



Bonanza Lakes (upper & lower):

Note: This is the only set of lakes that I do not separate into different descriptions.

Difficulty: *Classic*

Trailhead Elevation: 6480 feet; **Trailhead Lat/Long:** 47° 3'40.59"N / 115° 7'13.80"W

Lower Lake Elevation: 6250 feet; **Lake Lat/Long:** 47° 5'13.71"N / 115° 7'53.57"W

Distance: 2.5 miles

Upper Lake Elevation: 6320 feet; **Lake Lat/Long:** 47° 5'27.27"N / 115° 8'6.04"W

Distance: 3.0 miles



Getting There: From Superior, take Cedar Creek Road #320 and head toward Missoula Lake and Cascade Pass, 25 miles; stay on the main road as there are several other roads that connect. After coming off Miller Saddle, (about 20 mi) there will be an intersection at



the bottom of the drainage. Stay straight crossing Oregon Creek. The right fork at this intersection (road #7763) heads down the hill



Lower Bonanza Lake 2011

to the Big Flat; the left fork will take you up to the Oregon Lakes trailhead (1/2 mi).

Starting at Cascade Pass (Missoula Lake saddle) take stateline trail #738 North towards the Bonanza Lakes. The state line trail is just across the road from the Cascade Pass sign. The 4-wheeler tract that heads straight up the hill is not it. Head north on



Lower Bonanza Lake 1980





this easy and mostly level trail for about 1.5 miles to a low saddle.

The trail (#616) heads down into the head of Cataract Gulch and then climbs gently to the ridgeline just above Lower Bonanza Lake. This is a good section to look for Huckleberries later in the summer. A couple switchbacks down the hill take you to the lower and smaller lake. To get to the upper lake follow the shoreline trail around the lake and go over the low saddle between lakes.



Upper Bonanza Lake 2007



Lower Bonanza Lake 2022

You may also come up

Bonanza Gulch on trail #616 from the Big Flat Road as described in the Lost Lake directions. It is a shorter distance, but it is rather brushy; not well maintained and does not have views of the state line. I talked to a couple a few years ago and they had mistakenly come up that way. They said it was pretty brushy, but at the time there were a ton of huckleberries.

At the Lake: Both lakes contain small Brook Trout, and the fishing can range from poor to spectacular depending on timing during the day at each of the lakes. The lower lake has a very well-used campsite at the outlet and one on the opposite side of the lake near the inlet stream that can be a little wet early in the summer. The upper lake has a larger campsite on the low saddle between the lakes; another large area on the right side of the outlet; a small campsite on the other side of the outlet; and finally, a spot on the left side of the lake just above the small cliffs. These 2 lakes are easy hikes for all ages.

The Bonanza Lakes are my most visited lakes. I have been coming to these lakes for close to 60 years. I am probably approaching 50 visits over my lifetime and probably more than 20 nights. I have been in/out of these lakes along multiple routes.



Lower Bonanza Lake 1987

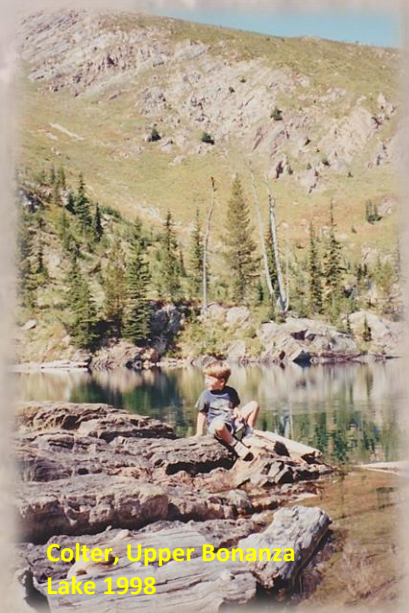




Lakes of the Great Burn & More

The first time our dad brought us in was when I was about 8 from Lost Lake when the road was drivable for regular pickups back then. We came down the steep draw just east of the upper lake outlet. The trail was steep and brushy back then, my sister recalls finding a whole bunch of the old green/white bar computer paper in that draw.

I have also come in/out from the Dry Creek side and the above-mentioned Bonanza Gulch. Years ago, a game trail existed that took off at the Missoula Lake outlet, side hilled around the ridge and through Cataract Gulch eventually connecting to trail #616. Our dad dragged us and a couple friends across that route when we were in Junior High. This is probably not a doable option these days given the amount of growth over the past 50+ years. I have even walked the ridgeline from Cascade Pass to the saddle.



Colter, Upper Bonanza Lake 1998

For several years, we rode our motorcycles into the low saddle and then hiked in from there. The access was great and the fishing good. The section of the stateline trail from Hoodoo Pass to Dry Creek is still open to motorcycles; 20 miles of spectacular single-track riding. Several times I rode the bike into the saddle after getting off work with the fire crew in Superior, fished for a couple hours, hustled out and hit the road by dusk.

