

12

Blackmare Lake



Coordinates

Trailhead:

44d 46' 88" N
115d 52' 45" W

Blackmare Lake:

44d 46' 21" N
115d 48' 28" W

Distance: 11.4 miles out-and-back

Total elevation gain: 2,600 feet

Difficulty: Very Strenuous

Elevation Range: 5,650 feet to 7,900 feet

Topographic Map: Blackmare

Time: 4 hours 30 minutes to 6 hours

Season: July through October

Water Availability: Pond, Kennally Creek, two lakes and several streams

Cautionary Advice: The last two miles of the route is on an unofficial trail; it is not maintained by the Forest Service.

Information: Payette National Forest, McCall Ranger District (208) 634-0400

Restroom: Yes

Blackmare Lake

This trek has the building blocks of an outstanding hike. Mountain lakes? You will discover two remote beauties with gorgeous backcountry campsites. Wildlife? Look for deer, elk and the elusive cougar. The drainage of the South Fork of Blackmare Creek is notorious for black bear activity. Views? The route crosses several high ridges which dispense impressive vistas of the rugged terrain. Flora? Huckleberries, wildflowers and a lush forest of conifers are never in short supply. Solitude? Don't look for company once you leave the main trail and venture on an unofficial trail to the two lakes.

The two mile jaunt from the main trail requires basic route-finding skills to find the two lakes: map use, cairn finding or gps proficiency. Although the first lake is not named, this Cinderella is surrounded by conifer forest and granite knolls. The much larger Blackmare Lake lies in a granite encrusted amphitheater, set below the towering 8,861-foot Square Top Mountain. The eastern shore of the lake is guarded by steep walls of granite and talus while the opposing shore invites exploration with granite knolls and thick forest. You could easily spend hours getting lost in Blackmare's grandeur.



The eastern side of Blackmare Lake is bordered by steep granite ridges.

Trailhead Directions

From downtown McCall, drive south 9.4 miles on ID 55. Turn left onto paved Paddy Flat Road, between mile marker 134 and 135. Reset your odometer to 0 and follow Paddy Flat Road (FR 388) for 1.4 miles to Farm to Market Road. Cross Farm to Market Road (FR 388 turns into a well-graveled road) and continue to a junction at Paddy Flat Summit at 5.2 miles. Take the left fork and drive an additional 9.9 miles to the Kennally Creek Campground. There are several confusing spur roads which turn off of FR 388. Remember to follow the signs to Kennally Creek Campground.

The Hike

Follow Hike 11 for 1.8 miles to the signed junction for Blackmare Summit and Needles Summit. Turn right at the junction. The path immediately crosses the East Fork of Kennally Creek and narrows considerably, indicating less usage. Downed trees discourage two-wheeled travelers. Ascend through dense forest to another creek ford at 2.9 miles. Along this stretch of trail, hikers will find an abundance of ripened huckleberries in August.

At 3.5 miles, look for a weathered sign on a tree “Blackmare Lake No Trail.” To your left, you will clearly see a trail leading up the steep ridge. Turn left and ascend 500 vertical feet—without any switchbacks—to the crest of the

ridge. Views west are far-reaching to lower Long Valley and Lake Cascade. From the ridge, descend through a gorgeous small canyon blanketed with oversized boulders. The trail is faint in a few sections although rock cairns assist with route-finding. Rise on a wooded ridge to another saddle at 4.2 miles and enjoy the marvelous views east of the rugged Salmon River Mountains.

The path turns north and descends steeply 300 feet to a small pond with several campsites. Follow the footpath around the northern shore of the pond and reach the unnamed lake at 4.8 miles. Several campsites are scattered around the lake's perimeter.

