

American Canyon Trail (#1 on the ASRA Topo Trail Map)



Distance: 2.4 miles to river; 1 hour down, 2 hours up (hiking)

Difficulty: First 1.7 mi: easy down, moderate up
Last 0.7 mi: mod. down, difficult up

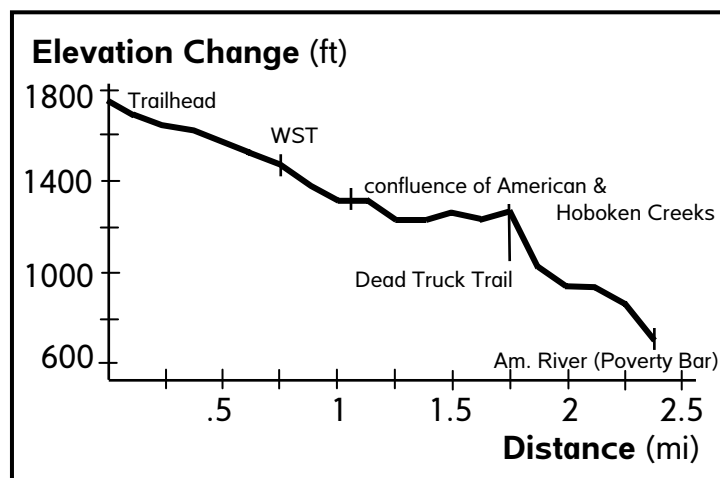
Slope: 6% avg; 28% max. (see below)

Trailhead / Parking: (N38-54-809; W120-55-624)

Trailhead is on Pilgrim Way east of Cool. Take Hwy 49 south to Cool. Turn left on Hwy 193 at blinking red light and drive 5.7 miles. Turn left on Pilgrim Way and look for trailhead on right side just before the gated entrance to Auburn Lakes Trails. Curbside parking is available along Pilgrim Way on both sides of trailhead, and overflow parking can use private land on the left side of Pilgrim Way 100 yards before trailhead.

Description

This steep trail has everything needed for a great day of exploration: rugged mountain canyons, a beautiful stream with waterfalls, a wide variety of plant and animal life, gold rush era history, and panoramic views of the Middle Fork American River. This is an excellent hike for bird lovers and picture takers – even artists with drawing pads and paint boxes. Remember your binoculars, camera, sunscreen, water and a lunch to enjoy while you savor the scenery.



The American Canyon Trail is densely treed along the first half, mostly with various species of oak and pine. Laurel and blackberry bushes can also be found along most of the trail. Ankle-high poison oak creeps onto many parts of the trail, so please use caution. After the first mile, the trail gets more sunlight and will be hot in the summer – early morning use is recommended.

About $\frac{3}{4}$ miles from the trailhead, the trail joins the historic Western States Trail (WST) for a short distance (see sidebar). Take a right at the first trail intersection with the WST, and go straight at the next intersection to stay on the American Canyon Trail.

