



Ward Peak Lake:

Difficulty: *Classic / Challenger*

Distance: 1.0 miles

Trailhead Elevation: 6415 feet; **Trailhead Lat/Long:** 47°15'30.65"N / 115°22'35.83"W

Lake Elevation: 6330 feet; **Lake Lat/Long:** 47°16'5.94"N / 115°22'16.14"W



Getting There: Take the Little Joe Road (#282) out of St. Regis and then take the stateline road (#391) at the summit for about 4.5 miles, give or take. The trailhead is a well beaten down area situated in the saddle before Ward Peak. This is also the trailhead for Square Lake. The stateline road gets considerably narrower and rougher at that point. If you are tempted to follow the road out to eventually get to the Hiawatha Trail, make sure you have a couple hours to spare, a servable spare tire and a chainsaw. Razers, jeeps and side-by-sides use the road and do not cut out the deadfall to standard truck width. I have seen cars on the road past Square Lake, but I wouldn't take one.



Ward Peak Lake

Walk up the road for about 1/3 mile and then head up the hill to a saddle on the stateline. The climb is not steep, nor brushy or far so the lack of trail is no big deal. You can also just traverse up the ridge from the trailhead if you choose, following the best route available. There is a trail from the Square Lake trailhead that goes up the ridge, but is sporadic at best and hard to follow.





Draw to Climb Up

Once at the saddle, look for an obvious trail diving steeply off the Montana side above Square Lake, this is the "Traverse Trail" to Ward Peak Lake. Be aware there is a second small saddle between two rock outcrops down the ridge 100 feet that can lead you astray. The trail quickly heads to the left at a lesser gradient than the start. I would wear some footwear with good lateral/ankle support as the trail

slopes downhill at 10-30% for the majority of its length. The trail at this point is easy to follow as you traverse across the hillside, below some cliffs and then above a small stream in a draw.

This is where I got tripped up the first time I did this hike, lost the trail and had to backtrack. In this draw, the trail continues to traverse and ends up on a rocky area with a large log blocking the path. The trail ends here, but there was a rock cairn there which led me further away from the actual trail. Instead, there is a faint path that goes straight up the hill back in the draw. It is not obvious and easy to miss; I have included a couple pictures for reference.



Up is Down

Once at the top of the draw, the trail picks up in the trees and continues to traverse the hillside

at a moderate grade. The trail in this stretch has several deadfalls that alter or block the trail so have some patience and stay on the trail. You will shortly come to another saddle. The lake is just a couple hundred yards away. A good trail heads down the hill and over to the lake. The entire hike is just under a mile. I am always impressed how rugged the area around Ward Peak is; it is a unique area that doesn't get enough credit.



Ward Peak Lake





Skye Waiting on the Sunrise

At the Lake: *The lake is shallow and small with no fish. The lake sits far below Ward Peak with very steep hillsides or cliffs all around. The lake has 2 unique bodies of water with a very narrow opening between them that I was able to easily step across. Montana Fish & Game shows this as 2 lakes; with the larger body of water named Ward Peak Lake and the smaller as un-named. Looking up towards the stateline is impressive with a large rock deposition area and cliffs all around; a snowfield was still visible at the end of*

September. There is another little valley below the lake that overlooks Hazel Lake. There is a primitive game trail past the outlet that will take you down into the valley on the left side.



Ward Peak Lake from Stateline

There is a small campsite just below the lake on a rock shelf; one on the flat rocks next to the lake; and another nestled along the rocks near the outlet. There are 2 old mine entrances at the lake; one is above the lake to the left of the rock deposition area; and one below the lake to the left of the outlet. In addition, there is an old cabin site at the lake. While at the lake in 2024, we (Skye & I) saw a Bald Eagle cruising around. This is another one of those lakes that doesn't see much traffic so your chances of quiet and solitude with some fantastic views are very good. On the way out, take a few minutes at the saddle by the lake and walk up to the left as there is a very good view of Hub Lake with Eagle Peak towering above. If you continue down the ridge for a bit you can get a glimpse of Hazel Lake. Return to the trailhead by the same route.



