



Sparkling water, cool forests, wildlife—and gold—have drawn people to this area for many centuries. To preserve its beauty, Congress established Whiskeytown National Recreation Area in 1965. Stop for a minute and look around. In the half-century since, has it changed?

## Whiskeytown's Treasures

Whiskeytown Lake nestles among the steep, rugged hills and valleys of the Klamath Mountains in northern California. Heavy winter rains, dry summers, and frequent wildfires create habitats ranging from old-growth forests to oak woodlands and chaparral. Over 1,100 plant and animal species live here, many with names that evoke the area's intense colors—gray pine, blue oak, yellow warbler, purple finch, black bear, rainbow trout.

Native Americans found acorns, fish, deer, and other treasures that sustained them for thousands of years. The discovery of gold nearby in 1848, only months after it was found farther

south at Sutter's Mill, brought fortune hunters known as '49ers. Today the area provides water, wildlife habitat, recreation, and power generated by the Central Valley Project.

President John F. Kennedy dedicated Whiskeytown Dam in 1963, noting that when "we set aside recreational areas, we can be sure they will be used." But, he asked, "What kind of a country will [future Americans] find? How much recreation will be possible for them? I think if we make the right decisions now, they will be grateful to us..." Why not join in? Help preserve Whiskeytown for this and future generations.

Sunset on Whiskeytown Lake. NPS

## Enjoy Your Park

Most people come to Whiskeytown for the lake's cool water. You can also visit Camden House and historic water ditches from the Gold Rush era. Walk to waterfalls through old-growth forests. Hike or take a four-wheel-drive vehicle to the summit of Shasta Bally.

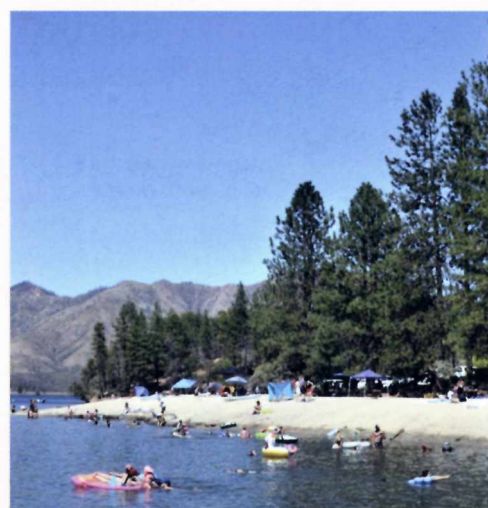
**On the Lake** Whiskeytown Lake, with 36 miles of shoreline and 3,200 acres of surface area, stays full in summer. It offers floating, fishing, sailing, paddleboarding,

scuba diving, swimming, wading, wakeboarding, and windsurfing.

**On the Land** About 39,000 acres of public land surround the lake. Shaded mountain trails and year-round creeks offer breaks from summer heat. Activities include birding, camping, hiking, gold panning, horseback riding, mountain biking, nature study, photography, picnicking, wildlife viewing, and sightseeing.

## A Long History of Fire

Wildfire has been integral to the area's landscape for centuries. Wintu set the land on fire for their livelihood. Fires are now hotter and larger for reasons that include climate change. The Carr Fire of 2018 destroyed over 100 structures and burned 97 percent of the park. Whiskeytown is regreening, but the park will burn again. Come study this complex landscape.



Summertime at Brandy Creek Beach.



Whiskeytown is black bear country.



Take in Crystal Creek Falls' beauty.



Kayaking is a great way to experience the lake.



Park firefighters discuss the Carr Fire.

### Wintu



Wintu elders share traditions with their children.

The national recreation area is also the homeland of Wintu people, who prospered here for centuries. They gathered acorns, hunted elk and deer, and fished for trout and salmon. Artisans honed razor-sharp knives from obsidian and created tightly woven baskets used to cook liquids. Their culture lives today.

### Gold Rush and Early Development



Panning for gold is popular here. Try it!

For most '49ers the big strike was always in the next shovelful. Some succeeded with hard work and luck. They were the exceptions.

Charles Camden and Levi Tower became friends and partners in San Francisco in spring 1850. They sailed in search of the Trinity River's mouth, then traveled overland to Whiskeytown's northern diggings. Camden built a one-room cabin and a mining operation, sawmill,



Tower House Hotel as it appeared in 1912.

and water ditches. Later he erected toll roads and bridges, and around the cabin he built a larger home, Camden House. It is among the park's many structures from the Gold Rush era.

Tower made his living by providing food and shelter to miners. He invested his profits in the 21-room Tower House luxury hotel, gardens, and orchards. The hotel burned in 1920.

### Central Valley Project



President Kennedy dedicating the dam, 1963.

