GIANT SEQUOIAS

Giant sequoias are the largest individual tree by volume. They can grow to be over 35 feet wide, over 300 feet tall, and can weigh 2 million pounds or more. These trees get their immensity by living for a very long time, with the oldest giant sequoia recorded at over 3,200 years old. Their native habitat is the western slope of the Sierra Nevada mountains between about 4,000 to 8,000 feet elevation.

Giant sequoias' life depends on fire. Fire causes the cones to dry out and release seeds. While the cones can release seeds from other disturbances, they release en-masse and germinate more successfully in a post-fire environment. This environment creates direct sunlight, bare mineral soil and less competition.

Colonization resulted in fire suppression of this area until 1975 when the first prescribed burn in the park was conducted. Beneficial fire (such as a prescribed burn, cultural burn, or a monitored natural wildfire) promotes giant sequoia germination and reduces the fuel load, lessening the likelihood of a catastrophic fire that can kill mature trees and threaten homes. As you walk along the grove trails, look for giant sequoia seedlings growing among evidence of recent prescribed burns.

PLEASE REMEMBER

Stay on the Trail—Over 250,000 visitors enter the park every year. The organisms which live on the forest floor cannot survive getting stepped on by thousands of visitors. In addition, the soil compacts with more foot traffic, creating erosion and fewer opportunities for plant growth. Stay on the trail and practice Leave No Trace principles.

Follow the Law—All state laws, including vehicle codes, apply in the park. No collecting—all natural and cultural features are protected by law and should not be disturbed.

Dogs—No dogs are allowed on trails. Dogs can go on paved roads, fire roads, campgrounds and day-use areas. Pick up and dispose of waste. Dogs must be on maximum 6-foot leash at ALL times and physically under control.

Bears—Bears are native to all of California and live here year-round. Store food, scented items and garbage in bear-resistant storage lockers and/or hidden in locked vehicles when not actively being used. Always properly close food storage lockers. Discard any food that cannot be hidden and stored securely. Dispose of trash in bear-resistant dumpsters and make sure it is properly secured. This is a zero-tolerance policy.

Seasonality—The Parkway closes after the first significant snowfall or December 1, whichever comes first. This closes vehicle access outside of the North Grove areas. The road reopens May 1st or later if there is still snow. Camping partially closes in fall and fully reopens in late spring. Food is available at the food trailer in the summer.

Prescribed Burns—The park often conducts prescribed burns in fall and spring. The burns may close parts of the park for weeks at a time and often impact air quality.

TRAILS TO SEE THE GIANTS

North Grove Trail—Easy, ADA accessible, 1.7 miles (loop)
The trail through the North Grove is a gentle loop accessible to wheelchairs, weather permitting. Pick up a self-guided brochure in a brown box at the trailhead by the Visitor Center or just past the Discovery Stump. As you walk, look for the numbered markers to read about the ecology and history of this area. You will come across the first giant sequoia to make international news in 1852, the Discovery Tree, which quickly became the Discovery Stump when it was cut down in 1853. Other notable giant sequoias include the Father of the Forest log (stop #13), which you can walk through, and the largest tree in the North Grove, the Empire State Tree (stop #5). Make sure you stay on the trail (indicated by the numbered trail markers) as you may step on a seedling! Allow 1-1.5 hours.

North Grove Overlook Trail—Moderate, creates slightly over 2-mile loop with the North Grove Trail
This trail begins off the North Grove Trail just past stop #2. This is also how to start the River Canyon Trail. The North Grove Overlook Trail climbs the ridge above the grove and parallels the North Grove Trail for about 0.5 mile to provide views of the upper parts of the giant sequoias. It rejoins the North Grove Trail near stop #13. From there you can walk either right (longer route) or left (shorter route) on the North Grove Trail to return to the trailhead. Allow 1-2 hours.

