

Northern GUIDE TO **California Backroads & 4-Wheel Drive Trails**

By CHARLES A. WELLS

Monache Meadows

This eTrail Provided
in Partnership with





Monache Meadows is surrounded by wilderness. Stay on existing routes at all times.



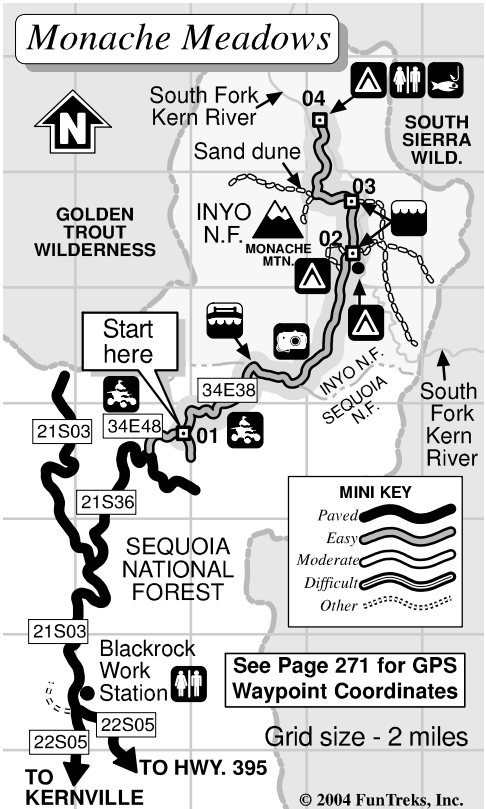
Great camp spot at halfway point.



So. Fork of Kern River often shallow in summer.



Forest portion of route has a few bumps.



Monache Meadows 67

Location: Northeast of Bakersfield and Kernville, northwest of Ridgecrest.

Difficulty: Easy. Gentle, bumpy, single-lane road through forest and meadows. Shallow water crossings except during spring runoff.

Features: Beautiful, scenic valley surrounded by wilderness areas. Remote location keeps traffic down. Explore, camp, fish and relax along river.

Time & Distance: Allow 3 to 4 hours for 18.2-mile round trip.

To Get There: From Kernville: Take Sierra Way north 20 miles. Turn right on Sherman Pass road and go northeast 32 miles following signs to Blackrock Work Station. *Reset odometer.* Continue north on 21S03 and turn right on 21S36 at 3.5 miles. Bear left on dirt road 34E48 at 7.1 miles. Turn right at 7.4 before reaching trailhead 34E38 at 8.1 miles. **From Hwy. 395:** At a point 32 miles south of Olancha on Hwy. 395, head west at Kennedy Meadows turnoff. Stay left on 22S05 before Kennedy Meadows following signs to Blackrock Work Station a total of 37 miles from 395. *Reset odometer* and follow same directions from work station as stated above.

Trail Description: *Reset odometer at start* (01). Bear left at trailhead sign and follow narrow road as it weaves through forest. Driver's choice at 1.7 miles. After gate at 2.3 miles, all vehicles must stay on designated roads. Cross tiny bridge over Snake Creek before Monache Meadows comes into view at 2.5. Stay left at 5.2 and right at 5.9. At 6.1 miles (02), ignore first road to left then bear left at camp spot under trees. Cross tributary to fork at 6.2 miles then stay left along west side of river. (Right goes back across river.) At 7.2 miles (03), stay left following sign to Bakeoven Campsites. Turn right before sand dune at 7.8 miles. Turn left at T at 8.4 before reaching campsites at 9.1. Cross river and bear left to more campsites and pit toilet at 9.2 miles (04). Enjoy the campgrounds or explore other side roads in the area. All roads eventually dead end at the wilderness boundary.

Return Trip: Return the way you came.

Services: Water and toilets at Blackrock Work Station (Office closed Tuesdays and Wednesday.) Roofless pit toilet at camp sites at end of trail. Gas and other basic services in Kernville and Inyokern.

Maps: Sequoia or Inyo N.F., USGS 7.5-min. map, Monache Mountain, CA,











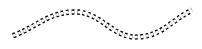

























Wpt.	Mile	Latitude North			Longitude West			UTM Easting	UTM Northing	Zone
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You should set your GPS unit on Datum NAD27CONUS.

