

Quarry Road Trail (#31 on the ASRA Topo Trail Map)



Distance: 5.6 miles; 2¼ hours each way (hiking)
Difficulty: Easy
Slope: 0.5% avg; 15% max. (see below)

Trailhead / Parking: (N38-54-713; W121-02-095)

Trailhead is 2 miles south of ASRA Park Headquarters. Take Hwy 49 south from Auburn, turn right across the American River towards Cool. Turn left on a small dirt road ¼ mile south of the river crossing. Trailhead is beyond the parking area at a green gate.

Description

This wide, level trail can be used for a half-day walk and a pleasant picnic along the Middle Fork (MF) American River. It goes through some of the best scenery available in the American River Canyons, and picnic tables are provided along the first 1¼ miles of the trail. For those looking for a good workout, this trail is 11.2 miles round-trip. Several side trails are accessible that can be used to create even more challenging loops. There is little shade, however, so take plenty of water and sunscreen on hot summer days.

The Quarry Road Trail follows the route of the gold rush era Grand Flume, a 13 mile long wood

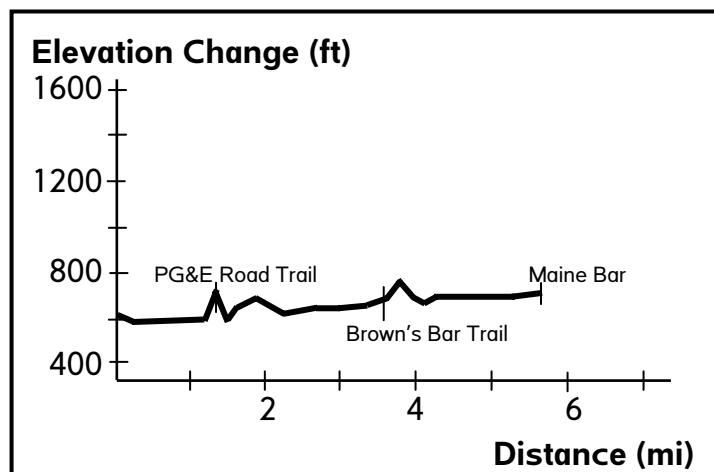
and canvas flume that was built annually by private mining companies to extract gold from the river during the late 1850's. The Mountain Quarries Railroad also used the first 1¼ miles of the trail in the early 1900's to transport limestone from the quarry up to Auburn.

