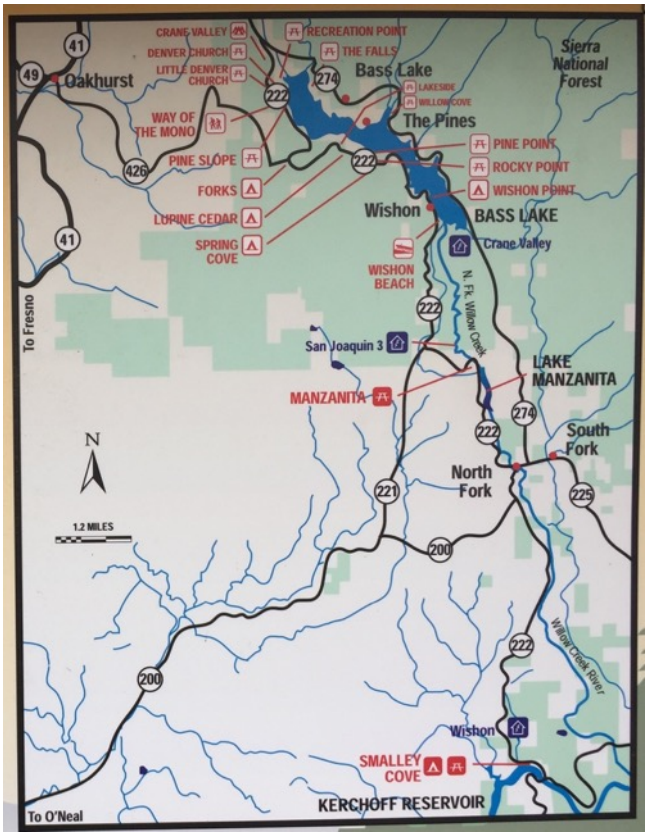


Manzanita Lake, A Quiet Natural Escape

Traveling Through the Southern Sierras and towards Yosemite national Park there are many natural attractions, beautiful views and great picnic spots. The downfall is that many of these sites are often flooded with tourists and out-of-towners. Whether you're a local or a traveler that wants to get off the beaten tourist path Manzanita Lake, just a mile and a half from North Fork, ideal for you. It offers picnic site with a natural feel and lovely trails and is really a hidden treasure of the area.

Manzanita Lake is a small manmade lake built in the early 1940 during projects to develop hydroelectric power plants. While the lake itself is administered by PG&E it is surrounded by the Sierra National Forrest. Manzanita Lake covers a surface area of 26 acres with a rather shallow average depth of 6.5 feet. On the banks of the Manzanita Lake there is a day use picnic area and a small sandy beach with swimming area. It is one of the quieter lesser known recreation sites in the southern Sierras. Somewhat of the main tourist routes. It is good for those who like to get away from crowds of tourists and overcrowded attractions. (Sierra Nevada Geotourism)





Looking over the picnic site upon first arrival from the parking lot one can see the glistening rippling water of the lake in the distance. Picnic tables are well spread out throughout the terrain with gravel pathways joining them up and to the parking lot and beach. Each table is

accompanied by a fixed stand barbecue and a silver galvanized trash can Tall pine trees and oaks spreading out to form a shady canopy over the entire picnic site. Spots of light shining through with bright beams where there are breaks in the cover overhead.

At the bottom of the hill on the far side of the picnic site is a small sandy beach bathed in sunlight. Some visitors taking the opportunity to take a soak in some sunlight working on their summer tan while children build sand castles, run around, play beach ball and all sorts of fun and games. Fool's gold can be seen sparkling in the sand, a common site in the southern Sierras, reminders of the gold rush era and so many who came to ruin over the deceptive Pyrite flakes. When the water at the edge of the lakes is stirred by the feet of swimmers it too lights up with glistening golden flakes, like the effect of a glitter filled snow globe when shaken. The sand on the beach is coarse river sand that feels rough under bare feet. Being at the altitude of 2,900 feet and being fed by snow melts means that the water can be deceptively cold even till the middle of summer.



Squirrels come out of their burrows to pester picnickers and to try scavenging something to eat. Ducks and Canadian geese follow children around also with the hope of being fed. The animals are particularly tame and use to the presence of people. On a quiet day one might even be so lucky to spot a magnificent Bald Eagle catching fish. (Sierra Nevada Geotourism) The sounds of children playing, and cheerful chatter fill the air. One can hear the splashing of a swimmers or a kayak going by. Birds chatter overhead. A fisherman casts his rod with the characteristic swish and plop. Fishing in the lake is governed by California State Fish and Game rules and a license is required. (Fishing and Hunting Regulations)

The fresh piney smell of the forest melds with the smell of barbecue fires. The smell leads one to think of all the flavors of summer barbeque often enjoyed at the picnic spot. Cravings for the mouthwatering flavors of burgers, hotdogs, steaks, chips, beer, soda and other picnic snacks fills one's mind. Despite being able to accommodate a rather large number of people the well spread out layout of the picnic site means that it never feels crowded. Natural vegetation shelters different section giving extra privacy. This means that one can still feel the tranquility of nature despite sharing the area with many other visitors.





In addition to swimming, kayaking and fishing already mention there is a 2-mile paved trail that runs parallel to the old flume taking water for hydroelectric power from Manzanita Lake to Corrine Lake. The trial compromises of an old section of road abandoned when County Road 222 was constructed on a higher, safer route. This makes it ideal for activities such as cycling and horse riding. It runs past the dam which turns into a cascading waterfall after rain. The sound of rushing water from the channel is constantly present creating a calm atmosphere. For the more daring one can walk along the mesh work over the channel itself, yet care must be taken for falling in would spell certain death in the fast-flowing cold water and sheer vertical sides offering no hold.

Manzanita Lake can be accessed all year round taking County Road 222 from North Fork. Access is free, and both the picnic site and restroom facilities are accessible to persons with disabilities. Unfortunately, the trails are not wheelchair accessible at the time. Dog owners will be glad to hear that the entire area is dog friendly, given you control your animals and follow local regulations. (reference 1)



Spring is here, and summer is around the corner. Manzanita Lake is perfect for a summer picnic and some water fun. It is never overcrowded like many other natural attractions in California, offering an opportunity to enjoy nature and tranquility like it is meant to be.

References

Sierra Nevada Geotourism, Manzanita Lake: A Great Family Outing (n.d.). Retrieved March 26, 2018, from https://www.sierranevadageotourism.org/content/manzanita-lake-a-great-family-outing/sie50c5753df8df5bedc

Fishing and Hunting Regulations. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2018, from https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Regulations