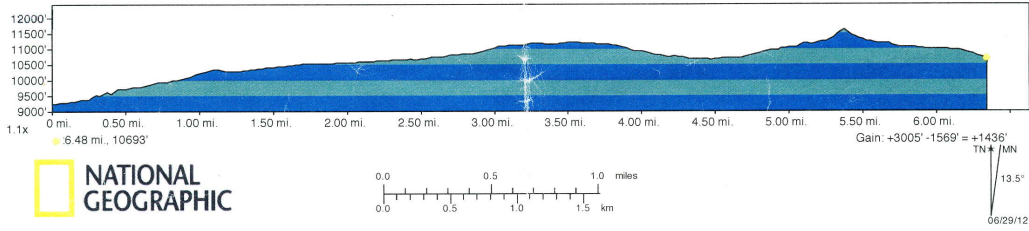
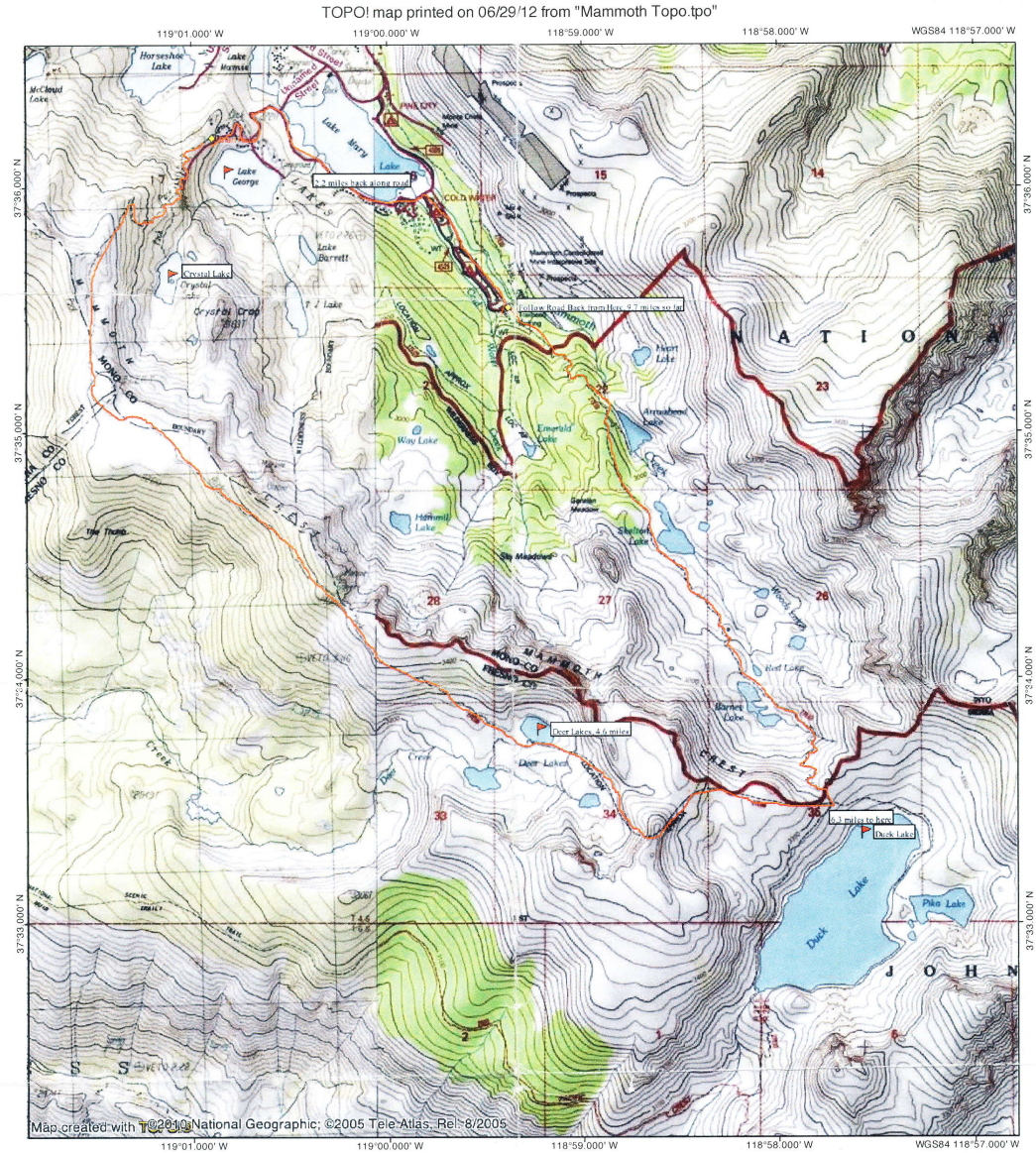


