

## Kane Lake

### Overview

With its emerald water and cascading waterfalls, Kane is one of our most beautiful alpine lakes. The hike to Kane Lake is stunning as well, with much of the trail under thick, beautiful woods and alongside an idyll creek marked by crystal clear pools and a number of small waterfalls. When the trail opens to the sky, the views to the colossal Pioneer Mountains are magnificent.

However, this is not an easy hike. While the first half of the ascent is quite pleasant, the trail rises dramatically in the third mile. There is a fair bit of scrambling up large boulders and at times, particularly on the descent, you are at the mercy of your shoes' tread-quality. The road into the hike is a harrowing adventure itself. The last 4.7-mile stretch is incredibly rocky and at times very narrow.

Still, for fit hikers with high-clearance vehicles, the reward is worth the challenge. Sun Valley locals are drawn to Kane Lake, with many making it an annual trek. It is also a fantastic destination for backpackers.

### The Numbers

7.2 mile out and back

1695 feet total elevation gain

Ascent Grade: 8.4% (Moderate)

Toughest Mile: 11.1% grade

### Water

Kane Creek offers plenty of water along most of the hike though it leaves the trail during the heart of the ascent.

### The Drive

It is a 19.5-mile drive to the trailhead from downtown Ketchum with the last 10.2 miles on dirt roads. The last 4.7 miles are over a rocky narrow road and high clearance vehicles are a must.

[Click here for directions to the trailhead](#). There is parking for about 15 vehicles.

There are no bathroom facilities at the trailhead.



Parking and Trailhead

### Season

Late June through mid-October

### The Route

The trail starts by gently rising through a pleasant forest with Kane Creek running along to the left. Just before the .3-mile mark, cross a carved trunk bridge and shortly afterwards come to a signed junction with the [Summit Creek trail](#). Turn left.



Junction with Summit Creek trail (Turn Left)

Right after the turn, cross the creek again over a plank bridge. At about .66 miles, cross the creek over deadfall



Deadfall crossing in mid-August

The trail continues to roll along and impressive views begin to open to the Pioneer Mountains at .85 miles. Next, enter a small meadow with the creek flowing closely by to your right as you pass through a grove of willows.

The pleasant stroll continues until about the 1.5-mile mark. Over the following mile, there are a few short bursts of tough ascent, including your first scramble over boulders just after the 1.75-mile mark. There will be more of those to come. After that scramble, there is a placid shallow pool and a small waterfall. This is a great place to stop and gather energy for the bigger climbs ahead.



Shallow pool and waterfall at about 1.8 miles

Just after the waterfall, the trail weaves in and out of shade as you come alongside a talus-covered mountainside. Another climb hits just before the 2-mile mark and at about 2.15 miles, the trail begins to skirt the right edge of a large boulder field. At 2.5 miles, use rocks to skip across an easy creek crossing.

The next section of the hike gets a little tricky. The climb intensifies at 2.7 miles and the footing gets difficult in spots as you cross sections of talus. Views to the Pioneers are even more magnificent at this point.



The trail at 3.1 miles

It is very easy to lose the trail here and in other spots over the remainder of the hike. If you are unsure that you are on the trail, resist the urge to keep moving. Stop and identify the way ahead. If you cannot make that out, identify the trail behind you and re-trace your steps.

Leave the boulder field at about 3.25 miles and cross over a large rock to re-connect with the dirt trail. Shortly afterwards, the dirt trail ends and the path continues over a large, rising rock field.



Rock field at about 3.25 miles

Start climbing the rocks. The dirt trail appears in dribs and drabs as you climb. Again, take your time to identify the best way up the rocks. Your goal is seen in the picture below – pass over the rock shelf just to the right of the small tree that sits between the pine tree groves



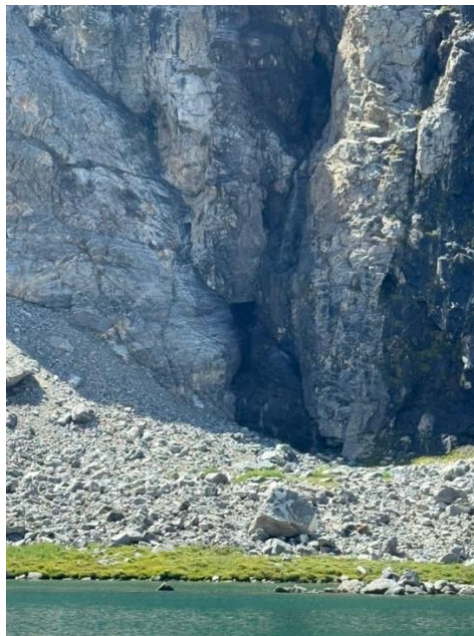
Goal as seen at 3.35 miles

Scramble towards the tree (the proper trail weaves through the rock field, but there are multiple ways to make it there). As you pass the tree, veer a little left. At times, there are

cairns that mark the way, but some less-than-helpful hikers have taken to knocking down cairns, so they are not as reliable as in the past. Just before the 3.5-mile mark, a dirt trail does re-emerge. It dips a bit then rises again. Shortly after the climb, you get your first glance of beautiful Kane Lake. Walk down to its edge and find a quiet spot to rest and soak in the lake.



Kane Lake



Waterfall

On the descent, be extra careful with your footing. Avoid getting the soles of your shoes wet and when you are walking on a large rock, find a spot where algae is not growing.