Hot and Cool...Free Kayak Tours on Whiskeytown Lake

A Message From . . .

Jim McEntire, Park Superintendent

Forty years ago, 10,000 people from Northern California anxiously waited for President John F. Kennedy’s helicopter to come into view and land on the new Whiskeytown Dam. As President Kennedy stepped off the helicopter the crowd burst into applause and cheer. President Kennedy was on his national Conservation Tour, visiting parks and major conservation projects, including new dams and wildlife refuges.

The President gave a stirring speech that is etched in the memories of all those that participated. Even today people speak of their memories with fondness and excitement. Terri Hodgetts, a young woman from Hayfork, California, led a group of 32 high school students on a 35 mile hike from their hometown to Whiskeytown to see President Kennedy. Another local character, Mr. Paul McDermott, brought a mule with the President was addressing the crowd.

There is no charge for the kayak tours, although visitors must display a valid park pass on vehicles parked at Whiskeytown. The National Park Service provides tandem kayaks, paddles, life jackets, and basic paddling and safety instruction for up to sixteen people on each trip. If you already have access to a canoe or kayak, you are welcome to bring your own boat and join the tour at any time.

BEAT THE HEAT THIS SUMMER WITH A COOL KAYAK TRIP on Whiskeytown Lake. Free ranger-guided kayak tours depart from Oak Bottom twice daily this summer, providing a great escape and the opportunity to spot park wildlife while cruising over the clear blue waters of Whiskeytown Lake. Park rangers and volunteer kayak assistants provide information about local history, current events, plants and animals in the park, not to mention boat-in access to some great swimming locations away from crowded beaches and campgrounds. Two-hour tours will depart at 10:00 am and 1:00 pm, daily. Special moonlight kayak tours will be offered for several nights each month when the moon is approaching full.

To Participate in Whiskeytown's Kayak Program:

• You must know how to swim
• You must weigh less than 275 pounds
• You must be at least six years old
• If you are six to twelve years old, you must ride with a parent or guardian.
• Call (530) 242-3455 to reserve a space up to one week in advance.

VIP Profile

Whiskeytown Lake holds a special place in the heart of Ray Gonzalez, known affectionately by his friends here as “The Waterman.” Originally, from the islands of Kauai, Ray has made northern California his home for the last 15 years, volunteering at Whiskeytown since 1988. Ray clears litter and garbage from the lakeshore, trails and waters of Whiskeytown in an effort to care for the place he considers his home away from home.

Ray started volunteering because he wanted to make a positive difference in the world. He enjoys being able to see the difference in the lake’s appearance after cleaning up the trash left by less thoughtful visitors. When asked why he continues to come back week after week, year after year, Ray replies, “because this is my home—just like the bald eagle, the bear, and the bass, I live here.”

In addition to keeping Whiskeytown clean, Ray also helps out with the park’s popular kayak program, sharing his knowledge of the underwater world of Whiskeytown Lake. As an avid underwater film photographer, Ray has captured great images of kokanee, bass and turtles at Whiskeytown.

Keeping the park clean is an enormous task. Ray is a hard worker, but wishes that more people would take the time to pick up after themselves. Next time you’re out on the lake, look for Ray and say hello. It’s easy to understand why this National Park Service volunteer holds a special place in the heart of Whiskeytown.
Friends of Whiskeytown

Join the Friends of Whiskeytown. The Friends of Whiskeytown is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping the National Park Service restore and protect the magnificent resources and recreational opportunities at Whiskeytown. Your contribution of $25.00 or more will help the park to complete projects that would be otherwise unfunded.

Yes, I want to become a Friend of Whiskeytown and help Whiskeytown National Recreation Area. Enclosed is my tax-deductible gift of:

Donors of $25 or more receive the Friends of Whiskeytown newsletter twice a year and are listed on the Friends of Whiskeytown Contributions Wall at the park Visitor Center. Please make check payable to the "Friends of Whiskeytown, Inc." and mail to P.O. Box 105, Whiskeytown, CA 96095.

Name
Address
City/State/Zip
Telephone
Email

Interested in volunteering? Yes / No (circle one)

Please call our Volunteer Manager’s office at (530) 242-3421 for more information.

The Friends of Whiskeytown was incorporated in December 2002, as an independent private nonprofit organization. The Friends of Whiskeytown operates under a cooperative agreement with the National Park Service to provide private funding for specific programs and projects that further the preservation, protection or enhancement of Whiskeytown National Recreation Area. The Friends of Whiskeytown is not a membership organization; nor does it engage in political activity or other advocacy. The Friends of Whiskeytown does not receive federal funding of any kind. Contributions to the Friends of Whiskeytown are tax-deductible to the extent that the sum exceeds the value of benefits provided to the donor. For further information, call (530) 242-3460.

