

Heritage of the Lake Arrowhead area

The Mountaintop Ranger District has a rich and varied history that can be enjoyed with relative ease requiring only a quick drive or a short hike. For approximately 10,000 years Native Americans have made the San Bernardino Mountains their home. Abundant plant and animal life, sweeping mountain vistas, and permanent water sources, attracted our prehistoric ancestors just as they do us today.

Today we refer to the Native American cultures that inhabited the Lake Arrowhead area as the Serrano, and their direct descendants live on in the San Manuel and Morongo Bands of Mission Indians. The Little Bear valley, Deep Creek and its surrounding environs were very important to Serrano culture, and many familiar features of the local landscape figure prominently in Serrano life and religion. A short drive down Hwy. 173 will take you to Indian Rock Camp where you can walk along the trail among numerous bedrock mortars and “metates” where Native Americans processed plant material into flour, meal, and paste.

In the middle part of the 19th-century, logging activities began in the Lake Arrowhead area. Fueled by burgeoning growth in the basin below, the tall virgin timber provided an attractive commercial venture for several entrepreneurs. Logging continued as an important component of the forests around Lake Arrowhead, culminating with the Brookings Lumber and Box Company that built miles of railroad from Arrowbear to Crestline. Many of the roads we drive on today are built on top of these old railroad grades.

Around the turn of the 20th-century, logging activity was gradually replaced by recreational interests. With the development of the new lake in Little Bear Valley (Lake Arrowhead), new communities along “the Rim” began to spring up almost overnight. Today, you can weave your way through these mountain communities along Hwy. 18, the Rim of the World Highway, itself a scenic and historical trail.

The San Bernardino National Forest is actively engaged in the protection and interpretation of the great wealth of prehistoric and historic period resources that are found in the Lake Arrowhead area. Not only is it a legal responsibility placed on the Forest by Congress, it is an integral portion of the vast recreational and educational opportunities that the Forest provides to the visiting public. In collaboration with Native American groups and volunteer organizations, the San Bernardino National Forest is pursuing a heritage resources program that encourages enjoyment of our historic treasures and fosters stewardship of these unique and irreplaceable resources.