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*The Most Terrible Mountains I ever beheld.*  
—Sergeant Patrick Gass, September 16, 1806

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# A History Buff's Guide to the Lolo Trail Corridor

by

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Edited by Kristopher K. Townsend

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## Chapter 1

# Introduction

Prepared for the amateur history traveler, this guide attempts to display the many historic sites along the National Forest land portion of the Lolo Trail Corridor,<sup>1</sup> together with information about their history and where to learn more. We focus on two National Historic Trails; the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail and the Nee-Me-Poo National Historic Trail. But there have been many players who have passed over or lived along this route. Key to everything is the role played by the Nimiipuu people, or Nez Perce Tribe, who lived a semi-nomadic life in the mountains, established the travel routes, and are still a keen presence in the mountains.

## What Is the Lolo Trail?



*The original Lolo Trail in red with US Highway 12 in yellow. Not shown are several travel routes that roughly follow the old trail.*

The Lolo Trail is the ancient travel route across the mountain barrier that separates the peoples of the Columbia Basin from those on the Great Plains. It was pioneered by Native Americans and became a major route for trade and travel long before European contact. For white trappers, traders, and travelers it became popular due to a fortuitous arrangement of the ridgeline between the North Fork Clearwater and Lochsa Rivers. The ridgeline provided a relatively short route with minimal ups and downs compared to other routes. The actual route changed over time due to fires, windstorms, and other changes in the mountains. Some parts of the route were near salmon streams, and hunting and gathering areas provided food for the

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<sup>1</sup> At the time of this writing, the U.S. National Forest Service refers to this historic travel corridor as the “Lolo Trail Corridor”. <https://www.fs.usda.gov/r01/nezperce-clearwater/recreation/lolo-trail-corridor> accessed 24 April 2026.

human travelers. After the horse was acquired in the early 1700s, meadows provided the necessary horse feed.

Long before Europeans came to North America, the people living on each side of the Bitterroot Range came to the mountains on foraging rounds. Small, often family related groups used large areas and developed trails between their hunting, fishing, gathering and living sites. A few routes, including the Lolo Trail, became a trading route across the mountains tying different tribal groups together in an economic, social and cultural network.

Like all Indians, the natives in the Pacific Northwest were heavily impacted by European diseases which over the course of three or more events over a half-century typically only left 10% of the native population to encounter the white prospectors, ranchers and homesteaders invading their lands. Lewis and Clark estimated a population of 6,000 Nez Perce people which correlates with the estimate by some archeologists that 60,000 Nimípuu lived in the valley of the Clearwater River before the diseases struck. That is a larger human population than lives in the area today, and they were living off local resources—largely salmon as a protein, a variety of bulbs such as camas as starch, and supplemented by other foraged berries, fish and game. Each season, these native peoples traveled in small family groups into the mountains living near the meadows and rivers. Returning year after year, they knew the land better than any visitors since, passing this knowledge down through generations—mother to daughter, father to son.

A Nimípuu story is that a young boy who was lost in the mountains was approached by *Hah-hahts*, the Grizzly Bear, who was angry that the humans were encroaching on his land. Grizzly Bear confronted the boy and gave a great roar! The boy stood unafraid and said “I can only die. Death is only part of life. I am not afraid.” Grizzly Bear was amazed at the bravery of the boy. Instead of eating him, Grizzly Bear took the boy to the backbone of the highest mountains to show him where the *quas-peet-za* (curled hairs) lived. He also showed the boy the huckleberry, chokecherry, and serviceberry. When they returned to the Kamiah Valley the bear said “here your people are living. Go tell them what you have learned about this great land, the food that has been provided for them, and the trail that will take them across the mountain.”<sup>2</sup>

## Trails Come in Many Forms

Before the arrival of the horse, the Nimípuu, like all peoples of the Americas, were afoot. They used dogs as beasts of burden, but most of the job of carrying life’s necessities fell on people whose shoes were moccasins. Those people left little lasting physical impact on the earth, and the trail was just the route people traveled with little vegetation or soil disturbance. The people seldom traveled more than 10 miles in a day and so, they knew many places and campsites that today we pass without notice.

