

# TRINITY RIVER



A publication of the California Department of Boating and Waterways

## THE TRINITY RIVER

The Trinity River offers excellent opportunities for river running, ranging from expert kayak runs to novice summer rafting fun. The Trinity is primarily Class II and III and is suitable for rafting and kayaking most of the year. Because Highway 299 West runs adjacent to most of the river, there are a number of options for tailoring a run to fit your skill level and the time available. The most popular stretches are between Pigeon Point and Cedar Flat. Beyond Cedar Flat lies the Burnt Ranch Gorge, rated an upper Class V on the water classification scale. Only expert boaters should attempt this run. Below Burnt Ranch are many popular areas for boating, fishing and more. Several commercial guides operate on the Trinity River under Forest Service special use permits. They provide quality guided raft trips and whitewater instruction. A list of the commercial whitewater rafting companies offering trips on the Trinity River is available at the Big Bar Ranger District office or by phone, (530) 623-6106. The Shasta-Trinity office also has a Website that describes the area: [www.r5.fs.fed.us/shastatrinity/](http://www.r5.fs.fed.us/shastatrinity/).

### ACCESS SITES

The California Department of Boating and Waterways has funded boating access improvements on the Trinity River as part of the department's Boating Trails Program. These projects include the Big Flat and Pigeon Point

access sites. The access improvements include parking, restroom facilities and better access to the river.

### CAMPING

There are numerous Forest Service campgrounds: Pigeon Point, Big Flat, Big Bar, Hayden Flat, and Burnt Ranch. There is also a group site at Skunk Point that is available by reservation through the Big Bar Office. Please look at the entrance kiosks for fee and other information. Be aware that there are some seasonal closures of campgrounds.



There are also numerous privately owned campgrounds including: Big Foot, Trinity Adventure Park, Riverside Gulch Park, Del Loma RV Park, and the Lazy BB. There is also a campground at Camp Kimtu that is operated by the Willow Creek Community Services District and one at Tish Tang that is run by the Hoopa Valley Tribe.

Unless you have obtained prior permission, camp only on National Forest Land. There are many private parcels of land along the Trinity River and permission from the owner must be secured before camping on them.

When camping along the river, etiquette dictates that you select campsites suitable to the size of your group. Small groups occupying large campsites can cause problems, and vice-versa. Whenever possible, camp along open areas such as gravel bars or sandy beaches. This will reduce damage to soil and plants.

### CAMPFIRES

To avoid campfire impacts, use a portable stove for cooking whenever possible. If you decide to have an open fire, use a fire pan or existing fire ring. Make sure the ashes are dead and cold before leaving. Use only dead/down wood or bring your own.

Free fire permits are required for campfires outside of a developed campsite. In addition, some areas and seasons have special limitations regarding campfire use. It is your responsibility to find out what these limitations are. The best way to do this is to contact the land management agency that is closest to your planned trip. Through the course of the dry season, as fire danger increases, various levels of fire restrictions are put into effect. In order to prevent wildfires, strict compliance is a must!

### PACK-IN & PACK-OUT

Pack out everything that you bring in, including garbage. Planning ahead, avoiding glass containers and repackaging of foods, can lessen the amount of refuse that builds up during your trip. Dispose of garbage in appropriate containers to avoid attracting animals and insects. Avoid trampling sensitive plant life along the river and respect wildlife that you may see on your trip.

Human waste is a major problem along river runs. Use established rest rooms or portable toilet systems whenever possible.

For more detailed information on Leave No Trace ethics log on to <http://www.lnt.org>

### RIVER SAFETY

Know Before You Go! Make a realistic and safe judgment of your group's ability level, your equipment, the run you are planning to do and the environmental conditions, before you get on the river.

NEVER BOAT ALONE! For safety reasons, it is suggested that you always boat with others.

