

A Boating Trail Guide to the Sacramento River

From Redding to Red Bluff

The Sacramento River, California's largest river, is your ticket to beating the summer heat and escaping the tumult of everyday life. Flowing 375 miles, from the shadow of Mount Shasta in the north through the Central Valley and the Delta to San Francisco Bay, this river constitutes an irreplaceable resource to Northern California's ecology.

Boating, fishing, camping and swimming on the Sacramento and its reservoirs attract more than 8 million visitors a year. The river's salmon fishery alone generates over \$100 million annually, and more than 70% of the salmon caught off California's coast spawn in the Sacramento River and its hatcheries.

The 21-mile stretch from Redding to Balls Ferry is perfect for scenic touring and shorter trips. For the adventuresome, the breath-taking 33-mile stretch between Balls Ferry and Red Bluff is your ticket.



Wildlife

The riparian (riverside) forests ribboning the river and the adjacent oak woodlands provide a habitat for a diversity of wildlife.

Mammals: Beaver, black-tail deer, river otter, grey squirrel and ring-tail cat are commonly seen. Observant visitors may spy coyote, grey fox, bobcat, or mountain lion south of Balls Ferry.

Amphibians: The evening serenity is underscored by the sounds of the Pacific chorus frog and the bullfrog. Daytime travelers are likely to see western pond turtles, fence lizards, and spadefoot toads.



Fish: The river supports four runs of chinook salmon, including the endangered winter-run. More abundant species are the Pacific lamprey, steelhead and rainbow trout, striped bass, green sunfish, bluegill, largemouth and smallmouth bass, Sacramento sucker, shad, and various catfish, minnows, herrings and sturgeon.



Birds: Counting both migratory and resident birds, nearly 200 different species have been observed along the river. Avian wildlife include the belted kingfisher, spotted sandpiper, egret, great blue heron, valley quail, turkey, osprey, Nutall's woodpecker and scrub jay. The river sustains various waterfowl including mallard duck, Canadian geese, cinnamon teal and merganser. The best months to see migratory waterfowl are between September and January. The most fortunate visitors may spot bank swallows, bald eagles and golden eagles.

History

The Sacramento River has a long and rich history. Prior to the arrival of Europeans, the river was home to several Native American groups, with dozens of settlements lining its banks. The Wintu, Nomlaki and Yana thrived upon the salmon runs of the Sacramento and its tributaries, and nearby acorns and deer.

When Spanish explorers first came to the river in 1808, they named it the "Jesus Maria." The river was renamed when later explorers saw it for the first time on the Day of the Holy Sacrament (El Rio del Sacramento).

In 1844, the river south of Redding became a lumber transportation system, as logs were sent down the river from locations near Ash Creek and Battle Creek to Sutter's Fort. By 1880, enormous lumber rafts, made from as many as 20 logs held together with wooden pegs, were floated down the river to various destinations.

In 1876, rough-cut lumber was transported within V-shaped flumes from above Manton to Red Bluff. Remnants of the Blue Ridge Flume, which paralleled the river south from the mouth of Inks Creek, can still be seen today.

The river has changed dramatically since the construction of the Shasta Dam in 1938, and the Red Bluff Diversion Dam in 1964. Although these dams have modified the river system, the riparian landscape between Redding and Red Bluff is the most unspoiled of the entire 375-mile river.

Boating Safety

Be sure your boating skills are equal to Class II difficulty levels. Although the river appears calm, strong eddies, cold water, and sweepers (overhanging trees, etc.) pose threats to the unaware boater.

River flow levels change, and hazards vary with them. Always know the flow conditions. Call the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation at (916) 275-1554 for information on flow conditions before you go.

Be alert! Stay clear of overhanging branches, snags and partially submerged obstacles.

If your boat capsizes, stay on the upstream side, preferably at the end of the craft. This allows for better visibility to enable you to swim the boat to shore. It also will prevent the possibility of being pinned against obstacles. Hold onto the floating boat unless you can increase your safety by abandoning it. Float on your back with your feet pointed downstream, to fend off obstacles and prevent your feet from becoming wedged between rocks, which can hold you under water.