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<sup>2</sup> Nez Perce National Historic Park, U.S. National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/nepe/learn/historyculture/lolo-trail-and-pass-history.htm>, accessed 24 April 2026.

Before the horse arrived, those travelers walked carrying their gear with only dogs as pack animals. They tended to favor ridgeline travel because they were usually more direct and their relative lack of water made for a drier trail. Because fires burn uphill, the ridgelines had less brush and thick timber. Their camps were in the same kind of places we choose to camp today—sheltered from the wind, rain and elements; good water; level ground; and after they acquired the horse, grass for horse feed. The margins between forest and meadow were also the best places to hunt.

A change came with the arrival of the horse about 1700. Horses could carry much larger loads and traveled faster which in turn, enabled trade over longer distances. But the horse also made a change that resulted in a visible and physical trail feature. The horses' hooves would break the layer of leaves and grass that protected the soil. During summer thunderstorms or heavy fall rains, water collected in the exposed soil of the trail and washed soil away. Since many trails were going up or down steep slopes, the concentrated water dug trenches. The impact is easier to find along the Lolo Travel Corridor because 7,000 years ago, Mt. Mazama in present Oregon erupted and deposited about 18 inches of ash over the Lolo area's base granite. The ash was especially fertile and supported a wide variety of lush vegetation, but when exposed to heavy rain, it eroded quickly. Where horse travel exposed the soil, a trench would quickly cut down to the old granitic bedrock leaving a trench about a foot and a half deep. We can still find those trenches, even after a hundred years of non-use.

The Lolo Trail crossing became a key route due to an arrangement of ridges running east and west just north of the Lochsa River. It is mentioned in many fur trade and Western exploration journals. Alternate mountain crossings often required a large river crossing followed by climbs up and over high ridges only to descend and cross another river. By contrast, the Lolo Trail lays mostly along high ridgelines. Although there are climbs and descents, it was easier to travel in the days before the horse and before settlers constructed trails.

Unfortunately, the “Travel on Ridges” rule of thumb tends to push aside the reality of Nimíipuu travel and has led to white historians focusing on just ridgeline routes. There were several reasons the Nimíipuu traveled in the lower elevation canyons. First, the Nimíipuu were living in the mountains, often without bringing their food supplies. They visited the streams for salmon and other aquatic foods. They knew when food and other resources were available for harvest. They moved to meet those harvest times and locations. Second, they often needed to cross in the spring, and the heavy snow zone is on the western one-third of the trail. Peaks and ridges like Rocky Ridge, Snowy Summit, Bowl Butte and Willow Ridge held snow much later in the summer than did peaks further east such as Smoking Place, Indian Post Office, or Spring Mountain. Thus, the challenge for the Nimíipuu was getting around this heavy snow zone.

The deep snow barrier in the Lolo Trail route was the ridgeline terminating at Woodrat Mountain just north of Kooskia and extending south from Rocky Ridge towards the Middle Fork Clearwater River. The low point in that ridgeline is just north of today's Mex Mountain. Crossing

that pass from the Lolo Creek<sup>3</sup> (Idaho) drainage takes you into the headwaters of Fish Creek which flows east 20 miles before entering the Lochsa River near today's Lochsa Historic Ranger Station. By following the trail down Fish Creek, it took them around the heavy snow found in June or early July. Even today with global warming, the western approach is often closed past Rocky Ridge, one of the westernmost peaks, before July 20. Like Lewis and Clark, Nimípuu traders could not wait until August to cross the mountains.

Bottom line, Lewis and Clark followed an Indian trader's trail across the mountains. The journals record that where the snow had cleared, the trail tread was there. In those days, pack horses were not led but herded as a group. A pack horse would wander out of the trail, bump into a tree with their unfamiliar pack breaking off branches and leaving an opening that could be easily detected. Today, the clues of broken tree branches and pack-rubbed trees are missing, but the braided trenches remain.

