

Sawtooth traverse

Sept 3-4, 2010

Séance to Oval plus Abernathy and history... (bonus of Devils Corner)

Peaks:

Star Peak 8690',
Starlet Peak 8040+',
Peak 7982',
Séance Peak 8067' (aka **Black Santa**),
Gray Peak 8082',
Courtney Peak 8392',
Buttermilk Ridge 8267',
Oval Peak 8795',
Abernathy Peak 8321'

Non-peak -history:

Old Goat Skagit River Gorge trail
Devils Corner (Elbow)

With a weather system coming in it looked like a day and a half of good weather. Luck had it we had 2 1/2 days of good weather. Though the freezing level dropped to 6500', a stop at Washington Pass on the way home had snow and Devils Corner finished in rain.

Many recent reports on the route for the basics of Star to Oval so I won't bore with those details.

Star to Oval:

An early morning start meeting Kevin (EMR) who was heading to do just Oval. A quiet pleasant walk to Fish creek Pass (5.2m, 2h45m), Past a tent at Star lake and up the South ridge to Star Peak.

Sent a teaser TM and after much contemplating decided the trip was going easy and to add Black Santa to the days wanderings. I couldn't resist the name.

East to tagging each prominent point through talus, heather, beautiful Bernice Lake and a great view looking at the Sawtooth Peaks I'd visited last year.

Nice breaks to eat and relax on each peak and enjoy the blue skies and sunshine. I returned to Star Lake on a much better lower route (even lower would have been better). Refilled water and headed west to Gray Peak traversing the ridge of browns and greens. I love walking in the high alpine, the smells, openness and brilliant colors.

From Gray, back east to Courtney to watch as the sun began to set. Down giant boulders and up Buttermilk with a nice bivy in a crack of two giant horizontal boulders. Stars, meteors and the moon made a scenic eve. Temps dropped dramatically and the skies were clear again in the morning. I'd ripped a tendon in the calf yesterday so going downhill was very slow. Down Buttermilk and north along the ridge to Oval.

An interesting note is all the registers were gone from the "popular" peaks. Fay's registers were still on Gray and Séance. I left new registers on Star, Courtney and Buttermilk, though had only brought three (they weigh nearly a pound a piece!).

One last optional summit was Scaffold. I followed Ovals east ridge to trees then north down a gully into the open trees. Scaffold didn't look appealing so I made my way cross country NE, two beautiful meadow openings of old lakes or swamps. Above the second (c6400') the old trail from Fish Creek Pass.

About three hours from Oval peak I intersected the main trail with 2.4 miles left to the trailhead. As I walked out Luke and three others (BoeAlps) passed heading to Star Lake. Shortly after a surprise of CMurph and partner -also heading to Star Lake.

24.5 miles I was back at the car. I brewed up some food and took a short nap. It was midday and after some stretching I decided to check out Abernathy.

A bonus peak – Abernathy:

At the trailhead three vehicles. One a large truck with a Game Pass -hmm, guns? hunters? My start was a little delayed taking the first right and going almost a mile on the Scatter creek trail. Figured out I should have been gaining elevation.

I started again at 4:00. Two groups of hikers and one couple that had tried fishing coming down. Not much for views to the lake. At the lake trees had been blown down by apparently an avalanche. Three were camped with a fire. I followed the trail along the north of the lake and went up to west of the east peak to scout an option of dropping down a gully to Abernathy lake. Found a good option in case the weather held another day.

The summit had a register from Moderns last year's 100th Bulger summit. The way down the ligament started screaming, so another peak tomorrow was out of the question.

A cold night with more stars. Saw the Spacestation go by and more of the back of my eyelids. Morning had some alpine glow, though a cloud layer looked to end the blue sky weekend.

Breakfast at Javaman and a stop to be a tourist at Washington Pass overlook. On leaving I stopped to take a user poll from "Matt". More people should stop for these polls to give a show of hikers using the resources. He said the number counter registered nearly 1100 visitors to the overlook the day before and only 6 took the poll.

Bonus history –Devils Corner and dugout canoes:

I stopped before Newhalem to do a little exploring of the "Old Goat Trail" and found the old trail chipped in the rock and an old rotted bridge at Devils Corner (or Elbow). Filling in real places with history I've read made the weekend even better.

A downpour of rain didn't dampen my spirits as I motored west with a stop for Ice Cream and another in Darrington to read the history plagues and check out the dugout canoes.

A relaxing full weekend. and good timing with the weather. Very nice not needing anything but hiking gear.

Stats: 34.2 miles, 19542vert and 9 summits.

Gear: Compass, map, sunscreen

Happy trails!
fwb2