### RECOMMENDED RIVER SAFETY EQUIPMENT

Be familiar with the size and limitations of your craft. Choose a raft or kayak that is appropriate for white water. Inner tubes, inexpensive, single-chambered inflatables, and less rigid construction kayaks are not recommended for difficult whitewater. The following are some essential items to bring:

- 1 helmet per person
- boat repair kit
- air pump
- 1 Type III or V lifejacket per person (should be worn at all times when on the water)
- extra oars, paddles, life jackets, helmets
- appropriate river rescue equipment (throw bag, bow line, rescue lines, etc.)
- sun hat
- sun screen
- first aid kit
- drinking water, snacks in a dry bag
- bail bucket
- flashlight, water protected matches
- tennis shoes, booties or other footwear
- dry clothing in a sealed bag
- wetsuits or other thermal protection (for cold water)
- knife

## WHITewater CLASSIFICATIONS

The following classification is based on a guide for rivers established by American Whitewater. The river should be considered one class more difficult than normal if the water temperature is below 50° Fahrenheit, or the trip is in a wilderness area.

### CLASS I (EASY)

Fast moving water with riffles and small waves. Few obstructions—all obvious and are missed easily with little training. Risk to swimmers is slight; self-rescue is easy.

### CLASS II (NOVICE)

Straightforward rapids with wide, clear channels, which are evident without scouting. Occasional maneuvering may be required, but rocks and medium-sized waves are missed easily by trained paddlers. Swimmers are seldom injured and group assistance, while helpful, is seldom needed.

### CLASS III (INTERMEDIATE)

Rapids with moderate, irregular waves, which may be difficult to avoid and which can swamp an open canoe. Complex maneuvers in fast current and good boat control in tight passages or around ledges are often required. Large waves or "strainers" such as fallen trees, bridge pilings and undercut rocks, may be present but are easily avoided. Strong eddies and powerful currents can be found, particularly on large-volume rivers. Scouting is advisable for inexperienced parties. Injuries while swimming are rare; self-rescue is usually easy but group assistance may be required to avoid a long swim.

### CLASS IV (ADVANCED)

Intense, powerful but predictable rapids requiring precise boat handling in turbulent water. Depending on the character of the river, it may feature large, unavoidable waves and holes or constricted passages demanding fast maneuvers under pressure. A fast, reliable eddy turn may be needed to initiate maneuvers, scout rapids, or rest. Rapids may require "must" moves above dangerous hazards. Scouting is necessary the first time down. Risk of injury to swimmers is moderate to high, and water conditions may make self-rescue difficult. Group assistance for rescue is often essential but requires practiced skills. A strong Eskimo roll is highly recommended.

### CLASS V (EXPERT)

Extremely long, obstructed, or very violent rapids, which expose a paddler to above-average danger. Drops may contain large unavoidable waves and holes or steep, congested chutes with complex, demanding routes. Rapids may continue for long distances between pools, demanding a high level of fitness. What eddies exist may be small, turbulent, or difficult to reach. At the high end of the rating scale, several of these factors may be combined. Scouting is mandatory but often difficult. Swims are dangerous, and rescue is difficult even for experts. A very reliable Eskimo roll, proper equipment, extensive experience, and practiced rescue skills are essential for survival.

### CLASS VI (EXTREME)

These runs often exemplify extremes of difficulty, unpredictability and danger. The consequences of errors are very severe and rescue may be impossible. For teams of experts only, at favorable water levels, after close personal inspection and taking of all precautions. This class does not represent drops thought to be unrunnable, but may include rapids that are only occasionally run.

## MAN-MADE OBSTACLES

There may be mining equipment, cables and flood debris in or near the river. Learn to look well downstream and avoid these obstacles.

## EXTREME HIGH & LOW WATER

Any river can have extremes of high and low water, and each has its own unique set of challenges. High water increases the likelihood of large holes, strainers and other river hazards. Due to water speed, reaction time must be fast for avoiding obstacles, and rescue may be difficult. Any unexpected swims or other events can result in long exposure to cold water. Low water increases the problems of exposed rocks and other obstacles that can trap boats and people.

