

Lake Clementine Trail (#18 on the ASRA Topo Trail Map)



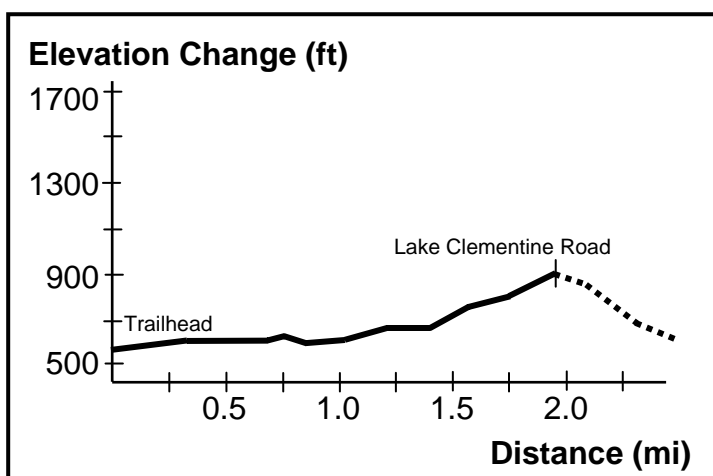
Distance: 1.9 miles; 1 hr each way (hiking)
Difficulty: Easy, except for short stretch where trail narrows due to wash out
Slope: 3½% avg; 11% max. (see below)

Trailhead / Parking: (N38-54-941; W121-02-144)

Trailhead is at confluence area, 1¾ miles south of ASRA Park Headquarters. Take Hwy 49 from Auburn south to Old Foresthill Road at the bottom of the canyon. Continue straight for ¼ mile, cross the curved Old Foresthill Bridge, and park on the right. Trailhead is on the left across from the parking area behind the green gate.

Description

This easy trail is ideal for a panoramic hike along the North Fork (NF) American River, much of it in the shade of conifers and oaks and in close proximity to riparian flora and chaparral. Several side trails lead down to the river, the last one descending to a deep pool beneath the North Fork Dam where spectacular views of water cascading over the dam can be seen.



Lake Clementine Trail begins at the confluence area on the far side of the curved Old Foresthill Bridge (built in 1955). It parallels the NF American River upstream, river left. At ¼ mile, concrete abutments for what was known as the Steel Bridge (1911-1955) may be seen on the opposite riverbank. At ½ mile, the trail goes under the Foresthill Bridge (see sidebar).

