

• FEATURED TRAIL •  
**BOX LAKE**

Hidden white sand beaches  
in the Idaho mountains

*By McKenzie Kraemer*



*Photo courtesy McKenzie Kraemer*

Box Lake is a fairly popular trail, and for good reason. Scenic vistas, crystal clear water and beautiful wildflowers are readily enjoyed by hikers that take this seven mile out-and-back route. While the trail sees heavier weekend traffic in the summer months, Box Lake itself is close to one mile long, so finding a spot all to yourself once you arrive is easy to do.

The route is fairly steep in places, but flattens out at various points to give your legs a break. The first half mile of the hike climbs 400 feet along a switchback trail that weaves through a canopied forest of pine trees before opening up to a hillside of snags from a





Photo courtesy McKenzie Kraemer

forest fire in 1994. For most of the hike, the trail meanders next to Black Lee Creek with several creek crossings in between meadows of wildflowers and granite terrain. At the two mile mark, hikers can take a break and take in the views from a granite outcropping. This point is 7,400 feet in elevation and looks out over the Black Creek drainage and the mountains to the south.

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Photo courtesy McKenzie Kraemer

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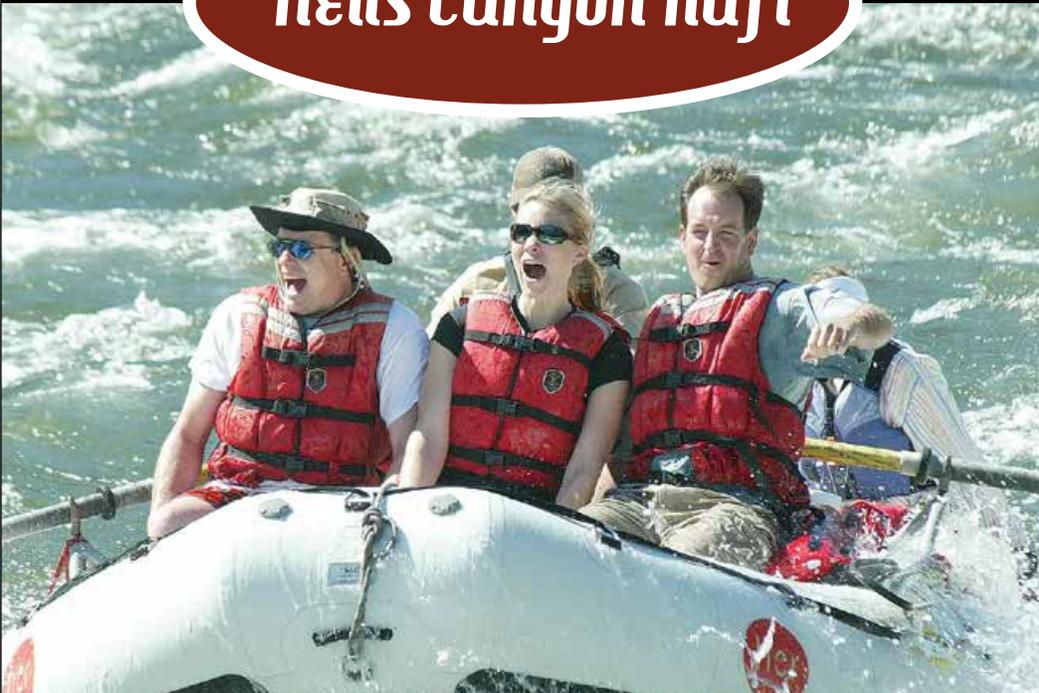
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Another half mile from this vantage point, the trail enters a flat meadow area with a spectacular view of Box Lake at the end. To access the lake, continue along the trail down a switchback trail for another half mile that puts you at the south end of Box Lake. The lake itself is one of the largest alpine lakes in the area with plenty of camping sites around the perimeter.

Box Lake also connects to Sisters Lakes on the north end which then connects to the Crestline Trail. With the proximity to several other lakes and trails, Box Lake makes a great basecamp for day tripping. Fishing at Box Lake is fair, but if you're after a real catch, the larger Sisters Lake is where you want to be.