## WHEN IN DOUBT, SCOUT!

Be aware that rapids and drops can look different from various vantage points. Scouting is always recommended when approaching an unfamiliar or difficult rapid. Looking for unique hazards, planning the best routes through them, and deciding whether or not to run the rapid are all elements of scouting. A short portage around a rapid may be a better choice than putting yourself or others in harm's way.

### STRAINERS

Willows, brush, fallen trees, submerged obstacles and other debris can form "strainers." These hazards allow the force of the river to flow through them but may entrap boats and/or people. Learn to identify and avoid strainers.

## RIVER RUNS

### PIGEON POINT CAMPGROUND TO BIG FLAT

**Difficulty: Class III+**  
**Length: 6 miles**  
**Recommended Levels: 500 to 5000 cfs**

Put-in at the Pigeon Point Forest Service Campground. Take-out is on river right at Big Flat. Significant Class III rapids include: the Slot (Z-Drop), Hell's Hole, Sailor Bar and Fish Tail.

### BIG FLAT TO FRENCH BAR

**Difficulty: Class II**  
**Length: 8 miles**  
**Recommended Levels: 500 to 5000 cfs**

Put-in at Big Flat. Numerous Class II rapids. Possible put-ins and take-outs at Big Bar and White's Bar. This stretch is popular with novice rafters, kayakers, canoers and rafters.

### FRENCH BAR TO HAYDEN FLAT

**Difficulty: Class II+**  
**Length: 2.5 miles**  
**Recommended Levels: 500 to 5000 cfs**

Put-in at the Forest Service River Access at French Creek. Class II+ rapid where Big French Creek enters the river on the right and the river takes a wide bend to the left. Take-out is on river right at Hayden Flat.

### HAYDEN FLAT TO CEDAR FLAT

**Difficulty: Class II+**  
**Length: 7 miles**  
**Recommended Levels: 500 to 5000 cfs**

Put-in at the Hayden Flat Forest Service Campground. Take-out is on river right at Cedar Flat. Numerous Class II+ especially in a small gorge section about 1.25 miles after put-in. Cedar Flat is also the beginning of the Burnt Ranch Gorge section which is Class V and for experts only!

### CEDAR FLAT TO HAWKINS BAR (BURNT RANCH GORGE)

**Difficulty: Class V**  
**Length: 9 miles**  
**Recommended Levels: 500 to 2000 cfs**

Put-in at the Forest Service access at Cedar Flat. Take out is on river left at Hawkins Bar. An alternate take-out for kayakers is at Gray's Falls. Number of Class IV rapids in the upper stretch followed by numerous Class V rapids including Upper, Middle and Lower Burnt Ranch Falls, Origami, Table Rock and Gray's Falls in the gorge section.

### HAWKINS BAR TO TISH TANG CAMPGROUND

**Difficulty: Class II – II+**  
**Length: 24 miles**  
**Recommended Levels: 500 to 6000 cfs**

Numerous options for put-ins and take-outs along this stretch. From Hawkins Bar the popular access points with approximate mileage markers are Tunnel Flat (4), Confluence of the South Fork (8),

## POISON OAK

Poison oak is a common plant in the Trinity River area. Exposure can lead to severe itching and spreading rashes. Learn to identify and avoid poison oak. If exposed, washing with soap and cold water immediately after touching the plant may prevent or lessen the rash. There are also over the counter products that may help.

## SNAKES & OTHER WILDLIFE

There are rattlesnakes, bears and other wildlife that make their homes in the Trinity River area. Be alert to their possible presence and give them plenty of space if you see them, and you will rarely have any problems.

## RIVER FLOW & WEATHER INFORMATION

Weather and water flows can be highly variable on the north coast of California. Air temperature, wind, water level and velocity, size and difficulty of rapids can vary widely and change quickly. What may be a safe trip under one set of conditions may become an extremely hazardous voyage at another. It is highly recommended that river travelers check the flows and weather forecast before embarking on a trip downstream.

