Deer Creek Tribute Trail East

Built with grants totaling nearly $1 million, Deer Creek Tribute Trail is a major new amenity of the area. It memorializes the early contributions of native Nisenan and Chinese people to the history of this place. New developments include an improved trail along Little Deer Creek in town, a historic route through downtown Nevada City, connecting links along the canyon of Deer Creek west of town, and a fine new trail to a beautiful plaza at Stocking Flat on Deer Creek with its new Chinese Bridge across Deer Creek to a forested loop trail. All of this is linked to a popular footpath along 1.8 miles of the historic Newtown Canal west of town. It all adds up to a great new trail system with lots of interesting and beautiful options to explore.

**Place:** In and west of Nevada City, CA  
**Season:** Year around  
**Land:** Mixed municipal, private, BLM and Nevada Irrigation District  
**Trail signs:** Good direction signs for eastern half; sparse signage in far western portion  
**Length:** Longest continuous distance is 3.6 miles one way; branches vary (see below)  
**Altitude change:** Nearly level for long stretches; some places with moderate grade (see below)  
**Difficulty:** Easy to moderate depending on length and part of trail hiked or ridden  
**Trail surface:** Paved, dirt or graveled roads, dirt trails; dirt path along Newtown Canal  
**Environment:** Pine woods, city streets, rural residential, and rural mixed conifer and hardwoods  
**Rules:** No motor vehicles; stay on trails; no smoking on rural trails; no camping

**In-town Trailheads:**

*Pioneer Park*: The official beginning of the Tribute Trail is next to Pioneer Park in Nevada City. To reach this trailhead, go to the foot of Broad Street in Nevada City, continue uphill on Boulder Street less than 0.2 mile, turn right on Park Avenue, then right on Nimrod Street. The trailhead is about 80 yards up Nimrod Street on your right, opposite the Pioneer Park tennis courts (N39.26092 W121.01287).

*Robinson Plaza*: To explore the trail from a base in downtown Nevada City, go to Robinson Plaza at the corner of Union Alley and Commercial Street, opposite the Bank of America. The plaza is right on the trail route. It’s a good base for exploring the trail in either direction (N39.26291 W121.01701).

*Miners Foundry*: If you would like to go west from town into the rural sections of this trail, start at the intersection of Bridge Street and Factory Street on the west side of the Miners Foundry building (N39.26205 W121.02079). To get there from Robinson Plaza, walk up Commercial Street, turn left on York Street, cross Broad Street, then go uphill toward the Bonanza Market and the historic Nevada Theater. Turn left into the parking lot between those two buildings and walk down the lot to Spring Street where you will be in front of the Miners Foundry. Now go down the road on the right side of the Foundry (this is Bridge Street) to Factory Street on the right. There is a small Tribute Trail marker at this intersection (look on the telephone pole just right of the "Not A Through Street" sign on your left as you enter Factory Street.)

**Rural Trailheads:**

**Note:** Much of the Deer Creek Tribute Trail goes along or runs near rural public roads west of Nevada City. You may pick your own starting place along a public road. If you do this, be sure to park well off the traveled roadway.

*Champion Road*: The first place west of town where you can be on dirt trail is near the intersection of Old Downieville Highway and Champion Road. To drive there from downtown Nevada City, go up Broad Street, turn left on Bennett Street and after a couple of hundred yards bear left on Monroe Street which shortly will go downhill for about 150 yards. Old Downieville Highway begins at the foot of this hill and runs west from there. Follow Old Downieville Highway about 0.3 mile to its intersection with Champion Road (a dirt road) on your left.

There are actually two trailheads near this intersection. The most obvious is about 300' down Champion Road on your left, with a pullout area for parking on your right (N39.26174 W121.03094). There is also a trailhead along Old Downieville Highway about 300' west of the same intersection, on your left just before a mailbox that is mounted on an old metal plow (N39.26198 W121.03116). There are places to pull off Old Downieville Highway and park. The trail from
this "upper" trailhead simply takes you a very short way down to the signed trailhead on Champion Road.

