

FACILITIES

PICNICKING AND CAMPING: There are two day-use areas that provide a great spot for a day hike and picnic. These areas have covered tables, restrooms, grills and wonderful views. Willow Creek Campground has two large pull-through spaces, which are great for RVs, and many other distinct spaces for every type of camper.

GROUP CAMPING: There is a new group camping facility in the campground. Please contact the park for reservations.

FEES: Fees are charged for day-use and camping. A current fee schedule is posted in the park.

PARK ACTIVITIES

There is a trail system that covers each end of the park suitable for many types of activities, including hiking and mountain biking. During winter months these trails are great for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. There is also an off-highway vehicle trail that connects into thousands of acres of Bureau of Land Management lands. There is also opportunity for fishing on Willow Creek. Rainbow trout are stocked as needed and the browns and brook trout are naturally reproducing.

LOCATION & CLIMATE

Ward Charcoal Ovens is located about 18 miles southeast of Ely via U.S. 93. Visitors can drive about 11 miles on the dirt road of Cave Valley Road or can continue on U.S. 93 and turn onto a 7-mile dirt road that has signs for the park. The park is open year round with peak use between May and August. Summer temperatures range from 90 degrees in the day to 50 degrees at night. Winter months range from 40 degrees in the day to -10 degrees at night. During peak winter months there is approximately a foot of snow as a base layer, so the park can support cross-country skiing and other snow activities.

REMINDERS

Please join the majority of our visitors who maintain this area and preserve the fragile desert environment by observing these rules:

- No climbing on the ovens; it is not safe and causes extensive damage to them.
- No shooting in the park.
- State law protects all plants, animals, rocks, minerals and historic and prehistoric artifacts. Please do not remove, destroy or disturb these features.
- Pets must be kept on a leash no longer than 6 feet.
- Collection of wood is prohibited.
- Please use trash cans or dumpsters provided.

WARD CHARCOAL OVENS

State Historic Park

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Phone: (775) 289-1693

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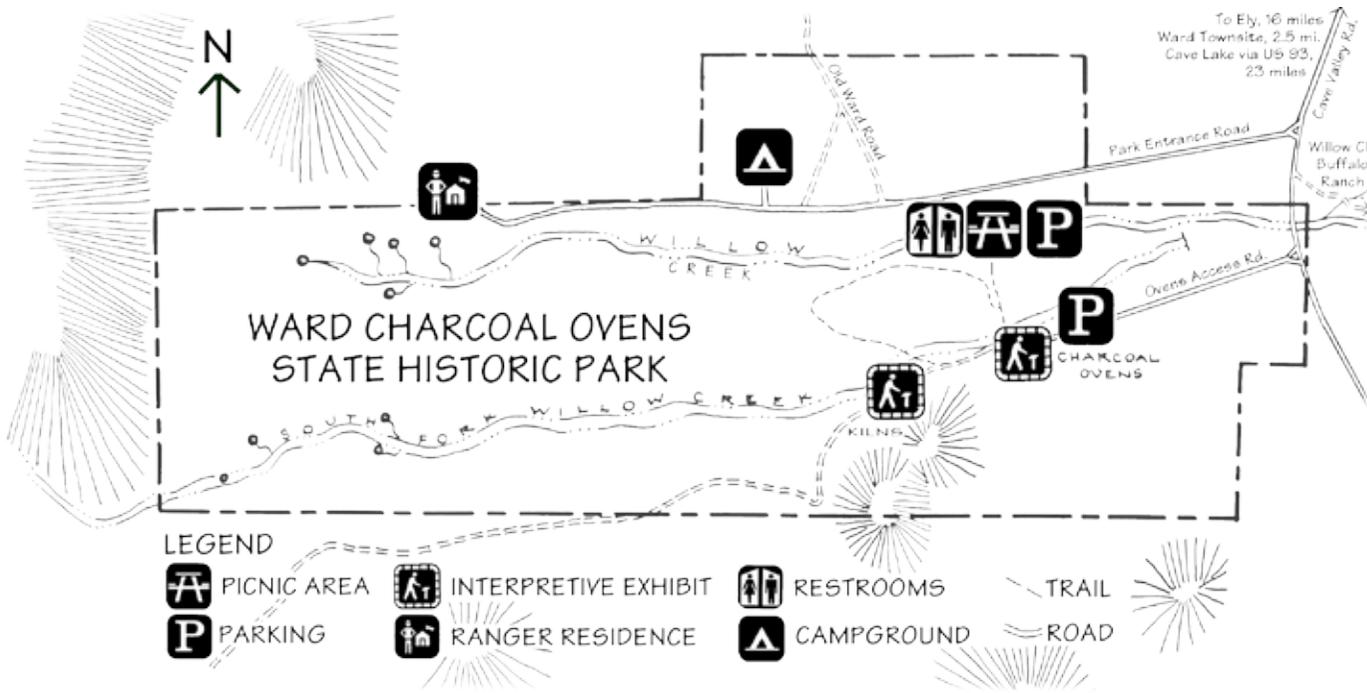
WARD CHARCOAL OVENS