There are a couple of sources of weather and water conditions available. Weather

reports are available at (707) 443-7062 or at <http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/Eureka/>. Flow information is available at (707) 445-7855, or on the internet at <http://cdec.water.ca.gov> and <http://water.usgs.gov/data.html>. The flow-related information on this map is based on the gauge at Hoopa.

When planning a boating trip, you should obtain river flow information and determine how the flow will affect the difficulty of the run. It is imperative to make an honest assessment of your boating skills and avoid runs that are too difficult. Whitewater accidents often occur because boaters attempt rivers beyond their level of skill. Included in this brochure is the American Whitewater rating system for classifying the difficulty of river runs, from Class I to Class VI, with Class VI being the most difficult run

For a safe and enjoyable time, learn to always check flow and weather information before you embark on your trip.



### SURPRISE CREEK TO LOW WATER BRIDGE

(Three Bears)

**Difficulty: Class IV+**  
**Length: 6 miles**  
**Recommended Levels: 600 to 3000 cfs**

A remote Class IV+ run with beautiful scenery. The nature of this run can change drastically depending on the river flow. Narrow and rocky at low flows and large holes at higher flows. Mostly run in winter/spring as it is rain and snowmelt dependent.

### LOW WATER BRIDGE TO THE CONFLUENCE WITH THE MAIN FORK

**Difficulty: Class II+**  
**Length: 9 miles**  
**Recommended Levels: 1000 to 3000 cfs**

Beautiful run through a remote and narrow canyon. Take out at Sandy Bar on river left or farther down on river right at Hiel-Din. Popular with canoeist and beginning boaters.

Flows are "suggested" levels, and except for the South Fork runs are based on flows downstream at Hoopa.

**United States Forest Service**  
**Shasta-Trinity National Forest**  
Big Bar Office  
Star Route 1 Box 10  
Big Bar, CA 96010  
530-623-6106

**Trinity River Management Unit**  
**Weaverville Office**  
P.O. Box 1190  
210 Main Street  
Weaverville, CA 96093  
530-623-2121  
<http://www.r5.fs.fed.us/shastatrinity/>

**Six Rivers National Forest**  
**Lower Trinity Ranger District**  
P.O. Box 68  
Willow Creek, CA 95573  
(530)629-2118  
<http://www.r5.fs.fed.us/sixrivers/>

**Bureau of Land Management**  
**Redding Field Office**  
355 Hemsted Drive  
Redding, California 96002  
Telephone: 530-224-2100  
[www.ca.blm.gov](http://www.ca.blm.gov)

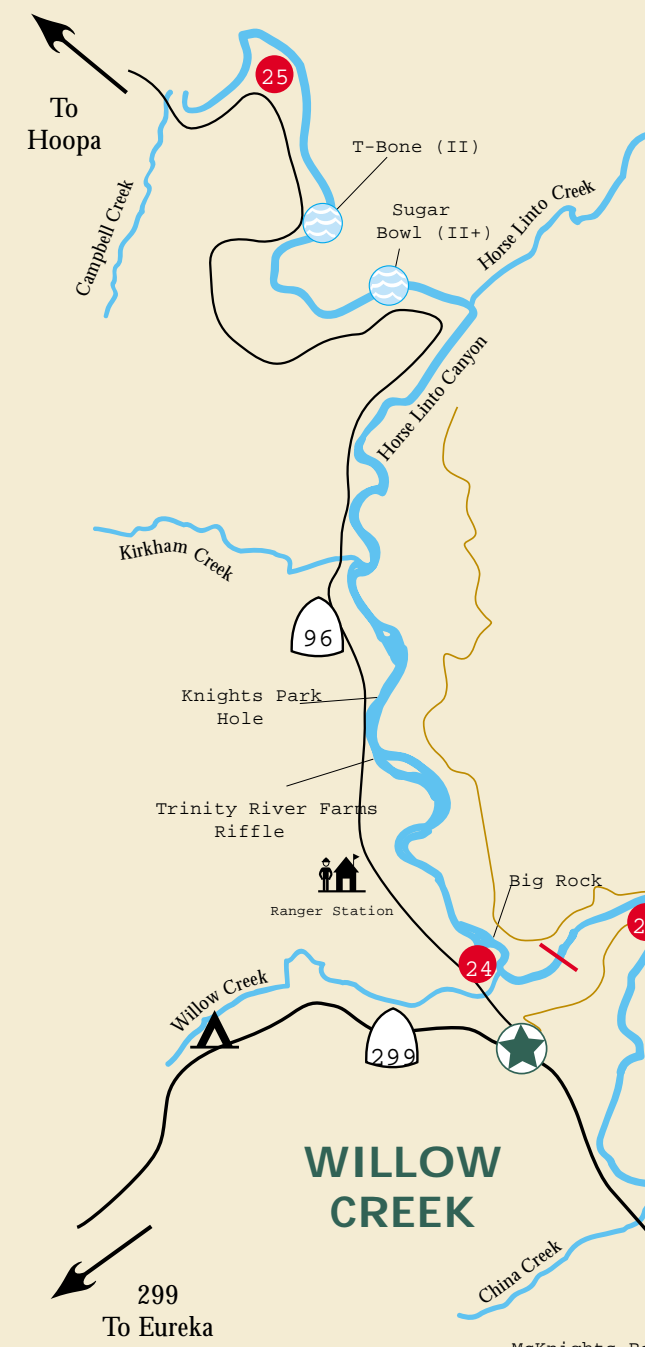
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# TRINITY RIVER • POINTS OF INTEREST