South Grove Trail—Moderate, 5.5 miles (lollipop loop)
This trail accesses the most and biggest trees in the park. To reach the trailhead parking lot, drive down the Parkway road and past the Stanislaus River. There is no water available at the parking lot. Pick up a self-guided brochure in the brown box. The first mile of the trail is a moderate, steady climb from the parking lot to the South Grove Loop intersection with a gain of 260 feet. You will cross a fire road along the way. Once at the loop intersection, go left to reach the there-and-back offshoot with notable trees, including the Palace Hotel with a burn scar you can walk inside and the largest tree in the park, the Agassiz Tree. The trail ends at the Agassiz Tree. You may return by the way you came for a 5-mile hike. Or, after returning from the offshoot, go left on the loop for a 5.5-mile hike. Allow 3-4 hours and bring drinking water.

Bradley Grove Trail—Moderate, 2.5 miles (loop)
This loop trail travels to a grove of young giant sequoias planted in the 1950s by park caretakers and conservationists Owen and Adrienne Bradley. To access the trail, start hiking on the South Grove Trail. Just after crossing the bridge over Beaver Creek (about 600 yards), look left for a trail sign and box with trail guides. There are two large giant sequoias and two fire road crossings along this trail. Allow 1.5-2 hours and bring drinking water.

OTHER TRAILS

Other ADA-accessible trails include Meadow Boardwalk, the braille-signed Three Senses Trail loop along the trail by the Discovery Stump, Beaver Creek access and trail loop, and access to the Stanislaus River from the picnic area.

The Lava Bluffs Trail is a hilly, 2.5-mile moderately strenuous lollipop loop with geologic formations. The strenuous River Canyon Trail (8 miles round-trip, 1000 feet gain) goes up from the North Grove Trail to the Scenic Overlook, then down to the Stanislaus River. Always bring water.



CALAVERAS BIG TREES
STATE PARK

WELCOME! Calaveras Big Trees State Park, established in 1931, covers 6,500 acres of mixed conifer forest and is the only state park with the largest individual tree, giant sequoias! While located around 4,700 feet in the Sierra Nevada mountain range, the park is easily accessible along Highway 4. The park's hub is the North Grove area, containing the Visitor Center, North Grove Campground, meadow, picnic areas, fire roads, and the wheelchair-accessible North Grove Trail with over 100 giant sequoias. This area is open year-round and gets snow every winter. The Walter W. Smith Memorial Parkway, closed in the winter, goes past the Stanislaus River and has more camping, fire roads, picnic areas, and trails with giant sequoias. The park has a partnership with the Mi-Wuk and Washoe tribes, who have come to this area in the summer season since time immemorial.

Calaveras Big Trees State Park
1170 CA-4
Arnold, CA 95223

Day-Use Areas:
Sunrise to sunset

Day-Use Parking:
$10/day/vehicle
Parking available throughout the park.

California State Parks Passes Accepted: Fourth Grade, Disabled Discount, Explorer, Golden Bear, Senior Golden Bear, Golden Poppy, State Library, Veteran

209-795-2334
711, TTY Relay Service
parks.ca.gov/CalaverasBigTrees

California State Parks supports equal access. For accommodation requests, including alternative formats, please contact ***CalaverasBigTreesSP@parks.ca.gov.*** *For information about accessible features, visit* ***parks.ca.gov/AccessibleFeatures.***

THINGS TO DO

- ***If you have one hour,*** walk the North Grove Trail, a 1.7-mile loop with giant sequoias. For a shorter walk, turn around before signpost #15.
- ***If you have half a day,*** in the spring to fall drive down the Parkway to the South Grove for a 5-mile hike, ending your visit at the Beaver Creek Picnic Area. For a shorter walk, check out the Visitor Center and walk the North Grove.
- ***If you have a full day,*** in the spring to fall hike the South Grove and picnic at Beaver Creek. On your way back, check out the Stanislaus River and the Visitor Center. End your day walking around the North Grove. For a shorter walk, explore the Visitor Center then walk the North Grove. In the spring to fall, drive down the Parkway to check out the Stanislaus River and relax by Beaver Creek.
- ***If you are looking for an ADA-accessible activity,*** the North Grove Trail, Three Senses Trail, Meadow Boardwalk, Beaver Creek Trail, and the Stanislaus River Trail are accessible, weather and season permitting. There is a free wheelchair available to borrow on a first-come, first-serve basis for the North Grove area.

