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## Pine Creek Canyon



**Suggested Flies for the Pine Creek Canyon Area:**  
**[Eastern Sierra Hatch Selection](#)**

**Other Local Favorites:**

**Nymphs:**

[Hare's Ear #16-18](#)  
[Prince Nymph #16-18](#)  
[Pheasant Tail Nymph #16-18](#)

**Drys:**

[Parachute Adams #16-18](#)  
[Olive Caddis #16-18](#)  
[Royal Wulff #16-18](#)  
[BWO Sparkle Dun #18-20](#)  
[BWO Parachute Dun #18-20](#)

**Directions:**

Pine Creek Canyon can be reached from Bishop on Hwy 395; Heading northwest on US 395 from Bishop, turn left on Pine Creek Road and drive 10 miles to the trailhead parking near the pack station. The road ends just beyond the Pack Station with a gate keeping vehicles from entering the grounds of the Pine Creek Tungsten Mine.

**Notes:**

Pine Creek Canyon is an area with a long history of mining during the 1900's. The mine was closed in 2001 but the area still enjoys a great deal of interest among fly fishers and rock climbers. At the end of Pine Canyon Road is the Pine Creek Pack Station providing horse packing into the interior as well as a trailhead into the French Canyon, Plute Canyon, and Humphries Basin.

The canyon was first explored in the 1880's for gold and silver but little was found. Prospectors did find molybdenum and a tungsten-bearing mineral known as scheelite. In 1916, these ores were mined for the war effort of World War I as the scheelite could be used to make very durable steel alloys. Transportation of the ore was very difficult within this steep terrain utilizing pack mules. After the war, the mines were dormant until 1936 when the US Vanadium Corporation purchased the property and developed a mill to provide a means to produce high quantities of tungsten. Sometime in 1941, the first tram was constructed utilizing all-wood towers, the largest of it's kind in the United States. Remnants of the towers still exist on the slopes of the canyon as well as some of the steel buckets and other equipment. By 1942, the mine was the largest producer of tungsten in the country and was instrumental in providing a strategic resource for World War II. It operated at full capacity for the next 54 years. One of the mines, Tungstar, was invested by movie stars, Shirley Temple and Randolph Scott. Since the "stars" were involved the mine became known as Tungstar.

Pine Creek flowing through the canyon from the road end to the community of Rovana has a good population of both Browns and Rainbows. It is a freestone stream of heavy riparian overstory with riffles and pools.

Taking the Gable Lake Trail from the Pine Creek Trailhead is a destination to **Gable Lakes**. This is a group of four lakes. All of the lakes are fishless. The 7.7 miles roundtrip, steep and rugged with a 3500' elevation gains over 4 miles. Lots of mining equipment to see and explore.

Taking the Pine Creek Trail west from the Pine Creek trailhead through the Pine Creek Pack Station, you start at 7,400 feet elevation and pass through a forest of Aspen, Birch, Juniper, Jeffrey Pine, and Red Fir. In about a mile, the trail merges with a mining road to the defunct Brownstone Mine. The mine is another 1/2 mile further up the trail at 9100 feet elevation, so you would have climbed over 1700 feet within the first two miles of the trail. You will reach the John Muir Wilderness Boundary at the 2.25 mile marker and it's another 1/2 mile before you are along the cascading Pine Creek below Pine Lake at 9800'. This trail includes the following areas:

**Pine Creek:** The creek has about 1 mile of fishable stream from Pine Lake to Honeymoon Lake with an elevation gain 450 feet. It drains the Granite Falls-Chalfant Lakes basin. The stream has good productivity and excellent spawning. Pine Creek contains both Rainbow Trout and Brookies.

**Pine Lake:** About 3.3 miles from the trailhead at 9,942 feet. The trail wraps around the northern portion of the lake. Pine Lake consists of Brookies and Rainbows.

**Upper Pine Lake:** 4.25 miles from the trailhead at 10,200'. Consists of Brookies and Rainbow Trout.

**Honeymoon Lake:** At 5 miles from the trailhead the trail forks. The left fork heads up to Pine Creek Pass. To the right fork, you will see Honeymoon Lake (10,440'). Also consists of Brookies and Rainbow Trout.

Pine Creek Pass is about 6.5 miles from the trailhead at an elevation of 11,140 feet. Going through Pine Creek Pass, you can access the French Canyon and the nearby lakes:

**Big French Lake:** To the east of Pine Creek Pass, you can travel off-trail for 3/4 miles and reach Big French Lake at 11,265 feet elevation. Big French Lake contains Golden Trout. Further to the southeast is Little French Lake but this is fishless.

Taking the Morgan Pass Trail along the mining road above Pine Creek Tungsten Mine at 9800 feet, you can go off-trail after 3.75 miles to the west and access the following lakes:

**Bear Lake:** A small lake at 10,150 feet elevation about .25 mile from the mining road. It is fishless.

**Finch Lake:** About 1.5 miles from the trailhead at 10,800 feet. It is fishless.

Continuing on the mining road for 5.25 miles from the Pine Creek Trailhead you reach the Morgan Pass Trail. The trail is actually part of a mining road that was abandoned. This trail brings you into the Little Lakes Valley. Prior to reaching the Pass, you reach two lakes:

**Lower Morgan Lake:** About 0.5 miles from the mining road along the Morgan Pass Trail at 10,700 feet. Contains Rainbows and Golden Trout.

**Middle Morgan Lake:** About 1 mile from the mining road along the Morgan Pass Trail at 10,800 feet. Contains Rainbows.

**Upper Morgan Lake:** About 1.25 miles from the mining road along the Morgan Pass Trail at 10,900 feet. Contains Rainbows.

**Horton Lakes** can be reached from the Horton Trailhead. From Bishop go west on Line Street (Hwy 168). Follow Hwy 168 approximately 8 miles to Butte Rd. and turn right. Follow Buttermilk Road (dirt) past Wells Upper Meadow where the road becomes increasingly worse. It is likely you will need 4x4 to the end. Lower Horton Lake has Brookies.

## Fishing Regulations (Effective March 1st, 2021)

### Lakes within Pine Creek Canyon:

Open all year, five trout daily bag limit, 10 trout in possession.

### Pine Creek and all other creeks and tributaries:

From the last Saturday in April through November 15, 5 trout daily bag limit, 10 trout in possession; and, from November 16 through the Friday preceding the last Saturday in April, 0 trout bag limit, artificial lures with barbless hooks only and trout must be released unharmed and not removed from the water.