

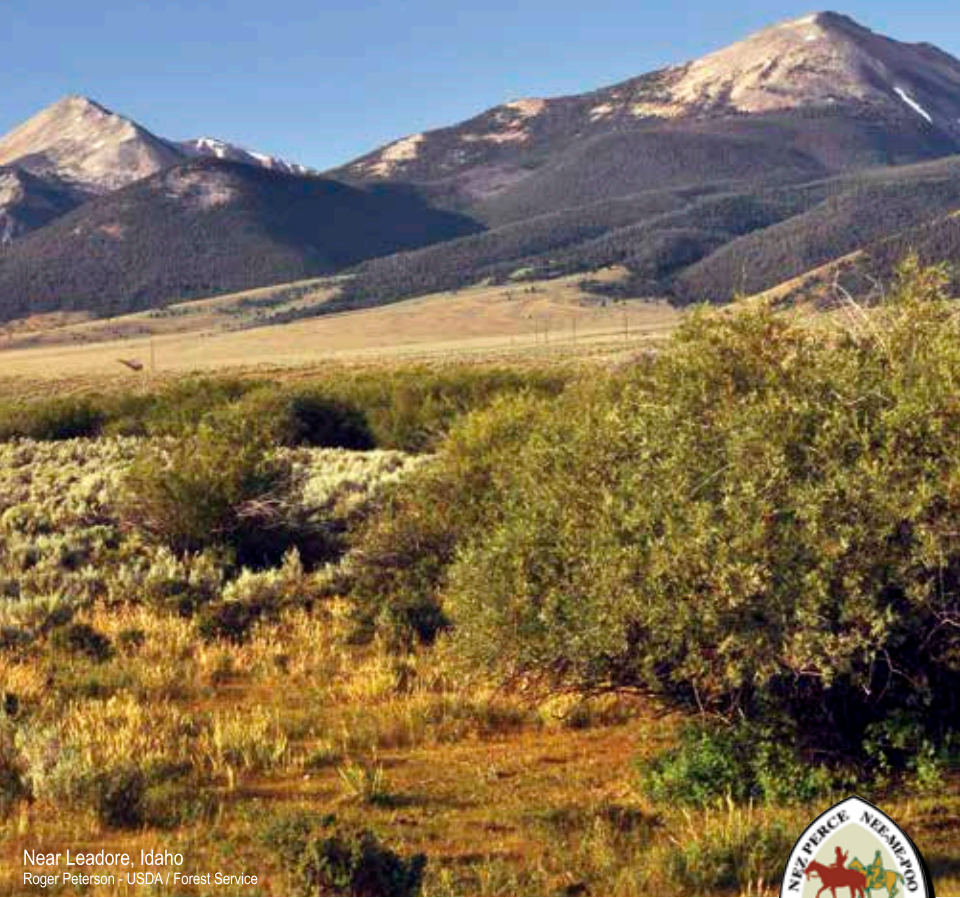


United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Leadore and Island Park, Idaho,  
to Yellowstone National Park, Montana

5

Experience the  
**Nez Perce  
Trail**



Near Leadore, Idaho  
Roger Peterson - USDA / Forest Service

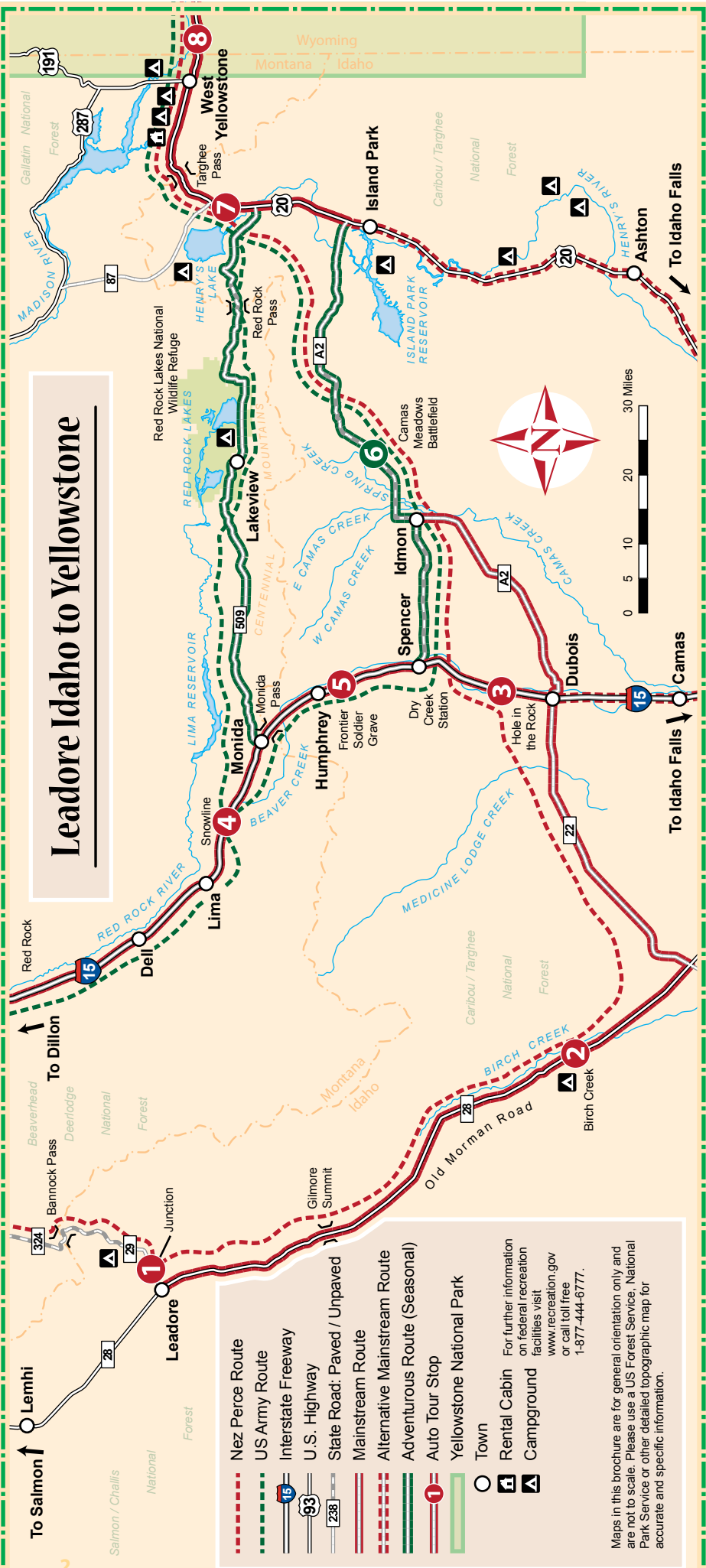


**AUTO TOUR**



Forest  
Service

# Leadore Idaho to Yellowstone



- Nez Perce Route
- US Army Route
- Interstate Freeway
- U.S. Highway
- State Road: Paved / Unpaved
- Mainstream Route
- Alternative Mainstream Route
- Adventurous Route (Seasonal)
- Auto Tour Stop
- Yellowstone National Park
- Town
- Rental Cabin
- Campground

For further information on federal recreation facilities visit [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov) or call toll free 1-877-444-6777.

