

**Friday**  
**August 24, 2018**

**North Fork Trail Big Pine Creek**  
**Big Pine, CA**

Approximately 565 Miles and 9 Hours from Central Phoenix "stack",

Type: Day Hike	Max Rtg/Pts: 4/1	Elev. Change: 2800 ft.	Length: 12.5 mi,
Start Time: 7:15 am	Duration: 7 – 8 hrs	Max No of Part: N/A	Last Scouted: Sept 2016

- Major Hike:
- Cross-Country:
- Exploratory:
- Individual Effort:
- Options:
- Pass/Fees Rqd.:

	Coordinator	Alternate
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Home		
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Required Equipment: Comfortable hiking boots, sunscreen, hat, adverse weather outer protection, Minimum 3 Qt. Water, Lunch/Snacks, Moleskin, Daypack,

Recommended Equipment: hiking poles, first aid kit, radio, water filter

Cautions and Special Preparations: This is a steep and rocky trail. There are a few creek crossings that can run pretty high depending on the season. The first half of this trail is fully exposed and can be very hot in the summer. This is a high altitude hike topping out at 10,760 ft. at Fourth Lake. Be prepared for any kind of weather at these high elevations. No cell phone reception.

**Description:**

**Start of the Trail (Elev. 7965 ft.)**

Hikers first walk along the stream for a short distance, over a footbridge then through a patch of woodland to a junction, which gives a fine view of the South Fork canyon. Turning right, the path switchbacks up the hillside dividing the two branches of the creek and enters the overgrown lower end of the North Fork canyon, where it crosses the stream a second time and begins to climb the exposed, treeless, north side of the valley. After another junction, with a less-traveled path towards the next valley northwards (Baker Creek), the trail crosses a rocky area and rejoins Big Pine Creek just above a 100 foot cascade (Second Falls), a point that marks the boundary of the **John Muir Wilderness**. Most of the rest of the way to the lakes is quite wooded, the valley floor covered by a mixture of pine and aspen trees. The next 2 miles of the path runs close to the stream though generally quite high above, all on the north side, ascending steadily with a few short steep sections of switchbacks though other parts are almost level. At one point the trail passes a log cabin built by actor Lon Chaney, set in a shady

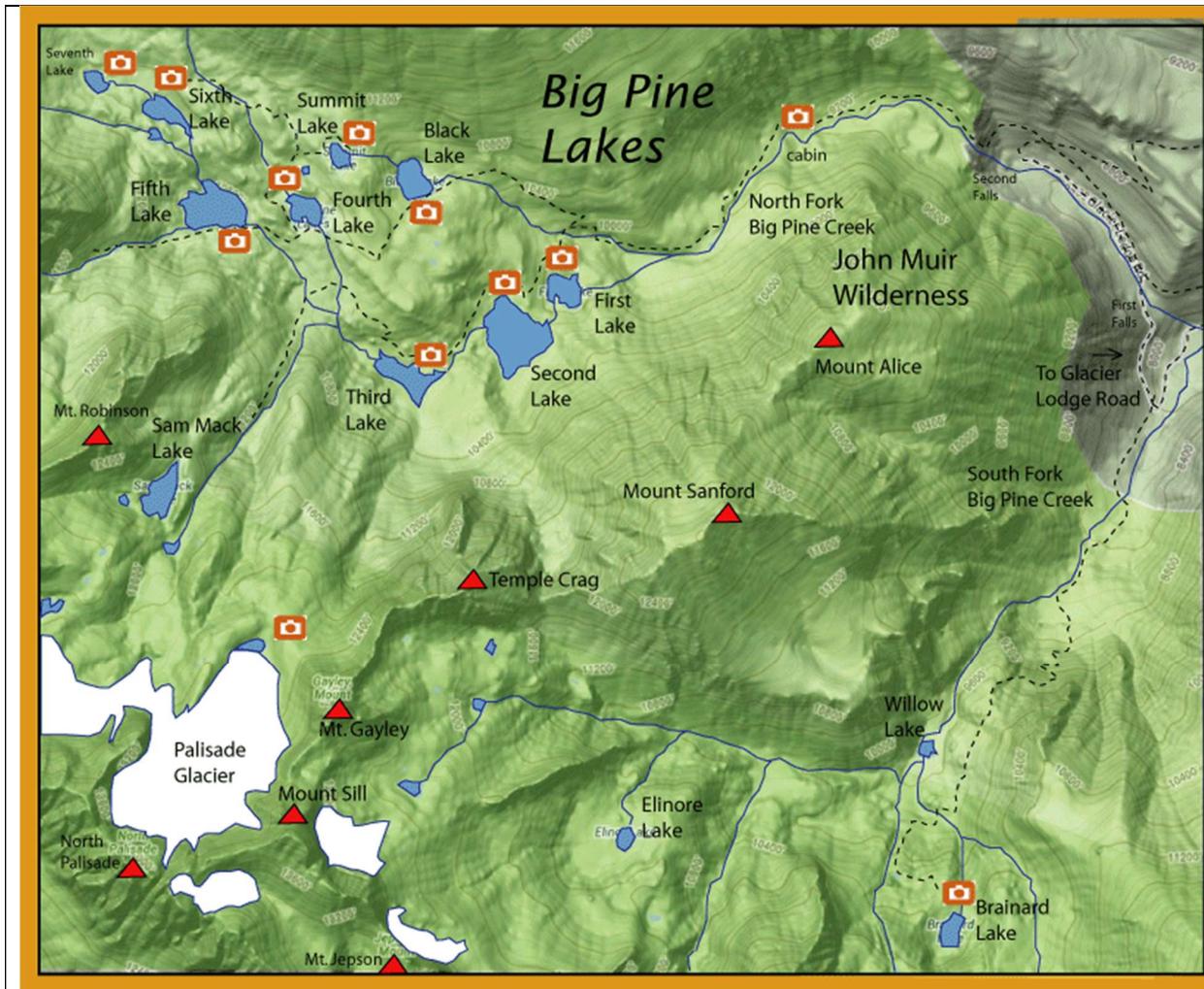
clearing beneath tall lodgepole pines.

