

OREGON TRAIL-BEAR LAKE SCENIC BYWAY



Southeast Idaho, from the Utah border, through Soda Springs and west to McCammon, has been traversed by travelers since before recorded history. First by various tribes of natives on their way to "Po-Ha-Ba," the healing waters of the hot springs at Lava Hot Springs, later by fur trappers, then emigrants on the Oregon Trail. The Union Pacific Railroad opened the area to freight and passengers circa 1880, McCammon was a stop on "The Gold Road," the stagecoach and supply road from Salt Lake City to the gold mines in Montana. This guide starts at the Utah/Idaho border and will guide you to each site along the byway. If you are starting in McCammon follow it from the bottom up.



1. Bear Lake Portal and Overlook

Often called The Caribbean of the Rockies for its intense turquoise blue water. Bear Lake is home to several species of fish found nowhere else in the world, such as the Bonneville Cisco. During pioneer times, Bear Lake was the site of Mountain Men Rendezvous' and fur trading. Year round recreation includes swimming, boating, fishing, hiking, biking, and snowmobiling. Just north of the Utah line on U.S. 89 at Milepost 2.2. 42° 1'59.23"N, 111°23'49.77"W



2. Gutzon Borglum Monument

Gutzon Borglum was a prolific American sculptor best know for his presidents' sculptures on Mount Rushmore, South Dakota. Borglum was born in St. Charles, Idaho in 1867. His marble head sculpture of Abraham Lincoln is on display in the Capitol Rotunda. Two stone monuments honoring Borglum are located in St. Charles at Milepost 8 on U.S. 89 between Center Street and 1st North. 42° 1'59.23"N, 111°23'49.77"W



3. North Beach State Park - North

North Beach State Park offers over two miles of sandy beach for day use. The park sits on the north end of Bear Lake which is 20 miles long and 8 miles wide. It is a water sports Mecca attracting boaters, water skiers, and beach lovers from all over the country. Anglers can try for a native cutthroat or lake trout in the summer. In the winter, they come back with buckets and nets when the Bonneville Cisco run. 4 miles east of St. Charles. 42° 7'12.31"N, 111°17'48.86"W



3. North Beach State Park - East

East Beach, with 966 acres, features a 48-unit campground with water, electricity, and dump station. It also has two group camp areas with electricity, water, shelters, grills, and tables. South of the campground is a large day-use area with three group shelters and 5 acres of grass, drinking water, restrooms, tables, and fire grills. It has about 2.5 miles of beach access. It has a small boat ramp that is usable during high water. 7 miles from North Beach on East Shore Road. 42° 1'44.63"N, 111°15'25.82"W



4. Minnetonka Cave

Minnetonka is the largest limestone cave in the state. Located near the town of St. Charles, the cave is a geologic wonder dating back nearly 320 million years. Breathtaking passageways extending more than 2000 feet into the hill side contain nine rooms of fascinating stalactites, stalagmites and banded travertine. Located outside St. Charles on paved St. Charles Canyon Road, which leads 10 miles west up St. Charles Creek to the cave. 42° 5'17.12"N, 111°31'9.79"W



5. Bear Lake National Wildlife Refuge

Established in 1968, the wildlife refuge is a major nesting area for Great Basin Canada geese, sandhill cranes, and mallards, pintails, canvasback, and redhead ducks. Other waterfowl include herons, egrets, terns, rails, ibis, bitterns, grebes, avocets, and white pelicans. The refuge's Mud Lake Unit is a favorite resting area for several thousand ducks and geese each spring and fall. Photo by Jim Parker. 42°14'12.67"N, 111°21'12.63"W

Turn East from U.S. 89 in Paris onto Second North and travel 2-1/2 miles.



6. Paris Tabernacle & Historic District

Paris has a remarkable architectural legacy. One of which is the Paris Tabernacle, a Romanesque Revival style red sandstone church built between 1884 and 1889. Other significant local buildings include the Paris Hotel, the Pendry Drug, and the Bear Lake Country Courthouse. Guided tours are conducted daily in the Summer. Milepost 15.8 on U.S. 89, Main Street, Paris. 42°13'32.77"N, 111°24'1.37"W



7. National Oregon-California Trail Center

The National Oregon-California Trail Center is located in Montpelier. The center has on display the "Living History," a dramatic recreation of the pioneers' journey from Missouri to Clover Creek. Located on the actual Clover Creek Encampment site, the center offers visitors a unique opportunity to experience pioneer life as it was more than a hundred years ago. 322 N. 4th Street, Montpelier. 42°19'19.69"N, 111°17'51.37"W



