

# Boating on the Trinity River

Big Bar and Weaverville Ranger Stations • Shasta-Trinity National Forest



## **Introduction...**

On any given weekend, when the weather is good, crowds of white water boating enthusiasts can be found pursuing their sport along the scenic and challenging Trinity River. The Trinity River offers excellent opportunities for river running, ranging from expert kayak runs to novice summer rafting fun. The Trinity River is primarily Class II and III and is suitable for rafting and kayaking most of the year. Because Highway 299 West runs adjacent to most of the Trinity River, there are a number of options for tailoring a run to fit your skill level and the time available. Most boaters put in at Pigeon Point and are strongly advised to takeout at Cedar Flat. Beyond Cedar Flat lies the Burnt

Ranch Gorge, rated an upper Class V on the white water classification scale. Only expert boaters should attempt this run. Several commercial guides operate on the Trinity River under Forest Service Special Use Permits. They provide quality guided raft trips and white water instruction. A list of the commercial white water rafting companies offering trips on the Trinity River is available from the Big Bar Station (530)623-6106, or from the Weaverville Office at (530) 623-2121.

**Camping...** along the Trinity River, there are four National Forest Campgrounds: Pigeon Point (put in), Big Flat, Big Bar, and Hayden Flat. A fifth Forest Service Campground is Skunk Point. This is a group campground available by reservation from the Big Bar Station. You will also find three private campgrounds: Trinity River R.V. Park, Grover's Gulch, and Del Loma R.V. Park. All users are required to pay campground fees when using campgrounds. Toilets and potable water are located at each campground. Unless you have obtained prior permission, camp only on National Forest Land. There are many private parcels of land along the Trinity and permission from the owner must be secured before camping on them.

When camping along the river, etiquette dictates that you select campsites suitable to the size of your group. Small groups occupying large campsites can cause problems and vice-versa. Whenever possible, camp along open areas such as gravel bars or sandy beaches. This will reduce damage to soil and plants.

**Campfires...** Many campfires are built yearly and the natural appearance of the river corridor is being marred by blackened fire rings with partially burned firewood and ashes. To avoid a campfire scar, use a stove or firepan. If you do have an open fire, keep it small, safe and scatter your fire ring. Make sure the ashes are dead and completely out and bury the ashes when you are finished. Use only dead or down wood for campfires. Fire permits are required and may be obtained free from any US Forest Service Ranger Station. It is your responsibility to keep current on fire restrictions that go into effect as the weather gets hotter and drier.

**Pack it in • Pack it out...** If you brought it in, please take it out. Pack out all garbage in trash bags. Don't bury trash or garbage. It decomposes slowly and attracts animals and insects. Do not sink cans in the river. At low water they are a hazard and an eyesore. **Leave only footprints, take only photographs.**

**Sanitation...** Boaters are encouraged to use the toilets that are located at Pigeon Point Campground, Big Flat Campground, Skunk Point Campground Area, Whites Bar Picnic Area, Hayden Flat Campground and Cedar Flat Picnic Arcata. Dispose of human waste in suitable containers outside the river corridor. **We all depend on clean, healthy water – help protect the quality of your future boating experiences.**

**Water...** Rivers and streams which appear crystal clear may be contaminated with human and animal waste. Avoid an intestinal disorder disease called “giardia” by either boiling water for at least five minutes or using filters especially designed to remove contaminants such as giardia. Do not wash your dishes directly in the river or side streams. Use biodegradable soap and dump waste water away from streams. When bathing, dispose of bathwater away from streams. For more information on giardia, pick up a copy of the Recreation Opportunity Guide titled **“Giardia... what you can’t see might hurt you”** available at most Forest Service Ranger Stations.

**Wildlife...** The Trinity River offers many opportunities for wildlife observation and photography. Common birds include egrets, kingfishers and blue herons. Mammals such as black-tailed deer, otter and some bear may also be seen. These creatures are wild and should not be harassed. Rattlesnakes are common in the river and creek canyons. Always use caution and steer clear. Please do not kill rattlesnakes as they are important in keeping rodent populations in balance. For more information on wildlife and birds that you might encounter along the river, pick up copies of the Recreation Opportunity Guides titled **“Wildlife of the Shasta-Trinity,” “Birds of the Shasta-Trinity,” “The Western Rattler,”** and **“Bear Precautions for Houseboating and Camping”** available at most Forest Service Ranger Stations.