67. MONACHE MEADOWS

1	0.0	36	9	44.4	118	13	54.3	389209	4002456	11
2	6.1	36	12	27.8	118	10	32.1	394320	4007426	11
3	7.2	36	13	16.5	118	10	38.1	394190	4008929	11
4	9.2	36	14	18.8	118	11	9.6	393427	4010858	11

Map Legend

	Interstate		Toilet
	Paved Road*		Gas
	Easy Trail*		Parking
	Moderate Trail*		Picnic Area
	Difficult Trail*		Camping
	Other Road*		Mine
	Described in text		Hiking
	Hiking Trail		Cabin
	Boundaries & Divides		Water Crossing
	Cliff, Canyon		Fishing
	Railroad		ATVs, Dirt bikes
	Mountain Peak		Scenic Point
	Lake, Sand Dune		Windmill
	Map Orientation		Ghost town
	Interstate		Major Obstacle
	U.S. Highway		GPS Waypoint
	State & County Road		
	Forest Service Road		
	BLM Road		
	Starting point of trail		

Scale indicated by grid

Scale is different for each map; check grid size at bottom of map.

* These items repeated on each map for your convenience. See Mini Key.

CALIFORNIA LAWS, LICENSING AND FEES

California has the greatest number of off-highway vehicle (OHV) enthusiasts in the nation and the number is growing rapidly. In the last twenty years OHV registrations have increased 83%. Unfortunately, since 1985, land available for OHV recreation has decreased 47%. Much of this land was lost in 1994 when Congress passed the California Desert Protection Act. Over 7 million acres of land were designated wilderness and closed to OHV recreation. To deal with this problem, California has enacted special licensing classifications, strict OHV laws and additional fees which are explained as follows:

Street-Legal Vehicles. This classification includes licensed SUVs, Jeeps and dual-purpose motorcycles. They are allowed on major highways, forest roads, state park roads and in most OHV areas. Fees are paid when license plates are purchased and vary with vehicle type. Normal highway laws apply.

Green-Sticker Vehicles. This category includes ATVs, dune buggies, sand rails and unlicensed dirt bikes. These vehicles are allowed in OHV areas and on certain BLM and forest lands. Green stickers are good for two years. (See OHV laws on next page.)

Red-Sticker Vehicles. ATVs and motorcycles made after January 1, 1997, must meet stricter emission standards. Those that don't get a red sticker, which is exactly the same as a green sticker except the riding period is limited. Cost is same as green sticker.

National Forest Adventure Pass. You'll need a special Adventure Pass if you camp or stop to recreate in Los Padres National Forest. If you are just passing through, a pass is not required. This situation applies to five trails in this book as follows: #51 Prewitt Ridge, #52 South Coast Ridge, #55 Pine Mountain, #56 Garcia Ridge and #57 Twin Rocks. Cost is \$5/day or \$30/year. Fee does not apply to green-sticker vehicles. You can get passes at Forest Service offices and at many local vendors (see www.fsadventurepass.org).

ATVs & DIRT BIKES

This book is primarily a guide for street-legal, off-highway vehicles. It is not intended to be a comprehensive guide for green-sticker vehicles (specifically ATVs and dirt bikes). Most trails in this book allow green-sticker vehicles but not all. Dual-purpose motorcycles (i.e. street-legal dirt bikes) can run on both primary roads and legal open land. The following is a simplified list of state OHV laws.

State OHV Laws:

- Riders must wear approved safety helmets.
- A safety course is required for riders under age 18.
- A safety certification is required along with parental supervision for riders under age 14.

- ATVs cannot carry passengers.
- No riding while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Speed is limited to 15 mph near campsites and groups of people. You are the final judge of unsafe situations. Be extra careful.
- Vehicles must have muffler, spark arrester and brakes plus lights if used at night.

In addition to state laws, most OHV areas have additional rules. Some common ones include:

- Safety flags must be used.
- No glass containers are allowed.
- No open alcoholic beverage containers are allowed.
- Campers cannot dump sewage or gray water.
- In most areas, you must pack out your trash.

