

Payette National Forest

VISITOR GUIDE



Deep Canyons, Deep Wilderness, Deep Snow



Box Lake



Backcountry skiing



Whitebird Ridge, near Lockwood Point



South Fork of the Salmon River.

*"The mountains are calling
and I must go."*

- John Muir

Fast Forest Facts

Acres: 2.3 million

Species of mammals & birds:
Over 300

**Deepest Canyon in North
America:** Hells Canyon at 8,000'

Backcountry Airstrips: There
are six airstrips on the Payette
National Forest

Spanning seasons in a day, visitors can explore the contrasts of the Payette National Forest. From warm, deep canyons to crisp alpine lakes, the forest is the centerpiece for outdoor recreation in Idaho's Heartland. This spectacular land is bordered by two of the deepest canyons in North America: the Salmon River Canyon on the north and Hells Canyon of the Snake River on the west. To the east lies the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness, one of the largest congressionally designated Wilderness areas in the lower 48 states.

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Come see for yourself!

*This Visitor Guide provides the information you need to make the most of
your Payette National Forest experience.*

Get to Know Us

Smith Mountain

Special Places

Special Places



Suicide Rock in Monumental Creek

Over 120 million years ago, the lands of the Payette National Forest were beachfront property on the western edge of North America. It took eons of collisions, subductions, melting, folding, and tilting for west-central Idaho to appear as it does today. The waterfront edge now forms the backbone of Marshall Mountain and War Eagle Mountain, while Goose Creek Canyon shows off a subduction zone. Molten rock rose into the overlying rocks and formed the Idaho Batholith, a colossal granite body underlying most of the central portion of the forest.

Connected with other public lands, the forest is part of an expansive, uninterrupted landscape that provides superb habitat for an exceptional array of big game, upland birds, and other wildlife. Over 300 different species of wildlife make their home on the Payette National Forest. Some are common and easily spotted from roads and trails, while others are more reclusive and require perseverance to see.

It is an area nationally recognized for dramatic landscapes, from craggy mountain peaks and shimmering lakes to plummeting river canyons. Vast expanses of unroaded backcountry provide solitude, although facilities and amenities are nearby. Far reaching trails support incredible winter sports, destination hunting, and traditional gathering of forest products.



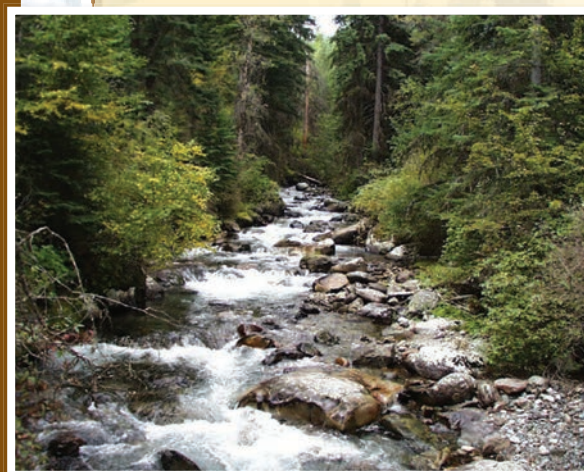
© David P Lewis

Great grey owl
(P. Klasner)

Whatever your particular interest, you are bound to leave the Payette National Forest with a keener sense of the earth's landscape and your place in it.

Rapid River

Especially popular in the spring for early hiking and biking, and in the fall for hunting, the Rapid River area offers excellent opportunities for a more primitive recreation experience. Multiple trails present hikers the chance to view wildlife, wildflowers, and amazing scenery.



Rapid River

Rapid River is a designated *Wild and Scenic River* for its entire length and is important habitat for threatened Chinook salmon, steelhead, and bull trout. Within the Rapid River area on the New Meadows District, Black Lake is a popular recreational destination, which is accessible via road 002 from Council.

Sheep Rock

Sheep Rock is a scenic overlook and interpretive trail in a fairly remote area on the Idaho rim of Hells Canyon. At an elevation of 6,847 feet, the overlook provides visitors with an up-close, birds-eye-view of one of the greatest lava extrusions of geologic time. Your journey to Sheep Rock from Council (via road 002) takes you through some of central Idaho's most amazing country. Broad vistas of jagged mountains and open spaces awash with wildflowers accentuate your trip. Birds of prey and the possible sighting of bighorn sheep or mountain goats will thrill the wildlife viewer.