Maps in this brochure are for general orientation only and are not to scale. Please use a US Forest Service, National Park Service or other detailed topographic map for accurate and specific information.



# The Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail

Designated by Congress in 1986, the entire Nez Perce National Historic Trail (NPNHT) stretches 1,170 miles from the Wallowa Valley of eastern Oregon to the plains of north-central Montana. The NPNHT includes a designated corridor encompassing 4,161 miles of roads, trails and routes.

This segment of the Nez Perce National Historic Trail from **Leadore, Idaho, to West Yellowstone, Montana**, is one of eight available tours (complete list on page 31). These are available at Forest Service offices and other Federal and local visitor centers along the route.

As you travel this historic trail, you will see highway signs marking the official Auto Tour Route. Each Mainstream Auto Tour Route stays on all-weather roads passable for all types of vehicles. Adventurous and Rugged Routes are an alternative for those seeking the most authentic historic route. They are often on gravel or dirt roads, so plan ahead.

Many locations along all Auto Tour Routes may not have cell phone coverage. Designate a contact person at home to communicate through.

**Check weather and road conditions before embarking on your journey. Call 511 for road condition reports on major routes. For road condition information on Adventurous and Rugged Routes inquire locally.**



# Experience the Nez Perce Trail

## How do I get there?

You may begin this Auto Tour at one of two locations, Leadore, Idaho, or Snowline, Montana. If you followed Auto Tour 4 you may have chosen to follow the Nez Perce route over Bannock Pass to Leadore or the Military route to Snowline Road along Interstate 15.

**Leadore, ID:** Located in central Idaho near the Montana border, Leadore is about 46 miles southeast of Salmon, ID, on Idaho State Highway 28. From Idaho Falls, ID, take Interstate 15 North for 23.6 miles to Idaho State Highway 33. Turn west onto Idaho State Highway 33 and continue for 15 miles to Idaho State Highway 28. Continue for 75 miles to Leadore, ID.

**Snowline, MT:** Located on Interstate 15, present day Snowline, MT is nothing more than Exit 9, 5.6 miles south of Lima, MT. From Idaho Falls, take Interstate 15 north for 86.3 miles to Exit 9, Snowline, MT.

## Mainstream Traveler *(Passable for all types of vehicles.)*

For most travelers this will be the appropriate route. The roads are generally paved and won't pose a challenge for typical cars, campers with trailers, and RVs.

From Leadore, Idaho, the Mainstream Traveler will follow Idaho State Route 28 southeast through the Birch Creek

Valley to Idaho State Highway 22. Continuing east on Idaho State Highway 22 to Dubois, Idaho, the Mainstream Traveler can take Clark County Road A2 east and join the Adventurous Route to Henry's Lake at Idmon, Idaho. If you prefer to stay on paved roads or are traveling in winter months, when this Adventurous Route is closed, there is a fully paved alternative route. Details for the Alternative Mainstream Route are on Page 21.



From Henry's Lake the Mainstream Traveler will follow U.S. Highway 20 east to West Yellowstone, Montana, and the conclusion of this Auto Tour.



## Adventurous Traveler

*(Not recommended for motor homes or vehicles towing trailers; usually passable from July to October.)*

Adventurous Travelers will have the option of following the route of the events of the summer of 1877 more closely. This route is mostly on gravel roads with some paved sections, and is closed during the winter months. Inquire locally for road conditions.

Beginning at Spencer, Idaho, the Adventurous Travelers follow the Idmon Road to Idmon, Idaho, and then follow Idaho County Road A2 to Idaho State Highway 20. There they rejoin the Mainstream Traveler for the remainder of this Auto Tour. There are no gas stations between Spencer and Idaho State Highway 20 so Adventurous Travelers should make sure to have a full tank of gas before leaving Spencer, Idaho.

An alternate Adventure Route, which follows the course taken by Lieutenant Bacon in an effort to cut off the Nez Perce, is detailed on page 18. While this route is not a part of the official trail, it takes the traveler through the through the picturesque Centennial Valley and rejoins the official trail at Henry's Lake.



## Prelude to the Flight of the Nez Perce

Prior to 1855 the Nez Perce (or, in their language, Niimípuu, meaning “the people”) homeland extended throughout much of north-central Idaho, northeastern Oregon, and southeastern Washington. Tension mounted as whites moved West and settled in the Nez Perce territory. In that same year, the United States government made a treaty that established an approximately 7,500,000-acre Nez Perce Indian Reservation encompassing most of their traditional homeland.

However, the discovery of gold on Nez Perce land triggered an influx of more settlers and fueled more conflicts. A new treaty in 1863 shrank the reservation to one-tenth its original size. Some bands of Nez Perce refused to sign the treaty and became known as the “non-treaty” Nez Perce.

The government, responding to pressure from settlers, called on the military to force the “non-treaty” Nez Perce onto the new reservation in Idaho Territory. General Oliver Otis Howard, a Civil War veteran, was to carry out the task.

From June to October of 1877, *Hinmatóowyahtq’it* (Chief Joseph), *Hóototo* (Lean Elk), *’Elelímyete’qenin’* (Chief Looking Glass), *’Álok’at* (Chief Ollokot - Frog), Chief *Piyóopiyo xayxáyx* (White Bird) and others led between 750 - 800 Nez Perce men, women, and children along with approximately 2,000 horses over 1,170 mountainous miles to what they hoped would be safety with their friends to the east.

The 1877 Flight of the Nez Perce from their homelands while being pursued by U.S. Army, General Howard and Colonels Samuel Davis Sturgis, John Oliver Gibbon, and Nelson Appleton Miles is one of the most fascinating and sorrowful events in Western U.S. history.