**Trail tips:**
There are many ways to walk or ride the Deer Creek Tribute Trail, depending on your time and interest. Joggers may want to run the entire 3.6 mile length from one end to the other and back, with a 0.4 mile side trip down to Stocking Flat and a 0.6 mile loop off the south end of the Chinese Bridge (total 8.6 miles.) History buffs will enjoy the route through Nevada City's early Chinese Quarter to the Chinese Memorial. Locals and visitors looking for a local walk or jog will enjoy the neighborhood feel of the route west from Miners Foundry and along the quiet road called Old Downieville Highway. Beyond the Champion Road trailhead (see above) there is the rural beauty of a more extended excursion down the valley of Deer Creek to Stocking Flat and a loop trail on the far side of the Chinese Bridge. And back in town, many will appreciate the Tribute Trail's woody shortcut along Little Deer Creek to Pioneer Park from downtown and back. The following are a few suggested ways to enjoy this great new trail system:

**Downtown Discovery Walk:**
Using Robinson Plaza as your base, pay a visit to the Nevada City Chamber of Commerce (right there on the plaza) and pick up a copy of the "Chinese Quarter Walking Guide." Using the guide, walk up Commercial Street, especially noting the concentration of historic Chinese Quarter buildings around the intersection of York Street, then pay a visit to the beautifully landscaped little Chinese Memorial just 30 yards up Commercial Street past York Street on your right at the entrance to the municipal parking lot.

Also from Robinson Plaza, you can easily get to Pioneer Park, just 1/3 mile away. Walk up Union Alley to Broad Street, turn left and cross over the freeway and continue to the large intersection just east of the freeway. Look on your right for the large parking lot next to the Stone House building at the southeast corner of this intersection. Walk into that parking lot, going along the far left side of the lot until you see the Tribute Trail sign by the creek. Enter the trail and walk through woods along Little Deer Creek about 300 yards to the trailhead on Nimrod Street. Pioneer Park with its tennis courts, grassy fields, swimming pool, children's playground, and rustic buildings are across and uphill from the trailhead. Retrace your route to return to Robinson Plaza.

**Note:** There is a short side trail off this route, not officially part of the Tribute Trail, which you might want to explore. This is the Miner's Trail of the Nevada City Rotary Club and it gives you a rare chance to walk along Deer Creek right in Nevada City. As you walk back up Broad Street toward downtown, go left onto a gravel path alongside the freeway off-ramp immediately after you have crossed over Deer Creek. The signed trailhead is about 30 yards down this path on your left (N39.26181 W121.01686). The trail parallels Deer Creek for about 150 yards with two small stone benches along the way where you can sit and view the creek. (Curious walkers may wish to continue on the rough and sometimes littered dirt path under the freeway. It comes out on quaint little Cabin Street where you can walk out to Pine Street, turn right and return to downtown, or go left and walk across Deer Creek on the historic South Pine Bridge.)

Of course there are many other things to discover in downtown Nevada City, both on and off the Tribute Trail route. You can get all the information you need at the Chamber of Commerce office on Robinson Plaza or just walk around.

**Note:** There are public restrooms at Robinson Plaza and at the municipal parking lot by the Chinese Memorial. There are no restrooms, water fountains or trash cans in rural portions of the Tribute Trail. Please be prepared for these conditions and be sure to pack out all trash. Please observe the no smoking and no camping rules for this trail. Fire danger can be very high in summer and fall.

**Quick Out-of-town Walk:**
In almost no time, you can be out of town on the Tribute Trail and walking in a quiet rural neighborhood near Deer Creek. Locals will often be found here, out for some exercise near town. Start at the Miners Foundry trailhead (see above) and go west on Factory Street. You may wonder if this is the right way but, yes, it is. The road will soon curve to the left, the pavement will end and you will be on a one lane dirt road (Wyoming Street) that parallels Deer Creek. In about 0.3 mile, the dirt road will come out onto the pavement of Old Downieville Highway which you can follow another 0.3 mile to where Champion Road goes down to your left. Here you have two options for extending your hike. You can take the Deer Creek Tribute Trail into increasingly rural countryside along Deer Creek, or you can follow the tradition of many local residents who use the little-traveled Old Downieville Highway west of here as a great place to walk or ride for exercise. If you choose the latter, you can go another 1.5 miles beyond Champion Road on Old Downieville Highway to
where it ends at busy Highway 49, then turn around and retrace your route back into town. (Round trip from Miner's Foundry to the end of Old Downieville Highway and back is 4.4 miles, with little elevation change. There is one short hill with a 50' elevation change on Old Downieville Highway; otherwise the route is mostly level.)