**25** Tish Tang Campground  
Most vehicles okay except long trailers. Narrow switchbacks on paved section are tough for long vehicles. Paved road ends just beyond campground with the dirt road giving way to huge gravel bar and access to the river.

**24** Big Rock  
Marked access to gravel bar at Big Rock. Parking for all vehicles.

**23** Camp Kimtu Community Park and Campground  
Popular swimming and beach spot. Long gravel bar/beach with numerous access spots. Parking area is a bit of a walk across gravel to the river. Campground is above the river.

**17** Tunnel Flat  
Cars and trucks only on this road; there is no turnaround space for trailers etc. Others park in large turnout near highway. Steep trail to river. No overnight camping.

**16** Hawkins Bar  
Marked access across the highway from the store. Narrow road is good for cars and trucks; poor for large RVs and trailers. Large gravel bar and river access.

**15** Gray's Falls Camp  
Forest Service day use area. Follow signs to a trailhead and steep long trail to the river. Kayakers often take out here after running Burnt Ranch or put in for Class II/III with large parking area, river access and restrooms. Not recommended for rafts or canoes.

**6** Big Flat River Access  
USFS river access just downstream of the town of Big Flat with large parking area, river access and restrooms.

**22** South Fork Bridge Access (Hiel-Din)  
Gentle trail on bridge. WE side leads to confluence of Trinity River and its South Fork. Parking is best on the east side of the bridge at the trailhead.

**21** Sandy Bar  
Access for most vehicles, trailers not recommended. The road can be soft sand; vehicles can get stuck here. Has been a popular swimming spot, but the ownership and access of this area may change in the near future. Check with the Forest Service and observe signage for information on the status of access.

**20** Low Water Bridge  
Good river access with limited parking.

**19** Todd Ranch  
Marked with sign 9.1 mi. from Hwy. 299, dirt road beyond 8.7 mi. Mama Bear (III/IV) Trailers and RVs not recommended. Alternate access.

**18** Surprise River Creek Access  
Most popular put-in for the Three Bears run. There is also a trailhead above the main road with access to some excellent hiking.

**14** Burnt Ranch Campground  
Forest Service campground with a steep trail to the river. Not typically a boating river access but has great views of the Burnt Ranch Falls area.

**13** Cedar Flat River Access  
Marked access at picnic area just east of bridge. Parking area and toilets. Last take-out before the Burnt Ranch Gorge (V).

**12** Sandy Bar  
Marked Access. Trail to Sandy Bar. Cars and large vehicles park on road. Popular swimming and beach spot.

