



United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service



PACIFIC SOUTHWEST REGION

Restoring, Enhancing and Sustaining Forests in California, Hawaii and the Pacific Islands

Sierra National Forest

Hiking the South fork of the Merced River Bass Lake Ranger District

Originating from some of the highest ranges in the Sierra, the Merced River begins its journey from Mt. Hoffman and Tenaya Lake on the north, the Cathedral range on the east and the Mt. Raymond area south of Yosemite. It has two branches: the main fork and the south fork. The main fork flows through the Sierra National Forest and Yosemite Valley. The South Fork flows through Wawona, winding its way through the Sierra National Forest to Hite Cove where it joins the main river at Highway 140.

HITE COVE TRAIL

A spectacular early spring wildflower display is along the **Hite Cove Trail** from February to April, with over 60 varieties of wildflowers along this 7.2-mile round-trip hike along the South Fork on the Merced. It is illegal to pick wildflowers - take only photos or sketches. The Trail is closed during high fire danger. Parking and toilets are across from Savages Trading Post.

The first 3/4-mile of the trail is private land. This moderate hike ends at Hite Cove. Camping is allowed at Hite Cove. Campfire permits are required for stoves, barbecues and campfire.

SOUTH FORK OF THE MERCED RIVER TRAIL

This trail is 22 miles long, beginning at Savages Trading Post on Highway 140 north of Mariposa, running southeast to Highway 41 in Yosemite National Park. Parking is available along Highway 140. The Hite Cove Portion of the South Fork Trail is 4.5 miles long and runs from Highway 140 to Hite Cove.

Bicycles and horses are not allowed on the trail. As you meander along the trail, you will discover the remains of the old Hite Mine that produced over \$3 million in gold and a gold mining town that once stood on the banks of the river. **Please remember that historic and prehistoric artifacts are not to be disturbed or removed as they are protected by law. Violators will be prosecuted.**

DEVIL GULCH

Road (3S02) to the South Fork of the Merced River. This section of the trail is 2.5 miles long and fairly easy to hike. Dispersed campsites are at Devil Gulch, the river and Devil Gulch Creek both need to be forded in order to continue on the trail. Caution during high water spring runoff.

DEVIL GULCH TO KISSLER'S CABIN

Road (21E13). This portion is 10.5 miles long and is more difficult to hike. Camping available at Peach Tree Bar, Kissler's Cabin and Bishop Creek.

BISHOP CREEK/KISSLER'S CABIN

to Highway 41 in Yosemite National Park. This final section is 6.0 miles long and runs through Yosemite National Park. No dispersed camping is allowed along this trail within the Park boundaries. From Kissler's Cabin to the Forest Boundary is 4.5 miles. Dispersed camping is available while on National Forest land before reaching the Yosemite National Park boundary. This portion of the trail is moderate to difficult to hike.



United States
Department of
Agriculture



Forest Service
Pacific Southwest Region
www.fs.usda.gov/sierra

Sierra
National
Forest

Rev 01/13/2012

OTHER TRAILS

from the South Fork Trail

The Savage/Lundy Trail (19E05 Snyder Gulch leaves the South Fork Trail at Devil Gulch. It is 3.0 miles long and the most difficult of these trails. The other trailhead is at the end of Jerseydale Road. Dispersed camping is allowed along this trail.

THE IRON CREEK TRAIL

(20E040) intersects the South Fork Trail at Kissler's Cabin/Bishop Creek and runs south for about 5 miles. It is a more difficult trail to hike because of steep inclines and switchbacks. Trailhead parking is available at the end of Forest Road 4S17. Dispersed camping is allowed.

HIKING ALONG THE INCLINE ROAD

Incline road is along an old right of way of the Yosemite Valley Railroad on the north bank of the Merced River providing hikers with a relatively level, though mostly unshaded, river trail. The trail begins near El Portal and travels 28 miles to Bagby. Because the old railroad bridges have fallen down, the swift side streams may not be crossable during wet weather and snowmelt. This is a good trail to follow for viewing wildflowers in the spring .

TRAIL TIPS

* ***Don't pick the wildflowers*** – it's against the law and they are next year's flower display.

* Rattlesnakes are common - be careful where you put your hands and feet; don't challenge snakes.

CAMPING and FIRE DANGER

Camping outside of designated campgrounds is NOT permitted along the Merced River on National forest lands.

Long, hot and dry summers make vegetation in the Merced River Canyon tinder-dry every summer creating a great potential for resource destruction and threat to human life and property.

Please be very careful of fire. Campfire permits are required for any use of fire outside of a designated area.

For additional information please contact:

Sierra National Forest
Bass Lake Ranger District
57003 Road 225
North Fork, CA 93643-9734
559-877-2218
www.fs.usda.gov/sierra

Mariposa Station
P.O. Box 747
Mariposa Ca 95338
209-966-3638

All Are Welcome

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (not all prohibited bases apply to all programs). Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.), should contact USDA's TARGET center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Ave, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.