

McArthur-Burney Falls Memorial State Park



Our Mission

The mission of California State Parks is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.



California State Parks supports equal access. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should contact the park at **(530) 335-2777**. If you need this publication in an alternate format, contact interp@parks.ca.gov.

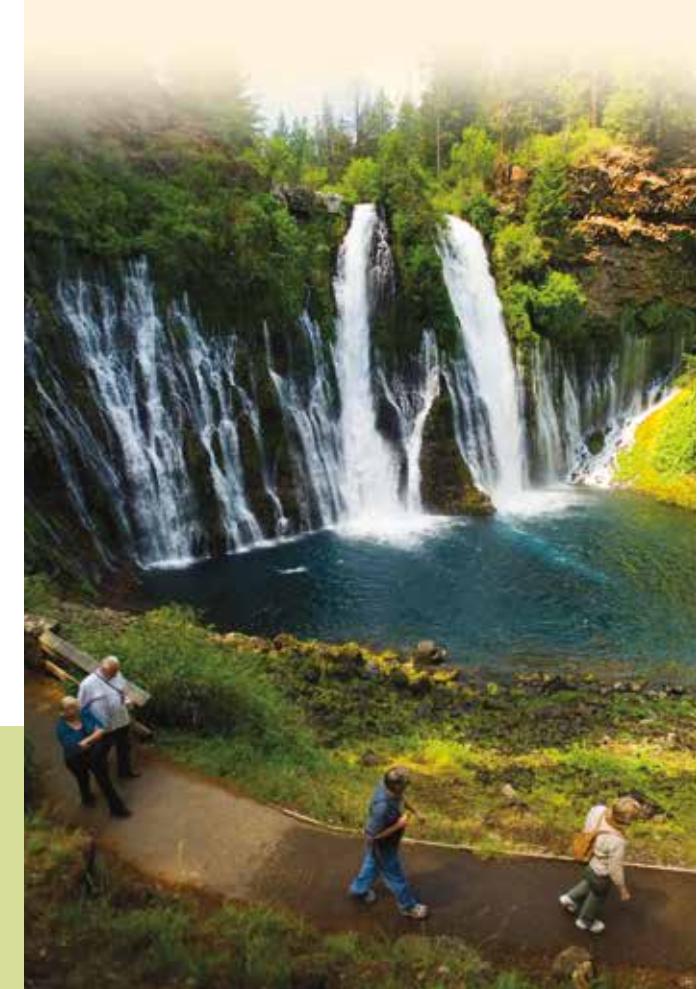
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**McArthur-Burney Falls
Memorial State Park
24898 Highway 89
Burney, CA 96013
(530) 335-2777**

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*On a visit to the falls,
an enthralled President
Theodore Roosevelt
pronounced them one of
the wonders of the world.*





McArthur-Burney Falls Memorial State Park

Park sits on the eastern edge of the Cascade Range, between majestic Mount Shasta and Lassen Peak. The park's centerpiece is the thundering white-water falls on Burney Creek, augmented by the voluminous springs emanating from the basalt cliff face.

On sunny days, the mist above the basin of blue water at the bottom of the falls is often alight with rainbow colors. In the fall, the pool reflects the rich hues of autumn leaves, while winter often brings a lacy array of tiny icicles to decorate the face of the cliff.

The climate in this area 65 miles east of Redding is dictated by its predominantly mountainous topography. The park's highest elevation is nearly 3,100 feet. Temperatures range from averages of 20 degrees in winter to more than 85 degrees during the drier summer months. Between November and March, rainfall averages nearly 28 inches.

PARK HISTORY

The first people of this region lived in small groups or "bands." The band that lived near the falls and the creek that flows into the Pit River called themselves Ilmawi. Central to the band's way of life, the Pit River provided an important range of activities, including fishing, gathering, and social and sacred uses.

Today, the Ilmawi are among nearly a dozen culturally similar bands that comprise the Pit River Tribe.

The name "Pit" refers to a traditional hunting method in which hunters dug deep pits to trap large game such as pronghorn, deer, and elk.

Salmon and trout from the river were a vital part of the Pit River people's diet. The surrounding lands provided small game, including squirrels, ducks, geese, sage hens, and quail. Acorns, bulbs, tubers, seeds, and grasses also grew in the region, while various trees, herbs, and mosses served medicinal needs.

Fur trappers began to encroach on Pit River territory in the 1820s and '30s. By the mid-1850s, European and American settlers were homesteading the Pit River bands' lands. By the 1870s, many members of the Ilmawi and other bands had died from European diseases or been forcibly removed to the Round Valley Reservation in Mendocino County.

