

# Oak Flat Lookout

## Recreational Lodging

Greenhorn Ranger District  
Sequoia National Forest



Where can you experience camping with a view? Historical Oak Flat Lookout, overlooking the scenic Kern River, is available for daily rental. At an elevation of 4,900 feet, it provides clear skies and solitude for visitors.

**Lookout History:** Oak Flat Lookout was constructed in 1934 in the Greenhorn Mountains to provide fire detection views along the Kern River Canyon. The Forest Service has used lookout towers such as Oak Flat for many years to spot forest fires and provide vital communications and weather information to firefighters. In the early years of the Forest Service, lookouts provided a crucial link in wildland management, often being the only source of communication and fire detection for many miles.

Most early lookouts were forest vantage points, equipped with a map board, Osborne fire-finder and mountain telephone line; some early sites were actually trees that had been topped off, with a platform and a rope ladder added.

Oak Flat was on the front line of forest fire detection until 1984. Today aircraft and patrol trucks spot most fires within minutes of starting and fire lookouts are being closed. If you wish to visit an operating lookout, Breckenridge Lookout located southeast of Oak Flat is open during the summer months.

**Recreation Use:** Overnight use of Oak Flat Lookout and its facilities is available for individuals, families and groups. The lookout is equipped with a propane kitchen stove, propane heater two twin beds, some dishes and utensils a bucket and cleaning gear and one fire extinguisher. There is an outdoor barbecue fire ring, picnic table and vault toilet. The lookout will hold four adults maximum. Children are not allowed in the lookout except under the direct supervision of a parent or guardian.

**Permits:** Permits for use of the lookout are issued on a "first-come first-serve" basis to anyone 18 years or older. To apply for a permit, complete the application/permit form that is available at the Greenhorn Ranger District Visitor Center in Lake Isabella.

There is a maintenance fee of \$35.00 per night per group. Fees collected are deposited in a special account used to maintain the Lookout.

**Getting There:** Oak Flat Lookout is located 25 miles east of Bakersfield. To reach the lookout, take Highway 178 to Rancheria Road. Proceed 15 miles north to road FS 27S20. The road is an improved gravel road, but you should be on the lookout for livestock and other traffic. The lookout is located .7 miles from the turn off. There is **no** guaranteed vehicle access during winter months when the road may become muddy and impassable. Oak Flat may also be reached by hiking, horseback, biking or skiing.

**What to Take:** Cozy is the word that describes the lookout tower and there is very limited space to store items. Everything that you take to Oak Flat is either hauled up hand-over-hand in a basket pulley system or carried up 40 steep stairs, so plan accordingly. There is **NO WATER** available on site. At a minimum we recommend you take 1 gallon per person per day for adequate drinking and washing needs.

The lookout cabin provides 2 small beds inside, as well as plenty of outside camping area near the tower. You will need to bring bedding or sleeping bags for the mattresses. The weather can change suddenly and there is usually a strong wind blowing at Oak Flat, so bring adequate warm clothes. Winter visitors should plan on the possibility of snow, rain and ice. Sturdy footwear or boots are recommended for those interested in hiking and exploring the nearby area.



**Appliances:** There is **NO POWER** at Oak Flat, and visitors today experience the life style of past lookouts. Cooking is done on a small propane stove or over an outside barbecue grill. There is also a picnic table outside. You may want to bring firewood for a campfire at night. There are instructions for the appliances in the tower. There is one propane lantern available for light at night. A good flashlight with batteries will help on any night trips away from the tower. The propane heater is on a thermostat should provide adequate heat year round. Restroom facilities consist of a single vault outhouse 100 yards northwest of the lookout. Follow the split rail fence to find it.

**Enjoying Your Stay:** Other items can enhance your stay at Oak Flat. We recommend you take binoculars to appreciate the views from the tower. Guides, such as plant books, bird books and star gazers, can be purchased at the Ranger Station and help you enjoy your trip. Don't forget camera and film and any personnel items, such as books, games and toiletries. We recommend you also take sunscreen if you're planning on much time outside.

**Last Minute Details:** Oak Flat Lookout is pretty much self-service. We ask that you bring trashbags and haul all your trash home when cleaning up at the end of your stay. You may also want to bring paper towels. A small amount of cooking utensils and silverware should be at the lookout for your use.

While Oak Flat is just one hours drive from downtown Bakersfield, it provides solitude. There is no phone service at the lookout, but cellular phones should work.

**When You Arrive:** The combination you are issued will open the gate, the trap door to the tower and the door of the lookout cab. Be sure to lock the gate to insure privacy.

For more information regarding Oak Flat, or for reservations of the tower, Please contact:

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