



Trail 22 - Dog Lake from Spruces

Duration: 3 hours

Distance: 5.4 out-and-back

Difficulty: Easy; the last half mile climbs

Trailhead: Across the road from Spruces Campground

Elevation: Spruces 7500'; Dog Lake 8715'

Map: Mt. Aire 7.5' quadrangle

Avalanche: Low

GPS Coordinates: Dog Lake--12 T 446091/4501756

Dogs: Not allowed in Big Cottonwood Canyon

Introduction: A popular backcountry trail and destination, this route to Dog Lake almost always sports tracks from backcountry skiers heading to Reynold's Peak above Dog Lake. The trailhead is easy to find, parking is ample, and the trail sits in quiet winter solitude winding through fir, and naked aspen. A small stream breaks through the snowy surface in some sections of the trail. Moose sightings are not unusual here. Rabbit tracks and a lone winter spider or two may cross your path. Overall the trip to Dog Lake is a pristine, half day jaunt that takes you back into the mountains for a winter escape.

How to Get There: 9.7 miles up Big Cottonwood Canyon the Spruces Campground parking lot sits on the south side of the road. Park here. Directly across the road is a UTA Bus stop sign sitting next to the big rail-road-crossing road blocks that come down to close the road off during winter avalanche management. The trail to Dog Lake heads northwest up the mountain right at the crossing block and bus sign.

Trail Description: From the bus sign head north west through the trees. The first section of trail travels through a Mill D cabin neighborhood. The trail often appears groomed but is actually packed according to the travel going on within the neighborhood. It is primarily a summer cabin retreat, so the jaunt through this portion still affords a sense of solitude. Avalanche danger is slim to none along this trail because anchors abound in the form of trees, and slopes are gentle until you get to Reynold's Peak above Dog Lake.

About .4 mile up the trail, you will run into the first fork in the road. In the crotch of the fork sits a big Mill D cabin-layout sign. At this fork stay left. One tenth of a mile further up the trail a green forest service gate sits off to the south. If the snow is deep this may not be visible, so go by mileage if you can't see it. Diverge from the road at this gate by heading left around the gate in a westerly direction. You should see the trail as you get around the gate. The trail forks again two miles up the road. Depending upon snow pack, there is another sign that shows Dog Lake to the left and Desolation Lake to the right. Head left. The trail is a pleasant jaunt passing near a stream at times. The last half mile is an uphill pull. As you come over the crest of the hill the depression for Dog Lake is visible. You can head to the south/left, up through the trees, and gain a vantage point that allows you to look down over Dog Lake and up at Reynolds Peak. If the snow is good you may see backcountry skiers. Reynolds Peak is a known avalanche area.

Options: If you wish to add variety to your return trip, you can, from the upper vantage point spoken of above, travel to the south and down the first gully which will hook you back up with the original trail a half mile down. Personally, if the powder is good, I prefer to return down the hill just climbed, in order to get a little downhill powder-stomping into the trip.