## The Chase Begins

Rather than risk conflict by continuing to resist relocation, the “non-treaty” Nez Perce gathered their livestock and belongings and began a painful and difficult journey to the new reservation.

On June 14, 1877, the Nez Perce bands reached a familiar camas-gathering site at Tolo Lake near Grangeville, Idaho.

That night several young warriors, angered by past atrocities and injustices at the hands of white settlers, set out to avenge their people. Their raid left a number of local settlers dead. The Nez Perce decided to flee and thus embarked upon a four-month journey with General Howard in full pursuit.

### **Camas Plant**

The camas (Qém'es) bulb, a staple food of the Nez Perce, is more nutritious than a potato. It is gathered with a (túkes) digging stick, then roasted, baked, broiled, steamed, or dried.



Digging Stick  
Image courtesy of  
the National Park Service,

This Auto Tour describes the sad and difficult journey of the Nez Perce as they fled from the U.S. Army under General Howard’s command, following a surprise attack on their camp along the Big Hole River. Carrying their dying and wounded with them, the Nez Perce traveled southward through a vast and rugged landscape of wind-swept, sagebrush plains and high mountain valleys from Leadore, Idaho, to West Yellowstone, Montana.

Image courtesy of the National Park Service,  
Nez Perce National Historic Park



The 1877 Flight of the Nez Perce symbolizes the dramatic collision of cultures which continues to shape America and its people. A native people were forced to flee their homelands in a futile attempt to avoid war and save their traditional ways. European immigrants found themselves fighting neighbors who had been their friends for many years. Traditional trails, which had long been a source of joy and sustenance, became trails of flight and conflict, trails of sorrow.

## Chronology of Events

*The events in this timeline coincide with the sites seen on this auto tour:*

- August 13** – Nez Perce cross the Continental Divide at Bannock Pass and set up camp just outside Junction, Idaho. ❶ General Howard departs Big Hole Battlefield leaving most of his infantry behind and camps 23 miles south of the battlefield. The remainder of Howard's troops leave on August 15 and catch up with him a few days later.
- August 14** – Nez Perce move camp to Gilmore Summit, Idaho area at the head of Birch Creek. General Howard advances 25 miles to Horse Prairie Creek.
- August 15** – Nez Perce move south through the Lemhi Valley on Old Mormon Road (present day Idaho State Highway 28). Along Birch Creek, warriors encounter a wagon train carrying food and supplies. A fight ensues, leaving five members of the wagon train dead and one Nez Perce mortally wounded. ❷
- Aug. 16-17** – Nez Perce stop at Hole-in-the-Rock, ❸ then cross the wagon road above Dry Creek Station near present-day Spencer, Idaho, and camp in Camas Meadows. General Howard's troops camp at Red Rock Station and then Junction Station. ❹ Lieutenant George R. Bacon is dispatched to the vicinity of Henry's Lake via Red Rock Lakes to watch for and intercept the Nez Perce. Captain James E. Calloway and a group of Montana volunteers join General Howard.
- August 18** – Nez Perce camp near the junction of Camas and Spring Creeks. Captain Randolph Norwood joins General Howard, now camped at Dry Creek Station, eight miles below Pleasant Valley on the stage road.
- August 19** – Nez Perce camp southeast of Camas Meadows. General Howard reaches Camas Meadows and establishes Camp Calloway.
- August 20** – A group of warriors raid General Howard's camp and make off with the mule herd. Captain Norwood's command, one of three, is sent in pursuit and later skirmishes at Camas Meadows Battle with the Nez Perce. ❺
- August 21** – General Howard moves his troops to Shotgun Creek. The Nez Perce camp in a meadow southwest of Henry's Lake. ❻
- August 22** – Nez Perce cross the Continental Divide at Targhee Pass, enter Montana and descend to the Madison River Valley, where they enter Yellowstone National Park. ❷ Samuel A. Glass, wounded at the Camas Meadow Battle dies and is buried at what is now the Frontier Soldiers Grave memorial. ❸
- August 24** – General Howard moves camp to Henry's Lake inlet at Sawtell Ranch. He then leaves for Virginia City, Montana, for supplies and mules. ❹
- August 28** – After returning from Virginia City, Montana on August 27, General Howard and his men leave Henry's Lake and proceed to Yellowstone National Park. The Montana volunteers leave General Howard's command and head for home.



— AS YOU TRAVEL THE TRAIL —

**The trail memorializes not only  
those who died during the flight,  
but those who survived.**

**Their tragic journey marked the end  
of freedom for the Nez Perce  
and opened their lands to settlement.**

**As you travel this historic trail  
from Leadore and Island Park, Idaho,  
to Yellowstone National Park, Montana  
whether you drive, ride, or walk,  
you will gain an  
understanding of and appreciation for  
the difficulty of their journey  
and the tremendous odds that  
the Nez Perce had to face and overcome.**

Nez Perce Dreamers in Traditional Dress.  
courtesy of WSU L.V. McWhorter Collection



Before starting over the Lolo Trail, the chiefs proclaimed there would be a peaceable and law-abiding passage through all the country. This policy of nonviolence was successful as they crossed the Lolo Trail and traveled through the Bitterroot Valley. During this time the Nez Perce were able to avoid confrontation with the U.S. Army and remain peaceful with the local white settlers. All of this changed once Colonel Gibbons caught up with them at Big Hole.

After a bloody two-day battle at the Big Hole River, the Nez Perce gathered their wounded and continued south through the Big Hole and Horse Prairie Valleys of Montana, raiding a few ranches on the way. On August 13 they crossed the Continental Divide at Bannock Pass into Idaho.



*“He (Lean Elk) understood and would have the people up early in the morning, and traveling till about ten o’clock. Then he ordered a stop and cooking was done while the horses filled upon grass. About two o’clock he would travel again. Kept going until about ten o’clock at night. We had no timepiece, but we could easily judge our movements. In this way the people covered many miles each sun. They were outdistancing the soldiers. Everybody was glad ...”*

*– Wa’tólin (Hair Combed Over Eyes),  
Tribal Historian and Warrior*

Wottolen (Hair combed over eyes) and his son 'Iléxni 'éewteesin' (Many Wounds) or Sam Lott.  
Photo courtesy of WSU L.V. McWhorter Collection



# 1 Meeting With Chief Tendoy

## *The Nez Perce Route*

After crossing Bannock Pass, the Nez Perce moved down to the small town of Junction, Idaho (two miles east of Leadore). There, locals awaited them behind a small, hastily constructed stockade.