I even rode a Mountain Bike all the way into the lake one day. I have lost dozens of flies in the trees around the lakes. Most of the big logs from the 1910 burn that used to float around the lake and provide some room to back cast are gone. We camped many times when we were teenagers, and we would more than likely not see anyone else during the 1970's. That is not the case today as the lakes are very well known and are a popular destination.

I really consider the view from the upper lake shoreline as one of the best along the Great Burn divide. There are other lakes along the divide, especially in the sections south of Hoodoo pass, that have great photo opportunities, but this has always stood out.



Bonanza Lakes 2017



Lower Bonanza Lake 2011





Lakes of the Great Burn & More

We brought our grandkids into the lakes for a day when the bear grass was blooming. I had never seen as much bear grass in bloom in my life. All the kids caught fish, and we saw a moose at the lower lake and deer on the trail. We have a picture of that day hanging in the house.



Upper Bonanza Lake 2011



"The Log" Lower Bonanza Lake

The log (above) has survived for as long as I have been coming to the lake. It used to be about 100 feet up the shoreline but has moved over the years. I have caught many fish from it.



Upper Bonanza Lake 2019



Upper Bonanza Lake 2011

Mornings at the upper lake.



Lower Bonanza Lake





Bonanza Lakes from the state line.



Upper Bonanza Lake 2023



Bonanza Lakes 2023

More pictures



Bonanza Lakes 1982



Lower Bonanza Lake 1980



Evening at Upper Lake



Upper Bonanza Lake





Lakes of the Great Burn & More



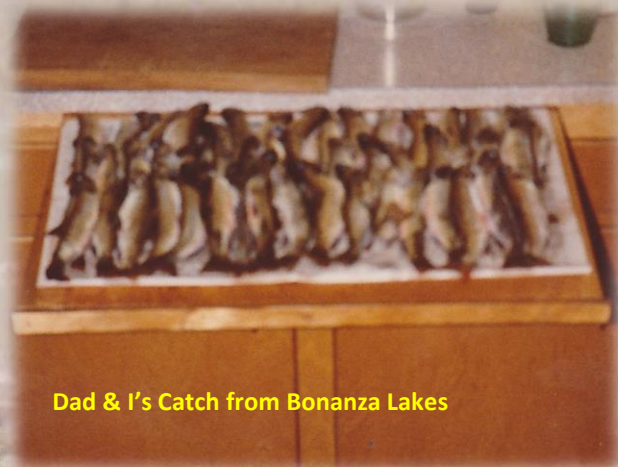
Junction of 738 & 616



Kathy on the Trail



Debbie & Roger's Family



Dad & I's Catch from Bonanza Lakes



Jayden & Lillie





Lakes of the Great Burn & More



Shane & Marie Family



Kathy Getting Sassy



Kathy Standing on the Log



Shane & Sully Above Lower Lake



Nova & Kids at Lower Lake





Lakes of the Great Burn & More



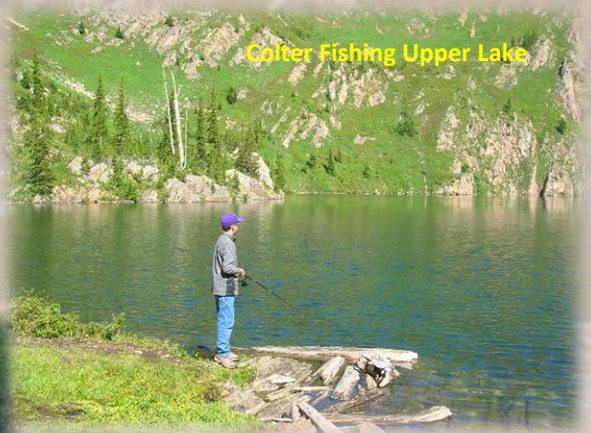
Indie & I at Lower Lake



Colter Having a Snack



Fishing is Fun



Colter Fishing Upper Lake



Evening at Lower Lake





Lakes of the Great Burn & More



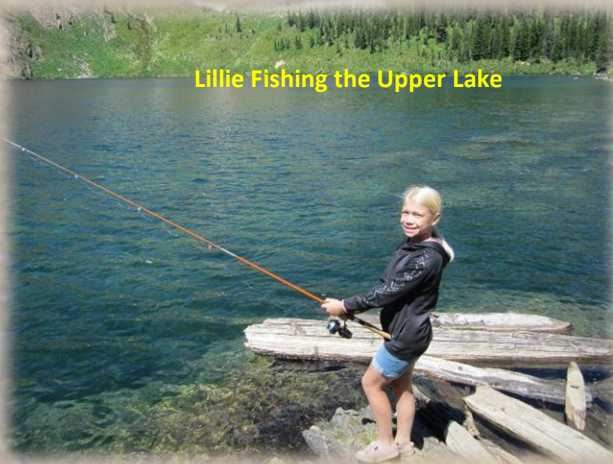
Travis Looking to Fall in



Grandkids at Upper Lake



Trail Out of Cataract Basin to Stateline



Lillie Fishing the Upper Lake