ACTIVITIES

Trails—Trails with giant sequoias include North Grove, North Grove Overlook, South Grove and Bradley Grove trails. **See back for more information.**

Picnic Area—A few are reservable, please ask park staff. All others are first come, first served and are in the North Grove area, River Picnic Area and Beaver Creek Picnic Area.

Camping—North Grove and Oak Hollow campgrounds have potable water and showers. There is a seasonal dump station but no RV hookups. There are hike-in environmental campsites (e-sites) with no water. Sites can be seasonally reserved on ***ReserveCalifornia.com***. For the rest of the year, only sites #1-11 are open first come, first served and are dry camping.

Programs—Weekend programs are offered year-round and daily programs are offered in the summer.

Fishing—Mainly rainbow trout. Fishing is ONLY allowed in the Stanislaus River and Beaver Creek. License required.

Bicycling—Standard bicycles and class 1 and 2 e-bikes are allowed on all roads.

CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS SINCE 1864

CALAVERAS BIG TREES STATE PARK

STANISLAUS NATIONAL FOREST

CALAVERAS SOUTH GROVE NATURAL PRESERVE

to Camp Connell, Markleeville

to Arnold, Sacramento

PLEASE REMEMBER

After the first significant snowfall or December 1 (whichever comes first), Walter W. Smith Memorial Parkway is closed to vehicles past the Visitor Center. The road reopens May 1st, depending on weather.

NORTH GROVE

Winter Closure of Parkway Begins Here

Entrance Station

Visitor Center

Gate 22

Jack Knight Memorial Hall

Discovery Stump

Three Senses Trail

Pioneer's Cabin Tree #21

Mother of the Forest #15

Father of the Forest #13

Empire State Tree #5

North Grove Campground

Sentinel Tree

FamCamp

North Grove Meadow Boardwalk

Gate 23

Wagon Road

Walter W. Smith Memorial Parkway

North Grove Trail

Big Tree Creek

Grove Overlook Trail

Canyon Trail River

SOUTH GROVE TRAILHEAD AND BEAVER CREEK

South Grove Trailhead

Beaver Creek Picnic Area

White Fir

Beaver Creek Flat

Gate 30

Walter W. Smith Memorial Parkway

Stanislaus Ridge Road

Beaver Creek Trail

Bradley Grove Trail

Beaver Creek Road

Skull Creek Road

South Grove Trail

Beaver Creek

Group Campground and Cabins

Gate 19

Gate 16

Gate 20

Entrance Station

West 5000 Ft Road

East 5000 Ft Road

Gate 1

Gate 17

Gate 18

Stanislaus View

Lone Snag

Gate 24

East Moran Road

Oak Hollow Road

Oak Hollow Campground

Gate 27

Gate 28

Gate 25

Sugar Pine

North Grove Campground

No Name Rd

Ben Smith Road

Scenic Overlook

Gate 13

West Moran Road

Gate 15

Gate 14

River Picnic Area

Stanislaus River Trail

River Canyon Trail

Oak Leaf Spring Picnic Area

Lava Bluffs Trailhead

Lava Bluffs Trail

North Fork Stanislaus River

Love Creek Road

Gate 12

Gate 11

Gate 10

Gate 9

Gate 8

Gate 7

Gate 2

Gate 3

Gate 4

Gate 5

Dorrington Gate Road

Honor Camp Road

Beaver Creek

Beaver Creek Road

Railroad Grade East Road

North Side Rim Road

South Side Rim Road

Gate 31

Palace Hotel Tree

Agassiz Tree

see detail map at left

see detail map at right

0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Mile

0 0.5 1 1.5 Kilometers

N

- Highway
- Major Road
- Paved Road
- Trail: Accessible
- Trail: Hike
- Fire Road: Hike and Bike (Dogs on leash allowed)
- Locked Gate
- Accessible Feature
- Cabin
- Campfire Center
- Campground
- Campground: Environmental
- Campground: Group
- Parking
- Picnic Area
- Picnic Area: Group
- Restrooms: Accessible
- Restrooms
- Sanitation Station (seasonal)
- Viewpoint
- Visitor Center

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