

Location

Desolation Wilderness is part of Eldorado National Forest in the Sierra Mountains outside of South Lake Tahoe, about 3 hrs from the bay area.

We will start at eagle falls trailhead (on the southwestern shore of lake tahoe) and hike into Dick's Lake. The hike is 5.5 miles. We will ascend 1,700 ft. It's short but steep. A permit is required to camp in desolation; I will reserve this in advance for our group.

We will take a break every mile. If you are off your game with exercise, this is a good excuse to train—squats & lunges, bike, jog stairs, or hike hills with a weighted back. I encourage this for your general health and well-being. It is completely possible to do this hike without any training, but you will be more comfortable and prepared if you exercise regularly.

Intention

This wilderness therapy trip is simply for being more connected to nature through and while you do growth work. I suggest you use the preceding weeks to meditate on and set an intention for the trip.

Of course, you can go without any intention or ideas of how you will use a wilderness trip for therapeutic reasons (that's how I did it in the beginning!). See what arises for you. A major part of this trip is connecting to nature in a deeper way, such that you can open to something that can be accessed in future moments, in or out of wilderness settings.

There will be some group debriefing, and possibly some group therapy work depending on the fit and wants of the group. Mostly, this is an individualistic trip. You will spend time reflecting, meditating, journaling, and using nature ritual to touch something within yourself that you seldom see.

Weather

The averages on these days are high temperatures of 77, lows of 37. As you can see there is a huge range of temperature. You should be in a cozy sleeping bag by the time it starts to get very cold, but in the mornings, it can take a few hours before the sun starts to really warm, so you want warm layers.

Continuous rain is unlikely, but there are brief showers/storms. A rain poncho is wise, and you will need a rain fly for the tent, bivvy, or hammock you are sleeping in.

The sun still fairly strong in September, you will need sunscreen.

Insects/Animals

Mosquitos are usually gone by this time of the year because it is so dry (there are plenty of lakes but they don't seem to breed much in the cold water).

There are rattlesnakes. Rattlesnakes are scared of human unless they are harassed or threatened. Watch when scrambling up rocks or walking over logs. Just watch where you step. In the evening, rattlesnakes like warm rocks and can be found coiled a few hours after sunset.

Bears are uncommon in this area, but are occasionally seen. Brown/black bears do not attack humans unless harassed. Sometimes they can be a nuisance to food left out (they can rip open packs etc.).

Our main nuisance will be chipmunks and marmots (marmots look like huge squirrels). Food will be strung up in a wire mesh bag that rodents and bears will have trouble getting to.

Bats come out at night and are beautiful in moonlight swooping over the lake. There are plenty of hawks and falcons and occasional foxes and coyotes.

Gear

You want relatively light plush gear. You want to be comfortable, but don't over pack. Good expensive gear is usually light and good at accomplishing whatever task it is designed for.

For example, if you are familiar with sleeping pads (the thing that goes under the bag), when you were growing up you might have used those blue foam pads, or grey ridge rest pads. These cost about \$15 new, and it feels like you are sleeping on \$15. A real sleeping pad is \$80-120, probably inflates, compresses and rolls up into less space, and is comfortable enough to sleep on for a few weeks in a pinch, similar to an air mattress. You'll just be on your pad for 2 days, but you want to feel rested and refreshed. The moral to the story here is *own, borrow, or rent great gear*. There is no substitute for this.

I recommend that you borrow gear for the trip. There are no shortage of folks that live in the bay area that have hiking gear. Borrow what you can.

If you buy your gear, I recommend REI. If you don't like it, it doesn't fit, or any reason at all, you can return used gear to REI for your money back.

If you want to rent gear, you can try these places (I own my gear and haven't rented from these locations):

<http://www.bawt.org/programs/gear/rentals/>

<http://www.rei.com/stores/rentals.html#California> The Berkeley REI rents camping gear.

<http://www.outbackadventures.com/rentals/camping.htm>

First Aid/medical

Because of the proximity to Tahoe and its many ski resorts, cell phone towers are setup up through the mountains. Many parts of desolation get cell phone service, and we will be in parts that are near regions of cell service (don't bring your phone, I will have mine for emergencies). In the event of serious injury, I can be in cell phone range within 30 minutes to call for an evacuation. I have been trained in wilderness first aid (NOLS) and will have a medical kit.

I nor anyone in my hiking groups over the years has been seriously injured. All of this being said, sometimes injuries happen.

Background

I've been hiking and camping in the wilderness since I was 10 years old. I fell in love with nature early.

In 2010 I started hiking alone into the wilderness. The experiences I've had on these journeys transformed me. I realized how important nature was to my healing/personal growth, and when I became a therapist I wanted to apply this professionally. I designed a trip/program to help others connect with nature. I believe folks can use this as I have, to fuel personal growth, and use the wilderness to touch something deeper within the self.

I have experience leading groups on backpacking trips and nature meditations, nature therapy for individuals, and a psychotherapy group.

As a bonus, desolation wilderness is one of the most beautiful places I've visited, and our destination is one of my favorites.