Recreational Opportunities Abound at Whiskeytown

Do you want to get in shape, lose some winter weight, improve your heart beat, and strengthen your body? If you do, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area offers a wide variety of recreational opportunities for you and your family.

The park continues to host large sporting events, including the Lemurian Shasta Classic mountain bike race, the Memorial Day Sailing Regatta, the Whiskeyman Triathlon, the Whiskeytown Relays and the September Lake Swim. The spectacular landscape and the varied terrain of the park attract hundreds of mountain bikers, long-distance swimmers, runners, sailors, and equestrians. Mountain streams, waterfalls and old growth forests provide a lush backdrop to inspire even the most tired athlete to push a little further.

Whiskeytown was originally slated to become a 5,000-acre county park. The county park would have included the 3,200-acre lake and a 300-foot buffer around the shoreline, including Oak Bottom, Brandy Creek beach and marina and the Whiskey Creek boat ramp. However, leaders in Redding and Shasta County began to worry whether the county would have the financial resources to maintain such a facility. James K. Carr, a local resident who was appointed Undersecretary of the Interior in 1961, sought to make Whiskeytown a unit of the National Park Service. On November 8, 1965, Congress passed the legislation to create Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area.

Forty years later, over 750,000 people visit the park each year to recreate. While most visitors use the lake for swimming, boating, fishing, kayaking, and water skiing, more and more visitors are using the park’s backcountry. In response to the growing demand for trail use, the National Park Service has joined forces with the nearby communities of Weaverville, Redding, and French Gulch to develop a plan to construct a regional trail. In the future, the Shasta-Trinity Trail will link Redding with the Trinity Alps.

In June 2005, the National Park Service released the Shasta-Trinity Trail Environmental Assessment for public review. The document describes three alternatives for constructing a nearly 20-mile hiking, biking and equestrian trail through Whiskeytown National Recreation Area. The preferred alternative proposed by the Park Service suggests constructing several new sections of trail that will traverse the higher slopes of Shasta Bally, connecting Brandy Creek with the Boulder Creek Falls area. It is expected that following public review, portions of the new trail could begin construction as early as summer 2006.

More and more people are visiting Whiskeytown’s beautiful waterfalls, located in box canyons shaded by pine and Douglas fir forest. Improved trails include new rock work, handrails and rock-chipped steps which provide safer access to the bases of these picturesque waterfalls. A waterfall with an estimated height of 240 feet was rediscovered in 2004, and a new trail will be open to “Whiskeytown Falls” in the summer of 2006.
Don’t look for this little dipper in the night sky—it’s not a constellation. No, it’s a funny, stubby songbird with the most unusual habits. The next time you are at any clear, rushing mountain stream in Whiskeytown, look very closely for the American Dipper. You won’t find it in the creekside willows or in the nearby treetops of the alders or pines. Instead, search for it right in the middle of the stream, comically bobbing up and down on a rock. It won’t be easy to see, since its sooty gray color allows it to blend in with the water. It is a solitary bird, rarely seen with others of its kind.

The dipper will be easier to hear, however. The loud, buzzy metallic DZZEE of its call clearly distinguishes it from other birds. Its song is almost rattle-like, with a series of high whistled or trilled phrases. I describe it as a wren on steroids, as if the dipper is attempting to reproduce the melodious tunes of other songbirds, but its voice box will only allow it to make big, harsh noises.

The dipper employs one of the strangest foraging strategies of any North American songbird. Its diet consists mainly of aquatic insect larvae, small fish in the 2 to 3 inch range, and fish eggs. Of course, it has to go underwater to reach its preferred cuisine. These birds may very well get their name from their habit of suddenly “dipping” into the water to feed. They can forage on the bottom of streams where the current is too fast and the water too deep for people to stand in. According to some sources, they can “fly” underwater to depths of 90 feet, using their strong legs and toes to walk along the bottom or the surface of their short wings to paddle around under the water like ariain scuba divers.

