

## East Fork of the North Fork of the Big Wood River

### Overview

This little-used trail through the Hemingway Boulders Wilderness is a great way to experience the rugged beauty of the Boulder Mountains. Most of the hikes through that range are either long and difficult or require a tough drive up Trail Creek Road. This 4-miler does have some climb to it, but most of the ascent is gradual, with only a few short sections of sharp climb. The scenery is fantastic. After an initial ascent through a mountain meadow, much of the hike is through a Douglas fir forest along a ridge overlooking a beautiful valley forged by the river. Later in the hike, the trail alternates between forest and open areas where rock slides took out the standing trees. The views to the Boulder Mountains improve as you near the destination and the river roars over shallow drops to create impressive waterfalls.

The destination is a meadow that sits just above the small river – a great spot for a picnic. The trail does continue past the meadow, but it is grown-over in spots and deadfall makes the route more difficult to find the further you go.

This hike sits on the uncomfortable side of “Family-Friendly” but fit families with older children will find it a nice way to spend a few hours in the wonderfully wild Boulders. It is also a great option for anyone seeking solitude, as it generally averages less than one group of hikers a day, even during the heart of summer.

### The Numbers

4 miles out and back

985 feet total elevation gain

Ascent Grade: 8.7% (Moderate)

### Water

The river runs along the trail for much of the hike, but only gets close enough to be accessible (even for dogs) at the mile mark and again at the turnaround. Much of the climb is in the shade, but the toughest burst of climb is in the sun.

### Drive

It is a 11.9-mile drive to the trailhead from downtown Ketchum with the final 3.8 miles traversing a rocky dirt road. Drivers of low-profile cars should use caution when heading to the trailhead.

There are no bathrooms at the trailhead.



Parking and Trailhead

### Season

June through October

### Route

The trail begins by rising through a mountain meadow. Quickly come to a sign marking the trail's entry into the Hemingway Boulders Wilderness section of the Sawtooth National Forest. The trail continues to climb and enters the woods at the .3-mile mark. The river runs to your right, but is too far to access, even for dogs. Pass a distant waterfall at about .45 miles.

The trail alternates between forest and open hillside. As the skies open, the views of the Boulder Mountains improve. Just after the mile mark, the river runs close to the trail.

At 1.25 miles, you cozy up to a rock slide on your left and cross over a section of trail covered in tallus. Just before the 1.7-mile mark, the ascent intensifies over a rocky path. The river comes into full view as shallow waterfalls careen down the valley. Above the river, nearly 10,000 foot peaks rise dramatically.

At 1.95 miles, use rocks to easily cross a small stream and scramble up a few yards to the destination, a peaceful mountain meadow with the river running at the foot of a hill. This is an excellent spot for a picnic.



Crossing and destination