

Stevens Trail



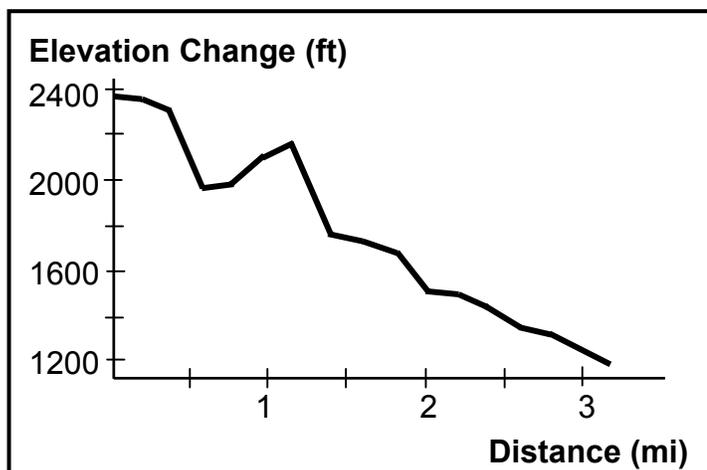
Distance: 3.2 miles to river; 1½ hours down, 3 hours up (hiking)
Difficulty: Easy down, moderate up
Slope: 6% avg; 40% max. (see below)

Trailhead / Parking

Parking is on N. Canyon Way in Colfax. From Auburn, take I-80 east to the 2nd Colfax exit and turn left on the frontage road, which is N. Canyon Way. Continue 0.6 miles and turn left into a small parking area. Look for a 'trail' sign marking the trailhead.

Description

This very well maintained trail is one of the most popular hiking and biking routes to the North Fork American River, in part because of its easy access from Colfax. However, this is a remote trail, and hikers are advised to carry a whistle or hike with a friend. The entire trail is mostly shaded, passing through Oak, Laurel, Douglas Fir, and huge stands of Manzanita. Wildflower displays rarely matched anywhere else are particularly attractive during April and May. As with most trails in the ASRA, poison oak can be found along much of the trail. Take plenty of water and use caution, as the trail is hot during summer months and steep at times with narrow passages.



