

## Schneider Cow Camp to Meiss Ridge (and maybe over the ridge)



This is probably the most prolific wild flower spot in the area. Of course, you must keep in mind that wildflowers come and go fairly quickly and the weather can be fickle. Schneider is basically a large bowl with an old cow barn at the west end and the Meiss Ridge at the other. You reach the cow camp by turning into the well marked CalTrans maintenance station located just east of the most eastern dam of Caples Lake. Drive between the two rows of maintenance buildings and turn right at the end.

Pass through the cattle gate (make sure you reclose it). Follow the road for about 1 ½ miles. The road is not maintained so stop when you think your transportation could be damaged. When you get to the 'spot' there will be the old cow barn to your left, a four wheel drive only road straight ahead, the trail to the ridge to your right and a couple of trees right in the middle. Use sunscreen and bug repellent before you get out and take water with you. There is very little shade anywhere in the bowl. It is unsafe to drink untreated lake and stream water in the Sierras.

There is usually a small stream running through the meadow to the left with many of the typical wet feet plants like Lungwort, Monkey Flower and Lupine and occasionally Shooting Stars. Watch your step, you could end up calf-deep in mud (or other material-pack horses are often in this area). Wander around the meadow and check out the old barn.

The trail to Meiss ridge takes off to the right (east) and roughly follows the stream bed. The first ½ mile is relatively flat and has a wide variety of flowers both wet-feet and dry-feet usually including Cow Parsnip, Goldenrod, Indian Paintbrush, various Penstemons, Blue Dicks, Flax and Lupines to name a few. I have a photograph taken in this area I call Northern Sierra Garden. When you reach the east end of the bowl, you must either turn back or traverse the switchbacks up the slope to Meiss ridge above. From the ridge you can look down into Meiss meadow containing Meiss Lake, Four Lakes, Round Lake and Showers Lake. It is usually very windy on the ridge so hang on to your hat!

From the ridge you can hike down into Meiss meadow and then join the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail headed south to end up near Carson Pass at the Meiss trail trailhead. Or you can go north and explore the lakes mentioned above. Another option is to stay on the ridge heading north-west and explore the area around Little Round Top. If you have not prepared for transportation to pick you up at the Meiss trailhead, you'll have to go back down into the Schneider bowl to reach your vehicle.

Your choice of which hike is best for you depends upon why you are hiking. Schneider bowl can be a terrific location if you just want to spend a little (or a lot of) time wandering through a treasure trove of wildflowers. For the adventuresome, the hike to the ridge and beyond can be fulfilling. For a more sedate experience, just standing in the bowl can be very satisfying.

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