Panther Creek Camp

Good warm-up/evaluation for hikers and gear as preparation for a tougher hike like Bearpaw or Alta Peak.

Trail Type: Out and Back
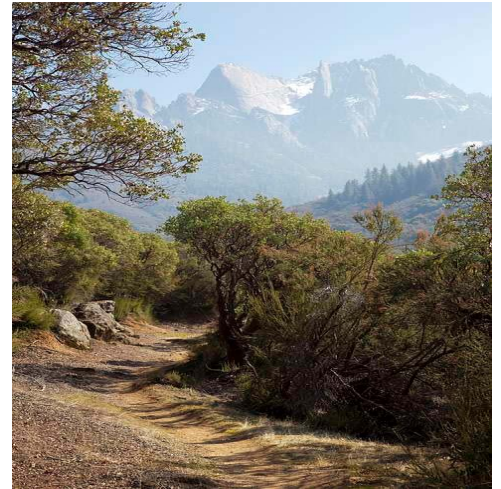**Skill Level: Moderate**
Distance: 7 miles
Trail Head Elevation: 3325 feet
Elevation Gain: 650 feet
Trailhead coordinates: 36° 31′ 39.21″N 118° 45′ 04.74″W

To get to the Trailhead: Take Generals Highway (SH198) and turn right at the Hospital Rock Picnic Area toward Buckeye Flat Campground. Follow the small brown wood sign for the Middle Fork Trail by veering left on the dirt road just before the campground. Please note that the Buckeye Flat Campground road may be closed in the winter. At these times, you will have to park at the Hospital Rock Picnic Area and walk less than two miles to the trailhead.

Highlights: Panther Creek Falls, fishing in the Middle Fork of the Kaweah River for those who don't mind bush-whacking, wildflowers in the spring, views up the river drainage to the Great Western Divide, access to Redwood Meadow (one of the most remote sequoia groves in the park).

When to Go: This low elevation trail is best in spring, late fall, or winter. Summer typically brings scorching temperatures that deter most hikers.

Common Campsites along the Middle Fork Trail Corridor: Panther Creek, about 3.5 miles from the trailhead, is the first place where camping is allowed and the destination for this hike. Further down the trail, other campsites include Mehrten Creek (about 6 miles from the trailhead) and Buck Creek (about 9 miles from the trailhead). These previously mentioned campsites are the only locations you will likely find flat ground and breaks in the vegetation.

Common Wildlife You Might See: Mule deer, black bear, bobcat, mountain lion, rattlesnake, and lots of birds.

Common Vegetation You Might Notice: Buckthorn, Manzanita, black oak, chemise, bear clover.

Items of Caution: Poison oak is abundant below 6,000 feet elevation - long sleeves and pants are your best protection. Watch out for rattlesnakes, especially at the lower elevations. Check for ticks.