

Crater Mt, Jerry Lakes and Jack Mt (9066').

Oct 1-3, 2010

"The most scenic trip of the entire year..."

Franklin & Carla (dicey)

Many years in passing Ross Lake and Jack I look up wondering.... Many plans and many other distractions filled the time. Many have told of the arguers of summiting Jack. I wonder how many attempt versus how many summit. Not a mountain or endeavor to be taken lightly. It is one thing to hear this and another to experience in person. The year has been full of many trips some would call big and tough, Pickets, Moxes, South Hozomeen, Pasayten choss piles, exposure, route finding issues, exposed slabs with cliffs below, loose down sloping slabs with ball bearings, hand holds that prove portable... Well, Jack has them all. Now needing a good weekend without the distractions of all the other places I've been wanting to visit. We figured three days would allow more time and make for a pleasant fall color trip. Now after many years the day was here...

This is the story of Jack...

Friday, the first of October predicted to be a hot stellar summer style day, dry all weekend, with only 20-30 percent precip chance on Sunday and a bonus of expected fall colors.

Day 1, the approach:

Only a few cars at the Canyon Creek trailhead. One day hiker took off ahead of us not to be seen. Shortly across a bridge then the old guard cabin and a log bridge. Right along the Jackita Ridge trail, leaving the river and heading steeply up as the day became hot. 2h10min 3.3m ~5200', with the flattening trail and after a wet spot a small creek, a tree with a large nail in it. Which way? Too early for the trail to Crater Mt, or is it? Some studying of the map and we found it to be the trail to Crater Mt. More up, some opening and in 2/3 a mile (2h50m, 4m, c5700') past a camp with a rock ledge and view. Five minutes a cairned trail on the right (goes to Lookout #2). And another minute and the trees opened to a broad basin, tarn, brilliant red blueberry bushes and vibrant golden larches.

The trail lead past the tarn and up the ridge (west). Blue skies, larch, rock, blueberries and more great views. Several tastings the blueberries had no flavor. So many, but tasteless...darn! While stopping to take in the view Kyle caught up. At c7100' (6m, 4h30m) we dropped our packs, snacked and donned day packs and helmets for the jaunt up Crater. The trail zig zags up the ridge, fortified with rock walls to make an easy ramp system. Soon enough the trail ends and the rock scrambling begins. Yellow circled x's mark where to go up. At a left turn also an arrow added to the x's, soon on the upper slope. Old wood structure from the tram and more trail/easy c12 scrambling heading north to the summit location of the old lookout site (30min from leaving the packs).

Warm and clear skies, a great day for views in all directions. Jerry Glacier, a pea green lake, Jerry lakes... No reg found so left a small one. We spent much time looking at Jack trying to figure how to get up it. I'd forgot my field glass, and the sun angle didn't provide much contrast to distinguish gulleys. Basically it looked darn steep and intimidating. After lunch we headed back to the packs reversing our route up. From the packs (c7100) we traversed northeast across a boulder field to the c7100' saddle south of Jerry Glacier (25min). Choice here was north dropping to avoid the glacier and then west to the c6500' saddle south of Jerry Lakes. We went leftish (NW) along the glacier looking for the ledge mentioned in a few books to attain the ridge west of Jerry Lakes. Ventured some options though the ledges we found were not appealing, so we dropped along the west of the glacier and to the saddle south of Jerry Lakes.

The view into the lake basin was stunning. Clear lakes, boulders, bluffs around the lakes surrounded by orange and red bushes and vibrant golden larch. Another point to stare at Jack, still no answers. Past the first snow and up the gully with two snow patches...? Down the rock, then heather. The surprise was the size and immensity of the boulder field maze to work through getting to the lake. Kyle was at a campsite next to the outlet of the west lake. We chatted, crossed the stream and followed the shore to the north side. The warm sun and beauty of the basin gave pause and we decided to camp here and not carry overnight packs up the next ridge into the next basin. It was a flip since it was only 4pm (8h50min, 10.25m, 7051 ascent) and plenty of time in the day to get up and close to Jack...

Plenty of time to check out views from the bump between the lakes (all the trees on it had been burnt. And a short jaunt to the north lake –more stunning views... The sun set over the west ridge early and the temps began to drop. More like summer than fall. Dinner, prep for summit day and an early eve.

Day 2, the big summit day:

Nice thing about this season is with the early eve there is ample time for sleep :-). An early morning stars still out and the moon illuminating. We'd plotted out a path up the cliff west of the lakes. West up, traverse left (SW), a short narrow ledge then up to scree to the saddle west of the lakes (.7m, 30min, c6500', 555' ascent from camp). The skies were light giving a good view of the basin we needed to drop to attain the ridge toward Jack. Again, more time to stare at Jack, and still no great confidence at the ascent route. From each angle it looked just plain steep. And this is a scramble? Descending scree and heather Jack began to glow in the morning light. Stopping to check it out it still look very ominous. Each time I'd looked it looked tough. The hard shadows of the morning light showed several ribs and gulleys. We'd see when we got there. Often routes aren't apparent til nearly in them. Below we saw golden water and headed to it south of the upper basin (c5720, 1.2m, 1h5m). A serpentine bushwhack up meadows, rocks and sparse trees gaining along the ridge due west to c6150. Then NW to 7100', these basins had some orange and red bushes, but no golden larch. Jerry lakes are beautiful and a much better choice for camps on this trip.

