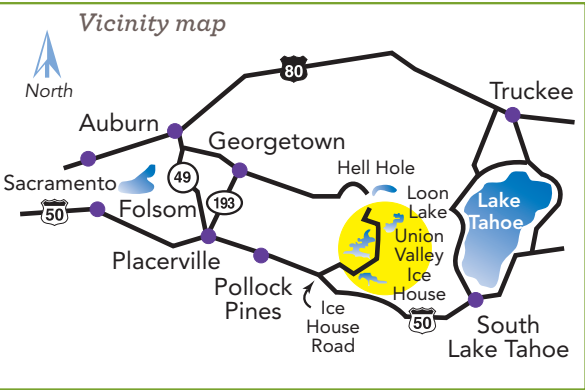


# Crystal Basin Recreation Area

Powering forward.  
Together.



**SMUD®**  
Sacramento Municipal  
Utility District





**ELDORADO**  
**National Forest**  
Forest Service - U.S. Department of Agriculture

Welcome to the Crystal Basin Recreation Area of the Eldorado National Forest, spanning 85,000 acres of pine and fir forests along the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada. Capped by the majestic, granite peaks of the Crystal Range and traversed by lakes, reservoirs and streams, the Crystal Basin’s four seasons and varied terrain offer a diverse range of rugged outdoor adventure.

## History

The Crystal Basin was once the home of the Miwok, Washoe and Maidu people. In the 1800s, ranch settlers grazed dairy cattle on the high mountain meadows now covered by reservoirs. In the early 1900s, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service opened the Crystal Basin to the public.

In 1957, Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD) began construction of the Upper American River Project (UARP), a series of hydroelectric power plants in the Crystal Basin. Today, the UARP is capable of producing 1.8 billion kilowatt-hours of clean, affordable electricity — enough energy to power about 200,000 homes a year in Sacramento.

As part of the UARP, we created a network of beautiful mountain reservoirs and built a variety of recreational facilities around the reservoirs. Working together, SMUD and the Forest Service continue to provide land and water-based recreation opportunities for all visitors to enjoy.

## Camping

Over 700 developed campsites are available in the Crystal Basin. Most require fees and/or reservations and have a fire ring with a grate, table and parking spur. Campgrounds have bear proof storage and trash containers, toilets and many provide piped-in water. Most sites accommodate recreational vehicles (no hookups). The maximum stay is 14 days.

Most areas of the National Forest allow camping in an undeveloped setting. When you pick your spot, make sure it’s at least 100 feet away from streams and lakes, to protect streamside vegetation and prevent pollution.

## Fishing

Anglers can cast for kokanee salmon, small mouth bass, mackinaw or rainbow trout at Union Valley Reservoir. SMUD and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife stock rainbow trout throughout the summer in Ice House, Union Valley and the Loon Lake Reservoir. For fishing enthusiasts eager to reel in a wild brown trout, try your luck at Gerle Creek.

## Bicycling


The Crystal Basin has trails for both road cyclists and mountain bikers to enjoy. For families with children and cyclists who prefer a relaxed ride on pavement, Union Valley Reservoir has a paved 12.5 mile bike trail that winds along the edge of the lake. Mountain bikers can enjoy a 3.1 mile stretch of single track trail along the Ice House campgrounds.

## Horseback riding

Equestrian campgrounds are available at Loon Lake Reservoir, Wrights Lake and Tells Creek with access to scenic riding trails. The individual sites at Loon Lake Reservoir have hitching posts and pull-through parking to conveniently accommodate horse trailers.

## Boating

Recreational boating is a favorite pastime on the clear mountain lakes of the Crystal Basin. Ice House, Union Valley and Loon Lake Reservoir have paved boat ramps and are large enough to accommodate motorboats and water sports.



Be aware of the spread of invasive mussels and remember to **clean, drain and dry** before and after launching into new waters.

## Hiking

The Crystal Basin provides a gateway to Desolation Wilderness, offering access to 117 miles of hiking trails across the Sierra Nevada. Many of the trails located within the Crystal Basin offer easy to moderate day hikes. For an easy, educational hike, try the accessible Gerle Creek Summer Harvest Trail and learn how Native Americans utilized the resources available from the forest.

## Accessible

Many of the developed areas throughout the Crystal Basin are accessible for people with disabilities. The Crystal Basin Information Station, fishing pier and trails at Gerle Creek, many of the campsites, parking areas and the paved boat ramps at the reservoirs accommodate wheelchairs.

## Snow skiing

Cross-country skiers can traverse miles of exquisite, pristine ski trails near Loon Lake Reservoir, the highest elevation reservoir in the Crystal Basin. The ratings for the ungroomed trails range from “Easiest” to “Most Difficult.” Trail maps are available from the Forest Service. *Keep safety in mind, know your limitations and stay within your difficulty level.*

## Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV)

For those who prefer 4-wheels, the Crystal Basin is home to one of the most famous OHV trails, the Rubicon Jeep Trail. Another popular trail is the Barrett Jeep Trail near Wrights Lake. Please check the latest Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) and only travel on designated roads and motorized trails.