By contrast, most of the Native Peoples' use of the mountains were in small family groups moving from one small village site to another with few horses and they would have made little impact. Today, those trails are mostly lost. When Congress designated the Lewis and Clark Trail as a National Historic Trail, they did not designate the route on the ground. For many people, the Bird-Truax Trail discussed below is the Lewis and Clark trail, but for purists, it's the Native American trail of that era.

## Lolo Etymology

There are two leading theories as to the origin of the name *Lolo*.

**A Montana fur trapper** Some believe that the word came from a French trapper by the name Lawrence Rence who lived on Montana's Lolo Creek. Since the local Salish did not use "Rs" in their language, the locals could not say his name, and it got morphed into "Lolo". The Interior Salish, like the Nimípuu, were semi-nomadic, but this trapper built a cabin and remained in the same area, so it became Lolo Creek.

**Chinook Jargon** The other name source comes from a language developed in the Pacific Northwest by early fur traders and Native Americans to allow communication between the disparate groups involved in trade. The language is a short list of words which met the needs of the traders to communicate. It includes words in Spanish, Russian, French, English, and several native languages. In *Dictionary of the Chinook Jargon* by George Gibbs, "Lo-lo" is revealed to mean "carry" or "to carry".<sup>4</sup> Lolo, or "carry" could be meant to carry furs and goods upriver in a

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<sup>3</sup> There are two Lolo Creeks associated with the Lolo Trail Corridor. Near the western approach is the Lolo Creek of Idaho—a tributary of the Clearwater River. Along the eastern approach, Montana's Lolo Creek reaches the Bitterroot River near Travelers Rest at present Lolo, Montana.

<sup>4</sup> A dictionary of the Chinook jargon, or trade language of Oregon (1863) is available at <https://archive.org/details/dictionaryofchin00gibb/>.

canoe or loaded on horses. It could also be used to indicate workers who were hired to carry gear while traveling. The reasoning is that *Lolo* was used to mean a big carry like the French “portage,” which certainly fits this mountain crossing. Another reference comes from the journals kept by the trappers and traders. In several journals “Lolo” is a moniker for new arrivals. The other named members of the group are known, but never Lolo. How we wonder, can a man appear in different journals over a 30-year period, but we don’t know who he is or anything about him? But if you think in terms of Chinook Jargon, Lolo was one of the many unnamed, uneducated mixed blood trappers and workers who attended the “bourgeois” in their travels, but who, as an individual, did not merit attention.<sup>5</sup>

## Generations of Travel Ways

We can look at both trails and roads in terms of its generation just as we talk about the generation of a phone or tablet.

First generation trails are those created by people going from place to place. They made little disturbance and followed the route of easiest travel.

Second generation trails are those where someone has taken the effort to remove downed trees or rocks from the travel way. This can be confusing as a first generation Nimípuu trail adopted into a Forest Service trail system will often have some barriers removed, be rerouted around boggy areas, and have the tread dug out on side hill sections. That makes them second generation.

Third generation trails are semi-engineered trails, with a limited grade which can make them longer, i.e. switchbacks have been added. There are a few of these within the Lolo Trail Corridor.

First generation roads were built along lines of least resistance. They had no rock surfacing or culverts, so they were often boggy. For that reason, they were usually on ridgelines which were drier. Grades could be quite steep, usually 10 percent or less, but occasionally up to 15 percent. They are single lane with passing places typically quite far apart.

Second generation roads are slightly improved first generation roads. When built new, they were surveyed beforehand and grades are fairly constant. Streams have culverts, and any areas prone to moisture have a crushed rock surface. They are typically single lanes with frequent pull-outs for passing oncoming vehicles.

Third generation roads are typically built to log-haul standard—roads that can accommodate heavy logging traffic. They are part of an overall plan for commercial access to large areas. They

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<sup>5</sup> For more, see Joseph Mussulman’s comprehensive series *Naming the Lolo* at <https://lewis-clark.org/sciences/geography/naming-the-lolo/>. In particular, see *Lolo in Trade Jargon* at <https://lewis-clark.org/sciences/geography/naming-the-lolo/lolo-in-trade-jargons/>.

can be single lane, but more often are 12 feet wide with frequent passing places. Long, even grades and culverts manage water drainage.

