

AUBURN TO RATTLESNAKE BAR

This information is current as of June 2022.

The original patch segment for this section is “Rattlesnake Bar – Auburn Dam.” However, this hike is best described as “Auburn to Rattlesnake Bar” as it is the best way to complete this section given the substantial descent from the Auburn trailhead down to the North Fork of the American River.

This hike is approximately 8 miles and should be avoided when temperatures are above 90 to 95 degrees for at least three reasons: 1. increased risks for heat exhaustion, dehydration, etc.; 2. Scouting should be relatively fun and superhot is not fun; and 3. there is no need to hike this in the heat - there are plenty of cooler months to schedule this hike. In fact, when you can't hike the Sierras due to snow, Folsom beckons!

STARTING TRAILHEAD – CHINA BAR – CARDIAC TRAIL PEAK

Google “China Bar Cardiac Peak” and you will find the starting point listed as 490 Maidu Dr. Auburn California.

<https://goo.gl/maps/gX9EGAZrYRK3DUNK6> This is the Auburn State Recreation Area “China Bar Area.” There is a parking lot here outside of the Park Entrance booth. You do not need to enter through the booth, but you may have to pay \$12 to park a car in the lot to the right of the park entrance (there were two port-o-potties) there too. Another free parking option is to continue ½ block past the lot and park along the side of Maidu Drive. To the left of the parking lot is the PCWA Field Services Division facility.

ENDING TRAILHEAD – RATTLESNAKE BAR BOAT RAMP PARKING AREA

Google “Rattlesnake bar boat launch” and you will find the Rattlesnake Bar Boat Launch in Loomis 95650

<https://goo.gl/maps/Toi4UpYVZYXsRR97> The trailhead you will be coming out of at the end of the hike is called Avery’s Pond Trailhead and it is located just north of the boat launch area. There are pit toilets at this location. You will need to pay \$12 to enter and park at this location.

Note – since this is a point-to-point hike, you will need to park a car *at the ending trailhead first* and then shuttle everyone to the starting trailhead. Because there are parking fees involved, you may want to find a group meeting point prior to going to either trailhead, so you can consolidate participants in as few cars as possible.

ON THE TRAIL

If you use Alltrails.com, you will find this trail listed as “Pioneer Express Trail: Newcastle to Rattlesnake Bar.” Feel free to follow the Alltrails version if you feel more comfortable. It will get you down to the water via an alternate path than we are recommending below. No matter how you get down, the goal for the first mile or so at the beginning of the trail is to get down to the water to the Pioneer Express trail where the hike along the American River really begins.

Our alternate route down to the water is more straightforward and easier to follow than the Alltrails.com hike. At the southside of the parking lot at the China Bar starting point, there is a small waterway canal (about 4-5 feet across) called the Shirland Canal (see photo below). According to this website, the Shirland Canal was constructed for mining purposes <https://www.placer.ca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/8666/9---Archaeology-Cultural-Resources-PDF>

Shirland Canal



Follow along the left side of the Shirland Canal for 0.7 miles until you come to a sign “Cardiac Trail” and turn left onto the Cardiac Trail. (See photo below)



You will soon learn why this is called Cardiac Trail and will be delighted that you are going downhill! You will see many cuts through the switchbacks down – avoid them and stay on the main trail. You will also find many signs on the way down noting “Cardiac bypass” Avoid these turn offs, unless you know where they are bypassing to, and just stay on the main Cardiac Trail down. Take your time going down as it may be steep at certain sections. Also, the soil surface seems to be clay and might be very slippery when wet. If it is wet outside, consider the Alltrail.com version down to the water, which seems to be a mix of roads and trails down to the American River.

At 1.4 miles from the start of the trail down Cardiac Trail, you will come to a gravel parking lot. There was a port-o-potty here, but we didn’t check to see if it was locked or open. At this gravel lot, you will see a road gate to your right with a sign “Pioneer Express” – walk past that gate (see photo below). You are leaving the Cardiac Trail now and moving on to the Pioneer Express trail. Go down this gravel road a short way to the American River.