Here, Chiefs White Bird and Looking Glass met with Chief Tendoy of the Lemhi Shoshone to ask for his support. Instead, Chief Tendoy advised the Nez Perce to move on. The Nez Perce complied and camped that night near what is today Nez Perce Canyon.

*Hóototo* (Lean Elk also known as Poker Joe) knew this country well and accepted leadership of the main group.



*Piyóopiyo xayxáyx* - Chief White Bird  
by Roger Cooke



## 2 Trouble at Birch Creek, Idaho

### *The Nez Perce Route*

From Leadore, ID, travel southeast on Idaho State Highway 28 for 45.4 miles. Turn right into Birch Creek Campground. As you enter the campground an interpretive kiosk with Trail and other local information is on your right.

On August 14, the Nez Perce traveled south through the vast expanse of the Lemhi Valley on the Old Mormon Road (Idaho State Highway 28).

As you drive down this valley, you are surrounded by two magnificent mountain ranges. To the west are the Lemhi Mountains, with peaks rising to more than 10,500 feet. To the east you will see the Bitterroot Range. Here, the Continental Divide defines the border between Idaho and Montana.

The Nez Perce moved quickly, crossing Gilmore Summit (historically known as Salmon River Pass) and traveled south along Birch Creek. While crossing the Corrine-Virginia City Wagon Road, around noon on

Wednesday, August 15, a group of Nez Perce warriors crossed paths with several heavily laden freight wagons heading for the mining camps near Salmon City, Idaho, and Leesburg, Idaho. The three teamsters and four passengers had stopped at Birch Creek to eat lunch. Before the men could grab their rifles, the warriors surrounded them. Desperate for food and supplies, the Nez Perce tried to barter with the teamsters.



*There is an abundance of wildlife along the Nez Perce National Historic Trail. All wild animals need to be treated with caution and respect. If you are planning to hike, check with the nearest land management agency for information on local wildlife. Know how to be safe in wild country.*

Things turned ugly when whiskey was found among the supplies. Albert Lyons happened upon the Nez Perce while hunting for lost cattle, slipped out of camp and hid in Birch Creek until nightfall when he made his getaway. Two Chinese cooks also escaped when they were sent for firewood. The struggle that ensued over the contents of the wagons left five men dead; three teamsters - James Hayden, Albert Green, and Daniel Combs - and two unidentified miners. *Ketalkpoosmin* (Stripes Turned Down), who was instrumental in the capture of the howitzer during the battle at Big Hole, was mortally wounded in a scuffle when he tried to persuade the warriors to leave and return to the main Nez Perce group. Word of the killings spread quickly across the valley throwing fear into the local residents. A rescue party arrived to find the wagons burned and five dead. They were buried where they fell, but later disinterred and reburied at the cemetery in Salmon, Idaho.



### 3 Moving On

*The Nez Perce Route*

From Birch Creek Campground continue southeast on Idaho State Highway 28. In 13.5 miles turn left onto Idaho State Highway 22. In 30.3 miles merge onto northbound Interstate 15. Travel north for 5 miles and take Exit 172. Turn west (right) and travel 0.7 miles to the crossing over Beaver Creek. Just south of here is where Hole in the Rock Station was located.

Forty animals from the wagon train were absorbed into the Nez Perce herd. From Birch Creek the Nez Perce moved east, skirting the foothills of the mountains and crossing Medicine Lodge Creek and Beaver Creek. They again crossed Corrine -Virginia City Wagon Road a few miles north of Dubois. They stopped at Hole-in-the-Rock Station and cut the telegraph lines.



The Nez Perce left a broad trail 50–100 feet wide. Vegetation was almost entirely obliterated by tramping horses dragging scores of travois poles carrying wounded. That evening they set up camp in Camas Meadows.



Lemhi Valley, Idaho  
Roger Peterson - USDA / Forest Service

## **Stations**

The Corinne - Virginia City Wagon Road was a Stage Route opened in 1864 by transportation businessman and “Stagecoach King” Benjamin Holladay. The route connected the Mormon communities in Utah with the Montana mines. Present day Interstate 15 closely follows this old stage route.

A team of horses pulling a stagecoach could travel only so far before needing to be replaced by a fresh team. Stage Routes offered a station every 20 miles or so where fresh horses could be obtained. The tired horse team would then be fed and allowed to rest until the next coach arrived. This system enabled the coach to continue on its way with only a short delay.

For the passengers these stations offered warmth, food, drink, and even a place to sleep if needed. Travelers would often hop off the coach to warm up for a few minutes while the stage driver changed horses.



## General Howard Takes Up the Pursuit

### *The U.S. Army Route*

***At this point our narrative switches perspectives back to General Howard and the troops chasing the Nez Perce.***

After the battle at Big Hole, Colonel Gibbon's pursuit of the Nez Perce was taken up by General Howard. Howard and his men proceeded hastily east to head off the Nez Perce. They were spurred on by news of disastrous encounters between Nez Perce warriors and settlers at Horse Prairie. On August 14 General Howard and a small group of his soldiers traveled 25 miles; the balance of troops followed with slower moving wagons full of supplies. Passing through the town of Bannack, Montana, they were greeted by cheering settlers. The troops camped 12 miles beyond the town on Horse Prairie Creek, then moved on to Red Rock Station.



General O. O. Howard  
Harper's Weekly



## 4 General Howard's Strategy

### *The U.S. Army Route*

On August 17 near Snowline, Montana, fearing the Nez Perce might escape back into Montana, Howard sent 40 cavalry men under the command of First Lieutenant George R. Bacon and several Bannock scouts under the command of Captain Orlando "Rube" Robbins to proceed via Red Rock Lake to Reynolds Pass near Henry's Lake. Lieutenant Bacon was to wait in the vicinity of Targhee Pass and watch for the Nez Perce for 48 hours, and, if they showed up, to detain them and send word back to General Howard.



Snowline, Montana  
Roger Peterson - USDA / Forest Service

# Lieutenant Bacon's Route

*Adventurous Route Side Trip (Seasonal)*

This side trip follows the route taken by Lieutenant Bacon and his men from present day Snowline to Henry's Lake. Winding through the picturesque Centennial Valley, this route offers a unique perspective on the events of the summer of 1877.

