

Lake Aloha is no walk on the beach



AJ gets a drink from what appears to be a new lake because of all of the runoff. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Susie and Heather were the only ones we were supposed to meet along the way. However, there is so much snowmelt that pools of water look like new lakes. This is not an exaggeration.

Water was everywhere. I expected the Glen Alpine Springs area to be a bit flooded, but it wasn't bad. It was as we climbed that we came across these foreign water bodies.

Looming walls of granite appear to be weeping as water seems to stain the light gray rock.

Waterfalls not ordinarily running in the summer look like a spigot has been turned on.



Granite encapsulates the dark blue water of Lake Aloha.

It's an interesting dichotomy. On the one hand there is so much water that it would be hard to know California is in year four of a major drought. On the other hand it was mid-May and runoff should not be so substantive; the moisture should still be in the form of snow. Thus, a clear sign this was no ordinary winter in regards to snowfall or spring because the warm weather has melted the little that did fall.

In several places it's necessary to walk across logs or hop from rock to rock to cross the running water.

U.S. Forest Service crews still need to clear a few blow downs.

It was the second Monday of May that Donna and I made the 12-mile round-trip trek to Lake Aloha. This picturesque lake in Desolation Wilderness should have tons of snow on the trail. Not so. The couple snowfields we traversed across were no big deal.

Really, we shouldn't have been able to be there. It's too early in the season to be on this route without snowshoes. Actually, it's doubtful I would be on it in the winter because Fallen Leaf Lake Road is usually closed and the route has no markers for winter recreationists.



Just below Lake Aloha are flat “lunch” rocks that overlook Heather Lake.

But I learned this is the time to make this ascent. One of the fabulous things about this hike in the early season is the lack of people on the trail. With this being one of the portals to Mount Tallac, there is often a bevy of foot traffic that can make it seem like anything but a wilderness area.

A few backpackers were coming and going. On this particularly windy day I was glad it was a day trip for us. My lone backpacking trip was to Lake Aloha and it was a miserable windy experience.

It was too windy and cold to spend much time at this lake that looks like it is from another world. We were reminded of the time of year by the snow lining the shore on the other side of the lake that then extends to peaks that seem to scratch the sky. Mount Pierce and Pyramid Peak are the most visible from this vantage point.



People are known to swim to the islands of Heather Lake on warm summer days.

This granite basin has only a few trees protruding from the edges of the water. Rock is the dominant feature – including the islands.

I had forgotten how much granite there is on this trek – much more rock than dirt. So much that I was at the vet the next day. I had booties for my former dog for the overnighiter. I was a bad mommy this time and AJ's pads suffered because of it. One paw had to be bandaged.

Starting out at the trailhead we were at 6,560 feet. Lake Aloha is at 8,170 feet.

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Getting there:

From South Lake Tahoe go north on Highway 89. Turn left on Fallen Leaf Lake. Wind around and park at the trailhead. This

is the Glen Alpine Trailhead.

Once on the trail, follow signs for Susie Lake and Lake Aloha.