## Historical Name Confusion

For the Nimíipuu, the purpose of traveling over the mountains was usually to hunt buffalo. Their name for the trail is *K'useyneisskit*, or “Trail to the Buffalo”. For the Kootenai Salish peoples, the Bitterroot and Clarks Fork valleys had no salmon, so to them, it was the “Trail to the Salmon”. The first written records of the crossing are the Lewis and Clark journals. Later, as the fur trade developed, traffic on the trail by non-Nimíipuu people picked up, and the route received the name Lolo Trail. Those traders and journalists passed through today’s Lewiston-Clarkston area, then on to either Weippe or Kamiah, Idaho, and then to Musselshell Meadows to access the Lolo ridgelines. Finally, at Rocky Point, just north of present Powell, the ridgeline terminated and the trail dropped down and crossed today’s Crooked Fork Creek. It then climbed to Lolo Pass at Packer Meadows and then down Montana’s Lolo Creek. There were good Nimíipuu trails on all those ridges, and that became the “Trail”. This ridgeline route is mentioned frequently in early fur trade journals, U.S. Army records, and missionary journals. In the 1860s, gold was discovered near Pierce, Idaho and gold seekers flooded in. They used the Lolo trail on their forays into the mountains looking for riches. Unfortunately, few reliable maps have survived from that era. In the more remote mountain locations, the maps that did survive are quite inaccurate.

**Bird-Truax Trail** In 1866, the Federal government appropriated \$50,000 to build a wagon road from Lewiston, Idaho over the mountains to the Virginia City, Montana gold fields. They looked at other routes and picked the Lolo Trail route as the best route. They started work near Musselshell Meadows near Weippe, Idaho and worked east. The money was woefully short, so early on, they gave up on building a *road* and instead built a *trail* suitable for pack animals. They thought they could get more money to come back and widen the trail into a road suitable for wagons. The contractors were Wellington Bird and Major Sewall Truax. The initial trail was built nearly to the Montana-Idaho state line at Lolo Pass. The project was abandoned when no more money arrived.

During the 1877 Nez Perce War, the non-treaty Nimíipuu bands used the Lolo Trail route as did the Army chasing them. Whether the Nimíipuu used the Bird-Truax Trail is debatable, but the Army hired men to cut the Bird-Truax Trail open, and the troops followed it. For the first time, there was a map of the route, not just a general description in someone’s private journal. In 1900, the Forest Service began using the trail as a mainline pack trail to serve administrative and firefighting crews, and it served in that capacity for more than 30 years.

**An evolving system** There were many other trails, often quite short segments between camps or resource areas. They went to the berry fields, gathering grounds, and hunting areas—and between family village sites. When the early Forest Service rangers hired the Nimíipuu to guide

them, they found that Nimípuu trails seldom went where the rangers wanted to go, but there was no other choice—the Forest Service did not have funding for significant trail building. Therefore, our most reliable sources for the Nimípuu trails are early Forest Service maps. We can generally assume that the trails shown on them were originally Nimípuu trails adopted into the Forest Service trail system. There are numerous anecdotal journals that tell us how horrible those trails were. At least they were horrible to someone in a hurry with a long-distance goal.

To the original route-makers, it was K'useyneisskit. The first engineered trail was built by Bird and Truax, known as the Bird-Truax Trail. With the introduction of mining, ranching and fur trapping, the area on each side of the mountains was increasingly populated by white settlers and in their newspapers, it was called the Lolo Trail. Around 1900, National Forests were established, and its rangers hired the local Nimípuu to guide them. They all called it the Lolo Trail, but they mostly were referring to the high-country ridge route. The lower elevation routes that avoided the higher snow zones were mostly forgotten. It follows, then, that the Forest Service maps documented the Lolo Trail as a ridgeline trail between the Lochsa River and the North Fork Clearwater River. It was not until the Great Depression in the 1930s and the creation of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) that the agency was able to build their own trail system.