Ward Peak Lake



Mine Entrance Below Lake

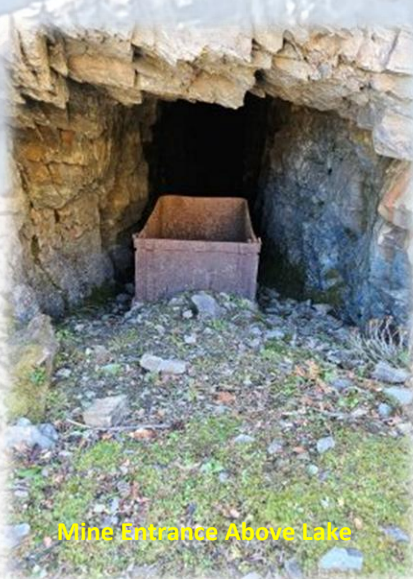




Bonus Route to Square Lake: Instead of returning to the trailhead via the traverse trail do the following. From the steep draw that you had to climb up on the way in, angle down and left just below the rock shelf into a tree'd draw. This is the draw to the left of the one with the small stream. This will take you down through the trees and an open slope where you will pick up a primitive trail to Square Lake. To come out either climb out the same way you went in or go around the left side of Square Lake and follow the steep & ugly trail back to the trailhead. I am adding this route to Square Lake on it's individual page with more detail.



Traverse Trail



Mine Entrance Above Lake

Double Bonus Route from Ward Peak Trailhead: This is the route I took the first time I went into this lake. I started at the Ward Peak Trailhead hiking up trail #250 for a 1/4 mile. Take the primitive trail that heads in the opposite direction as it traverses east around the south shoulder of Ward Peak. The trail is surprisingly good at first but slowly gets grown in and sparser as you work your way into the draw. The trail eventually ends at an old cabin site below a rockslide. From there I traversed over to the ridge / stateline. You get some great views of Square Lake and the area below; where you can see the trail to Ward Peak Lake. Follow the ridge down to the saddle where you pick up the traverse trail to the lake. On the way back, just head straight down the hill to the road and back to your starting point. It took me less than an hour from the lake to my truck on the way out.