However, the ties of the people to their land proved strong. Today, the Pit River Tribe continues to maintain spiritual and economic relationships with their ancestral lands. People honor their cultural identity by visiting ancestral sites; conducting traditional activities such as hunting, gathering, fishing, and ceremonies; and teaching traditional life skills to their children and grandchildren. Many descendants still look upon Burney Falls and the sapphire pool at its base as a sacred place.

Tribal members also continue their role as caretakers of the land, at times partnering with California State Parks to carry out land-management practices.



Image courtesy of the Meriam Library, CSU Chico

Drawing of Shasta Peak by Charles Wilkes

Becoming a State Park

Burney Falls was named after Samuel Burney of South Carolina, who died in the area in 1859. Several local features came to be named after Burney.

John and Catherine McArthur arrived in the 1860s, purchased thousands of acres, and opened a mercantile store in the area. Over time, several family farms and the small settlement of Peck's Bridge sprang up along the Pit River near the falls. Early pioneer Isaac Ray established a short-lived lumber mill above the falls, but the area was sparsely populated well into the 1900s. The nearby Pioneer Cemetery bears witness to some of the historic names associated with this part of California.

In 1917 the newly formed Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) began buying up land and water rights in the area. Alarmed residents foresaw that PG&E, in the interests of providing more hydroelectric

power, would dam the Pit River and destroy Burney Falls. Frank and Scott McArthur, sons of John and Catherine, purchased 160 acres surrounding the falls; in 1920 they deeded the property to the State, requesting only that it be named for their parents. The land officially became a state park in 1926. The Pit River was eventually dammed; the Pit 3 dam formed the Lake Britton reservoir.

Some of the park's oldest features—including a historic cabin and Diablo stone stoves—were built by the Civilian Conservation Corps prior to World War II.

NATURAL HISTORY

Geology

The park's landscape resembles the Modoc Plateau geomorphic lands to the east. Most

of the park is blanketed by the 200,000-year-old basalt of Rocky Ledge, a single lava flow that covers about 43 square miles east and north of the town of Burney. This basalt forms the lip of Burney Falls.

The lava flow that created the ledge was quite fluid; it formed a sheet between 10 and 120 feet thick. The volume of this basalt eruption is estimated to be about half a cubic mile. Subsequent faulting has produced several prominent linear cliffs, or scarps, in the Rocky Ledge basalt.

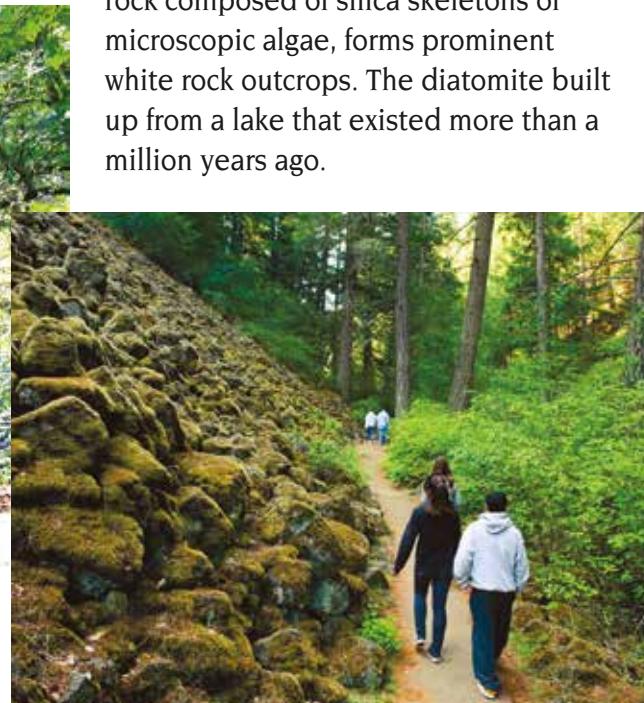
This basalt overlies other volcanic rocks whose age is estimated to be about 2.5 million years—ten times as old. The boundary between older and newer lava is marked by a line of emerging springs about 1/3 of the way down the falls. Further north along Burney Creek, diatomite, a

rock composed of silica skeletons of microscopic algae, forms prominent white rock outcrops. The diatomite built up from a lake that existed more than a million years ago.