The Whiskeytown Nugget
blue heron flew right over me and landed about twenty feet away in the tumbling waters. After nearly four feet tall, it seemed all neck and legs. The heron curved its neck into an “S” shape and stood completely still while staring unblinking at the water. Suddenly the neck snapped out straight with lightning speed as a small fish became dinner at the end of its long, spear-shaped bill.

The Great Blue Heron will take almost any live prey, including amphibians, crustaceans and even small mammals. How about a tasty frog, a crab, or a mouse for a meal? The heron’s diet is mainly fish, though, and it can be found just about anywhere in North America where there is water, including lakes, rivers, marshes, seaside wetlands, and swamps. Even tiny backyard ponds may attract the big birds. A Redding suburbanite was amazed to find a heron devouring the expensive koi in her water garden and promptly installed a chicken wire cover to thwart the heron’s efforts.

Although the heron relies on stealth and forages on its own, it can become quite social at nesting time. Several large fledgling pits in the Carr Powerhouse area have hosted mixed-species rookeries throughout the years. The Great Blues claim the higher nesting sites while related species, such as Great Egrets, are relegated to the lower parts of the tree. The large, flat nests of tightly woven sticks seem improbably perched in the pines at thirty to seventy feet up. Add two or three rapidly growing young herons, two adult parents taking turns feeding them, and you get an act that defies gravity.

Next time you are lingering along a creek at Whiskeytown, or doing any other activity near the water, keep your eyes peeled for a sighting of these gangly birds. Their size and voice make them hard to miss. You may be as spoilt as I was if one happens to leap into flight in front of you with its harsh scream. But fear not, unless you happen to be a fish.

We Did It Again!

The National Park Service is proud to announce the completion of our second handicap accessible fishing pier on Whiskeytown Lake. The new pier, located at the end of the Oak Bottom Marina parking lot, has a 20 ft. X 20 ft. fishing deck with a 6 ft. wide, 40 ft. long gangway anchored to the shore. The pier has a heavy steel substructure set in concrete, two-inch interlocking aluminum decking and a stainless steel guard rail system. This provides a secure, non-movable platform that reaches 60 feet out over the water for enjoying the lake. The first handicap accessible fishing pier is located at the Whiskey Creek Launch ramp parking area.

These are just a few of the resident amphibians of Whiskeytown National Recreation Area. The park has recently started to do an inventory of its plants and animals, including amphibians. The overall goal is to maintain suitable habitat for the wide variety of plants and animals in the park so that visitors may enjoy them for years to come. Help take care of our wonderful amphibians and reptiles. Please observe wildlife in the wild and then let them go on their own way.

Amphibians on Land and in a Dry Park?

by Bruce Bury
U.S. Geological Survey

WHISKEYTOWN NATIONAL RECREATION AREA is usually viewed as a hot, dry park. This impression is mostly from visitors who experience the park from spring to early fall when temperatures commonly exceed 100° F. It can be easy to forget that there are many months of rainy weather during the winter, and during these wet periods many amphibians are active in the park, emerging from their underground retreats for varying times on land.

These “terrestrial” salamanders include two species which lack lungs. They breathe across their skins and force air into the throat area, and they deposit their eggs in clusters on land. They have no aquatic stage.

First, the Ensatina is a stout-bodied salamander about 4 inches long. Adults are brown to tan with varying amounts of beige or pale yellow on their undersides. They may live in Douglas fir forests as well as oak woodland portions of the park, and some are even found in the chaparral shrublands.

The Black salamander is more slender, with longer legs than the Ensatina. Black salamanders are black to dark gray, and some have a greenish wash over the skin.
GENERAL INFORMATION

SERVICES:
Visitor Center:
Located on Hwy 299 and Kennedy Memorial Drive, the Visitor Center is open daily during the summer from 9 am - 6 pm. All permits and passes are available here. A large selection of books and postcards are also available. (530) 246-1225

Park Headquarters:
Open Monday - Friday 8 am - 4:30 pm. Special Use Permits are available here. (530) 244-3400

Radio:
Tune to 1440 on your AM radio for information about Whiskeytown.

Launch Ramps and Fishing Piers:
There are three boat ramps on the lake located at Whiskey Creek, Oak Bottom, and Brandy Creek Marina. There are accessible fishing piers at Whiskey Creek and Oak Bottom.

Marinas and Store:
Oak Bottom Marina and Brandy Creek Marina provide gas, fishing supplies, souvenirs and other non-perishable items for sale. Boats may be rented at Oak Bottom Marina.

Phones:
Phones are located at Oak Bottom (store, marina, and beach), Brandy Creek beach and marina, Whiskey Creek launch ramp, and the Visitor Center.

Post Offices:
French Gulch is open 8:00 am - 4:00 pm Monday through Friday; Saturday 8:30 am - 10:30 am.

Whiskeytown is located near Whiskey Creek and is open 8:30 am - 12:30 pm Monday through Friday and 10:30 am to 12:30 pm on Saturday.

Old Shasta is open 8:30 am - 5:00 pm (closed noon - 1:00 pm), Saturdays 7:00 am - 8:30 am.