Ward Peak Lake



Ward Peak Lake

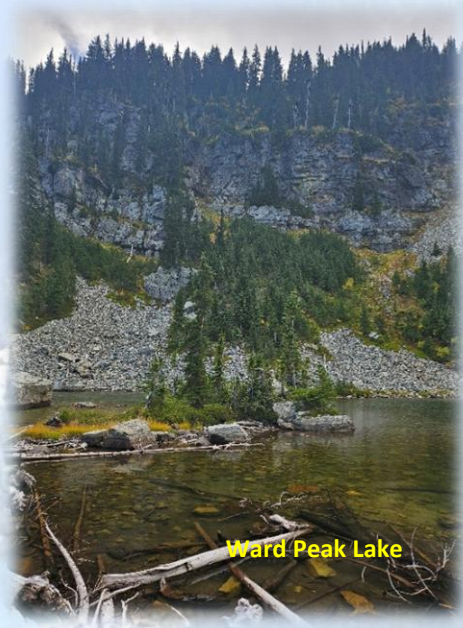




Lakes of the Great Burn & More



Ward Peak Lake



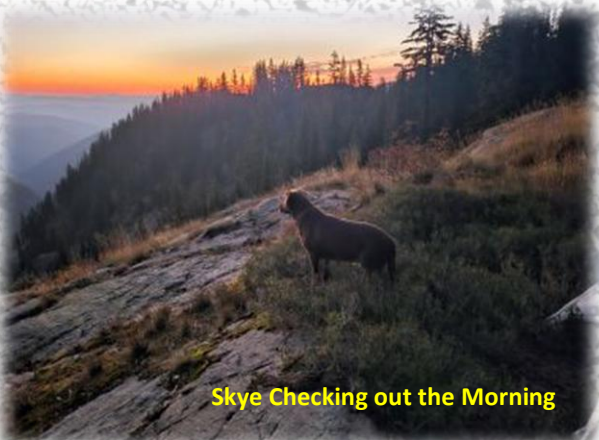
Ward Peak Lake



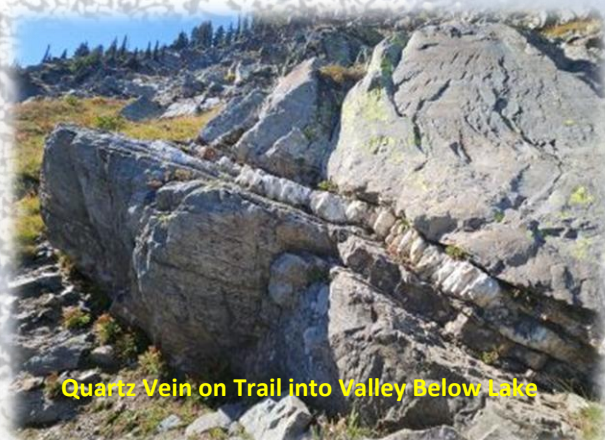
Ward Peak Lake



Looking Back at Route



Skye Checking out the Morning



Quartz Vein on Trail into Valley Below Lake

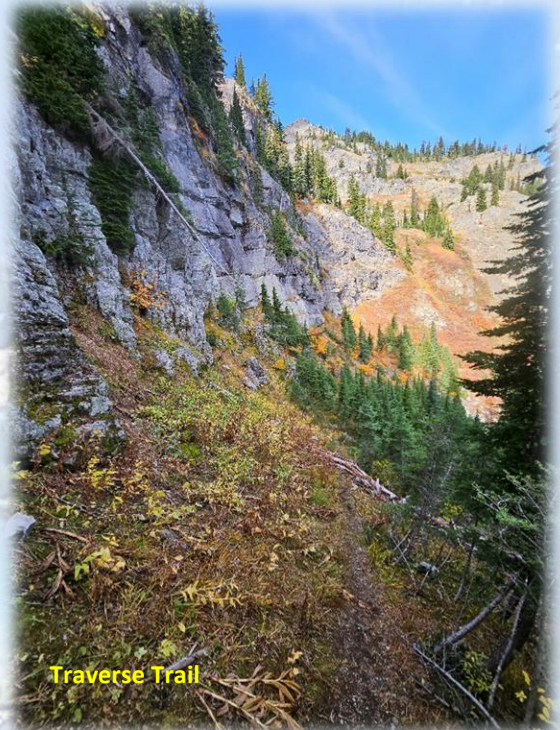




Lakes of the Great Burn & More



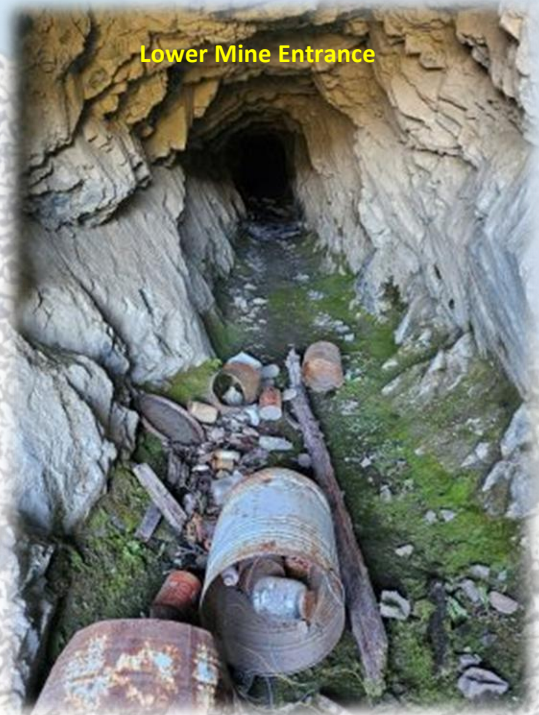
Traverse Trail



Traverse Trail



Lake from Upper Mine Entrance



Lower Mine Entrance

