

LAKE OF THE CRAGS, GRAND TETONS NATIONAL PARK

The Lake of the Crags trail is no longer park maintained; according to information found online, it was a park maintained trail a number of years ago, but due to the difficulty of the hike the trail is no longer maintained. It is about 3 miles and 3000 feet of elevation gain to hike to the lake from the Jenny Lake trail, and the trail passes two other lakes along the way (Arrowhead Pool and Ramshead Lake). We accessed the start of the Lake of the Crags trail from the String Lake trailhead, as it appeared to be only about a mile from the trailhead to the turnoff. The trail takes off from the Jenny Lake trail by a large tree, after passing three small bridges in rapid succession (if coming from the north end of Jenny Lake). There are many trails taking off from main trails in this park, so it could be easy to take the wrong trail. The lower part of the Lake of the Crags trail is in quite good condition considering that it has few hikers on it, so it is not difficult to find for the majority of the hike. However, once reaching Arrowhead Pool, the trail becomes more faint and a hiker must have reasonably good route-finding skills to continue (it is not difficult to see where you are intending to get to, so you would likely not get lost, but it is difficult to find a safe route to your destination). We encountered two groups on our hike, one of which was a small family group who were starting up the steepest stretch of the hike as we were heading down. Note that this is not a trail that is at all safe to descend in the dark or if it is wet; therefore, do not start this hike late in the day or if inclement weather is predicted!!

* This trip report has been divided into two parts because it contains over 100 photos.

TOPO map of this hike:

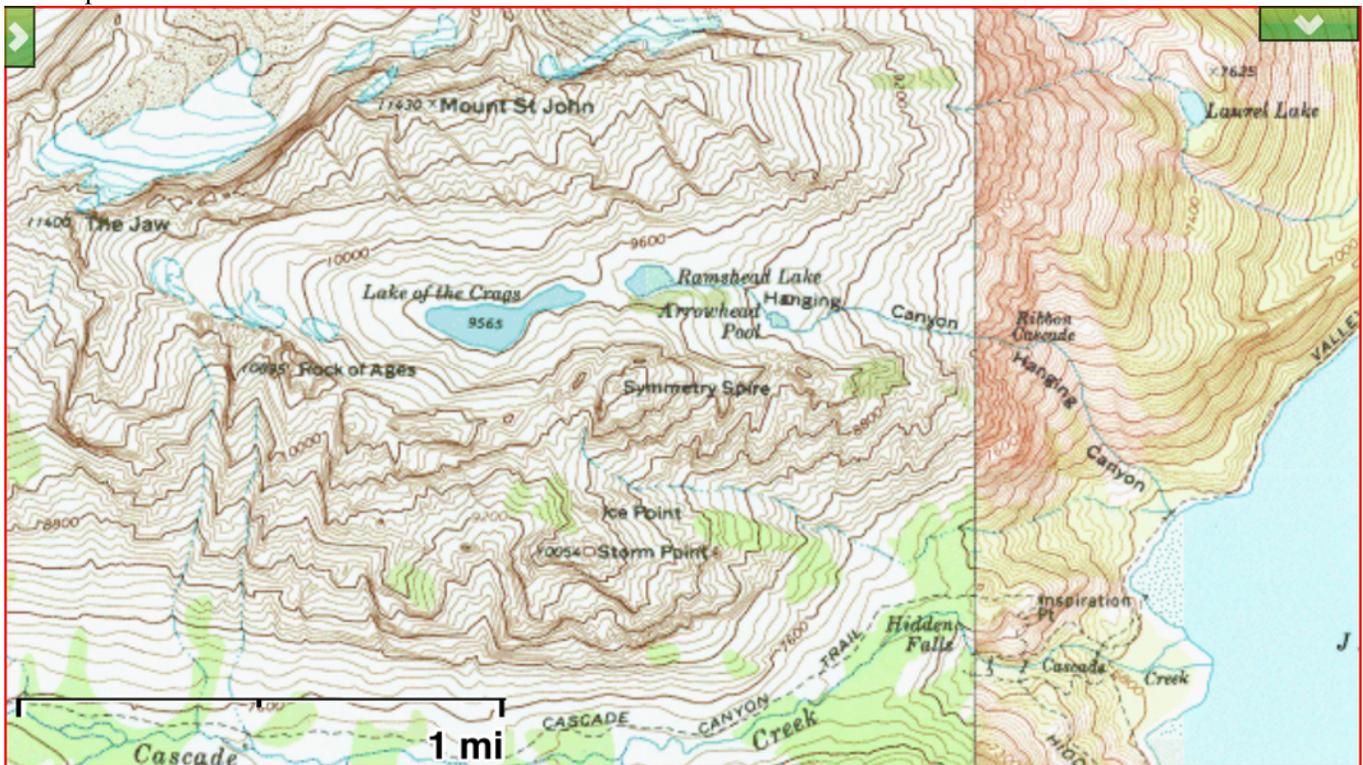


Photo of the tetons from Windy Point Turnout on the way to the trailhead:



Another photo of the tetons, this one from the Teton Glacier Turnout:



Panorama of the tetons from the bridge we crossed just after leaving the trailhead:



Looking up towards Symmetry Spire (left of center) and Mount St. John (right of center); Hanging Canyon (where the Lake of the Craggs is located) is between these two peaks, and the canyon to the right of it contains Laurel Lake, which is another hike I hope to do someday—though much shorter than Lake of the Craggs, it appears to also have an unmaintained trail to it:



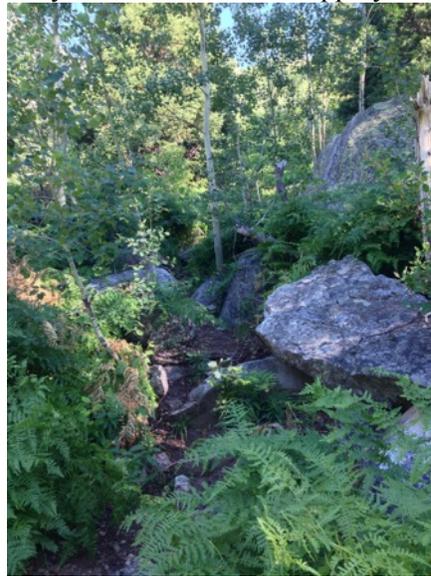
Panorama of Jenny Lake from the north end:



This is the start of the trail to Lake of the Craggs:



The next two photos show the beginning of this trail, as it passes through a marshy/swampy/wet area and has some rocks and tree routes which help keep shoes from getting wet and muddy but which are also slippery:



First view of Cascade Canyon from this trail:



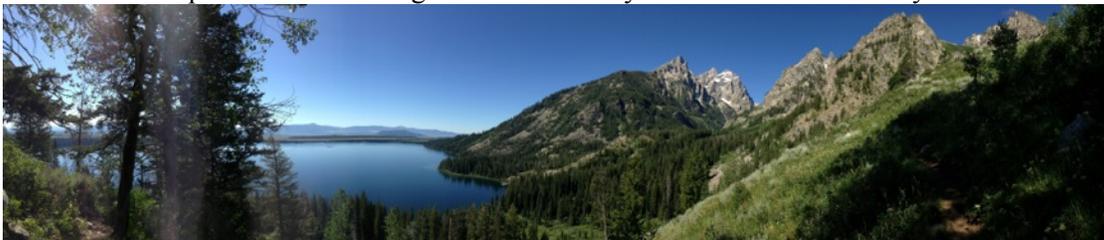
The trail quickly gets steep as it climbs up towards the canyon:



The trail switchbacks across a meadow:



Then, we reach a more level spot and are able to get a view of Jenny Lake and Cascade Canyon:



The trail switchbacks a second time, and we are amazed by a spectacular patch of wildflowers, which looked even better in the lighting on the hike back though were much better to see in person than they appear in the photos:



Another view of the tetons and Cascade Canyon, with wildflowers (compare the similar photo taken on the trip back):



The trail begins to get steep again as we approach the waterfalls (labelled "Ribbon Cascade" on the TOPO map):



Panorama of Jenny Lake, Cascade Canyon, and the trail heading towards Ribbon Cascade:



The canyon seen between the two peaks in this photo is a "false summit"; it is probably only half of the distance from where this photo was taken to the Lake of the Craggs:



Wildflowers, with the waterfall in the background:



Yet another panorama of this trail; at this point, it was already an incredible hike, with the stunning scenery and the abundant wildflowers... And the elevation change had not yet begun to make me tired:



The cliffs start to look steeper as we get closer to them:



The trail switchbacks up this valley to the right (north) of the falls, then crosses above the cliff seen in the middle of this picture:



