip: 18 miles

Elevation gain: 2,680 feet

Highest point: 9,560 feet

Time: 2 days

Difficulty: Strenuous

Maps: USGS topographic: Heart Mountain, Scott Peak; Forest Service: Caribou-Targhee National Forest, Dubois Ranger District

Information: Dubois Ranger District

Getting there: From Idaho Highway 22, 6 miles west of Dubois turn right (north) onto the paved Medicine Lodge Road, which makes four 90-degree turns in the first 10 miles: west at 3 miles, north at 4.5 miles at Small, west at 8.3 miles, and west across Indian Creek at 10.3 miles. Here the road (280) enters a canyon of lava cliffs, and at 15 miles the pavement ends. At 22.4 miles turn left (west) on the primitive Webber Creek Road (196) and drive to the end of the road at 27.2 miles.

The three aquamarine Webber Lakes nestle under 1,200- to 1,500-foot cliffs of layered rock that is bent into curves. Above the grassy basin of the first lake, buff-colored rock layers curve up at each end, forming ears. The eared peak also forms a backdrop for the second lake, which sprawls in a talus basin that has only a few trees. The highest lake has even more rock around it. Above it, layered cliffs drop from a flat-topped peak most of the way to the milky blue water. To the right of this peak, rock layers encircle a hollow, forming an eye.

From the campground, the trail stays on the right side of the creek. At 1 mile is a small meadow, and at 2 miles a grass and sagebrush flat with log cabin ruins. From the flat, the trail runs along a steep hillside in a Douglas fir forest. At 2.9 miles in another sagebrush flat, it fords a side creek that may be dry. The trail continues through willows, Douglas firs, sagebrush, and talus.

At 3.8 miles is a junction with a trail down the South Fork of Webber Creek. It is called the Myers Creek Trail (113) because it goes 5.5 miles to the Myers Creek Road (191).

Beyond the junction is nearly a mile of willows and beaver lodges. At 5 miles the route switchbacks up onto a hill of pines. At 5.5 miles it skirts the base of a talus slope above narrow meadows of columbine and bluebells. At 6.7 miles the trail leaves the creek and climbs to the junction with the Divide Creek trail at 6.9 miles, near the ruins of several log cabins.

The ascent continues to be steep until the trail meets the shortcut from the Divide Creek trail at 7.5 miles. At 7.9 miles is the first lake, with undeveloped campsites at the lower and upper ends.

The path circles the right (north) side of the lake at a distance from it and climbs through trees to the second lake at 8.1 miles. There are some possible campsites between the trail and the lake.

The trail to the upper lake heads up a timbered hill towards the cliffs of the wall on the right. At 8.6 miles the grade slackens and the trail edges talus, way above the creek, and becomes faint. The route goes between two outcrops to the edge of the creek's ravine at 8.8 miles. From here, walk between rock

benches and over grassy flats to the lake at 9 miles. There are no campsites because all the ground is rocky.