# LOOP HIKE FROM LAKE MARY TO DEER LAKES TO DUCK LAKE, MAMMOTH

TOPO map of the route:



The hike starts by heading up towards Crystal Lake and Crystal Crag, except we turn off on the Mammoth Crest Trail before reaching the lake. This photo was taken looking down at Lake Mary from one of the switchbacks after passing the fork in the trail:



Another view of Lake Mary and the nearby lakes from further along the trail:



Soon we get a view of Crystal Lake and Crystal Crag, with the Mammoth Crest in the background:



Reaching a flatter stretch of the trail, which is welcome after the climb from the Lake George parking area:



Luckily it wasn't too windy this day, as is sometimes a problem along this route:



The hiking is very pleasant along here, with good views:



Soon we are hiking along the western side of the Mammoth Crest, with amazing views of the surrounding mountains:



Looking back at the ridge and the flatter area we had just been hiking through.



From here, the trail climbs gradually along the ridge until reaching a high point, then dropping down to the Deer Lakes. This is a very nice viewpoint of both sides of the ridge:



The well-defined trail continues along the side of the ridge:



Looking down from part of the Mammoth Crest; I think this is just above Hammil Lake:



The trail finally begins to descend to the Deer Lakes, and we begin to glimpse our route over to Duck Lake:



The lowermost Deer Lake can be seen here:



The middle Deer Lake is right of center in this photo, with the upper Deer Lake just out of view:



This view shows the Deer Lakes area, with our approximate route over to Duck Lake being over the leftmost saddle in the ridge to the back in the photo (seen just above the middle Deer Lake)



The Deer Lakes are quite nice, but unfortunately we didn't have a lot of time to stop and take photos:



Looking back across the middle Deer Lake:



We then continued past the middle Deer Lake; on the TOPO map there appears to be a trail heading over to Duck Lake, but we didn't see a trail the entire way and ended up having some spots of (relatively straightforward) route-finding:



Looking down on the middle Deer Lake; the part of the Mammoth Crest Trail heading down to this lake can be seen in the center of this photo:



The route heads up the valley behind the middle lake; this is the route we took out of the valley (the "trail" marked on the TOPO was still under snow):



Looking up the valley (the snowpack in the center of the photo appears to be where the TOPO map routes hikers-?):





As we gained elevation, we got a glimpse of the Upper Deer Lake:



After scrambling up the embankment a short distance, we encountered a use trail (part of the old main trail?), and followed it the rest of the way up to the ridge. It certainly made the route through the boulders a lot easier:



Looking down on the Upper Deer Lake, which appears to be much nicer than it appears from the TOPO map:



The last stretch of the climb to the ridge:



This is the view of the Deer Lakes complex from the ridge; I wish we'd been able to spend more time at this location:



A detailed map was necessary here to determine which way to go to get to the Duck Lake trail (this looks like a good place to return to for some more exploration in the future):



It seems like it would be difficult to get lost here, but one could easily get cliffed-out if heading in the wrong direction:



Up ahead, we spotted more of a trail (it seemed to disappear in places, then reappear again; I'm not sure if this part of the trail originated where we came from, or from the "trail" on the TOPO—or if this "trail" on the TOPO even exists):



This was our first view of the Duck Lake area after crossing the ridge (that is Pika Lake in the photo, not Duck Lake itself):



The trail disappeared again, so we cut cross-country towards Duck Lake:



Unfortunately we got our first view of the lake at a point where the main trail was way down by the edge of the lake:



Duck Lake and Pika Lake:



So, we headed over towards the saddle between Duck Lake and the rest of the trail back:



Looking down at Barney Lake, and the trail down (unfortunately I don't have any photos of the rest of the route back):

