

27 SILVER SPRING LAKES

Silver Spring Lakes is one of my favourite early-season trips. The hike follows a chain of three deep blue lakes at the base of steep cliffs not far from Elko. Each lake has its own distinct colour, depth and plant habitat.

Hikers are rewarded by views of rolling mountains to the north and picturesque cliffs to the south. These dramatic cliffs surround the third lake and can be seen clearly throughout most of the hike. A roughly-travelled trail winds along the eastern shores of these scenic, long, narrow and lowland lakes. The trail crosses exposed bedrock and lakeside talus slopes and winds through the forest. After the initial half a kilometre up a steep section, the rest of the hike is easy and mostly level.

In springtime, the lakeside meadows are awash in the glorious colours of wildflowers, bees and butterflies. Soft carpets of many species of flowers brighten the openings between the lakes. Glacial lilies are one of the first flowers to emerge from the spring ground. Shooting stars cover the sunny areas with their vibrant purple colour. Daisies, harebells and pentstemons also share the sunny areas. The clematis vines climb up rose bushes and the fairy slippers dance in the darker shadows of the woods. Mid-May to mid-

Rating easy

Time short day hike

Distance 3 km

Elevation gain 90 m (300 ft.)
lakes elevation 1006 m (3300 ft.)

Trail one short steep section, indistinct trail, wet spots, fairly level trail to three mid-elevation lakes

Map 82G/6 Elko

Drive

Road any vehicle

Road map page 108

From Highway 3 turn east into Elko. The Elko townsite is not visible from the highway. The turnoff is south (slightly downhill) from the prominent gas station/restaurant along Highway 3.

- 0 km Turn east from Highway 3 into Elko. Paved road winds around several corners. Stay to the main road through the small town.
- 1 km Turn left (east) downhill to the river.
- 1.5 km Cross the Elk River bridge on to the Elko/Morrissey haul road. Follow this gravel road 2.3 km east from the bridge. The river bends away from the road for a couple of kilometres.
- 3.8 km Notice when the river flows alongside the road again and drive another 500 m (or less). Look uphill on the right side (south) for a small well-worn footpath. Park about 200 m past (east) of the trailhead, at a wider spot along the busy roadway.

