

# DOME ROCK, WESTERN DIVIDE HIGHWAY, & BEYOND

## WESTERN DIVIDE RANGER DISTRICT GIANT SEQUOIA NATIONAL MONUMENT SEQUOIA NATIONAL FOREST



The **Western Divide Highway** on the Western Divide Ranger District is the gateway to many areas of interest. You will be traveling east about 24 miles from Springville, up Highway 190 to the 7,000 foot elevation. Hwy 190 becomes the Western Divide Highway where Forest Service Road 21S50 (the North Road) intersects. If you were to turn left/north at this intersection, you would be on the road to reach the trailhead of the **Freeman Creek Trail** (location of the President George Bush Sr. Giant Sequoia Tree), **Summit, Clicks Creek, and Lewis Camp trailheads**, all entrances to the Golden Trout Wilderness, along with **Golden Trout Wilderness Pack Station**.

If you continue on the Western Divide Highway another tenth of a mile you will come to **Quaking Aspen Campground**. Less than a mile from the campground, you will reach Forest Service Road 21S05, which will take you on a dirt road half-way to **Needles Fire Lookout**. From there you will park and hike the remaining 2.5 miles to the lookout. Needles is popular for sightseeing and rock climbing. See the Brochure on Needles Fire Lookout for more specific information.

Continuing south on Western Divide Highway, you will pass the community known as Ponderosa, and the **Ponderosa Lodge**. One mile further, you will reach the entrance of **Upper Peppermint Campground**, currently a free-to-use dispersed camping area. There is a vault toilet provided and a few scattered tables and fire rings, but no water other than the creek (boil 5 minutes before using). There is no garbage disposal provided, so please, if you pack it in, pack it out. A campfire permit is REQUIRED.

Another mile south you will see a Forest Service sign designating the **Peppermint Work Center**. During the summer months, a Fire Engine and crew as well as a Helicopter and crew are housed here for fire protection to the Golden Trout Wilderness as well as surrounding area. Visitors are normally welcome at times of non-activity. Please leave the area immediately if personnel request it, due to a fire response or other type of emergency.

Almost directly across the Western Divide Highway from the Peppermint Work Center is Forest Service Road 21S69 which will take you to **Dome Rock**, approximately 1/4 mile down a well maintained dirt road from the Highway. There is an ample parking area provided with porta-potties but no water. A short, moderate hike to the top of the Dome will provide you with a spectacular view of the Needles, and many distant peaks of Sequoia National Park and Inyo National Forest, as well as the Kern River Drainage and Kern Plateau. You may also still see the effects of the 2002 McNally Fire which burned a large portion of the Kern Canyon. Please be aware that there is no guard rail and the slope of the top of Dome Rock may be deceiving, with the drop to the bottom being hundreds of feet. Parents of young children should hold them securely while visiting the top. Dome Rock is popular for rock climbing, with camping on top of the Dome or nearby, and walk or rappel down, to climb back up. Dome Rock is also a popular place for weddings, with as many as 5 per year being performed on the giant granite rock. A road is available to the top of the rock making the area handicap accessible for special events, but remains locked unless a Special Use Permit has been issued by the Forest Service. Be sure and bring your camera, for you would not want to miss this great picture-taking opportunity. Several commercials have been filmed from this giant rock, so you may recognize the scenery!

To continue on our journey, we are back in our auto continuing south on Western Divide Highway. Along the way you'll pass Horse Canyon and several viewpoints that offer views of Dome Rock and the Needles. Approximately 8 miles south of Dome Rock you will reach **Long Meadow Campground**, then another mile to **Redwood Meadow Campground**, and just beyond, the parking area (a \$5 fee is charged) for **The Trail of 100 Giants**, which is a "not to be missed" opportunity to walk on an accessible trail for approximately 1.3 miles and view the Giant Sequoias close up! This is another camera must! On April 15, 2000, President William J. Clinton proclaimed the establishment of the Giant Sequoia National Monument, and made his announcement beneath one of the giant trees at the Trail of 100 Giants.

Back in our auto and heading south for 2 miles, we come to Holey Meadow Campground. Continuing south ½ mile you come to a “STOP” sign. This is the end of Western Divide Highway. Continuing straight across the intersection you will discover a parking area with an information kiosk and vault toilet.

A left turn will put us on SM50, which will take us to Forest Service Road 22S82 (**Lloyd Meadow Road**), which is the lower access to rock climbing at the Needles, **Lower Peppermint Campground**, numerous dispersed camping areas, the trailheads of **Jerkey** and **Forks of the Kern** for access into the Golden Trout Wilderness and also driveable access to the **President George Bush Sr. tree**. At the junction of Forest Service Road 22S82, SM50 changes to SM99, and will take us to **Johnsondale, R-Ranch**, and on down the canyon to Kernville and Lake Isabella.

A right turn from the “STOP” sign at the end of Western Divide Highway onto SM50 will take us over Parker Pass and down to California Hot Springs and eventually out to Highway 65 at **Ducor**.

Overall, the Western Divide Highway is packed with many treasures to see and experience in its short distance of 15.5 miles.

**For more information, please contact:**

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**Map goes here**



United States  
Department of Agriculture



Forest Service  
Pacific Southwest Region

Western Divide Ranger District  
Sequoia National Forest

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