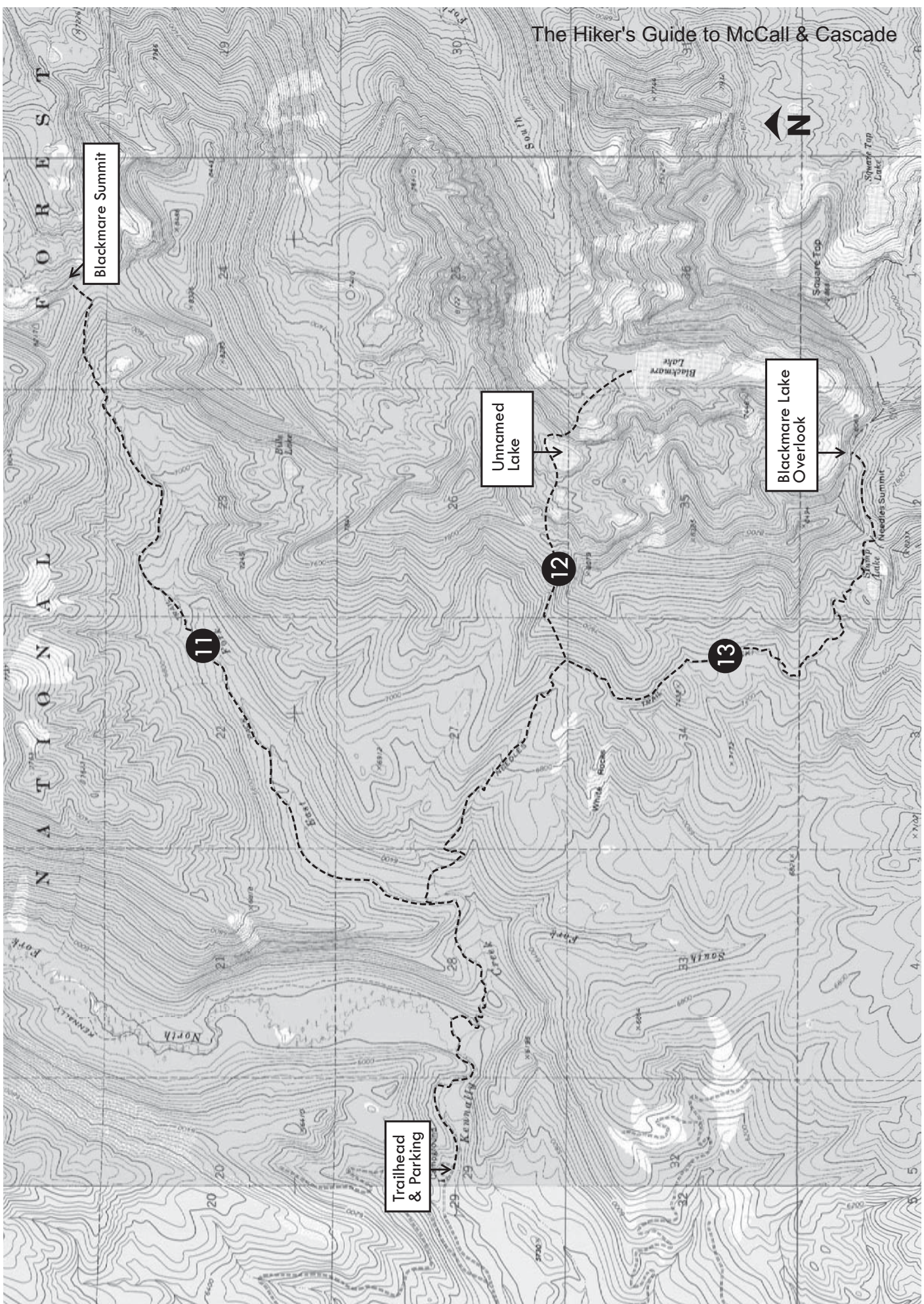
If you are comfortable with route-finding, continue on to Blackmare Lake. A small footpath travels around the northern shore of the unnamed lake and then



Weathered sign for route to Blackmare Lake.

turns south to the back of the lake. At 5.0 miles, the narrow trail travels east and plummets over 400 feet in a quarter-mile to a small meadow filled with a confetti of wildflowers. The path is faint here; look for cairns to help with route-finding.

At 5.3 miles, turn right at a large cairn and descend through forest, willows and downed timber to the ford of a small creek. Beyond the creek, the sporadic path continues east and rises 250 feet to a grassy knoll and turns right to the northern shore of Blackmare Lake.



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