

Granite Lake & Maggie's Peak

General Information

Granite Lake is a little Tahoe jewel tucked away in the fold of the ridge leading up to Maggie's Peaks. The trail is steep making this an intermediate hike, although many beginners could make it to the lake with some rest stops...and there are several with beautiful views. For the more hardy, the trail continues steeply up from Granite Lake to near Maggie's Peaks. From the top of South Maggie's Peak the views of Tahoe, Cascade, Emerald Bay, and the Desolation Wilderness are stunning.

Where To Start

Emerald Bay is located a few miles north of South Lake Tahoe on Highway 89. The Bayview trail starts at the end of the Bayview Campground opposite Inspiration Point which is the scenic overlook located one mile before you get to Emerald Bay. A wooden sign points right to Granite Lake.

Trail Description

From the permit kiosk, look ahead to the sign that says, "Granite Lake". The trail is wide and easy to follow the entire way. The first 3/4 mile switch-backs up the side of a ridge through pine and fir forest that was badly damaged by Bark Beetles during the drought of the early 90's.

Many of the trees have subsequently been removed making this less than a pristine area. The forest health continues to improve, however. The trail passes a small creek that flows out of Granite Lake. Just after this crossing, the trail levels out some and bends sharply back toward the east. Large granite boulders at this turn provide seating for a well deserved rest stop with panoramic views of Lake Tahoe and Emerald Bay. The trail continues to climb for another 1/2 - 3/4 mile to Granite Lake. The total elevation gain for this part of the hike is about 880'. After a little R & R at the lake, and maybe some fishing too, you can continue up the trail to Maggie's Peaks. The trail again gets steep for the next mile or so as you continue to switch-back towards the saddle between the two peaks. At the saddle, you have climbed 500' above Granite Lake and have another 450' to go to the summit of South Maggie's. Once at the saddle, continue just a few hundred feet then head left (south) off the trail across a sparsely forested slope. Continue up-slope until you reach the summit boulders.

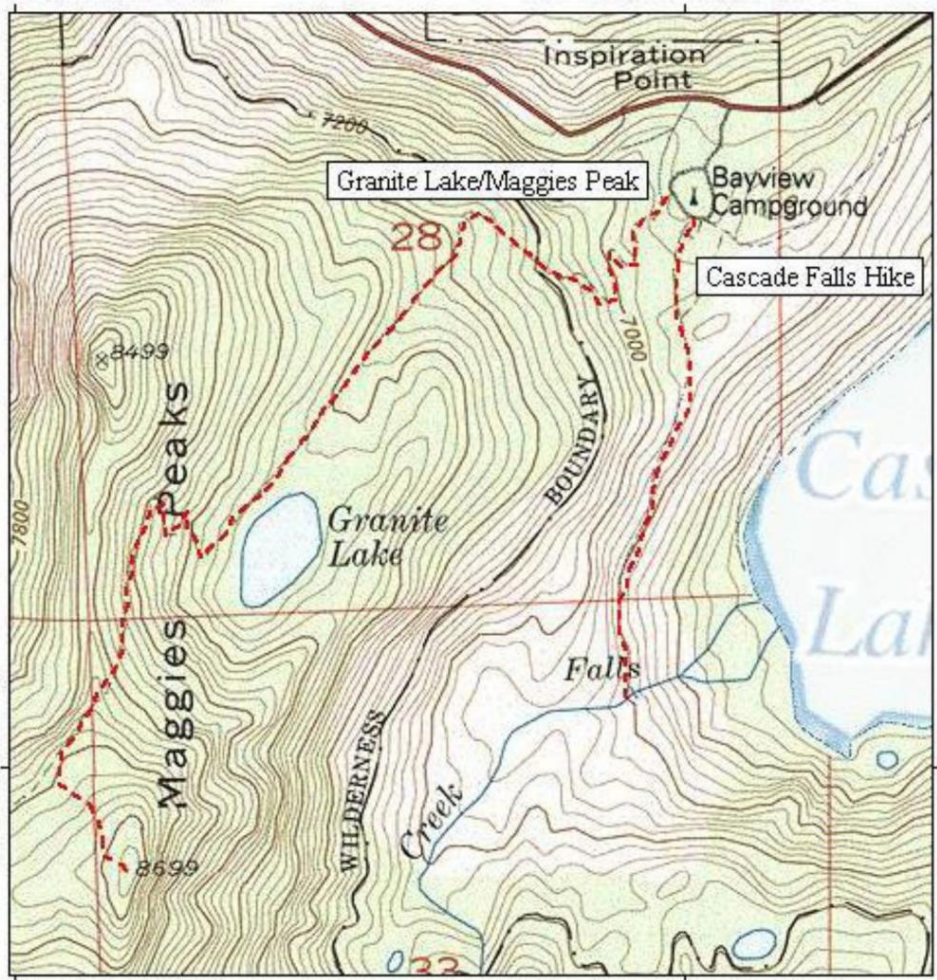
From the top, you have panoramic views of several lakes including Tahoe and Cascade to the east, Mt. Tallac to the south, and the Crystal Range to the west. There is also an inspiring view of the rounded Cascade Canyon that shows the effects of glacial action in forming the Sierra Landscape. The hike/climb to North Maggie's is more demanding with some route finding and 3rd class (hand and feet) scrambling. The view from the north peak includes Eagle Lake and the Velmas as well as Cascade, Emerald Bay and Tahoe. To descend, reverse your hike. This hike can take from 2 to 6 hours round trip depending on your condition.

Environmental Concerns

Please stay on the trail! This trail is often steep with many switch-backs. The existing trail has been carefully designed and includes water bars to direct drainage off the trail as quickly as possible. It is tempting to cut the switch-backs to save time, especially on the way down. However, by cutting switch-backs you will greatly increase the erosion of the trail by forming a secondary trail that is not well drained.

Advisory:

Getting to either North or South Maggie's Peak involves off-trail travel. Although the route to South Maggie's is straight forward, you should still have a topo map and compass and know how to use them. It is possible to descend too far east and come to a cliff band. Under NO circumstances should you descend these cliffs. Instead, retrace your steps up the mountain a bit and then head west and down until you intersect the trail. It is also possible to miss the trail if you are not paying attention and end up heading down to Eagle Lake, so be mindful on the off-trail descent.



Granite Lake Maggies Peak Hike Profile

