

[What is Pothole Gold](#)

When you think about pot holes, you probably picture annoying driving hazards in the middle of the road that you try to avoid at all costs. That hole in the asphalt can cause a flat tire and help throw your car's alignment out of whack! But a pot hole in a rock that's located in a gold-bearing stream or river is something you DON'T want to steer clear of the next time you're out prospecting.

One way a natural rock pot hole is formed is when sand, pebbles and small rocks are spun around on bedrock by river currents. As they spin, they work like a drill and slowly grind away at the rock. In the process, the stones and pebbles caught in the hole wear away at themselves as well as the bedrock until they are swept away by the current and replaced by other pebbles, sand... or bits of GOLD! This type of natural drilling has taken place in most California rivers for thousands of years, but you can expect to find potholes in just about any river that has a rocky bed, especially if it's made of limestone, granite, or lava. Some holes are a few inches in diameter and depth, others can be quite large

There are basically two kinds of potholes in bedrock channels -- vertical and lateral. Vertical potholes formed on rock surfaces that were at one time part of the channel's rock floor. These potholes are now exposed because that portion of the channel has been raised above the active river or is just below the surface, making them pretty easy for you to spot. Lateral potholes are cut into the rocky sides of channels or into sides of rocks that stuck out of the channel as mini-islands. Lateral potholes formed near the river's surface, where rock, water and air meet, instead of at the river bottom.

In the same way that tree roots, huge logs, and big boulders can catch gold as it is moved downstream by fast-moving water, rock pot holes are natural gold catchers, too. Rocks and debris can settle in the pot holes and act as a "cap" for bits of gold that are also washed into the depression. Often the cap will completely hide gold that is underneath it... that is until some lucky prospector like you comes along, knowing where to look, and moves the cap out of the way to expose the [gold](#). *Eureka!*