More stopping to stare. Yaouhsa!... Traversing up from 7100' to 7300' to the first snowfield. Choice... crampons or moat? We went for the moat. Very wide rising again to upper snow level then down again a large cavern and looked to close out. Around the corner an opening and up to the far west end of the snowfield (c7400).

We followed Stefan's great detailed directions from here.

<http://www.nwhikers.net/forums/viewtopic.php?t=11116>

Basically a ramp heading west. A large boulder with a sling and webbing (c7800'). Not sure why since good walking up the dirty ledge. Stefan's report mentioned they'd roped up east of the boulder. We took his advice, went 20' past the boulder (west) then up 4-5 feet with a cl4 move. Nothing great for handholds topping this out. Continued 30 feet as his directions to another cl3 gully that appears on the right. If you go this way may be good to cairn your way often. Snow each year clears small cairns and leaves even more rubble on the solid downsloping rock. Almost in jest, but more serious, maybe taking a broom to clear your steps would be handy. Up this gully we went working climber's right then left onto what appeared easiest terrain. Some places offered solid clean rock where water had flowed. Our trick was trying to avoid the loose small scree on the steep slope sans handholds. No matter to how careful we both were rockfall was inevitable (sorry dicey). We hoped that no other party had caught up and was trying to ascend below us.

We were in the gully that has two snow patches in it and ascended toward the narrowing and orange gully (look for orange gully just west of the summit, the others are grey –except with morning glow). Did I mention it was steep and piles of loose ball-bearing rock on downsloping slab? Through the narrow part of the gully (c8500') past the snow patch and up toward the orange. The gully opened and we shifted right (east) to the rib (c8600'). The rib offered more solid grips, still having to check for loose larger rocks. At c8700+ under a cliffy area we moved right (east) upward past around a small rib and a short small ledge traverse to the saddle (c8932') just west of the summit. From here we started up a high exposure slab hanging above the Hohokomeen Glacier on the north to the ridge and walked it east to another saddle with a nasty steep gully dropping south. From here straight offered a chimney and to the rightish easy cl2-3 scramble the final short 20 feet or less to the summit ridge. On the short ridge the high point is on the north (9066', 4h34m, 3m from camp).

The views beyond stunning, a white puffy lake filled the valleys to the west and what looked like smoke to the east. Looking west the ridge of Jack falling precipitately to both north and south. The Hohokeem Glacier spreading out north reaching toward the white puffy lake. Towers of high peaks surrounding. A great game of name that peak, made the more fun from our trips up so many that surrounded us. The Pasaytens to the east, north South Hozomeen, The Chilliwacks, Luna, Fury and the Pickets, Baker area, Davis, Bacon... Snowfield, Neve, Borealis with Tricouni and the Icecap area, Forbidden ridge to Boston reaching to Booker. Goode calling to us, Ragged ridge stretching east, the Gardners and seemingly a balls throw away Holliway, Golden Horn and Tower. Bigger question was who was heading up which peak today.

Being a very warm and low wind day we took a long break on the summit. Opening the register of scrappy wet paper to allow some drying. For this year I found only 1 solo entry Aug 17th. I'll check my images later to see if more this year. After signing us in and drying the pages I reset the reg upright. After a lunch and an hour of lounging we started reversing our route down. The entire way up I was apprehensive of the descent knowing they are normally more difficult than the ascent. We stuck more to the ribs avoiding much of the ball bearings. And after the narrow climbers right (east). A few hundred feet above the exit ledge was a bit confusing on our way up. Finding a new purple sling we scouted and could see the ledge still far below. We worked some nasty ledges west then east past the c14 spot we came up to above the boulder with sling. About 20' east of the boulder a class 4 vertical lower with steps (~6') then an easy ledge west to the top of the boulder. There were other options to get to this same ledge that would be even better. From the top of the boulder a hop to the ledge (1h40m from summit). WHEH! That part was behind us, yet still not out of it.

Great care going down the loose ledge system heading east back to the snowfield. Staying somewhat high to use the wall and rock as hand holds. At the snowfield we repacked axes and crampons and again ducked into the moat, a tight passage, a large cavern, popped to the surface then down again in a 6' deep moat to the end of the snowfield. Still not out of it, but another step past. The traverse to the heather ridge was a mix of loose scree and unscarifiable surface. Our tracks in made for easier going.

2hrs40min from the summit we were both back on good footing and heather. I felt like a great weight lifted. Sitting for another food and relax in the hot sun we both agreed to be satisfied having summited and neither wanting to repeat. The mountain provided a taste of the cascades from so many summits, and not necessarily the good features –except the superb views.