8. Oregon-California Trail Portal

Emigrants by the thousands entered present day eastern Idaho at this location traveling along the Oregon-California Trail. Emigrants on the trail encountered Big Hill, thought to be the steepest and longest descent found on the trip west. Wheel ruts are still visible today from the locking of wagon wheels. East of Montpelier at ITD roadside pullouts on U.S. 30 (Milepost 440.1, Milepost 441.7 and Milepost 454.5). N 42 14 09.73, W 111 13 59.27



9. Georgetown Relief Society Hall

This small log and wood frame building over 125 years old, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In Georgetown's early settlement, it functioned as a local chapel, schoolhouse and general meeting hall. For many years it was a focal point for the female society of this small community. 161 North 3rd West Street, one-half block west of Main Street and U.S. 30 in Georgetown. 42°28'26.90"N, 111°22'15.00"W



10. Georgetown Summit

Over 300,000 emigrants used the Oregon-California Trail between 1840 and 1869. Three ruts are visible at the bottom of the hill, indicating that the wagons and oxen spread out to reduce the dust. The route crossed over this summit heading northwesterly for Soda Springs, and then went on to the Snake River at Hudson Bay Company's Fort Hall. On U.S. 30, 3 miles north of Georgetown. 42 31.762 N, 111 24.336 W



11. Soda Springs Oregon Trail Oasis (A - I)

This site provides information about the Pioneer Historic Byway, the Oregon Trail Bear Lake Scenic Byway, things to see and do in the park and other parts of the community, phosphate mining, the Caribou National Forest, and maps of the region. Located along US 30, in the middle of the block of Corrigan Park. 42.654998, -111.602404



11a. Bear River Overlook

A spectacular view of the Bear River. Sherman Peak, at an elevation of 9,682 feet, can be seen in the distance. Originating on the north slope of the Uinta Mountains in Utah, Bear River travels 300-miles north into Wyoming and then curves south in a horseshoe through Idaho and back into Utah and the Great Salt Lake. 1 mile northeast of U.S. 30 (Milepost 411.9). 42°34'56.32"N, 111°28'50.37"W



11b. Sulphur Springs

Sulphur Springs was noted in numerous early explorer and emigrant diaries. When the wind is right, the distinct rotten egg odor can still be easily detected along Highway 30 east of town. The cold water and bare ground continues to emit sulphur smelling gas in a bubbling "plip-plop" manner reminiscent of hot pots in Yellowstone Park. Travel one mile east of US 30 on the Sulphur Canyon road to the first road junction. An interpretive sign is one hundred yards east. 42°38'41.18"N, 111°30'23.84"W



11c. Pyramid Springs and Soda Springs Geyser

Soda Springs boasts having the world's only captive geyser. On November 30, 1937 in an attempt to find a hot water source for a local swimming pool, a well driller set free the natural geyser at a depth of 317 feet. It is located on Pyramid Spring, a travertine mound described by Fremont in his 1840s expeditions, along with other area springs. The history of Soda Springs and Caribou County is portrayed on picture boards in the Geyser Park Visitor Center. Historical artifacts and antiques are on display next door at the Enders Hotel Museum. Enter on Main Street & 1st Street South and drive 150 feet west to Geyser Park.

42°39'26.13"N, 111°36'17.32"W



11d. Brigham Young's Cabin

In June 1870, members of the LDS Church residing in the small village of Paris learned that Brigham Young and other LDS Church authorities were planning a trip to Soda Springs. Twenty men under the direction of John Walmsley built a home for President Young. The 18-by-22 foot log cabin had a floor, windows with calico ruffles, and a shingle roof. It was a truly fine home for the times. Located on the south side of U.S. 30 between 1st and 2nd East Streets. 42°39'15.84"N, 111°35'59.48"W



11e. Wagon Box Grave

In the summer of 1861, a family of seven on the way to Oregon was camped in the near the Bear River. Their horses had strayed and the family fell behind the main part of the wagon train to search for them. The family was killed by Indians sometime during the night. Members of the larger party found the bodies the next morning. They were buried together in the box from their wagon. 1st South Street entrance. Next to Geyser Park.

42°39'24.61"N, 111°36'24.07"W.