Falls Loop Trail

Above: Rainbow Footbridge
Right: Basalt talus slope along the trail



Animal and Plant Life

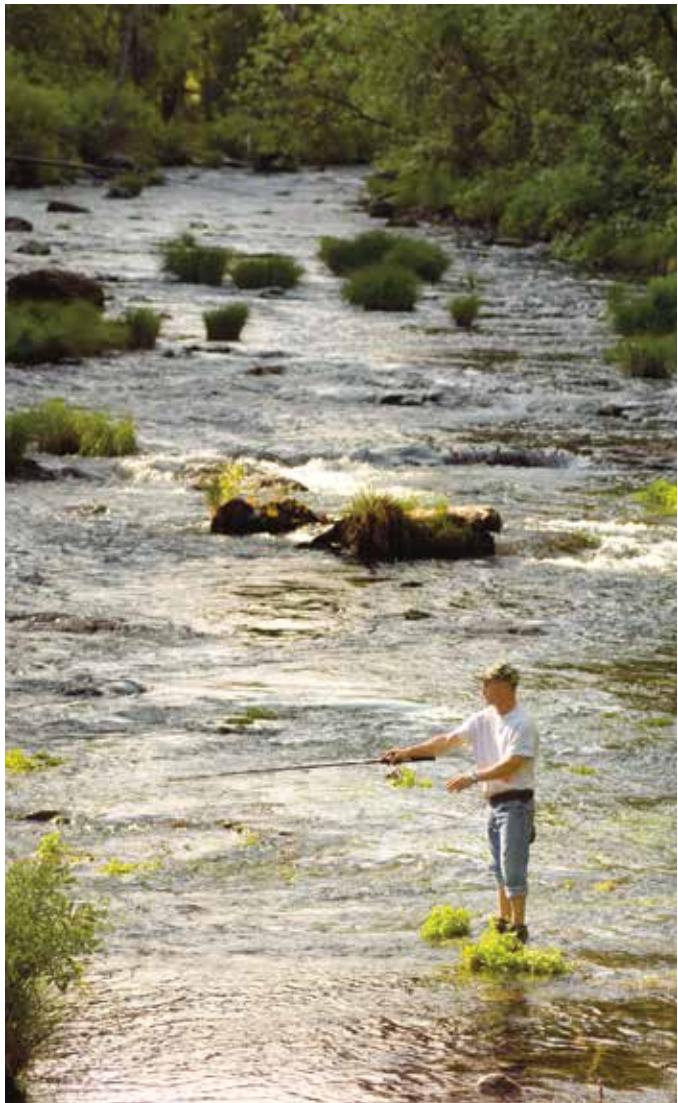
Typical of the rugged, undeveloped northeastern part of California, wildlife is abundant. Observe such spectacles as migratory black swifts darting in and out of the falls to feed their nestlings, or the once-endangered bald eagle soaring high overhead. California's Watchable Wildlife program has designated the park a "best viewing site," a testament to its varied wildlife habitats.

A vibrant mix of coniferous forest—including ponderosa pine and, along Burney Creek, Douglas-fir—provides habitat for such wildlife as western fence lizards, various woodpeckers, and other small animals.

A mixed hardwood forest—predominantly California black oak and Oregon white oak—and chaparral are home to a wealth of mammals, including California ground squirrels, porcupines, coyotes, and gray foxes. Numerous bird species, such as pileated woodpeckers, chestnut-backed chickadees, peregrine falcons, ospreys, and American white pelicans thrive in the park.

Montane chaparral is primarily a shrubby habitat; it provides cover for mule deer—the favorite prey of mountain lions—rabbits, and various insects and birds that eat chaparral seeds. This dry habitat harbors very few reptile species.

Seasonally, dry areas become wet meadow habitat whenever the soil cannot absorb any more water. The plants that grow here are mostly grasses and herbs. Wet meadow is primarily occupied by insects until it dries out enough to accommodate small rodents.



Upper Burney Creek is popular with anglers.

They, in turn, attract such raptors as red-tailed hawks and northern harriers hunting for their meals.

Tree-lined Burney Creek represents riparian habitat, a significant resource that attracts American dippers, western pond turtles, Pacific tree frogs, non-native bullfrogs, and river otters.

RECREATION

Camping

The park has more than 100 family sites (without hookups) and several primitive sites. All campsites are a short hike from both the lake and the falls. An RV sanitation station is located at the north end of the campground.

Hiking

Five miles of hiking trails wind through evergreen forests, and the Pacific Crest Trail passes through the park.

