

FLOE LAKE, KOOTENAY NATIONAL PARK, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA

Floe Lake is a 21 kilometer (round-trip) hike which has a total elevation gain of 715 meters; note that most of this elevation gain is in the last 2.5 kilometers, making the hike reasonably difficult. Added to that, there were hordes of mosquitoes and flies on the 2.5 km climb and at the lake while we were there, which were not kept away by repellent. Therefore, we were unable to take many good rest stops on the way up to the lake, at the lake, and on the way back down. Due to a wildfire in the area in 2003, much of the undergrowth along Floe Creek was cleared out, giving increased visibility as well as kilometer after kilometer of uninterrupted fields of fireweed and other wildflowers.

After starting on the trail, we immediately knew that we would be hiking through stands of burned-out trees broken by avalanche chutes and blooming fireweed:



After half a kilometer, the trail crosses a bridge over the Vermilion River, then follows the hillside for a little while before entering the valley which contains Floe Creek. This photo is of the Vermilion River just below the bridge:



Past the bridge, we walked through stands of young trees interspersed with fireweed. We were already amazed by the flowers we had seen, but the best was yet to come:



The trail drops down towards Floe Creek:



After crossing to the northern side of Floe Creek and zigzagging up the hillside, the fireweed increases:



Looking up at fireweed coming down an avalanche chute:



Looking ahead at the far southern end of the Rockwall with fireweed in the foreground:



A closeup of just one of the multitudes of fireweed:

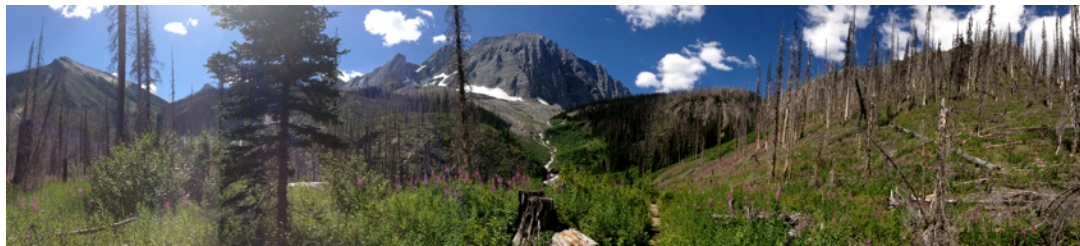


There were other wildflowers along the trail on this hike, but most often they were overpowered by the fireweed:



The next six photos show more of the fireweed we saw along this trail:





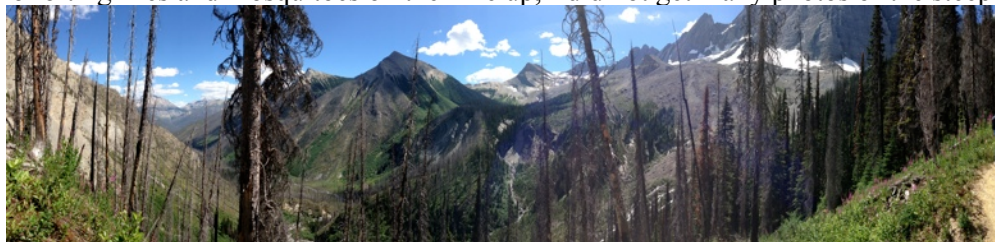
Finally, after about eight kilometers of hiking through fields of fireweed, we reach the start of the climb:



Looking back out towards Isabelle Peak, the Vermilion River, and the road:



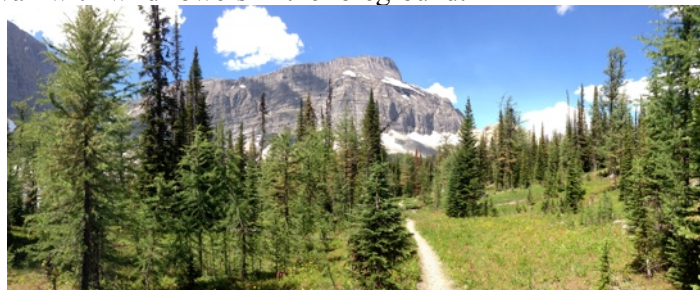
Due to the number of biting flies and mosquitoes on the hike up, I did not get many photos of the steep climb:



