

READ & HIKE
IDAHO

FOURTH OF JULY LAKE TRAIL

A Read & Hike Idaho Trail Guide

▣ SAWTOOTH NRA, IDAHO

TRAIL SNAPSHOT

LOCATION:

White Cloud Mountains / Sawtooth National Recreation Area

DISTANCE:

About 3 miles round trip

DIFFICULTY:

Moderate

BEST SEASON:

Summer to early fall

BEST FOR:

Older kids, lake views, wildflowers

Fourth of July Lake Trail is a rewarding alpine lake hike with forested sections, mountain views, wildflowers, and a beautiful lake destination. It is a strong fit for families who want an adventure that still makes space for reading, resting, and noticing.

Detailed Trail Guide

Fourth of July Lake Trail gives families a classic alpine destination: a mountain lake, forest sections, open views, and seasonal wildflowers. The route is short enough for many families with older children but still feels like an adventure. The lake makes a wonderful place to pause for a snack, read a short book or chapter, and reflect before heading back.

Quick Trail Facts

LOCATION	White Cloud Mountains / Sawtooth National Recreation Area
DISTANCE	Approximately 3 miles round trip to Fourth of July Lake
DIFFICULTY	Moderate
ESTIMATED TIME	1.5 to 2.5 hours for many families, depending on pace and stops
BEST SEASON	Summer to early fall
RESTROOMS / PARKING	Trailhead access may involve a dirt road. Check road and trail conditions before visiting.
FAMILY-FRIENDLY NOTES	Best for families with older children or younger children who are already used to hiking.
SAFETY REMINDERS	Bring layers, water, snacks, and sun protection. Watch for changing mountain weather and uneven trail surfaces.

Family Hiking Reminder

Use this guide flexibly. Pick a safe turnaround point, pack water and layers, and check current trail or weather conditions before visiting.

Read Before & After

Books that connect to this trail

Use these books before the hike to build curiosity and after the hike to extend family conversation. Choose one short read-aloud, one longer title, or a mix for different ages.

READ BEFORE YOU GO • The Hike by Alison Farrell • A Stone Sat Still by Brendan Wenzel • The Camping Trip by Jennifer K. Mann • The Busy Tree by Jennifer Ward • Goodbye Summer, Hello Autumn by Kenard Pak	READ AFTER YOU HIKE • My Side of the Mountain by Jean Craighead George • The Wild Robot by Peter Brown • Hatchet by Gary Paulsen • A Wolf Called Wander by Rosanne Parry • The Nature Fix by Florence Williams
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Family Conversation Prompts

- What did you notice that we might have missed if we hurried?
- What part of the book reminded you of the lake or mountains?
- How did the landscape make you feel?
- What was the most peaceful part of the hike?
- What can we do to care for alpine lake areas?

Trail Activities

Observe, search, sketch, and wonder

Observation Prompt

Look at the lake and mountains together. What shapes, colors, and reflections do you notice? What changes when the wind moves across the water?

Scavenger Hunt

☐ A mountain reflection	☐ A bird or bird sound
☐ A wildflower	☐ A trail marker
☐ A tall pine	☐ A place to rest
☐ A cloud shape	☐ A sign of changing weather
☐ A rock texture	☐ Something that makes you ask a question

Drawing or Journaling

Create a view-finder drawing. Draw the lake as if you are looking through a window and add three details around the edges.

Simple Nature Activity

Mountain weather watch: pause at the beginning, middle, and end of the hike. Notice how the sky, wind, temperature, or clouds change.

Age-Level Variations

Ways to use this trail with every age

Ages 0-3	Name simple trail features: water, tree, rock, flower, and sky.
Ages 4-7	Draw one thing from the trail and tell a story about it.
Ages 8-12	Write three field notes: one about plants, one about water, and one about mountains.
Teens	Create a photo or sketch series showing before, during, and after the hike.
Adults / Family Read-Aloud	Read a short passage at the lake and discuss how the setting changes the reading experience.

Downloadable Printables

- Trail guide PDF
- Wildflower and view finder scavenger hunt
- Field notes page
- Drawing journal page

Before You Go

Trail distances, access, amenities, and seasonal conditions can change. Families should check the managing agency, recent trail reports, weather, road conditions, and posted trailhead signs before visiting.

Source Notes

- Sawtooth National Forest information lists Fourth of July Creek Trailhead as a recreation access point in the Sawtooth area.
- Sawtooth National Forest visitor guide information describes Fourth of July/Washington Lake as a popular White Cloud Mountains hike with lake and peak views.

Library Program Idea

Invite families to bring a book to read at the lake. Begin with a trailhead safety circle, hike slowly, pause for a view-finder sketch, and close with a shared question: What did this place help us notice?