

SNAG LAKE LOOP AND THE CINDER CONE, LASSEN NATIONAL PARK

This hike starts at the Butte Lake trailhead. The Snag Lake loop recommended in the Lassen National Park hiking brochure is listed as approximately 13.8 miles round trip, with 1,300 feet of elevation gain. Computed from the park map, the distances are as follows:

- 0.4 miles from the parking area to the Prospect Peak turnoff
- 0.9 miles from the Prospect Peak turnoff to the the Cinder Cone turnoff
- 0.6 miles *around* the Cinder Cone to the Nobles Emigrant Trail turnoff
- 0.5 miles from the Nobles Emigrant Trail turnoff to the first Rainbow Lake turnoff
- 3.0 miles from the first Rainbow Lake turnoff to the second Rainbow Lake turnoff
- 0.6 miles from the second Rainbow Lake turnoff to the Horseshoe Lake turnoff
- 0.5 miles from the Horseshoe Lake turnoff to the Cameron Lake turnoff
- 4.4 miles from the Cameron Lake turnoff to the Widow Lake turnoff
- 1.5 miles from the Widow Lake turnoff to the Bathtub Lake turnoff
- 0.9 miles from the Bathtub Lake turnoff to the parking area

The total from this is 13.3 miles. This gives an estimate of the distance for the standard Snag Lake loop hike.

We did this loop in the counter-clockwise direction, and we also hiked the Cinder Cone. On its own, the Cinder Cone loop is 4 miles round trip (with an elevation gain of 850 feet). I would estimate that hiking the Cinder Cone would add approximately 1 to 1.5 miles on to the length of the hike.

A photo of Burney Mountain on our drive to the Butte Lake trailhead:



This was our first view of Butte Lake:

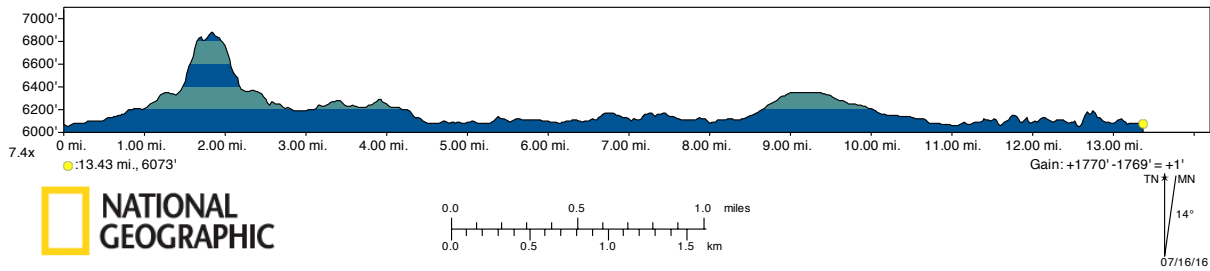
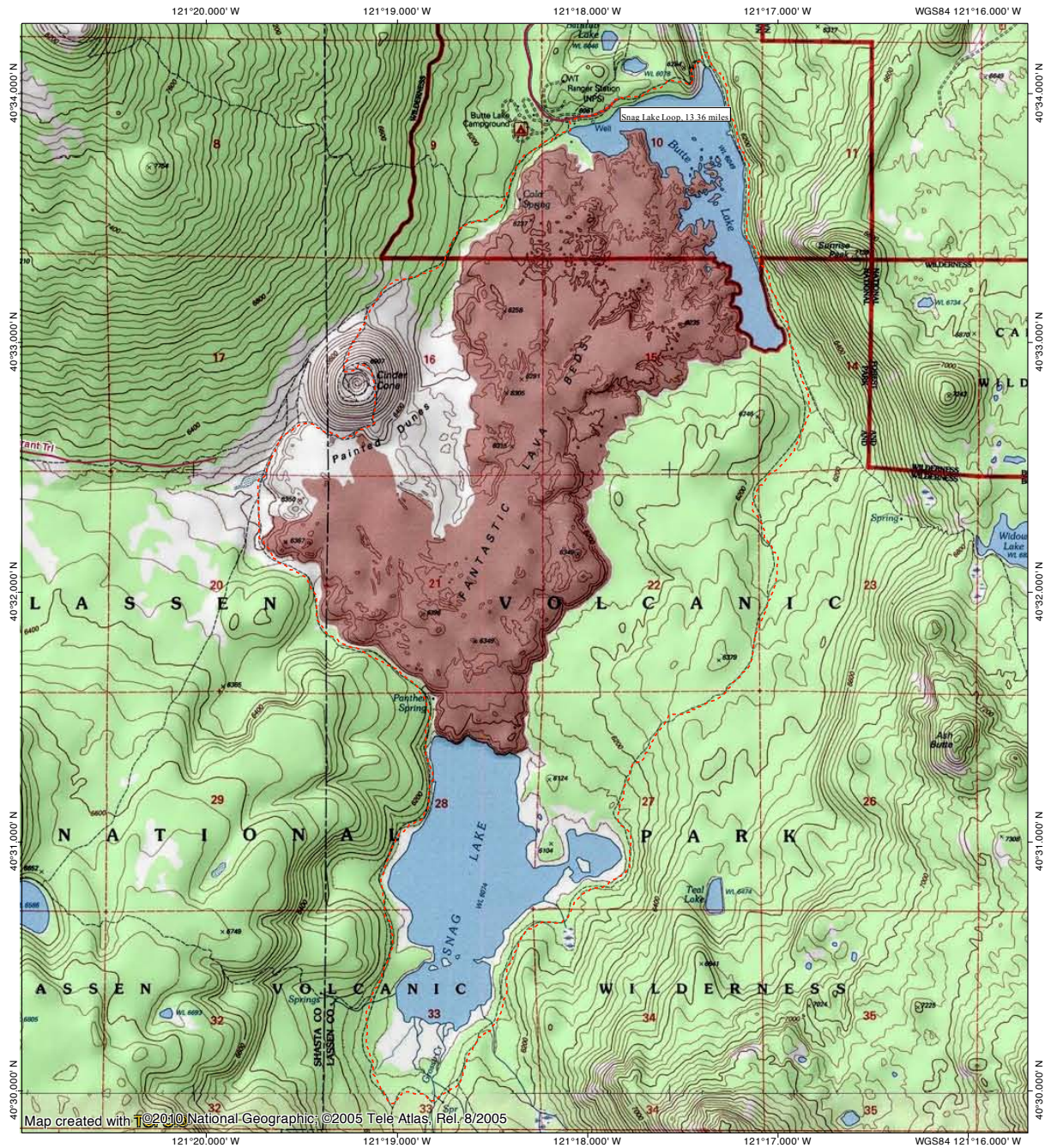


