

Bear Lake

You might find yourself alone on this great Adirondack hike to a beautiful lake and a lean to built in March 2010. There is a large parking area at the McKeever Trailhead, which also includes a kiosk and trail register. Sign the register, even if you don't park here. You'll notice two dirt roads (trails) leading out of the parking area. On the left is the Woodhull Mountain Trail. The road is rough but I guess you can drive on it as we saw a few cars plus a truck head down that way. On your right with the gate is the Wolf Lake Landing Road. This is the better of the two roads. The gate was open.

You can park at the trailhead and walk or bike 1.1 miles to the Bear Lake Trail (adding 2.2 miles on your overall hike) along the dirt road or drive to the trail along the road. Parking is limited where Bear Lake Trail crosses the road (maybe 2-4 cars). We had no problem parking since we were the only ones stopping here. The road is single lane and should be driven slow since you can expect to see other vehicles (we passed two cars on our way and five on the way back).

Since the gate was open and we watched a few cars driving in and out of the roads, we decided to start from where the trail crosses the road. While driving along the road we noticed numerous DEC yellow camp here discs at different camping spots right off the road. One person we spoke to at the trailhead said the camping spots were all along the whole road. We reached where the Bear Lake Trail crosses the road and pulled into a pull off to park. Make sure your completely off the road! More cars passed by us as we got our gear together and prepared to start our hike.

The biting insects were out and I did put repellent on (DEET) prior to starting our hike. We were pleased when there was a bit of a wind to keep the little pesky bugs away at times. The trail is easy to follow as your following blue DEC trail discs. Right away the trail crosses through a marshy area and crosses a stream. The trail climbs a bit and will cross the stream a few more times. The walk is pleasant in a beautiful forest. You pass by a few large rocks as you begin to descend.

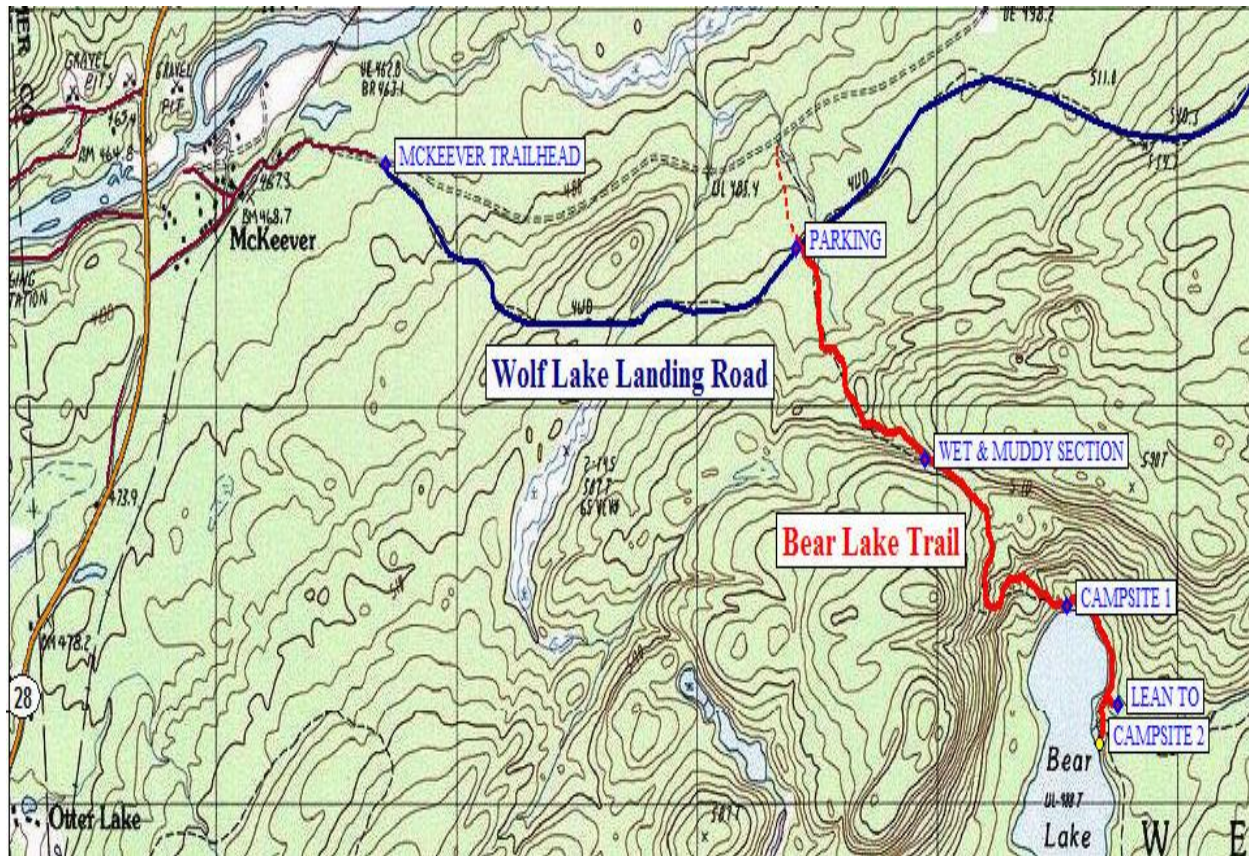
Your first views of the lake are through the trees at 0.8 miles as you begin a steep descent. At 1.2 miles the trail reaches next to the lake at an unofficial campsite with a great view of lake. The trail makes its way around the lake and soon you'll see the newly built lean to off to your left. There is a side trail (unmarked as of 5/16/2010) that leads to the lean to at 1.5 miles. The lean to has a huge fire pit and a large picnic table. We did not see a privy when we visited on 5/16/2010.

You can make the lean to as your final destination of your hike. We decided we would check out the lake inlet and bridge near the junction of the Woodhull Lake-Bear Lake Trail just 0.2 miles to the south. There was no sign of a bridge, but it was a very scenic stream which can be easily crossed. There was another unofficial campsite just a bit further south. You can also create a huge loop with the other trails in the area. We turned around and retraced our steps back to our vehicle.

Directions:

From Utica take NY 28 North into Adirondack Park past White Lake. Turn right on McKeever Road (DEC sign on corner). Follow road past old railroad station and follow state land access sign as road splits (veer right). Cross railroad tracks and follow dirt road to main McKeever Trailhead parking area with kiosk and register. Either park here or follow Wolf Lake Landing Road (dirt road on right with gate) to the Bear Lake Trail crossing about one mile away. If you pass Moose River Road and cross the Moose River on NY 28, you've gone too far.

Other great hikes that are nearby include Brandy Lake, Round Pond and Gull Lake.



Reference from "Hiking in The Adirondacks - West Central Region – Black River Wild Forest" found on the cnyhiking.com webpage.