

Ivanhoe Mine and Gold Creek Lakes trip – July 16-17, 2011

Leaving from the Bonner truck stop our group of six vehicles: Steve G. (Suzuki), Willie and Jeanne (flat fender), Erik and Kami (CJ-7), Larry (CJ-7), Joe and Jenny (Toyota), and guest Jason (TJ) headed to the staging area five miles east of Maxville. After leaving our trailers and airing down we headed up to Little Gold Creek Road. No way could Joe complain about the dust as we encountered on this trip but oh was there quite a bit of rain. And yes, there were lots and lots of mud puddles, which by the end of the day gave an interesting coat to all the vehicles. Oh, and we had to bust through several snow drifts, a couple of which captured Jason's totally stock TJ and put it on the receiving end of a tow strap. Larry stuck close to Eric in case of a repetition of break downs, and thus needing a tow home.

The climb to the Ivanhoe Mine, while fairly steep and with a couple of switch backs, was uneventful other than the cutting of some trees blocking the route. There is an outstanding view of the Gold Creek Basin to the east, the Drummond Valley to the north, and looking south one can see Cow Camp Meadows. On the way back down Joe somehow managed to find a rather deep hole that pretty much swallowed one of his 37 inch tires. Regrettably, his superior driving skill allowed him to escape without a tow.



Cow Camp Meadows

It was then on to the Gold Creek Lakes trail, of which about one third of its length was a flowing stream bed. This year's heavy snowfall and melt actually had filled in between the rocks with silt making it considerably easier than past times. We ate lunch at the lake.

Larry and Jason opted to return home the easy way to the Gold Creek exit on I-90 while the rest of us reversed our route. Oh, I almost forgot: Joe had to try a bit of cliff diving and took three tries before he finally got his Toyota down, two of which almost rearranged his passenger side body panels. Steve dropped down it like he had done it a hundred times. Naturally Joe and I had to climb up it on the way out which we did quite easily.

Going back up through the snow drifts made for a bit of a challenge even for Willie who kept taking the wrong line through them in two wheel drive.

A short side trip was taken up the switch back trail that joined in with Princeton Gulch road. More ATV width than Jeep width it offered a great view to the south. Back at our staging area, Steve and Joe trailered their rigs and headed home, while Willie and Jeanne weathered out a stormy night in their camper.

Sunday Derek (Toyota) joined Willie and Jeanne to check out the possibility of a new trail in the area. For whatever reason, his rig started running badly, had a strange engine noise and was smoking. After a bit of discussion it was decided that he should return home (note: he did make it home okay).

Willie and Jeanne continued on to the new trail and after squeezing through a very narrow trail came out within a mile in a meadow where the road ended. Of all bizarre things we met a guy out running, doing trail routing for a proposed 30K run in the area!! He said the road was now only a single track and very overgrown. This was actually shown as a road of FS maps. Go figure!

As always, Jeanne's favorite thing was all the wildflowers: whole meadows filled with dancing wind flowers (anemones) and bright sunshine yellow buttercups, as well as purple delphiniums, and white marsh marigolds; and the wildlife: a few deer, chipmunks and squirrels.

Backtracking we discovered another road that also ended at the upper end of Cow Camp Meadow. Just for fun we hiked across the meadow and discovered an old horse pack trail. We hiked it for over an hour to no end (finally blocked by a large downed tree) before turning back and counted over 500 saw cuts of downed trees ranging from three inches to three feet in diameter. Interestingly enough, the trees had been blazed in both directions. Judging from the condition of the trail and downed trees not cut, it has been lots of years since its last usage. Possibly could be the old trail to the Ivanhoe Mine before the current road was put in?



Tree across the trail

We left Maxville about 4:30 Sunday afternoon to return home in order to make some changes to the flat fender for the next trip.