

# Interpretive Trails

## Nevada City Ranger District



### Tahoe National Forest

Interpretive trails are short trails designed to help you learn something about natural or cultural history in your national forest. Exploring these short trails is a great way to spend time with the family on a fun walk, and come away with a greater understanding of the natural forces or people who've shaped this portion of the Sierra Nevada.

There are six interpretive trails on the Nevada City Ranger District. All of them are good places to bring a picnic lunch, but the Rock Creek trail and PG&E's Sierra Discovery trail have developed picnic areas next to them designed for this purpose.

### Rock Creek Nature Trail

This half-mile trail is a favorite with school groups from the Nevada City area. Located approximately eight miles east of Nevada City off of Highway 20, the Rock Creek trail winds along Rock Creek. Visitors learn about the trees and plant communities of this ecosystem, as well as the Marsh Brothers lumber mill that operated here in the 1880s. A plaque at the adjacent day use site helps visitors find remains of the lumber mill. A trail brochure is available

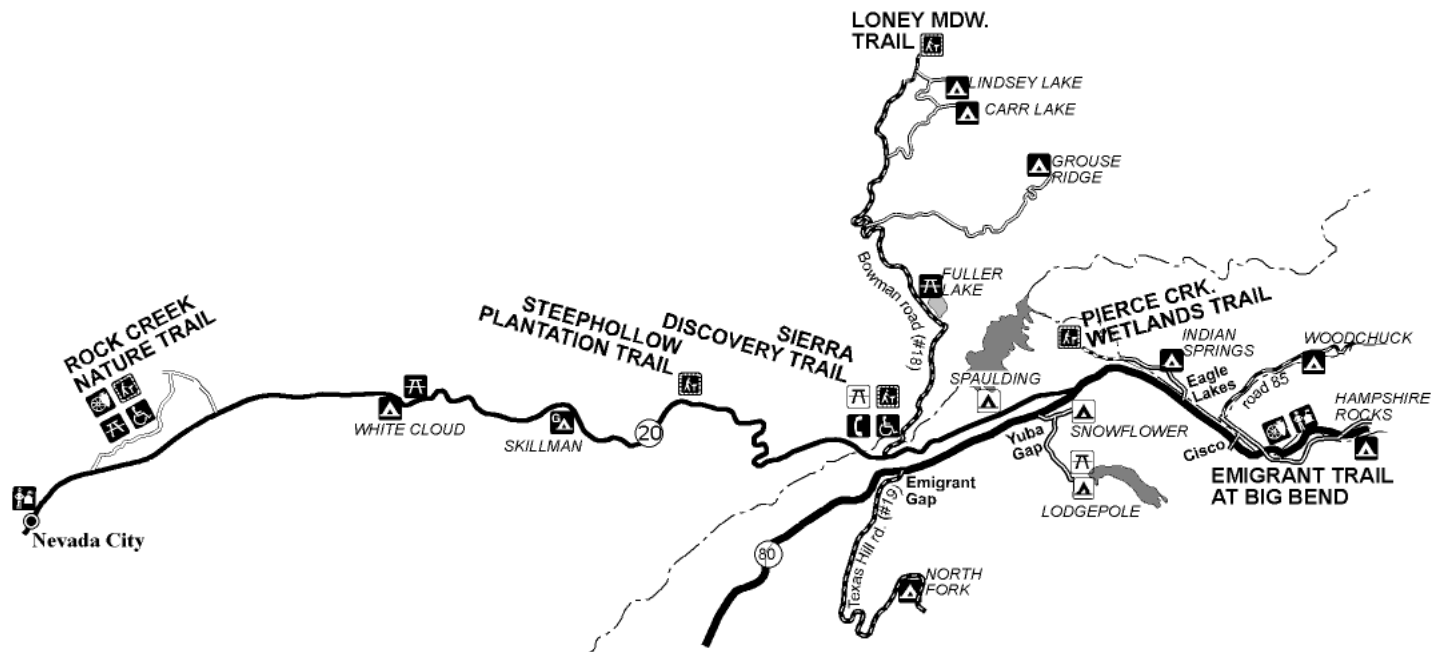
on-site. Picnic tables and restrooms are adjacent.

**Accessibility:** The first 300 yards of this trail are rated "moderate" for wheelchairs. Beyond this point, the trail is considered non-accessible due to narrow tread.