Sheep Rock is recognized as a National Natural Landmark. Its trail is designated a National Recreational Trail.



Sheep Rock Interpretive Site

© Timothy Epp

Wilderness

Wilderness is an area of federal land that is free from modern human manipulation, is undeveloped and natural, and provides outstanding opportunities for solitude and a primitive type of recreation.

The Payette National Forest has portions of two congressionally designated wilderness areas. The Hells Canyon Wilderness (administered by the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area and Wallowa-Whitman National Forest) is 214,944 acres of high mountain peaks, ominous canyon rim-rocks, and quiet solitude. Split by the Snake River, the Hells Canyon Wilderness straddles the Idaho and Oregon state boundary. At lower elevations, dry, steep slopes break over into the Snake River canyon.



Big Creek in the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness

In the high country are the towering peaks, and alpine lakes of the Seven Devils Mountain Range—said to be named for a vision of seven dancing devils that appeared to an Indian lost in the area. For more information, visit www.fs.usda.gov/attmain/wallowa-whitman/specialplaces/



Snake River flowing through Hells Canyon

The Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness (administered by four national forests in central Idaho) is a place of steep, rugged mountains, deep canyons, and wild, whitewater rivers. The Salmon River Mountains, located south of the Main Salmon and west of the Middle Fork, are the most massive range, and dominate the Wilderness. North of the Main Salmon River are the Clearwater Mountains, and east of the Middle Fork are the Bighorn Crags. For more information on the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness, go to www.fs.usda.gov/goto/FrankWildPNF/. Explore these Wilderness areas alone, or contact the forest for information on the numerous outfitters and guides that can assist you with your adventure.

For more information on the National Wilderness Preservation System, visit www.wilderness.net.



Chinese coins



Heritage Resources

Waiting silently in the canyons and mountains of the Payette National Forest are reminders of the centuries-old relationships between people and the land. There is a rich history of cultural diversity here with a story to tell.

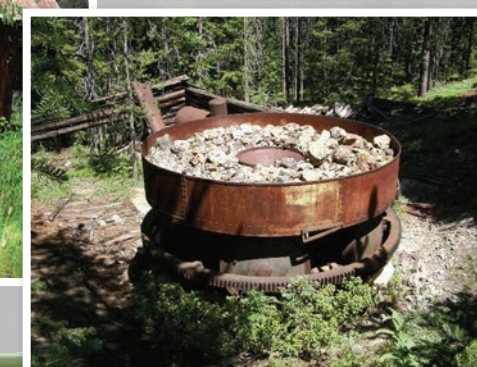
Many American Indians were the first to call southwestern Idaho home. They continue their traditions today through fishing, hunting, and gathering. Lewis and Clark's explorations, Oregon Trail emigration, and gold discoveries brought people from all over the world to Idaho. On the Payette National Forest, the remains of mining towns and cemeteries give voice to some of the thousands of Chinese immigrants who arrived after the California Gold Rush of 1848, seeking fortunes in the gold fields, railroad camps, fish canneries, and on the great agricultural ranches of the southwest. As they ventured into the Idaho wilderness, they brought their cultures and customs into these remote areas, creating a society within the existing Euro-American culture.



Snowshoe Mine

Today, the Warren Mining District remains as an important vestige of ethnic heritage, and several sites in the district are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. At the Chinese Cemetery at Warren, interpretive signs lead visitors through this historic site.

From 1933 to 1941, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) were major contributors to the development of the Payette National Forest, where four camps were in operation. The buildings at the McCall District Administrative Site and the Paddy Flat Administrative Site are visible reminders of their accomplishments.



Chilean mill at Venable Mine

Get to Know Us

Special Places

Fire Lookouts

Fire protection has long been an integral part of the Forest Service, and the Payette National Forest has been home to as many as 70 fire lookouts in its past. Only 13 remain that are still staffed; most have been removed, burned over in a fire, or have melted into the landscape. Six lookouts are on the National Historic Lookout Register. There are examples of several styles of construction still visible, from a single steel tower to early wooden structures.

Sturgil Fire Lookout, built in 1934



For more information, visit the Forest Fire Lookout Association at: www.firelookout.org



The lookouts are staffed through the summer and fall months, and personnel are usually available to give you a glimpse at an era of fire detection that is rapidly being replaced by more modern fire-spotting techniques.

