

Camping & Picnicking

American River Ranger District Tahoe National Forest



Welcome

Welcome to the American River Ranger District of Tahoe National Forest. These public lands are dedicated to the wise use and production of timber, water, grazing areas, wildlife, and recreational opportunities. The Forest name, taken from the famed Lake Tahoe, is probably from a Washoe Indian word meaning “Big Water”.

The Tahoe National Forest extends from Lake Tahoe to north of the prominent Sierra Buttes. Several highways, including Interstate 80; State Highways 20, 49, 89, and 267; and Forest roads, provide excellent access to most of the Forest.

Elevations within the Forest vary from about 1500 feet in the foothills to over 9000 feet at the Sierra Crest.

Fishermen and hunters use the campgrounds in season. Fishermen frequent the many rivers, streams, lakes, and reservoirs on the Forest in the quest for rainbow, German brown, and eastern brook trout. There are also numerous deer, black bears, and upland game birds of interest to the hunters who visit the Forest.

Enjoy your visit to the Tahoe National Forest. Please help us prevent forest fires and keep recreation areas clean. The Forest is yours to explore, enjoy, and protect.

Family Recreation Sites

Family campgrounds and picnic areas are generally available on a first come, first serve basis. The campgrounds that take reservations are: Giant Gap, Shirttail Creek, French Meadows, Lewis, North Fork, and all group campgrounds. For reservations visit www.recreation.gov or call 877-444-6777. Unless otherwise indicated, each campsite has a table and a fire ring or cooking stove/grill.

Campground Time Limitations

Camping is limited to fourteen days per year within each campground, per individual or family group.

Camping outside developed campgrounds is limited to fourteen days per Ranger District per year.

Seasons

Generally, the main camping season in the Tahoe National Forest is from Memorial Day through Labor Day. Although some campgrounds open earlier and remain open after the regular season, water systems may be shut down and garbage collection discontinued. Snow may inhibit vehicle access to campgrounds during the winter, and care must be taken to park off roadways where snow removal equipment operates. Contact your local Forest Service office for snow and parking conditions.

Trailers

Many campgrounds will accommodate travel trailers up to 26 feet in length. Parking space only is available; there is no provision for utility connections. Pickup campers and other single vehicle campers are permitted in any car space.

Group Campgrounds

Group camps are available by advance reservation only. See individual site descriptions for size, location, and information on reservations.

Garbage

Most developed sites have garbage containers (many are now equipped with bear-proof ones), and we ask you to please use them. This is especially important to protect your family from bears that may enter your campsite in search of food.

When garbage containers are not available please take all of your garbage with you. Leave a clean camp!



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Campfire Permits

Campfire permits are not required in designated recreation sites; however, a permit is required for all camping and cooking fires on National Forest land outside of developed campground areas where there is no provided fire ring or BBQ grill. In periods of high fire danger other restrictions may be in effect. Check with a Ranger Station before your outing.

Number of Campers per Camp Unit

In order to protect the adjacent soil and vegetation, the number of campers in a developed campground is limited to six persons per single camp unit. This restriction does not apply to a single family composed of parents and dependent children.

Pets

Pets are allowed in campgrounds, but they must be kept quiet, cleaned up after, and on a leash.

Firearms

You may bring firearms into developed camp and picnic grounds; however, you may not discharge them near any developed sites, roads, trails or areas of concentrated public recreation use (within 150 yards). No firearms of any kind are allowed in a State Game Refuge, such as that at French Meadows.

Landownership

Within the boundaries of the Tahoe National Forest roughly 800,000 acres are public land and 400,000 acres are privately owned. Please respect the rights of the private landowners. You may inquire at the nearest Ranger Station or consult the Tahoe National Forest map regarding landownership.

Motor Vehicles

The operation of all motor vehicles in recreation sites, including motor scooters and motorcycles, is permitted only on developed roads or parking areas. Vehicles are to be used only for entering and leaving recreation sites.