While the trail and lake are beautiful in every season, our favorite time to make this trek is in the fall. By late August, the lake recedes a few feet, revealing stunning white sand beaches. Paired with the blue water, Box Lake is reminiscent of a Caribbean shoreline which makes the strenuous hike well worth the effort.

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Photo courtesy McKenzie Kraemer

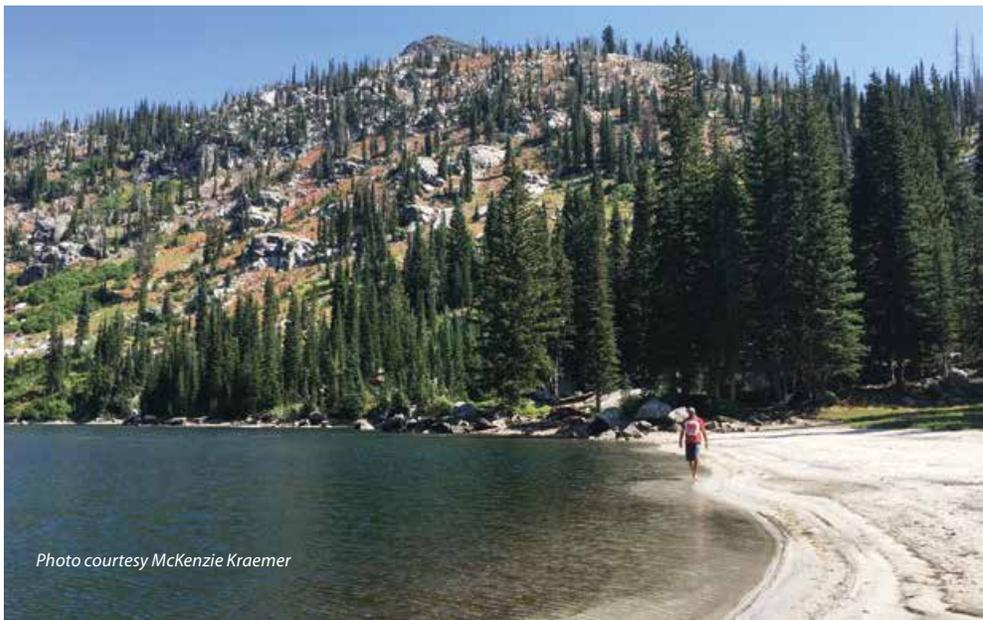


Photo courtesy McKenzie Kraemer



**TRAILHEAD DIRECTIONS:** From McCall on Davis Avenue heading toward Ponderosa State Park, turn right onto Lick Creek Road. After 3.2 miles, the road will fork toward Little Payette Lake (keep right). From this fork, travel approximately 11 miles. There will be a parking lot on the left with a sign that says "Box Lake Trail." The parking area can hold about five or six vehicles.

Photo courtesy McKenzie Kraemer



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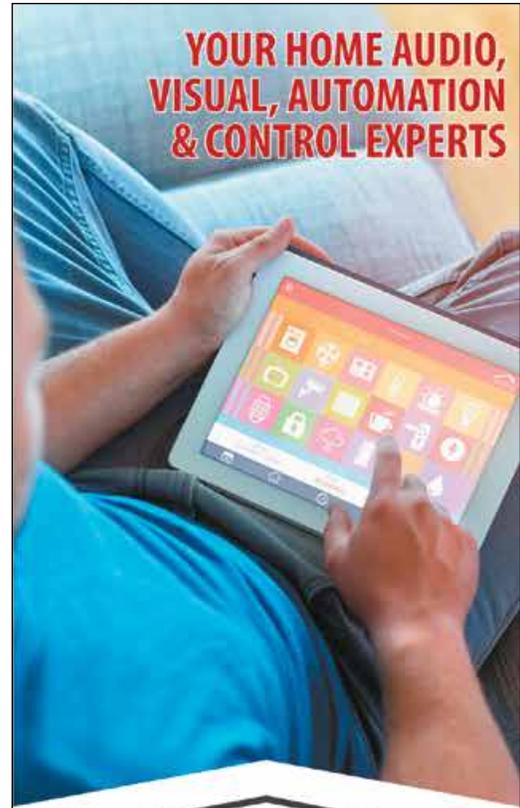


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