



Gold Rush History

Sample One-Day Program Module

9:00-9:30 Welcome to Mother Lode River Center

Introductions of Staff
Safety Guidelines and Rules
Quick Site Tour

9:30-11:00

Geology - The miners of the 1880's used their knowledge of rock formations to find gold. Exploring the beach of our camp, students will find their favorite rocks which instructors will help them learn to identify as being one of the three basic types of rocks (metamorphic, sedimentary and igneous). They will then play games that help them understand how such rocks are formed in the "rock cycle". The three types of mining (placer, hard rock and hydraulic) will come alive with "Sutter Says", a dynamic game that will help them understand the various methods the miners used to find gold.

Hydrology - The gold that the 49ers discovered was originally precipitated from seawater off of California's coast in ages past by undersea volcanoes called "black smokers". How this gold ended up in the miner's pans is a mystery we will solve by engaging in activities that illustrate the water cycle, continental drift, erosion and finally applying our gold panning skills to find some "color". Eureka!

Activities: Gold Panning, Rock Hound

11:00-12:30

Native Americans - The Nisenan (Southern Maidu) flourished in this area and achieved a sustainable, adaptive lifestyle for years before the arrival of the miners. Acorns gathered in the Fall were processed into meal in the granite bedrock. Each ¼" of depth in these holes represents one hundred years of such activity. This grinding hole is over 8" deep! We will explore the banks of the river to gather and study plants the Nisenan used for medicinal purposes. Students will hear the words of John Marshall who wrote admiringly about the peaceful and respectful way the Nisenan conducted their lives. They will understand why he feared that his discovery of gold would harm these gentle people who lived in harmony with their neighbors and had never waged war.

Activity: native plant walk, acorn grinding

12:30-1:00 Lunch



1:00-2:30

Human Geography - The gold rush changed the face of the nation and the world and it rapidly increased the rate of settlement in the new West. How did these immigrants get to California and what challenges and hardships did they endure? Students will recreate this adventure with the "Race to California Obstacle Course" game in which they will choose one of the three major routes used by the miners to come to California. While traversing the land route across the Great Plains, the sea route around Cape Horn or the canal route across the Isthmus of Panama they will encounter malaria, ship crew desertions, hunger, thirst, mountain ranges and come to appreciate the challenges the miners faced in coming to California.

Activity: "Race to California" game; paint, draw and/or write about life during the gold rush.

2:30-4:00 Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park tour

4:00-4:30

Closing and Goodbye