

Castle Lake Trails



Castle Lake is a classic example of a glacial cirque lake carved out of granite. It lies at an elevation of 5,440' feet and is located 10 miles southwest of Mt. Shasta City, adjacent to the Castle Crags Wilderness. This is a popular lake for swimming and paddle boarding due to its crystal-clear waters. A hike up the Heart Lake Trail takes you into the Castle Crags Wilderness and connects to the PCT just to the south of Heart Lake. The road to Castle Lake is paved and maintained for year-round access, although the lake will be covered in ice and snow through winter and spring.

Camping and Toilet Access

Bring your own water or filter the water at creeks and lakes. There is a campground and vault toilet just to the north of the Castle Lake parking lot. Dispersed camping is not allowed within 1 mile of Castle Lake, but following the trails beyond the lake, you are able to disperse camp. See Forest Service rules on dispersed camping for details.

Important Trailheads

Castle Lake Shore Trail

Distance: .5 Miles There, .5 Miles Back (1 Mile Total)

Elevation Gain: 30'ft

The short trail leaves from the northeast end of the parking lot (on the right just past the restroom as you drive in). It heads along the west shore of the lake and allows you several opportunities to reach the water's edge for a refreshing swim or a contemplative sit. The trail terminates at the granite cliffs that form the headwall on the south side of the lake. Midway on the trail is a cabin that is used as a limnology lab by UC Davis for monitoring the lake. A floating platform near the center of the lake is used for taking lake samples and conducting experiments.

Heart Lake

Distance: 1.5 Miles There, 1.5 Miles Back (3 Miles Total)

Elevation Gain: 753'ft

The Heart Lake Trail begins to the south of the parking lot at the north end of the lake shore. Walk east to the trailhead and to the east side of Castle Lake, where the trail ascends the cliff side, climbing a rocky staircase for about .7 miles. Once you reach the top of the crags overlooking Castle Lake, there will be a junction at the .7-mile mark. Stay to the right to keep on the Heart Lake Trail, the left will take you out to Little Castle Lake and Mt Bradley. In about .2 miles, you reach another junction. The left takes you to the PCT connector that shortly reaches the Pacific Crest Trail. Stay to the right another .2 miles to reach Heart Lake. Just beyond Heart Lake another .3 miles is the Castle Lake Viewpoint that provides stunning views of Castle Lake, Mt Shasta, and surrounding alpsines.

PCT Connector: Castle View Trail

After the .7 miles Junction to Mt Bradley trail, take a right onto the Heart Lake Trail. Continue for another .2 miles. At the next junction, stay left to reach the PCT connector called the Castle View Trail. Hike another .6 miles to reach the Pacific Crest Trail.

Little Castle Lake

Distance: 1.2 Miles There, 1.2 Miles Back (2.4 Miles Total)

Elevation Gain: 672'ft

Staying to the left of the Heart Lake Trail and the .7-mile junction, continue onward the Mt Bradley trail for roughly .4 Miles. Little Castle Lake will be toward the south of the trail with Ney Springs Creek flowing down toward the north.

Mt Bradley Ridge

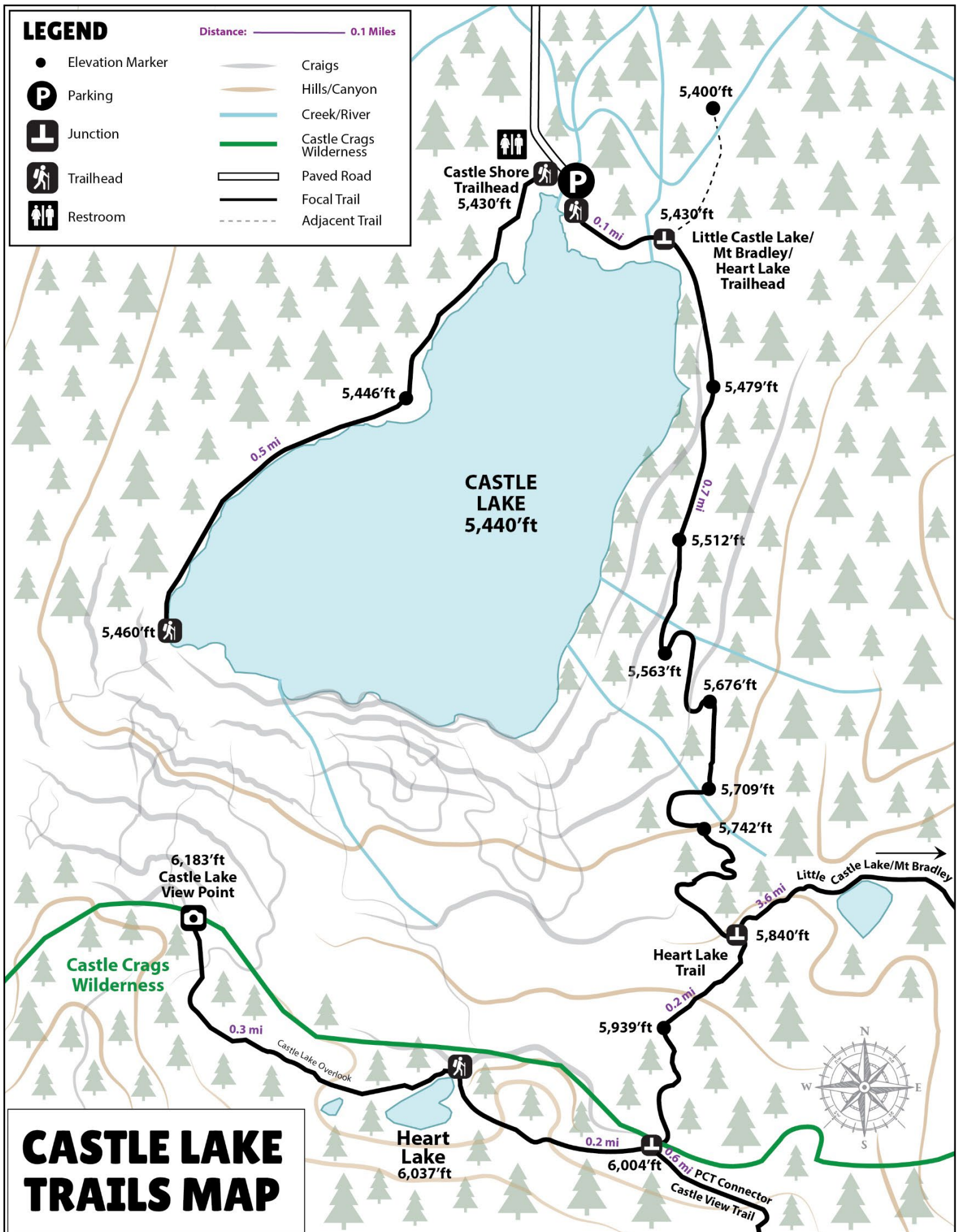
Distance: 5.1 Miles There, 5.1 Miles Back (10.2 Miles Total)

Elevation Gain: 2,276' ft

Staying to the left of the Heart Lake Trail at the .7-mile junction, continue onward for another 4.3 Miles toward the east. You'll meet with a road and arrive at Mt Bradley.

LEGEND

- Elevation Marker
- P** Parking
- J** Junction
- Trailhead
- Restroom
- Distance: — 0.1 Miles
- Craigs
- Hills/Canyon
- Creek/River
- Castle Crag Wilderness
- Paved Road
- Focal Trail
- Adjacent Trail



CASTLE LAKE TRAILS MAP