The decent down the ridge pulled us toward the basin to the north. A giant flat and wet looking plain. The pull was to the left, our route more SE and rightish. The ridge and lower basin would be nice camping, but not the beauty of the golden larch of Jerry Lakes. From near the bottom of the lower basin Dicey noticed a large black rock on the far wall move. Blinking it was still, then it moved again. A black bear was grazing blueberries not even noticing us. The climb east back up to the ridge was slow hot and tedious, one foot after the other... and no bear.

We topped the ridge 785' from the basin creek in hot sun, clear blue skies and shadows of the late day starting to sweep from the south across the south Jerry Lake (4h15min from the summit). A choice of a half mile to bag peak 7001 or lounge in the last of the sun at the lakes... When I finished taking a series of photos I noticed Dicey was already down past the loose scree heading to the exit ledge. Choice made I scurried after. We'd found a nice easy route up in the morning that had a ten foot or so traverse the up to the loose scree. Once back down this a northerly traverse past the cliffs and home free to camp in the sun (4h40min from summit). We started early to afford a more leisure day. Well worth taking a third day and enjoying the beautiful summer like weather and fall scenery.

Day stats: 10h10min, 6.4m, `4550 ascent.

Boots off, with sandals and towel I retreated to the lake while dicey lounged amid the fall colors of camp. Not long after getting wet and washing the shirt that was ready to walk out on its own the ridge shadow passed –over two and a half hours of days of daylight left, but no sunshine. Still relaxing and enchanting the reflections of fall colors on the still lake. After dinner I explored five of the lakes to not see a ripple on any of them. Perhaps these lakes are of the few that have not been stocked. Two very large lakes, a small one and a tinny one. The lower lake is very deep from shore and would be great for diving (with sunshine:). The upper east lake's east ridge dropped to the valley below views east like you could reach out and touch. The last colors of the day leaving the mountain peaks, I wondered back to camp venturing through the maze of endless boulders. It was nice to have time to venture and explore the area. Jerry Lakes is on my list of places to return.

Day 3, a leisure walk out:

For fall another relatively warm eve, Stars and moon coming out near morning to light the tent. Morning temps at 43deg. Our camp area was noticeably in a cold sink compared to the camp near the boulders. A casual breaking of camp and heading back up to the saddle south of the lakes (35m, .8m, 582 ascent). We chose to take the low route back. Followed a cairned slight path into the boulders over hidden streams, weaving around and around. From afar the boulders aren't apparent. Then onto large slabs of green and purple, grays, whites and a pond trapped by

solid rock (c6470, 1.6m, 1h20min). Another choice –right and up to the saddle we came from Crater Mt or east around the pea green lake. The pea green lake won out. How often do you get to visit a pea green lake? A small trickle at the outlet, over solid slab with plenty of photo op stops. Another black boulder... bear? On our way up the loose ridge north of the lake the black boulder was still a boulder. Cluffed out we headed SE to a good spot up. Well, not such a good spot 40' earlier was much better. Gaining the low sloping heather ridge the skies east looked ominous. More so than the west skies. A very pleasant walk, meadow and sparse larch. A broad summit and across sand and rock to the remains of Outlook #2 (2h20min, 3.2m, 1170 ascent, c7085'). Keeping with the leisure walk out another break for the last views of the basins and more food...

We missed the trail down (should have gone NE) though intersected a few hundred feet below the summit by going east then traversing north. The tread is very good, but many blowdowns. Felt like this trail has not seen maintenance in well over ten years. The loop trip rather than following our in route was definitely a bonus. In 45 minutes we were at the trail a hundred feet east of the first tarn (from Friday) (3h20min, 5m, c5700). A right turn to the tarn and larch, a left turn to the car. A few minutes and the large camp with rock ledge. We'd descended into the low clouds. Trail enshrouded in mist and cool. 15 minutes a right turn onto Jack Ridge trail. After a traverse the long downhill switch backs began. They go on and on, some steep... and on and on... I couldn't take the tedium and needed a break to cool off the burning feet. Twenty minutes later we started the final 1500' descent below the clouds through ever thickening woods. Flattening along the river, the log bridge and dilapidated guard station winding to a road size trail to the large steel bridge and the last short flat stretch to the car. Day stats: 5h40min, 8.5m.

Near the parking lot we passed a gal taking pictures of mushrooms. At the parking lot a truck pulled in for a short look at the scenery and then off. I can see why they spent money to make the parking lot pretty and not on brushing or clearing blowdown. Most people probably don't venture more than a short bit from the parking lot. Loading the car and enjoying refreshments PIB pulled up returning from her Hart's Pass jaunt. A stop at the MM Diner to socialize and refuel. Nice stretching the weekend out and having relaxing trips.

This trip has been hanging for a long time. Many thanks to Dicey for being a great trip partner and to PIB for checking up on us. For those not needing to soil their shorts on the excitement of Jack Mt., I'd highly recommend Crater and Jerry Lakes.

Happy trails!
fwb2

trips stats:

Total: 25.2m, ~12770 ascent,

Day 1: 8h50min, 10.3m, 7051 ascent

Day 2: 5h40min, 8.4m, 4550 ascent

Day 3: 5h40min, 8.5m, 1169 ascent

Gear:

Helmets!, ice ax, crampons, sunscreen. (soccer shin guards and a broom could be added ;-)