### The Lower Lakes

The next junction, 4 miles from the road, marks the start of a loop past five of the lakes, and is best hiked in the clockwise direction since the remainder of the elevation gain (1,000 feet) is done gradually and the route is fairly shady; taking the right branch first involves a quite strenuous climb up an open, south-facing hillside. So, if walking along the left fork, **First Lake (Elev. 9961 ft.)** soon comes into view - quite a small feature, set beneath the towering, scree-covered slopes of Temple Crag and Mt Alice. Like several others the lake is filled with bright turquoise water, characteristic of glacial activity; the color results from light diffraction by suspended rock particles created by the grinding action of glaciers high above, from where the water originates. The path runs quite far from the lake though it is easy to scramble down to the water level. A short distance further is **Second Lake (Elev. 10,059 ft.)**, the largest and one of the prettiest, with a shoreline of smooth granite cliffs and boulders. Next is **Third Lake**, a little different than the first two as the water is less colorful and quite shallow; in late summer the lake partly dries up to reveal mud flats at one end. The path then climbs quite high above the west shore of the lake via a short but steep series of switchbacks, and leads on through the pine forest to a junction with a spur path to the base of Palisade Glacier.

### The Upper Lakes

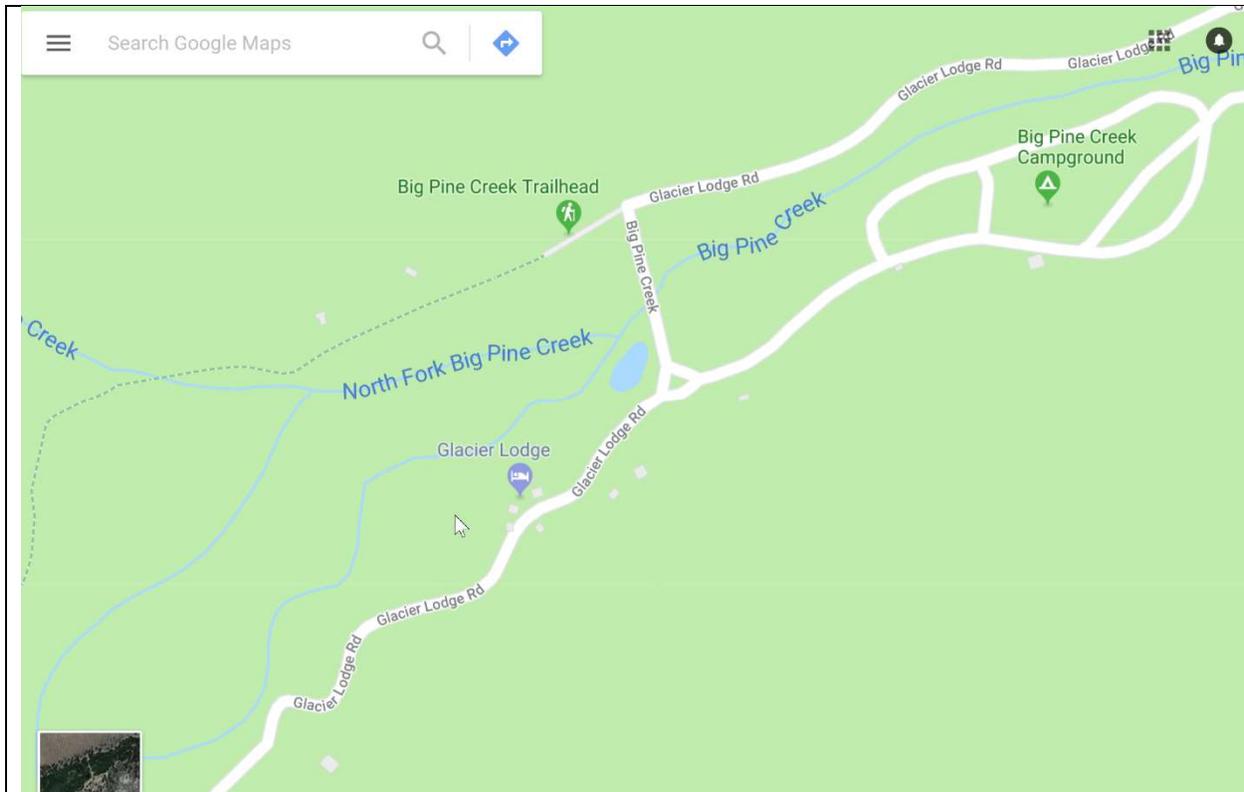
Back on the main trail, the next fork is a four-way junction (Elev. 10,760 ft.). Turning left, a short descent reaches the shore of **Fifth Lake (Elev. 10,787 ft.)**, perhaps the most impressive as it sits in a large granite bowl, enclosed on three sides by steep rocky slopes, and filled by deep, clear, blue water. If continuing straight on at the junction, the path very soon arrives at **Fourth Lake**, encircled by thick pine forest without the stark granite scenery of the earlier lakes. Past here are the smaller Summit Lake and Sixth Lake, where the official path ends, though Seventh Lake lies not far beyond. The final water on the loop path (**Black Lake, Elev. 10,649 ft.