“On October 6, 1986, congress amended the National Trails System Act by designating the Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) Trail as a component of the National Trails System.”<sup>6</sup> The USDA National Forest is charged with administering that trail, and at the time of this writing, they call it “The Nez Perce (Nimípuu or Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail”.<sup>7</sup>

Not only did the 1986 legislation give two names for that trail, but it also failed to designate the location of the trail on the ground. Nor did any legislation designate the location of the Lewis and Clark National



<sup>6</sup> Sandra Broncheau-McFarland, “Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail: Historic and Administrative Context” (USDA Forest Service, 2016), p. 30, <https://npshistory.com/publications/usfs/npnht/hac-2016.pdf> accessed 23 April 2026.

<sup>7</sup> “Welcome to the Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail”, <https://www.fs.usda.gov/trails/nez-perce-nht> accessed 23 April 2026.

Historic Trail. In the Lolo area, the route of Lewis and Clark in 1805 and 1806 is uncertain in places. A best guess line was drawn on the Clearwater National Forest maps and USGS quadrangle maps produced in the 1960s. By contrast, the route the US Army in the Nez Perce War is known. That trail is the Bird-Truax trail, which became the Lolo Trail.<sup>8</sup>

## Naming Conventions

In this guide, we will use the following naming conventions.

**Lolo Trail Corridor** An ancient travel corridor that coincides with portions of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail and the Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail.

**Lolo Trail National Historic Landmark** The portion of the Lolo Trail Corridor managed by the USDA Forest Service within the Nez Perce-Clearwater and Lolo National Forests.

**Nee-Me-Poo Trail** The ridgeline trail followed by the Nimípuu on their flight to freedom in 1877. Similar names: Bird-Truax Trail, Virginia City Wagon Road, Lolo Trail, Lewis and Clark Trail, Nimípuu Trail, Nimiipuu Trail, the Northern Nez Perce Trail, and K'useyneisskit.<sup>9</sup>

**Nimípuu trail** Any trail used for generations by the Nimípuu and Interior Salish to access rivers and valleys—often branching from the Nee-Mee-Poo Trail.

**Lewis and Clark Trail** The route followed by the Lewis and Clark Expedition fall 1805 and spring 1806. Much of their route was on the Nee-Me-Poo Trail, but significant portions followed other Nimípuu trails.

**Lolo Motorway** Forest Service Road 500 (FS 500), commonly known as the Lolo Motorway, is a narrow, primitive, dirt road built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. It passes through the Lolo Trail Corridor. Other names include Lolo Trail Road and Lolo Divide Road.<sup>10</sup>

Over the past century several people have attempted to define Lewis and Clark's route across the Bitterroot Mountains. The first to publish in popular form was Ralph Space's 1964 booklet *The Lolo Trail*, which is still available locally. Space didn't provide maps but instead a description. It was the best available, although some observers felt there were areas of concern. In the 1990s and early 2000s two more researchers attempted to correct some of the

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<sup>8</sup> For a deeper history and analysis of the Bird-Truax Trail, see <https://trailresearch.org/topic/bird-truax-trail/>.

<sup>9</sup> For more, see <https://trailresearch.org/topic/nee-me-poo-national-historic-trail/>.

<sup>10</sup> Historically, the Lolo Motorway started at Musselshell Meadows, went up Gold Creek—today's Forest Service Road 535—to Beaver Saddle and a junction with today's Forest Service Road 104. It then went east over Snowy Summit, Soldier Meadows, passed Beaverdam Saddle to Pete Forks and its junction with Forest Service Road 500—the Lolo Motorway. It then went east on the Lolo Motorway to its junction with US 12 near the Crooked Fork Bridge east of Powell.

questions,<sup>11</sup> but for most people the Lewis and Clark route is un-useable. Instead, almost all who cross the Lolo follow the Nee-Me-Poo trail via the Lolo Motorway.