The operation of motor vehicles in such a manner as to create excessive noise is prohibited. Please drive carefully and observe all posted speed limits.

Horses

Horses are not allowed in most campgrounds. There are a few sites designed with facilities for equestrian use, and those sites are specified in this guide.

Water

Only water from developed systems at recreation sites is maintained safe to drink. Open water sources are easily contaminated by human or animal waste. Water from springs, lakes, ponds, and streams should be properly treated before drinking. One recommended method of treatment is to bring clear water to a rolling boil for a minimum of five minutes.

For More Information

Foresthill Ranger Station

22803 Foresthill Road

Foresthill CA 95631

(530) 367-2224

TTY users dial 711 for telecommunications relay

All Are Welcome

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Camping & Picnicking on the Foresthill Divide

American River Ranger District

Tahoe National Forest



Foresthill Divide

Foresthill Divide Road extends from Foresthill northeast along the ridge for about 30 miles, where it intersects the Soda Springs Road. This area is heavily forested. Activities include fishing, camping, hiking, and hunting. Supplies are available in Foresthill. The main recreation season is May through October.

Big Reservoir Campground/Morning Star Lake Resort

Located thirteen miles north of Foresthill on Sugar Pine Road. A portion of this campground is owned by the Forest Service and is operated by DeAnza Placer Gold Mining Company. For information and reservations, contact:

DeAnza Placer Gold Mining Company
PO Box 119
Foresthill CA 95631
(530) 367-2129

Elevation: 3,500 feet

Facilities:

- One hundred campsites
- Limited firewood
- Picnic sites with tables, grills and fire rings
- Piped water
- Vault toilets
- Showers
- Space for trailers (no hook-ups)

Attractions:

- Fishing (fee charged) - no motorized boats
- Swimming

Mumford Bar Campground

Located 17 miles northeast of Foresthill on Foresthill Divide Road. This small campground is located at the roadside, near the Mumford Bar Trailhead. This is a free, first come, first serve campground.

Elevation: 5,200 feet

Facilities:

- 4 campsites (OK for equestrian use)
- Campfire rings with grills, no tables
- 3 hitching posts & 2 single-tie rings for stock
- Vault toilet
- Pack-in/pack-out (no garbage receptacle)
- No water

Attractions:

- Mumford Bar Trail offers hiking, mountain biking, or equestrian access to the North Fork American River

Robinsons Flat Campground

Located 27 miles northeast of Foresthill on Foresthill Divide Road, a narrow winding, paved mountain road. Large trailers are not recommended. This is a free, first come, first serve campground.

Elevation: 6,800 feet

Facilities:

- 14 campsites (7 regular, 7 equestrian)
- Vault toilets, tables, fire rings with grills
- Pack-in/pack-out (no garbage receptacle)
- Hand-pump well water source during summer

Attractions:

- Trails - including Western States Trail access
- Views from nearby Duncan Peak Lookout
- Restored historic buildings on site



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Sugar Pine Reservoir

American River Ranger District

Tahoe National Forest



Sugar Pine Reservoir Recreation Complex

This recreation complex contains two group campsites, two family campgrounds, boat ramp, hiking trails, picnic area, swimming beach, and trailer dump station. Located fifteen miles northeast of Foresthill off the Sugar Pine Road, the complex is managed by the Tahoe National Forest, American River Ranger District (530) 367-2224. The facilities have been designed to accommodate wheelchairs. Some campsites are more suitable for wheel chair use and have been designated with blue handicapped signs. However, they are not reserved solely for use by disabled persons, but open to anyone. Boating speed limit on the lake is ten miles per hour. The trail between Giant Gap eastward towards Manzanita Day Use, and around the lake to the boat ramp is an accessible paved trail. It continues, unpaved, to complete a loop around the reservoir. Use of OHVs, motorized scooters, or horses is prohibited.

