



Hay Meadow Trail

in the Caribou Wilderness

By Jeff Crawford & Skip Oberdorf

Description

South Caribou Lakes Loop Trail is a ten-mile loop encompassing seven lakes: Beauty Lake, Posey Lake, Long Lake, and four Hidden Lakes.

Amenities for horses

The trailhead has one 12-foot by 12-foot wood corral, along with plenty of grazing areas for feed. There is no safe drinking water, but there are plenty of streams and lakes. Parking is good for up to four rigs, although, on weekends in the summer, parking at the trailhead may be full. In that case, we recommend going back approximately 1/8 mile and turn right to the Heckle Ranch over flow area, which is just a

1/4 mile south of the trail head.

Amenities for people

There is beautiful scenery and a high country experience, with many lakes and good fishing. Bring water and food.

Riding

This is a single-track trail with a few steep hills, which is appropriate for intermediate riders. We recommend hoof protection and a breast collar.

The Trail

From the Hay Meadow trailhead ride approximately 1/2 a mile to the first fork, and take the left fork to Beauty Lake. This

trail, which is less steep, makes a clockwise loop around the lakes and reconnects with the Hay Meadow trail at the fork, where you head back to the trailhead.

In the nearby mountain town of Chester, the Chester Ranger Station, which is across from the Chester Airport, has a trail pamphlet you can pick up.

Why we like it

It's a beautiful single-track trail, it's mildly challenging, and it has lots of pristine lakes surrounded by granite boulders. Some of the lakes offer good fishing.

Cost and reservations

No reservations are required, and there is no cost.

Directions

Out of Chico, take Highway 32 northeast towards Chester, CA. Approximately 40 miles up Highway 32, you'll come to the Highway 36 junction. Turn right on 36 and head toward Chester. Pass through Chester and across the causeway, with Lake Almanor on your right. After several miles, you'll come to the A13 junction. Turn left/north at the A13 junction. Proceed 1/4 mile to New Chester Dump Road. Turn left and continue 1/2 mile and take the first right on Caribou Lake Road (there's actually no sign there, but it's a paved road heading north.) Continue approximately 10 miles to where pavement ends and turn left towards the Hay Meadow Trail head. This is the south trailhead to the Caribou Wilderness area. Taking a forest service map is helpful! H



About the authors

Jeff teaches riding and starts colts through Jeff Crawford Horsemanship (www.jeffcrawfordhorsemanship.com.) Skip "Scout Skip" spends lots of time riding in the mountains and loves it.