**11** Hayden Flat Campground  
The campground is on both sides of the road. For river access there is a short trail at the vehicle turnaround loop after you drive through the camping area that is closest to the river. Access for all vehicles, but tight for trailers or large vehicles on river side. Toilet facilities.

**10** Del Loma  
Marked access on gravel road. Suitable for all vehicles, but trucks are best for access to entire gravel bar. No facilities.

**7** Big Bar River Access & Campground  
Campground is across the bridge. River access is somewhat difficult with minimal park.

**8** White s Bar  
Marked River access with shady picnic areas and restrooms.

**9** French Bar  
Marked River access with a large gravel bar. No facilities.

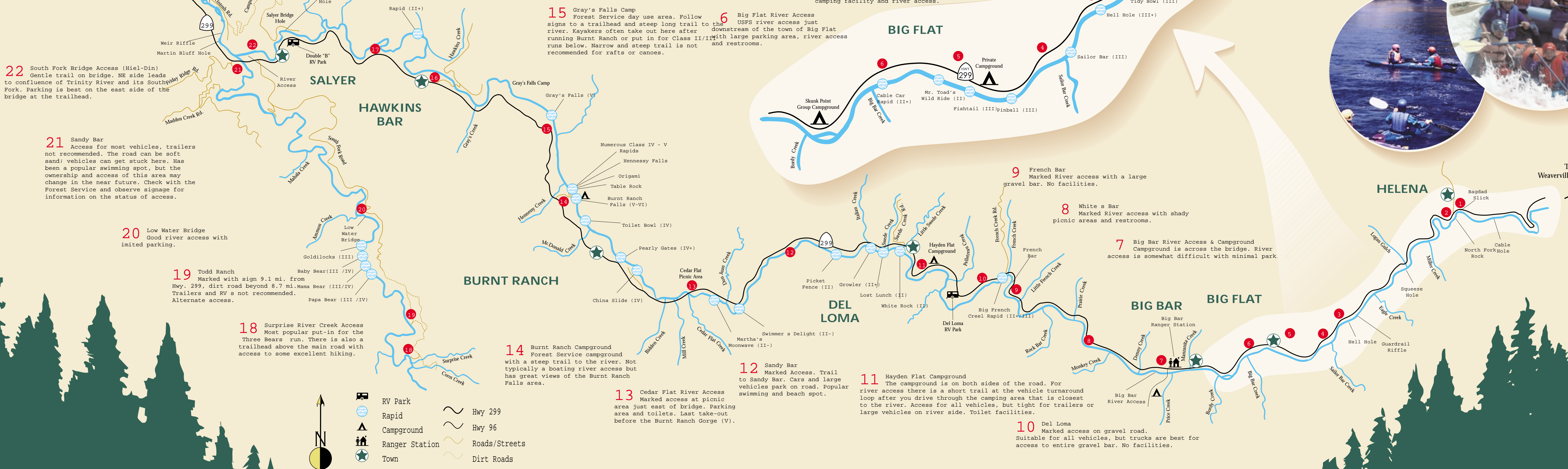
**5** Big Flat  
Small town with raft companies, a small store, a private camping facility and river access.

**4** Sailor Bar  
This is a mining claim with gravel road to small gravel bar and rough camp. Four-wheel drive trucks only! Otherwise park on the gravel turnout near the highway.

**3** Trail  
Moderately steep contour trail provides access to Hell Hole. Park in turnout downstream. Location marked by thin vertical Trail sign (easy to miss.)

**1** Bagdad Monument River Access  
Short dirt access road at Bagdad Monument on east side of the North Fork bridge. Small turnaround area and somewhat minimal access to the river. Toilet facilities. Alternative put-in to the Pigeon Point Campground.

**2** Pigeon Point Campground  
USFS campground that is the main put-in site for this run. Camping and toilet facilities but no potable water. Also a popular spot for swimming and fishing.



RV Park  
 Rapid  
 Campground  
 Ranger Station  
 Town  
 Hwy 299  
 Hwy 96  
 Roads/Streets  
 Dirt Roads