**Directions:** From Nevada City, drive seven miles east on Highway 20. Turn left at the "Conservation Camp" sign, and look for the sign reading "Nature Trail". The last portion is an unpaved road. This site is often inaccessible during the winter, due to snow and ice.

### Steephollow Plantation Trail

The Steephollow trail, at the Omega Rest Area, winds through a tree plantation for 0.6 mile, and visitors can learn about the fire history of this area, and the hows and whys of plantation management. Visitors can learn how to identify the differences between the firs, ponderosa, and Jeffery pines in the plantation. A deck perched over the South Yuba canyon has a broad view of the canyon, including hydraulic mine sites, a forest fire scar, and vegetation patterns from both natural and man-made forces. A trail brochure is available just past the trailhead. A restroom is at the rest area.



Forest Service  
Pacific Southwest Region  
[www.r5.fs.fed.us/](http://www.r5.fs.fed.us/)

Tahoe National Forest  
[www.r5.fs.fed.us/tahoe/](http://www.r5.fs.fed.us/tahoe/)

**Accessibility:** This site is accessible, rated “moderate” for wheelchairs.

**Directions:** From Nevada City, drive 18 miles east on Highway 20. The trailhead is located in the Omega Rest Stop managed by CalTrans.

### **Sierra Discovery Trail (PG&E)**

The Sierra Discovery trail is a 0.9 mile paved route that winds through the head of Bear Valley along the Bear river. From the small waterfall to the decaying logs, visitors can learn about the importance of the natural environment and its role in clean water, healthy wildlife, and other important concepts. Interpretive signs and a kiosk are located at the trailhead, and there is a picnic site and restrooms adjacent. A pay phone is also available.

**Accessibility:** This site is fully accessible for persons with mobility impairments. The trail is paved.

**Directions:** From Nevada City, travel approximately 20 miles east on Highway 20 to the Bowman Road turnoff. Turn left and travel approximately one-half mile (north) up this road. The parking lot is on the left.

### **Loney Meadow Trail**

Loney Meadow is a high elevation (6,000 feet) meadow with wonderful wildflower displays in summer. The meadow provides important wildlife and bird habitat, and is undergoing ecological restoration to correct the effects of a century of cattle grazing in the meadow. The one-mile trail circles the perimeter of the meadow. Interpretive signs discuss the history of the meadow, some common bird and animal species, and meadow & stream restoration.

**Accessibility:** This trail is considered “difficult” for wheelchairs, due to its one-mile length and uneven surface.

**Directions:** From I-80 at the Highway 20/Nevada City exit, drive four miles west on SR 20. Turn right on Bowman road, and follow this two lane paved road to the end of pavement, approximately 10 miles.

### **All Are Welcome**

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At the end of pavement, follow the signs onto a dirt road for approximately 0.75 mile to the trailhead.

*Note: this road is not recommended for low clearance vehicles.*

### **Pierce Creek Wetlands Trail**

The Pierce Creek Wetlands trail takes the visitor through a section of forest, glacially carved rocks, and a rare Sierra wetlands and shallow pond. Signs along the trail discuss the interrelationships of these three areas, and encourage the visitor to listen and look at the environment around them.

**Accessibility:** This trail is not considered accessible for persons with mobility impairments. Tread is narrow, rocky and steep in certain locations, with uneven footing.

**Directions:** From I-80 at the Eagle Lakes exit, follow the paved road past Indian Springs campground to the end of pavement (approximately 1.5 miles). At the end of pavement, follow the unpaved, rough road for approximately 0.9 mile, and look for signing for the Pierce Creek Wetlands trail. *Note: this route is considered a four-wheel drive route. Persons in 2WD vehicles may choose to walk in from the end of pavement. This route crosses private property; please respect the property owner's rights.*

### **Emigrant Trail at Big Bend:**

The Big Bend trail is a partially paved trail that follows the trace of the 1840s overland emigrant trail to California. A brochure available at the adjacent Visitor Center outlines the history of the emigrant migration and trail development in this area.

**Accessibility:** the portion of this trail that parallels the South Yuba river is paved and accessible by persons with mobility impairments. Beyond this point, the trail is not considered accessible and is not marked.

**Directions:** The trail begins just upstream of the bridge behind the Visitor Center. At the end of pavement, the emigrant trail leaves the river and goes up a sheer rock face onto “Potato Rock”, a prominent granite dome.