

## MESAS IN CALIFORNIA?

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### Chapter 3: Tuolumne Table Mountain

You will pass Tuolumne Table Mountain near Knights Landing on your way to Jamestown, and then Sonora, Columbia, and other locations on highway 49, the heart of the Mother Lode gold country. Tunnels dug below the volcanic latite cap described by Brewer were producing gold bearing stream gravels before 1860.



a, represents the lava top or "table"; b-b, the underlying gold-bearing slates, called the "bed rock," and also the "rim rock."

Between the table and the rim rock is a bed of gravel, once the soil of the surface before the molten streams of lava flowed on. This gravel is thickest in the old river bed, where they find the gold mixed with sand, gravel, and cobbles, the whole generally cemented together into a hard, firm mass, like rock.

Tuolumne Table is actually one remnant of extensive flows 9-10.4MY ago from vents about 60miles up an ancestral stream bed near the Sierra crest and Sonora Pass.



Trails are available to the public from the Jamestown side so you can enjoy the wild flowers in spring and see old mine portals.

There are several internet sites that show details about trails and also many aerial photos of the Tuolumne Table area. In addition, you can download a very interesting report by F. Leslie Ransome (1898) that describes many Table Mountain facies remnants along the Stanislaus River from Tuolumne Table Mountain all the way to the Dardenelles Cone at 9,500'.

No trip to the Mother Lode would be complete without a stop at the mining town of Columbia. Yes, it is a tourist attraction, but it is very interesting to see the way gold was mined and processed and pick up more information on other interesting local sites. There is a large deposit of limestone that extends east of the town, and a trail that leads to a campground and a limestone quarry. The eroded limestone formations along the trail are spooky and you can easily walk to view the workings of the old quarry.

Farther up WY49 is the town of Angels Camp. There is a rock and mineral shop on Main Street that is definitely one of my favorites. Be sure to check out the back room for good prices on rough and slabs.

Murphys is east on HWY4 from Angels Camp, and is near Mercer Cave, many wineries, and the E Clampus Vitus and other museums. You must see the mineral collection at Ironstone Vineyards, which includes several world-class gold and quartz specimens. There are many limestone caves and formations in the Mother Lode. Cave City Caverns are relatively close to Mercer Cave, and Moaning Cave and Indian Grinding Rock State Park are farther north. All of these are worth a visit. Enjoy.

F. Leslie Ransome, 1898. Some lava flows of the Western Slope of the Sierra Nevada, California. Geological Survey Bulletin 89.