

Lake Emma Trail

Round Trip: 7 miles
Difficulty: Strenuous
Hiking Time: 4 to 5 hours

U.S.G.S Maps: Kenai A-2
Elevation Gain: 2,400 feet
High Point: 2,500 feet



Trailhead: The trailhead is located on the northwest shore of Tustumena Lake. Primary access is by boat from the Kasilof River Landing, via the Kasilof River and Tustumena Lake. Tustumena Lake is a large glacial lake with recurring high wind and waves. Inclement weather can develop suddenly and without warning, making Tustumena extremely rough and dangerous. Take extra boat gas, survival gear and always use caution when on Tustumena Lake. If the lake is rough- **STAY ON SHORE**- and be prepared for an unexpected extension of the trip. Boats must not be left unattended at Emma Lake Trailhead along the Tustumena Lake shore. Boats should be pulled completely out of the water or otherwise secured when unattended.

DESCRIPTION: Lake Emma trail provides access to the historic Lake Emma Cabin. In 2004, the Glacier Creek Fire burned approximately 7,000 acres, including a significant portion of Lake Emma Trail. Reconstruction of the lower portion of the trail was completed in 2005. The first 2 miles of trail climb sharply in elevation before leveling off for the final approach to Lake Emma Cabin. The trail traverses both mature spruce and birch forests and heavily burned areas.

SCENIC VIEWS: As a result of the Glacier Creek Fire, unobstructed panoramic views of Tustumena Lake, Caribou Hills, and the surrounding area are possible along much of the trail. Spectacular views of mountains and glaciers can be had above timberline.

CAMPING: Overnight stays in Lake Emma Cabin are possible on a “first come-first serve” basis. No permits or fees are required. The cabin receives regular use by hunters and hikers in the fall. Please clean the cabin and leave a small supply of firewood before you depart. There are no established campsites and suitable areas to pitch a tent along the trail are limited. Camping and water is available above timberline, but firewood is not. You must rely on a camp stove and all water should be treated or filtered. Please do not disturb alpine tundra vegetation, as it is very fragile.

FISHING: Fishing along Tustumena Lake can be fair to good. Emma Lake offers fair fishing for Dolly Varden trout. Review Alaska Department of Fish and Game hunting and fishing regulations.

OTHER ACTIVITIES: Berry-picking can be good during late summer. This is also a good area to view wildlife such as Dall sheep, hoary marmots, brown bears and caribou. Access to Indian Creek and alpine areas are possible via primitive routes and offer good opportunities for hunting, sightseeing, wildlife viewing and exploring, however these routes are not routinely maintained and can be difficult to follow. Exploration in these remote areas requires good navigational skills, as well as map and compass and possibly a GPS. The alpine area is subject to heavy fog or clouds and the resulting low-visibility makes navigation very difficult.

The Andrew Berg historic cabin is visible to the south of the Emma Lake Trailhead. It is a quick boat ride or a short, but challenging hike along the lakeshore to the cabin. The cabin is not available for overnight stays, but worth a visit to examine the exceptional craftsmanship of early trappers and hunters.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS: Emma Lake Trail is within federally designated Wilderness; be sure to leave no trace of your visit. Emma Lake is closed to public aircraft operations. There is a private in-holding adjacent to the trailhead. Please respect the rights of the property owners.