Boating and alcohol can be a DEADLY MIX! The effects of alcohol can result in the inability to react safely to a dangerous boating situation.

One U.S. Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device (PFD) must be available for each person on board a vessel. We strongly recommend that each person have a wearable PFD (life jacket), and that they be worn. **Children under the age of 7 MUST wear a Coast Guard-approved PFD.**

When buying or renting a life jacket, always look for the U.S. Coast Guard approval number, your assurance that it meets the minimum requirements of federal law. Be sure the one you choose fits properly and is right for the water conditions you expect to encounter.

The greater the buoyancy, the better. For use in white water, the armhole-style life jacket is essential. The horsecollar-style should only be used on calm water. Some life jackets are designed to turn unconscious wearers face up in the water, a feature you may want to consider. For more information, write or call the Department for the pamphlet, "Safe Boating Hints on Personal Flotation Devices."

Test your life jacket in a pool or in calm waters before your trip. If your head is well above the water and you can breathe easily, the life jacket should be acceptable. If not, consider a life jacket that provides more buoyancy.

Recommended Equipment

Include a boat repair kit, air pump, bail bucket, extra oars and paddles, or for powerboats, an extra shear pin and prop.



To Report A Fire, Call 9-1-1

Redding To Red Bluff

The Redding To Red Bluff Boating Trail provides diverse experiences to satisfy every mood. This 54-mile stretch winds its way through a variety of landscapes, each one individual.

The Sacramento between Redding and Red Bluff is one of the most pristine stretches of the river. The California Division of Boating and Waterways, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management and the Shasta Cascade Wonderland Association have published this boating trail guide to assist you in planning a safe and enjoyable visit through this unique river area.

Redding to Balls Ferry

If you're yearning for the great outdoors, come and enjoy the picturesque setting of the Sacramento River. Natural splendor and a variety of recreational opportunities dominate this stretch of the river.

Broad expanses of cottonwoods, willows, alders, shrubs and grasses will entice you to relax and enjoy the serenity, or try fishing, swimming, or hiking some of the many beautiful trails.



With or without a boat, you can enjoy some of the best trout fishing on the river. The area is rich in wildlife including osprey, mallard, Canadian geese, otters, muskrat, beaver, raccoon, coyote, deer and skunk.

Recreational Opportunities

There are several public access points as well as parks that have services to offer the recreation enthusiast. Some of the fun opportunities include:

- Fishing
- Kayaking
- Rafting
- Canoeing
- Hiking
- Picnicking
- Sight-Seeing
- Developed Camping
- Wildlife-Viewing
- Swimming
- Bird Watching
- Biking
- Tennis
- Baseball
- Inner Tubing

Note: The Bureau of Land Management continues to acquire land within this region. Contact their Redding office to learn more about additional recreational opportunities.

Balls Ferry To Red Bluff

Bring your binoculars and fishing rod; this stretch of river offers spectacular scenery, wildlife and fishing.

The Bureau of Land Management administers the lion's share of this segment within their Sacramento River



Area. Remote camping opportunities are available on most public land along the stretch, and two developed campgrounds cater to both vehicle and boating campers.

Sheer canyon walls, gentle river terraces, lush riparian vegetation and rolling oak woodlands typify this meandering portion of the Sacramento.

Recreational Opportunities

Miles of public shoreline, acres of upland terrain and several developed boating access points lend themselves to the following activities:

- Rafting
- Primitive Camping
- Sight-Seeing
- Wildlife-Watching
- Swimming
- Biking
- Canoeing
- Fishing
- Developed Camping
- Hiking
- Hunting
- Horseback Riding

Further Information

California Division of Boating and Waterways

For information regarding boating on other California waterways: One Capitol Mall, Suite 410, Sacramento, CA 95814. Phone: (916) 263-1331

California Department of Fish and Wildlife

For fishing and hunting regulations within California: 601 Locust Street, Redding, CA 96001. Phone: (916) 225-2300