Nearby Services:
Redding: 8 miles east and has all major services.

Hospitals & Clinics:
Redding: Sunset Urgent Care - (530) 472-4211, Redding Medical Center - (530) 244-0400, Mercy Medical Center - (530) 225-6000.

Mail:
Whiskeytown National Recreation Area is located on Hwy 299 and Kennedy Memorial Drive. Mail is postmarked Whiskeytown, CA 96096.

To ORDER AN EMERGENCY CALL 911

Ranger Guided Programs
Whiskeytown National Recreation Area offers a variety of ranger-guided activities for everyone from June 14 to September 1. All programs are subject to change. Please check the campground bulletin boards or call the Visitor Center at 246-1225 for the most current information.

Gold Panning:
Thursday through Tuesday 2:30-4:00 pm
Discover the myths and realities of the Gold Rush Days, then try your luck at Gold Panning. Meet across the footbridge at the Tower House Historic District.

Puppet Show:
Thursday 8:00-8:45 pm June 26 through August 21
Both adults and kids are invited to join a cast of zany characters in a lively and entertaining program about how to safely enjoy Whiskeytown. Meet at Oak Bottom Amphitheater.

Camden House:
Sunday 1:00-2:00 pm
Tour the 1852 home of pioneer/prospector Charles Camden and learn how fortunes were made and lost during the California Gold Rush. Meet across the footbridge at the Tower House Historic District.

Evening Program:
Friday, Saturday, Sunday beginning June 14th from 9:00-10:00 pm
From August 8 through August 31 8:30 - 9:30 pm
Join a ranger for a talk, slide show or other activity exploring the natural, cultural and recreational values that Whiskeytown offers for the enjoyment of present and future generations. Meet at the Oak Bottom Amphitheater.

Junior Firefighter:
Saturday 11:00 am-12 noon
Discover the role that wildfire plays in our forests. Meet at the Visitor Center and learn about our fire management program and how we manage fire to protect property, lives and ensure forest health. Meet at Oak Bottom Amphitheater or call the Visitor Center at 530 246-1225 to find out how you can become a Junior Firefighter.

Kayak Tour:
Daily, 10:00-12 noon and 1:00 - 3:00 pm, reservations required
Hop on a kayak built for two and explore some of the more quiet spots around Whiskeytown Lake while you learn more about the park from a park ranger. Register up to one week in advance by calling (530) 447-3455

Water Safety:
Days and times may vary, check with the life guards on duty for current schedule.

Kids aged 7 to 12 years old can make new friends while learning about the special wonders of Whiskeytown. Ask how you can become a Whiskeytown Junior Ranger. Meet at the Oak Bottom Amphitheater.

Boating Safety
Each summer thousands of boaters visit Whiskeytown Lake seeking an enjoyable outdoor recreational experience. To ensure that boating on the lake is safe and enjoyable for everyone, it is important to know and abide by California Boating Laws. It is also a time to remember certain safety rules and regulations. California State Law REQUIRES all children, 12 years of age and under to wear a personal flotation device (PFD) while on board any boat. Since weather changes can occur quickly on the water, it is also a good idea that all individuals wear a PFD for safety. Before launching your boat, become familiar with Whiskeytown Lake and the restricted areas. Know and observe all regulatory buoy markers on the lake.

No Wake zones are enforced at the Brandy Creek Marina, Oak Bottom Marina and Campground, Dry Creek Campground, and Whiskey Creek Boat Launch and Group Picnic Area.

Always be on alert for swimmers on the lake, especially close to shore and around downed water ski and wake board riders. Boaters must stay at least 100 feet from all people in the water. All portable boats are prohibited within 500 feet of the designated swim beaches at Brandy Creek Beach, Oak Bottom Beach, East Beach, and Whiskey Creek Beach.

Fires in the Visitor Center for maps and additional information.

Fires over 2 kids under 82 degrees are prohibited, and they adversely impact other visitors’ enjoyment of the park. Be considerate. Just like operating a boat under the influence of alcohol or drugs is prohibited in this regulation, so is smoking or the use of fireworks in the lake while you are on the water. 

Boating rules and regulations are designed to protect property, lives and ensure forest health. Meet at Oak Bottom Amphitheater or call the Visitor Center at 530 246-1225 to find out how you can become a Junior Firefighter.

PARK PASSES

Passes may be purchased at the Whiskeytown Visitor Center and at self-pay stations throughout the park. Park your pass on the driver’s side dashboard when you visit the park. By purchasing a pass, you are directly contributing to improvements at Whiskeytown.

Daily - $5
Valid at Whiskeytown on date of purchase only.

Annual - $20
Valid for one year from month of purchase. Also honored at Lassen Volcanic National Park.

National Park Pass - $20
Valid for seven days from date of purchase.

Golden Age - $10
Lifetime pass for U.S. citizens over the age of 62.

Golden Access - Free
Lifetime pass for U.S. citizens and permanent residents that are permanently disabled.