**Boating Safety...** Avoid creating an unpleasant experience for yourself and other river users. Be courteous when launching or taking out your boat. Clear the launch area as quickly as possible. Boater should avoid interfering with people fishing and other river users. When possible, move to the opposite side of the river to minimize potential conflict. Be especially aware of gold dredgers working under the water and do not float over the area where they are working. Also be aware of cables that stretch across the river and cables that anchor dredges. Most cables are 6 feet above the water; however, some may be on top of the water. If you encounter any hazardous cables, please report them to the Big Bar Station. Do not try to remove them yourself. According to federal regulations, motorized boats must yield the right of way to non-motorized boats. However, this does not give non-motorized craft the right to block or hamper the safe passage of a motorized boat.

**Tips for safe boating:**

1. Keep in mind that cold water can drain your mental and physical strength quickly. Dress appropriately for the weather and water conditions. Be aware of the symptoms of **hypothermia**, the rapid and progressive mental and physical collapse resulting from the lowering of the inner body temperature due to exposure and cold. Symptoms include uncontrollable shivering, slow, slurred speech, fumbling, drowsiness and exhaustion. The best treatment for hypothermia is to eliminate exposure and restore the body’s temperature by removing wet clothing and getting the affected person into warm clothing and a sleeping bag.
2. **Dehydration** is very common during hot, dry days on the river but can be a problem at all times of the year. Drink plenty of water (recommended: 2 quarts per person per day, minimum).
2. Know the water flow and weather forecast before you go. The weather and water levels can rapidly change, especially along California’s North Coast rivers.
3. Familiarize yourself with the stretch of the river you are about to run. Know the put-in and take-out points for your trip. Be aware of hazards and features of your river run. Downstream hazards include rocks, holes, strainers, sweepers and other obstructions.
4. Know your boating abilities and skills. Honestly assess your boating ability. Don’t attempt a run that is beyond your skill level. Overconfidence can quickly get you into trouble.
5. Don’t go out alone. Always let someone know your trip plan before you go.
6. ALCOHOL, DRUGS AND BOATING ARE NOT A GOOD MIX. **DON’T DRINK AND SINK!**

**Recommended Equipment for a day on the water:**

Life jacket • Helmet • Wetsuit or Drysuit • Extra paddles • Repair kit / Knife • Throw rope rescue bag • Air pump • Whistle  
First aid kit • Map / Guidebook • Tennis shoes / Sandals / Watershoes • Swimsuit or shorts and t-shirt • Hat with tie down strap • Sunblock and lip ointment • Sunglasses with headstrap • Change of clothes for after trip

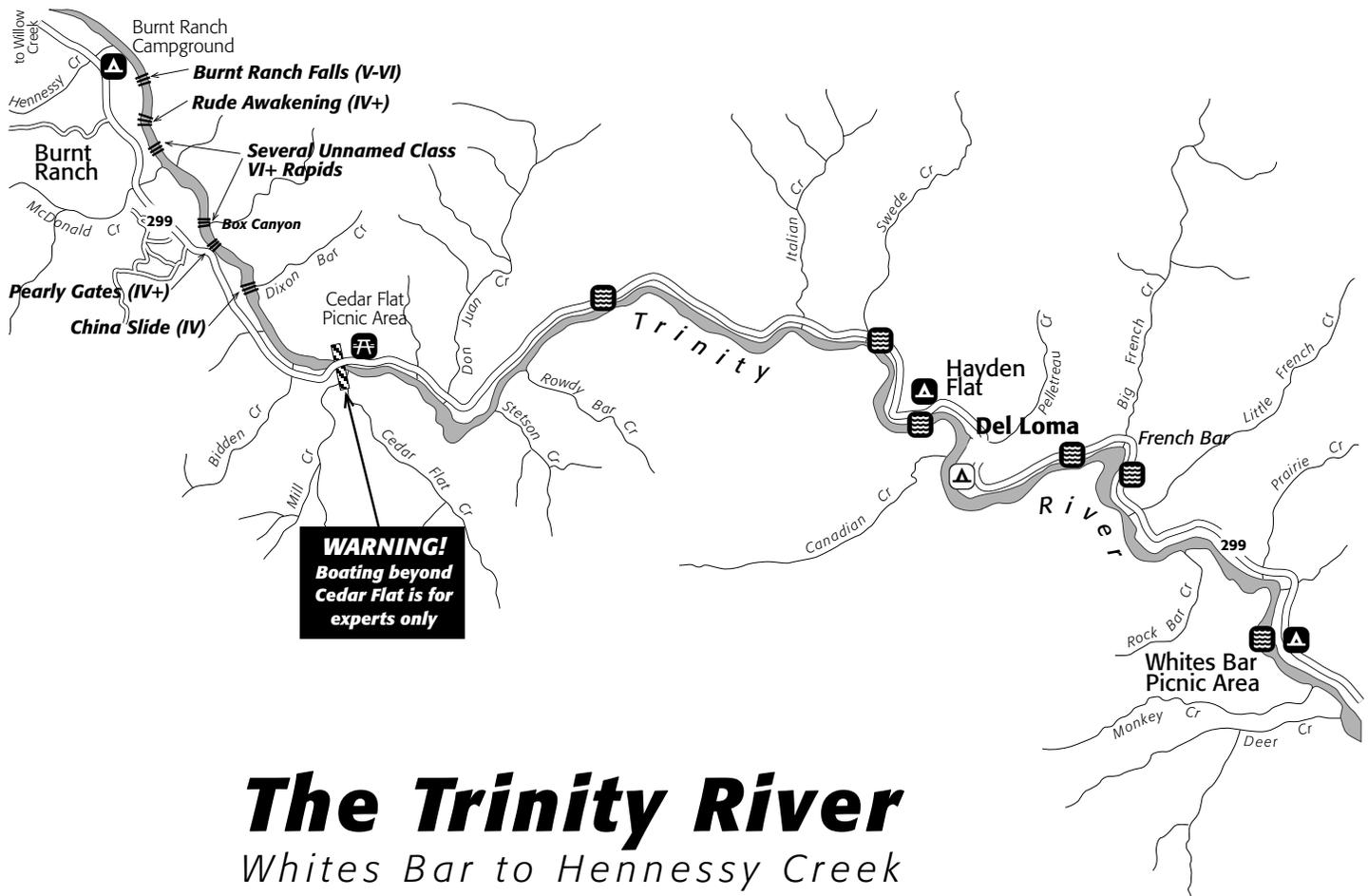
For more information contact the Forest Service at: [www.fs.fed.us/r5/shastatrinity](http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/shastatrinity)

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Shasta-Trinity National Forest



# The Trinity River

## Whites Bar to Hennessy Creek

### Classification of White Water

The white water of the Trinity River offers challenge, excitement and a certain amount of danger, depending upon your level of skill and equipment. The classifications reflect the technical difficulty of the rapids at optimum conditions. When a river's flow changes, the difficulty of the river run often changes also. A river generally suitable to your skills can become a serious hazard to you and your boat after a heavy rain, change in the releases from Trinity and Lewiston Dams, or even after a dry spell. River flows have a direct effect on current velocities as well as the size and difficulty of the rapids. The Trinity River at flood level can be especially dangerous due to the huge amount of debris in the river. Not all rapids in the river have been classified, so, "When in doubt, scout!"

- CLASS I...** *"Quite comfortable for the first time greenhorn."* Moving water with a few riffles and small waves. Few or no obstructions.
- CLASS II...** *"No great problem for someone who has mastered a few basic boating skills."* Rapids with waves up to 3 feet, and wide, clear channels. Some maneuvering required around obvious obstacles.
- CLASS III...** *"Beginners would be proud to get through."* Rapids with high, irregular waves, narrow channels, rocks and holes. Often requires complex maneuvering. Preliminary scouting recommended.
- CLASS IV...** *"Considered dangerous for swimming."* Long turbulent rapids with powerful waves and holes. Many obstacles requiring precise, expert maneuvering. Scouting is mandatory first time.
- CLASS V...** *"Represents the limit of reasonable boating."* Long, technical and very violent rapids with highly congested routes. Dangerous drops, unstable eddies, irregular currents and horrendous holes are often encountered. Requires experience, confidence, good physical condition and proper equipment. Scouting is essential for every passage.
- CLASS VI...** *"I'd go back if I were you!"* Difficulties of Class V carried to the extreme of navigability. Nearly impossible and extremely dangerous. Mishap could be hazardous to life. For teams of experts only, after close study and with all precautions taken.

