

**Image: Cinder Cone
Lassen National Park, Northern California**

Journey into the Heart of an Ancient Beast

Left, soft crunch,
Right, soft crunch,
SLIDE...

No traction for weary trekker: steep, soft puddles of cinder
Remnant of wind, rain and bold explorer before you.

Midnight matte black grains of time immemorial,
Once spewed from the tumultuous heart of an ancient Fury.
Now less belligerent, but passive aggressive,
Braking progress - Gravity complicit.
Pulverized mountain underfoot, dressed in cold patches of
snow.

Surmount the rim!
Peer deep down into the heart of beast long quiescent.
Wild winds threaten toppling those with unsure foot.
Onward ho! Descend!
Sliding, one foot then other pushes cinder and snow aside.
The beast has been waiting millennia for you to arrive.
Do not disappoint.

~ Vivian Fung