A few yards down this gravel road is the American River, where you ‘ll find a picnic table (see left photo below) and is a nice place to take a water break. The downhill portion of this hike now is over, and you will be glad you decided to go this direction rather than the opposite direction. As of June 2022, there were signs cautioning against going into and drinking the water – due to algae concerns (see right photo below). Note this sign indicated that filtering or boiling would not make the water safe to drink, so unless you obtain new verifiable information **BRING AND CARRY ALL OF YOUR DRINKING WATER ON THIS TRIP!** At least two liters in cooler weather. This is another reason to do this hike in cooler temperatures, as a 95 degree plus hike would require at least a gallon of water (if not more) for each person.



You are basically now going to be hiking along the American River for the remainder of the hike. The trail will go up and down, and at several times you will veer right, away from the water and then above several gullies back to the water. Below is a common view that you will encounter (see photo below).



At approximately 5.7 miles into the hike, you will come to the PG&E Newcastle Power Plant (see photo below)



You will hike over a small wooden bridge to arrive at the power plant. You will then head down the gravel road past the power plant.

A few hundred yards down this gravel road, you will come to a paved road that turns uphill to the right that has a Horse Xing sign. (See photo below).



To the left of the road guard rail barrier in the middle of the photo above (that keeps cars from driving off the road), the trail picks up again to the left. Continue down this trail. If you look at google maps, you are now on the Avery Pond Trail.

After a few hundred feet, you will come to a fork (you are now at Avery Pond). If you take the right fork, (see left photo below) you will travel down the right side of Avery Pond, if you take the left fork, you travel down the left side of Avery Pond. Both ways meet up again at the south end of the pond. We took the left fork and at the middle of Avery Pond looking to the right, is a view of Avery Pond through the bushes (see right photo below)



Continue past Avery Pond. If you took the left fork at the beginning of Avery Pond, you keep left at the end of the pond, because if you go right, you will now be circling Avery Pond. In other words, keep heading south down the Avery Pond trail.

About a mile past Avery Pond, you will come to a fork in the trail that has no sign (see photo below). Stay left at this fork that will take you back to the ending trailhead at the Rattlesnake Bar Boat Launch where your car is parked.



Note many dayhikers park at the Rattlesnake Bar Boat Launch and take the Avery Pond Trail north (where you are coming from). So, from Avery Pond to the end of the trail you might meet several people coming in the opposite way who are just day hiking to Avery Pond from Rattlesnake bar.

Upon your return to the Rattlesnake Bar Boat Launch parking lot, you can congratulate your unit on completing this Folsom Hike segment.

Things to consider: at the ending trailhead cars, put a change of shoes (your shoes will be dusty) and perhaps a change of clothes. Keep some snacks and water in the cars and be aware that you may have no cell reception at Rattlesnake Bar. T-Mobile worked but Verizon did not. This may be important to consider if you chose Rattlesnake Bar as the meeting place at the beginning of the day and someone is late – you might not be able to reach them by phone from Rattlesnake bar to find out where they are.

PATCHES

Patch segments for this hike (aka a “rocker” called Rattlesnake Bar Auburn Dam) are available at the GEC scout shop, as is the large patch the segment patch goes around (called a rounder). If they are out of this rocker or rounder, it might take a couple of months for them to re-order. So, if you are having a court of honor and want to hand out these segments to scouts, don’t wait ‘till the last minute to obtain a rocker/rounder patch - contact the scout shop early.

SAFETY

Last but not least, take some time with your unit to discuss safety. Make sure you have reviewed physicals (and have them). You don’t want to discover 4 miles into the hike that a scout has asthma or a bee allergy and didn’t bring an inhaler or an epipen, etc – there are flowers and there is an occasional bee. Know where your nearest hospital is, e.g., Kaiser Permanente Roseville Medical Center. Review the Guide to Safe Scouting and make sure the scouts you are taking are mature enough for this trip (there are a few cliff sections and you cannot have horseplay) – this means making sure they brought their water and other 10 essentials. Leave No Trace, avoid touching any nature and beware of poison oak that is everywhere along this hike. We did not see a rattlesnake, but it’s named Rattlesnake Bar for a reason - they are certainly out there, so make sure you stay on the trail and keep an eye out for snakes along the way, especially the

lead hiker. You should also be on the lookout for ticks and screen yourself at the end of the hike for ticks. Take sunscreen and a minimum of two liters of water. Develop an emergency phone tree list and designate a contact person who will not be on the trip who has knowledge of where you will be and when. Finally, all participating adults must have up to date YPT training and be AB 506 registered.