



TRAIL AT-A-GLANCE:



FORESTHILL DIVIDE LOOP TRAIL

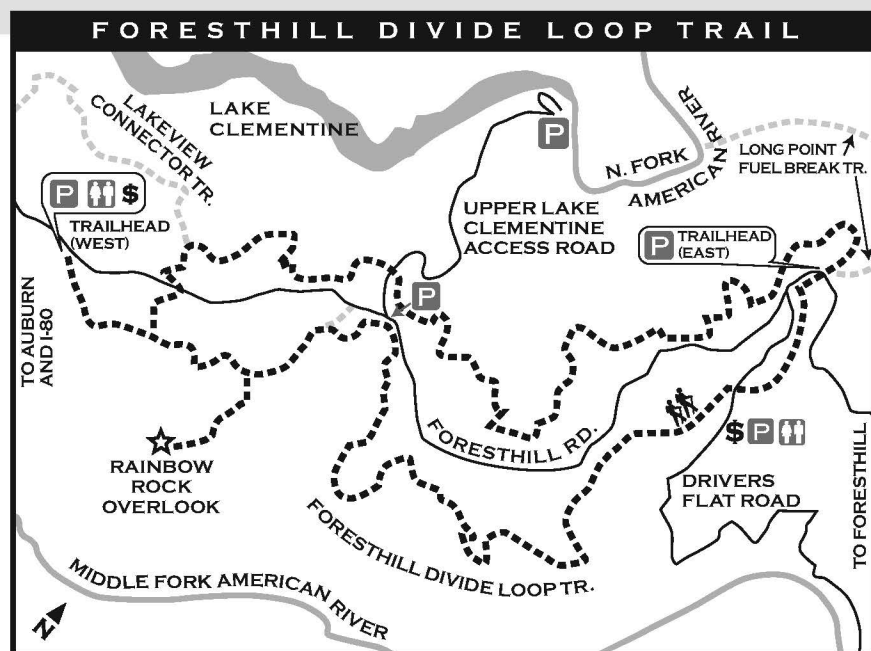


DISTANCE: 8.2 miles; 3.7 hours (hiking)
Shorter loops are also possible.
Add 1 mile (0.4 hours) from Trail-head (West)



DIFFICULTY: Easy to moderate

ELEVATION CHANGE: +/- 320'



Foresthill Divide Loop Trail

TRAIL SNAPSHOT

This loop features views of both the North Fork and Middle Fork American River and Lake Clementine from the divide ridge which separates the North and Middle Forks. Straddling the Foresthill Divide at elevations ranging from 1600 to 1900 feet, it provides a diversity of flora as it meanders through five major American River Canyon ecosystems: yellow pine forest, foothill woodland, riparian and chaparral. It also passes through open meadow grasslands that overflow with wildflowers in the spring. All of the ecosystems are abundant with wild mushrooms in the wet sunny months.

Trailhead Parking

West: (N38-56.561; W120-58.946)

Trailhead (west) is on Foresthill Road, 3½ miles east of Foresthill Bridge, at a large parking area on the right known locally as the Grizzly Bear House turnout.

East: (N38-58.433; W120-57.253)

Trailhead (east) is on Foresthill Road, 7 miles east of Foresthill Bridge (0.2 mile past Drivers Flat Road) at a large parking area on the left. Both trailheads have a port-a-potty.



Mountain bike riders usually ride in a counter-clockwise direction on the Foresthill Divide Loop Trail.

FORESTHILL DIVIDE LOOP TRAIL

The Foresthill Divide Loop Trail offers a quintessential American River Canyon experience for hikers, bikers and equestrians, and it is extremely popular year round. Starting the loop at





The Upsidedown Tree

appropriately named the Grizzly Bear House because the skin of an enormous grizzly bear was once spread out on one of its walls, seeming to take the whole building in its embrace. The trail soon opens up into large, rolling grasslands dotted with majestic oaks. One is nicknamed the Upsidedown Tree as its massive, gnarly branches look like roots reaching to the sky. Gobbling wild turkeys delight canyon pilgrims with their fanciful feather displays. Matted spring grass on the fringes of tiny meadows, hidden deep within the woodlands, provide evidence of bear lairs. At ½ mile, turn right at the



Wild turkey

Drivers Flat marker, which puts you onto the 8.2 mile loop going counter-clockwise. At 1 mile, a side trail to the right leads to Rainbow Rock, an overlook with a magnificent panoramic view of the Middle Fork American River from Poverty Bar to the east and to Brown's Bar to the west. This side trail adds 0.8 of a mile round trip from Rainbow Rock and a 200 foot elevation change.

Returning to the loop trail, meander on and in and out of shaded foothill woodlands and sunny chaparral dominated by manzanita, buck brush and chemise. At 1.4 miles, the trail turns right while a dirt road continues straight.

Those interested in a shorter, 3.9 mile loop should

the trailhead (west) adds one mile to the 8.2 mile loop, but it is the closer trailhead coming from Auburn.

The trail begins at a green gate (#118), behind the parking area and then turns left into the shade of oak and foothill pines. About 100 yards east of the parking area, there's an old quartz rock foundation of a hotel nestled in the trees which served the gold rush era miners. The hotel was ap-

continue straight on the dirt road; carefully cross Foresthill Road and go right for 200 yards; turn left onto Upper Lake Clementine Road and go 0.2 of a mile down the road to find the loop trail again. Turn left on the loop trail and proceed 2 miles to return to trailhead (west).

For those remaining on the 8.2 mile loop, the trail becomes narrower and more scenic. At the 2.2 mile point, there is a grand view of the Middle Fork and the Cool limestone quarry to the west. At 3 miles, a well-built wooden bridge crosses a perennial creek. Fresh mud on the trail is a puzzle of animal and human tracks. A bit further, there is a fork in the trail. Stay to the left. At 4.1 miles, either continue straight on the loop trail or turn left and proceed up Drivers Flat Road to Foresthill Road. Either way, when you get to the road, carefully cross and proceed to the parking lot at the trailhead (east). This marks the halfway point of the 8.2 miles loop trail.

From the trailhead (east), the loop trail continues left behind the parking area, passing through a few miles of dense, yellow pine forest and foothill woodlands with occasional glimpses of the North Fork. The trail crosses Upper Clementine Road through dense stands of madrone to a trail intersection. Take the left fork back to the Grizzly Bear House trailhead.

An option to access the North Fork at the east trailhead is to walk straight out the faint Long Point Fuel Break road/trail through mature black oak forest carpeted with pungent smelling mountain misery to excellent views at the North Fork canyon rim. A bulldozed firebreak trail connects to downriver bars.

HISTORICAL SNAPSHOT:

Grizzly Bear House

In the summer of 1852 J.D. Borthwick, an English sketch artist who spent the night at the Grizzly Bear House spins this tale of a grizzly in his book *Three Years in California*, "Ursus horribilis, who after having both eyes shot out and winking a good deal, turned on his hunter pursuer, and treed him by scent. The hunter unloaded more shot balls into the grizzly until at last it fell mortally wounded."

