



Clear Creek Vista Trail



FEATURES

Difficulty Level: Moderate

Length: 2.43 miles one way

Elevation: 1,250 to 1,650 feet

This trail connects with the Mill Creek and Camden Water Ditch Trails.

TRAILHEAD DIRECTIONS

Starting at the Whiskeytown Visitor Center, drive west on Highway 299 to the Tower House Historic District parking lot, approximately 8 miles. At the end of the parking lot follow the paved trail over the Clear Creek Footbridge and then turn left. Walk along the white fence and cross over the next bridge. Follow the dirt road past the Tenant Farmhouse and barn. Continue past the El Dorado Mine site.

Look to the left for trailhead signs. There are two branches to this trail; both cross the creek. The first is a few hundred yards past the El Dorado Mine. A few hundred yards farther, the second also crosses over the creek, following the powerline access road up the hill. Either can be used and rejoin at the flat water ditch portion of the trail.

TRAIL DESCRIPTION

The now-level path follows the water ditch past an old mine with some remaining tracks, support beams and sheet metal. As it continues, the trail overlooks the Tower House Historic District and then winds around the hill, paralleling Clear Creek and Highway 299.

Look across the valley and notice the effects of the French Fire of August 2004, which burned over 10,000 acres. Historically, wildland fire was part of the natural sequence of events and burned through areas like this every 20 to 30 years.

Without naturally occurring fires, the forest becomes littered with deadwood. This fuel build up generates exceptionally hot and destructive fires that burn deadwood and living plant growth. Low intensity fires are like nature's pruning shears, and stimulate new growth. In fact, some plants have adapted their life cycle to fire; the knobcone pine requires fire to open and release seeds from its' cones.

This photo of the Tower House Historic District was taken in the 1850's. Try to find this view along the Clear Creek Vista Trail.

The trail forks but both paths end at Carr Powerhouse Road. The left fork is signed as the trail and descends switchbacks reaching a trailhead. Continue following the dirt road until reaching the paved road and the Clear Creek Bridge.

The right fork is a relatively level trail until an old road comes in from the right. The trail rapidly loses elevation. The remains of another old road enter once again from the right. The trail ends on the paved road. Turn left and follow the road to the Clear Creek Bridge.

Highway 299 is to the left, or east of the Clear Creek Bridge.



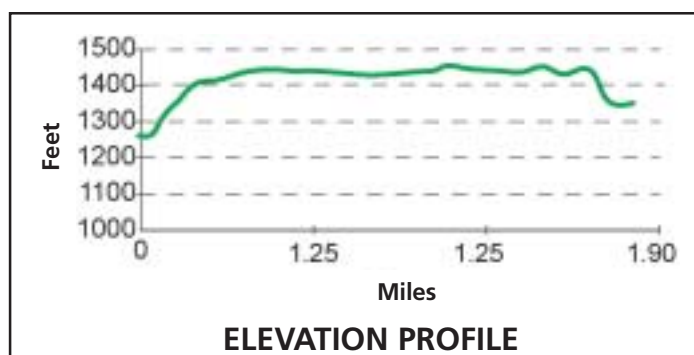


Remnants of an ore cart track once used to haul rock from a mine shaft on the Clear Creek Vista Trail. Mill Creek trail is below.

Mining History

As with many of the other trails at Whiskeytown, this trail follows both access roads and old water ditches. Miners needed water to process the gold-rich ore from their mines. When it was determined that it would be easier or cheaper to bring the water to the mine, a water ditch was built. These ditches provided the year-round water supply necessary for mining operations.

Beginning in 1885, the El Dorado Mine was actively worked for over 80 years, but it was always a very small operation. A number of different owners tunneled into this hillside trying to follow the veins of gold. The main shaft eventually reached 500 feet in length. The mine was acquired by the National Park Service in 1967 and closed for safety reasons. Today, some of the equipment used in the dangerous occupation of gold mining can still be seen.



Watch out for poison oak along the trail. "Leaves of three, let it be", refers to the arrangement of three leaves on each section of the branch.