



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
WHISKEYTOWN NATIONAL RECREATION AREA
P.O. BOX 188
WHISKEYTOWN, CA 96095-0188



James K. Carr Trail to Whiskeytown Falls

Hiking only. No bicycles or pack animals.

Difficulty level

Moderate

Length

3.4 miles round trip

Elevation

2200 to 2900 feet

Enter at your own risk

The Carr Fire burned through 98% of the park's forested lands in the summer of 2018. Be aware of hazards created by the fire, including falling trees and limbs, burned out stump holes, abandoned mine features, and loose rocks.

Watch the weather and do not hike if rain is forecast. Rain storms present the possibility of flash flooding, landslides and debris flows in the fire area.

Stay on established roads and trails and report hazards to park dispatch, (530) 242-3431.

Directions

Starting at the Visitor Center, drive west 9 miles along Highway 299 to Crystal Creek Road. Turn left onto Crystal Creek Road and drive for 3.5 miles until you reach the gravel parking lot on the left.

Trail Description

Take Mill Creek Trail downhill along a former logging road. Cross over the west fork of Crystal Creek on a footbridge and continue until you reach the sign for the James K. Carr Trailhead on the right. The trail ascends steadily uphill through a ravine. Stay on the main trail and avoid the old logging spurs to the right and left.

The trail will level out and you will arrive at a picnic area; horses and bicycles should be left here. The trail parallels the creek for .25 mile until it reaches the base of the falls. Look to the left for the stone stairs leading up the cliff. Use the metal handrails for safety as you climb to the vista points.

History

Before becoming a park, the land was privately owned by Arthur Coggins, whose logging company selectively removed Douglas fir, ponderosa pine, sugar pine and incense cedar during the 1950s. At this time, the loggers were generally the only people who knew about the falls. Hiking up the path, try to imagine the logging trucks that regularly drove up and down this former logging road.

Park rangers initially learned about the waterfall in 1967 but kept it quiet. At that time, the park did not have the staff to protect this treasure or the money to construct a trail to the falls. Eventually, these rangers moved on and others who knew about the site passed away. Knowledge of the falls was generally forgotten and only a few residents visited the falls over the years. It was in 2004 that park biologist Russ Weatherbee “rediscovered” the falls while viewing aerial photos. Intrigued, he and park geologist Brian Rasmussen hiked into the area and found the falls.

The trail is named after James K. Carr, a former Shasta County resident, who became the Undersecretary of the Interior during the Kennedy Administration in 1963. He was determined to set aside Whiskeytown Lake, Shasta Bally and the surrounding mountains as a national park site. Carr was successful and on November 8, 1963, Congress created the 42,000-acre Whiskeytown National Recreation Area.