



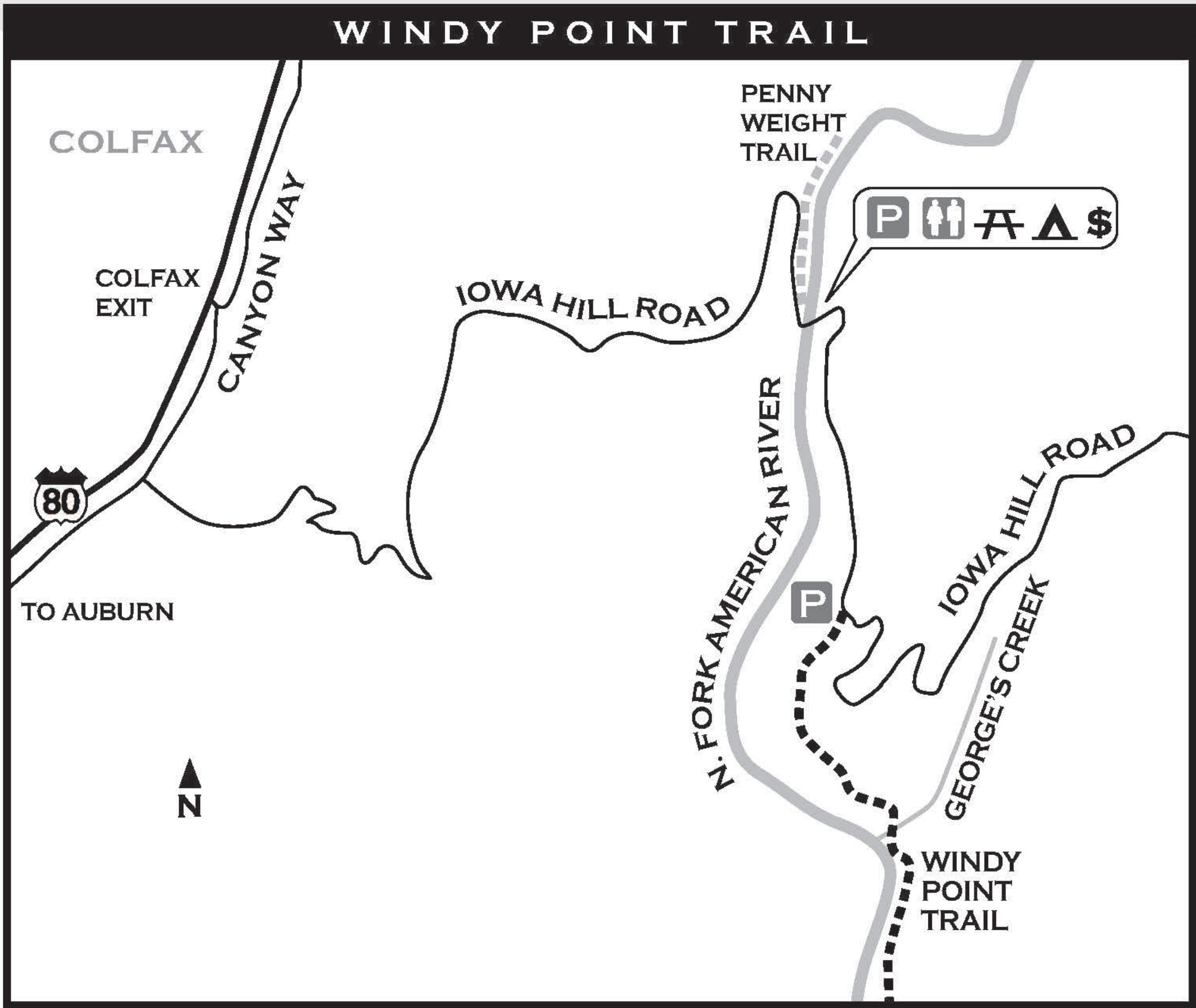
TRAIL AT-A-GLANCE: WINDY POINT TRAIL



DISTANCE: 1½ miles one-way; ¾ hours (hiking)

DIFFICULTY: Moderate to difficult. Trail is narrow, with loose rock and steep drop-offs.

ELEVATION CHANGE: +/- 550'



Windy Point Trail

TRAIL SNAPSHOT

This short but challenging trail offers aerial views of the North Fork Canyon and when timing is right a stunning wildflower display. The trail traverses sections where the whole hillside is carpeted with blue, yellow, purple, and gold wildflowers highlighted against a blue sky and green canyons dominated by oaks and gray pine. In spring, it is a photographer's and wildflower lover's delight. Caution: watch for poison oak, as it thrives along the trail.

Trailhead Parking

(N39-05.420; W120-55.259)

Trailhead is on Iowa Hill Road. From Auburn, take I-80 east to Colfax. Exit at the Colfax, Grass Valley, Hwy. 174 exit. Go right at the exit onto Canyon Way. In approximately 0.3 of a mile

turn left on Iowa Hill Road. Drive approximately 3.1 miles down Iowa Hill Road and across the North Fork American River. After crossing the bridge continue for approximately 0.8 of a mile through the small camping area and up the road towards Iowa Hill. Several large boulders and a very small sign that simply says "trailhead" mark the trail. There is limited parking on the right

shoulder just before and at the trailhead as the road bends to the left and away from the river.

Caution: Iowa Hill is a narrow paved road with no guard-rail. Drive slowly and watch for approaching vehicles since some places are not wide enough for two vehicles to pass.

WINDY POINT TRAIL

The Windy Point Trail provides access to some beautiful and steep river canyon scenery. This old miner's trail is a narrow single file path cut into a steep slope above the North Fork of

the American River. It has some sharp drop-offs and lots of loose shale and rock, which make it a challenge. Plan on spending as much time enjoying the scenery and wildflowers as hiking. Near the start, after leaving the woodlands, as the trail narrows and the views open up look back and north across the canyon to the famous "Cape Horn" section of the first Transcontinental Railroad, which is still in use. Its completion was one of the extraordinary engineering and construction feats of the 1860s.

The trail starts out fairly wide and level in a shaded woodland filled with larkspur and buttercups in the spring. It soon narrows as it crosses a steep slope above the river gorge. The river below is heard well before it is seen. In the spring after a rainstorm outstanding waterfalls cascade down the canyon on the opposite side. Remember to watch your footing while soaking in the colorful wildflower displays of monkey and popcorn flowers, butter and eggs, and brodiaea along the trail in the many small clearings.

Kayaks and rafts may be visible in the river below as they exit Chamberlain Falls and prepare to enter Tongue and Groove on this class III-IV section of the river.

A vibrant palette of wildflowers cascades from the rock terraces above the trail. The large open Windy Point Meadow in full bloom overflows with goldfields, poppies, meadow foam and the less common purple and yellow harlequin lupine as the meadow merges with the rapidly flowing river below.

The trail leaves the meadow in a short steep decent to cross George Creek filled with aquatic insects, newts and an occasional fleck of gold. Caution: The creek may be too hazardous to cross in high water.

After crossing the creek look for the scarlet fritillary (brown bell) hidden along the path. Continuing on about 1/4 mile a spur trail leads to a lunch spot on the riverbank. Close by, huge woodwardia ferns grow in a grotto while California sister butterflies drink from the moist sand that is filled with the footprints of raccoons.

The hike back to the trailhead is steep and can be hot. Be sure to carry enough water and snacks especially if children are along for the adventure.

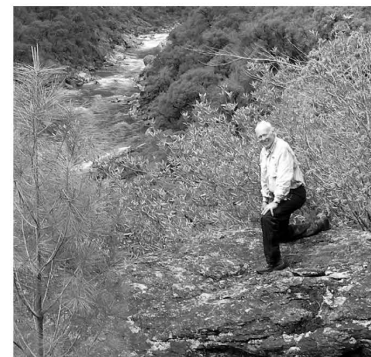
Note: The main trail continues on and eventually connects to Indian Creek Trail and Yankee Jim's Road. Trail repairs are in progress but it is still very rough in sections and is not recommended for casual hikers.



Jim's Ferris, cofounder of the ASRA Canyon Keepers and coauthor of American River Canyon Hikes, at Windy Point meadow



Harlequin lupine at Windy Point meadow



Evan Jones, trail guide, trail blazer and coauthor of Take A Hike, at "Portrait Rock"

