Sierra Nevada—Northern Mines – Malakoff Diggins State Park/Empire Mine State Park

The Sierra Nevada—Northern Mines field trip offers participants the perfect combination of Sierran Fall season weather conditions and a tour of two important gold mine sites that helped put California state on the world map 150 years ago. The Northern Sierra Nevada mining region is home to both “world-class” and lode gold deposits. Field trip participants will have the opportunity to visit the largest historic placer mine in the region, notably the “Malakoff Hydraulic” or “North Bloomfield Hydraulic Mine,” now designated as a California State Park. Participants will visit the historic “ghost town” of North Bloomfield within the park and several additional sites, including the Malakoff Pit (where one cubic mile of gravels were processed for placer gold), Hiller Drain Tunnel, and abandoned mine features of the Hamilton Tunnel. The group will enjoy a lunch and lecture in the North Bloomfield townsite “picnic area.”

After lunch, the group will depart for the historic mining towns of Grass Valley and Nevada City. Nevada City was established in 1852 and nicknamed “The Queen of the Northern Mines” for its rich lode gold deposits and Victorian homes built by historic mine owners and superintendents.

The last field trip stop will be at the famous Empire Mine in Grass Valley, now designated as Empire Mine State Park. Participants will visit museum exhibits, the main production shaft area, the retort gold processing facility, and Bourne Mansion. A brief lecture will be provided to summarize the significance of California’s most productive historic lode mine.