

Castle Point (terrific sunset view)



The Castle Point hike is a fairly short hike that is also short on wildflowers. However, the views are nothing short of spectacular. And there is at least one geologic feature of this hike that keeps me wondering “how did that happen?”. If you go for the sunset, take a flashlight with fresh batteries, you’ll be walking back in the dark. There are two trail heads that ultimately lead to Castle

Point. Each trail takes 20 to 30 minutes of hiking (one way). By far the easiest trailhead to find and the least strenuous route starts on the north side of highway 88 at the Carson Spur. Park at the spur and then walk directly west along the ridge. Watch your step carefully because the drop off on the right into the Caples Creek drainage is severe.

Shortly before you reach the Point, you will see a trail leading off to the left. This is the trail coming up from the poorly marked trail head in Martin meadows. Continue straight on to the Point. If you get there before sunset, explore the views. To the south you can see part of Silver Lake. On the north and continuing on toward the east are the Caples Creek drainage and the peaks of the desolation wilderness behind Lake Margaret and the Schneider cow camp. To the south-east you can see Thunder Mountain and sometimes a moonrise next to it.

The geologic wonder I referred to earlier is comprised of some very large boulders at the Point. Typically large boulders are carried along in a glacier and then dropped when the glacier melts. They fall to the lowest point, generally in the valley floors. In this case they are located at the peak of the ridge. My thinking is that they were thrown from a volcano and landed there. Which volcano? Was one of these nearby peaks or bowls that are now lakes once a volcano and how long ago was it active? There are also many colorful lichen growing on these remnants of a past geologic event.

At sunset you will want to be at the Point looking to the west. When the atmospheric conditions are right, you can see multiple mountain ranges to the west lined up as if they were marching to the ocean but became frozen in time. The sun’s outline will change into various shapes as it passes through layers of clouds or temperature gradients. Once the sun sets, it’s time to head back. Now you will definitely need those flashlights to keep an eye out for that deep canyon on your left.

Castle Point is not a good choice for wild flowers but an outstanding hike for views and a sunset, weather permitting. And, if you happen to be there at the right time, the moonrise over Thunder Mountain is an added bonus.

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