

## **Nelda's Diner is mentioned in the Guide Books for the Pacific Crest Trail!**

*Both Yogi's Guide and the Pacific Crest Trail Atlas 2nd Edition mention Nelda's as a destination not to be missed!*

*Here are some excerpts from hiker's journals posted on the net.*

Anyway, after camping about fourteen miles south of Walker Pass, the four of us decided yesterday (Saturday) we'd try and hitch west out of Walker Pass to Lake Isabella, where--according to Yogi's handy trail guide--there is a place called Nelda's Diner that apparently has the best milkshakes on the PCT. Like we were gonna pass THAT up!

After 30 minutes of holding out our thumbs and waving at every passerby (wherein I began to learn the sign language of a hitch hiker, for instance someone drives by and gives you the hand sign for an inch, it means they aren't going far and are about to turn off just down the road) we got a ride from a wonderful lady named Mary.

She was a wildlife biologist and we spoke of the work she did in the area during the summertime. She took us right to Nelda's diner where the shakes were to be epic.

We saw Chief Daddy and his entourage eating and slurping up the last bits of their meals. Chief Daddy eyed us jealously as our malts arrived,

and then I found out he was lactose intolerant. I held up my two lactaid tablets and said, "this malt is made enjoyable because of these!". Though his lactose intolerance sounded worse than mine he seemed pleased to know that there might be something that would work for him in the future.

My stawberry peanut butter malt was fab, but more impressive than the malt was the list of shakes/malts. They had imagined every combination possible and given them all names. There were probably 75 on the list.

The entourage left and I went and swooped the leftover fries from their table. Furniture and I feasted on them while Evan used my iPhone to try and track down a decent shoe store in the area.

The highlight of our town stay has to be Nelda's diner - where there are 108 named milkshakes on the menu, but you can get any combination of ice cream flavors and additions that you want. It comes in a tall glass, piled high with whipped cream, and you even get the extra in the silver malt cup if you order the large. Chocolate + thin mint + crunch bar + malt for me, Vanilla + butterfinger + sprinkles for Scout. We sat with Cloudspotter, Mosey, A-Train, Nafta, Hot Rock, and Out There, and everyone loved their shake or malt. The waitress told us the most popular named shake is "PMS" which is chocolate chip + butterfinger + crunch bar.  
<http://www.yelp.com/biz/neldas-diner-lake-isabella>

Wow. Trail Magic Strikes Again. We hiked out to Walker Pass with great speed, the possibility of town food and good milkshakes aiding each step. We got to the campground moments before Dr. Tart, saw 1 car, asked them if they were headed to town, then saw a hiker who had just finished a section of the PCT from Hwy 58 to Walker Pass. Her name was Karla and she & her friend Di asked if there was anything we needed. I told them we had heard of a good restaurant in Lake Isabella with the best milkshakes on the trail. On my word alone, as well as Karla's voracious appetite, the kind pair took us to Lake Isabella, which ended up being about 35 miles from Walker Pass, much further than anticipated. But, we got to Nelda's Diner and stuffed our faces full of excellent food. My meal began with a raspberry cheese cake & chocolate milk (large please) followed by a ranch & handmade fried onion & swiss burger. This was no ordinary burger. Nelda's Diner offers a hungry hiker serving called "The Strangler": any burger, upgraded to 2/3 pound of meat & double toppings, served on a french roll. Wow! I wish I had taken a picture. Its been a long time since I've eaten at a restaurant with all fresh ingredients & handshaped burgers. I was very impressed.

Wade dropped us off at the Kern Motel in Lake Isabella, where I was happy to see Blue Butterfly, One Step, Stone Dancer, Vegematic, Walkin Cowboy, Blacksnake, Southern Man, Bayou, Moonshine and Rosemary.

After a quick shower followed by a late lunch at Nelda's Diner (mmmm . . . milkshakes) with Blacksnake, Tahoe Mike and Grampa Kilt, I dialed a ride to the library, then returned to the motel around 7 p.m. As I was leaving the motel to walk back to Nelda's for dinner, I saw a woman walking toward me. She looked vaguely familiar, but I couldn't quite place her. "Hey!", she yelled as I started to walk on. It was Wheeew!