State Historic Park



(775) 289-1693

www.parks.nv.gov/ww.htm



Ward Charcoal Ovens State Historic Park is located in the Egan Mountain Range approximately 18 miles south of Ely, Nevada. This beautiful park is mostly known for its six beehive-shaped historic charcoal ovens; however, the park offers an array of recreational opportunities.

PARK HISTORY

The basin near Ward Charcoal Ovens was a major stopover for settlers who used Cave Valley road to travel from Pioche, Nevada, to the nearby railroad town of Toano (1870–1876). Silver ore was discovered here in 1872 when freighters were looking for oxen that were grazing in the Willow Creek Basin area. The Ward Mining District, located two miles north of the park, was then developed. Small claim mining continued in this area for several years. In April 1875, the Martin & White Company from San Francisco invested money to extract silver ore, bought up several small claims and built smelters (furnaces for melting ores).

The beehive shaped ovens replaced an older system of producing charcoal because the ovens were a more efficient way to reduce pinyon pine and juniper into charcoal. The Ward Charcoal Ovens operated from 1876 through 1879, the silver boom years of the Ward mines. The ovens were eventually phased out completely due to depleted ore deposits and a shortage of available timber.

The Ward Charcoal Ovens served diverse purposes

after their function as charcoal ovens ended. They sheltered stockmen and prospectors during foul weather and had a reputation as a hideout for stagecoach bandits.

The area was privately owned and managed by ranchers until 1956. A special-use permit provided by State of Nevada management opened 160 acres to the public. In 1968, the land became public in a land trade. The next year the Nevada State Legislature created Ward Charcoal Ovens State Monument. The State Park designation was added in 1994, and park facilities continue to be added to the site.

Today, the ovens continue to represent a unique and fascinating chapter in Nevada mining history. The Nevada Division of State Parks takes pride in the preservation of this park for future generations to enjoy.

NATURAL RESOURCES

The park is classic Great Basin, high-desert environment. Major vegetation consists of big sagebrush at lower elevations and pinyon/juniper forest at higher elevations. The park contains many different creeks with springs as sources. The park has an elevation range of 7,000–8,000 ft. There is a diversity of wildlife within the park: Elk, deer, rabbit, mountain lion, bobcat, coyote and fox share the park with various bird species.

THE HISTORIC OVENS

The ovens are 30-feet high and 27-feet in diameter at the base. The parabolic, beehive shape reflected heat back into the center of the oven reducing heat loss. The walls are 20-inches thick with three rows of vents. The ovens were made from rock quarried directly southwest of the ovens. The rock is called tertiary volcanic and quartz latite tuff.

Each oven held approximately 35 cords of wood – one cord is 4-feet high by 4-feet wide by 8 feet long – and produced about 1,750 bushels of charcoal.

Wood was cut into 5-foot to 6-foot lengths and stacked inside the ovens vertically using the lower door. The first floor of the oven was filled leaving an open space in the center to serve as a chimney. The wood was then loaded up a ramp and through the upper door, which looks like a window, in the same fashion.

The loaded oven was ignited and the metal door was cemented shut. The vents were used to adjust the air drafts to suffocate the fire just enough to produce charcoal. Burners gauged the charcoaling process by the color of the smoke.

When the charcoaling was completed, in about 10 days, all air vents were closed and the fire died out. The charcoal was then cooled using water through the chimney. The oven was emptied loading the charcoal into bushel-size burlap sacks.

