

American Canyon Trail



Distance: 2.4 miles to river; 1 hour down, 2 hours up (hiking)

Difficulty: Easy down, moderate up

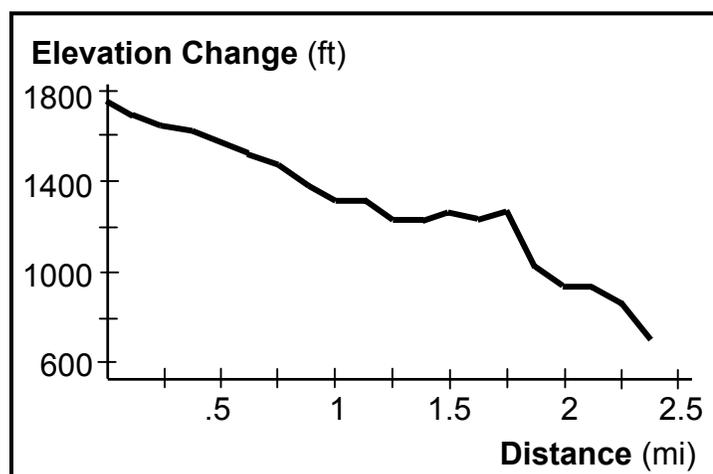
Slope: 11% avg; 28% max. (see below)

Trailhead / Parking

Trailhead is on Pilgrim Way east of Cool. Take Hwy 49 south to Cool. Turn left on Hwy 193 at blinking red light and drive six miles. Turn left on Pilgrim Way and look for trailhead on right side just below the gated entrance to Auburn Lakes Trails development. Curbside parking is available along Pilgrim Way on both sides of trailhead.

Description

This steep trail has everything you need for a great day of exploration – rugged mountain canyons, a beautiful stream with waterfalls, a wide variety of plant and animal life, gold rush-era history, and panoramic views of the Middle Fork American River. This is an excellent hike for bird lovers and picture takers – even artists with drawing pads and paint boxes. Remember your binoculars and camera, and don't forget water and a lunch tucked into your backpack to enjoy while you savor the scenery.



The American Canyon Trail is densely treed along the first half, mostly with various species of oak and pine. Laurel, blackberry bushes, and poison oak can also be found along most of the trail. After the first mile, the trail gets more sunlight and will be hot in the summer – early morning use is recommended.

This trail joins the historic Western States Trail (WST) for a short distance about $\frac{3}{4}$ miles from the trailhead (see sidebar). Take a right at the first trail intersection with the WST, and a left at the next intersection to stay on the American Canyon Trail.

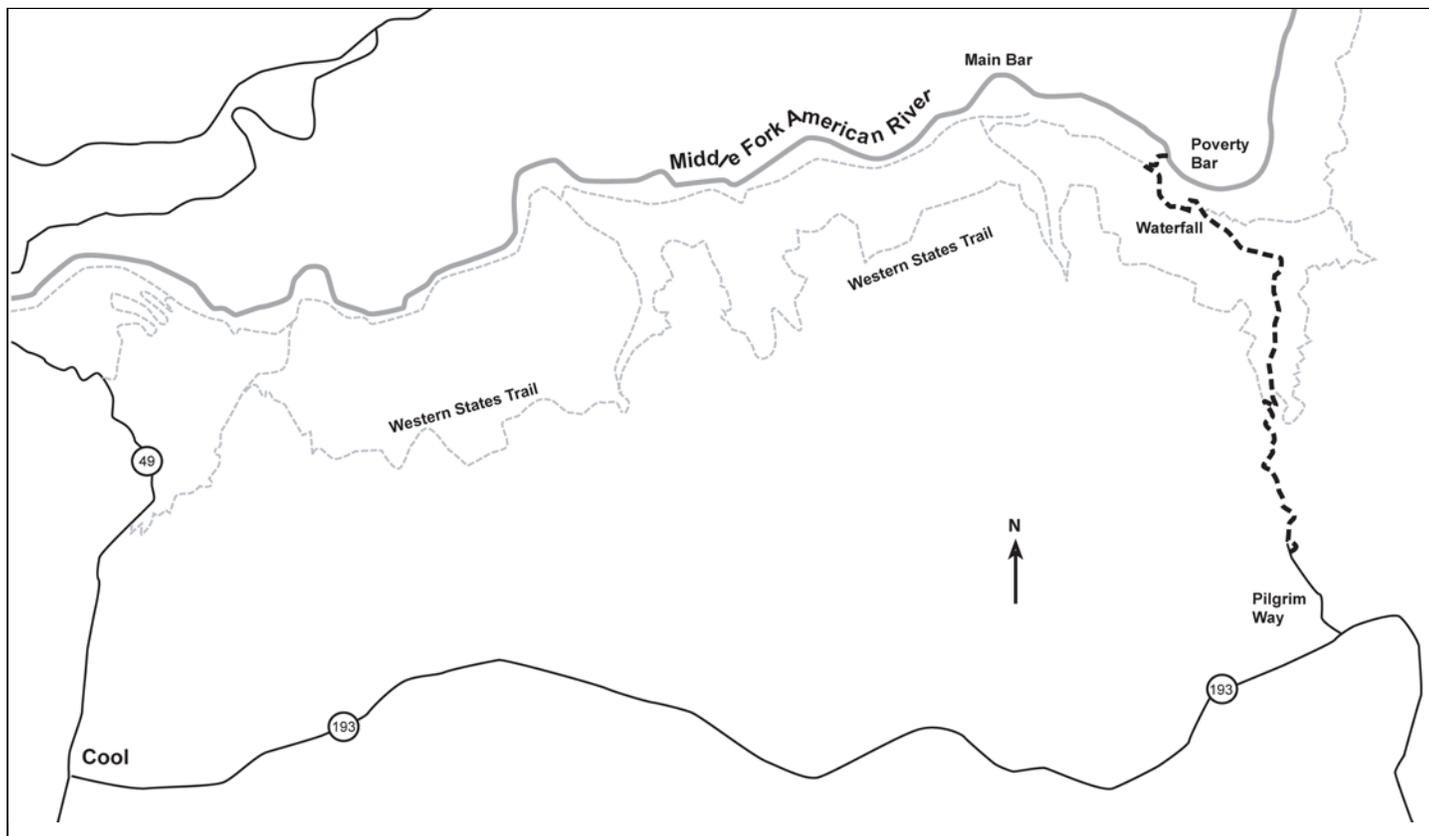
About halfway down the trail is a plaque and shrine erected by friends and fellow joggers in memory of Barbara Schoener. The plaque describes the 1994 tragedy when Barbara was attacked and killed by a mountain lion while jogging alone on this trail. Many joggers now wear a small bell or whistle when they run on mountain trails, or they run with a friend.