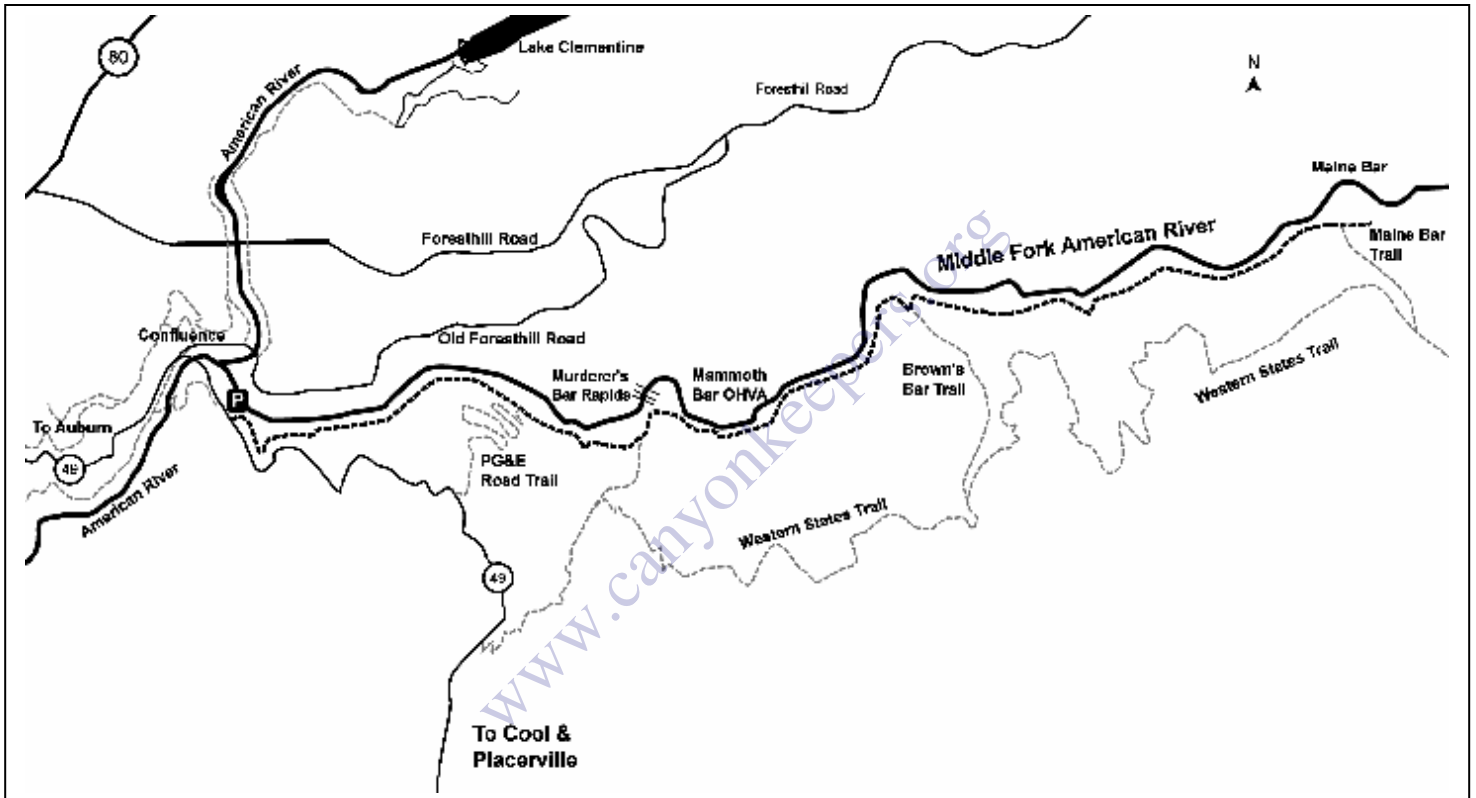
After 1¼ miles, the trail bears right up a short hill above the picnic area. Remnants of a large limestone-loading platform for the rail cars can still be seen on the left. At the top of the hill, a separate unmarked trail (known as the PG&E Road Trail) takes off uphill from just above the ruins of the limestone-loading platform.

The PG&E Road Trail offers fascinating views into the now abandoned quarry (hikers and bikers only). A short uphill trek and a couple of switchbacks bring you to a spectacular amphitheater in the quarry – well worth a 20-minute detour. For those with enough stamina to take this 1¼-mile trail to the top, it offers some awesome viewing spots of the river canyon and quarry. It comes out on Hwy 49 at the top.

Returning to the Quarry Road Trail and continuing upriver, the trail meets the historic Western States Trail (WST) at the 2 mile point (see sidebar). In the river below, you can hear the Murderer's Bar Rapids, named for a deadly skirmish between miners and Native Americans that occurred here in 1849. Further upriver, you may see or hear off-highway vehicles scurrying up and down the canyon on the other side of the river in the Mammoth Bar OHV area (the only designated OHV area in ASRA).

At the 3.5 mile point, the trail intersects with Brown's Bar Trail, which heads uphill to the WST. The Quarry Trail continues parallel to the MF American River for another 2 miles. Just before reaching Maine Bar, the trail intersects with Maine Bar Trail. Like the earlier Brown's Bar Trail this too heads uphill along a creek and intersects at the top with the higher WST. No bikers are permitted on any of these side trails. The Quarry Road Trail ends at Maine Bar.





Did You Know? – The Western States Trail originally stretched from Sacramento to Utah. The Sierra Crest portion of the trail, blazed by Paiute and Washoe Indians and later used by miners is now the route of two world-famous endurance races: the Tevis Cup Ride for equestrians, and the Western States 100-mile Endurance Run. Both races begin before dawn at Squaw Valley in the Lake Tahoe Basin and end in Auburn after nightfall, traversing roughly one hundred miles.

This part of the WST (from Ruck-A-Chucky campgrounds to the Hwy 49 crossing) is different for runners and riders. Endurance runners hug the canyon wall on a narrow, winding trail about 600 feet above the river, while Tevis Cup riders take a wider, flatter trail closer to the river, following the route prospectors used to get from bar to bar along the river. The Quarry Road Trail joins with the lower WST from Maine Bar to Murderer's Bar.