

Bumpass Hell Trail

EFFORT	Moderate
LENGTH	3.0 miles
GEOLOGICAL FEATURE(S)	Geothermal Activity
LOCATION	Lassen Volcanic National Park
CONTACT	530-595-4444

Description: Poor Mr. Bumpass gave his name to this trail after losing his leg in one of the boiling pools. Make sure you heed the warning signs to avoid the same fate. This trail leads to one of the most popular destinations in the park, and one of the best spots to view the geothermal activity present here. It is a gentle climb to the lookout, and then a steeper descent to the boardwalk area, which winds through the bubbling mud pots and fumeroles. The colors here are gorgeous and otherworldly.

Here's a tip if you want to cut the trail shorter: pass the main trail parking lot and park across from Lake Helen in a pullout. There's another trailhead here that starts you a bit further along on the trail. Lunch at the picnic area at the trailhead, or beside Lake Helen where there are a few picnic tables set up.

Head out through a forested area walking on a nearly level trail. Before long, you come to an overlook of the geothermal area. Look down to see steam rising up from the ground below. The smell of sulfur will reach up at you. From this vantage point, you can also observe the discoloration of the soils caused by the minerals in the water and steam. If anyone in your group is unable to negotiate climbs and descents, this is where you will leave them. But we hope you are up to it because down below is where the party really shakes.

Follow the trail down steeply to reach an open area beside a creek. Heed the warning signs and stay on the trail and away from steam and hot water. Somewhere beneath the ground, water is being heated enough by magma to produce this continuous display of steam wherever the pressure can escape through fissures. These spots are known as fumeroles.



Bumpass Hell Mudpot

In some places, the heat source is near enough to make the ground itself hot. Right beside the trail you will find a couple of mud pots full of a grayish green ooze, heated to a slow boil. As the bubbles of steam escape, the mud issues burbling noises. Between this ongoing sound effect, varying in degree with the size of the bubbles, and the hissing of steam, there is quite a little concert going on down here. And the various colors of the surrounding soils (red, orange, yellow, white, and purple) present an artistic backdrop to this music.

The trail winds its way to all of the primary geothermal features here and then returns you to the place where the trail heads steeply back up to the overlook. Make the climb and take one last look down at Bumpass Hell before returning the same way you came out to the parking area.

Directions: From the southwest park entrance, head north past Sulphur Works and continue on the main park road past Emerald Lake to the trailhead parking on the right. There is a restroom.