HIKING - FOREST SERVICE - ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

NATIONAL FOREST – San Juan RANGER DISTRICT - Columbine
Updated: May, 2003

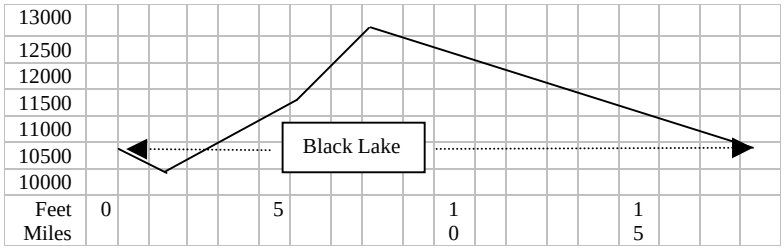
Ute Creek Loop # 813 (includes Continental Divide Trail)

Length (Outer Loop): 18.5 mi / 29.8 km

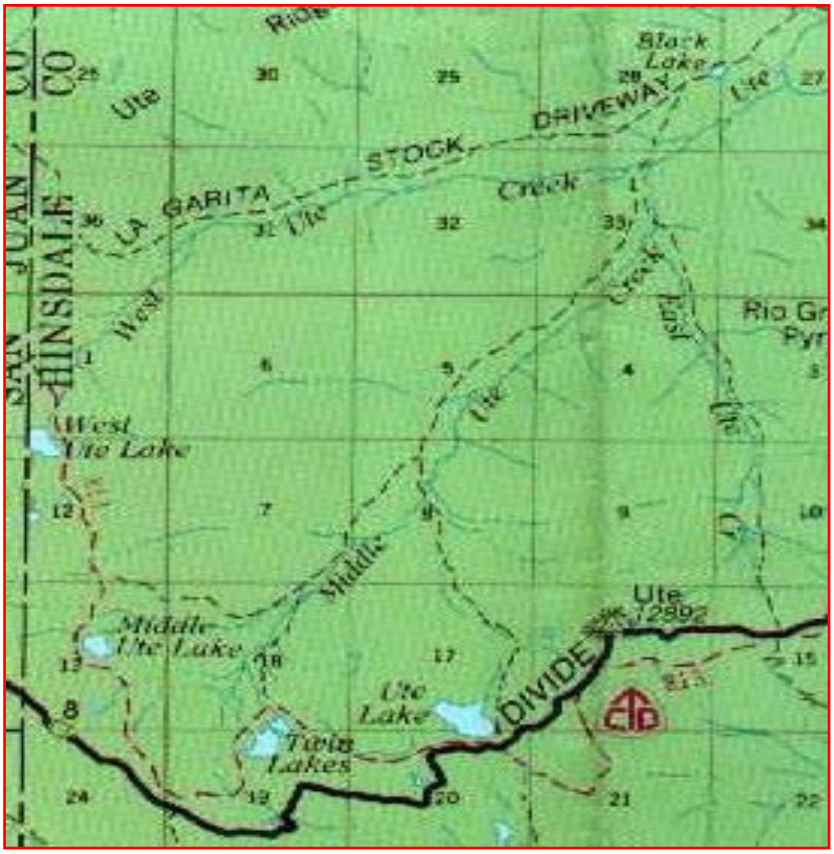
Use: Heavy use in some areas
Difficulty: Moderate
USGS Map (s):
Finger Mesa, Rio Grande Pyramid
Starting Elevation: 10,800'
Black lake
Ending Elevation: 10,800'
Black Lake
Highest Elevation:
12,680', at Junction of CDT and West Ute Lake Trail

Recommended Season

Spring Summer Fall Winter



Access # 1:
From Creede, drive southwest on Colorado 149 for 19 miles and turn left on Rio Grande Reservoir Road, FDR 520. Continue on this road for 17 miles until you reach the Ute Creek Trailhead. Black Lake is at the junction with the Ute Creek Loop, 6.5 miles up the trail from the Ute Creek trailhead.



Access # 2:
Can be reached by either the Vallecito Creek Trail (see its description) or the Pine River Trail to Flint Creek Trail (see these descriptions). The trail north to the Continental Divide Trail is between Flint Lakes and Rock Lake.

Attractions & Considerations:
The hiking trail in this area is moderate in difficulty, with meadows, streams, and occasional stands of trees. Two loops can be taken: the "inner" loop of roughly 12.3 miles, or the "outer" loop of about 22.4 miles. Traveling clockwise on the loop from Black Lake along the Middle Ute Creek Trail, you descend through meadows at a moderate to steep grade. You will cross several creeks and reach the East Ute Creek Trail junction at .9 miles.

Inner Loop: At the junction with the East Ute Creek Trail, continue straight on the Middle Ute Creek Trail, passing the turnoff for Ute Lake and on to Middle Ute Lake at mile 3. The Continental Divide Trail (CDT) junction is at mile 5.2, and the trail will climb down rocky slopes south of West Ute Lake. The CDT and West Ute Creek Trail junction is at mile 8.2, and the Middle Ute Creek and West Ute Creek Trail junction at 12.6.

Outer Loop: This loop travels at higher elevations for a longer stretch on the CDT, passing both Ute Lake and Twin Lakes. The East Ute Creek Trail connects to the CDT at mile 10.2, then on the CDT for another 3.5 miles to Ute Lake, and on to Twin Lakes at mile 15. Between Middle Ute and Twin Lakes, the trail is not well defined, with heavy willow growth and boggy areas. From Twin Lakes, continue on the CDT 3.5 miles to Middle Ute Lake and .3 miles past the lake to the Middle Ute Creek Trail junction. It is 3.6 miles farther to the Middle Ute Creek and West Ute Creek Trail junction and back to Black Lake.

Scan of the San Juan National Forest Map
Forest Service maps and other publications are available at the Public Lands Center, in the Durango Tech Center, ½ mile west of Durango off Highway 160; or by calling (970) 247-4874..
www.sjma.org

Fishing Considerations:
Ute Creek is a large headwater of the Rio Grande, and a fine trout stream. Most of the trail along Ute Creek provides meadow fly-fishing for small rainbows, brook trout, and cutthroats. All of the lakes in this area have been rated fair for cutthroat and rainbow. Please check the fishing regulations regarding limits, allowable lures, and restrictions on certain lakes, rivers, etc.

Weminuche Wilderness Regulations:
- Group size is limited to 15 people.
- Camping is not allowed within 100 feet of any water source.
- Outfitter-guides who receive any form of compensation must obtain a special-use permit to operate on public land.
- Possession of motorized equipment and mechanized means of transport are not permitted.
- Recreational livestock are prohibited from being restrained within 100 feet of lakeshores and streams or within riparian areas.