

# Folsom Lake

## State Recreation Area



### 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 **(916) 988-0205**. If you need this publication in an alternate format, contact [interp@parks.ca.gov](mailto:interp@parks.ca.gov).

#### CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

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Sacramento, CA 94296-0001

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(916) 653-6995, outside the U.S.

711, TTY relay service

[www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov)

#### Folsom Lake State Recreation Area

7755 Folsom-Auburn Road

Folsom, CA 95630

(916) 988-0205

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*Folsom Lake's  
miles of shoreline and  
waterside trails attract  
millions of boaters,  
equestrians, cyclists,  
and hikers each year.*



## Folsom Lake State Recreation Area

offers scenic panoramas of open grasslands, rolling hills, the Sierra Nevada, Sacramento Valley, and the Bay Area's Mount Diablo. Folsom Lake State Recreation Area

covers 19,500 acres. Its two reservoirs, Folsom and Natoma, attract about two million visitors annually.

The climate is typical of Sacramento area. Hot summers require a sunhat and sun block. In winter, fog brings a chill. Spring and fall offer rainy or warm days with cooler evenings and nights.

### PARK HISTORY

#### Native People

For thousands of years, the land near Folsom Lake belonged to the Southern Maidu or Nisenan ("from among us"). The Nisenan lived in temporary summer shelters made from peeled tree bark. In winter they dwelled in permanent villages on the American River. These villages had community buildings, including *kum* ceremonial and guest structures.

The Nisenan traded with other native groups, exchanging local acorns for black oak acorns, manzanita berries, and sugar pine nuts. Coastal people traded with the Nisenan for oyster shells, shell beads, and basket materials. The Nisenan are still known worldwide for their woven baskets made from



Scenic views

willow, redbud, tule, milkweed, sedge grass, and native grapevines.

After the 1848 gold discovery, most of the Nisenan lands were given away as Spanish land grants. The native people were overwhelmed by the loss of their food sources and by diseases like smallpox. The Nisenan people were nearly decimated, but today their descendants live in nearby communities or on reservations.

### FOLSOM DAM

Folsom Lake was created in 1955 by the construction of Folsom Dam, a concrete dam flanked by earth wing dams and dikes, with a total length of about nine miles. The shoreline extends about 15 miles up the forks of the American River. Lake level normally varies from 460 feet in early spring to less than 400 feet by summer. Downstream, behind Nimbus Dam, smaller Lake Natoma has about 500 surface acres of water. Built by the Bureau of Reclamation as part of California's Central Valley Project, Nimbus and Folsom Dams control the waters of the American River and provide flood protection, household water supply, power, and irrigation.

### THE FOLSOM POWERHOUSE

Nearby Folsom Powerhouse was built to harness the water power of the American River at the original Folsom Dam, completed by Folsom Prison laborers in 1893. The Powerhouse landmark, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is a state historic park.

### PLANTS AND WILDLIFE

Blue oaks, interior live oaks, foothill pines, and annual grasses dot the open woodlands. In the spring, blooming wildflowers include Indian paintbrush, larkspur, lupine, brodiaea, fiddleneck, dutchman's pipe, and monkey flower.

Black-tailed deer, raccoons, skunks, opossums, gray foxes, and coyotes are often seen in the park. Mountain lions and bobcats may occasionally be spotted. Beavers and river otters live in the Mormon Island Wetlands, a perfect area for bird watching.

Nesting egrets, herons, and cormorants may be observed from the Willow Creek access. Year-round residents include Canada geese, blackbirds, scrub jays, quail, wrens, bushtits, and towhees. Wrentits and California thrashers sing in the chamise-chaparral. Look for kingfishers and grebes near the water. Red-tailed hawks, kestrels, ospreys, and eagles might be seen soaring over the lake.



Folsom Lake and Dam

## RECREATION

**Fishing**—Folsom Lake waters hold trout, catfish, largemouth and smallmouth bass, perch, and kokanee salmon. A valid California fishing license is required. Lake Natoma's accessible pier and fishing platform is at Nimbus Flat.

**Boating**—Launching facilities are located at several places

around the lake (see map for details).

The marina at Brown's Ravine also features boat slips, a towing service, a gas dock, and snack bar.

**CAUTION:** Boaters should be alert for floating debris. Watch carefully for underwater hazards, especially when the lake level is very low. Observe speed limits.

### Camping

**Peninsula Campground**—A hundred family campsites—some accessible—accommodate trailers up to 18 feet and motor homes up to 24 feet. A sanitation station is provided. No site hookups are available. Accessible flush toilets, hot showers, and piped drinking water are available. Two launch ramps and a day-use area are near this secluded campground at the end of the Peninsula between the north and south forks of the American River. Reach the area by boat or drive ten miles south

Photo courtesy of Sacramento State Aquatic Center



*Windsurfing on Folsom Lake*

from the town of Pilot Hill on Highway 49.

### Beals Point Campground

Just north of Folsom Dam, Beals Point has 49 family campsites and 20 RV hookup sites for trailers and motor homes up to 31 feet. A sanitation station, piped drinking water, and wheelchair-accessible restrooms with hot showers are available nearby.



*Horseback riding trails at Folsom Lake*

**Black Miners Bar Group Campsites**—On the north shore of Lake Natoma, three group campsites are available. Two can hold up to 50 people each and one can accommodate up to 25 people.

**Reservations**—Reserve campsites at all campgrounds by calling (800) 444-7275 or visiting [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov).

