

Mohawk Lakes

by Dave Cooper

A popular area for cross country skiing and snowshoeing during the winter months, the Spruce Creek Trail provides access after the snow melts to a remote and beautiful high mountain valley filled with picturesque lakes.

I was tempted to call this week's Trail Mix "Land O' Lakes", but I believe that the name has been taken! As you hike further into the valley, you will be convinced that you must have reached the highest lake, only to discover yet another a few minutes beyond.

Getting to the Trailhead: From the Boreas Pass Road junction at the south end of Breckenridge (the last traffic light as you leave town), follow State Highway 9 for 1.7 miles south to Spruce Creek Road. Turn west onto Spruce Creek Road and follow it through a housing development to the winter trailhead parking area, 1.2 miles from Highway 9. There is a trailhead sign here for the Mohawk Lakes Trail.

Hike Statistics:

Trailhead to lower Mohawk Lake: 1500 feet total elevation in 2.7 miles each way on-trail.

Trailhead to the highest lakes: 2160 feet total elevation gain in 9.0 miles round trip (moderate, mostly on-trail hiking).

USGS Quad: Breckenridge, CO



Looking back at the Upper Mohawk Lakes, the rugged east ridge of Pacific Peak to the right



View of the Upper Mohawk Lakes from the rugged east ridge of Pacific Peak

Hike Description

While it is possible to drive beyond the winter trailhead parking area with a high-clearance vehicle, I prefer to make the hike a little longer and enjoy the undulating trail from the winter parking area. This trail is delightful, wandering through pine forest and crossing many small streams before rejoining the road half a mile before Mayflower Lake. So, start at this lower trailhead and enjoy the introduction to this week's hike.

Cross the Wheeler Trail after 1.4 miles and continue on to the point where you rejoin the road at 1.9 miles, just before a water diversion dam. The trail takes a right turn here, signed to Mayflower Lake and the Mohawk Lakes. Stay left at the trail junction 0.2 miles beyond the Water Diversion dam, where a short detour would otherwise take you to Mayflower Lake.

Just before reaching Continental Falls, 2.5 miles from the trailhead, the trail wanders through some well-preserved log buildings. When you reach the Falls, the trail can be tricky to follow due to the plethora of social trails in the area. Generally the main trail stays to the left.

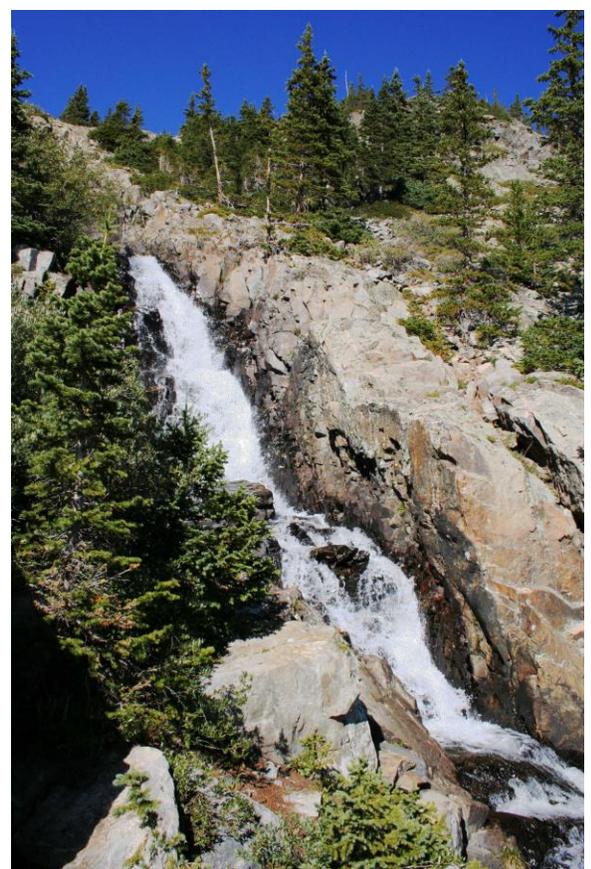
Shortly after reaching the top of the Falls the trail passes more mine buildings. Again, pay close attention to where the trail heads through this area.