The Central Valley Project, to move water from northern California to drier areas farther south, began in 1935. At Whiskeytown engineers blasted a 10½-mile-long, 17½-foot-diameter tunnel through solid granite to divert water from the Trinity to the Sacramento river system. The lake they created brought hydroelectric power, a dependable water supply, a flood control system—and opportunities for recreation.

### A World-Class Watershed



Largemouth bass (left) and rainbow trout (right) flourish here.

The watersheds for the lake and the creeks that feed it are densely forested and lightly developed. The water generally runs clean and clear. Swimming, boating, and fishing are extremely popular. Do your part to keep park waters healthy. Never leave food unattended. Place all trash and food scraps in the brown, bear-proof trash cans. Don't feed the wildlife, including geese and squirrels.

In the 1970s, Whiskeytown employees planted thousands of tree seedlings around the park to offset the effects of former logging roads and mining activities. The trees help hold soil and water in place and reduce erosion, sediment, and stormwater runoff flowing into the lake.



# Explore Whiskeytown

The following applies only to the Whiskeytown unit of Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area.

**Visitor Center** Open daily as staffing allows, the visitor center offers information, maps, publications, and outdoor exhibits.

**Activities** Park rangers offer kayak and paddleboard tours, and walks and talks.

**Water Sports** You may swim and boat. • Scuba divers must be certified and have proper equipment. • Federal and state boating rules apply. Wear a lifejacket. Observe restrictions. • Personal watercraft (PWC), like Jet Skis, are prohibited. • Use launch ramps at Oak Bottom, Whiskey Creek, and Brandy Creek. • Oak Bottom has two small stores and a marina with boat rentals. • Brandy Creek has a beach, small store, and kayak and paddleboard rentals in summer only.

**Hiking, Mountain Biking, Horseback Riding** Dozens of miles of trails and primitive roads lead to waterfalls, rugged mountain vistas, and historic mining features. Visit the website to learn more.

**Fishing** Fishing is permitted from a boat or the shore. Species include rainbow, brook, and brown trout; largemouth, smallmouth, and spotted bass; and kokanee salmon. California fishing license is required. Ask about park-specific restrictions.

**Gold Panning** Only recreational gold panning is allowed. Register at the visitor center (\$1 fee) and ask for details.

**Camping** Oak Bottom has tent and RV campgrounds. Tent area has restrooms and fire grates. RV area has restrooms, dump station, and water; no hookups. Oak Bottom beach restrooms have hot showers (fee). Brandy Creek has RV camping (self-contained units

only), dump station, and water; no restrooms or hookups. 14-day camping limit May 15 to September 15; 30-day limit rest of the year.

**Primitive and Backcountry Camping** Primitive campgrounds require a permit (fee); they have fire rings, tables, food storage lockers, and restrooms (except at Coggins Park). Backpacking regulations and the required free permit are available at the visitor center.

**Backcountry Roads and Trails** Four-wheel-drive vehicles are recommended on the park's dirt and gravel roads. Only vehicles that can legally be operated on public streets are allowed. Off-road driving is prohibited. Use caution and common sense. If you need help and must leave your vehicle, it should stay on the road. Contact the visitor center in advance for winter closures, current road conditions, and trail information.

**Fees and Passes** Buy weekly and annual park passes and permits for gold panning at the

visitor center or YourPassNow.com. Buy permits for primitive camping at the visitor center. National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands passes are also accepted. Display permits and passes on your dashboard.

**Safety and Regulations** Your safety is your responsibility. • Never swim alone. • Watch children closely in and near the water. • Fires are allowed only in fire grates and may be restricted if fire danger is extreme. • Pets must be leashed at all times. They are not allowed at East Beach or at the beaches and picnic areas at Brandy Creek, Oak Bottom, and Whiskey Creek Group Picnic Area; alcohol is prohibited at these same beaches and picnic areas. • Smoking is allowed only in designated areas. • Do not feed wildlife. • Store food in bear-proof lockers or out of sight in a secured vehicle. • Federal laws protect all natural and cultural features in the park. • For firearms regulations check the park website.

Emergencies call 911

**Accessibility** We strive to make facilities, services, and programs accessible to all. For information check the park website.

**More Information**  
Whiskeytown National Recreation Area  
PO Box 188  
Whiskeytown, CA 96095  
530-242-3400 (park headquarters)  
530-246-1225 (visitor center)  
www.nps.gov/whis  
Follow us on social media.  
Use the NPS App to guide your visit.

The Whiskeytown unit of Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area is one of over 400 parks in the National Park System. Learn more at [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov).

**National Park Foundation.**  
Join the park community.

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Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area is in northern California. Whiskeytown is a national park unit. Shasta and Trinity are not. They are part of the Shasta-Trinity National Forest, managed by the US Forest Service: [www.fs.usda.gov/stnf](http://www.fs.usda.gov/stnf).