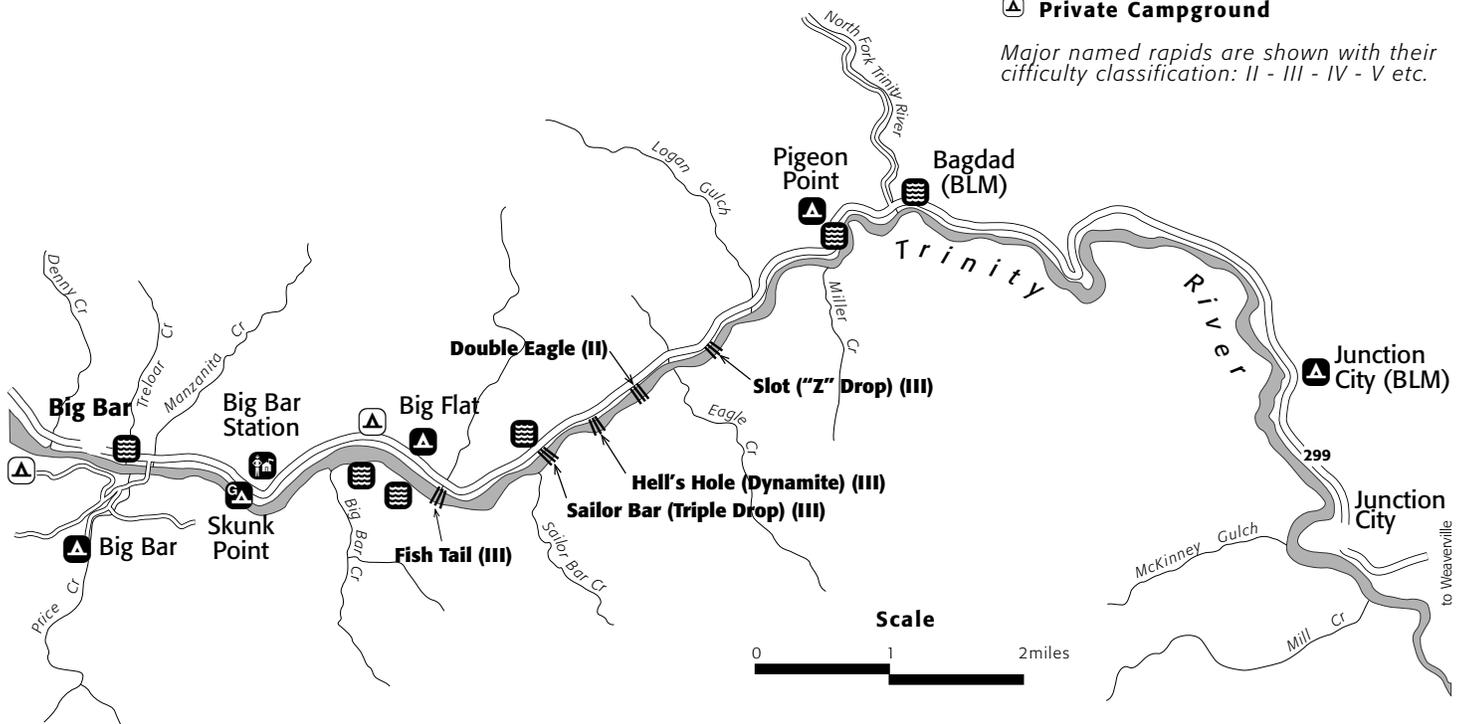
# The Trinity River

Mill Creek to Denny Creek

## LEGEND

-  River Access Points
-  Forest Service or BLM Campground
-  Private Campground

Major named rapids are shown with their difficulty classification: II - III - IV - V etc.



## White Water Summary of Trinity River Between Put-ins

**Pigeon Point to Big Flat (5 miles)**... Two Class III+ rapids, five Class III rapids.

**Big Flat to Big Bar (3 miles)**... Class II rapids.

**Big Bar to White's Bar (2 miles)**... Class II rapids.

**White's Bar to French Creek (3 miles)**... Class II rapids.

**French Creek to Hayden Flat (4 miles)**... One Class II rapid.

**Hayden Flat to Cedar Flat (7 miles)**... Three Class II rapids

Courtesy: Julie Buer of "Great Out of Doors."

## Pigeon Point Campground to Cedar Flat

**Difficulty:** Class III+ to mile 5.2, Class II+ thereafter

**Length:** 25 miles. Longer and shorter runs possible.

**Gradient:** 17 ft./mi. h# # (Drainage: 1440 sq. mi. at takeout).

**Season:** Year round. Best in late spring and summer.

**Runnable Levels:** 300/500-8000cfs.

**Elevation at Put in:** 1390'

**Flow Information:** (530) 322-3327.

**Scenery:** Very Good.

**Solitude:** Fair. Highway 299 West is alongside most of the way.

**Water:** Usually clear but not drinkable... purify first.

**Maps:** Helena, Hayfork, Hyampom, Ironside Mountain (USGS 15'), Shasta-Trinity National Forest Map.

**Auto Shuttle:** 24 miles. 30 minutes.

**Emergency Telephone Number:** Dial 911

**Logistics:** The put in just downstream from the mouth of the North Fork of the Trinity River & Pigeon Point Campground, is about 80 miles east of Arcata and 15 miles west of Weaverville on Highway 299 West. Easy shuttles up and down the highway.

**Source:** California White Water: A Guide to the Rivers, Cassidy & Calhoun, 1985.