

Driving directions to Iron Creek Rd
24.9 mi – about 42 minutes

A Bull Trout Lake Rd, Stanley, Custer, Idaho 83278

- | | |
|---|---------|
| 1. Head northeast on Bull Trout Lake Rd toward ID-21 | 0.5 mi |
| 2. Turn left at ID-21 | 4.1 mi |
| 3. Turn left to stay on ID-21 | 17.7 mi |
| 4. Turn right at Iron Creek Rd/NFD 619 Rd | 2.7 mi |

B

Iron Creek Rd





IRON CREEK AREA

31 Alpine, Sawtooth and McGown Lakes

Map 11

round trip: 9.6 miles

elevation gain: 1,720 feet

side trip to McGown Lakes: add 1.5 miles one way and 330-foot gain, 255-foot loss

highest point: 8,430 feet

map: Stanley Lake

time: 8 hours

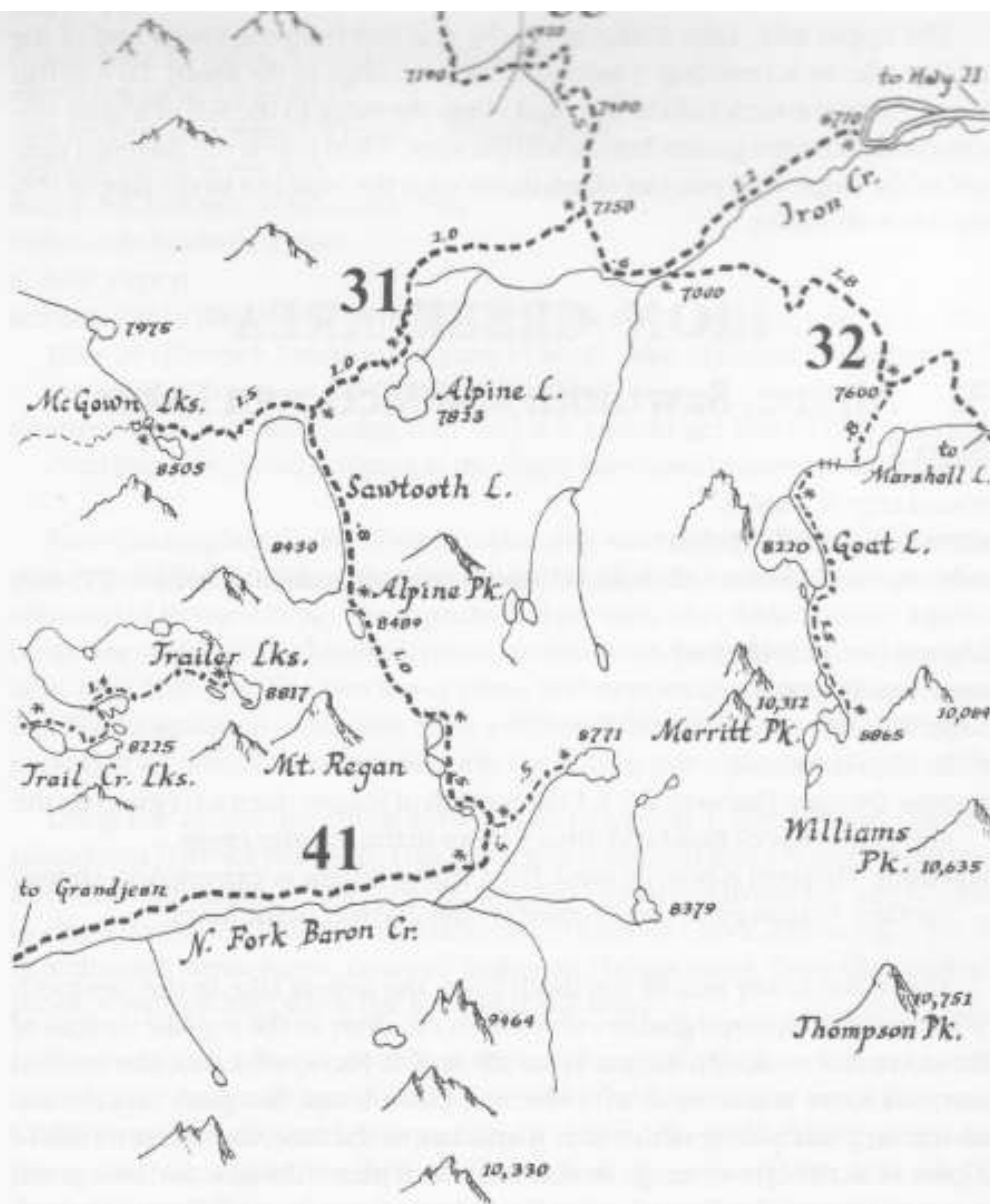
difficulty: strenuous

access: On State Highway 21, 2.5 miles north of Stanley, turn left (west) on the gravel Iron Creek Road and drive 3 miles to the transfer camp.

warning: This trail is heavily used. For a true wilderness experience, choose another. No campfires are allowed within 200 feet of the lakes.