Elevation: 3,500 feet

Forbes Creek Group Campground

Located on the southeast side of the reservoir, this campground is available by reservation only. For reservations contact the National Recreation Reservation Service (NRRS) at 1-877-444-6777 or visit their website: www.recreation.gov

Facilities:

- Two 50-person group sites
- Campfire circle, cooking grills, picnic tables
- Piped water
- Vault toilets
- Tent pads
- Central parking to accommodate recreation vehicles

Manzanita Picnic Area - Day Use Only

Located on the north shore of the reservoir.

Facilities:

- 23 picnic sites with standing grills
- Piped water
- Vault toilets

Attractions:

- Swimming beach
- Two mile paved trail along shoreline

Giant Gap Campground

Located on the north shore of the reservoir, campsites can accommodate trailers up to thirty feet in length.

Facilities:

- Thirty campsites (double sites available)
- Piped water
- Vault toilets
- Fire rings with grills, tables, tent pads

Attractions:

- Fishing, swimming, and trail nearby
- Lake views from many sites

Shirttail Creek Campground

Located on the north shore of the reservoir, campsites can accommodate trailers up to thirty feet in length.

Facilities:

- Thirty campsites (double and triple sites available)
- Piped water
- Vault toilets
- Fire Rings

Attractions:

- Fishing, swimming, and trail located nearby



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Camping & Picnicking on Mosquito Ridge Road

American River Ranger District

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Mosquito Ridge Road (FS Road 96)

This road is the primary access from Foresthill to French Meadows Reservoir. It is generally open from May through November. In the winter months, it can be closed by snow and ice.

Ralston Picnic Site - Day Use Only

Located twelve miles east of Foresthill on Mosquito Ridge Road and one mile south on Forest Road 23, this picnic site is on the Middle Fork of the American River.

Elevation: 1,300 feet

Facilities:

- Five picnic sites with tables and pedestal grills
- No Firewood
- Vault toilet
- River water source - purify before drinking

Attractions:

- Fishing access
- Swimming
- Canoeing or kayaking

Big Trees Grove, Nature Trail, and Picnic Site

Located 22 miles east of Foresthill on the Mosquito Ridge Road and one mile south on the Big Trees Road.

Elevation: 6,000 feet

Facilities:

- Three picnic sites with tables and grills
- Flush toilets
- Piped water, drinking fountain (between June & September)

Attractions:

Self-guided interpretive trail through the northernmost native grove of Giant Sequoias. Interpretive pamphlets available at the trailhead or at the Foresthill Ranger Station.



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French Meadows Reservoir

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French Meadows Reservoir Area

Located 36 miles east of Foresthill by way of Mosquito Ridge Road, this recreation Area is operated by the Tahoe National Forest, American River Ranger District (530) 367-2224.

For reservations, call the National Recreation Reservation Service at 1-877-444-6777 or reserve online at www.recreation.gov.

Activities include fishing, swimming, boating, camping, group camping, picnicking, hiking, and viewing scenery. A trailhead into the Granite Chief Wilderness is about 7 miles to the north & east at Talbot. The entire area is within a State Game Refuge and no firearms (including sling shots and paintball or pellet guns) are permitted. Fires and/or overnight camping are only allowed in the facilities provided at developed sites. Supplies are available in Foresthill. The main recreation season is June through September. Elevation: 5,300 feet

French Meadows Campground

Located on the south shore of French Meadows Reservoir. This campground is available on a first come, first serve or reservation basis.

Facilities:

- 75 campsites with tables, fire rings with grills
- Piped water
- Flush toilets, vault toilets
- “Bear-proof” food lockers and trash cans
- Concrete boat launching ramp nearby
- No firewood

French Meadows Picnic Site - Day Use Only

Located on the south shore of French Meadows Reservoir, adjacent to the boat ramp. Sites available first come, first serve.

Facilities:

- Seven picnic sites with tables and grills
- Piped water
- Vault toilets

Lewis Campground

Located on the north side of the reservoir, the campsites are not on the reservoir, but within walking distance for most people. This campground is available on a first come, first serve or reservation basis.

