



Sparkling water. Cool forests. Wildlife. Gold! For many years these treasures enticed people to the area. In 1965, to preserve this place of beauty, Congress authorized 42,000 acres as Whiskeytown National Recreation Area. Stop for a minute and look around. Are the treasures still here? We invite you to explore—discover your own treasures at Whiskeytown.

View from South Fork Mountain NPS / MATTHEW SWITZER

The Treasures of Whiskeytown

Whiskeytown Lake is nestled among the hills and valleys of the Klamath Mountains in northern California. Geologic forces created steep and rugged terrain. Heavy winter rains, long dry summers, and frequent wildfires create diverse habitats, from old-growth forests to oak woodlands and chaparral. Over 1,100 plant and animal species live here, many with colorful names like gray pine and blue oak, black bear and rainbow trout, purple finch and yellow warbler.

Native Americans found their own treasures here—acorns, fish, deer, and other plants and animals—that sustained their way of life for thousands of years. The discovery of gold nearby in 1848,

only months after it was found farther south at Sutter's Mill, brought fortune hunters known as '49ers. Today we value this area's water, wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, and the power-generating facilities of the Central Valley Project.

President John F. Kennedy dedicated Whiskeytown Dam in 1963, noting that when “we set aside recreational areas, we can be sure they will be used.” But, he asked, “What kind of a country will [future Americans] find? How much recreation will be possible for them? I think if we make the right decisions now, they will be grateful to us . . .” Why not join in? Help us preserve Whiskeytown for you and for future generations.



Family playing at Brandy Creek.



Exciting ride on Shasta Bally.



Black bears can climb trees!



Hike to Boulder Creek Falls.



Enjoying the lake breezes.

Enjoy Your Park

Most people come to Whiskeytown for the reservoir's cool water. You can also visit historic water ditches and the Camden House from the Gold Rush era. You can walk to waterfalls, stroll through old-growth forests, and hike or drive a four-wheel-drive vehicle to the summit of Shasta Bally. Explore your park—its lake, historic areas, and mountain landscape.

On the Lake Whiskeytown Lake features a 36-mile shoreline and a surface area of 3,200 acres. The reservoir remains full in summer and provides exceptional water recreation in a beautiful mountain setting.

Activities Boating, canoeing, kayaking, fishing, sailing, scuba diving, swimming, wading, paddleboarding, wakeboarding, and windsurfing.

On the Land About 39,000 acres surround the lake. Mountain trails through shaded corridors and year-round creeks offer a break from summer heat.

Activities Birding, camping, hiking, gold panning, horseback riding, mountain biking, nature study, photography, picnicking, sightseeing, and wildlife viewing.

Wintu



Wintu elders share traditions with their children.

For centuries Wintu Indians enjoyed a prosperous life here. They gathered acorns, hunted elk and deer, and fished for trout and salmon. Skilled at crafts, Wintu fashioned tools from obsidian and wove baskets so tightly they could cook liquids in them. Although the Gold Rush era nearly destroyed the Wintu, their heritage lives today.

Gold Rush and Early Settlers



Panning for gold is popular here. Try it!

For most '49ers the big strike was always in the next shovelful. Those who succeeded with hard work and luck were exceptions.

Charles Camden and Levi Tower became friends and partners in San Francisco in spring 1850. They sailed in search of the Trinity River's mouth, then traveled overland to Whiskeytown's northern diggings. Camden built a one-room cabin and a mining operation, sawmill,



Tower House Hotel as it appeared in 1912.

and water ditches. Later he erected toll roads and bridges. Around the cabin, he built a much larger home, Camden House. It is the park's only surviving structure from the Gold Rush, and a place for visitors to learn more about this era.

Tower made his living by providing food and shelter to miners. He invested his profits in the 21-room Tower House luxury hotel, gardens, and orchards. The hotel burned in 1920.

Central Valley Project



The overflow spillway is about 24 feet wide.

In 1935 construction began on the Central Valley Project, which was built to move water from northern California to drier areas farther south. At Whiskeytown engineers blasted a 10½-mile-long, 17½-foot-diameter tunnel through solid granite to divert water from the Trinity to the Sacramento river system. The resulting lake brought many benefits like recreational opportunities, flood control, hydroelectric power, and a dependable water supply.

A World-Class Watershed?



Largemouth bass (left) and rainbow trout (right) flourish here.