**Boat Camping**—You may camp overnight aboard your self-contained sailboat or powerboat only in designated mooring areas.

Obtain a map of the mooring areas when registering for boat camping at the Granite Bay entrance station or the marina at Brown's Ravine. If no one is available when you arrive, contact park headquarters. Your boat must have self-contained sanitary and gray-water systems with sleeping accommodations for all aboard. You may camp ashore at the Peninsula Campground only in a designated campsite. Beach the bow of your boat and anchor off the stern. A secure tie-up is essential, as the wind may rise during the night. Boat camping is limited to two consecutive nights.

**Picnicking**—Family picnic sites are located at Willow Creek, Nimbus Flat, and Black Miners Bar on Lake Natoma, and at Beals Point, Brown's Ravine, Granite Bay, the Peninsula area, and Folsom Point on Folsom Lake.

Beals Point, Nimbus Flat, and Peninsula have accessible picnic tables, restrooms, and parking. All sites have barbecues; bring charcoal.

The group picnic area at Granite Bay holds up to 200 people. Reserve by calling (916) 988-0205.



*Lake Natoma accessible picnic area*



*Nimbus Dam*

**Horseback Riding**—Horse trailers can unload and park at several equestrian staging areas. Granite Bay has hitching rails, a water trough, and chemical toilets. Other staging areas are located at Black Miners Bar, Rattlesnake Bar, Brown's Ravine, Old Salmon Falls, Falcon Crest, and Sterling Pointe.

**Trails**—The park has 95 miles of trails for hikers, bicyclists, runners, and horseback riders. The trail system includes the Pioneer Express Trail, which is part of the 50-mile Western States/Pioneer

Express National Recreation Trail. Oaks Nature Trail is accessible.

A paved, mostly accessible bicycle trail loops around Lake Natoma, linking to Beals Point and the American River Bike Trail.

Darrington Trail is a popular mountain bike trail on the south fork of Folsom Lake, near Salmon Falls.

**Beach/Shore Access**—Call ahead to reserve a beach wheelchair for two hours at the Beals Point or Granite Bay day-use areas.

### ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

Accessibility in California State Parks is continually improving. For specific details, visit [www.access.parks.ca.gov](http://www.access.parks.ca.gov).

### EXHIBITS/PROGRAMS

**The American River Water Education Center** interprets water conservation and the American River Watershed. For information, call (916) 989-7100; for tours, call (916) 989-7132 or see [www.usbr.gov/mp/arwec](http://www.usbr.gov/mp/arwec).

### AQUATIC CENTER

**The Sacramento State Aquatic Center** offers boat rentals and boating safety classes. The facility is cooperatively operated by California State Parks, its Division of Boating and Waterways, and

the Associated Students of California State University, Sacramento. For schedules, call (916) 278-2842 or visit [www.sacstateaquaticcenter.com](http://www.sacstateaquaticcenter.com).



*Canoeing at Lake Natoma*

*Photo courtesy of Sacramento State Aquatic Center*

### NEARBY STATE PARKS

- Folsom Powerhouse State Historic Park  
9980 Greenback Lane  
Folsom 95630  
(916) 985-4843
- Auburn SRA  
501 El Dorado St.  
Auburn 95602  
(530) 885-4527

### PLEASE REMEMBER

- Grass, brush, and trees become tinder-dry. Wildfires are a serious threat. Fires are allowed only in the camp stoves or fire rings provided.
- Poison oak is present throughout the park. Even when dormant, poison oak can cause a serious rash.
- Rattlesnakes, mountain lions, or bobcats may be present in the park. Do not walk alone in isolated areas. Report sightings to park staff.
- Floating debris, an uneven lake bottom, and rock outcroppings are hazards for boaters and swimmers. Swim only in designated areas. No diving is permitted.
- All cultural and natural features are protected by law and may not be disturbed or removed.



*Poison Oak*

# Folsom Lake State Recreation Area



## PIONEER EXPRESS TRAIL MILEAGE

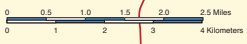
From Nimbus Overlook (Hazel Ave.) to:

Black Miners Bar Staging Area	4.5
Rainbow Bridge	5.0
Beals Point	9.2
Pioneer Express Trail Historic Monument	9.5
Douglas Boulevard	13.1
Granite Bay Staging Area	14.2
Beeks Bight	16.7
Horseshoe Bar	20.1
Rattlesnake Bar Staging Area	23.7
Auburn Staging Area	34.4

## SOUTH FORK ARM TRAIL MILEAGE

From Folsom Point to:

Brown's Ravine Staging Area	3.2
New York Creek	9.7
Old Salmon Falls	14.2
Sweetwater Creek	14.8
Salmon Falls Bridge	17.4
Peninsula Entrance Rd (Rattlesnake Bar Road)	27.0



This park receives support in part from a nonprofit organization. For more information, contact Friends of Lakes Folsom and Natoma P.O. Box 257, Orangevale, CA 95662 [www.bolfan.org](http://www.bolfan.org)

### Legend

	Freeway		Campground: RV
	Major Road		Fishing
	Paved Road		Food Services
	Trail: Accessible		Horse Staging Area
	Trail: Hike & Bike		Marina
	Trail: Hike & Horse		Park Headquarters
	Trail: Multi-Use		Parking
	Accessible Feature		Picnic Area
	Boat Launch: Hand		Picnic Area: Group
	Boat Launch: Vehicle		Restrooms: Group
	Bridge		Restrooms: Floating
	Campground		RV Sanitation Station
	Campground: Group		Swimming
			Trailhead