Facilities:

- 40 campsites with tables, fire rings with grills
- Piped water
- Flush toilets, vault toilets
- “Bear-proof” food lockers and trash cans
- Concrete boat launching ramp nearby
- Limited firewood

McGuire Picnic Site

Located on the north shore of French Meadows Reservoir. Sites available first come, first serve.

Facilities:

- Ten picnic sites with tables and cooking grills
- Large central parking area
- Piped water
- Flush toilets
- Water Fountain

Poppy Campground

Located on the northwest shore of French Meadows Reservoir, this campground is accessible by boat or hiking trail only. The hike from McGuire parking lot is approximately one mile. Camping is on a first come, first serve basis. Visitors should inquire if Poppy is open for use in advance.

Facilities:

- Twelve campsites
- Vault toilets
- Reservoir water - purify before drinking
- Pack-in/pack-out (no garbage receptacle)



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French Meadows Reservoir

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Gates Group Campground

Located on the east side of the reservoir, this group campground is available by reservation only.

Facilities:

- Two 25-person campsites
- One 75-person campsite
- Tables
- Cooking grills
- Campfire circle
- Piped water
- Vault toilets
- “Bear-proof” food lockers and trash cans
- Central parking

Coyote Group Campground

Located on the northeast shore of the reservoir, this group campground is available by reservation only.

Facilities:

- Three 25-person campsites
- One 50-person campsite
- Tables
- Cooking grills
- Campfire circle
- Piped water
- Vault and flush toilets (depends on site)
- “Bear-proof” food lockers and trash cans
- Central parking

Ahart Campground

Located on the Middle Fork of the American River, one mile above French Meadows Reservoir on Mosquito Ridge Road. This campground is available on a first come, first served basis only.

Facilities:

- Twelve campsites
- Tables
- Fire rings with grills
- Vault toilets
- River water source - purify before drinking
- “Bear-proof” food lockers and trash cans

Talbot Campground

Located on the Middle Fork of the American River, five miles above French Meadows Reservoir. This campground is available on a first come, first served basis only.

Elevation: 5,600 feet

Facilities:

- Five campsites
- Tables
- Fire rings with grills
- Vault toilets
- River water source - purify before drinking
- No trash cans—pack it in, pack it out!

Attractions:

- Near trailhead to Granite Chief Wilderness
- Hitching posts for horses nearby (Horses are **not** allowed in campsites.)



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Emigrant Gap/Texas Hill Area

Located in the northern part of the American River Ranger District, this recreation area is accessed via the Emigrant Gap exit (Exit 158B). Texas Hill Road (FS Rd 19) is accessed quickly from the off ramp, and leads to three remote campgrounds. The campgrounds are operated by the Tahoe National Forest, American River Ranger District (530) 367-2224.

For reservations, call the National Recreation Reservation Service at 1-877-444-6777 or reserve online at www.recreation.gov.

Activities include fishing, swimming, camping, group camping, picnicking, hiking, and viewing scenery. Limited supplies are available in Nyack. The main recreation season is June through September.

Elevation: 4,400 feet

North Fork Campground

This shady campground is near the North Fork of the North Fork of the American River. Campsites are available on first come, first serve or reservation basis. Parking at this campground is very limited, especially for trailers.

Elevation: 4,400 feet

Facilities:

- Seventeen campsites
- Tables
- Vault toilets
- Piped water
- Fire rings and grills
- “Bear-proof” trash cans

Tunnel Mills Group Campground

Located near a creek in a remote setting, sites are available on a reservation basis only.

Elevation: 4,400 feet

Facilities:

- Two 30-person campsites
- Vault toilets
- Fire rings and grills
- “Bear-proof” trash cans
- Creek water - purify before drinking

Onion Valley Campground

This campground is located near a pretty meadow and creek. Sites are available on a first come, first serve basis only.

Elevation: 4,400 feet

Facilities:

- 6 Campsites
- Vault toilets
- Fire rings
- No trash cans—pack it in, pack it out!
- No water on site - piped water at North Fork



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