### Abbreviations

CCC = Civilian Conservation Corps

FS = Forest Service Road. For example, FS 500 is Forest Service 500

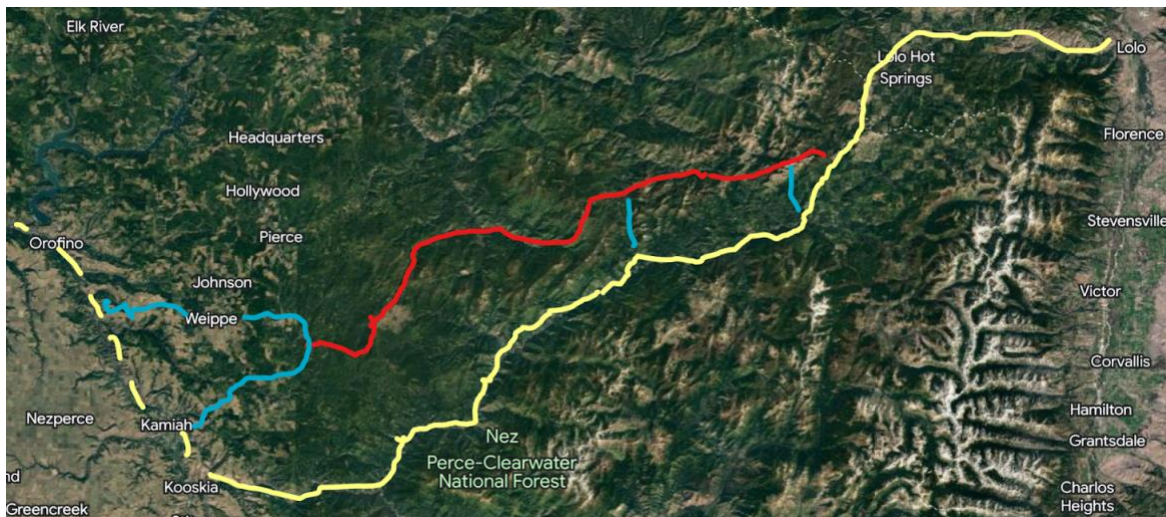
HW = A state highway

Rd = Road

US 12 = US Highway 12

### How to Use These Guides

This guide approaches the Lolo Trail Corridor from the west and goes east. Those wishing to travel east to west will need to reverse the stops provided in this guide.



*Yellow: US 12 (Chapter 2)*

*Red: Lolo Motorway (Chapter 3)*

*Blue: Access routes*

This guide offers three “motorized” routes and a chapter describing hiking and horse-riding trails:

**Kooskia to Lolo via US 12** (Chapter 2) US 12 follows the Clearwater and Lochsa rivers, summits Lolo Pass, and then parallels the Montana Lolo Creek. Although it is not the route our historic travelers used, it is very scenic and offers significant historical interpretation.

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<sup>11</sup> For these researchers and others, see <https://trailresearch.org/topic/lolo-trail/>.

**The Lolo Motorway** (Chapter 3) Significant portions of both the Nee-Me-Poo and Lewis and Clark Trail can be approximated by following the Lolo Motorway, FS 500, and then descending Parachute Hill to reach Powell, Idaho on US 12.

**The Western Nee-Me-Poo Trail** (Chapter 4) On the western side of the Lolo Trail Corridor, the Nee-Me-Poo trail veers north from the Lolo Motorway. One can approximate this route on Forest Service roads.

**Hiking and Horsing Trails** (Chapter 5) These trails offer a close experience to the historic routes through the Lolo Trail Corridor. Due to their elevations, they are only open mid-summer to fall. Only about half of the traditional Bird-Truax trail is open today, and those segments that are open are variously maintained.

**Distances and GPS Coordinates** For each stop or side road the GPS position for that place is given. If you have a GPS device, you can use it to keep oriented. At the end of each site’s description, the mileage to the next one is given. With this information, you can follow the “tour” in either direction.

## Resources

### Maps

We like to think we have covered everything in this book, but that is not the reality. In addition to other reading, there are several maps that will help you get around.