Irresponsible use of ATVs and dirt bikes is one of the biggest concerns of the Forest Service, BLM and other land management agencies and a major reason for trail closures. It is your responsibility to understand and obey laws wherever you ride. You must stay on designated routes when required.

OHV AREAS AND SVRAs

Despite many land closures, California still has nearly 100 off-highway vehicle (OHV) areas. These areas include upwards of 100,000 miles of unpaved roads and countless acres of open land. Many of them are located in southern California and the major ones are covered in *Guide to Southern California Backroads & 4-Wheel Drive Trails*. This northern book covers four OHV areas and two State Vehicular Recreation Areas. OHV areas include Cow Mountain, north of Santa Rosa, Clear Creek Management Area, between Hollister and Coalinga, Pozo/La Panza, northeast of San Luis Obispo and Jawbone/Dove Springs, east of Bakersfield. SVRA areas include Oceano Dunes, south of San Luis Obispo and Hollister Hills, southeast of San Jose. If you would like a detailed listing and a map of all OHV areas across the state, contact the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) Division of the California State Parks.

National Forests. This book includes routes in 11 different national forests as follows: Eldorado, Inyo, Lassen, Los Padres, Plumas, Sequoia, Shasta-Trinity, Sierra, Stanislaus, Tahoe and Toiyabe. Rules and regulations are generally the same, however, there are differences. You are responsible to know and obey all rules, so read forest maps carefully. Whenever possible, visit the closest ranger station to learn as much as possible about where you are going. Los Padres is the only forest of those listed above that requires an Adventure Pass. Plumas National Forest, in addition to its regular forest map, has a separate map for OHV trails.

SAFETY TIPS

File a Flight Plan. Determine where you are going and when you plan to return. Be as specific as possible. Inform a friend or relative and call them when you return. If something goes wrong, you'll have the comfort of knowing that at least someone knows where you are.

Travel with another vehicle. Your chances of getting stuck in the backcountry are immensely reduced with two vehicles. If one vehicle breaks down, you have a back-up. If you can't find anyone to travel with you, contact a local four-wheel drive club near the trail. To locate a club, contact the California State Association of 4-Wheel Drive Clubs. If you don't already belong to a club, consider joining one. It's a great way to learn and make friends.

Know location of closest hospital. Before you leave on any trip, check the location of the closest hospital or emergency facility in the area.

Carry extra maps. The maps in this book will clearly direct you along the trail. However, if you get lost or decide to venture down a spur road, you'll need additional maps with topographic information. Carry a compass or a GPS unit to orient yourself. At the end of each trail description, I list additional maps applicable to that specific area.

Booklet-style maps, like the *DeLorme Atlas & Gazetteer*, are very handy because they are easy to flip through and they cover the entire state. (Two volumes are required for California.) Latitude and longitude are printed along the edge of each map. With the simplest GPS unit, you can quickly determine your location. The *California Road & Recreation Atlas* by Benchmark Maps is very similar to the *Gazetteer*. It has better graphics but doesn't show quite as much backroad detail. Either atlas will work just fine.

The greatest amount of detail is shown on 7.5-minute U.S. Geological Survey Maps; however, each map covers a small area and many maps are required. Since I carry a laptop computer, I buy 7.5 minute maps on CDs. They are extremely economical and easy to use in this format, but they would be useless if something happened to my computer. I use them because they provide maximum detail for GPS tracking. In addition, I always carry paper maps.

Changing conditions. California's backcountry is fragile and under constant assault by forces of nature and man. Rock slides can occur or an entire road can be washed away from a single heavy rainstorm. A road may be closed without notice. Directional signs may be removed or vandalized. Route numbers are sometimes changed. Maps seldom keep up with changes and sometimes have mistakes. Take these factors into consideration when faced with a confusing situation. Rely on your own common sense.

High water, flash floods. Many of California's backroads cross or follow dry washes, small streams, and narrow canyons. Heavy rains can turn these places into raging torrents of water in minutes. Check weather fore-

casts and keep an eye on the sky. Be conservative and don't take chances. Cut your trip short if necessary. Don't attempt to cross a fast-flowing stream unless you've done it before and know what your vehicle can do. Wait if necessary; water levels usually go down quickly after a single rain shower. If you're in a narrow canyon and water begins to rise, drive perpendicularly out of the canyon if possible. If this is not possible, get out of your vehicle and climb to higher ground. Most people who die in flash floods attempt to outrun the rising water in their vehicles.