About $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles from the top, a small, very steep and unmarked side trail on the left leads down to a very nice waterfall and a great pool where you can escape the heat on a hot summer day.

Returning to the main trail, just before it crosses American Canyon Creek, the terrain levels out at the site of an historic gold rush town, once home to thousands of miners but now almost completely reclaimed by mother nature. If you look closely, you may spot a 30-foot high rock dam, hidden behind a pile of tailings, which was built by hand during the gold rush. Nearby, the confluence of the American and Hoboken Creeks offers a beautiful place to cool off while you watch numerous California newts (a.k.a. Firebellies) on the trail and in the pools.

Caution should be exercised throughout the hike due to ankle-high Poison Oak that creeps onto many parts of the trail. And don't forget sunscreen and ample water.





Did You Know? – The Western States Trail (WST) originally stretched from Sacramento to Utah. The Sierra Crest portion of the trail, blazed by Paiute and Washoe Indians and later used by miners and Pony Express riders, is now the route of two world-famous endurance races: the Tevis Cup Ride for equestrians, and the Western States 100-mile Endurance Run. Both races begin before dawn at Squaw Valley in the Lake Tahoe Basin and end in Auburn after nightfall, traversing roughly one hundred miles.

This part of the WST (from Ruck-A-Chucky campgrounds to the Route 49 crossing) is different for runners and equestrians. Endurance Runners hug the canyon wall on a narrow, winding trail about 600 feet above the river, while Tevis Cup riders take a wider, flatter trail closer to the river, following the route prospectors used to get from bar to bar along the river. The American Canyon Trail crosses the higher WST for runners and ends at the lower WST where Tevis Cup riders cross the river at Poverty Bar.

Thank you for visiting the Auburn State Recreation Area. Please take care to preserve and protect the trails, plants, and historic artifacts for other visitors (and for the wild residents of ASRA) by staying on the trail and by packing out all garbage to the trailhead. Some trails are very popular and may be crowded at times with hikers, bikers, and equestrians. Trail courtesy requires that bikers yield to hikers and equestrians, and that hikers yield to equestrians. In order to reduce conflicts and increase everyone's enjoyment, park visitors are required to act in a safe and courteous manner, obeying all park rules and speed limits, and respecting trail designations. **Not all trails are open to all uses. A large print version of this trail guide is available at ASRA Park Headquarters.**

This trail guide was created by ASRA Canyon Keepers, volunteers who assist the professional Park Rangers by providing information and assistance to ASRA visitors. Canyon Keepers conduct monthly hikes and meetings (open to the public) to learn more about the history and natural beauty of the American River Canyon. They also help maintain and improve hiking trails in ASRA. To learn more about Canyon Keepers, please call 530-885-3776 or click www.psyber.com/~asra/asrack.htm