Above the lower end of Sawtooth Lake, the largest lake in the Sawtooth Wilderness, sculptured granite curves from the shore to the cap-like summit of the dominant peak, Mt. Regan. From the trail to McGown Lakes, the twisted rust and silver trunks of dead whitebark pines frame this peak and the immense sapphire platter of the lake. A mile below the lake, the cracked cliffs of Alpine Peak fall to two orange peninsulas which pierce the lime and blue-green water of Alpine Lake. From the trail between the lakes, two hills in the distance to the east resemble potatoes, one with its jacket on and the other opened and topped with sour cream and chives.

To reach the trailhead (6,710 feet), follow the access directions above. The trail begins in a flat lodgepole forest, and comes close to Iron Creek at .5 mile. Then it climbs a rise and winds to a trail junction with the southern branch of the Alpine Way Trail at 1.2 miles. This branch goes south to Marshall Lake and then to a trailhead near the Stanley Ranger Station. From this junction, the Iron Creek Trail edges the right side of a round meadow and climbs gently. At



Map 11

1.8 miles, the north branch of the Alpine Way Trail turns off to Stanley Lake. To the south up a side canyon is a sliced-off dome.

The Iron Creek Trail angles up the side of the ridge and makes four switchbacks. At 2.9 miles, it fords cascading Iron Creek on rocks to a wildflower meadow. Then the trail zigzags up a forested ridge to a junction at 3.8 miles with a 200-yard path to Alpine Lake (7,823 feet).

The main trail continues above Alpine Lake zigzagging through granite benches. At 4.5 miles, the path flattens as it bridges a stream, then climbs the headwall to a grassy pond at 4.7 miles. The trail crosses the outlet of Sawtooth Lake and back again on logs to the left (east) side. It reaches a junction a few yards from the edge of the lake at 4.8 miles. The right (west) branch goes 1.5 miles with a 330-foot gain and 255-foot loss to McGown Lakes.

For a good view of the lake (8,430 feet), take the left (south) branch past a snow pond to a grassy area at 5.2 miles. From here it is .8 mile to the south end of the lake, where a pond sits in flowers under the wall of Mount Regan. The only good places to camp near Sawtooth Lake are at two ponds .7 mile below this pond at the head of the North Fork of Baron Creek, and back at the pond toward Alpine Lake.

You may want to retrace your steps to the junction at the head of the lake and take the other trail to McGown Lakes, which are set in gray talus. The main reason for taking this side trip is the excellent view of Sawtooth Lake.

32 Goat Falls and Lake

Map 11

round trip: 6.6 miles; 7.6 miles for the lake

elevation gain: 870 feet; 1,590 feet for the lake

elevation loss (return climb): 80 feet

highest point: 7,400 feet at the falls; 8,220 feet at the lake

map: Stanley Lake

time: 5 to 6 hours

ability: expert

access: On Highway 21, turn left (west) 2.5 miles north of Stanley onto the gravel Iron Creek Road and drive 3 miles to the transfer camp.

caution: Climbing to Goat Lake from the falls is the most dangerous hike in this book. Since the last edition of the book, the steep slope beside the cliffs edging the waterfall has deteriorated. Walking it now is like walking on ball bearings up a steep roof. The only safe route is to climb the cliffs beside the waterfall. Therefore, it is much safer to make the falls your destination.

Goat Falls tumbles in a beautiful series of cascades toward an inky green pond, which is also fed by two other high waterfalls. At Goat Lake, two small permanent snowbanks with aquamarine edges spit large chunks of ice into the water. These snowbanks hang above teal blue water at the base of an 1,800-foot wall. On the wall, rock towers thrust out of the cliffs like gigantic divers ready to plunge. On the other three sides of the lake, shorter cliffs enclose shallower turquoise water. Above the upper end, strands of a braided waterfall weave through lime green grass. Behind the falls, the tip of Thompson Peak holds feathers of rock aloft.