Inspect your vehicle carefully. Before you start into the backcountry, make sure your vehicle is in top operating condition. If you have a mechanic do the work, make sure he is reliable and understands four-wheeling. Tell him where you plan to take your vehicle. Pay particular attention to fluids, hoses, belts, battery, brakes, steering linkage, suspension system, driveline, and anything exposed under the vehicle. Tighten anything that may be loose. Inspect your tires carefully for potential weak spots and tread wear.

Wear your seat belt. You might think that because you're driving slowly, it's not necessary to wear your seat belt or use child restraints. I've learned through experience that you are much safer with a seat belt than without. Buckle up at all times.

Keep heads, arms, and legs inside a moving vehicle. Many trails are narrow. Brush, tree limbs, and rock overhangs may come very close to your vehicle. The driver must make it clear to every passenger to stay inside the vehicle at all times. Children, in particular, must not be allowed to stick their heads, arms, or legs out the windows.

Cliff edges. Watch children and be extremely careful around cliff edges. Hand rails are rarely provided. Watch for loose rock and stay away from these areas when it's wet, icy, or getting dark. If you climb up a rock wall, remember it's harder to get down than to climb up.

Lightning. During a storm, stay away from lone trees, cliff edges, and high points. Stay low to the ground or in your vehicle. Lightning can strike from a distant storm even when it's clear overhead.

Mines, tunnels, and old structures. Be careful around old mine buildings. Stay out of mines and tunnels. Don't let children play in these areas.

Trail Ratings Defined

Trail ratings are very subjective. Conditions change for many reasons, including weather and time of year. An easy trail can quickly become difficult when washed out by a rainstorm or blocked by a fallen rock. You must be the final judge of a trail's condition on the day you drive it. If any part of a trail is difficult, the entire trail is rated difficult. You may be able to drive a significant portion of a trail before reaching the difficult spot. Read each trail description carefully for specific information.

Easy: Gravel, dirt, clay, sand, or mildly rocky road. Gentle grades. Water levels low except during periods of heavy runoff. Full-width single lane or wider with adequate room to pass most of the time. Where shelf conditions exist, road is wide and well-maintained with minor sideways tilt. Four-wheel drive recommended on most trails but some are suitable for two-wheel drive under dry conditions. Clay surface roads, when wet, can significantly increase difficulty.

Moderate: Rutted dirt or rocky road suitable for most sport utility vehicles. Careful tire placement often necessary. Four-wheel drive, low range, and high ground clearance required. Standard factory skid plates and tow hooks recommended on many trails. Undercarriage may scrape occasionally. Some grades fairly steep but manageable if dry. Soft sand possible. Sideways tilt will require caution. Narrow shelf roads possible. Backing may be necessary to pass. Water depths passable for stock high-clearance vehicles except during periods of heavy runoff. Mud holes may be present especially in the spring. Rock-stacking may be necessary in some cases. Brush may touch vehicle.

Difficult: Some trails suitable for more aggressive stock vehicles but most trails require vehicle modification. Lifts, differential lockers, aggressive articulation, and/or winches recommended in many cases. Skid plates and tow hooks required. Body damage possible. Grades can be steep with severe ground undulation. Sideways tilt can be extreme. Sand hills very steep with soft downslopes. Deep water crossings possible. Shelf roads extremely narrow; use caution in full-size vehicle. Read trail description carefully. Passing may be difficult with backing required for long distances. Brush may scratch sides of vehicle.

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DISCLAIMER

Travel in California's backcountry is, by its very nature, potentially dangerous and could result in property damage, injury, or even death. The scope of this book cannot predict every possible hazard you may encounter. If you drive any of the trails in this book, you acknowledge these risks and assume full responsibility. You are the final judge as to whether a trail is safe to drive on any given day, whether your vehicle is capable of the journey, and what supplies you should carry. The information contained herein cannot replace good judgment and proper preparation on your part. The publisher and author of this book disclaim any and all liability for bodily injury, death, or property damage that could occur to you or any of your passengers.