## Robbs Hut

Robbs Hut is a popular mountain bunkhouse located on a 6,700 foot peak overlooking the Crystal Basin. It's open year-round, and features a cook stove, outdoor barbeque and sleeping accommodations for six. Overnight reservations required.

## Loon Lake Chalet

Skiers, hikers and mountain bikers can take refuge at the Loon Lake Chalet year-round. It offers a large warming room, a small kitchen and sleeping accommodations for up to 20 people. Overnight reservations required. **Reopening date to be determined.**

## Big Hill


For a panoramic view of the captivating scenery of the Crystal Basin, visit Big Hill Vista and Lookout. It offers views of the Crystal Range and west to Sacramento and Mount Diablo.




For more information, visit  
[smud.org/CrystalBasin](https://smud.org/CrystalBasin)




Recreation sites	Approximate season	Facilities & activities				Comments
		Family campsites	Group campsites	Day-use picnic sites		
Cleveland Corral - 4,000'	5/25 - 9/15		1	?	?	Information about Crystal Basin
Silver Creek Group Campground - 5,200'	6/15 - 9/15		1			No trailers/RVs 50 people max.
Big Hill Vista Point - 6,100'	5/15 - 10/15		1			
Ice House Reservoir - 5,400'						
Upper Silver Creek Day Use Area - 2019	5/15 - 10/15		5			No water
Ice House Campground - 2022	5/15 - 10/15	68	12			Accessible boating ramp and dock
Peavine Point Day Use Area - 2022	5/15 - 10/15		5			No water, boat-in only
Northwind Campground	5/15 - 10/1	9				No water
Strawberry Point Campground	6/1 - 10/1	10				No water
Crystal Basin Information Station	5/25 - 10/1					Visitor information
Union Valley Reservoir - 4,900'						
Azalea Cove Campground	5/25 - 10/1	10				Access by foot, boat or bicycle only No garbage
Big Silver Group Campground	5/25 - 10/1		1			No water Group - 50 people max.
Camino Cove Campground	5/25 - 10/15	32				No water
Fashoda Campground - 2023	5/25 - 9/9	30	5			Shower
Jones Fork Campground	5/25 - 10/1	10				No water
Lone Rock Campground	5/25 - 10/1	5				Access by foot, boat or bicycle only No garbage
Sunset Campground - 2018	5/25 - 10/1	121	1			Accessible boarding ramp and dock
Wench Creek Campground	5/25 - 9/15	100	2			2 groups - each 50 people max.
Westpoint Campground - 2021	5/25 - 10/15	23	1			Group - 30 people max.
Wolf Creek Campground	5/25 - 9/15	42	3			3 group sites - (1) 50 occupant and (2) 25 occupant.
Yellowjacket Campground - 2021	5/25 - 9/15	37				
Van Vleck Bunkhouse - 6,500'	Year round					Reservations required 6 people max.
Robbs Hut - 6,700'	Year round		1			Reservations required 6 people max.
South Fork Group Campground - 5,200'	5/25 - 10/1		1			Reservations required 125 people max.
Gerle Creek Reservoir - 5,200'						
Angel Creek Picnic Area	6/15 - 10/1		4			No motorboats
Gerle Creek Campground - 2011	6/15 - 10/1	50	4			Interpretive hiking trail, accessible no motorboats
Airport Flat Campground	5/25 - 10/15	16				No water Motorcycles & ATVs allowed
Loon Lake Reservoir - 6,400'						
Loon Lake Campground	6/15 - 10/1	53	2	5		2 group sites - (1) 50 occupant and (1) 35 occupant.
Loon Lake Equestrian Campground	6/15 - 9/15	9	1			Group - 25 people max. Livestock required
Loon Lake Boat Ramp RV Campground - 2020	6/15 - 10/1	12				No campfires, Accessible Boarding ramp and dock
Loon Lake Chalet - 6,500'	Year round					Reservations required 20 people max.
Northshore Campground - 2019	6/15 - 10/15	25				Water available
Pleasant Campground - 2024	7/1 - 9/15	8				Access by foot, boat or bicycle only No water
Red Fir Group Campground	7/1 - 9/15		1			25 people max., 6 cars Tents only
Wentworth Springs Campground	6/15 - 10/1	8				No trailers, rough road, No water
Wright's Lake - 7,000'						
Wright's Lake Equestrian Camp	6/25 - 10/1	15				Livestock required
Wright's Lake Campground	6/25 - 10/1	68	10			No motorboats




**Legend**




For more information, call Pacific Ranger Station / Crystal Basin Recreation information at 530-644-2324.