11f. Camp Connor, Morrisite Settlement, and 1863 Shoshone-Bannock Peace Treaty

Camp Connor was one of the first military posts in Idaho Territory for the protection of the overland emigration to Oregon, California. Morrisites, who followed Joseph Morris, planned a grand reformation of the Mormon Church. They accompanied General Connor and his troops to the Soda Springs area in May of 1863 and started Morristown near Soda Creek.

In late 1863, as a result of the Bear River Massacre and other military actions, General Connor coerced the Shoshone tribes to sign peace treaties at Camp Connor. Go south on 3rd West driving one block off US 30 to the back of the LDS Church parking lot. 42°39'12.15"N, 111°36'52.81"W



11g. Sheep Rock and Hudspeth's Cutoff

Sheep Rock marked the junction of the main route of the Oregon-California Trail and Hudspeth's Cutoff. Hudspeth's Cutoff diverged three-quarters of a mile west of here, striking west across the valley. Its route passed over Fish Creek divide, and the Portneuf Range, south of Lava Hot Springs. From Sheep Rock, the main branch of the Oregon-California Trail headed northwest toward Fort Hall. From U.S. 30 at Milepost 399.9, turn south on Soda Point Power Plant Road 1620. 42°39'0.85"N, 111°42'5.08"W



11g. Wagon Ruts and Trail Markers

Oregon Trail Park on the shore of Alexander Reservoir, reveals shallow swale remnants from wagons bound for Oregon and California. Accessible and easily visible from the park entrance road, the trail provokes the memories of those who traveled it. 42°39'31.89"N, 111°39'0.35"W.

Hudspeth's Cutoff - White fiberglass posts identify the Oregon-California Trail. Turn north the intersection of Idaho 34 and U.S. 30, then turn left through the park-and-ride lot and follow the old asphalt highway.

42°39'4.93"N, 111°43'43.01"W



11h. Volcanic Cinder Cones

Alexander Crater, a basaltic cinder cone is less than 20,000 years old. In 1843, John C. Fremont described Alexander Crater as "a very perfect crater." West of Sheep Rock, lava eruptions at least 140,000 years ago first blocked the Bear River from draining into the Snake River system. Between U.S. 30 and Idaho 34. 42°39'17.02"N, 111°44'55.89"W



12. Historic Chesterfield Town Site

Once a growing community on the Oregon Trail, Chesterfield, is now a ghost town. Many of the historic homes and buildings there have been restored and are worth touring. Established in 1879, Chesterfield was a Mormon settlement, and many of the 23 buildings that survive today are evidence of that way of life. The entire site of Chesterfield is now on the National Register of Historic Places. From Hwy 30 north on Old Hwy 30 to Bancroft, then 9.75 miles on Chesterfield Rd. 42°51'54.16"N, 111°54'12.89"W



13. Lower Portneuf Falls

This site offers wildlife viewing, fishing, and (further up the river) kayaking and canoeing. The Portneuf River was named after a mountain man by the name of Portneuf from Peter Skene Ogden's trapper party. On Old Highway 30 two miles north of U.S. 30. A loop road provides a place to park and a moderate walk on an undeveloped trail to Portneuf River Falls. 42°38'28.02"N, 112° 0'23.11"W



14. City of Lava Hot Springs

Formerly part of the Fort Hall Indian Reservation, the hot springs were sold to U.S. Government, then later ceded to the State of Idaho. Soak in world famous hot pools, or take a dip at the Olympic Swimming Complex. The South Bannock County Historical Center offers a complete history of the area. Explore the nearby Portneuf River for tubing, or take in a wide range of outdoor activities like hiking trails, fishing, hunting, skiing and snowmobiling. Located along Hwy 30. 42°37'10.30"N, 112° 0'25.96"W



15. City of McCammon

The Union Pacific Railroad opened the area to freight and passengers circa 1880, McCammon was a stop on "The Gold Road," the stagecoach and supply road from Salt Lake City to the gold mines in Montana. Gentile Cemetery features the impressive headstones of town founder, H.O. Harkness and his wife. Three-access points from U.S. 30 are Center Street, 12th Street, and Price Road. 42°38'56.41"N, 112°11'25.85"W

Bear Lake CVB | 69 N. Paradise Parkway Bld. C | Garden City, UT 800-448-2327 | www.bearlake.org

Lava Hot Springs | 430 East Main | Lava Hot Springs, ID| 800-423-8597 | www.lavahotsprings.org

Soda Springs | 9 West 2nd South | Soda Springs, ID | 888-399-0888 | www.sodachamber.com

OREGON TRAIL BEAR LAKE SCENIC BYWAY MAP

