

Pacific Crest Trail from Dead Man Springs to Middle Fork of the Feather River

By Hunter Hedman



Pacific Crest Trail Bridge over the Middle Fork of the Feather River

Photo by Bearcant

The Pacific Crest Trail route was first explored in the late 1930s by teams of young men from the YMCA. Once proven feasible, trail pioneers Clinton Clarke and Warren Rogers lobbied the federal government to secure a border-to-border trail corridor. This trail combined with the Wild and Scenic Middle Feather river make for a great day out. The Middle Feather was designated wild and Scenic on October 2nd, 1968. The Middle Fork of the Feather River was one of the first nationally designated wild and scenic rivers. The river runs from its headwaters near Beckwourth, California, to Lake Oroville.

This is one of the most beautiful parts of the Plumas National Forest and an area that is very seldom visited due to its remoteness and extremely rugged terrain. Old growth Douglass Fir and dense stands of Red Fir cover

the hill sides while brush and Oak become more prevalent as you make your decent into the canyon. The river gradient varies from gentle at the upper end to very steep in the deep canyons of the lower reaches. The adjacent lands range from the most primitive imaginable to manicured golf courses and residential area. Access is good by oiled roads in the upper portion and is nonexistent mile after mile in the wild river zones.

From Quincy, CA you will drive east on Bucks Lake road towards Meadow Valley. Continue through Meadow valley to Big Creek road on the left. Turn left on Big Creek road. Stay on Big Creek for about three miles until you see you see Forest Service road 22N28 on the left. Turn here and stay right where the road Y's. This is where it gets tricky. Stay on 22N28 until you reach the 24N64 on the right, it is not signed but there is a pine tree with plastic wrap around it just before the turn. Do NOT turn till you reach this road. Take 24N64 down an extremely steep ridge until it Y's again at a flat landing. Do not drive any further; this is where the hike starts.

Pacific Crest Trail at Dead Man Springs 

Allow yourself at least 5 hours from the trail head so that you may fully enjoy the area.

Sun exposure is limited to a few hours mid-day due to the steepness of the canyon walls.

Elevation begins at 4800 feet and ends at 3100 feet.

The hike itself is not difficult but the drive to the trail head is extremely steep with large rocks and loose dirt. You should be very comfortable driving off road.

Once the ignition is off look to the east and you will see a small wooden sign that says Middle Feather 1 mile. The trail is just to the left of this sign. As you hike the trail will begin to decline rapidly but never reaches more than a 15% slope. You will navigate several switch backs as the trail nears the river. Don't forget to stop and enjoy the view. Before long you will reach

the Bridge over the Middle Feather. From the bridge you can look up and down the canyon and possibly spot a trout in the pool below.

This trip requires a good clearance four wheel drive vehicle, hiking boots, water and a thirst for adventure!

This drive and hike offer a rare opportunity to experience one of the few untouched rivers in California. There is no water along the hike until you reach the river so be sure to bring at least a quart. The map to use is the Dog Wood Peak Topographic map. Maps can be purchased at the USFS supervisor's office in down town Quincy. Caution should be used on this hike as the trail shoulders are loose dirt and rock. Rattle snakes are common in the area as is poison oak. Be aware of where you are putting your hands and feet. Enjoy this trip!