**Reservations**  
1-877-444-6777  
[www.recreation.gov](https://www.recreation.gov)



 Boating  
 Boat ramp  
 Drinking water




 Equestrian  
 Fee  
 Fishing

 Hiking  
 Information  
 Lookout

 Mountain biking  
 Picnic area  
 RV dump site

 Restroom  
 RV  
 View point

 Skiing  
 Swimming

 Wheelchair accessible  
 Shower  
 Reconstruction year



Legend

Gate

Gravel or dirt road

Multi-use trail

Paved bike trail

Unpaved bike trail

Paved road

Ski trail

4-wd trail

Wilderness border

Primary forest route

Trailhead parking

Boat launch

Campground

Dam

Dumpsite

Equestrian

Groceries, food & other services

Information

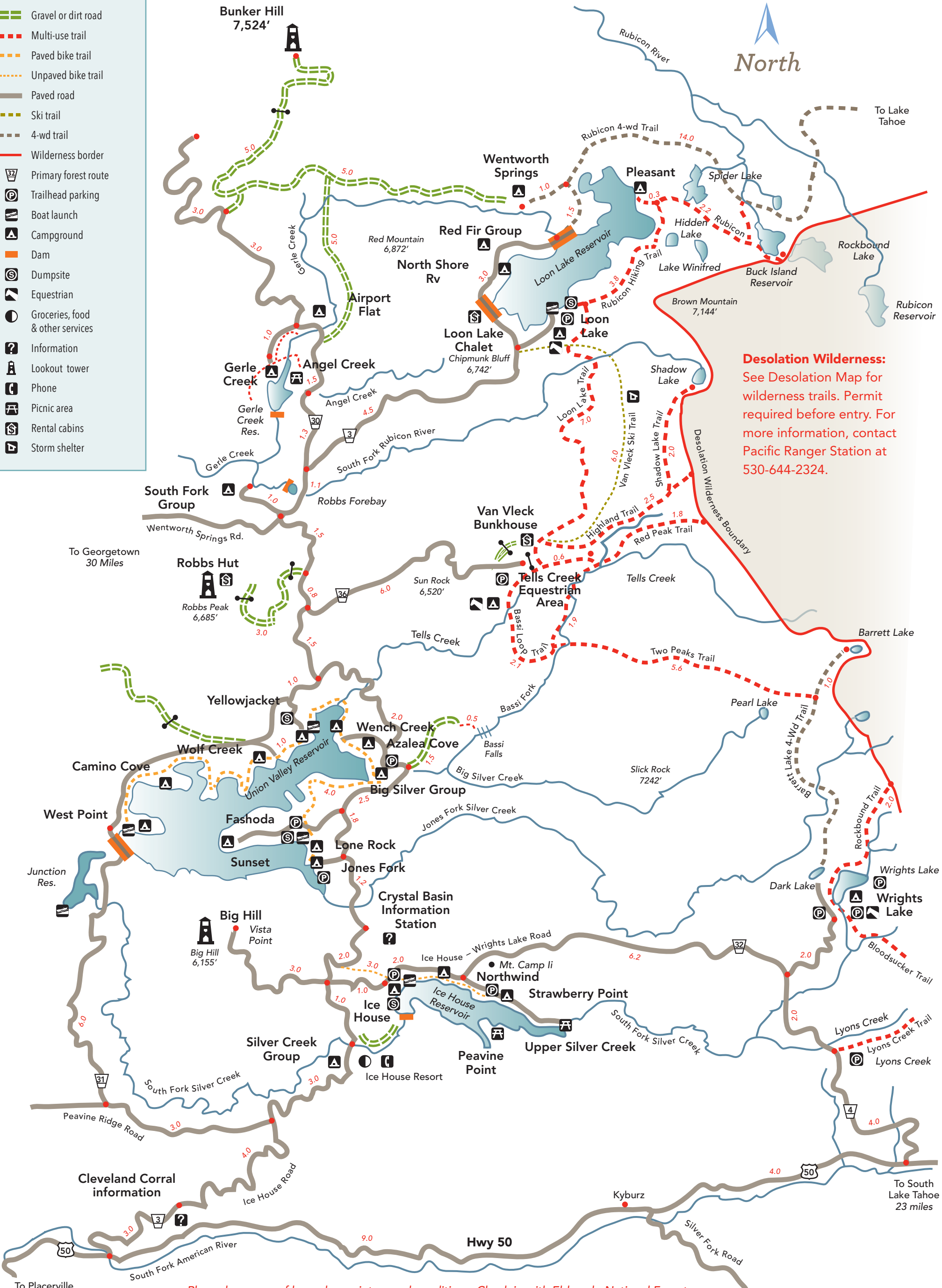
Lookout tower

Phone

Picnic area

Rental cabins

Storm shelter



**Desolation Wilderness:**  
See Desolation Map for wilderness trails. Permit required before entry. For more information, contact Pacific Ranger Station at 530-644-2324.

Please be aware of hazardous winter road conditions. Check in with Eldorado National Forest for current conditions and road closures before setting out on your trip.