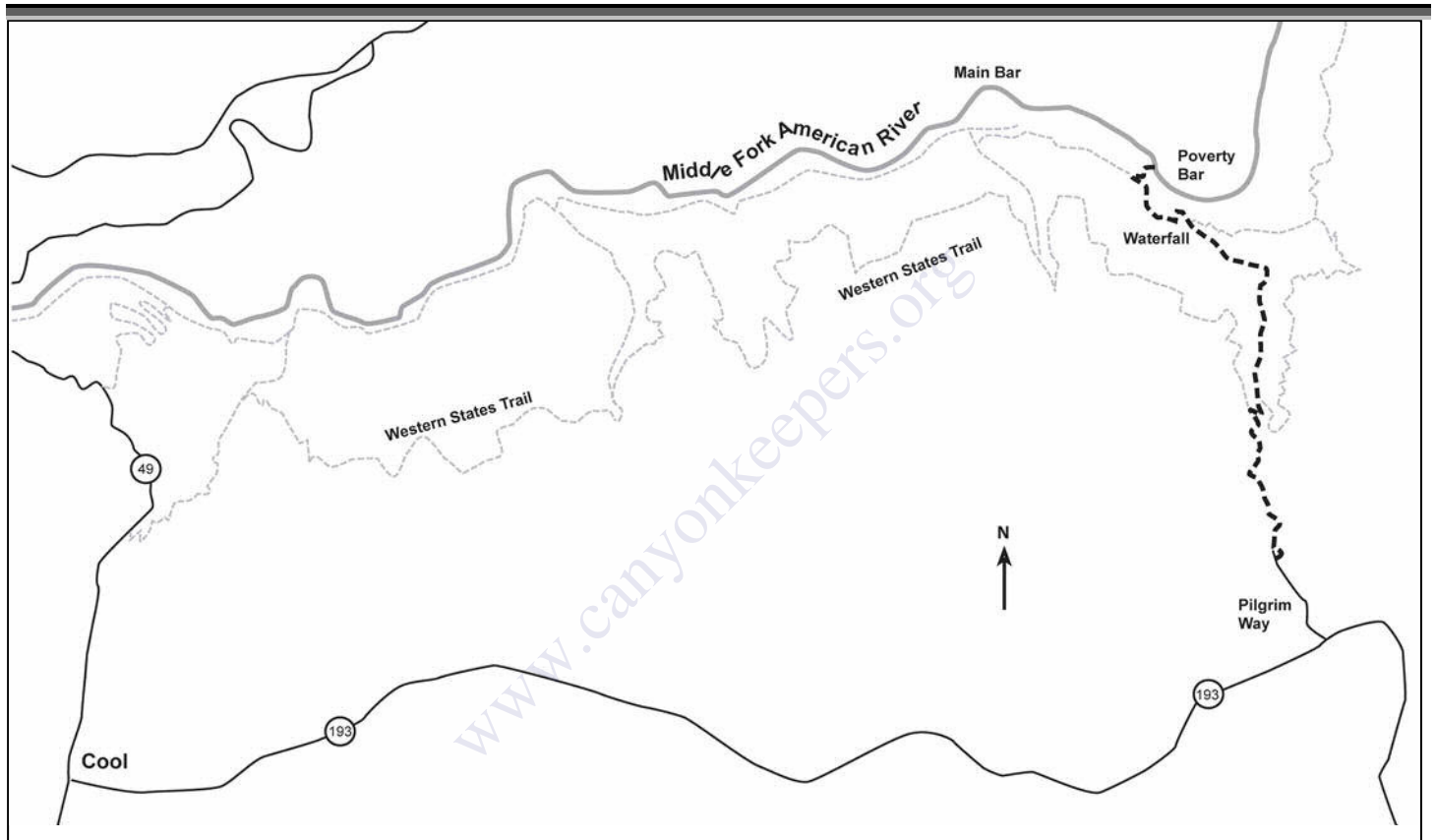
Just past the 1 mile point, the trail crosses American Canyon Creek, followed shortly thereafter by Hoboken Creek. The confluence of these creeks, just downstream from the trail, offers a beautiful place to cool off. Look for California newts (a.k.a. firebellies) on the trail and in the pools.

The terrain levels out at the site of a historic gold rush town, once home to thousands of miners but now almost completely reclaimed by Mother Nature. To reach the site of this old mining town, turn right after crossing Hoboken Creek and hike off-trail for about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile upstream. The site is across the creek. Returning to the main trail, if you look closely, you may spot a 30-foot high rock dam, hidden behind a pile of tailings, which was built by hand during the gold rush.

About $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles from the trailhead, a small, very steep unmarked side trail on the left leads down to some very nice falls and a great pool where you can escape the heat on hot summer days. Please use caution while climbing on the wet, slippery rocks. This side trail to the falls is just a few feet before the intersection with Dead Truck Trail on the right.

After the intersection with Dead Truck Trail, the path becomes very steep, dropping 600 feet in less than $\frac{3}{4}$ miles on its way to Poverty Bar on the Middle Fork American River.





Did You Know? – The Western States Trail
(WST) 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 Route 49 crossing) is different for runners and equestrians. 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 American Canyon Trail crosses the higher WST for runners and ends at the lower WST where Tevis Cup riders cross the river at Poverty Bar.