When a watershed is healthy, the ground is like a sponge. It absorbs winter's heavy rains. Spring-fed creeks cascade into rivers and lakes. Only occasional heavy storms cause mudslides or sediment runoff.

But at Whiskeytown, all is not well. Past logging and mining damaged the watershed, reduced vegetation, altered drainage courses, and eroded soils. Mudslides and torrential rains occur more

often, dumping sediment into the waterways. As water quality declines, so does fish habitat.

Can nature fix itself? Maybe, if we can wait decades or centuries. But can we wait? We need clean water now. The National Park Service places a high priority on restoring these watersheds to meet the needs of Whiskeytown's people, plants, fish, and other wildlife.

Exploring Whiskeytown

The following information applies only to the Whiskeytown unit of the Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area.

Visitor Center Open daily, the visitor center offers information, maps, publications, a bookstore, and exhibits.

Interpretive Activities Rangers offer walks, talks, kayak tours, and evening programs in summer. Check the park website, park guide, or at the visitor center for scheduled activities.

Water Sports You may swim, kayak, paddleboard, scuba dive, sail, and canoe. • Scuba divers must be certified and have proper equipment. • Federal and state boating rules apply. Stay alive and wear a lifejacket. Observe all restrictions. • Personal watercraft (PWC), like Jet Skis, are prohibited. • Launch ramps at Oak Bottom, Whiskey Creek, and Brandy Creek. • Oak Bottom has two small stores and a marina with boat rentals. • Brandy Creek has

a lifeguarded beach, a small store, and kayak and paddleboard rentals in summer.

Hiking, Mountain Biking, Horseback Riding The land around Whiskeytown Lake provides opportunities for these activities. Information is at the visitor center and on the park website.

Fishing Fishing is permitted from a boat or the shore. Species include rainbow, brook, and brown trout; largemouth, smallmouth, and spotted bass; and kokanee salmon. California fishing license is required. Inquire about park-specific restrictions.

Gold Panning Only recreational gold panning is allowed. Register at the visitor center (\$1 fee) and ask for details about this popular activity.

Camping Oak Bottom has tent and RV campgrounds. Tent area has restrooms and fire grates. RV area has restrooms, dump station,

and water; no hookups. Oak Bottom beach restrooms have hot showers (fee). Brandy Creek has RV camping (self-contained units only), dump station, and water; no restrooms or hookups. 14-day camping limit May 15 to September 15; 30-day limit rest of the year.

Primitive and Backcountry Camping Primitive campgrounds require a permit (fee); they have fire rings, tables, food storage lockers, and restrooms (except at Coggins Park). Backpacking regulations and the required free permit are available at the visitor center.

Explore the Backcountry The backcountry has many miles of trails and dirt and gravel roads. Four-wheel-drive vehicles are recommended. Motorized vehicles must be street legal and are prohibited off-road. Use caution and common sense. If you have vehicle trouble, stay on the road when going for help. Contact the visitor center for winter closures, current road conditions, and trail information.

Fees and Passes Buy weekly and annual park passes and permits for gold panning at the visitor center or www.pay.gov. Buy primitive camping permits at the visitor center. National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands passes also accepted. Display passes on dashboard.

Regulations and Safety See safety tips in the park guide. Know the regulations: your safety is your responsibility! • Never swim alone. • Watch children closely in and near the water. • Fires allowed only in fire grates and may be restricted if fire danger is extreme. • Pets must be leashed at all times. They are not allowed at East Beach or at the beaches and picnic areas at Brandy Creek, Oak Bottom, and Whiskey Creek Group Picnic Area. • Alcohol prohibited at these same beaches and picnic areas. • Smoking allowed only in designated areas. • Do not feed park animals. • Store food in bear-proof lockers or out of sight in a secured vehicle. • Federal law protects all natural and cultural resources. • For firearms regulations check the park website.

Accessibility We strive to make our facilities, services, and programs accessible to all. For information check our website.

Emergencies call 911

More Information
Whiskeytown National Recreation Area
PO Box 188
Whiskeytown, CA 96095
530-242-3400 (park headquarters)
530-246-1225 (visitor center)
www.nps.gov/whis

The Whiskeytown unit of Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area is one of over 400 parks in the National Park System. Learn more at www.nps.gov.

National Park Foundation.
Join the park community.
www.nationalparks.org



Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area is in northern California. Whiskeytown is a National Park unit. Shasta and Trinity are not. They are part of the Shasta-Trinity National Forest, which is administered by the US Forest Service. Detailed information at www.fs.usda.gov/stnf.

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