

North Fork of Hyndman Creek to Pioneer Cabin

Overview

There are four routes to Pioneer Cabin, and this one hits the sweet spot: magnificent scenery, incredible solitude, water for dogs, and challenging ascents. When you finally arrive at the cabin, you'll feel accomplished – and maybe just a little special for not having followed the herd up the far busier Pioneer Cabin Trail.

The trail starts with a gentle rise through sagebrush meadows before alternating between light forest and colorful mid-summer wildflowers. The North Fork of Hyndman Creek runs alongside the trail, sometimes quite close, for the first part of the hike. You leave the water behind at 2.3 miles, and the hike intensifies dramatically. Just after the 3-mile mark, the trail rises aggressively through a series of switchbacks under the open sun, with no relief until you are just steps from Pioneer Cabin – the perfect spot for a well-deserved picnic.

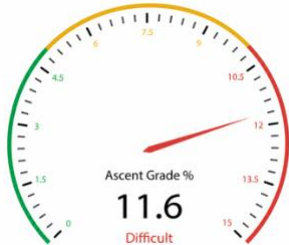
The Numbers

8.13 mile out-and-back

2540 total elevation gain

Ascent Grade: 11.6% (Difficult)

Hardest Mile: 19.8% (Very Difficult)



Water

The North Fork of Hyndman Creek runs along the trail for the first 2.3 miles, though at times it is too far away to reach easily. There are a few crossings that provide good opportunities to refill bottles. Make sure you have plenty of water for the hot, dry, challenging ascent that begins shortly after you leave the creek behind.

The Drive

From downtown Ketchum, it is a 17.7-mile drive with the last 6.1 miles on dirt roads. The last mile to the trailhead is rocky and narrow with limited turnouts, so use caution. [Click here for directions to the trailhead](#). The directions in the link end at a parking lot serving another trailhead, so continue another 500 feet or so on the single-lane road to a second parking lot and the proper trailhead. There is parking for about 20 vehicles.

Bathroom facilities are available at the first parking lot.



Trailhead

Season

Late June through early October

Route

The trail starts with a gentle ascent through sagebrush fields as the North Fork of Hyndman Creek runs to your right. As you near the half-mile mark, views open to beautiful peaks of the Pioneer Mountains.

At .8 miles, make an easy ford of Button Creek and continue through sunny fields before entering a mix of meadows and light forest. At 1.3 miles, the forest gets a little thicker, and just after the 1.6-mile mark, the trail crosses two small streams – this is a good spot to refill water.

A short, steep climb begins at 1.9 miles. After the climb, the trail undulates through the woods and occasional meadows. The North Fork of Hyndman Creek nestles closer to the trail for a bit. The last chance to top off your water is at 2.3 miles. If you are not topped off on water, **refill here**. The remainder of the hike is very difficult and mainly under open skies.



Watering hole at 2.3 miles

Just after you leave the creek behind, a lush valley opens before you and the climb intensifies. Though there are a few patches of forest, most of the climb is exposed as you cross through meadows or over rockfall.

At about 2.85 miles, come to the only real junction of the hike. Hook left to continue on the main trail. The trail straight ahead leads to some good back country camping sites.



Junction at about 2.85 miles (Hook left)

At about 3.3 miles, come to a series of seven switchbacks as the trail rises aggressively towards the cabin. Even the fittest hikers will have to stop and catch their breath over this portion of the climb. The ascent does not let up until just after the 4-mile mark as you crest the hill and finally see Pioneer Cabin. Trust us – it will be a welcome sight!