**), reached by turning right at the junction (**which we will do**), is also tree-lined and quite sheltered, though its northern edge is bordered by the smooth, more open slopes of a ridge extending east from the Inconsolable Range. Past Black Lake the path leaves the shade of the trees and begins the sharp descent back to the head of the main canyon, near First Lake.



**Driving Directions:** Take I-10 west to Redlands, Calif. and merge onto I-210 West at exit 77C toward Pasadena. Merge onto I-215 N via Exit 74 toward Barstow. I-215 becomes I-15 N. Then merge onto US-395 N via Exit 141 toward Bishop.

**Trailhead:**

From Bishop follow US Highway 395 south for about 15.5 miles to Big Pine. In the center of Big Pine turn west at Crocker Street and proceed out of town, as the road becomes Glacier Lodge Road. Follow the two lane road past campgrounds and the overnight parking for another three quarters of a mile to the day-use lot near the end of the road. Here you'll find the trailhead for the North Fork Big Pine Creek Trail. There is an outhouse at the trailhead but no water.



**Overnight Accommodations:**

Camping is available at Big Pine Creek Campground which is located near the trailhead. This campground can accommodate RV's up to 35 ft. in length. Upper Sage Flat Campground is also located along Glacier Lodge Road a few miles from the trailhead. This campground can accommodate RV's up to 40 ft. in length. Reservations for either of these campgrounds can be made on [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov) up to six months in advance. The Glacier Lodge, also located at the trailhead, has cabins available for rent. If interested visit their website at <http://www.glacierlodge395.com/>. If you prefer a motel, Big Pine has little to choose from, but Bishop offers many choices. The Leader will be staying at the Cielo Hotel in Bishop.

**Associated Hike:**

Lisa Nguyen will be leading a climb of Wildrose Peak in Death Valley National Park on Saturday, August 25, 2018. Death Valley NP is about 150 miles from Big Pine, CA.