The adaptations of dippers to their aquatic lifestyle are amazing. Scales close over their nostrils while they are underwater. A thick coat of downy feathers insulates them from the cold. A third eyelid can be drawn across the eye to help keep it clear of dirt suspended in the water. They have oil glands that are much larger than those in other songbirds and spend a lot of time preening, applying that oil to their feathers to maintain the waterproofing and insulating quality of their plumage.

The short wings aren’t just for paddling – dippers can fly with no problem. Their flight pattern is also distinctive. When disturbed, they take off on what seems like a crash course, flying low and lifting above the water, buzzing loudly. If the dipper is a nesting female, she will usually fly straight back to her nest to defend it. The nest is a beautiful green covered basket, made of interwoven mosses shape like a round hut with an opened arching near the bottom. They tend to locate nests on cliffs that are mossy and ferrozy, behind waterfalls, and even under bridges.

American Dippers thrive in unpolluted, fast-moving streams that have not been subject to a lot of silt accumulation. Deteriorating dirt roads can silt out a stream and destroy the populations of aquatic insects and fish that dippers depend on as a food source. At Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, ongoing efforts to rehabilitate old dirt logging roads by turning them into small foot trails or by restoring the natural contours of the land have succeeded in improving habitat not just for the dippers, but also for trout and salmon, who share some of the same food preferences and habitat as the dippers. The need to preserve their shared habitat gives bird watchers common cause with anglers.

Challenge yourself to spot a dipper on your next hike or by fishing trip to Whiskeytown. Whether it is dive bombing down the creek or wading underwater, you are sure to be entertained by this spunky “feathered fish.”

Remember, whatever your choice of recreation, your safety and that of others depends on it. Staying alert, and respecting the rules and feelings of others. All federal, state and local fishing laws are enforced on Whiskeytown. Please contact a Park Ranger if you have questions or need further information concerning boating or other park regulations.
Biodiversity Abounds at Whiskeytown!

Biodiversity abounds at Whiskeytown National Recreation Area. Whether on steep, sun-exposed slopes, in dark, moist canyons, or at the headwaters of Brandy Creek on Shasta Raly, species and habitats from different regions collide. Whiskeytown contains a broad range of vegetation communities that support abundant wildlife species. From the shrublands along the lakeshore to the old-growth forests near the top of Shasta Raly (the highest peak in the park), Whiskeytown has over 900 native vascular plant species along with at least 42 mammal species, 166 bird species, and 30 reptile and amphibian species. In addition to the vascular plant and vertebrate species, Whiskeytown boasts a diverse array of fission-obvious, but equally important species, such as lichens, bryophytes, fungi, and arthropods of many kinds. Investigators have yet to fully study and record most of the invertebrates. New species of all types are likely to be confirmed as biologists complete inventories within the park.

Whiskeytown is a geological crossroads where several of northern California’s physiographic regions merge. Elements of the Klamath Mountains, Cascade and Coast Mountain Ranges, and the Sacramento Valley come together here to create a variety of habitats. Also, the park’s rugged topography plays an important role in providing habitats. The park’s elevation ranges from 700 feet above sea level at Clear Creek to 6,209 feet at the top of Shasta Raly. That’s an increase of 5,500 feet in about 2.5 miles with an average slope of 37%. In addition, many streams and creeks flowing through the park produce ridges in all directions, and, in some places, gradients in excess of 75%. This extreme topography creates many different habitat conditions where species can thrive.

Landscapes are never static. Mountains uplift and erode, storms rage over the oceans and land, and disturbances of many types occur through time. As a result of these dynamic conditions, biotic communities also change. In particular, episodic disturbances, both natural and human-caused, can have rapid and profound effects on biotic communities. Disturbances upset conditions, reshuffling species distributions and abundances, and often reorganizing entire ecosystems. In fact, the redistribution of resources in both time and space is essential for the maintenance of biodiversity. Both natural and human-caused disturbances shape the biotic communities at Whiskeytown. Floods, landslides, windstorms, drought, fires, insects, disease cycles, mining, logging, development, dam construction, and fire suppression are some of the disturbances affecting Whiskeytown communities. These interactions have produced a mosaic of vegetation types, some very interesting and unusual, across the park in various states of recovery from disturbance.