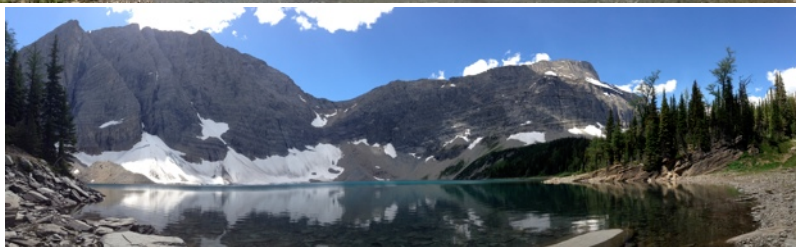
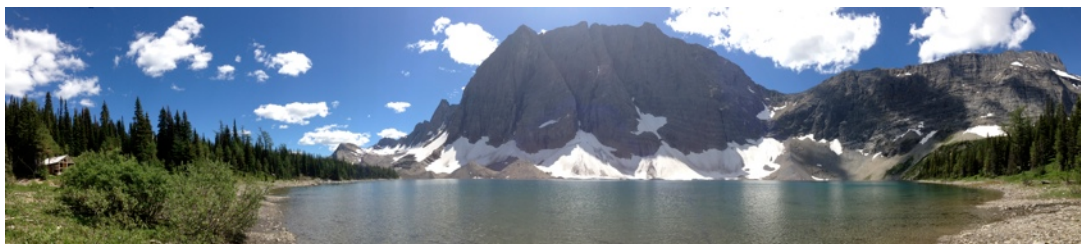
Eventually we reached where the trail levels off and passes through a meadow with wildflowers:



Looking north along the Rockwall with wildflowers in the foreground:



Finally, we reached the lake. The next seven photos show Floe Lake; note the warden cabin in the far left of the first photo:



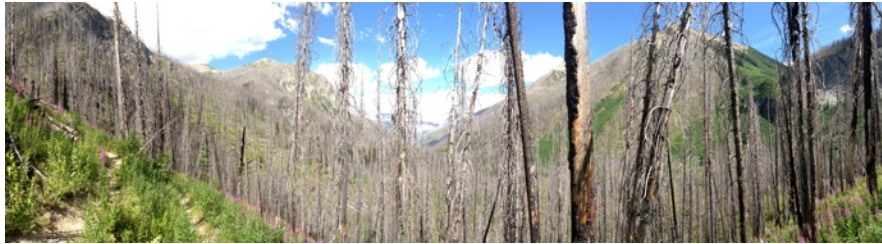


From here, we headed back down the trail in hopes of escaping the buzzing insects. The next five photos show some of the steep part of the trail down and the views from this trail:





After reaching the bottom of the steep section, we headed back down along Floe Creek through the fields of fireweed. Nine more photos of these flowers:

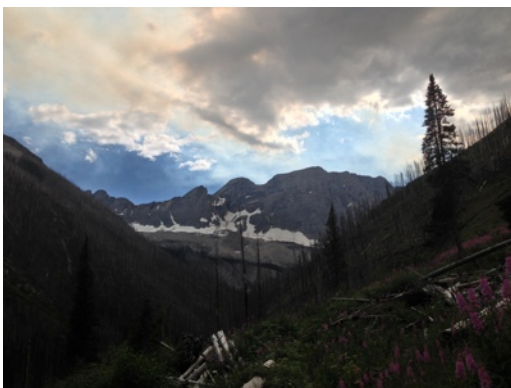




There was a wildfire over the ridge at Numa Creek while we were on this hike, which gave the sky interesting evening colors:



The next seven photos give an idea of the masses of fireweed we were hiking through:





Finally, we reached the bridge across Floe Creek, which can barely be seen in this photo:



More fireweed and burned trees on the way back to the trailhead:



We spotted an osprey between the Floe Creek bridge and the Vermilion River bridge:



The bridge across the Vermilion River:



Looking back up the trail just before crossing the bridge:



Burned trees with the smoky sky in the background:



The trail back to the trailhead after we crossed the bridge:



The car was a very welcome sight after this long hike:

