

## 3 Crater Lake

This hike offers delightful wildflowers, a scenic lake, and gorgeous mountain views. It's a beautiful day hike or a nice overnight stay; the choice is up to you.

**Start:** Crater Lake trailhead at Andrews Lake

**Distance:** 10.4 miles out and back

**Hiking time:** About 6 to 8 hours or overnight backpack

**Difficulty:** Strenuous if you hike out and back the same day; moderate if you camp at the lake

**Canine compatibility:** Dogs must be under control.

**Nearest town:** Silverton

**Fees and permits:** Free registration (available online, at managing agency, or major

trailheads) needed for both day hikers and overnight backpackers. Contact the managing agency for current information.

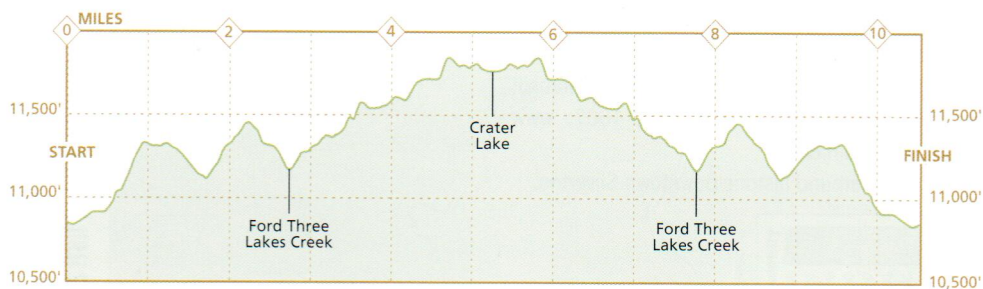
**Maps:** USGS Snowdon Peak; Trails Illustrated Weminuche Wilderness; DeLorme 3D TopoQuad CD-ROM; Maptech Terrain Navigator CD-ROM

**Trail contact:** San Juan National Forest, Columbine Ranger District, Bayfield; (970) 884-2512; [www.fs.usda.gov/sanjuan](http://www.fs.usda.gov/sanjuan)

**Finding the trailhead:** Drive about 8 miles south of the quaint town of Silverton on US 550, or from the junction of US 160 and US 550 in south Durango, drive north on US 550 for approximately 41 miles. If you're heading south from Silverton, turn left (south) onto the paved road leading to Andrews Lake Day Use Area, and drive about 0.7 mile until the road ends at the lake. You'll find wheelchair-accessible fishing ramps, a chemical toilet, and plenty of parking. If you'll be spending the night or you have stock animals, be sure to park in the Upper Scenic parking area. It's just up the hill from the day-use area. *DeLorme: Colorado Atlas & Gazetteer*: Page 76 C4. GPS: N37 43.685' / W107 42.659'.

### The Hike

Begin by hiking up the moderate slope via the Crater Lake Trail. There's a wonderful view back to Andrews Lake and beyond. You'll level off (at least for a while) after 1.2 miles. The trail parallels a meadow and then drops some, heading through the trees, then back out into the open at 1.5 miles. Cross another meadow, then ford a creek at 1.7 miles. From here to the wilderness boundary, it's a moderate, sometimes steep, climb.





*Tall chiming bells (Mertensia ciliata) are often seen while hiking wilderness trails.*

Enter the wilderness at the 2-mile point. The trail eases as you hike along an open slope laden with summer wildflowers. The area provides views of Hermosa Cliffs to the southwest and Engineer Mountain to the west. Descend moderately to Three Lakes Creek at 2.7 miles, one of many fords on this route. The trail stays mostly level as you cross creek after creek, alternating between trees, meadows, and open slopes. You will reach scenic Crater Lake at 5.2 miles.

### Miles and Directions

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- 0.0** Crater Lake trailhead.
- 2.0** Wilderness boundary.
- 2.7** Ford Three Lakes Creek.
- 5.2** Crater Lake. GPS: N37 40.511' / W107 42.795'.
- 10.4** Back to Crater Lake trailhead.

**Option:** Crater Lake is a good spot from which to climb North Twilight Peak, a jagged mountain in the West Needle Range. The peak stretches to 13,075 feet above sea level. It's about 1.2 miles farther than the lake and another 1,435 feet to the top of the mountain via the east ridge.

### Hike Information

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**Local information:** Silverton Chamber of Commerce, Silverton; (970) 387-5654 or (800) 752-4494; [www.silvertoncolorado.com](http://www.silvertoncolorado.com).

**Local events/attractions:** Ride the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad, Durango; (970) 247-2733 or (877) 872-4607; [www.durangotrain.com](http://www.durangotrain.com).

Walk around historic downtown Silverton.

**Accommodations:** Silverton offers a variety of private campgrounds and motels.