

Lake McArthur



NEED TO KNOW

LENGTH: 3.5 km (2.2 miles) roundtrip

ELEVATION GAIN: 310 metres (1,025 feet)

WALKING TIME: 1-1.5 hours one way

RATING: moderate

TRAILHEAD: Le Relais Day Shelter, 0.6 km south of the campground and 0.2 km north of Lake O'Hara Lodge. N51°21.454' W116°20.337'

LAKE McARTHUR TRAIL OUTLINE

Lake McArthur is the largest and deepest lake in the O'Hara area. The 85-metre depth of the lake contributes to its deep blue colour, which contrasts with the brilliant white of the Biddle Glacier beyond its far shore.

THE HIKE: From the trailhead at the Le Relais hut, hike to the Alpine Meadow and the junction beside the Elizabeth Parker Hut. Stay left and climb southwest through dense subalpine forest to Schäffer Lake.

Just 50 metres beyond the Schäffer Lake outlet bridge, the high trail to Lake McArthur branches left from the McArthur Pass trail. While you can reach the lake by staying on the right-hand option to McArthur Pass, we prefer the more scenic high option. This high route skirts around the lake's south shore, climbs steeply through alpine larch to the shoulder of Mount Schäffer, and follows the edge of a rock band for a short distance. Here you are greeted with good views north to Cathedral Mountain.

At km 2.4 you pass the junction for the short connector trail down to McArthur Pass and the Odaray Highline-Grandview Prospect route. Stay left and continue around the west ridge of Mount Schäffer, climbing along cliffs and boulder fields to the trail summit

THE DESTINATION: The trail summit at km 3.0 provides your first view of Lake McArthur. The final 0.5 km descends through meadows and rocky ridges to the lakeshore. The pyramid-shaped summit of Mount Biddle rises above the lake and glacier, adding symmetry to a scene that has attracted artists and photographers for decades.

OPTION: An alternate trail to Lake McArthur branches south from the main Lake McArthur trail just before the Elizabeth Parker Hut. It runs 300 metres (0.2 miles) toward Mary Lake, then branches right and climbs steeply along a rockslide beneath Mount Schäffer's cliffs. You pass through stands of giant alpine larch (known locally as the Big Larches) on the ascent and then rejoin the main trail at km 1.5 on the shores of Schäffer Lake. This option is only 300 metres (0.2 miles) longer than the main trail, but since it is very steep and rocky in places, it is usually hiked on the return from Lake McArthur.

LAKE McARTHUR TRAIL OUTLINE

0.0 Trailhead (elevation 2,035 metres).

—Trail climbs to Alpine Meadow.

0.3 Junction. Big Larches Route to Schäffer Lake left. Keep right.

—Trail crosses Alpine Meadow.

0.6 Elizabeth Parker Hut Junction. Linda Lake right. Keep left.

—Moderate to steep uphill.

1.5 Junction. Big Larches Route rejoins from left.

1.6 Schäffer Lake Junction. McArthur Pass right. Stay left for Lake McArthur high route.

—Trail climbs shoulder of Mt. Schäffer and skirts rockslide.

2.4 Junction. McArthur Pass-Odaray Highline right. Lake McArthur left.

—Moderate to steep uphill along cliffs and boulder fields.

3.0 Trail summit (elevation 2,345 metres).

—Gradual descent to lake.

3.5 Lake McArthur (elevation 2,250 metres).

LAKE MCARTHUR