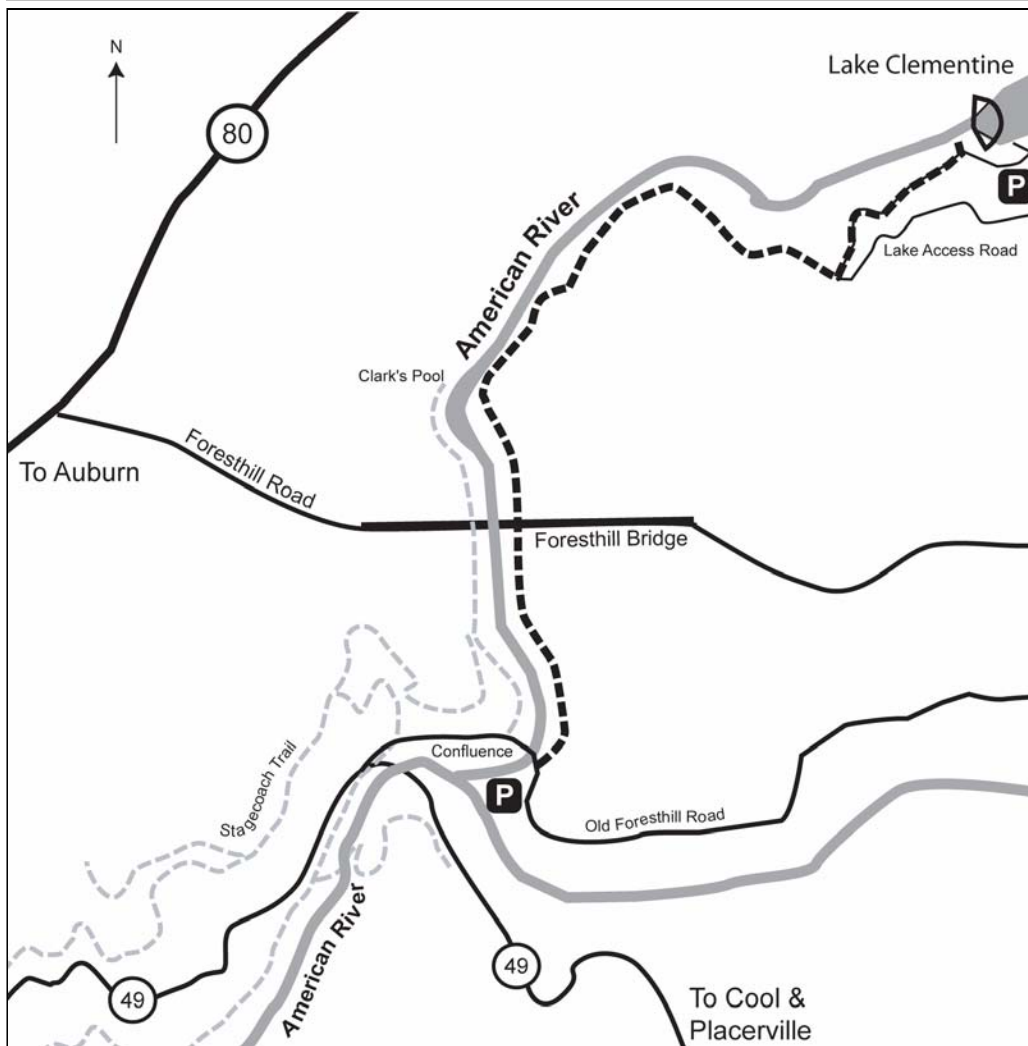
At ¾ mile, Clarks Hole can be seen on the left. It is a deep and clear rock-lined swimming hole that has been popular with locals for over one hundred years. A short side trail, on the left, leads down to the pool and a sandy beach. The summer water temperature of the river below Lake Clementine is surprisingly warm since it is fed from sun-warmed water from the surface of the lake flowing over the North Fork Dam. By contrast, the Middle Fork American River is fed from the bottom of Oxbow Reservoir and is considerably colder.

At 1 mile, rock abutments of a wooden covered toll bridge, built in 1875 and used until 1911, are visible on the opposite riverbank. A short distance upriver, if you look carefully, you can see evidence on the opposite riverbank of abutments where three different bridges existed between 1852 and 1875.

Continuing upriver, this part of the trail uses a largely shaded roadway that was once the old stagecoach route connecting Auburn with the gold rush camps of Iowa Hill, Georgetown and Greenwood in the late 19th century (see sidebar).

Lake Clementine trail ends at Lake Clementine Road. Follow this paved road to the left for about ¼ mile and then take the unmarked side trail on the left towards the river for an exciting view of water cascading over the dam face (see sidebar).





Did You Know? – The 2,248-ft long Foresthill Bridge was designed to span the reservoir that would have resulted had the Auburn Dam been completed. (Work on the dam was discontinued in 1976.) Water was expected to reach near the top of the cement piers. Today the bridge towers 730 feet above the river, making it the tallest bridge in California. It was opened in 1973 with much fanfare and has been featured in numerous movies and commercials. It has also been the site for many stunts – both legal and illegal.

Did You Know? -- Lake Clementine is used exclusively for public recreation. It was created in 1938 when the North Fork American River Dam was completed. The dam was designed and built by the Army Corps of Engineers in order to collect sedimentation from upriver hydraulic mining. A few years later, it was made superfluous when such operations were discontinued by state edict.

Did You Know? – Stagecoach Trail was originally a toll road built in 1852 known as Yankee Jim’s Turnpike and later as Old Stagecoach Road. The original road crossed the North Fork American River at a toll bridge just upriver from Clarks Hole, and from there, it led to the towns of Yankee Jim’s and Iowa Hill. In the late 1800s, Yankee Jim’s was a popular mining area, and Foresthill was yet to be developed. In 1875, the original toll bridge was replaced with a wooden covered bridge. In the 1870’s, tolls on the bridge ranged from 6¢ for a cow to 50¢ for a horseman and \$1 for a wagon and two horses.