This biodiversity is critical in that it sustains the environments in which we live and on which our lives depend. Biodiversity provides us with food, clothing, medicine, and fuel. Equally important are the ecosystem services that biodiversity provides, such as clean air and drinkable water. Threats to biodiversity include habitat loss and degradation, invasive species, pollution, overpopulation, overexploitation and consumption, and global climate change. By learning about how your daily actions affect biodiversity, you can take the first steps toward conserving it. And don’t forget, Whiskeytown deserves respect and further study as an area of great biodiversity in general.

A Way Cool Experience

Since 2001, Whiskeytown has offered visitors free ranger-led kayak tours. The tours provide a premier recreational experience and a different perspective of the lake. Park rangers give paddlers the chance to see bears, ospreys, blue herons, and maybe a bald eagle.

Kayaking the waters of Whiskeytown is a unique experience and good way to get some exercise and stay cool at the same time. For more information on the free kayak tours, contact the Whiskeytown Visitor Center at 530-246-1225.

Help Keep Whiskeytown Green

Nearly everyone knows that recycling benefits the environment and that the National Park Service protects and preserves special sites like Whiskeytown. We all want to visit and enjoy a clean, safe, and trash-free Whiskeytown.

When you do your part, your recyclables will be reused and won’t end up in the garbage. Did you know that it takes 80-100 years for an aluminum can to decompose, up to 700 years for plastic, and one-million years for glass? The plastic that is recycled is melted down and the free kayak tours, contact the Whiskeytown Visitor Center at 530-246-1225.

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Please sort your glass, aluminum, plastic, and trash into the correct can when you visit Whiskeytown. As you deposit empty containers in our recycle bins, you are not only keeping more trash out of landfills, but also saving energy and reducing pollution.

By recycling, you make a vital contribution to the environment. Recycling is one of the easiest and best things you can do for Whiskeytown. You really can make a difference.

Encourage your family and friends to recycle. Reducing the amount of garbage you throw away in important. You can also help reduce trash by buying items that use little or no packaging. This reduces the amount of trash we produce.

You do your part and we will do ours. Help keep your park clean and green for present and future visitors. The National Park Service is committed to reducing waste, conserving natural resources, and preventing and minimizing pollution.
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3. Trash your trash, manage your dog, (pick up poop).

4. Leave a site better than you found it. The Whiskeytown Junior Ranger program offers 2 campsites (tent only) at $75/site/night. Each campsite accommodates up to 5 persons.

5. Be part of a volunteer or community effort to clean up your local park. Whiskeytown offers a variety of ranger-guided events and programs for every interest. All programs are subject to change. Please call the Visitor Center at 426-1225 for current information.

KAYAK TOUR

Daily tours. Reservations required

Hop on a kayak built for two and explore some of the finest kayaking areas around Whiskeytown Lake so you learn more about the park. You must register in advance by calling (530)422-3462.

2008 Ranger Guided Programs

The Whiskeytown Nugget

GETTING THERE

Whiskeytown is located on Highway 299 between Redding and Weaverville.

GETTING THERE

Campers may be purchased at the Whiskeytown Visitor Center and at self-pay stations throughout the park. Place 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.

TO REPORT AN EMERGENCY CALL 911

The National Park Service promotes responsible outdoor recreation. Please take a personal role in preserving the outdoor experience for yourself and future generations while enjoying your visit at Whiskeytown.

1. Plan ahead. Know before you go.
2. Stick to trails.
3. Trash your trash, manage your dog, (pick up poop).
4. Leave it as you find it.
5. Be careful with fire.
6. Keep wildlife wild - don't feed the wildlife.
7. Respect other visitors, our trails, and your enjoyment of the park.

Leave No Trace is a national education program which promotes minimum-impact practices for non-motorized recreation. The goal of the Leave No Trace program is to promote responsible use of public lands through education, research and partnerships.

For more information visit the Leave No Trace program website – www.lnt.org