

67 HOURGLASS LAKE

Hourglass Lake is a timeless place near the top of the Purcell Mountains. Timeless, because the hourglass shape of this lake marks the passage of time by continuously flowing water over its banks down to Meachen Creek. Freshened by waters from Upper Hourglass Lake above, the water levels in these subalpine lakes seem perpetual.

Hourglass Lake is a quiet 1 km-long twin-lake, pinched in the middle by a rocky narrows. “The narrows” are only about 20 m across. From the slate-grey coloured water in the centre of the lake rises a tiny “spirit-island”-like knoll. Two small trees inhabit this rock island.

At the west end of the lake, a massive waterfall plunges through the forest, roaring down the steep slope from Upper Hourglass Lake. This waterfall crashes out of the forest and flows beside a talus slope. Large chunks of broken bedrock on a tilted boulder field separate the upper and lower lakes. Hikers may scramble up this rock slope to the spectacular upper lake. From the talus scramble, you can see the summit of White Grouse Mountain, which stands across Meachen Creek.

The mountains surrounding these lakes are typical of the southern Purcells. Exposed bedrock reveals the scouring by ancient glaciers that carved out the lakes. The erosion dumped rubble in swaths along the valleys.

To reach Hourglass Lake, leave the trailhead and hike down 18 m (60 ft.) through a logged area to a bridge across Meachen Creek. Follow

Rating moderate

Time day hike

Distance 3.6 km to “the narrows”

Elevation gain 270 m (900 ft.) to Hourglass Lake

Hourglass Lake 1860 (6100 ft.)

Upper Hourglass Lake 2190 m (7200 ft.)

Trail steep forested trail to subalpine lake, talus scrambling to upper lake

Maps 82F/9 St. Mary Lake
82F/10 Crawford Bay

Trail map page 205

Drive

Road high-clearance truck

Road map page 180

Follow road directions for Meachen Creek Road on page 197.

0 km At the junction of St. Mary Lake Road and St. Mary River Road, turn left (south) on to the St. Mary River Road. Cross a wooden bridge.

0.6 km Turn right at the second dirt road (south) on to St. Mary/Hellroaring Creek FS Road.

1.6 km Turn right on to St. Mary/Meachen Creek FS Road.

Stay to the main Meachen Creek FS Road.

29 km **Hourglass Lake** parking, unsigned trailhead, park in landing along road. Stay on main road about same elevation.

The trailhead, at 1597 m (5240 ft.), is one of many wide pull-outs along the road. Look high up on the forested slopes west (right) for a thin white streak of a waterfall. The trailhead is the only pull-out along that part of the road where you can see the waterfall.

Park along the Meachen Creek Road. Closely follow the parking signs at this trailhead. Helicopters were using the trailhead along the road for a landing spot during a heli-logging operation on the steep slopes nearby.