City of Anderson

For information regarding Anderson River Park: Parks and Recreation Department, 1887 Howard Street, Anderson, CA 96007. Phone: (916) 378-6656

City of Red Bluff

For information regarding Dog Park and Red Bluff River Park: P.O. Box 400, Red Bluff, CA 96080. Phone: (919) 527-2605

City of Redding

For information regarding Turtle Bay Regional Park, Cypress Street Bridge and South Bonnyview Road Boat Launching Facility: 760 Parkview Avenue, Redding, Ca 96001. Phone: (916) 225-4095

Redding Convention Center and Visitor's Bureau

For tourism and recreation information within the Redding City limits: 777 Auditorium Drive, Redding, CA 96001. Phone: (800) 874-7562

Shasta Cascade Wonderland Association

For tourism information about the Shasta Cascade region: 1699 Hwy. 273 Anderson, CA 96003. Phone: (800) 4-SHASTA

U.S. Bureau of Land Management

For information regarding the river between Balls Ferry and Red Bluff: 355 Hemsted Drive, Redding, CA 96002. Phone: (916) 224-2100

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

For information regarding water releases from Shasta Dam and flow conditions: USBR Shasta Office, CVP, Shasta Dam, Redding, CA 96003. Phone: (916) 275-1554

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

For information regarding the number salmon and steelhead passing through the Red Bluff Diversion Dam: phone: (916) 527-1408

U.S. Forest Service

For information regarding the Lake Red Bluff Recreation Area: Mendocino National Forest, Corning Ranger District, P.O. Box 1019, Corning, CA 96021. Phone: (916) 824-5196

River Etiquette and Minimum Impact Camping

1. The Sacramento River crosses through public and private land. Although the river is a public waterway, always respect private property and obey posted NO TRESPASSING signs.
2. Public campgrounds and facilities often have special rules designed to protect the natural resources and the public. Learn about the regulations governing the sites you plan to visit.
3. Pack out what you pack in. Keep trash bags handy in your camp area or watercraft. Pack the bags and all non-burnable materials out with you.

4. When camping on undeveloped BLM lands, select a campsite that will have a minimum impact on soil and vegetation. Riparian vegetation is very fragile--try not to disturb shrubs, bushes and trees.
5. Locate your shelter so that rainwater will drain away naturally, and there will be no need to dig a ditch around the perimeter of your tent or sleeping bag.
6. To minimize impacts, try using a fire pan and carry a grill so no rocks will be blackened for a fire pit. Fire hazards can be extreme, so be careful. A fuel stove can be ideal because of its safety and portability.
7. If you cook with charcoal, take all excess charcoal with you when you leave.
8. On BLM lands, use only dead and down wood to fuel your fire. Burn all combustibles and remove the fire ring before you leave. Please do not cut or damage live vegetation--it is habitat and will not burn anyway.
9. Simple, well-planned menus can reduce dishwashing and other camp chores which impact the environment. Use biodegradable soap for your dishwashing and bathing needs. Be sure to bathe and wash dishes well away from the river.
10. On BLM lands, carry out all solid human waste. If you are unable to transport it, dig a hole at least 6 inches deep (far back from the river's edge) for this purpose. Waste water from cooking can be put in the same hole. Finally, cover the hole.
11. Fishermen should take note of certain stretches of the river which may be closed to salmon fishing. When in a motorboat, slow down near floating craft, to reduce the size of your wake.

A Few Precautions

Watch for poison oak when you beach your craft and beware of rattlesnakes. Rattlesnakes are naturally as afraid of you as you are of them.

BLM-administered public lands along the river are very popular with deer and bird hunters. Take special note of hunting seasons and dress/behave accordingly.

The river flows much more slowly below Iron Canyon, so rafters and canoeists may need to do some heavy paddling in order to make progress. Floaters should use caution within East Sand Slough, a water-skiing and jet boat racing area.

Click on the map below for a larger view of an area.

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REDDING TO RED BLUFF



