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The American Canyon Trail includes fallen trees and other hurdles such as hanging branches, wet leaves and slick mud.



< American Canyon Trail: A hike for all seasons >



Mary West
Day hiker

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American Canyon Trail is nicely shaded to beat the heat in summer. It's where mushrooms grow in thick moss carpets along the creek in winter. The variety of butterflies and wildflowers are worth the four-mile hike in spring. The color display in fall makes a return trip a must.

The trail leads to a jungle-like setting at the bottom with a flowing creek, boulders and hanging vines.

Wide enough for two to walk side by side, the trail is lush with ferns in winter and wild grapevines in summer. A thick area of mint, in its season, begs you to pick a leaf or two. Be aware that poison oak and blackberry vines

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A-Chucky, Dru Barner and Western States Trails, among other destinations.

The two-mile hike to Dead Truck from the trail head is a gentle downhill stroll on a well-maintained trail. As you walk deeper in, the trees seem taller and vines hang more densely.

In winter, the ferns grow all along the canyon wall. The moss on the trees is heavy with rainwater. You can hear the rush of the creek below.

At the first switchback, you find a sign reading several trail options. Turn away from the sign and continue down the switchback. After a couple of short switchbacks, you will come to a similar sign. Instead of turning on the switchback, look at the sign straight ahead of you on the trail. This sign will show Dead Truck 1-mile. Your journey will continue deeper into the woods with the sound of Canyon Creek keeping you company along the way.

Soon, you come to Canyon Creek with Hobokin Creek right behind it. I can in no way encourage you to cross  creeks if you do not feel confident doing so. This is a lovely spot to pull up a rock and listen to the gentle  babbling of the creek over stones as it continues downstream.

In the warmer months, the creek is lower and river rocks, exposed and dry, make for a much safer crossing. If you choose to cross the two creeks, the trail will continue up the bank and to the left.

The trail narrows in places. Downed trees and hanging branches may be hurdles. Wet leaves and slick mud are also common hazards.

At 1.9 miles, you reach another sign, showing you at the foot of Dead Truck Trail marked STEEP.

Facing the sign, turn 180 degrees and you will see a footpath over to the creek and a cliff face blanketed in green in the wet season. Take the path and you can hear the falls get louder the closer you get. Shuffle down to the pool below. Again, I cannot suggest you cross the creek this last time, but the view of the falls is from the other side.

When the water is low, there are exposed rocks, but with heavier flows, a crossing can be treacherous.

If you choose to cross, you earn the prize of a view of the waterfall. Once you have enjoyed the falls, the pool and the peace and quiet of this trail, prepare for your return.

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To get to American Canyon Trail, take Interstate 80 to the Elm Street exit in Auburn toward Placerville. Follow Highway 49 into the canyon from Placer County into El Dorado County and out to the town of Cool.

At the stop sign in Cool, turn left on Highway 193. Drive five miles to Pilgrim Way. Turn left to gate 3 of Auburn Lake Trails. Just before the gate, you see room for three or four cars on your right. Park and you see the trail sign marking the trail head.

Mary West is author of the book series Day Hiker - Gold Country Trail Guides. The books are a collection of the Day Hiker columns where West shares her longtime love of the outdoors and favorite hikes in Northern California's Gold Country and beyond (available on Amazon). West was the recipient of the 2017 and 2019 CRAFT Award for Best Outdoor Newspaper Column by the Outdoor Writers of California. You can follow West on Facebook and Instagram.



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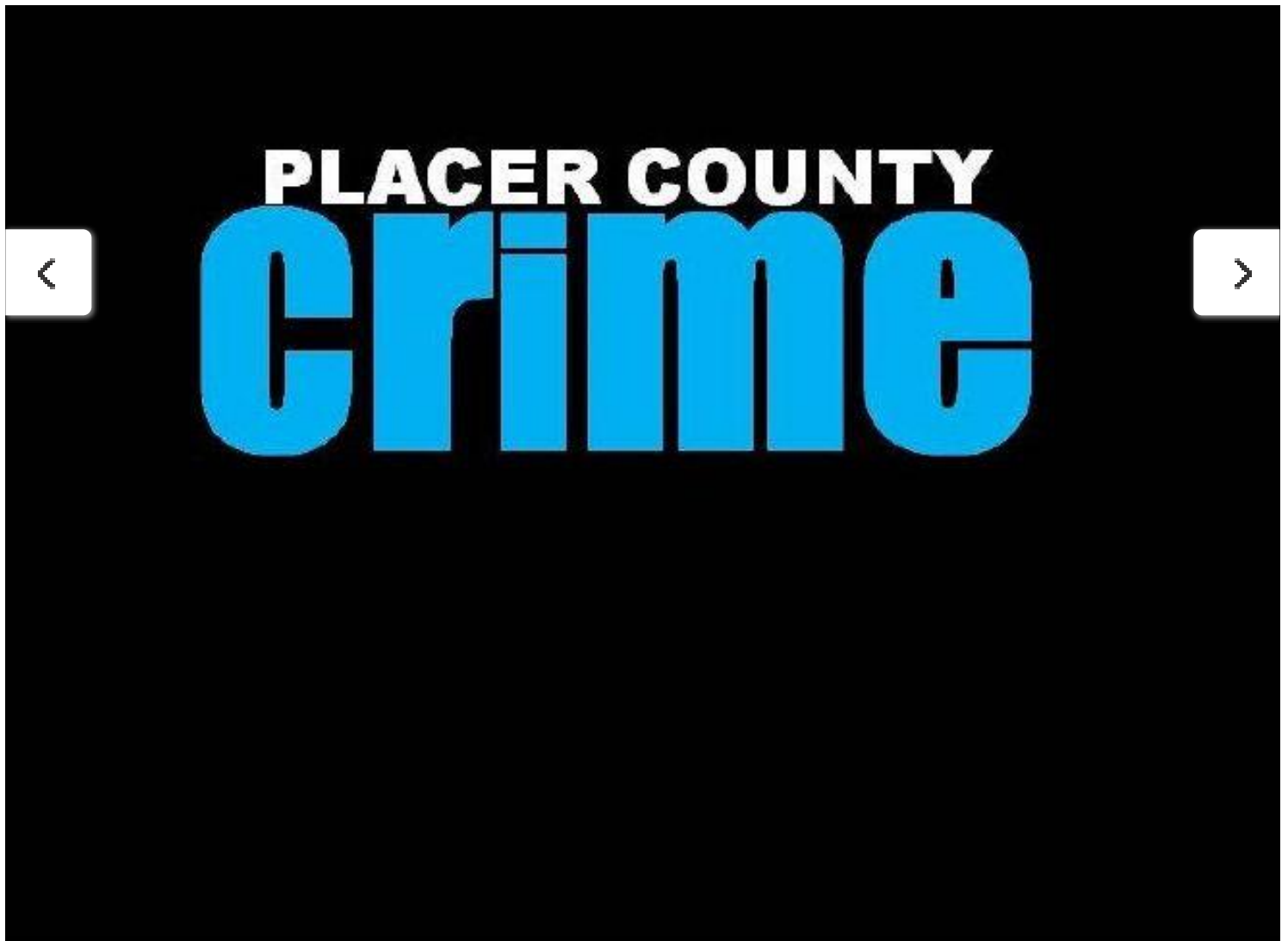
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