



Lakes of the Great Burn & More

Lower Bonanza Lake:

Difficulty: Classic

Distance: 2.5 miles

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

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



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



Lower Bonanza Lake 2011



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



Lower Bonanza Lake 1980

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





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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.



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.

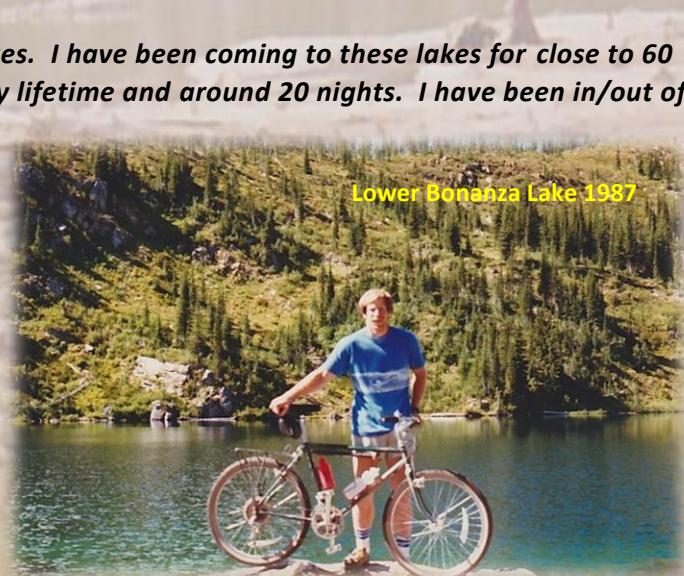
At the Lake: *The lower lake contains small Brook Trout, and the fishing can range from poor to spectacular depending on timing during the day at each of the lakes. The lower lake has a very well-used campsite at the outlet that can accommodate multiple tents and one on the opposite side*

of the lake near the inlet stream that can be a little wet early in the summer. I have never camped at the site near the inlet stream. The lake is an easy hike 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 over 50 visits over my lifetime and around 20 nights. I have been in/out of these lakes along multiple routes. 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.



"The Log" Lower Bonanza Lake



Lower Bonanza Lake 1987





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Cascade Pass to the saddle.

Many times, we rode our motorcycles into the low saddle where trail #616 drops into Cataract Gulch 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 in the 1980's 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.



Bonanza Lakes 1982



Lower Bonanza Lake 2011



Bonanza Lakes 2023





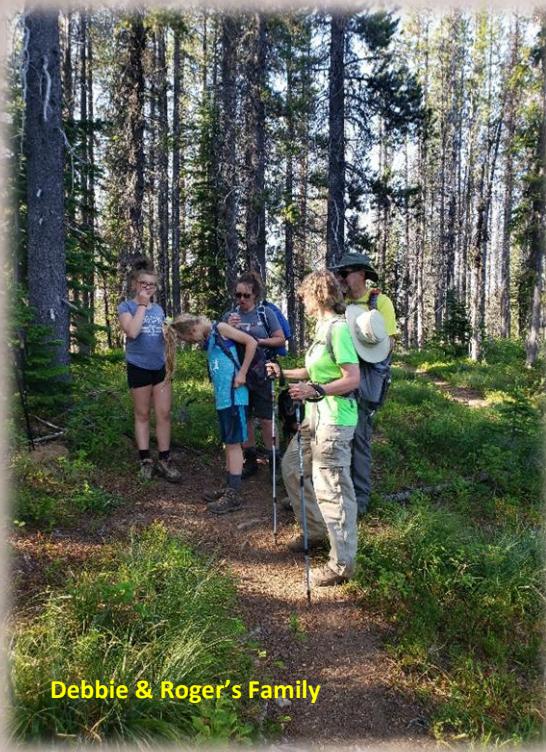
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We brought our grandkids into the lakes for a day when the bear grass was blooming. I had never seen as much bear grass in bloom in my life. All the kids caught fish, and we saw a moose at the lower lake and deer on the trail. We have a picture of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