- Burney Creek Trail—This backcountry trail leads to the falls through ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, incense cedar, and a variety of oaks.
- Pioneer Cemetery Trail—This hiking and biking trail follows a historic wagon trail to the Pioneer Cemetery.

Fishing

At Burney Creek, brook and rainbow trout abound in October. Lake Britton's trout, bass, bluegill, and crappie are popular with anglers. Lake Britton is easily reached via the Burney Creek Trail or by vehicle.

Licensed anglers should visit www.wildlife.ca.gov to check current fishing regulations before they visit.

Picnics

A shaded group picnic area, seating up to 100 people,



may be rented for groups and memorable special events. For rental details, call the park office at (530) 335-2777.

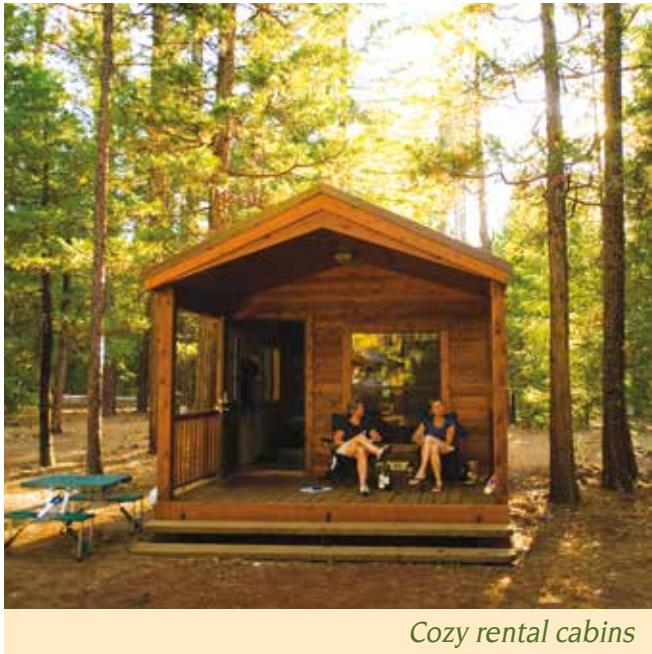
Find first-come, first-served family picnic tables near the lake, the creek, and the visitor center.

Cabins

Nestled within the campsites, you will find a number of one- and two-room cabins within walking distance of the falls and the camp store. Each cabin is well insulated against chilly nights and is equipped with propane heaters, padded platform bunk beds, wood floors, and six-foot covered porches.



Water recreation on Lake Britton



Cozy rental cabins

Cabins, which are offered in two interior sizes, 12x12 feet and 12x18 feet, each come with a campfire ring, outdoor table, and space to pitch a tent outside. Restrooms with flush toilets and showers are nearby. Bring sleeping bags and battery-powered lanterns (the cabins have no electricity or running water).

For more information and site-specific camping and cabin reservations, visit www.parks.ca.gov or call (800) 444-7275.

Interpretive Activities/Campfires

Check at the visitor center for a schedule of interpretive and summer campfire programs.

Special Events

Heritage Day takes place on the Sunday of Columbus Day weekend; it features demonstrations and re-creations of typical activities and crafts of the late 1800s.

ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

The park offers a great many accessible activities, including viewing majestic Burney Falls. The visitor center, restrooms, showers, Burney Creek Trail, two trails near the falls, some RV sites, tent sites, the more primitive walk-in campsites, and heated cabin camping are all accessible. Accessible picnicking is available at various locations. The Lake Britton marina is accessible, with a fishing pier and beach wheelchairs to loan.

Accessibility is continually improving. For updates, visit the website at <http://access.parks.ca.gov>.

NEARBY STATE PARKS

- Ahjumawi Lava Springs State Park
N 41.1000° W 121.4120°
(shallow boat-in only), 3.5 miles north of McArthur off Hwy. 299 (530) 335-2777
- Castle Crags State Park
20022 Castle Creek Rd.
Castella 96017 (530) 235-2684



Bald eagle

This park is supported in part by a nonprofit organization. For more information, contact:
McArthur-Burney Falls Interpretive Association
www.burneyfallspark.org

PLEASE REMEMBER

- All natural and cultural features are protected by law and must not be disturbed or removed.
- Horses are allowed on the Pacific Crest Trail only.
- Dogs must be on a six-foot maximum leash at all times and confined inside a tent, cabin, or vehicle at night.
- Pets are permitted only in the campgrounds, on the Pioneer Cemetery Trail, and on the Old Rim Camp Road.
- Except for service animals, dogs are not permitted on any other trails or the swim beach.



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