

Foresthill Divide Loop Trail (#12 on the ASRA Topo Map)



Distance: 8.2 miles; 3.7 hours (hiking)
Shorter loops are also possible.
Add 1 mile (0.4 hrs) from Trailhead (West)

Difficulty: Easy to moderate

Slope: 4% avg; 15% max. (see below)

Trailhead / Parking:

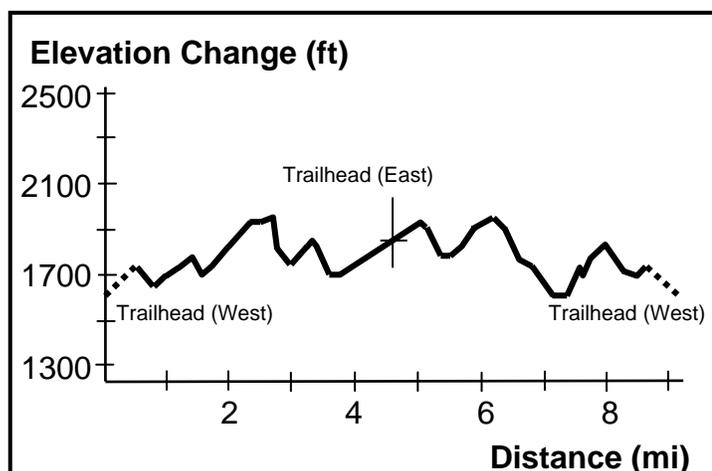
West: (N38-56-561; W120-58-946)

East: (N38-58-433; W120-57-253)

Trailhead (west) is on Foresthill Rd, 3.5 miles east of Foresthill Bridge, at a large parking area on the right (known locally as the Grizzly Bear House turnout). Trailhead (east) is on Foresthill Rd, 7 miles east of Foresthill Bridge (0.2 mile past Drivers Flat Road) at a large parking area on the left. Both trailheads have a porta-potty.

Description

This well maintained loop is among the newest trails to open in the ASRA (completed in 2000), and it offers some beautiful views of Lake Clementine and both the North Fork (NF) and Middle Fork (MF) American River. Straddling the Foresthill Divide at elevations ranging from 1600 to 1900 feet, it provides a diversity of flora as it passes through all four American River Canyon eco-systems: yellow pine forest, foothill woodland, riparian woodland, and chaparral. It also passes through open grasslands that are abundant with wildflowers in the spring.



The Foresthill Divide Loop Trail offers a quintessential American River Canyon experience for hikers, bikers and equestrians, and it is extremely popular year round. Starting the loop at trailhead (west) adds one mile to the 8.2-mile loop, but it is the closer trailhead coming from Auburn.

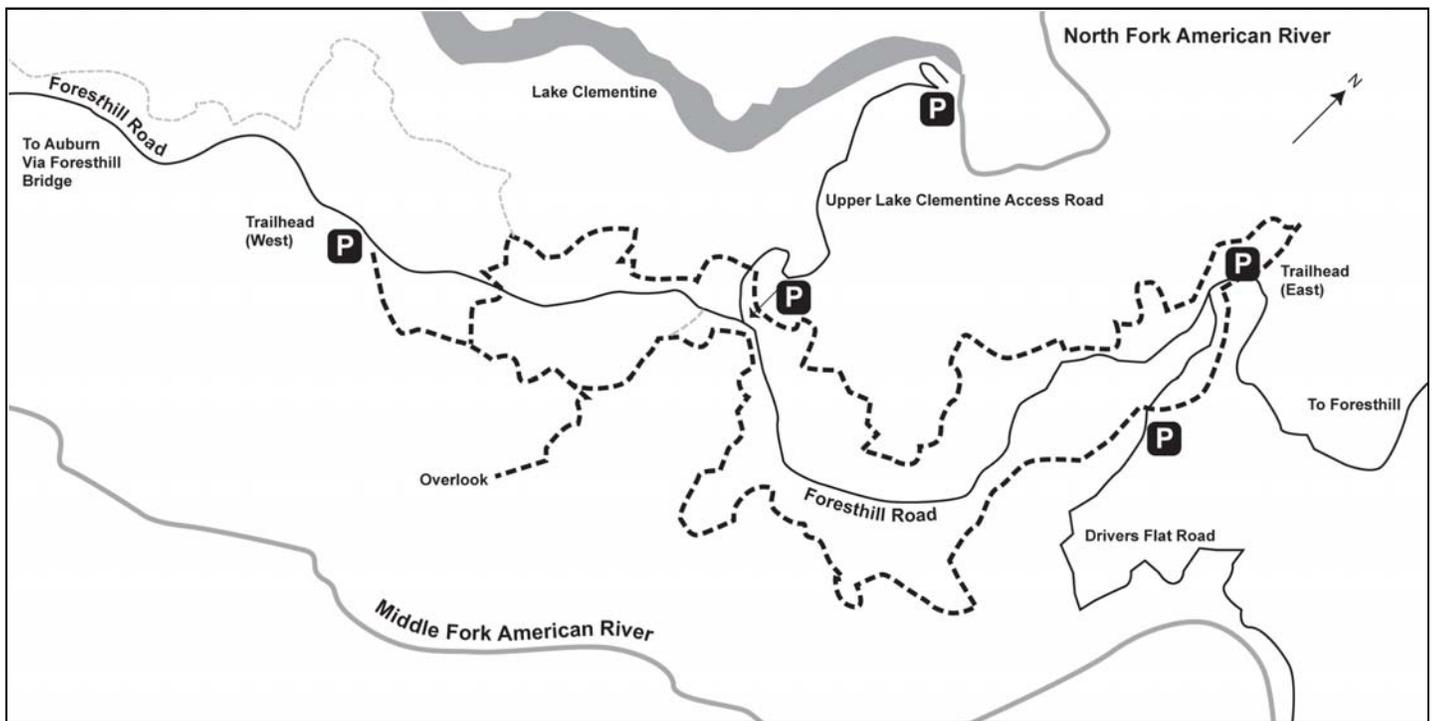
The trail begins at a green gate behind the parking area and then turns left into the shade of oak and foothill pines. About 100 yards east of the parking area, there is an old rock foundation of a hotel nestled in the trees. This hotel served miners during the gold rush era and was called the Grizzly Bear House, appropriately named because the skin of an enormous grizzly bear was spread out on one of its walls, seeming to take the whole house in its embrace.

