

PRESS RELEASE

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The World returns to El Dorado County ... where it all began!

EL DORADO COUNTY TO HOST THE 2016 WORLD GOLD PANNING CHAMPIONSHIPS, WHERE HISTORY MEETS ADVENTURE

Placerville, CA, February 2016 – The world will be returning to El Dorado County where prospective gold miners traveled from all over the world to find their fortune during the California Gold Rush beginning in 1848, arguably one of the most significant events to shape American history during the second half of the 19th century.

The 40th annual World Gold Panning Championship - "The Olympics of Gold Panning" - will take place in Placerville - just a few miles from the original gold discovery site. During a county wide, week-long celebration to be held September 11-18, 2016, more than 600 competitors from over 20 countries will participate in this unusual sporting event which originated in Finland in 1977.

"There is so much energy and excitement surrounding this event it feels like the gold rush has been reignited right here where it all started," said Jody Franklin, Executive Director of Tourism. "And it's not only gold panning enthusiasts, history buffs and rock hounds, we have heard from service groups, wine makers, rafting outfitters, farmers, residents and visitors wanting to be part of this event. This promises to be an unforgettable event which has already gained worldwide attention."

The week kicks off a day early with pre-activities on the Georgetown Divide on Saturday September 10th and Sunday, September 11th, with "Divide Gold Rush Days" to celebrate the World Gold Panning Competition. In addition to the historic stamp mill being activated, the community will resurrect the 49er years, providing interactive entertainment from characters of the past.

Officially named El Dorado County Gold Week, registration for the competition will begin at the county fairgrounds on Sunday the 11th, complete with a chili cook off and car show. A colorful "Parade of Nations" will march down Main Street in Placerville where the international competitors, dressed in their native costume, will proudly carry the flags of their nation.

Additional activities include educational opportunities for "Mini-Miner" elementary school students, a living history encampment provided by Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park and a gold discovery camp, as well as traditional melodrama skits from the Olde Coloma Theatre. A Grape Stomp and Brewfest is in the making, highlighting local wines and brews. Take a tour of the El Dorado County Historical Museum, view the historical artifacts, or research a family ancestor, land, or building. Listen to live music daily from rock and roll, jazz and country and even barbershop tunes. Surf's up on Friday night featuring musicians who have toured and recorded with the Beach Boys, playing the "California Dreamin"

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tunes of the 60's and 70's.

There are a host of activities and events taking place throughout Gold Country surrounding the competition. The El Dorado County Mineral and Gem Society is hosting the annual 3-day California Federation of Mineralogical Societies show, also at the fairgrounds. Historic downtown Placerville - "Old Hangtown" - once the hub of the Mother Lode, will host Oktoberfest and the Wiener Dog Races. Original old buildings still stand from the 49er period, including the oldest continuously operating hardware store west of the Mississippi – Placerville Hardware – an excursion on its own.

Experience rare access to historical sites like Gold Bug Park and Mine, historical reenactments, live music and performances during Coloma Gold Rush Live and the Divide Gold Rush Days. There are excursions to Apple Hill that are not only scenic, but will satisfy the appetite, as well as exciting one and two day whitewater excitement, and exclusive wine tours and tastings.

Event planners, Janine D'Agostini and Kara Adema, along with Rich "Uncle Fuzzy" Mason have been building the foundation for this event for almost three years and have since gathered an ever growing army of volunteers. Uncle Fuzzy is the president of the United States Gold Panning Association (USGPA), the not-for-profit organization responsible for hosting the 2016 World Championships, which are sanctioned by the World Goldpanning Association (WGA).

Uncle Fuzzy and his wife Joyce made a bid on behalf of the U.S. to host the 2016 World Gold Panning Championships. They won, and event organization began in earnest in 2013. While Uncle Fuzzy is the president, Joyce is the medal winner, the recipient of a bronze medal in the 2009 Veterans Division in Italy – and the only female from the U.S. to stand on the podium.

"Our team quickly realized this was something we could "roll out the red carpet" for our locals, state, country and world to show all the corners of this magnificent county," said Janine. "This will be an amazing experience for the competitors, residents and visitors." "I am so proud to be a part of this," Kara added. A U.S delegation of 12, which included the Masons, Janine, and Kara, traveled to the 2015 Championship in Navelgas, Spain last summer to gather information for planning this historical event, 168 years after the first California gold rush. While the rest of the world has changed, El Dorado County remains a gem of its own.

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