

Here's the contact information you need:

Lassen Volcanic National Park
 P.O. Box 100
 Mineral, CA 96063-0100
 530-595-4444
www.nps.gov/lavo

Note that you can also get information at the visitor center near the north entrance to the park.

38

CINDER CONE, SNAG LAKE, AND BUTTE LAKE

Length: 14-mile loop

Hiking time: 2 days

High point: 6,900 feet

Total elevation gain: 1,700 feet

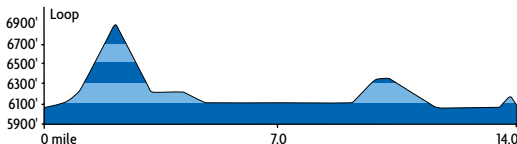
Difficulty: moderate to strenuous

Season: late June through October

Water: available only from Snag Lake, Grassy Creek, and Butte Lake (purify first)

Maps: USGS 7.5' Prospect Peak, USGS 7.5' Mount Harkness, park brochure

Information: Lassen Volcanic National Park



Cinder Cone's volcanic wonderland combines with a gently undulating trail around two of Lassen Volcanic National Park's largest lakes to make a good overnight backpacking trip. The journey offers open views of Lassen Peak and

other prominent mountains from Cinder Cone's summit and the shores of both Butte and Snag Lakes. Overnight trips require a permit. Get one at the park or via email (530-595-4444; www.nps.gov/lavo).

To reach the trailhead, drive Highway 44 for 11 miles east of its junction with Highway 89. Turn right at the sign for Butte Lake, go 6 miles to the Butte Lake Campground, and park in the lot by the lake's north shore.

The trail begins by the boat launch. Grab the nature trail brochure from the trailhead box; it explains in detail the natural history of the route to Cinder Cone.

At the trip's beginning, you'll join the Nobles Emigrant Trail, a route used by thousands of California-bound pioneers in the 1850s and 1860s. Follow this historic path as it parallels the edge of the brooding black basalt hillocks of the Fantastic Lava Beds.

West-bound pioneers traveled part of this trail in the mid-1800s.

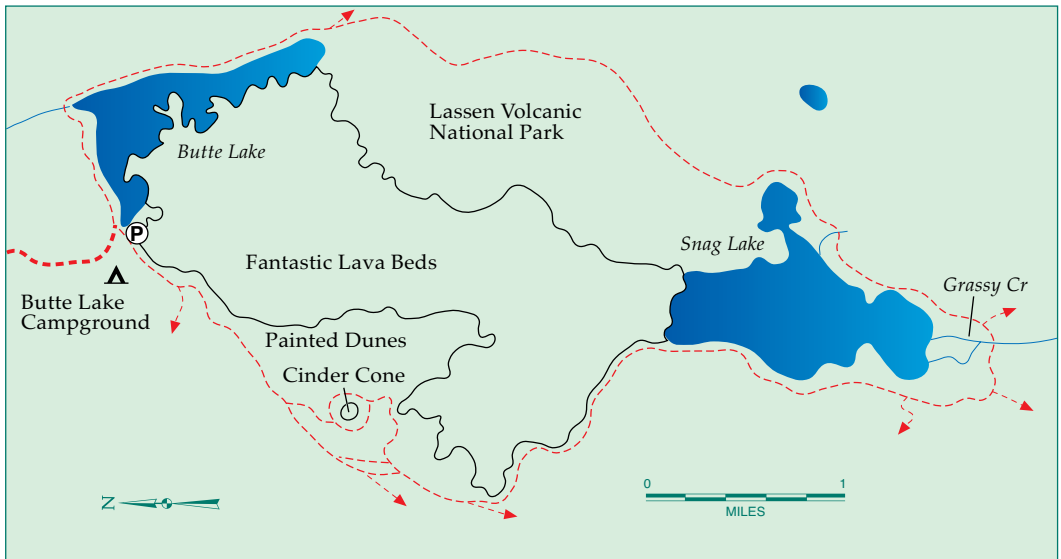
The trail forks 0.4 mile from the trailhead. Bear left and gently ascend 1 mile to another fork. (Some backpackers may want to leave their packs at this trail fork before exploring the top of Cinder Cone. After returning, they can go

right and then left to continue the hike.) Bear left again and gain 750 feet of elevation during the steep climb to Cinder Cone's sparsely vegetated 6,900-foot summit.

Formed over the last five hundred years, Cinder Cone last erupted in the 1600s. Massive basalt flows from the cone's base spread for several square miles to the south and east, creating the Fantastic Lava Beds. Oxidized cinders and ash account for the gray and orange Painted Dunes on the cone's south edges.

When you're done exploring, head down the trail on the south side. Once you leave the cone's flank, turn left at two successive trail junctures within 50 yards, and then head south 0.4 mile to another trail fork. Go left along the Fantastic Lava Beds 1.5 miles through a mixed forest of lodgepole pine, Jeffrey pine, and white fir to Snag Lake, which formed when lava flows from Cinder Cone dammed Grassy Creek. You can camp at any of the numerous sites near the lake's west and east shores, as long as they are at least 100 feet from the high-water mark.

After reaching Snag Lake, the trail travels 1.6 miles to a trail junction. Turn left here and again 0.3 mile farther. The way now heads east along the lake's south shore, crossing Grassy Creek and passing through a lush area to yet another trail fork after 0.5 mile. Turn left and walk 1.8 miles along the





Painted Dunes viewed from the top of Cinder Cone

lake's east shore, where you'll have good views of the Fantastic Lava Beds and Cinder Cone.

From Snag Lake's northeast shore, you'll initially travel by hundreds of aspen as the trail gently rises, levels, and then descends through 3 miles of forest. You'll encounter a trail fork (go left) just before reaching Butte Lake.

The trail then goes 1.8 miles along Butte Lake's shore, where you'll find aspen, black cottonwood, and willow that frame views of the Fantastic Lava Beds, Cinder Cone, Lassen Peak, and Prospect Peak. From the lake's outlet, climb steeply 150 feet and gently descend the last 0.3 mile to the parking lot.

