

26 CONNOR LAKES

We ambled through the shade of the forest and enjoyed the wildflowers that brightened the landscape. As we climbed up the trail we often had to scramble over fallen trees. Through the mask of the forest-covered canopy we saw only brief impressions of the towering mountains that lined both sides of the valley. At one section along the trail we waded across a fast moving, thigh-deep tributary of Maiyuk Creek.

The forested trail climbs up to Connor Pass above Connor Lakes. On the east side of the lake rises the cliffs of light-grey limestone along a jagged ridge line. A thick spruce and fir forest presses against the western lakeshore. The lake's navy-blue water stretches for 3 km in a narrow oval shape within the Forsyth Creek valley. Abruzzi Glacier, 11 km north of the lake in the Italian Group of mountains, highlights the upper reaches of this scenic valley.

From a grassy beach at the lakeside, a small log cabin presides over this wilderness. Stories in the cabin's guestbook mentioned that local citizens built the Connor Lakes Cabin in the 1950s. It has seen a lot of use during almost five decades, but we noticed that it also needs repairs.

We set up our tents and enjoyed the softening light of the evening at Connor Lakes. A pair of loons called and danced in the lapping waves near the shore. Calmly, a goose paddled near our camp. Using binoculars, we watched a small herd of mountain goats edge along the limestone crags high above the lake. The light turned crimson on the southern peaks and evening shadow drifted over the water.

High, thin clouds drifted across the sky. The massive peaks around the lake had already snagged these passing veils, and knots of their convergence threatened precipitation. An intense storm erupted with hard rain. Dark clouds and high winds pelted the park. We were thankful for being able to cook and eat in the warm and dry shelter of the Connor Lakes Cabin as we peered outside to the gloom.

West Access—Maiyuk Creek Trail

Rating moderate/long

Time backpacking or very long day hike to lake and back to road

Distance 9 km

Elevation gain 350 m (1140 ft.)
Connor Lakes 1800 m (5900 ft.)

Trail a creek to wade, slippery bridges, confusing sections to large lake in forest

Map 82J/6 Mount Abruzzi

Trail map page 102

Drive

Road any vehicle

Road map page 87, 102

Connor Lakes from the west access from Maiyuk Creek.

See road directions for Middle White River trails page 100. Follow directions up to the 67.4 km mark to the Maiyuk Creek FS Recreation Site and continue with directions below.

- 0 km Drive Highway 93/95 (5 km south of Canal Flats) on to the Whiteswan Provincial Park Road. Logging and tourist traffic use this busy road.
- 67.4 km (Parking for Middle White River trails.) Continue straight for Connor Lakes—Maiyuk Creek trail. Maiyuk Creek FS Recreation Site.
- 70.6 km Turn left up a new road
- 72 km Parking spot. Signed Maiyuk Creek trail—Height-of-the-Rockies Provincial Park. At 1450 m (4760 ft.).



Connor Lakes view looking south from cabin.

Travellers to the HOTR Provincial Park hopefully will maintain and continue to enjoy this cabin for decades to come.

At the time of this writing, BC Parks is gathering public input on management priorities for the HOTR Park. BC Parks urges volunteer groups to help in maintenance of such facilities as the Connor Lakes Cabin and other park amenities. Hikers can access Connor Lakes from two trailheads: the Maiyuk Creek trail via logging roads east of Canal Flats, or from the Forsyth Creek trail via bush roads north of Elkford.

Maiyuk Creek Trail

From the parking spot at the east end of the Maiyuk Creek FS Road, hike east on the trail along an old seismic cut-line through a lush mixed forest. At 2.5 km, the trail forks. The left fork follows the old seismic cut, which heads directly uphill. We hiked on the right fork as it contours around the steep section. Unfortunately, the right fork trail starts to braid apart as it too climbs that steep hillside. (On the hike back out, however, we followed the obvious trail through that steep area and were surprised that we had missed the continuous trail going in.)

Forsyth Creek Trail from Elkford

Distance 12.7 km one-way

Elevation gain about 300 m (1000 ft.)

Drive

Take Highway 43 to Elkford. Drive north on the main road through the city and continue north on the Elk River FS Road. Stay on the Elk River FS Road north of Elkford for 28 km. Turn left (west) at a sign for Connor Lakes and Forsyth Creek. Continue about 2 km to the BC FS Recreation Site with limited campsites and horse corrals. The trailhead is near the junction between Forsyth and Quarrie creeks.

Follow the trail from the BC FS Recreation Site and hike across the Quarrie Creek footbridge. Follow a seismic line west. At the end of the seismic cut continue north on the trail. Take the next two right forks and then the trail crosses Forsyth Creek. Hike along the western shoreline of Connor Lakes for 3 km to the cabin.

Climb uphill and follow shreds of trails in the thick bush. Stay within audible range of the creek, which is thundering in a steep-sided canyon on your right. Even if you must bushwhack up that steep part of the hill—the terrain levels in about 0.4 km. Just above the steep section, the creek flows lazily and flattens out into a marshy turquoise pond. Beside the pond is a small campsite clearing that snuggles in the balsam fir and spruce forest. Just across the pond to the south rises a stark and solitary mountain peak.

From the pond and the campsite head southeast. The main trail becomes a well-trodden path and the route steepens for the next several kilometres. At 5.4 km along the trail there are some muddy sections and a few hundred metres farther is the thigh-deep tributary of Maiyuk Creek that must be crossed.

The pass above Connor Lakes is at 7 km and at 1900 m (6300 ft.). From the

pass the trail to the lake descends 150 m (500 ft.) in 2 km. At the western lakeside hike north (left) for about 100 m. Cross over a log bridge and walk around the north end of the lake to the grassy lawn and the Connor Lakes Cabin.

To see the majestic Abruzzi Glacier or the other two Connor Lakes, hike north from the cabin. Follow the trail north for 800 m to a small tarn. The trail bends around to the east side of the tarn and climbs north to another lake. This third lake is the most northerly of the Connor Lakes chain and is a chalky green, circular pond that is about 1 km across. We followed the trail/route north past that lake for 4 km. The intermittent trail winds through marshy lowlands, subalpine meadows and up to an open ridge where we enjoyed a viewpoint of the Forsyth Creek valley. Far up the gradually sloping valley is the massive Abruzzi Glacier sprawling across the high plateau.



Kersten making dinner by the Connor Lakes Cabin.