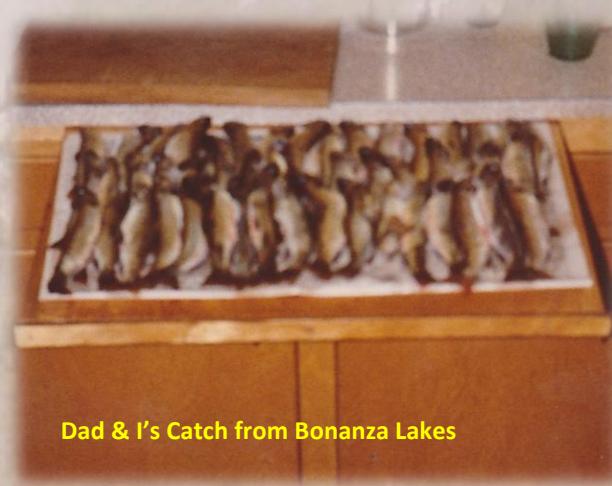




Lakes of the Great Burn & More



Debbie & Roger's Family



Dad & I's Catch from Bonanza Lakes



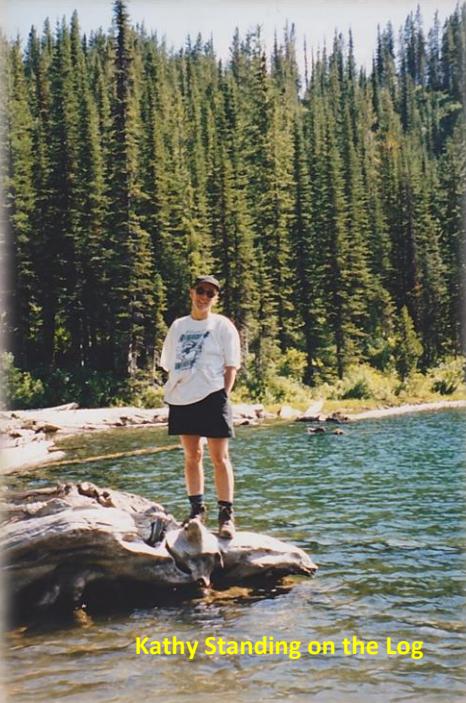
Nova & Kids at Lower Lake



Evening at Lower Lake



Travis Looking to Fall in

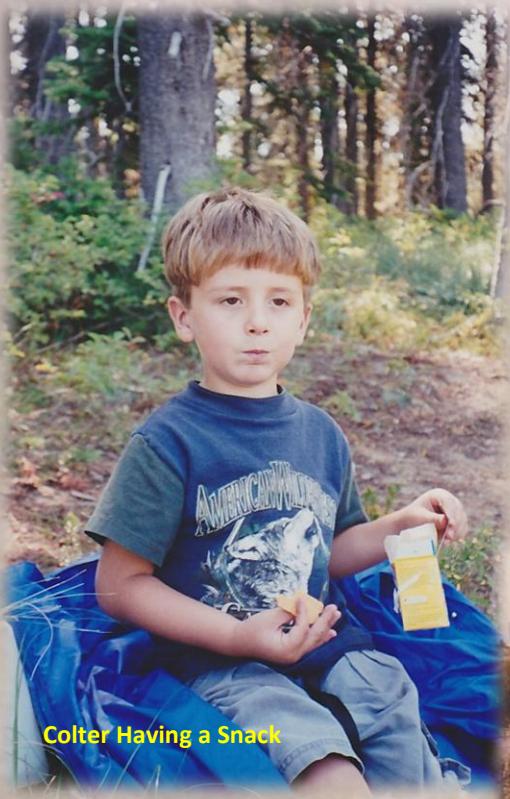


Kathy Standing on the Log





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Colter Having a Snack



Skye at Lower Lake 2025

