

Granite Chief Wilderness

Tahoe National Forest — Truckee and American River Ranger Districts



The Granite Chief was designated a wilderness area because of its pristine nature, natural beauty, and potential to provide primitive, non-motorized recreation opportunities.

Elevations in the Granite Chief range from 5000' valleys to 9000' peaks. Summers are typically warm and dry, though nighttime temperatures can be cold and afternoon thunderstorms often build over the mountains. Snow is possible during any month of the year.

Be prepared for changeable weather and bring clothing that will keep you warm and dry. Deep snow usually makes the Granite Chief inaccessible to hiking until late May or early June, though this varies with the snowfall from year to year. North facing slopes can remain patchy with snow until July.

Wilderness Regulations

Pursuant to 36 Code of Federal Regulations the following regulations apply within the Granite Chief Wilderness:

Wilderness permits are not presently required for day or overnight use in the Granite Chief Wilderness.

Campfire permits are required if using a portable camp stove or building a campfire. They are available at your local Forest Service, Cal Fire, Bureau of Land Management offices, or online at www.readyforwildfire.org/permits/. Permits are valid until the end of the year issued.

Campfires, using stoves, or smoking may be restricted when fire danger is high. Check with the nearest Ranger Station before visiting.

Camping, campfires and stove use are prohibited within 600 feet of any lake in the Five Lakes basin and 250 feet of the Whiskey Creek structures.

Group size is limited to 12 people for day and overnight use. 36CFR 261.58(f)

Human waste must be disposed of 200 feet or more from campsites, water sources or trails. Dig a hole at least 6" deep to bury human and canine waste. Digging animals will expose waste buried in shallow holes. 36CFR 261.57(g)

Dogs are prohibited from May 15 through July 15 each year in the following deer fawning areas: The Wilderness portion of the French Meadows Game Refuge (except for the area east of the Pacific Crest Trail), the Big Springs Trail, and the portion of Five Lakes Creek that parallels that trail.

Recreational Stock Use

Group size is limited to 12 animals for day use and eight animals for overnight use. Stock are prohibited within 600 feet of all wilderness lakes (except to pass through the five lakes basin on the Five Lakes Trail).



Private Land

Many of the trailheads and trails accessing the wilderness are on private land. Please respect the rights of landowners.

Maps

Recreation maps of the Forest can be purchased at your local ranger station. Topographic maps (and the skills to use them) are highly recommended in the wilderness because of minimal signs and the remoteness of the area. Most of the Wilderness is covered by two USGS topographic maps; the Granite Chief 7.5' and Wentworth Springs 7.5' quadrangles. Small portions of the eastern part of the Wilderness are covered by the Tahoe City 7.5' and Homewood 7.5' quadrangles.

Drinking Water

Water in the Sierra may be contaminated with *Giardia Lamblia* and *Cryptosporidium*, two organisms which can cause serious illness. These organisms are invisible, tasteless and odorless, and can cause symptoms which begin long after you've left the backcountry. There are many ways to protect yourself from these organisms. If day hiking, carry sufficient water from home, or bring along a portable water filter (make sure it filters down to 1 micron). If camping, use a filter or boil your water for three to five minutes. Water is usually available year-round in the major creeks, but smaller creeks may dry up toward the end of summer.

Granite Chief Trailheads

The following trailheads can be used to access Granite Chief's many trails. Directions are best used in conjunction with a Forest map.

Shanks Cove Trailhead

From Foresthill, proceed east on the Mosquito Ridge Road (Forest Road #96) for approximately 35 miles to French Meadows Reservoir. Cross the dam and continue on Road 96 for 3/4 mile. Turn right on Forest Road 48, Chipmunk Ridge Road. Go approximately 3.8 miles and turn left on Forest Road 48-14.

www.fs.usda.gov/r05/tahoe

This will take you into Greyhorse Valley. Go 5.5 miles to the trailhead on the left side of the road. Parking is along the roadside.

Greyhorse Road is generally passable in passenger vehicles, but high clearance is advised because of large drainage dips. Before leaving, check with the Truckee or American River Ranger Station regarding road conditions.

