



PHOTO 1

Hike: Split Mountain via Red Lake Trail, trail and route

Trailhead: Red Mountain Lake marked

Distance: 15 miles, up and back

Elevation gain: 7,500 feet

Elevation of peak: 14,058 feet

Time: Long day or backpack

Difficulty: 5

Danger level: 4

Class: 3 (one short section of class 3)

How easy to follow: 3

Children: No

Waypoints (WGS84): See page 115

Fees/Permits: No fees, permit needed if camping

Best season: Late summer, early autumn



From the town of Big Pine, CA, turn west on Crocker Street, also known as Glacier Lodge Road, drive 2.5 miles and turn *left* onto the signed McMurry Meadows Road. Immediately, make another *left*. At 3.5 miles, you pass a sign about campfires. At 6.5 miles you pass a cattle guard. At 8.8 miles you drive through a gate (open it if closed). At 9.7 miles continue *straight*; don't take the fork to the right. The road becomes rougher from here. At 10.0 miles

turn onto the *left* fork as indicated by a small sign. At 11.4 miles you come to a three-way divide. Go *right* and cross the creek in less than 100 yards. At 12.1 miles turn *right* at the sign that reads, "Red Mountain Lake Trail." Continue to the trailhead marked by a kiosk. (Waypoint 1) Total mileage 14.3. Photo 1 is the kiosk with part of Split Mountain in the background.

Note: Your mileage will probably differ due to tire size, tire pressure, and the nature of off road travel.

A high-clearance vehicle is needed.

Permits (if backpacking in): Have the following information ready before you call: entry date, exit date, entry trail (South Fork Trail, camping at Finger Lake), and number of hikers. Call 760/873-2483 and press 0. Hours: 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m., PST. Permits are \$5 per person. You're mailed a confirmation letter. This is *not* your permit. Take this letter to the ranger station in Bishop, CA (798 N. Main St., east side of the road).

You can try to obtain a walk-in permit (in person) the day *before* the hike at the ranger station in Bishop. They become available after 11 a.m. These are free, but you're out of luck if they are already taken. Personally, I pay the \$5 and know I have a permit waiting for me.

Lodging: Various motels in Bishop or Big Pine, CA.



PHOTO 2

Comments: Split Mountain is another California 14er! The route isn't loose compared to other routes I've done. The view from the summit rivals Mt. Sill, said to have the best view of any peak in the Sierra. There's running water just a few feet east of the kiosk. Let your ears guide you. There are no bear boxes or pit toilets at the trailhead.

If you're in great shape, do this as a day hike. The camping is marginal and there are no worthwhile nearby peaks. I'd start before daybreak due to heat. The trailhead sits around 6,500 feet and will be warm during summer months. A headlamp is mandatory if starting in the dark. Due to brush long pants are recommended.

Backpacking and Camping: If you choose to camp, due so at Little Red Lake. It's about a half-mile before Red Lake, has better camping spots, though limited, and the official trail ends at Little Red Lake. The hiker's path from Little Red Lake to Red Lake is much easier with a day-pack than a full backpack.

Lodging: Various motels in Bishop or Big Pine, CA.

<http://hotel-guides.us/california/bishop-ca-hotels.html>

Camping: \$20 per night.

http://www.recreation.gov/camping/Upper_Sage_Flat_Ca/r/campgroundDetails.do?contractCode=NRSO&parkId=70524

The Hike: Walk down the road you drove up, passing a sign indicating the trailhead for Red Lake. Follow the road to a small trail on the left (no sign). The trail climbs steeply via switchbacks before traversing south. It then levels off and heads west paralleling Red Mountain Creek. When the trail divides, take the second left marked by a cairn. Soon, the trail climbs steeply without switchbacks. Continue to the creek (Waypoint 2). If you're low on water, fill up here. Cross the creek and follow the trail through a swamp like area. The trail divides in the swamp area; take the right fork. Continue following the trail and look for cairns if in doubt. In about 4.5 miles you come to the end of the official trail at *Little* Red Lake. (See Photo 2.) This is a better place to camp than Red Lake. If the main campsite is taken, continue on a path to the far end of the lake. You'll be near a rushing stream that's great for filtering water and drowns out noise when sleeping.



PHOTO 3

To Split Mountain: Continue on the well-cairned hiker's path that hugs the north side of Little Red Lake. In about 0.5 of a mile, the path

travels along the NE side of Red Lake and soon climbs a steep hill. From the top of the hill you see your next objective: A saddle that sits above a scree slope. See Photo 3. (Waypoint 3) Follow the path up the scree slope. At the top you realize you're not at a saddle, but it looks like it from Red Lake. Hike through a small boulder field where you get a view of another apparent saddle. (See Photo 4.)

You might cross a snow field as you make your way to the chute below the saddle. The rock is better to the left of the chute. Once at the saddle (Waypoint 4), you realize you are on a ridge. Head south up the ridge. (See Photo 5.)



Although there's a path, the rock to the right has better footing. The last 100 feet of the ridge is an easy class 3 climb. Once up (Waypoint 5), you see the true saddle (between Split and Mt. Prater) is to the north (right). Head south about 0.75 of a mile on a path or hike on boulders to the summit. (See Photo 6.)

The summit (Waypoint 6) offers great views of other Sierra Peaks. For a while, Split Mountain was called South Palisade. Bolton C. Brown was the first person to climb Split



Mountain. To the north stands Bolton Brown Peak.

To Descend: Retrace your steps. Make sure to descend to the plateau shown in Photo 7. Many hikers get confused and head for the saddle between Split and Prater.



Waypoints:

1. 37.03527N / 118.35882W Trailhead
2. 37.02111N / 118.38579W Creek
3. 37.02324N / 118.40560W
4. 37.02811N / 118.42007W Saddle/ridge
5. 37.02698N / 118.42181W Top of class 3 climb
6. 37.02093N / 118.42243W Summit