This is the map of the trails in the Butte Lake area which is posted at the trailhead; notice that it appears at the time this sign was made there was a trail through the painted dunes, which ran between the dunes and the lava beds:



TOPO map of this hike:

TOPO! map printed on 07/16/16 from "Untitled.tpo"



From the trailhead, it is 3.4 miles until one reaches the far northern side of Snag Lake:



The Fantastic Lava Beds were formed by eruptions from the Cinder Cone:



The greenery growing just beside the lava beds made for good photography against the backdrop of the Fantastic Lava Beds:



Our first view of the Cinder Cone, with the painted dunes just to the left and the lava beds in the far left; notice all the flowers that were growing in the volcanic soil this June:



I was very surprised at how many flowers we saw during this part of the hike:



There were many pink and yellow flowers here:



The hike up the Cinder Cone is quite steep, and it is made more difficult by the loose footing:



Looking straight down the side of the Cinder Cone:



This is the view looking northwest, towards Prospect Peak:



Mount Lassen itself soon became visible to the southwest:



Panorama of the Cinder Cone from the top of this part of the trail; the rock here is indeed this reddish color:



There is a cutoff trail to the other side of the cone where the trail leads down to the painted dunes; we took the left fork (not visible in this photo) to get to the highest point of the Cinder Cone:



Looking across at Mount Lassen again; I think the peaks to the right are the Chaos Crag:



Panorama from the highest point with Butte Lake to the far left, the Fantastic Lava Beds left of center, the crater of the Cinder Cone to the right of center, and Mount Lassen to the far right:



