

Sagehen Creek

(Updated 8/28/15)

- **Distance:** 2.25 miles one way
- **Elevation gain/loss:** -275 ft
- **Maximum elevation:** 6148 ft
- **Difficulty:** Easy
- **Start:** Trailhead on highway 89
- **Activities:** Hike
- **Additional Resource:** A great [trail guide](#) by Kitty Williams

Sagehen Creek is one of the many creeks that drain the Prosser area watershed into the Stampede Reservoir in the Tahoe National Forest north of Truckee. Technically it is not really on Donner Summit, but because it is relatively low and on the east side of the summit, the snow is gone there relatively early in the season compared to the summit. This makes it an excellent springtime hike when the summit hiking trails are still buried in snow. If your feet are itching for a walk on terra firma, this can be your first hike of the season. The best time to do this hike is from the middle of May to the end of June depending on the snow fall. Usually by the start of July many of the flowers have come and gone.

The trailhead for this hike is easy to miss. It is just a small parking area on the east side of Hwy 89 where Sagehen Creek crosses the road. It is approximately 7.1 miles north of the Hwy 89/Interstae 80 interchange on Hwy 89. On a nice weekend the parking area can be filled with cars and it may be necessary to park on the narrow shoulder. The trail is well traveled and easy to follow as it parallels the creek. The trail can be muddy in places early in the season.

The flowers are the highlight of this hike. As you hike along the trail keep an eye out for the low growing Western Peony which blooms early. The trail threads through woodlands for the first 1.5 miles and there are wildflowers everywhere. The landscape then opens up into flat meadow land where wildflowers abound. Look for Shooting Stars in the meadows. Following the trail will take you across the creek to the large Sagehen meadow. If your timing is right, you will be rewarded by carpets of blue Camis Lilies that grow here every year. There is only about a one week window in which the lilies flower so if you hit it right, consider yourself lucky. As you walk through the blue lily flowers, keep an eye out for the much rarer white Camis Lily that also grows here. If you miss the Camis, you should not be disappointed, because there several other wildflowers that also grow in abundance in the meadow.

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