

South Fork National Recreation Trail

Yolla Bolla Ranger Station - Shasta-Trinity National Forest



What you will find

The South Fork of the Trinity River is one of the wildest and most scenic rivers in Northern California. It's headwaters begin in the highest portions of the Yolla Bolla-Middle Eel Wilderness and flow northward to the main stem of the Trinity River, draining almost all of the Yolla Bolla and Hayfork areas. This is rugged, mountainous country and is lightly populated. A visit to this area is like stepping back 50 years in time.

The most widely used portion of the South Fork of the Trinity River National Recreation Trail begins at the Scotts Flat dispersed campground south of Forest Glen and follows the river south (upstream) for 7.2 miles to the mouth of Smokey Creek. Along this stretch you will encounter a swinging footbridge which crosses the river at Scotts Flat Campground, numerous small creek crossings, some with foot bridges and some without, spectacular views from bluffs along the river, deep forests of fir, pine and oak, open meadows and lots of very scenic river corridor. The trail, which was once an old narrow gauge wagon road to a water powered sawmill, has gentle grades and therefore makes for very enjoyable family hiking. A longer hike is available if you continue on up river on the same trail for ten miles to the Double Cabins site at the Wild-Mad Road (FS 29N30). Each season offers new scenery to enjoy along the trail.

The South Fork of the Trinity River National Recreation Trail was designated by the Forest Service in 1980. Water is plentiful all along the trail and there is no shortage of excellent sites for primitive camping. Before camping along the trail remember to pick up your free campfire permit at any Forest Service Station.

Distances to destinations along the trail

Collins Creek..... 0.3 miles
Farley Creek..... 0.9 miles
Marie Creek..... 2.5 miles
Steel Mule Bridge..... 2.8 miles
Stockton Flat..... 3.8 miles

A brief history

The first visitors along the South Fork of the Trinity River were Native Americans who lived, hunted and fished here. The river and surrounding mountains were rich with wild game, salmon crowded the river and oak forests offered a bountiful harvest of acorns. In these surroundings they developed a deep and fascinating heritage. Except for intertribal warfare, they remained relatively undisturbed for centuries.

The first European ventures into this landscape came with trappers and prospectors in the mid 1800s. With the Gold Rush in full swing cattlemen and mule skinnners used old Indian trails to drive livestock and packstrings loaded with supplies into outlying areas to supply various camps, mines, homesteads and developing towns. One trail came from Covelo, on the coast side of South Fork Mountain, to Ruth, over South Fork Mountain, on through Hayfork and into Weaverville. In the early days, before the first roads were built, all access was by these trails, either on foot or on horseback.

This trail and the phone line that followed it, linked together the old Scott Flat Ranger Station, Ostrat Ranch, Smokey Creek Ranger Station, Bramlet Place, Horse Ridge Lookout, White Rock Guard Station and the Black Rock Lookout sitting on the northern edge of the Yolla Bolla-Middle Eel Wilderness.

Route to the Trailhead

Take Highway 36 to Hellgate campground. Cross Rattlesnake Creek Bridge to the Scott Flat campground. The trailhead for the South Fork of the Trinity River National Recreation Trail (8E18) is three quarters of the way through Scott Flat campground.

Hoffman Bluff..... 4.2 miles
Ostrat Ranch..... 5.8 miles
Silver Creek..... 6.2 miles
Smokey Creek (old Ranger Station site)..... 7.2 miles

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