

Old Sacramento

Walk, pedal or ride a horse: the trails all begin (or end) here, where the early American settlers made their most visible marks. After the discovery of gold in 1848, merchants and hoteliers were needed to support miners and the rapidly growing population. Seasonal flooding and devastating fires failed to deter these early pioneers. They built their businesses of brick and then physically raised the ground level of their waterfront city by a dozen feet to protect against flooding. Sacramento became so successful the west coast terminus of the Pony Express, telegraph and trans-continental railroad found its home here. Old Sacramento's many fine museums will help you experience the tumultuous early days.

Discovery Park

Barron Slough, the American River and the Sacramento River merge at the western end of the Parkway - Discovery Park. Reservable picnic sites, an archery range, large beach, boat ramp and many acres of habitat make it a desirable destination. Barron Island and the slough provide year-round riparian and open water habitat for wildlife.

TRAIL SYSTEM

The Jedediah Smith Bicycle Trail extends nearly 32 miles from Old Sacramento to Beal's Point. Bicycles share the trail with pedestrians, who walk and jog on the left shoulder, facing traffic. No motor vehicles, skateboards, or rollerblades are allowed on the trail. An unpaved equestrian trail roughly parallels the bicycle trail through the Parkway, generally providing spatial separation between wheeled and hooved transportation.

Bushy Lake - Cal Expo

Once filled from recurrent high water in the river, Bushy Lake now receives most of its water from wells at Cal Expo, site of the California State Fair. The lake and surrounding grasslands provide important habitat for wood ducks and other waterfowl and for elderberry bushes which are home to the valley elderberry long horned beetle, a federally and state protected endangered species. Bushy Lake is popular with bird-watchers and hikers seeking uncrowded and natural conditions.

Effie Yeaw Nature Center

The Nature Center and 73-acre nature area is located in Ancil Hoffman Park and named for schoolteacher Effie Yeaw. Yeaw led nature walks primarily for school children to share her love and knowledge of the natural history of the American River. The Nature Center is funded by fees for nature tours and underwritten by the American River Parkway Foundation, American River Natural History Association, County of Sacramento and contributions by individuals. Featured are exhibits, trails and interpretive programs in 77 acres of riparian woodland, grassland and oak woodland.

Arden Bar / William Pond Recreation Area

Extensively mined for gravel, Arden Bar was reclaimed and named for William B. Pond, former director of Sacramento County Parks Department. The Recreation Area now features a warm water fishing pond regularly stocked with trout, largemouth bass, sunfish, crappie and catfish and is equipped with a handicapped accessible fishing pier. The American River Parkway Foundation's Visitor Center will be located at the site of the old gravel company office.

American River Parkway

Jedediah Smith Memorial Trail

Bicycling

Sacramento has always had bicycle enthusiasts, beginning with the Capital City Wheelmen who lobbied successfully for a cinder path from Sacramento to Folsom. At its completion in 1896, 500 cyclists pedaled off on the inaugural journey over what would become the Jedediah Smith Memorial Bicycle Trail. The existing trail runs almost 32 miles from Old Sacramento to Beal's Point on Folsom Reservoir.

Boating

Most boating within the Parkway is by way of muscle-powered canoes, kayaks and rafts which launch upstream and take out downstream, using the many access points for boats. Raft rentals and shuttle services are available during the summer season. Daily river flow rates are available by calling the Bureau of Reclamation, (916) 978-5117. Motorized boats and fishing dories can be launched at boat ramps and some auto access points. There is a 5 mph speed limit on the Lower American River.

Equestrian

Shown by a dashed red line where it winds away from its parallel course with the bicycle trail, the equestrian trail winds through some of the more scenic and serene segments of the Parkway, with staging facilities located at the points designated by the horseshoe symbol.

Fishing

The American River boasts the only fall migration of king (also known as chinook) salmon to occur in an urban setting. Natural spawning occurs where appropriately sized spawning gravels exist, from about Watt Avenue upstream to the fish hatchery. Viewing this magnificent spectacle is best in the Sunrise Boulevard area, where hundreds of salmon can be observed completing their mating ritual. The Nimbus Fish Hatchery also provides self-guided tours and educational displays. During the fall and early winter months, the river is closed to fishing between Ancil Hoffman Park and Hazel Avenue to protect natural spawning. Steelhead also naturally spawn in the river and the introduced species, shad and striped bass, make their presence known during the late spring and summer months. A current fishing license is required at all times. Poaching can seriously endanger our resources and should be reported to CalTIP 1-800-952-5400.

Folsom Reservoir

Completed in 1955, Folsom Dam brought the era of piecemeal reclamation of the flood plain to an end and opened it to residential and commercial development. A part of the federal Central Valley Project, Folsom Reservoir provides water, electricity, flood control and recreation for the region. More information is available from California State Parks.

Old Folsom

What is now the City of Folsom was surrounded by gold strikes: Mormon Island supported a population of over 2,500 during its heyday. Its remnants can be seen today only when Folsom Reservoir is drained to very low levels. Settled first as a trading center, Mississippi Bar turned out to be a rich strike. Even today, its gravels are mined by Teichert Aggregates, who will ultimately restore the natural habitat. The historic Negro Bar was located on the south side of the river now covered by Lake Natoma, but was once the site of a prosperous hotel and gold deposits which were worked by several companies before being absorbed into Folsom. The Folsom Powerhouse switch was thrown first in 1895, electrifying Sacramento, 22 miles downstream. When Folsom Dam was completed the old powerhouse became obsolete. Folsom Prison was built in 1880. The historic prison lies northeast of Old Town Folsom and is still in use today.

Legend

- Jedediah Smith Trail
- Equestrian Trail
- Vehicle access with parking*
- Equestrian trail staging
- Handicap fishing pier
- Restroom
- Public telephone
- Emergency call box
- Picnic area
- Camp site
- Boat ramp**
- Mile marker
- County bike route
- Drinking fountains throughout parkway

* Facility locations as of January 2009
 * Parking fees are enforced and citations are treated as parking violations.
 ** Parking and boat-launch permits are available at the Sacramento County Parks office.
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