For more information, contact:
Lassen Volcanic National Park
P.O. Box 100
Mineral, CA 96063-0100
530-595-4444
www.nps.gov/lavo

37 CHAOS CRAGS AND MANZANITA CREEK

Length: 4 miles round-trip for Crags Lake, 6.6 miles round-trip for Manzanita Creek
Hiking time: 6 hours or 2 days
High point: 6,800 feet for Crags Lake, 7,000 feet for Manzanita Creek
Total elevation gain: 1,050 feet for Manzanita Creek, 1,000 feet for Crags Lake
Difficulty: moderate
Season: mid-June through late October
Water: available from Manzanita Creek (purify first); best to bring your own
Maps: USGS 7.5′ Manzanita Lake, USGS 7.5′ Lassen Peak, park brochure
Information: Lassen Volcanic National Park

This easily accessible pair of trails in the northwest corner of Lassen Volcanic National Park offers vivid contrasts: You'll walk through serene forests and lush meadows that exist just 2 miles from stark and barren Chaos Crags and Lassen Peak, massive volcanoes that have been active within the last millennium. Manzanita Creek's clear and cold waters and numerous wildflowers also highlight the trip. For those who want to backpack, look for occasional level areas. You must camp at least a half mile from the campground. Overnight trips require a permit. Get one at the park or via email (530-595-4444; *www.nps.gov/lavo*).

Stark and barren Chaos Crags formed a thousand years ago from a 1,500-foot lava surge.

Travel the main park road for 32.8 miles north of the junction of Highways 36 and 89 or 1.2 miles southeast of the junctions of Highways 44 and 89. Turn south onto the road to Manzanita Lake Campground and park 150 feet from the highway.

Chaos Crags (Photo by John R. Soares)

The first trail takes you to Crags Lake. Climb past white fir and Jeffrey pine, with the occasional sugar pine thrown in. Leap across a shaded stream at 0.6 mile and climb steeply through chaparral thickets.

Your efforts are rewarded at 1.9 miles with a view of Crags Lake and Chaos Crags. The latter formed around a thousand years ago when thick, pasty lava surged 1,500 feet up from a vent.

Look north to Chaos Jumbles, an avalanche from Chaos Crags that occurred 300 years ago. You'll also see the Hat Creek Valley and the peaks of Thousand Lakes Wilderness, with more Cascade volcanoes leading westward to the Klamath Mountains.

It's easy enough to scramble down to the shore of Crags Lake. In years of heavy precipitation the waters are clear and invite you for a refreshing, if chilly, dip. However, the lake can also dry up by early summer.

To reach the Manzanita Creek Trail, follow the campground road for 0.8 mile. Then take Loop F another 0.2 mile to the small parking area near site 31.

As you begin, you'll gain glimpses of Lassen Peak and Chaos Crags through Jeffrey pines. Climb to an open area at 1.1 miles, and then ascend through a fir and pine forest.

Cross Manzanita Creek on a wooden bridge at 2 miles and continue level. The jagged crest and colorful cliffs of Loomis Peak burst into view at 2.4 miles. This impressive volcano, just on the other side of the stream, will be with you for the remainder of the hike.

Farther on, small meadows nuzzle the creek. Saunter through a red fir forest before

entering the first large meadow at 2.8 miles. Cross a brooklet and then gaze northward at the peaks of Thousand Lakes Wilderness. Another 0.5 mile brings you to the largest meadow—wet, lush, and ablaze with wildflowers in summer.

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