



Trail 38--Grizzly Gulch/Twin Lakes

Duration: 2 hours

Distance: 2.56 miles out-and-back

Difficulty: Moderate

Trailhead: Upper Albion Basin parking lot – Alta Ski Resort

Elevation: Parking Lot 8787'; Top of Grizzly Gulch 9479'; Twin Lake Pass 9997'

Map: Brighton 7.5' quadrangle

Avalanche: Grizzly Gulch is a terrain trap during high avalanche conditions. In addition, be aware that the north route from Brighton to Twin Lakes Pass is a classic avalanche slope.

GPS Coordinates: Grizzly Gulch--12 T 0447721/4493716

Twin Lake (turn off to get to pass)--12 T 0448476/4493763

Twin Lake Pass--12 T 0448530/4493727

Dogs: Dogs are not allowed in Little Cottonwood Canyon

Introduction: Little Cottonwood Canyon is steeper and more avalanche prone than Big Cottonwood Canyon, but it is magnificent, rugged, and unbelievably beautiful. On a clear sunny day this route will knock your socks off with views of Mount Superior and the high-mountain chutes and bowls of the area—From Twin Lakes Pass you take in my favorite view in the Wasatch. Down one side of Twin Lakes Pass you see the lakes for which the pass is named which sit near Brighton Ski Resort, and down the other, the side you just came up, words cannot do the view justice. In fact, save this trail for a clear bright day or you'll miss the magic. A couple of large tailings piles mark the area's mining history, and when covered by snow make jumps for backcountry users. Chances are you won't know they are tailings piles, they'll just look like hills.

How to Get There: The Grizzly Gulch trail starts at the very top of Little Cottonwood Canyon. To get to Little Cottonwood Canyon follow Wasatch Boulevard south. There is a large intersection at the mouth of Big Cottonwood Canyon. Rather than turning east toward Brighton and Solitude, continue south for LCC. 2.3 miles up Wasatch Boulevard/UT 210 there is a stop light and the Boulevard takes a turn off to the right. Don't turn with the Boulevard, instead go straight through the light and follow the road/ UT 210 to the very top of Little Cottonwood Canyon and the town of Alta. Park in the Upper Albion Basin Parking lot. The trail starts on the east side of the lot.

Trail Description: The route I recommend on the way up follows the groomed track made by the Alta grooming cat as it takes high-paying skiers to the top of these backcountry bowls and chutes. On the descent, conditions permitting, drop into Grizzly Gulch for the return trip. I have chosen this route because it will be the safest and most scenic. The bottom of Grizzly Gulch empties into the parking lot-- if you want to head straight up Grizzly Gulch from the get-go, that is your option, but if avalanche conditions are unstable the route would be dangerous. Whether you head up Grizzly Gulch and jump on the cat track to make it to Twin Lakes Pass, or whether you just jump off the cat track on your way down and enter Grizzly Gulch for the return to your car, the gulch is only a portion of the trail. Narrow and surrounded by 40-degree angled walls, Grizzly Gulch is good fun, especially in powder. From the parking lot, head up the groomed road past the ROAD CLOSED sign on the east side of the parking lot. This is the "summer access road". A quarter mile up the road a cat track heads north, straight up the mountain. Head up this track for a more direct route. Mileage for this trip is figured going straight up this face, but you will get to the same place by following the winding cat track if you prefer a route with more gradual elevation gain. From the beginning, views of Alta Ski Resort open to the south and Mount Superior stands regally to the west. You will follow the track of the grooming cat until you are within a few hundred feet of Twin Lakes Pass. Use the GPS coordinate to note where to turn off the cat track and head toward the pass. More than likely, there will already be a path made from others who have come before, heading off to the east. Only 50 or so feet separate the cat track from Twin Lakes Pass and the view of a lifetime, it would be hard to get lost. This is one of my favorite spots in the Wasatch Range. The view of Mt. Superior to the West, the bowls on both sides of the mountains, the tree lined slopes, and out across the Salt Lake Valley are unlike any other. It's majestic to say the least. Off the other side of the pass the Twin Lakes sit snow-covered at the head of Brighton Ski Resort. Peaks on each side climb even higher if you want more elevation. This high-mountain, bowl area attracts backcountry skiers galore. Jumps, as well as

tracks down amazingly high, steep bowls and chutes, attest to their usage. On your way back down you drop into Grizzly Gulch. The Gulch is a known avalanche area during bad conditions, but during good conditions it's a playground for skiers, snowboarders and snowshoers. Approximately halfway back down the trail, Grizzly Gulch sits off to the north of the cat track you followed up. It's a relatively narrow gulch that is fun to run down when full of powder. The sides steepen a bit as you get farther down the gulch. The gulch empties right at the parking lot.

Options: You can also start from Brighton Ski Resort, come to Twin Lakes Pass, and then make your descent down this route and through Grizzly Gulch.