



Independence Trail East

Founded by the late John Olmsted, the Independence Trail transformed the historic Excelsior Ditch into the nation's first identified handicap-accessible wilderness trail. It is now one of the most popular trails in the area, contouring along wooded hillsides, passing live streams, and crossing deep gorges on restored wooden flumes that once transported water for hydraulic mining. The Excelsior Ditch was used for hydraulic gold mining, running all the way to the Smartsville mining district, 15 miles west of Grass Valley.

The East trail features occasional views of the South Yuba River canyon, seasonal side streams and bogs, and unmaintained access to the river at trail's end. Along the trail are two picnic tables, several benches, and several wooden bridges that have replaced the flumes of yore. After 0.6 miles, the trail passes under an impressive large boulder.

Getting there:

Take Highway 49 west towards Downieville for 6.25 miles. Highway signs inform travelers of up coming parking area on right. Please leave first parking lot open for handicap accessible vehicles. Pedestrians please go to overflow parking just around the bend on Highway 49. Turn left to go eastward, and turn right and pass underneath the highway (watch your head!) to go westward.

- Distance:** 2.2 miles one way. Last 0.2 miles unmaintained.
- Elevation change:** Nearly level.
- Uses:** No bicycles. No motorized vehicles. Dogs on leash.