The trail passes close to the waterfall, and this would make a good place to either turn around for a short hike or to have "second breakfast" for the trip to the Lake of the Craggs:



Still another panorama of the amazing views on this hike:



The trail is only a little overgrown through here, and there is no chance of losing the trail as it is very well defined:



As we approached this steep meadow, we were impressed by the number of yellow wildflowers on it (which unfortunately did not appear to be as prevalent in this photo):



Looking back at the waterfall from the last (but most major) switchback up the meadow:



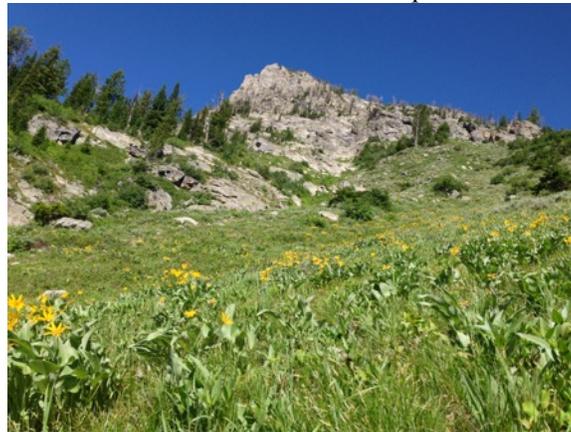
Crossing through the wildflowers:



The trail approaches the trees on the far hillside:



Looking up towards Mount St. John from the middle of the wildflower patch:



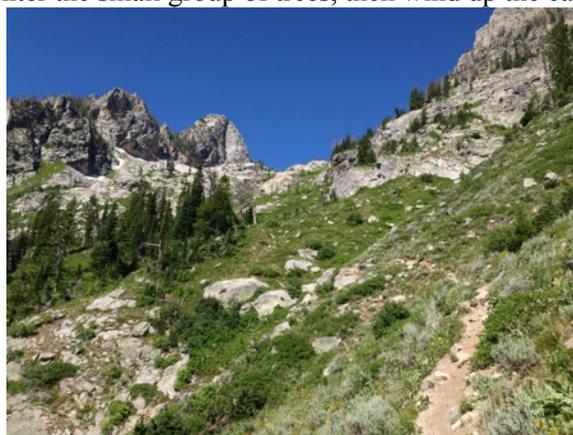
The trail crosses above the cliff in the middle of this picture:



Looking out from this much appreciated bit of shade:



Up ahead, we see that the trail will enter the small group of trees, then wind up the canyon:



Panorama looking back out towards Jenny Lake from here; it felt like we had climbed quite a bit from the lake, but we had much further to go. Interestingly, the two hikes this trail reminded me of were the trail to the Upper Victoria Glacier from the Plain of the Six Glaciers trail (although this trail is much steeper and longer than that trail, the scenery is similar), and the Steep Alluvial Fan Canyon in Death Valley (as both hikes seemed to keep climbing and we gained substantially more elevation than I had expected—though obviously the elevation gain in these two hikes is not really comparable):



Another panorama, from where the trail crosses the cliff seen in previous photos:



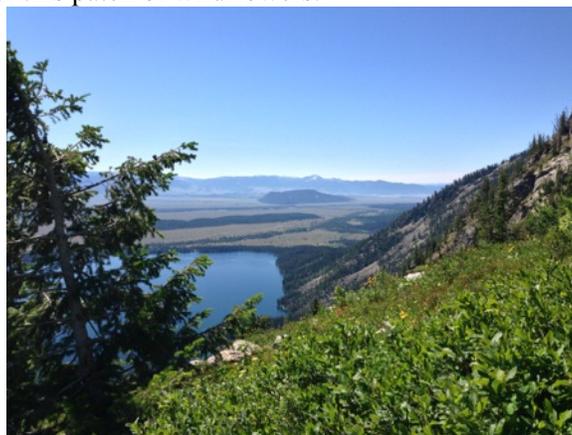
The trail gets steeper than it had been previously once we enter the small group of trees:



After we leave the trees, we encounter even more wildflowers:



Looking down at Jenny Lake through this patch of wildflowers:



Panorama of the trail with Jenny Lake in the background:



A more concentrated patch of wildflowers:



Looking back down the trail, with Jackson Lake in the upper left:



The trail continues to get steeper and we head upwards towards the lake:



Another waterfall, more of the Ribbon Cascades:

