A Boating Trail Guide to the

Tuolumne Wild & Scenic River

from Don Pedro Dam to Yosemite National Park

Welcome to the Tuolumne River

This guide to the Tuolumne River is published by the California Department of Boating and Waterways in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service, whose Groveland Ranger District manages 29 miles of the river.

The 1974 California Recreational Trails Act recognized the need to provide for increased recreational boating opportunities on California's rivers by designating specific rivers, including the Tuolumne, for study as boating trails.

The Tuolumne River has also been designated a Wild and Scenic River, under the 1968 California Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The Act provides that rivers possessing extraordinary scenic, recreational, fishery, or wildlife values shall be preserved in their free-flowing state, together with their immediate environments, for the benefit and enjoyment of the people of the state. The Tuolumne was added to the Wild and Scenic Rivers System on September 28, 1984.

This guide was designed to enhance the enjoyment and safety of visitors to the Wild and Scenic Tuolumne River, whether fishing, hiking the trails, enjoying the wildlife and wildflowers, picnicking, camping, or running the rapids.

Keep the River Safe and Clean

Haul out all litter and debris. Take only photographs, leave only footprints. Please respect the privacy of other people in the canyon.

Poison Oak
"Leaves of three, let it be"

Water Quality

Viruses, bacteria and protozoa can contaminate water in the wilderness. The most common sources of these pollutants are body wastes from humans and animals. Water can look, taste, and smell pure, yet still be contaminated. Remember to treat your water before drinking and practice good sanitation to prevent spread of disease. Boiling is considered the most reliable method of killing water-borne pathogens. Surface water should be boiled for at least three minutes. Disinfection chemicals and filters are also available, but those products must be chosen and used with great care if they are to be effective. Please dispose of human wastes and do all washing at least 100 feet from any water source.

Pete Wilson, *Governor*
Douglas P. Wheeler, *Secretary for Resources*
John R. Bañuelos, *Director*

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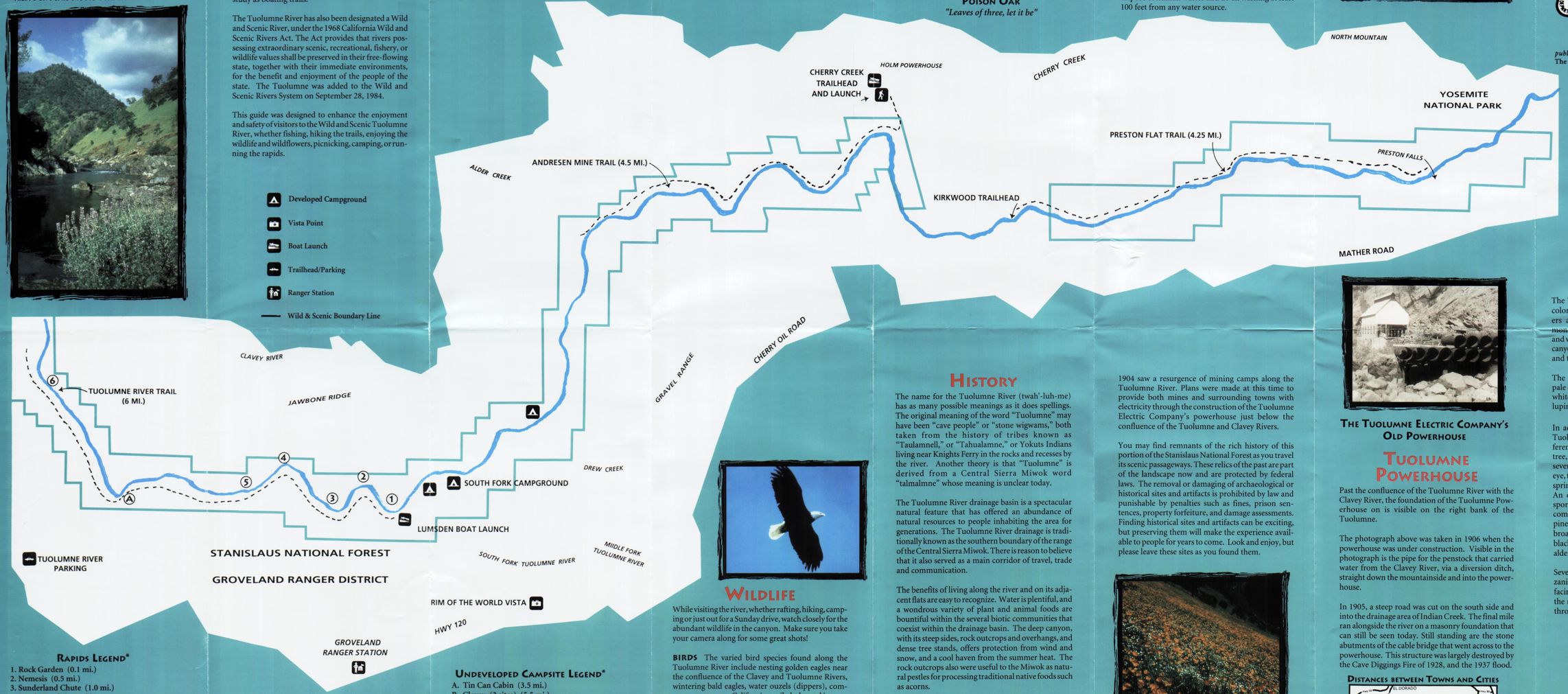
In Case of Emergency, call 911



Rapids Legend*

1. Rock Garden (0.1 mi.)
2. Nemesis (0.5 mi.)
3. Sunderland Chute (1.0 mi.)
4. Ram's Head (1.6 mi.)
5. India (2.1 mi.)
6. Sturn (4.5 mi.)
7. Evangelist (4.8 mi.)
8. Clavey Falls (5.5 mi.)
9. Gray Grindstone (9.5 mi.)
10. Thread-The-Needle (11.0 mi.)
11. Steamboat (12.1 mi.)
12. Cabin (12.8 mi.)
13. Hell's Kitchen (13.1 mi.)
14. Pinball (17.6 mi.)

Note: All mileages are taken from Lumsden Boat Launch

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Undeveloped Campsite Legend*

A. Tin Can Cabin (3.5 mi.)
B. Clavey (2 sites) (5.5 mi.)
C. Powerhouse (7.6 mi.)
D. Grapevine (8.0 mi.)
E. Indian Creek (8.3 mi.)
F. Wheelbarrow (8.8 mi.)
G. Baseline (8.9 mi.)
H. Driftwood Paradise (11.4 mi.)
I. Cabin (12.8 mi.)
J. Big Creek (2 sites) (13.0 mi.)
K. Mohican (14.1 mi.)
L. North Fork (2 sites) (15 mi.)

* Note: All mileages are taken from Lumsden Boat Launch

Wildlife

While visiting the river, whether rafting, hiking, camping or just out for a Sunday drive, watch closely for the abundant wildlife in the canyon. Make sure you take your camera along for some great shots!

BIRDS The varied bird species found along the Tuolumne River include nesting golden eagles near the confluence of the Clavey and Tuolumne Rivers, wintering bald eagles, water ouzels (dippers), common mergansers, California quail, dark-eyed juncos, great blue herons, scrub jays, Steller's jays, red-tailed hawks, turkey vultures, acorn woodpeckers, and a myriad of other avian species.

MAMMALS Common mammals seen along the river's edge include coyotes, skunks, black-tailed jack rabbits, mule deer, bats (which eat up to 500 mosquito-sized insects an hour!), and several species of squirrel. Less commonly seen species to keep a sharp eye out for are river otters, bears, beavers, and bobcats.

History

The name for the Tuolumne River (twah'-luh-me) has as many possible meanings as it does spellings. The original meaning of the word "Tuolumne" may have been "cave people" or "stone wigwams," both taken from the history of tribes known as "Taulamnell," or "Tahualamne," or Yokuts Indians living near Knights Ferry in the rocks and recesses by the river. Another theory is that "Tuolumne" is derived from a Central Sierra Miwok word "talmalmne" whose meaning is unclear today.

The Tuolumne River drainage basin is a spectacular natural feature that has offered an abundance of natural resources to people inhabiting the area for generations. The Tuolumne River drainage is traditionally known as the southern boundary of the range of the Central Sierra Miwok. There is reason to believe that it also served as a main corridor of travel, trade and communication.

The benefits of living along the river and on its adjacent flats are easy to recognize. Water is plentiful, and a wondrous variety of plant and animal foods are bountiful within the several biotic communities that coexist within the drainage basin. The deep canyon, with its steep sides, rock outcrops and overhangs, and dense tree stands, offers protection from wind and snow, and a cool haven from the summer heat. The rock outcrops also were useful to the Miwok as natural pestles for processing traditional native foods such as acorns.

Another resource of the river that became important in the late 1840's is gold. This treasure attracted a variety of ethnic groups with a common goal, and initiated a complex relationship between newcomers and natives, as well as between people and the environment. Miners' cabins dotted the Tuolumne River shores and slopes, and previously existing trails became thoroughfares. In late 1861 and early 1862, a series of torrential rains sent a major flood down the river leaving death, destruction, and illness in the remnant mining camps.

1904 saw a resurgence of mining camps along the Tuolumne River. Plans were made at this time to provide both mines and surrounding towns with electricity through the construction of the Tuolumne Electric Company's powerhouse just below the confluence of the Tuolumne and Clavey Rivers.

You may find remnants of the rich history of this portion of the Stanislaus National Forest as you travel its scenic passageways. These relics of the past are part of the landscape now and are protected by federal laws. The removal or damaging of archaeological or historical sites and artifacts is prohibited by law and punishable by penalties such as fines, prison sentences, property forfeiture, and damage assessments. Finding historical sites and artifacts can be exciting, but preserving them will make the experience available to people for years to come. Look and enjoy, but please leave these sites as you found them.

California Poppies in Tuolumne Canyon
Eschscholzia californica

The Tuolumne Electric Company's Old Powerhouse

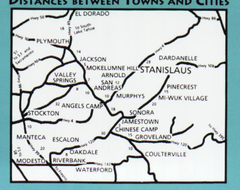
Tuolumne Powerhouse

Past the confluence of the Tuolumne River with the Clavey River, the foundation of the Tuolumne Powerhouse on is visible on the right bank of the Tuolumne.

The photograph above was taken in 1906 when the powerhouse was under construction. Visible in the photograph is the pipe for the penstock that carried water from the Clavey River, via a diversion ditch, straight down the mountainside and into the powerhouse.

In 1905, a steep road was cut on the south side and into the drainage area of Indian Creek. The final mile ran alongside the river on a masonry foundation that can still be seen today. Still standing are the stone abutments of the cable bridge that went across to the powerhouse. This structure was largely destroyed by the Cave Diggings Fire of 1928, and the 1937 flood.

Distances between Towns and Cities



Wildflowers

The Tuolumne River Canyon is well known for its colorful spring wildflower displays. Among the flowers are bright blue lupines, yellow seep-spring monkeyflowers, bright pink shooting stars, blue gilia and white globe lilies. At times, the steep slopes of the canyon are ablaze with California poppies, fiddlenecks, and the sunflower-like goldfields.

The display of colors continues into summer with pale orange paintbrush, deep blue harvest brodiaeas, white mariposa tulips, yellow-and-pink harlequin lupines, and pink blankets of clarkias.

In addition to its colorful spring wildflowers, the Tuolumne River Canyon is also home to many different shrub and tree species. The California bay tree, with its prominent spicy scent, may be found at several locations in the canyon. The California buckeye, the first deciduous shrub to produce leaves in the spring, is common throughout much of the canyon. An evergreen tree, the California nutmeg, grows sporadically on the north-facing slopes. The more common coniferous trees include the ponderosa pine, sugar pine, incense cedar, and gray pine. The broadleaf trees in the Tuolumne Canyon include the black oak, canyon live oak, interior live oak, and the alder.

Several species of chaparral, including chamise, manzanita, and buckbrush, dominate the hot, dry, south-facing slopes of the canyon walls. Poison oak, one of the most widespread shrubs in California, is found throughout the canyon.

Western Redbud
Cercis occidentalis