Hardrock Trail

A hike along the Hardrock Trail at Empire Mine State Historic Park is a walk back in time. The 856 acre park, one of three state parks in Western Nevada County, preserves what was once California’s richest gold producing mine. This urban interface trail in Grass Valley is popular among hikers, walkers, joggers, equestrian riders and bicyclists. An easy to moderate 1.5 miles, the Hardrock Trail covers much of the park’s “outback”. It’s a trail that offers relics of historic mining days in a forest setting.

Getting there:

From downtown Grass Valley, take South Auburn Street, turn left onto East Empire Drive, travel 0.3 miles, and turn right into Penn Gate parking lot.

From Highway 174, take East Empire Drive 1 mile to Penn Gate. Trail users can also access the Hardrock Trail via the Visitor Center parking lot located at 10791 East Empire Street, Grass Valley.

Distance: From Penn Gate to Visitor Center Parking Lot is 1.5 mi, Empire Street Trail from Visitor Center Parking Lot to Penn Gate is 0.7 mile, together the full loop is 2.2 mi.

Elevation Change: 143 feet

Uses: Hiking, jogging, mountain bikes, and designated equestrian areas. Dogs on a leash.

The Hardrock Trail is part of a larger trail network that includes the Union Hill and Osborne Hill Trails. Another pleasant side trip is to take a tour of the park’s adjacent Visitor Center and more formal landscaped gardens and mine yard.