Before leaving the Interstate, be sure you have a full tank of gas. From Monida, MT, at Exit 0 off of Interstate 15 on the Montana and Idaho border head eastward on South Valley Road through the Centennial Valley. In 27.6 miles arrive at



Lakeview, MT, the Headquarters for the Red Rock National Wildlife Refuge is located in Lakeview. From Lakeview continue east on South Valley Road. After Upper Red Rock Lake the road curves north and east. After leaving the Refuge continue east over Red Rock Pass where you reenter Idaho. After crossing Red Rock Pass continue on South Valley Road, which is now also called Red Rock Pass Road. Approximately

21 miles after leaving Lakeview, at the T in the road, turn right on Red Rock Road. In 6 miles stay to the left at the Y and continue 1 mile to the junction with US Highway 20. Turn left, north on US 20. In 2.9 miles you will reach the junction with Henry's Lake State Park Road.

## Just Following Orders

At Junction, now present day Snowline, Montana, General Howard was faced with a crucial decision: turn east and head for Henry's Lake in an effort to get ahead of the Nez Perce or continue south into Idaho and pick up their trail. In the end he compromised and dispatched Lieutenant Bacon with a small contingent of 40 men to Henry's Lake, while he headed south with the majority of his force.

Lieutenant Bacon must have known the futility of this operation. There was little chance a force of 40 men could stand against the Nez Perce. Fortunately for Lieutenant Bacon and his men, his orders were to wait at Henry's Lake for 48 hours and if there was no sign of the enemy, return to Howard. That is exactly what he did, leaving the lake merely hours before the Nez Perce arrived and by a route that ensured no contact with the enemy.

*"I was made one of a special detail to make a detour and get ahead of the Indians and fortify at Henry Lake. This detachment consisted of Lieuts. Bacon and Hoyle, myself, Guide Poindexter and 15 men. We started out at 3 a.m., and nearly all the camp saw us off, never expecting to see us again. We travelled hard for two days. ... I never knew what Lieut. Bacon's orders were. They were evidently to wait at the lake for two days and if the main column did not reach us by the expiration of that time to return as best we could. Whatever his orders may have been, that is exactly what we did, rejoining Howard's main column four or five miles from the lake, near the trail we had previously passed over. But on our return we made a wide detour in order to avoid the Indians."*

*-Private William Connolly*



## 5 Frontier Soldier Grave

### *The U.S. Army Route*

From Snowline, MT, at Exit 9 on Interstate 15, travel south on Interstate 15 for 14.8 miles over Monida Pass, MT, crossing into Idaho to Humphrey, ID, Exit 190. Take Exit 190 and turn left (east) under the freeway (I-15). At the T turn south toward Pleasant Valley Creek Road. In 2.9 miles, just after passing under Interstate 15, turn right onto Pleasant Valley Creek Road. Continue for 0.6 miles, keeping to the left. A sign will indicate the Frontier Soldier Grave.

General Howard and his men crossed the Continental Divide at Monida Pass, Montana, and made their way to Junction Station, Idaho, where Captain James E. Calloway and 55 Montana volunteers armed with a mountain howitzer joined them. After the arrival of Captain Randolph Norwood's Second Cavalry on August 18, General Howard's forces moved on. They rested that night at Dry Creek Station just 18 miles west of the Nez Perce camp and about 10 miles south of the present location of the Frontier Soldier Grave. On Sunday, August 19, the command started east and shortly thereafter came upon the trampled trail of the Nez Perce.

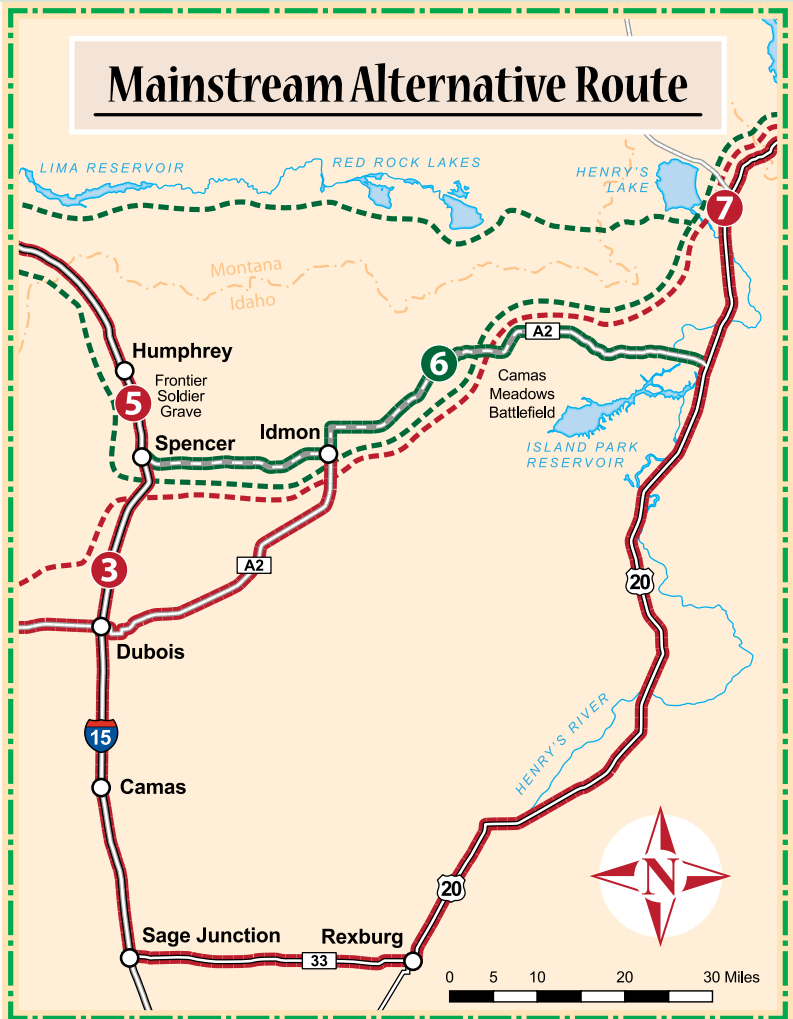
After the battle at Camas Meadows U.S. Army casualties were sent back this way towards Virginia City, Montana. Samuel A. Glass, a blacksmith with the Second Cavalry, having been shot through the bladder during the Camas Meadows battle (see page 23), finally succumbed to his wound and was buried here.



## Alternate Route for Mainstream Travelers

The route from Spencer, ID, to US Highway 20 is classified as an Adventurous Route because it is seasonal and not fully paved. It is, however, a relatively easy route on flat roads and takes you to the Camas Meadows Battlefield. If you are traveling during the winter or prefer staying on all weather paved roads then this Mainstream Alternative route is another option.

From the Frontier Soldier Grave head back along Pleasant Valley Creek Road for 0.6 miles and turn right toward Frontage Road /U.S. FS Road Fh33. In 2.8 miles turn left onto Frontage Road /U.S. FS Road Fh33 and then turn right to merge onto Interstate 15 S. Travel south on Interstate 15 for 41.2 miles and take Exit 143 for Idaho State Highway 33 and Rexburg, Idaho. Turn left onto Idaho State Highway 33 and continue for 19.4 miles to Rexburg, Idaho. Turn left to merge onto US Highway 20 towards West Yellowstone, Montana. Travel North on US Highway 20 for 66.6 miles and turn left onto Henry's Lake State Park Road.



## 6 Encounter at Camas Meadows

From the Frontier Soldier Grave head back along Pleasant Valley Creek Road for 0.6 miles and turn right toward Frontage Road /U.S. FS Road Fh33. In 2.8 miles turn left onto Frontage Road /U.S. FS Road Fh33 and then turn right to merge onto Interstate 15 south. Travel south on Interstate 15 for 3.9 miles and take Exit 180 to Spencer, ID. Turn left onto Opal Way and in 0.2 miles turn right onto Old Highway 91. Take the first left onto Idmon Road / Spencer - Kilgore Road. Continue along Idmon Road / Spencer - Kilgore Road for 14 miles. Turn left (north) onto A-2 Clark County Road / Idmon Road. In 1.9 miles the road jogs east and in another 6.5 miles you will reach the Camas Meadows Battlefield.

Camas Meadows encompasses an area about five miles east to west at its widest point and ten miles from north to south. Today it is bordered east, north, and west by the Caribou-Targhee National Forest. Camas and Spring Creeks flow through the meadows. The meadows have lush grassy areas punctuated by basalt fields. Basalt fields are lava flow outcroppings left from volcanic upheavals that occurred more than a half million years ago.

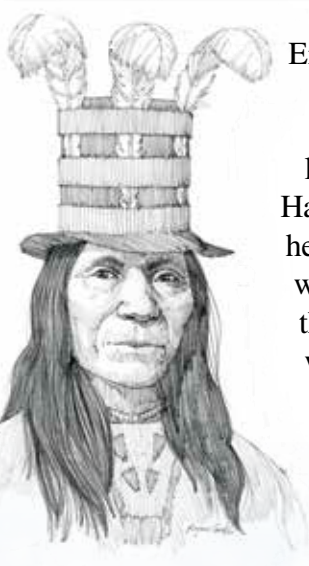
*"Each knoll so much like another, that you cannot fix your whereabouts by the distinct and diverse features around you. Should you drive to pasture five horses over these wave-like knolls for a mile, and then leave them for an hour to graze, it would be next to impossible to find them."*

*- General Oliver O. Howard*

General Howard camped near where the Nez Perce had been observed the day before in Camas Meadows. It was Sunday, August 19. All day the soldiers followed a broad trail left by the Nez Perce. After an 18-mile march across the sagebrush prairie, General Howard arrived at Camas Meadows. He camped along the high ground fringing the bottom of Spring Creek and named the camp in honor of Captain Calloway.



Sheridan Creek, Near Camas Meadows, Idaho  
Roger Peterson - USDA / Forest Service



Tuxúulxulc'ut - Chief Toohoolhoolzote

Eighteen miles away, the Nez Perce scouts had returned to camp, bringing word of the soldiers' location. *Cimúuxcimux húukux* (Black Hair) had a strong vision in which he saw himself and others escaping with the U.S. Army's horses. He told the chiefs of his vision, and 28 men were organized under the leadership of 'Álok'at (Chief Ollokot), 'Elelímyete'qenin' (Chief Looking Glass) and *Tuxúulxulc'ut* (Chief Toolhoolhoolzote) to carry out a raid.



Near midnight, they approached the Army camp. Several warriors crept quietly among the herd of animals, cutting them loose and removing warning bells. The main group of warriors rode four to a column, as would a cavalry unit. The sentry mistook them for Lieutenant Bacon's returning men. He called out a challenge that resulted in a shot being fired that awakened the troops and spurred the Nez Perce to action.

General Howard ordered Companies B, I, and L, consisting of about 150 men, to recapture the mules and horses that were by this time far down the trail. Captain Norwood's Company L was ordered to follow the Nez Perce. He caught up with them after about five miles. They dismounted to exchange shots. The skirmish lasted more than four hours. Just as the men began to realize they were being circled by the sound of firing from a flanking maneuver of the Nez Perce, "recall" was sounded.

*"The race to the thicket was something never to be forgotten, for a cavalryman is not trained for a five hundred yard sprint ... I had a horse's nose-bag slung over my shoulder containing extra cartridges, and a bullet cut the strap and it fell to the ground. A hero would have stopped, gone back and recovered that bag, but not I."*

*- Sergeant Harry J. Davis*





As Companies B and I retreated, Captain Norwood's troops hastily built rifle pits as a defense and remained until reinforcements came. The Nez Perce left as reinforcements arrived.



Camas Meadows Battlefield, Idaho  
Roger Peterson - USDA / Forest Service

Meanwhile, the Nez Perce warriors assessed the success of their raid. As the sun arose, the warriors realized they had captured most of the mule herd and a few horses. Their raid proved a tactical success by leaving General Howard with too few pack animals forcing him to go to Virginia City, Montana, to get more mules to continue his pursuit. Taking advantage of this opportunity, the Nez Perce gathered their stock, broke camp, and left Camas Meadows. For their part the military paid a high price for the few mules they recovered: Bugler Bernard Arthur Brooks lay dead, two soldiers died later, and five men were wounded, which Captain Calloway's volunteers escorted to Virginia City, Montana.

*"...Those soldiers... we must have hit one or two... they became scared... A bugle sounded down among the timber, and those soldiers skipped for their lives for that shelter. We sent bullets flying after them but they all reached the brush and disappeared."*

*- Piyopyóot'aliktt  
(Bird Alighting)*



*Piyopyóot'aliktt (Bird Alighting)*  
Photo courtesy of WSU L.V. McWhorter Collection

*"The soldiers did not hurry to follow us. They slowed after losing their pack mules."*

*- Hímiin maqsmáqs (Yellow Wolf)*

## 7 Henry's Lake, Idaho

From Camas Meadows Battlefield continue east on A-2 Clark County Road, which becomes Kilgore-Yale Road in 3.1 miles. In a further 21.4 miles turn left onto US Highway 20. Follow US Highway 20 for 11.8 miles and turn west (left) onto Henry's Lake State Park Road.

On August 24 General Howard and his troops reached the southern end of Henry's Lake. There he learned of Lieutenant Bacon's return and his failure to intercept the Nez Perce. With that news General Howard realized this desperate chase would continue.

*"The General intended to follow right after the hostiles but this was impossible because it was found that the command has but five days rations."*

*-Captain Robert Pollock, August 25, 1877*

The chase would continue, but at the moment General Howard's forces were exhausted. They could not continue without rest and supplies. Leaving his troops at Henry's Lake to recuperate, Howard took two wagon teams and immediately set off for Virginia City, Montana, 75 miles away, to obtain the much needed supplies.

*"General Howard inquired how many days would be needed to bring the necessary clothing to the camp from Virginia City, and was informed that it could not be done in less than five. The General was positive it could be done in less time, and without more ado, started for Virginia City, traveling night and day until he returned with all the stock of blankets, shoes, etc., in the town. Besides communicating with General Sherman and McDowell, through the telegraph office, while at Virginia City, Howard also directed further clothing supplies .... A herd of cayuse horses was also brought to serve as pack-animals."*

*-Thomas Sutherland (war correspondent)*

General Howard and many of his officers were beginning to feel that this campaign was pointless and futile. They were exhausted, ill-equipped, and outside of their jurisdictional boundary.

*"Everyone, believe me, is sick and tired of a fruitless pursuit of these Indians .... General Howard seems determined to follow them up in the (vain) hope I suppose, of overtaking them .... Not many officers are in sympathy with him, and a great many think he is guilty of folly of the gravest kind to follow on at the expense of loss in men and animals in a hopeless pursuit."*

*-Dr. John FitzGerald, August 23, 1877*

## Henry's Lake

Both the Nez Perce and the U.S. Army spent time at this shallow lake located in a grassy, seven-mile-wide basin surrounded by mountains. Nearby Reynolds Pass funnels traffic on Idaho State Highway 87 to the north towards Ennis and Bozeman, MT, while U.S. Highway 20 crosses Targhee Pass at the Continental Divide and leads to West Yellowstone. As Idaho State Highway 87 passes the north shore of Henry's Lake, it meets Forest Service Road 55, which continues around the lake to Staley Springs. This is where Gilman Sawtell, the first homesteader in Island Park, bivouacked General Howard's troops while the general rode to Virginia City, Montana, for supplies.

A loop can be made around the lake by continuing on Forest Road 53. The road ends at U.S. Highway 20 and is a lovely drive.



While in Virginia City, Montana, General Howard telegraphed his superiors to appraise them of their dire situation, and indicated that he was ready to bring this campaign to a close. General William Tecumseh Sherman replied curtly.

*"That force of yours should pursue the Nez Percés to the death, lead where they may .... If you are tired give the command to some energetic officer and let him follow them, go where they may, holding his men well in hand, ... For such a stern chase, infantry are as good as cavalry."*

*-General William T. Sherman (general of the U.S. Army)*

On August 28, Howard's command left Henry's Lake in pursuit of the Nez Perce.

## 8 The Nez Perce Reach the Madison River

From Henry's Lake State Park head northeast on US Highway 20 for 14.5 miles to West Yellowstone, MT. Turn right onto N Canyon St. In 0.2 miles turn left onto Yellowstone Avenue. Yellowstone Avenue becomes US Highway 20 / West Entrance Road. In about 0.5 miles you will enter Yellowstone National Park and fees apply. Continue east for 8 miles. Immediately after crossing the Madison River, pull into the turnout on the south side of the road.

**Note:** Although this route is designated as a Mainstream Traveler Route this road is a seasonal road and is closed during the winter months.

After spending one day at Henry's Lake, the Nez Perce departed on August 22. They crossed the 7,072 foot Targhee Pass and the Continental Divide for the final time, and descended to the Madison River. They then began a journey through the Yellowstone Wilderness, an area revered by the Nez Perce for its spiritual power. This area was designated as Yellowstone National Park in 1872.



## The Final Weeks

By the time General Howard entered Yellowstone National Park the Nez Perce were deep within the Park. They captured and later released a group of tourists and eventually made their way to the Park's eastern border where they exited through Hoodoo Pass. After leaving Yellowstone Park, the Nez Perce continued on toward the buffalo country of the Upper Missouri River. When they learned their Crow allies could not offer them refuge, the Nez Perce turned north toward Canada. There they hoped to gain asylum among Chief Sitting Bull's Lakota Tribe, already exiled from the United States following their defeat of Colonel George A. Custer at the Little Big Horn the year before.

Sadly, the Nez Perce flight ended just 40 miles south of the Canadian border. Along Snake Creek, Montana, just north of the Bears Paw Mountains, the Nez Perce engaged the combined forces of Colonel Miles and General Howard. During a six-day siege, many prominent Nez Perce leaders died, including Chief Looking Glass, Lean Elk, and Ollikut. Chief White Bird led a group of nearly 300 to safety in Canada, where they joined Sitting Bull.

*"It was in the night when I escaped with Chief White Bird and his band all afoot. The fight was over and nothing to stay for. ... We left that night before Joseph had given his gun to General Miles. We walked out, leaving many of our friends. Some were too bad wounded to travel and had to stay. Only about forty unwounded men stayed with Joseph and there were many women and children. Many more of them than men, both wounded and unhurt. ... It was lonesome, the leaving. Husband dead, friends buried or held prisoners. I felt that I was leaving all that I had but I did not cry."*

—Watátonmay

On October 5, 1877, Chief Joseph, believing the remaining Nez Perce would be sent to the reservation in Lapwai, Idaho, agreed to surrender. The war was over. Following their surrender, the Nez Perce faced eight years of exile in Kansas and Oklahoma, enduring sickness, starvation, and death before they were allowed to return to the Pacific Northwest.

Bear Paw Battlefield, Montana



Stephanie Martin, NPS

As you travel the Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail (NPNHT) we hope that these Auto Tour Guides provide you with an overview of the events leading up to and during the summer of 1877. If you would like to reflect further on these important events a wealth of information can be found on the NPNHT Learning Center page of the NPNHT website. There is also information for younger audiences including Coloring and Activities books which can be downloaded:

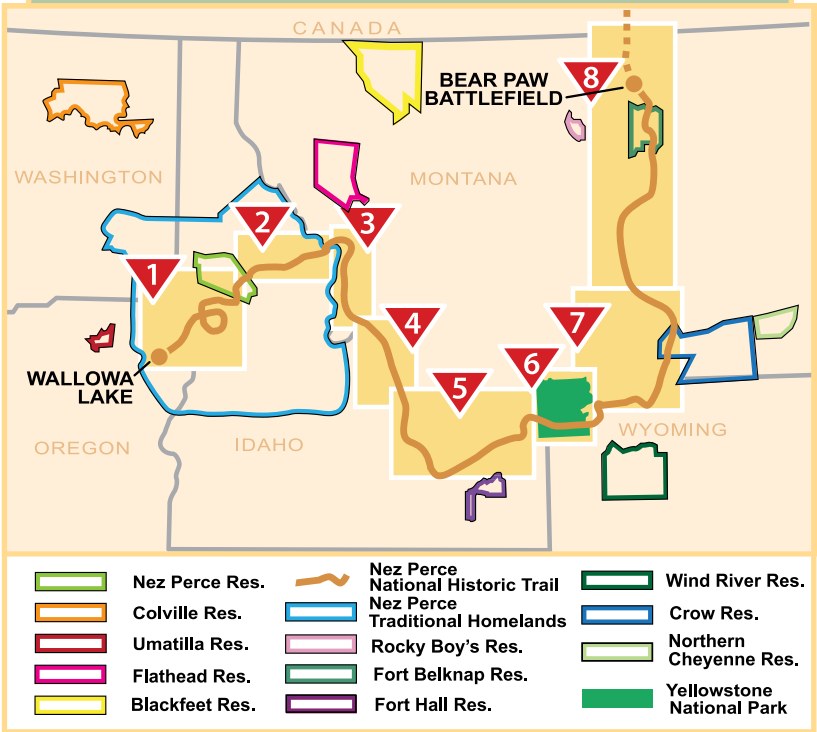
[www.fs.usda.gov/main/npnht/learningcenter](http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/npnht/learningcenter)

Many people have spent years studying historic documents and visiting the sites in an effort to understand the movement of people and the sequence of events in the Summer of 1877. Visitors who wish more detail may want to refer to some of those works: *Following the Nez Perce Trail, A guide to the Nee-Me-Poo National Historic Trail* by Cheryl Wilfong; and *Nez Perce Summer 1877, The U.S. Army and the Nee-Me-Poo Crisis* by Jerome A. Greene, and *Yellow Wolf His Own Story and Hear Me My Chiefs* by L.V. McWhorter.

## Notes

## Nez Perce National Historic Trail Auto Tours

See the Auto Tour brochure for each trail segment indicated on the map below for specific route information.



- 1** Wallowa Valley, Oregon, to Kooskia, Idaho
- 2** Orofino, Idaho to Lolo, Montana
- 3** Lolo, Montana, to the Big Hole National Battlefield, Montana, through the Bitterroot Valley
- 4** Big Hole, Horse Prairie and Lemhi Valleys
- 5** Leadore, Idaho, to Yellowstone National Park, Montana
- 6** Through Yellowstone National Park
- 7** Yellowstone National Park to Canyon Creek, Montana
- 8** Canyon Creek to Bear Paw



Auto Tour Brochures are available at local visitor centers, from the NPNHT Staff or from the NPNHT website at, [www.fs.usda.gov/npnht/](http://www.fs.usda.gov/npnht/)

For an interactive, Google Earth virtual tour of the trail please visit the Nez Perce Trail Foundation website at [www.nezpercetrail.net](http://www.nezpercetrail.net)

# This Trail is a Sacred Trust for All Americans

*“We, the surviving Nez Perces, want to leave our hearts, memories, hallowed presence as a never-ending revelation to the story of the event of 1877. These trails will live in our hearts.*

*We want to thank all who visit these sacred trails, that they will share our innermost feelings. Because their journey makes this an important time for the present, past and future.”*

*– Frank B. Andrews, Nez Perce descendant*

For more information on the Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail visit on the Web at [www.fs.usda.gov/npnht](http://www.fs.usda.gov/npnht) or contact:

**Nez Perce National Historic Trail**  
12740 Highway 12  
Orofino, ID 83544  
(208) 476-8234  
[SM.FS.npnht@usda.gov](mailto:SM.FS.npnht@usda.gov)

**Nez Perce National Historical Park**  
(208) 843-7001  
[www.nps.gov/nepe](http://www.nps.gov/nepe)

**Nez Perce Trail Foundation**  
[www.nezperctrail.net](http://www.nezperctrail.net)

**The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation**  
(509) 634-2200  
[www.colvilletribes.com](http://www.colvilletribes.com)

**Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation**  
(541) 276-3165  
[www.ctuir.org](http://www.ctuir.org)

**Nez Perce Tribe**  
(208) 843-2253  
[www.nezperce.org](http://www.nezperce.org)

**Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest**  
(406) 683-3900  
[www.fs.usda.gov/bdnf](http://www.fs.usda.gov/bdnf)

**Caribou-Targhee National Forest**  
(208) 524-7500  
[www.fs.usda.gov/ctnf](http://www.fs.usda.gov/ctnf)

**Custer-Gallatin National Forests**  
5001 Soutgate Suite 2  
Billings, MT 59101  
(406) 255-1400  
[www.fs.usda.gov/custergallatin](http://www.fs.usda.gov/custergallatin)

**Salmon-Challis National Forest**  
(208) 756-2215  
[www.fs.usda.gov/scnf](http://www.fs.usda.gov/scnf)

**Yellowstone National Park**  
(307) 344-7381  
[www.nps.gov/yell](http://www.nps.gov/yell)

**Henry's Lake State Park**  
(208) 558-7532 (summer)  
(208) 558-7368 (winter)  
[parksandrecreation.idaho.gov/parks/henrys-lake](http://parksandrecreation.idaho.gov/parks/henrys-lake)

**Upper Snake Bureau of Land Management Field Office**  
(208) 524-7500  
[www.blm.gov/idaho](http://www.blm.gov/idaho)

**Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge**  
(406) 276-3536  
[www.fws.gov/refuge/red\\_rock\\_lakes/](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/red_rock_lakes/)

**Island Park Historical Society**  
P.O. Box 224  
Island Park, ID 83429

**Yellowstone Historic Center**  
(406) 646-7461  
[www.yellowstonehistoriccenter.org](http://www.yellowstonehistoriccenter.org)

**Idaho Scenic Byways**  
(208) 334-2470  
[www.visitidaho.org/scenic-byways/](http://www.visitidaho.org/scenic-byways/)



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