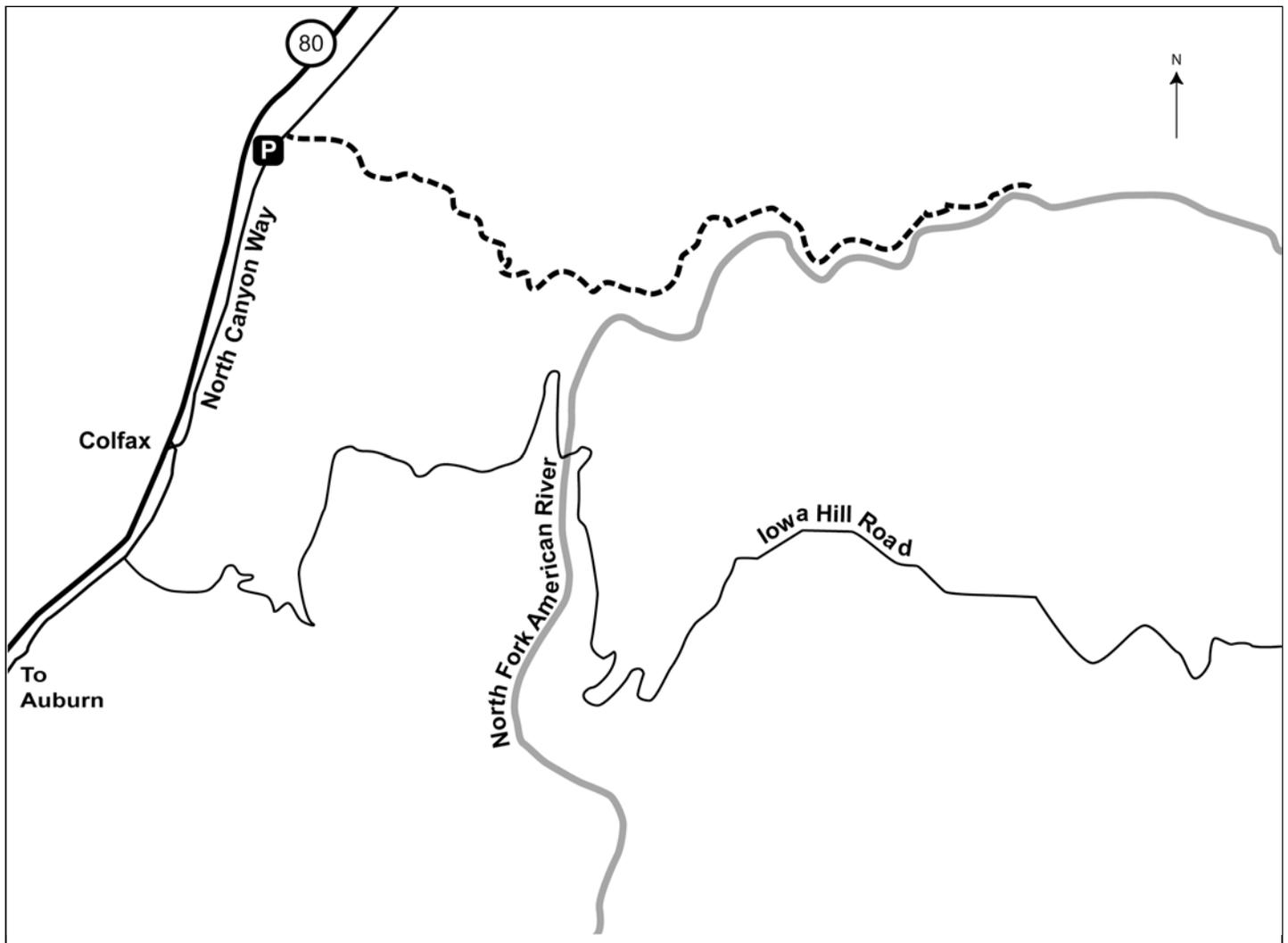
The Stevens Trail starts at the parking area on N. Canyon Way just north of Colfax. After a short distance, it intersects an unmarked firebreak road; turn right on this dirt road. At the ¾-mile point, the trail intersects another firebreak road; bear to the left and look for a metal 'trail' sign a few steps to the left. Soon thereafter, the trail forks again and you have a choice of going either right or left. There is a 'trail' sign on the right, and the right fork is perhaps the better direction since it is more shaded and has better views of the river. (The left fork eventually meets up with the main trail again.)

A little further along the trail is a beautiful cascading waterfall, and shortly thereafter is perhaps the most distinctive landmark on the trail – an immense bed of shale which resembles the 'Devil's Post Pile'. You can also see the remains of a mineshaft, abandoned long ago. In fact, there is evidence of widespread mining activity all along this trail. Above the bed of shale, railroad tracks for the Southern Pacific Railroad are cut into the steep canyon wall known as Cape Horn, reportedly by Chinese laborers suspended in baskets (although this story is now refuted by many railroad buffs).

After about a mile on the dirt road, look for a trail sign pointing to the left. From this point on, the trail enters the steep North Fork American River canyon and traverses the canyon upriver. This part of the trail offers magnificent views of the river, and the Iowa Hill Bridge can also be seen downstream. Hand stacked rock retaining walls can be seen on this stretch of the trail, an indication of the large amount of work required to build this trail (see sidebar).

The trail meets the river at Secret Ravine, and more signs of mining are evident. The foundation of an old suspension bridge can also be seen, complete with rusting cables. Although the trail is fairly easy down to the river, take an opportunity to rest and cool your feet in the cold river before starting the more difficult trip back to the trailhead.





Did You Know? – The Stevens Trail was originally built by Truman Allen Stevens shortly after he arrived in California in 1859. Stevens ran a ranch in Iowa Hill and a livery stable in Colfax. He built the trail and a self-propelled cable car to transport miners and animals

across the North Fork, for which he charged a toll. Although the trail can be found on a 1900-era USGS topographic map, it was largely unknown to locals until Boy Scout Eric Kiel charted it in 1969.

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