

# Cascade Pass Hike, September 7 and 8, 2004

Update Sept 13, 2004

I have wanted to hike in the North Cascades of Washington for over 40 years now, starting with my first learning about these mountains from friends and fellow hikers and climbers. But I never managed to get there, other than a short visit to Mt. Shuksan. The drive was always just too far. Even when it did seem within reason, we elected to go somewhere else, for in the allotted time, the other choice provided one more day of hiking, one more day away from the rat race of whatever it was that needed to be isolated from me at the moment. But the photos of the place, and recently, the web discussions continued to draw me to the place. I tried to talk Roger and his friends, Brian and Ken, into a trip up that way in July, but their schedule was too tight for it. I also did not know what I could physically manage. So, for that junket we went to the Alpine Lakes Wilderness, leaving the North Cascades for another day.

Well, that day arrived. Ron informed me that he had managed to set up his flight schedule to have several days free in early September of 2004. We could go do a junket to the mountains in that time. We attended a wedding here on Sunday, September 5, so I drove up to Ron's on Monday, Labor Day, September 6th. He had a BarBQ going in his back yard for friends which I got to attend. We then headed for the hills on Tuesday, September 7th. (That was Roger's birthday -- too bad he could not have joined us for this one!) We drove north from Gig Harbor through the madness of Seattle and on to Washington Highway 20 where we turned east. We then proceeded through Sedro Woolly, Concrete, and Marblemount where we left the main road. We stopped at the National Park Service office in Marblemount and got a back country permit, allowing us to camp in Pelton Basin for the next two nights. We then drove on a back road for 25 miles to roads end. There was a large parking lot there and it was nearly full with 2 to 3 dozen cars. We changed into our boots, grabbed our packs, and headed up the trail toward Cascade Pass. The trail on the west side was gentle and well graded.



After quite a while in the trees we finally broke out and started to catch some views. This was to be the best view we got of Eldorado. The closer rocks at the right of the picture are part of Forbidden, a peak largely hidden from us by Sahale. Glimpses of these mountains the next day were often obscured by clouds.

Reaching the top of the pass brought some views of our camp that night. The flat meadow area, 400 ft below the pass, is Pelton Basin. Our camp sight is in the trees on the left side.



The next morning brought hints of the rainy weather that was to come later. We loaded our packs to be stored in the trees at Cascade Pass so we could use the available good weather to explore Sahale Arm. As we hiked up to the pass, we could see weather from the Pacific piling over the pass, a view that would present itself often through the day.



After stowing our packs in the pass, we started up the arm. There were occasional moments of clear weather in the pass.



The Triplets and Cascade Peak behind the pass. Mt. Johannesberg is further to the right, rarely seen through the fog of the day. We did, however, hear ice falling from Johannesberg a couple of times through the day.

After climbing for a few hundred feet, we pulled out onto the flat of the "Arm," a long ridge extending upward toward the summit of Sahale Peak. Here Ron adjusts his camera for one of his many photos.



The peak

behind Ron is Mixup Mtn while the dominant wide peak is Magic Mtn. Pelton Peak and Trapper Mountain are further to the east.

Climbing higher on the Arm brought expanded views, with some beginning to show the next layer of peaks behind.



Our goal was the base of the glacier on Sahale Pk, which is the sharp point in this photo:



Here is the base of the glacier's west segment with a large pile of rocks below it.





This is a view of Ron from near the top of the rocks, looking down the expanse of Sahale Arm with Doubtful Lake 2000 ft below.





Another view of Doubtful Lake, taken from a ways down the Arm. The cascading water falls from the glacial basin were most picturesque.

As we hiked down, the weather finally changed in earnest, producing showers strong enough to prompt us to don our rain gear. We ended up hiking out that evening rather than camping again down at Pelton Basin. Overall, a really wonderful hike.