Continental Falls

Above the Falls the terrain becomes gentler and shortly you reach first Lower Mohawk Lake, then Mohawk Lake. Both of these locations may entice you to stop for a lunch break, but if you continue up the valley you will be rewarded with several more pristine lakes, plus excellent views of Pacific and Crystal Peaks. The highest lake is at an elevation of 12,500 feet.

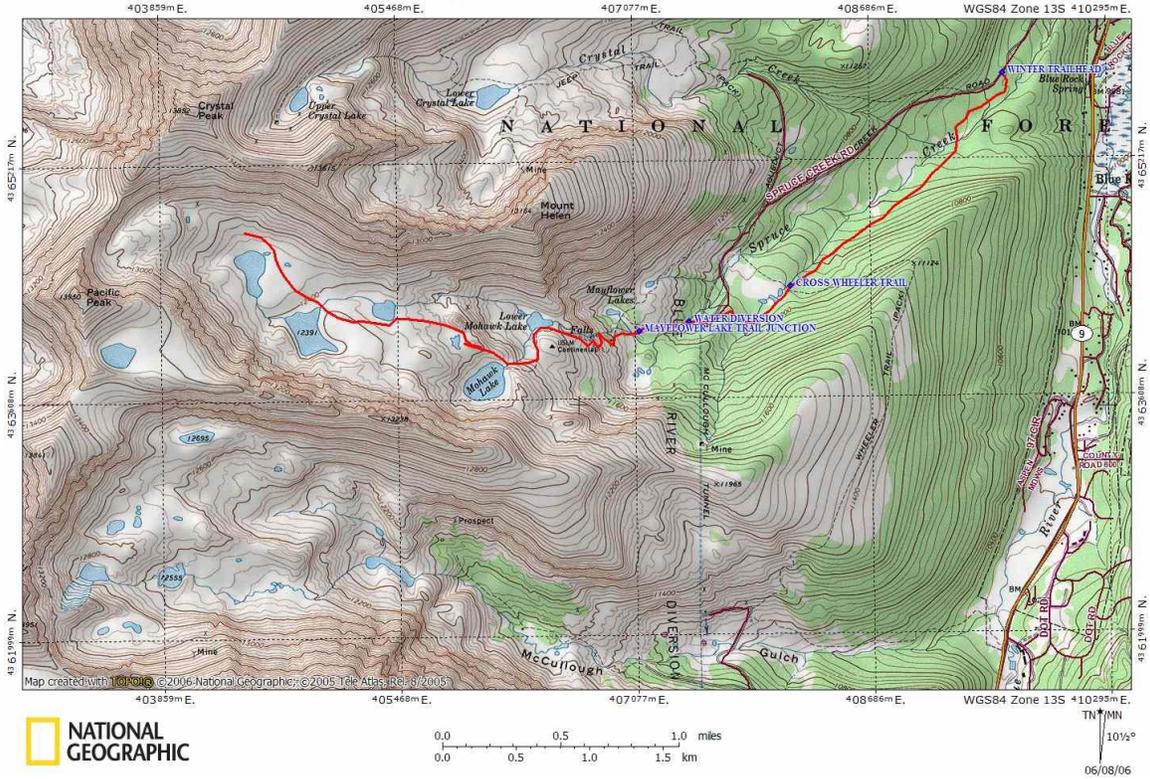
A word of caution. It is possible to continue to the end of the valley and to climb to the saddle on the ridge connecting Crystal and Pacific Peaks. With snow on the slope that might not be too bad, but after the snow melts the scree slope up to the saddle must rate as one of the least stable in the State.

If you want to continue the adventure, the north Couloir on Pacific Peak is probably your best bet, but again, not after the snow melts.



*Old mine
equipment
above the
Continental
Falls*

TOPO! map printed on 06/08/06 from "mohawk.tpo"



GPS Latitude / Longitude NAD83 (Deg., Min., Sec.)

WINTER TRAILHEAD: 39,26,13N / 106,3,2W, 10466 feet

CROSS WHEELER TRAIL: 39,25,26N / 106,4,2W, 10833 feet

WATER DIVERSION: 39,25,18N / 106,4,31W, 11115 feet

MAYFLOWER LAKE TRAIL JUNCTION: 39,25,16N / 106,4,45W, 11243 feet