We had not seen each other since Warner Springs the weekend of the kickoff party and she had lost 15 pounds since then. Despite a broken ankle, she has been hiking with her backpack and has made it through some tough sections. We sauntered down to Nelda's where we caught up with the trail gossip over dinner. As we sat in our booth in Lake Isabella, I thought of the many dinners we shared in Michigan, where we also shared our hopes and dreams for our PCT hikes. Now we are both living it.

Lake Isabella is 35 miles from Walker Pass but is the closest full service town in the area. Full service to this hiker means motel, laundromat, internet access, grocery store and someplace with milkshakes.

Nelda's Diner has the biggest selection of milkshakes I've ever seen.

But I digress.

We hiked 20 miles and got to the road at about 3:30, got a hitch at 4:00 that brought us the 30 miles into Lake Isabella to Nelda's diner. Erin and I couldn't even hold a conversation until we ate our food. The thought had crossed our minds that finding a hitch out of town may be difficult, but we had a one-track mind and decided we would deal with that later. So after we drank the milkshake and ate the burger, we both just wanted to go to sleep.

While I was in Lake Isabella I had gone to the library. One of the e-mails mentioned a place in Lake Isabella -

Nelda's Diner. It said that they had great hamburgers and tremendous shakes. I went to see. Instead of getting the hamburger, I got the special meatloaf, mashed potatoes, gravy and salad, and I did get the shake. BEST shake I have EVER had! Both yesterday and today I went there for breakfast. Had 2 pancakes, 3 eggs, 2 bacon and hash browns plus coffee.

**Miss Congeniality and a Breakfast Milkshake - Scout:** The day began at the Kern Motel whose neon sign should flash "SEEDY," "Hot Water After 6 PM." By 7:30 am we were in a booth at Nelda's Diner. At one point this morning there were 24, yes, two dozen, thru-hikers in booths at Nelda's. Say the word MILKSHAKES and we come a-calling, in droves.

Here's Hitch and Cabana Boy with a "small" hiker breakfast at Nelda's. Frodo and I shared a booth with Scuba and Miss Congeniality. "Miss C" is a musician, singer/guitarist from North Hollywood, so between milkshake slurps we had plenty to talk about. Scuba is one of "ours," he stayed with us at that house we have in that alternate universe you call the "real world."

So I'm hiking up to a peak near 7000 feet and I meet a guy who asks me if I'm going to Lake Isabella. I tell him that I'm not and he says that he is. Internally I get pissed because I'm jealous and I hike away in a huff. But the conversation was the spark I needed to get out of my trail funk.

Now I'm openly debating whether to go in or not. I just stayed in Tehachapi for two and a half days, but I really want to go to Lake Isabella. Kennedy Meadows is just a couple of days from Lake Isabella so why stop? But I really want that damn milkshake. So I keep climbing and I meet up with two people and we stop together to take a breather. I tell them I'm debating whether or not to go into town and they tell me that they're going in because even though they just took five days off to rest the woman's foot, it was acting up and they wanted to give it another break.

"Five days!?" I thought to myself. And here I was worrying over two and a half.

And just then I remembered the moment during one of my training hikes when I didn't want to stop to get out my water bottle but finally had to because I just couldn't grab it, and how absolutely angering it was. But also realizing that if I needed to stop to get the water bottle, why not? What was stopping me? If I wanted the water, why not just stop and grab it?

If my ankle hurt and I wanted to go into town and take a day, even though I just had two and a half off, why not? What was stopping me?

And that was it. Almost instantaneously my mood lifted and I felt happy again. I had the prospect of a room, a shower and a delicious milkshake in front of me again, and it was only a day

away.

And like that, all was right in the world once more. The next morning a trail angel was parked at the campground near the road into Lake Isabella so I got to have cinnamon buns, cookies, fruit and soda at 9:00am. I also met two of the nicest and funniest people on the trail so far who were also going into Lake Isabella, so we caught a hitch in together with a Canadian who was on a post-grad school road trip through the U.S. and Canada. He talked our ear off for the entire ride and seemed to know more about American politics than we did. He also told us about some controversy over Canada's sovereignty over the Northwest Passage and how they were putting battleships up there to assert control. Meanwhile I'm sitting there thinking, "Canada has a navy?"

I smiled to myself and stared out the window, listening to the guy go on about how much he loves Obama, throwing in my two cents about life here and there, and watching the cows graze in the deep green grasses at the foot of the desert mountains.

It was good to be back.

Oh, and the milkshake was the shit.