



Coordinates

Trailhead

N 43° 42.837'
W 114° 37.495'

Junction with Baker-Norton Trail

N 43° 42.474'
W 114° 40.418'

Distance: 5.6 miles out-and-back

Total Elevation Gain: 1,400 feet

Difficulty: Moderate

Elevation Range: 7,450 to 8,800 feet

Topographic Map: Boyle Mountain, Baker Peak

Time: 2.5 to 3.5 hours

Season: Mid-June through mid-October

Water Availability: Apollo Creek, a couple of small streams

Cautionary Advice: None

Additional Information: Sawtooth National Forest, Ketchum Ranger District (208) 622-5371

Pit Latrine: No

APOLLO CREEK

If you are seeking solitude, the hike up the untamed Apollo Gulch drainage is a good journey. Nearby trails, including the two Norton Lakes and Baker Lake, see the vast majority of hikers. Backpackers will find the final destination of the hike to be an exquisite destination for an overnight excursion.

Peering into the drainage from the trailhead, you might rethink hiking this trail. Scorched forest from the 2013 Beaver Creek Fire makes the outing look a bit ominous. Thankfully, the fire did not burn up this scenic drainage, and first impressions are proven wrong. Much of the hike weaves through Douglas-fir forest and sagebrush meadows, and there are several groves of aspen that make for a colorful autumn hike. The smallish, spring-fed Apollo Creek parallels the trail for most of the route, sometimes only a few feet away.

The hike's destination is the headwaters of Apollo Creek, located in a stunning, grassy basin set below a rocky ridgeline in the heart of the Smoky Mountains. A small bench located on the edge of forest is a great terminus to the hike. In the basin, the Apollo Creek Trail junctions with the Baker Creek–Norton Creek Connector, giving you several options for extended hikes.

TRAILHEAD DIRECTIONS

From Ketchum, drive north on ID 75 for 15.0 miles and then turn left (west) on the dirt-surfaced Baker Creek Road (FR 162). Follow FR 162 for 6.6 miles, then turn right onto a short, spur road (FR 171). Follow the road to its end at 0.2 mile. The trailhead is marked with a carsonite sign. There is parking for four or five vehicles. There are several dispersed campsites along FR 162.

THE HIKE

The hike starts in forest but quickly transitions out of the charred landscape within a quarter-mile. Although you can hear Apollo Creek, you cannot see it because it lies over a small berm. The trail enters Douglas-fir forest at a half-mile and then the canyon narrows at 0.7 mile.