The trail soon opens up into large rolling grasslands dotted with majestic oaks and beautiful wildflowers in the spring. At 0.5 mile, turn right at the Drivers Flat marker, which puts you onto the 8.2-mile loop going counter-clockwise. At 1 mile, a side trail to the right leads to an overlook with a magnificent panoramic view of the MF American River from Poverty Bar to the east, to Brown's Bar to the west. This side trail adds 0.8 miles and 200 ft of elevation change.

Returning to the loop trail, it meanders in and out of shaded foothill woodlands ecosystem and sunny chaparral dominated by manzanita, buck brush and chemise. At 1.4 miles, the trail turns right while a dirt road continues straight.

Those interested in a shorter, 3.9-mile loop should continue straight on the dirt road; carefully cross Foresthill Road and go right for 200 yards; turn left onto Upper Lake Clementine Road and go 0.2 mi. down the road to find the loop trail again. Turn left on the loop trail and proceed 2 miles to return to trailhead (west).

For those remaining on the 8.2-mile loop, the trail becomes narrower and more scenic. At the 2.2-mile point, there is a grand view of the Middle Fork and the Cool limestone quarry to



the west. At 3 miles, a well-built, wooden bridge crosses a creek (running in winter and spring). A bit further, there is a fork in the trail. Stay to the left. At 4.1 miles, either continue straight on the loop trail or turn left and proceed up Drivers Flat Rd. to Foresthill Rd. Either way, when you get to the road, carefully cross (preferably when no cars are coming) and proceed to the parking lot at the trailhead (east). This marks the halfway point of the 8.2 mile loop trail.

From the trailhead (east), the loop trail continues behind the parking area. It is mostly shaded with no open meadows, passing through dense yellow pine forest and foothill woodlands. The views are less grand on this side of the Foresthill Divide, although glimpses of the NF American River and Lake Clementine can sometimes be seen through the trees in the canyon below.

At 1.5 miles from trailhead (east), there is a great view of Lime Rock (see sidebar) on the far side of Clementine Lake. At 2.5 miles, the loop crosses Upper Lake Clementine Road.

Those starting at trailhead (east) and looking for a shorter, 6-mile loop: turn left and climb Upper Lake Clementine Rd to Foresthill Rd.; turn right and go 200 yards; carefully cross the road and continue on a dirt road behind the green gate; go 150 yards and turn left on the loop trail; proceed 3.3 miles to return to trailhead (east).

For those remaining on the 8.2 mile loop, cross Upper Lake Clementine Rd, go 3.8 miles through densely shaded foothill woodlands, and emerge on Foresthill Rd. Carefully cross the road and go 0.2 miles to a trail intersection. To return to trailhead (west), turn right and go 0.5 miles. To return to trailhead (east), go straight for 4.2 miles.

Did You Know? -- **Lime Rock** is locally known as Robbers Roost. When Foresthill was still a booming gold mining site, a local band of outlaws, the Gassaway Gang, is reported to have used the rock as a strategic lookout point to spot and then signal when the stagecoach was enroute from Foresthill to Auburn.