- ✦ *Krassel Ranger District: Sheepeater (within the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness), Williams Peak, Miners Peak*
- ✦ *McCall Ranger District: Pilot Peak, Carey Dome, Brundage Mountain, War Eagle*
- ✦ *New Meadows Ranger District: Granite Mountain, Pollock Mountain, Lick Creek*
- ✦ *Council Ranger District: Horse Mountain, Indian Mountain*
- ✦ *Weiser Ranger District: Sturgil Mountain*

Payette River Scenic Byway

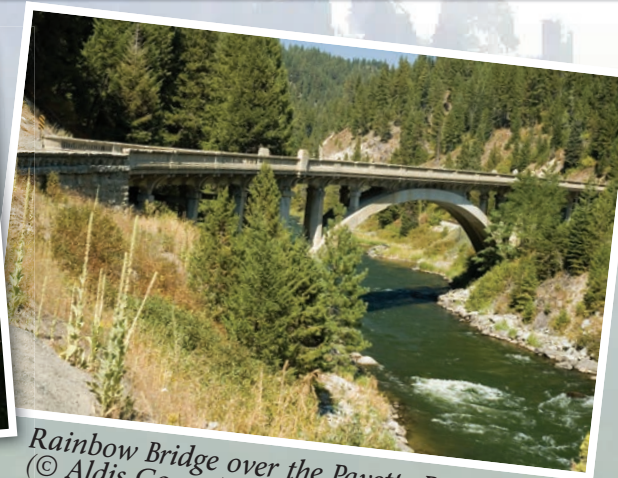
Length: 112 miles/179 km
Time to Allow: 2.25 hours

From the junction of Idaho 44 and Idaho 55 west of Boise, this byway heads north on Idaho 55 to Horseshoe Bend where it meets the Payette River. From there it passes through the Boise and Payette National Forests and the towns of Cascade and McCall before reaching the northern end at New Meadows.

For motorists, it can be a distracting drive as the river crashes and tumbles its way over the rocks through this narrow river valley. There are occasional pull-offs where you can view the wilder parts, and treat your senses to the sight, sound, smell, and rhythm of Idaho's whitewater. Along this byway are some great locations for camping, hiking, boating, fishing, and guided float trips.



South Fork of the Payette River (© Lee O'Dell)



Rainbow Bridge over the Payette River (© Aldis Garsvo)

Hells Canyon Scenic Byway

Length: 22 miles/35.2 km
Time to Allow: 3 hours round trip from Cambridge



Hells Canyon Scenic Byway winds its way along the east side of the massive rift created by the Snake River. Today, the walls of the canyon are like a museum, where pictographs and petroglyphs display evidence of early people.

The immense Snake River dividing Oregon and Idaho created much of the mighty Hells Canyon, the deepest in all of North America, plunging more than a mile below Oregon's west rim and 8,000 feet below the He Devil Peak of Idaho's Seven Devils Mountains. Towering cliffs of black and green basalt hang high above, housing mountain goats, bighorn sheep, and bald eagles.

During the summer months, visit the Hells Canyon Creek Visitor Center just below Hells Canyon Dam, the entrance to the wild and scenic part of the Snake River.

Hells Canyon (© Gene Lee)

Kayaking

Winter Recreation

Fewer places on earth offer greater potential for winter recreation than the Payette National Forest. When blanketed by snow, the Payette assumes an exaggerated primeval character that beckons to many; relatively few, however, respond to its call—a fact that enhances its appeal.

Alpine Skiing

The Payette National Forest hosts two downhill ski areas: Brundage Mountain and Little Ski Hill. Both work in close partnership with the Forest Service to guarantee exceptional skiing opportunities.

Brundage Mountain

Best known for its powder-stuffed glades and wide groomed runs, Brundage Mountain receives an average of 320" of snow each winter, and operates from Thanksgiving to mid-April. Five lifts access 1,500 acres with a vertical drop of 1,800'.

If you are looking for more remote terrain, Brundage Mountain offers snowcat skiing trips that open up 18,000 acres to backcountry skiing.

Little Ski Hill

Built in 1937 as a winter diversion for local forest workers, the Little Ski Hill has served the region's youth and skiing community for over 65 years. A T-bar provides access to 405 vertical feet of terrain. This small (but action-packed) facility is located two miles north of McCall, Idaho on Highway 55.

Nordic and Backcountry Skiing

Over 30 km of groomed trails can be found at the Bear Basin Trail System, just three miles west of McCall. Trails meander through meadows and wooded terrain, with surprising vistas around the corners. A warming hut and toilets can be found at the trailhead, along with a fee box to help defray the cost of grooming.

Countless acres of powder await the more adventurous backcountry skier wanting to get away from the noise and crowds. Popular destinations include Granite Mountain, and the Fischer Creek areas located on the New Meadows Ranger Districts, and the Lick Creek/Secesh area on the McCall Ranger District.



Backcountry skiing

The Payette Avalanche Center provides avalanche advisories and mountain weather information for the Payette and Boise National Forests: www.payetteavalanche.org



Brundage Mountain snowcat skiing

Snowmobiling

Snowmobiling's phenomenal rise in popularity on the Payette National Forest has taken the winter woods by storm. Several hundred miles of roads and groomed trails on the national forest are accessible by snow machine. The grooming program is a cooperative effort among the Payette National Forest, Valley County, and Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation.

Popular play areas for advanced snowmobile riders include Wong's Bowl and Council Mountain.

Before venturing out, make sure you have the most current Winter Travel Map, available at Forest Service offices.

Hells Canyon— Winter Recreation Without the Snow

Spring comes early in Hells Canyon, and some trails remain snow-free nearly year-round. This is a great time to hike the canyon to see wildlife and avoid the heat of summer. The best late winter trails are:

- ✦ *Eckels Creek #223*
- ✦ *Mid-slope Trail #222*
- ✦ *Allison Creek #514*
- ✦ *Kinney Creek #219*
- ✦ *Deep Creek Stairway #218*

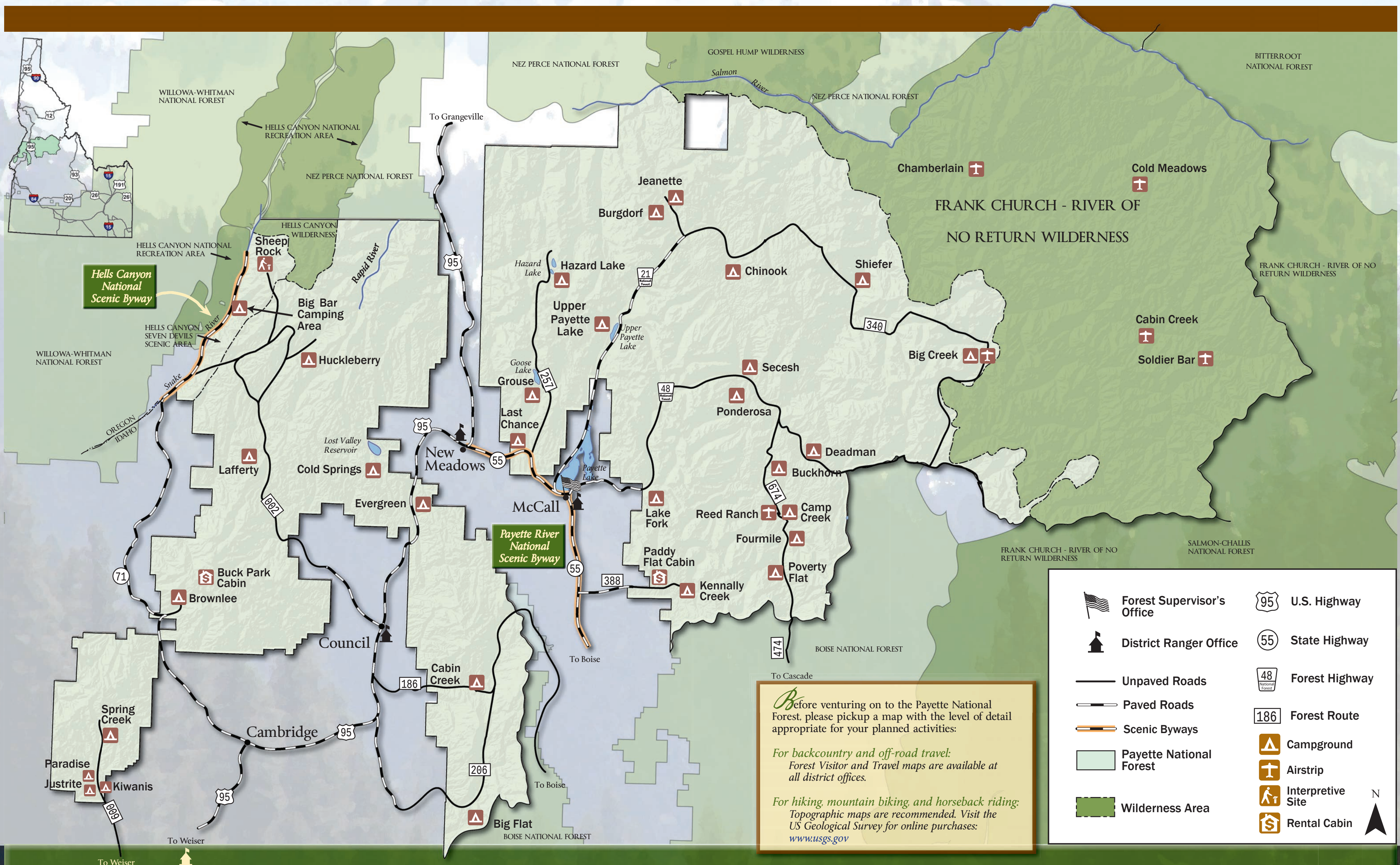
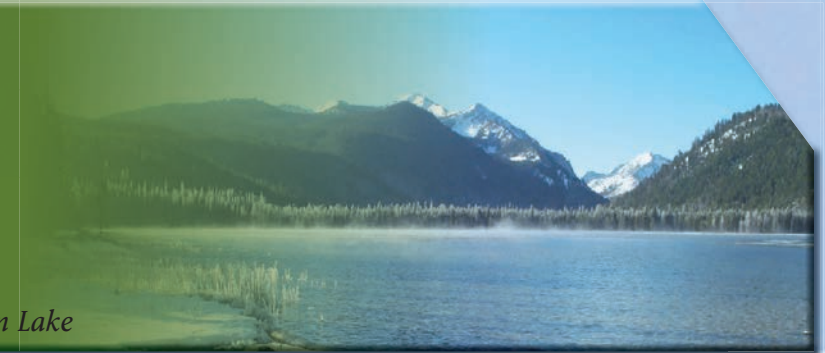
Early spring fishing can be excellent in Hells Canyon and Brownlee Reservoirs. And when you're looking for a spot to rest for the evening, Big Bar dispersed campground provides access to several hiking trails. Primitive camping is also available in pull-offs along the road between Hells Canyon Park and the dam.



© Amydala Imagery

Payette National Forest

Loon Lake



Campgrounds

Grouse Campground day use site



McCall and Krassel Ranger Districts

NAME	FEE (single/ double)	# OF SITES	SEASON	AMENITIES	
Big Creek	\$10	4	June-Oct.		No
Buckhorn Bar	\$10	10	May-Nov.		No
Burgdorf	\$10	6	June-Sept.		No
Camp Creek	\$10	4	May-Oct.		No
Chinook	\$10	9	June-Oct.		No
Deadman Bar	Free	3	April-Nov.		No
Fourmile	\$10	4	May-Oct.		No
Jeanette Creek	\$10	6	June-Oct.		No
Kennally Creek	\$10	10	June-Sept.		No
Lake Fork	\$10	9	June-Sept.		No
Paddy Flat Cabin Rental	\$100		July-Sept.	Cabin sleeps four and corrals. Water and electricity. Call the McCall Ranger District (208) 634-0400 for more information.	Yes
Ponderosa	\$10	10	June-Oct.		No
Poverty Flat	\$10	8	April-Nov.		No
Secesh	\$10	4	June-Oct.		No
Shiefer	Free	5	June-Oct.		No
Upper Payette Lake	\$10/\$15	24	June-Sept.		Yes
Upper Payette Lake Group	Varies	2	June-Sept.		Yes

America The Beautiful - National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Interagency Pass Program



The America the Beautiful Interagency Pass Program is a suite of annual and lifetime passes that provides visitors a convenient way to access federal recreation lands.

Note: The passes listed below are honored nationwide at all Forest Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, and US Fish & Wildlife Service sites charging an entrance or standard amenity fees. Entrance and standard amenity fees are not charged to persons 15 and under. Passes do not cover expanded amenity fees (such as boat launch fees or swim area fees), and may not be accepted at sites operated by concessionaires.

Annual Pass

Not accepted for camping discounts. Free annual pass for current U.S. military members.

Senior Pass

Available to US citizens 62 years and older. In some areas, is good for discounts on other fees such as camping. Must be purchased in person, with proof of age such as a driver's license.

Access Pass - Free

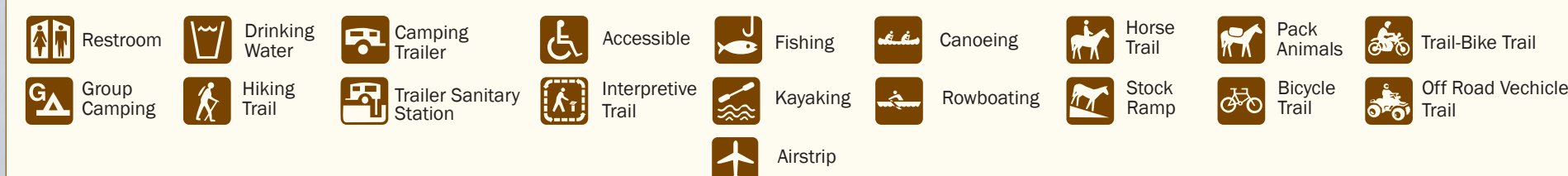
Available to US citizens that have been medically determined to have a **permanent disability** that severely limits one or more major life activities. In some areas, it is good for discounts on other fees such as camping. Must be obtained in person with written proof of disability.

For more information, visit <http://store.usgs.gov/pass>



Weiser, New Meadows, and Council Ranger Districts

NAME	FEE (single/ double)	# OF SITES	SEASON	AMENITIES	RESERVABLE
Big Flat	\$10/\$15	16	May-Nov.		No
Brownlee	\$10	11	June-Sept.		No
Buck Park Cabin Rental	\$50 per night		June-Oct.	Metal cots provided, but you must bring your own water, cooking utensils, sleeping bags, and firewood. There is no plumbing or electricity. Several motorized and non-motorized trails are located within walking distance of the cabin. For more information, call the Weiser Ranger District at (208) 549-4200.	Yes
Cabin Creek	\$10	12	May-Nov.		No
Cold Springs	\$10/\$15	33	June-Sept.		Yes
Cold Springs Group	Varies	2	June-Sept.		Yes
Evergreen	\$10/\$15	11	June-Sept.		Yes
Grouse	\$10/\$15	22	July-Oct.		Yes
Hazard Lake	\$10/\$15	11	July-Sept.		No
Huckleberry	\$10	8	June-Nov.		No
Justrite	Free	4	June-Sept.		No
Kiwanis	Free	1	June-Sept.		No
Lafferty	\$10	8	May-Nov.		No
Last Chance	\$10	26	May-Sept.		No
Paradise	Free	2	June-Sept.		No
Spring Creek	\$10/\$15	12	June-Sept.	<i>Day use sites available for groups of 25-100</i>	Yes



SINGLE: Up to 8 people and 2 vehicles **DOUBLE:** More than 8 people and up to 4 vehicles
All campgrounds are "Pack it In, Pack it Out" - no trash service provided.

To see the most current campground and cabin rental opportunities or to make reservations, go to www.recreation.gov, or call the National Reservation Service at 1-877-444-6777.



Spring Creek Campground

RECREATION.gov
 BRING HOME A STORY

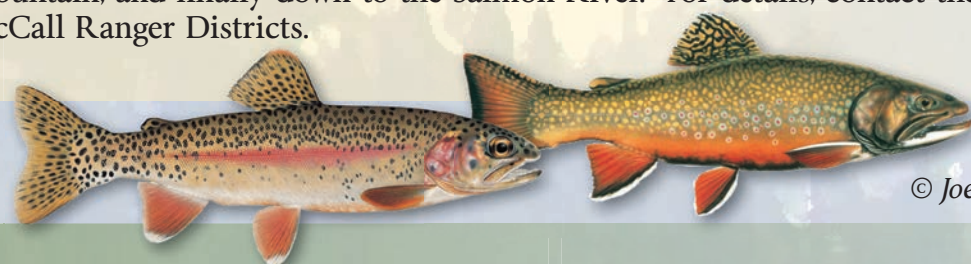
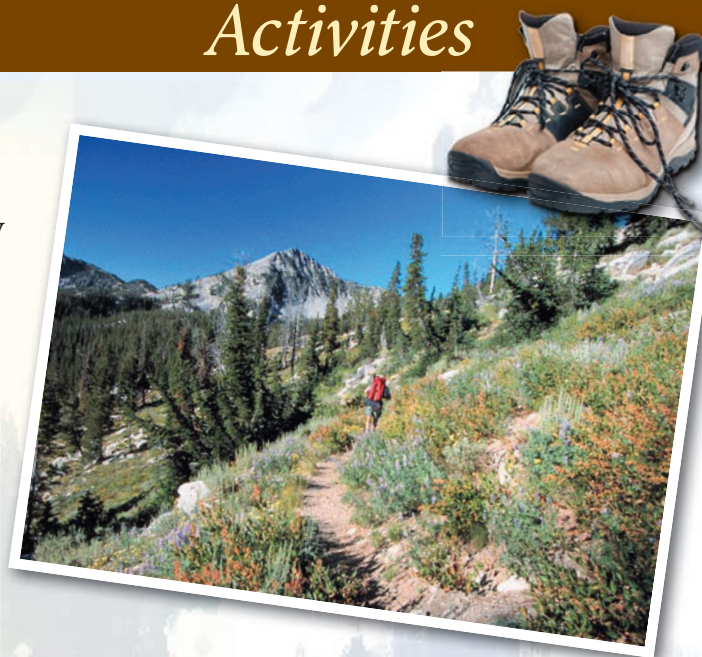
Recreating on the Payette National Forest

Activities

Hiking

With approximately 2,000 miles of trail on the Payette National Forest, there is diversity for all users to enjoy. Some trails on the forest are designated for motorized use, but many trails are solely for non-motorized opportunities. For more details on these designations please refer to the Motor Vehicle Use Map and the Forest Visitor maps available at any District Office.

A highlight of the Payette National Forest trail system is the **Idaho State Centennial Trail**. The trail—which starts in Nevada and ends in Canada—was designated as a part of the 1990 Centennial Celebration. The route enters the forest near Caton Lake, goes north to Ponderosa Campground, then to Loon Lake and Burgdorf, over to Marshall Mountain, and finally down to the Salmon River. For details, contact the Krassel or McCall Ranger Districts.



© Joe Tomelleri

Fishing

The Payette National Forest has about 400 lakes and reservoirs and 4,000 miles of fish-bearing streams. Over 46 different species of fish inhabit our waters. They vary from warm water bass, crappies, and catfish in Hell's Canyon Reservoir to native and introduced salmonids in colder waters. Native species, such as northern pikeminnow, mountain whitefish, and suckers, provide diversions from trout fishing. The Snake and Salmon Rivers contain white sturgeon that are regulated as a catch and release fishery.

In recent years, a sport fishing season for Chinook salmon has lured anglers to the South Fork of the Salmon River. This popular season occurs when the Idaho Department of Fish and Game determines the run is sufficient to sustain a harvest.



© Pavol Kmeto

For more fishing information:

Fishing regulations vary widely across the Forest, and include "put-and-take" fishing, trophy fish lakes, catch and release fishing for some native species, harvesting-encouraged areas for non-native species, and even some fishing for cultivated salmon and steelhead.

Visit the Idaho Department of Fish and Game at fishandgame.idaho.gov

The Forest has over 500 miles of single-track two-wheel motorized trails for both novice and expert riders. There are also several ATV trails in the Burgdorf area, on the McCall Ranger District, and in the Hitt Mountain area on the Weiser Ranger District.

Please pick up a Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) at any local Forest Service Office. It identifies the roads, trails and area where motor vehicles are allowed. In general, motorized travel off of designated roads and trails is prohibited, but the MVUM will show any exceptions.



Quick Link to Payette NF MVUM Map



Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) Use

We value public land for a variety of uses, among them the opportunity to take ourselves and our vehicles off the paved highway and into a natural setting. Off road vehicles are permitted on designated trails and roads within the Payette National Forest. These trails and roads are built specifically to minimize the impact of vehicles on fragile ecosystems, such as meadows and streams.

Know Before You Go

tread lightly!
LEAVING A GOOD IMPRESSION



- T** ravel only where motorized vehicles are permitted.
- R** espect the rights of others to enjoy their activities undisturbed.
- E** ducate yourself by getting maps and information; ask owners' permission to cross private property.
- A** void streams, lakeshores, meadows, muddy roads, steep hillsides, wildlife, and livestock.
- D** rive responsibly to protect the environment and preserve opportunities to enjoy your vehicle on wild lands.

Unpaved and primitive roads present special challenges even in good weather. Before you take off, think about another challenge – your responsibility to "Tread Lightly."
Here's how:

Dispersed Camping

Camping is free in most remote areas of the forest and is an extremely popular way of "getting away from it all" in the summer and fall months. Several of the popular camping areas have minimal facilities (such as fire rings and restrooms) to protect the natural resources. Other areas are just a pull-off from the road. Your vehicle may go up to 300 feet from a designated open road on most areas of the forest for the purpose of dispersed camping. Some road corridors are closed to motorized off-road camping due to concerns about resource damage. Please refer to the Motor Vehicle Use Map for details.

Wash Away from Water

Soap degrades water quality and harms fish and other aquatic life. Wash at least 200 feet from the water.

Use Established Fire Rings Wisely

- ☞ Check at the local Ranger Station for current fire restrictions. Remember, they can change on a daily basis.
- ☞ Use existing fire rings if possible.
- ☞ To put out a campfire, slowly pour water onto the fire and stir with a shovel. Continue adding and stirring until all material is cool to touch.
- ☞ Do not simply bury your fire. The coals can smolder and re-ignite.
- ☞ NEVER leave a fire unattended, even if there are no flames present. Many wildfires have been caused by abandoned campfires.



© Gorilla

Human Waste

Bacteria and viruses found in human feces are known to cause many different gastrointestinal diseases. Please follow these simple steps when nature calls:

- ☞ Find a spot at least 200 steps from any water source.
- ☞ Dig a hole 6-8 inches deep and bury human waste.
- ☞ Pack out used toilet paper.

Be Bear Aware!

If bears become accustomed to human food, they may become aggressive towards people or cause property damage. Eventually, these bears may have to be destroyed.

- » Keep a clean campsite. Store food and garbage in closed vehicles and out of sight.
- » Never put food scraps in the campfire - it attracts bears and skunks.
- » Don't keep food (or anything that smells) in tents.
- » Store stoves in a secure place when not in use.
- » Some bears also target motor oil, insect repellent, liquor and other things that look like food. Keep these items stored properly.

For more information, visit www.BeBearAware.org.

Please remember: "Pack it In, Pack it Out" - there are no trash facilities on the Payette National Forest.



© Anan Interpretive

Noxious Weeds

Noxious weeds can rapidly displace native plant species that provide habitat for wildlife and food for people and livestock. Here's how you can help reduce their spread:

- * Learn to recognize common weed species.
- * Don't camp or drive in weed infested areas.
- * Don't pick the flowers of noxious weeds and take them home.
- * When using pack animals, carry only feed that is certified weed-free. Within 96 hours before entering backcountry areas, feed them only weed-free food.



Dalmatian toadflax (© Bob Nowierski)



Spotted knapweed (© John Cardina)



Payette National Forest



Your Recreation Fee Dollars at Work

Recreation fees have made a real difference in our ability to serve our national forest visitors because these dollars can be reinvested into services and infrastructure. Some of the recent highlights of accomplishments on the Payette National Forest include:

- ¢ Increased maintenance at all campgrounds
- ¢ Funded campground hosts at major campgrounds
- ¢ Water testing at all fee campgrounds
- ¢ Continued work on forest rental cabins
- ¢ Future Environmental Assessment work to bring new outfitter and guide opportunities to the forest
- ¢ Designed and printed this Visitor Guide



Lupine (© Richard Fitzer)



Northern Idaho ground squirrel

Volunteering on Payette NF

Check out the Forest Service Volunteer Program on the Payette National Forest. The jobs are exciting and diverse, scenery is exceptional and co-workers are friendly. For more information, contact any Forest Service office or visit www.volunteergov.



Salmon River (© Gregory Frye)

Contact Information

Payette National Forest Supervisors Office
500 North Mission Street
McCall, Idaho 83638
(208) 634-0700

McCall District Ranger Office
102 West Lake Street
McCall, Idaho 83638
(208) 634-0400

Krassel District Ranger Office
500 North Mission Street
McCall, Idaho 83638
(208) 634-0400

New Meadows District Ranger Office
P.O. Box J
3674 Highway 95
New Meadows, Idaho 83654
(208) 347-0300

Council Ranger District Office
2092 Highway 95
Council, Idaho 83612
(208) 253-0100

Weiser Ranger District Office
851 East 9th Street
Weiser, Idaho 83672
(208) 549-4200

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Visit us at www.fs.usda.gov/payette