



CLIMBING MT. BORAH

Welcome to the Lost River Ranger District – THE TOP OF IDAHO - Of Idaho's 25 highest mountains 24 are in our District, Borah Peak and Leatherman Peak are the two tallest.

Recommended climbing season is Early-July to Mid-August. Many of the 50 peakers say this is the toughest climb. It is ranked 11th in the country with 3,000-5,000 climbers each year. NO PERMIT IS REQUIRED.

GETTING THERE

Mt. Borah will be reached by driving north of Mackay (21 Miles) or South of Challis (33 miles). Between mile posts 129 & 130 a sign will indicate the trailhead turnoff. 2.5 miles down this road (Birch Springs Rd.) brings you to a large flat area for trailers and motorhomes. This is just before the switchback that leads to the campground and trail head. The trailhead parking is for regular size vehicles only. At the end of the road there is day parking and a turn around.

CAMPING

5 campsites are available, each containing a firepit and picnic table. There is a vault toilet but no water. Campsites are on a first come, first serve basis. We encourage you to check the fire danger rating if you plan to build a fire for warmth or cooking. If conditions are extreme no fires will be allowed. Remember, if it is too hot to touch it is too hot to leave. No garbage services are provided. If you pack it in, pack it out.

THE CLIMB

The climb to the summit is not very difficult in terms of complexity, but it can be quite fatiguing due to the sheer steepness. Over the course of 3.5 miles, you will ascend 5,400'. Two miles of that is sheer altitude. The incline starts at 7400' but trail begins at the turnaround and goes up the sagebrush grass slope to the ridge. The real climb begins at the brutally steep west ridge. Emerging from the timberline (10,600') the route continues to follow the ridge which is not as steep. The next steep portion is Chicken Out Ridge (11,400') which is knife edge and will require scrambling using both hands and feet. The route continues to follow the ridge through a steep couloir that is usually draped with packed snow. The trail curves to the north ascending the south ridge and slope of Borah Peak.

The climb is rated as a difficult day trip taking the average hiker 6 to 7 hours not counting time at the top. The average round trip is 10 hours. Many choose to camp on the ridge the first night. The summit is marked with a USGS survey marker, and a register is placed nearby.

THE VIEW

The view is said to be outstanding from the summit.

The Lemhi range lies to the east and northeast; the Salmon River mountains lie to the north; the White Clouds, Boulders and Sawtooth's to the west; the Pioneer and White Knobs to the southwest. Leatherman Peak (2nd highest mountain) lies to the southeast.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

Leave as early as possible. Keep abreast of the weather conditions. Patterns often change in the afternoon bringing thunderstorms in the summer. They build up quickly and within a few hours can be frightening if caught on an exposed ridge. Bring plenty of water. Do not drink water from a stream. Even though cool and clear it may contain bacteria, including Giardia and chemical purifiers are not always 100% effective. For sanitation purposes and to prevent spread of disease bury or cover all human waste. This will keep the landscape pristine and make the climb more pleasurable for all. Notify someone of your plans in case of an accident or emergency.

HISTORY

The sharp line across the base of Borah runs over 20 miles is 14' tall and was formed during the Borah Earthquake October 28, 1983. The quake measured 7.3 on the Richter scale. The Valley dropped 4" and the mountain rose 1". There are interpretive signs on the Double Springs Road at the Earthquake information site. This spot fully explains the area quake and is about 2 miles north on Double Springs Rd.

INTERESTING FACTS

The 1ST register was placed in 1930 by Robert & Dave Fulton & Ray Odle (Francis Smith).

The 1st government register was placed in 1934.

The mountain was named in 1939.

The fastest known climbing time by a male is 1:20:07 ascent and 1:53:47 car to car. By a female it is 1:40:32 ascent and 2:29:16 car to car.

"High Pointing" is a hobby for many with the goal of climbing the highest peak in each state.

There have been 3 deaths on the mountain due to avalanches. A young couple in 1977 from Idaho Falls perished when they attempted a November climb. They were on the west side of the peak at an elevation of 9500'. The bodies were not recovered until 9 months later.

June 13th, 1987, a Boise architect slid 700' down a ledge and was buried in 15' of snow. He was a member of an Idaho search and rescue unit. He had just proposed to his girlfriend before the accident at the summit.

Even as a non-technical climb Custer County search and rescue averages two calls per summer.

Most accidents occur while on the descent and not the ascent.

ONLINE RESOURCES

www.terraserver.com (Satellite Imaging)

www.idahoclimbingguide.com

www.idahosummits.com

www.climbingidaho.com

www.summitpost.org/borah-peak/150190

www.theoutbound.com/idaho/hiking/climb-mount-borah

Lost River Office 208-588-3400

www.fs.usda.gov/scnf

www.facebook.com/scnf

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