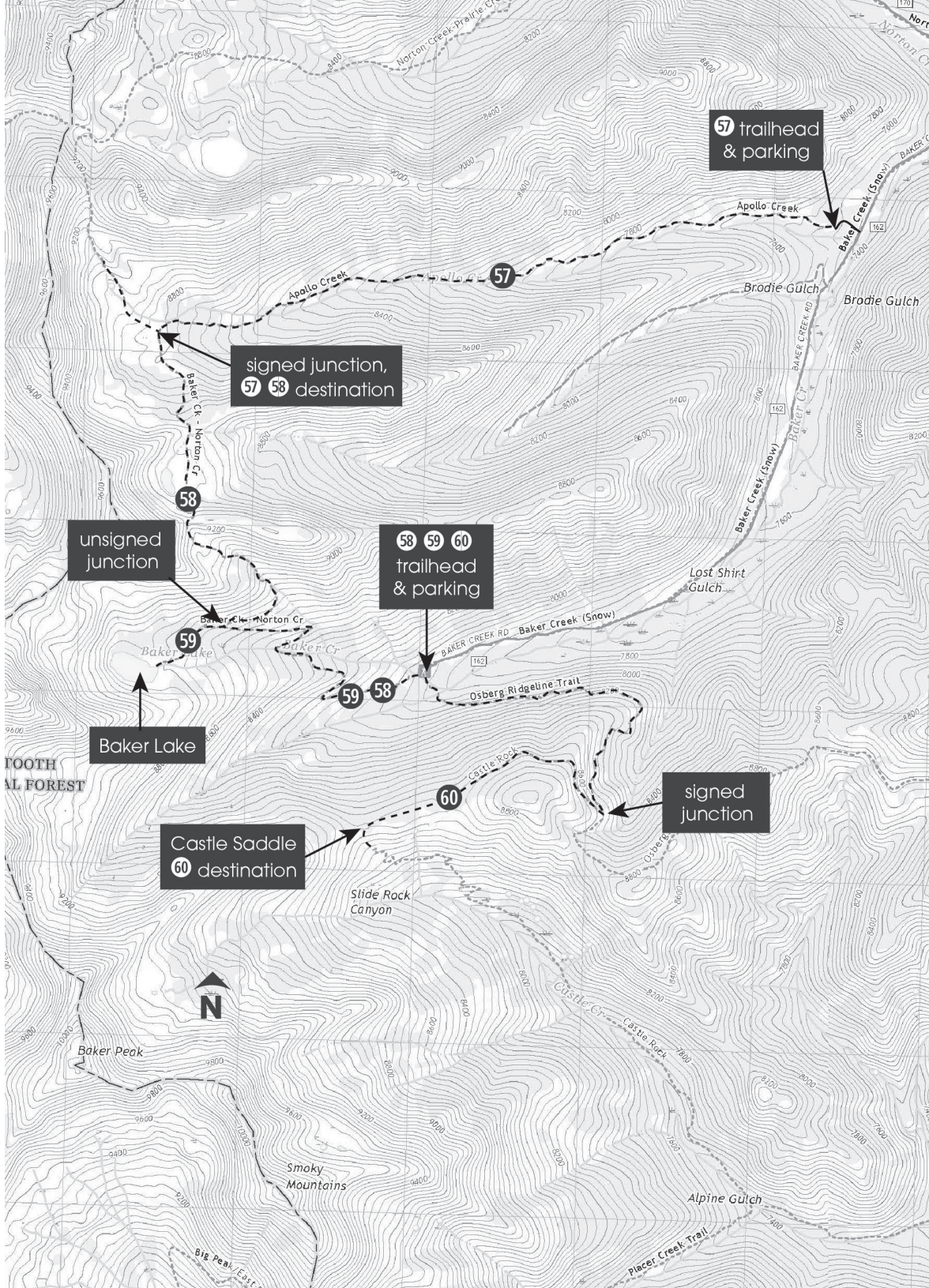
Continue along a modest grade and enter thick forest at 1.3 miles. Within 500 feet, the trail moves close to Apollo Creek in a little grassy area. From here, the trail steepens into a large stand of aspen at 1.6 miles. Peak color is usually mid-September. The trail now transitions through patchy forest and sagebrush meadows. Cross a tiny spring-fed creek at 2.3 miles. Over the shoulder views are impressive looking east to the distant Pioneer Mountains.

Now move through one last stand of forest and finally arrive at a signed junction, marked by a massive cairn, with the Baker Lake–Norton Creek Connector. The setting here is beautiful with rolling mountains hemming the grassy basin. If you walk south a few yards along the trail to Baker Lake and then veer left off-trail about 100 feet to the edge of forest (see map), you will find a bench to enjoy a break and observe the sensational surroundings. The basin is a wonderful place to explore off trail.

To extend the hike to Baker Lake (2 miles one way), turn left at the junction. The trail crosses the basin for a short distance and then enters forest and rises to a 9,250-foot saddle at 0.9 mile. Along the ascent, you will pass nearly fifteen mammoth cairns. Somebody or some group had a lot of time on their hands.

From the saddle, it is a descent of nearly 700 feet through burned forest to an unsigned junction. A right turn leads to the popular Baker Lake in a quarter-mile. Although a longer hike and much more arduous than the route from the Baker Lake trailhead, you will likely see few, if any, other hikers until you near Baker Lake.

Another option for an extended hike is to turn right (north) at the signed junction toward the West Fork of Norton Creek. This trail rises to a 9,500-foot saddle in 0.7 mile and then descends 400 feet through dense woods in another quarter-mile to a signed junction with the West Fork of Norton Creek Trail (hike 56). Turn right, and descend nearly 1,500 feet in 3.1 miles to the trailhead.



57 trailhead & parking

signed junction,
57 **58** destination

unsigned junction

58 **59** **60**
trailhead & parking

Baker Lake

Castle Saddle
60 destination

signed junction

- 57** APOLLO CREEK
- 58** BAKER LAKE-NORTON CREEK CONNECTOR
- 59** BAKER LAKE
- 60** OSBERG RIDGELINE TRAIL TO CASTLE SADDLE