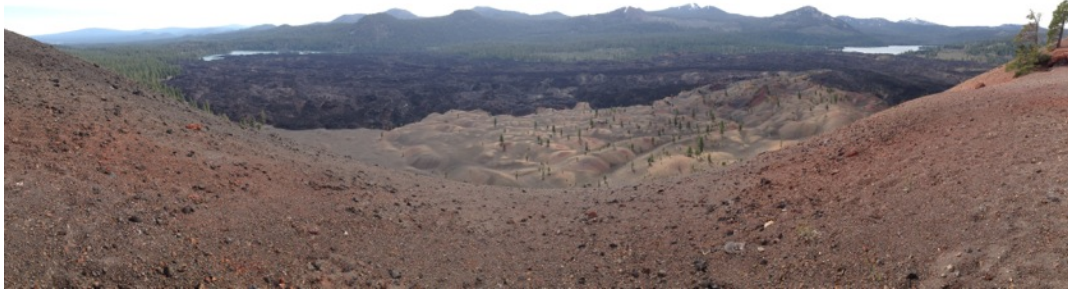
Another panorama from a little further along the trail, with the painted dunes now visible just left of center; notice that with the different camera settings Mount Lassen is more easily visible:



There was a surprisingly large quantity of flowers along the eastern side of the Cinder Cone:



Panorama looking down at the spectacular Painted Dunes (which I don't think there are any trails through because a trail would probably mar the landscape):



This is the very center of the Cinder Cone, just barely not visible from the ridge:



Panorama with Butte Lake on the far left, Snag Lake right of center, and Mount Lassen to the far right; the peaks forming the background ridgeline would probably be very nice hikes:



These yellow flowers were everywhere on the upper part of the southeastern slopes of the Cinder Cone:



One last panorama of the painted dunes from the start of the trail down the other side of the Cinder Cone:



Notice the well-defined line where the Fantastic Lava Beds meet the Painted Dunes:



There were a few of these pinkish/reddish/purple flower bushes alongside the trail:



A close-up photo of one of these interesting flowering plants:



The painted dunes are a spectacular formation; I wish there was a trail that circled them so that I could have gotten more photos with different sun angles of the dunes:



As we still had a long ways to go on this hike, we began heading back towards the main trail:



Panorama looking back at the painted dunes and across the lava beds towards Ash Butte, Mount Hoffman, and Red Cinder Cone:



This is the trail on the other side of the Cinder Cone, which seems to be less travelled:



The trail wraps around the base of the Cinder Cone before rejoining the main route:



There were incredible colors on the part of the painted dunes that goes between the Cinder Cone and the lava beds through here:



We rejoined the main trail and started heading south towards Snag Lake:



Looking over at the edge of the Fantastic Lava Beds, which we would be following for the entire way to Snag Lake:



Looking ahead at Fairfield Peak; notice there were still many flowers on the sides of the trail:



These yellow flowers seemed to be the most prevalent through here:



There are two types of yellow flowers in this photo, and both appear to be different from the two types of yellow flowers we spotted at the top of the Cinder Cone:



Panorama of where there is some greenery growing on the volcanic gravel; this volcanic gravel we were walking across through here proved to be more like sand than gravel, and therefore this part of the trail towards Snag Lake took longer to cross than expected (luckily this terrain does not continue past where the lava beds meet Snag Lake):



At this point we have reached the first Rainbow Lake junction; according to this sign, it is now 1.5 miles to Snag Lake. However, according to the park map, this junction is 2.4 miles from the parking area, and at the parking area Snag Lake was listed as being 3.4 miles away, which would indicate that Snag Lake should only be 1 mile away. I'm guessing that the sign at the parking area gives the distance to first encounter Snag Lake, whereas this sign gives the distance to partway around Snag Lake. Take note of this inconsistency so that it doesn't cause confusion:



Panorama of the western edge of the Fantastic Lava Beds from here:



Looking back at the Cinder Cone rising above the lava beds:



The trail continues into a patch of trees; there are still many flowers growing out of the volcanic gravel:



The formations at this edge of the Fantastic Lava Beds were interesting to see as we hiked towards Snag Lake; note the vivid red "pinnacles" seen in this photo:



The trail finally becomes easier to walk on as the ground becomes firmer and less gravelly, and more trees begin to grow out of this volcanic soil:



This was our first view of Snag Lake, from what I think is sometimes called "Lava Cove"; the prominent peak in the background (center of the photo) is Mount Hoffman:



We continued along the trail around the lake; Lava Cove is to the far left in this photo:



This is one of many nice camping spots around Snag Lake:



Mount Hoffman is again the main peak visible in the center of this photo; I think the peak to the left is Ash Butte, and the peaks to the right are probably the Crystal Cliffs, above Juniper Lake:



Looking back at the northern end of Snag Lake, where it is bounded by the Fantastic Lava Beds:

