

Visitor Guide



Carson River Canyon Open Space

Carson City, Nevada

Welcome to Carson River Canyon!

Carson River Canyon Open Space is one of Carson City's most historic Open Space properties. This extensive canyon stretches three miles along the Carson River following the historic Virginia and Truckee Railroad Grade. The area plays host to many outdoor activities including fishing, river rafting, swimming, off-highway vehicle exploration, horseback riding, and mountain biking. Enjoy breathtaking views and sandy beaches in one of the many day use areas.

History

This beautiful canyon was once home to more than a dozen ore reduction mills and lumber mills. In 1869 the Virginia and Truckee Railroad made it's way into the canyon, hauling ore from mines in Virginia City to the mills and returning laden with timbers for the mines.

In 1860, the first dam and ditch were completed five miles upriver from Empire City (now the Empire Ranch Golf Course). Water from the Carson River, a necessary component in mill operation, was diverted to power the Mexican and Mead Mills. Soon after, numerous businesses followed suit. The most notable were the Brunswick Mill, Merrimac Mill, Copper Canyon/Blue Canyon Mill, Vivian Mill, Santiago Mill, and the Eureka Mill. Today, little evidence remains of these once powerful operations. Travel along the remaining Railroad Grade and imagine the canyon as it once was. (Webster, Daniel. *Mills Along the Carson River*. 2015)

Flora and Fauna

Carson River Canyon Open Space is home to riparian and upland ecosystems. The river is flanked in cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*) and willow (*Salix* sp.). Native upland plants include shrubs such as big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), bitter brush (*Purshia tridentata*), rubber rabbitbrush (*Ericameria nauseosa*), horse brush (*Tetradymia* sp.), green ephedra (*Ephedra viridis*), purple sage (*Salvia dorii*) and desert peach (*Prunus andersonii*). Native wildflowers include sulfur buckwheat (*Eriogonum umbellatum*), prickly poppy (*Argemone pleiacantha*), narrowleaf milkweed (*Asclepias fascicularis*) and paint brush (*Castilleja cremosa*). Invasive plant species found in the Canyon include cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*), hoary cress (*Cardaria draba*), tall tumble mustard (*Sisymbrium altissimum*), and dodder (*Cuscuta* sp.)- a parasitic plant found to be growing on sagebrush. Animals of the canyon include coyote (*Canis latrans*), mountain lion (*Puma concolor*), rattle snake (*Crotalus lutosus*), and mountain cottontail (*Sylvilagus nuttallii*).

Rules and Regulations

- Open Dawn to Dusk
- Share the trails, the land and the river
- Respect others
- Use safe speeds
- Clean up after your pet

The following are PROHIBITED:

- Camping
- Open flames including coal barbecues
- Discharge of firearms (excluding waterfowl hunting with valid license)
- Littering or dumping of any material
- Wood gathering or cutting

Information: (775) 887-2262
www.carson.org/parksandrec
Non-Emergency: (775) 887-COPS
Emergencies Call 911

Visitors are responsible for knowing all rules and regulations. Violations are punishable by fine per Title 13.





Brunswick Mill
Day Use Area
1 mile from Sedge Road

Named after the Brunswick Mill built in 1864. The mill acted as the hub of the canyon complete with a polling location and freight platform. This day use area features class III rapids.



Merrimac Mill
Day Use Area
0.16 Miles from Kiosk

Named after the Merrimac Mill built in 1861, this day use area offers quiet fishing spots, calm swimming holes, and towering white cliffs. Across the river, remnants of the large diversion dam are still visible.



Copper Canyon
Day Use Area
0.26 Miles from Kiosk

Named after the Copper Canyon/Blue Canyon Mill built in 1862. Explore the Western Smelter Day Use area across the V&T Railroad Grade. The Smelter was built in 1910 and still remains today.



Vivian Dam
Day Use Area
0.53 Miles from Kiosk

Named after the diversion dam built to operate the Vivian Mill in 1860. It was often feared the mill would wash away due to the close proximity of the river. Day use area offers a quiet sandy beach.



Santiago Mill
Day Use Area
1.79 Miles from Kiosk

Named after the Santiago Mill built in 1862. The last remaining structure of the mill was mysteriously burnt down in 1911. This day use area offers unique sandy beaches, and deep swimming pools.



Eureka Mill
Day Use Area
2.5 Miles from Kiosk

Named after the Eureka Mill built in 1861. The dam was the largest at 26 feet high, backing up the Carson River for over a mile. Day use area features beautiful beaches and fishing spots.

Map Legend

- Paved Road
- Maintained Dirt Road
- V&T Railroad Grade - High Clearance
- V&T Railroad Grade - 4x4 Recommended
- Railroad Track
- Private Property
- BLM Land
- Carson River
- Way point Sign
- Caution



Map services and data available from U.S. Geological Survey, National Geospatial Program.

Carson River Canyon Map