

Frenchman Lake Recreation Area

Plumas National Forest

Beckwourth Ranger District



A Great Place to Visit

Visitors will find many recreational opportunities available in and around the Frenchman Lake Recreation Area. The area has five campgrounds, two boat launches, five fishing access points and an accessible pathway near the dam. Water sports include fishing, boating, skiing, jet skiing and swimming. Other activities include hiking, biking, picnicking, nature viewing and hunting. During the 'off season' ice fishing and cross-country skiing are popular activities. One campground remains open throughout the year.

In 1962 the California Department of Water Resources erected the dam on Little Last Chance Creek creating Frenchman Lake. The purpose of the 129 foot earthen dam was to provide dependable irrigation water for Sierra Valley and improve fishing in the area. Frenchman Recreation Area was developed around the lake. Just the drive through the scenic entranceway is worth the trip.

Little Last Chance Scenic Area

Little Last Chance Scenic Area is the entranceway to Frenchman Lake Recreation Area. This section of Little Last Chance Creek and canyon

was formed as a result of multiple geologic events. Several million years ago, volcanic eruptions here flowed over granite rock and completely blocked the creek. A lake 200 feet deeper than today's Frenchman Lake was formed. Over the years, the ancient lava flows eroded and the creek chiseled it's current streambed, leaving a beautiful and scenic passage through the canyon. If stopping for photographs, please pull safely out of traffic lanes and watch for traffic.



Unknown photographer



Unknown photographer

Boat Launching

Frenchman and Lunker Point are the two boat launch facilities. Both are fee areas with two lane concrete launching ramps, boat loading docks, parking and accessible toilets. The docks are placed when water levels are high enough. In past years, water levels have not sufficiently covered the ramp at Lunker Point resulting in its closure. This ramp was opened for 2017. When water levels are low, illegal driving along the lakeshore occurs. Oftentimes vehicles get stuck in the mud, spread noxious weeds and cause other resource damage. Please only drive where authorized.

Boating

Boating on the lake is regulated by Plumas County. Skiing, jet skiing, wind surfing and other watercraft are allowed. All users must adhere to state, county and other regulations.

Fishing

Regularly caught fish species include rainbow trout, brown trout, small mouth bass, and catfish. Crayfish are also present. The six fishing access points around the lake are Nightcrawler Bay, Snallygaster Point, Crystal Point, Turkey Point, Salmon Egg Shoal and Frenchman Dam. Fishing near or on boat launch ramps and docks is dangerous and not allowed. All fishing, whether on shore or on the water, is regulated by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

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United States
Department of
Agriculture



Forest Service
Pacific Southwest Region
Plumas National Forest
www.fs.fed.us/r5/plumas

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Camping

During peak season, there are 171 family campsites available between Chilcoot, Frenchman, Spring Creek, Cottonwood Springs and Big Cove Campgrounds. Cottonwood Springs offers two group sites. All campsites have tables, grills, fire rings, water, toilets and garbage service. Chilcoot, Cottonwood Springs and Big Cove Campgrounds have flush toilets. Coin operated showers are available at Big Cove and Cottonwood Springs. Accessible sites are available on loop B of Cottonwood Springs Campground. Family accessible sites are available at Cottonwood Springs and Chilcoot Campgrounds. (See the chart below)

Each campground has first come and reservation sites with a maximum stay of 30 days. Reservations are available between mid-May through Labor Day Weekend on-line at www.Recreation.gov or by calling 877-444-6777. The campgrounds are usually open from April to mid-October. Frenchman Campground remains open in the off-season without fees, water or garbage service.

A concessionaire under special use permit operates the campgrounds. Campground rules are posted at entrance kiosks near the pay station. Campground Hosts are a resource for all campers and visitors.

Day Use

Day use is available at Chilcoot Day Use Area, and the fishing access points around the lake. There is a covered picnic area at Frenchman Dam. The Frenchman Picnic Area near Frenchman Boat Launch Facility is a fee area.

Getting There

From Reno take US 395 north to Hallelujah Junction and Hwy 70. Go west on Hwy 70 over Beckwourth Pass to the town of Chilcoot. At Chilcoot go north on Hwy 284 to the recreation area.

From Quincy follow Hwys 89/70 east. At the 89/70 split continue on Hwy 70 through Portola to Chilcoot. At Chilcoot go north on Hwy 284 to the recreation area.

Trails

There are four trails in Frenchman Lake Recreation Area.

- The Frenchman-Spring Creek connector is a gradual .25 mile long trail offering views of the lake and connects the two campgrounds.
- The Spring Creek-Big Cove connector is .75 mile long. It offers lake views while traversing along Spring and Galeppi Creeks.
- The Big Cove Enabler is a short accessible paved trail from Big Cove Campground to the lakeshore.
- From the kiosk near the dam is another short paved accessible trail that leads to the lakeshore when the lake is full. Otherwise it leads to an overlook of the lake.

Hunting

Historically this area has been a popular hunting area. Mule Deer is the most abundant big game. Small game includes waterfowl, rabbits, squirrels and upland game birds. California is in the process of eliminating all lead ammunition for hunting. Hunting is regulated by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Campground	# of Sites	Toilet Type	Showers	Group Sites	Accessible Sites
Chilcoot	40	Flush	No	No	Yes
Frenchman	38	Vault	No	No	No
Spring Creek	35	Vault	No	No	No
Big Cove	38	Flush	Yes	No	No
Cottonwood Springs	22	Flush	Yes	2	Yes

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In Case of Emergency
Fire / Medical / Sheriff:
Call 911
A pay telephone is
located in Chilcoot

