



Clarks Hole Trail (#5 on the ASRA Topo. Trail Map)

Distance: 0.6 miles one way; 20 min. (hiking)

Difficulty: Easy to moderate

Slope: 9% avg; 23% max. (see below)

Trailhead / Parking: (N38-55-010; W121-02-207)

Trailhead is 1¼ miles south of ASRA Park Headquarters. Take Hwy 49 south to Old Foresthill Road at the bottom of the canyon. Continue straight for ¼ mile and park on the left. Trailhead is just beyond the parking area at the green gate.

Description

This is a great family hike to a large, deep swimming hole on the North Fork American River, upriver of the Confluence. In the early 1900s, Clarks Hole (also called Clarks Pool) was managed by the city of Auburn as a municipal swimming pool, complete with concession stands and lifeguards. Today, it is still popular with Auburn locals for picnics and swim parties, although there are no lifeguards.

To get to Clarks Hole from the confluence, go around the green gate behind the kiosk and trudge up the steep fire road for 0.2 miles. Continue past the intersection with Stagecoach Trail (see separate trail guide) on the left, and after 40 paces, look for an unmarked, narrow trail on the right. The trail is well carved into the canyon's wall, but there are steep drop-offs to the river. Please use caution with smaller children.

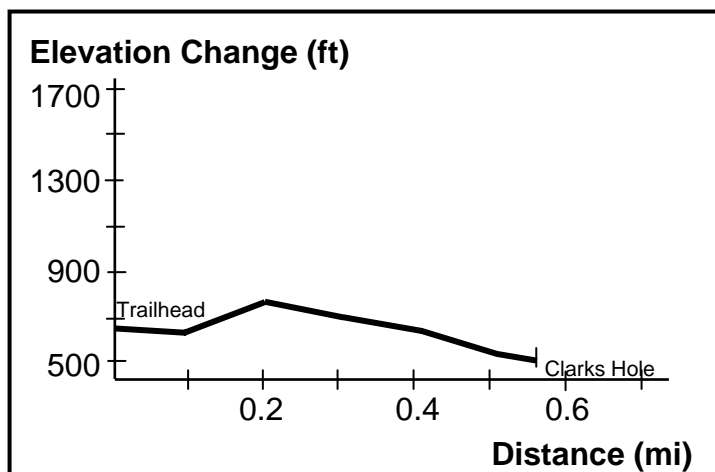
The remainder of the trail gradually descends to the river under the shade of young fir trees and several species of oak. This part of the trail was once a part of the stagecoach route connecting Auburn with the gold rush camps of Foresthill, Georgetown and Greenwood in the late 19th century. The trail soon goes under the Foresthill Bridge (see sidebar).

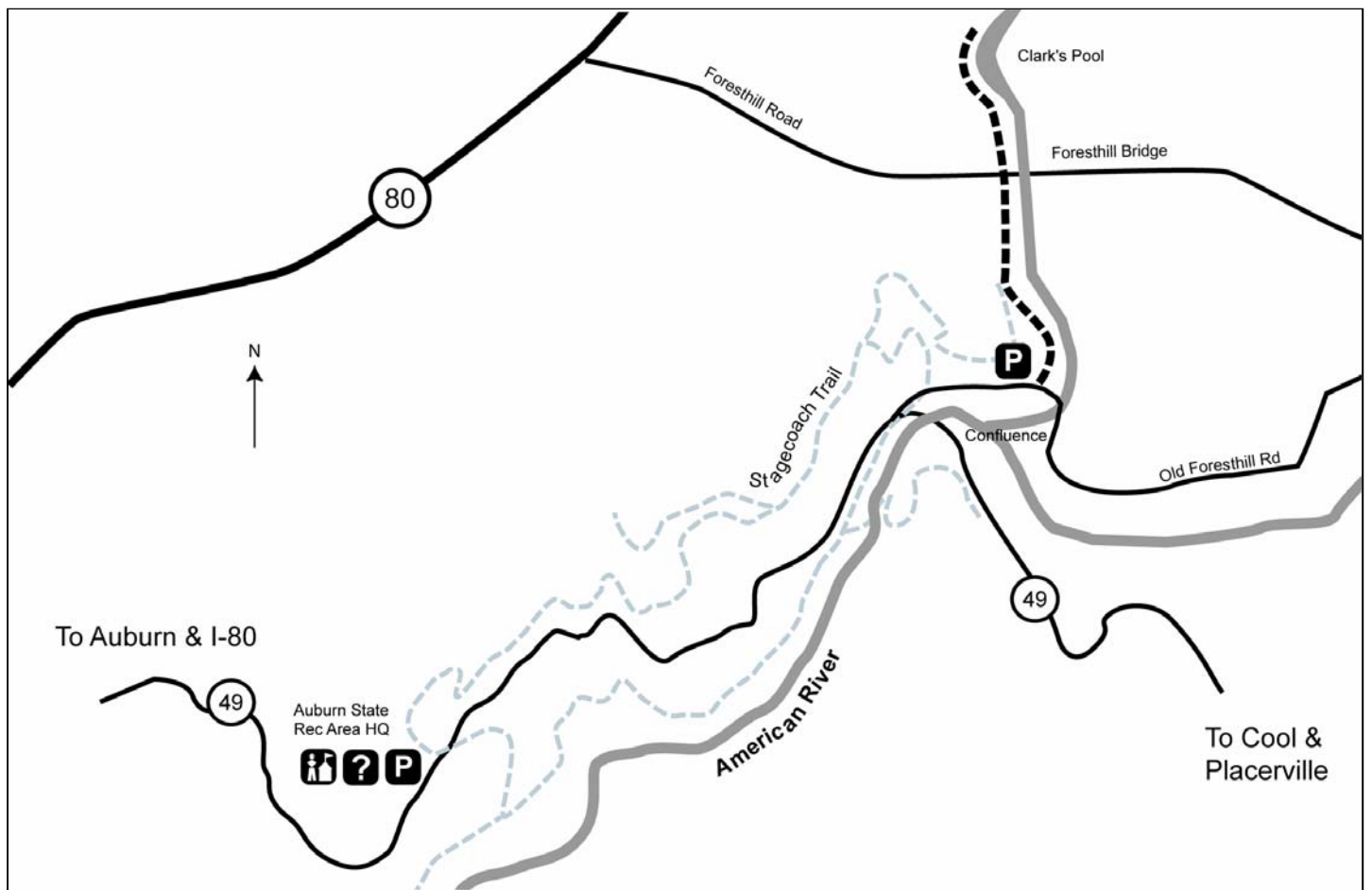
Further along, the trail passes a small waterfall on the left, and crosses a tiny stream, both of which run during winter and spring. Just before arriving at Clarks Hole, the trail goes through a thick blackberry patch.

The trail ends with a climb down some mammoth landmark rocks that surround the pool. The summer water temperature of the North Fork (NF) American River below Lake Clementine is surprisingly warm. It is fed by the sun-warmed water from the surface of the lake flowing over the North Fork Dam.

On the opposite side of the river, you can see the Lake Clementine Trail, (see separate trail guide) which parallels the NF American River up to the Lake Clementine Dam.

Watch out for poison oak along this trail.





Did You Know? – The Foresthill Bridge is 2,248 feet long and connects Foresthill and Auburn. Designed to span the reservoir that would have resulted had the Auburn dam been completed, it was opened in 1973 with much fanfare. Water was expected to reach the top

of the cement piers, but today the bridge towers 730 feet above the river, making it the tallest bridge in California. It has been featured in numerous movies and commercials, and it has been the site of many stunts – both legal and illegal.