Tevis Cup Trailhead

Seasonal Deer Fawning Closure— From May 15 to July 15, dogs are prohibited on the Tevis Cup trail.

From Foresthill proceed approximately 34 miles east on the Mosquito Ridge Road (Forest Road #96). Continue beyond the French Meadows Recreation area to Forest Road Junction 51. Stay to the right of road 51 and travel approximately 2 miles to road junction 51-12. Turn right at this intersection and travel approximately 1/2 mile to the trailhead parking area (undeveloped). Hike on the road past the green gate, cross the stream and continue on road for approximately 1 mile to the Granite Chief Trailhead.

The road beyond the green gate is on private land. Follow the trail markers and sign to the trailhead.

From the north (Soda Springs): To reach the Tevis Cup Trail from Soda Springs, travel approximately 8 miles south on the Soda Springs Road to the junction of Forest Road #51. Turn left on 51 and continue approximately 2.5 miles to Red Star Ridge. (This is where the Tevis Cup Trail intersects with the road and the trail continues west). Continue on road 51 for approximately 1.3 miles. Turn left and follow the private logging road to the yellow gate. Park here and follow the road approximately 1.6 miles, about half-way through this private land. The trail forks to the right to the wilderness boundary.

Talbot Trailhead

Seasonal Deer Fawning Closure— Dogs are prohibited on the Western States Trail (Picayune Valley) from May 15 to July 15 to protect mule deer fawns.

From Foresthill proceed east on Mosquito Ridge Road (Forest Road #96) for approximately 35 miles to French Meadows Reservoir. Cross the dam, turn left and continue for approximately 9 miles to Talbot Trailhead and Campground. The trail passes through 1 mile of private land before reaching the wilderness boundary.

Pacific Crest Trailhead

From the north the Pacific Crest Trail can be accessed from the Granite Chief Trailhead.

From the south (Barker Pass): From Truckee, take Highway 89 South to Tahoe City. Continue south on Highway 89 from Tahoe City for another 4.2 miles to Kaspian Picnic Area. Turn west here on Blackwood Canyon Road (also called Barker Pass Road/Forest Road #3). The road follows Blackwood Creek for 2.3 miles, crosses the creek and then climbs 4.8 miles to Barker Pass. Pavement ends at the summit. The trailhead is 0.3 miles beyond where the pavement ends.

Granite Chief Trailhead

From Truckee, take Highway 89 South to the Squaw Valley Road. Go 3 miles to the head of the valley and look for the Squaw Valley Fire Station on the right. The Granite Chief Trail begins just behind the Fire Station. Park across the road in the ski area parking lot.

Powderhorn Trailhead

From Truckee follow the directions for the Pacific Crest Trailhead at Barker Pass. After the pavement ends at the summit of Barker Pass, continue 1.9 miles to the trailhead on the right (north) side of the road. Parking is on the roadside.

Leave No Trace

- Select existing campsites 200 feet from water and out of site of other campers. Never ditch around tents or cut live vegetation.
- Do all washing well away from water. Biodegradable soaps should not enter the water directly, but should be filtered through soil in order to break down.
- Dispose of human waste in holes 4-6 inches deep and at least 200 feet from camp, trails and water. Proper disposal of waste can help prevent the spread of Giardia, as well as viruses and bacteria.
- Naturalize your campsite. Before leaving, scatter sticks and leaves if they were cleared for tents and remove ALL trash. Do not bury it or leave anything unburned in a fire ring.
- Travel in small groups and be aware of your impact on other visitor's experiences.
- Stay on designated trails and never cut switchbacks.
- Tie stock animals at least 200 feet from water using hitch lines with tree-saver straps. Stock animals should never be tied directly to trees except for very short periods to load and unload.
- Before leaving your campsite, fill in the areas that stock have "dished" with their hooves.
- Carry in feed. Ask your feed store about obtaining "weed free" feed. Many wilderness areas are experiencing an invasion of non-native weeds introduced by feed for stock animals. Often, these non-native species out-compete natural species and can cause long-lasting changes that are difficult or impossible to eradicate.
- Picket or hobble stock for short periods of time only (Two to three hours) and be sure to move the picket stake often.
- Before leaving your campsite, scatter manure so it decomposes more quickly.