Electronic maps and GPS units are an invaluable resource—if nothing else but to answer the question, “Are we there yet?”. Because there is virtually no cell phone service for most of these tours—even along US 12—be sure your electronic map device will operate as intended without cell phone data. At a minimum, download the Clearwater National Forest map for mobile devices.

There is another map this author—and most experienced travelers within the Lolo Trail Corridor—always carry: an old-fashioned, paper of the Clearwater National Forest. This map gives the “big picture” perspective that mobile devices cannot. It is available at the Orofino and Kamiah ranger station, Lolo Pass Visitor Center, Travelers’ Rest State Park, some local vendors, and online for a price of about \$15.

For access and information about the Clearwater National Forest maps—paper and digital—visit <https://www.fs.usda.gov/r01/nezperce-clearwater/maps-guides>.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> USGS topographic maps are also available at <https://www.usgs.gov/programs/national-geospatial-program/topographic-maps>. Because of their “zoomed in” scale, they are best for exploring small areas and many maps would be needed to cover any of the tours in this guide.

## Related Books

*The Lewis and Clark Expedition Day by Day*, by Dr. Gary Moulton (University of Nebraska Press, 2018)

This book provides the essential story of the Lewis and Clark Expedition without the burden of the complete journals previously transcribed by Dr. Moulton. The expedition journals comprise 13 volumes and are available online at <https://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu/>. Even if you settle just for the two captains' full journals and only the Bitterroot Mountain portions, you will have to carry two heavy journals. In *Day by Day*, Moulton skips the many pages of mileage charts, celestial observation tables, and Lewis's formal scientific descriptions. Instead, you get a clear and concise summary of each day.

*In Pursuit of the Nez Perces* compiled by Linwood Laughy (Mountain Meadow Press, 2002)

Laughy has compiled source material from three key participants in the 1877 Nez Perce War: Gen. O.O. Howard, Duncan McDonald, and Chief Joseph. Each participant shares a unique perspective and between the three, a grasp of what motivated these during the 1877 Nez Perce War is clarified.

*Lewis and Clark Among the Nez Perce: Strangers in the Land of the Nimiipuu* by Allen V.

Pinkham and Steven R. Evans (The Dakota Institute Press of the Lewis and Clark Fort Mandan Foundation, 2013)

Pinkham and Evans incorporate both the Lewis and Clark journals and Nimiipuu oral histories to tell a balanced story of the people's encounters with Lewis and Clark.

*The Lolo Trail: A History and Guide to the Trail of Lewis and Clark*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, by Ralph S. Space, (Historic Montana Publishing, 2001)

This is the original book on the Lolo Trail and although some things have changed, many haven't, and the history and flavor of his writing is worthwhile. Many of this guide's stories come from this book, but Space typically offers more depth than we do here. Space was a career Forest Service manager, firefighter, and dynamic personality. The book is for sale at Clearwater National Forest offices, by local vendors or online.

*Clearwater Country! Historical & Recreational Guide Lewiston, Idaho—Missoula, Montana* by Borg Hendrickson & Linwood Laughy (Mountain Meadow Press, 2010)

This book gives the traveler of US 12 between Lewiston and Missoula a comprehensive history.

*Across the Snowy Ranges: The Lewis and Clark Expedition in Idaho and Western Montana*

written by James R. Fazio, photography by Mike Venso, and maps by Steve F. Russell (Woodland Press, 2001)

This book reads much like a coffee-table book—a day-by-day commentary accompanied by color photographs printed on oversize, clay-based paper.

*Hike Lewis and Clark's Idaho* by Mary Aegerter and Steve Russell (University of Idaho Press, 2002)

This is the ultimate hiking guide of the Nee-Me-Poo and Lewis and Clark Trail including most of the side trails.

*Forty Years a Forester* by Elers Koch (Missoula: Mountain Press Publishing Company, 1998)

*The Lochsa Story: Land Ethics in the Bitterroot Mountains* by Bud Moore (Missoula: Mountain Press Publishing Company, 1996)

## Online Resources

The Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest home page is at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/r01/nezperce-clearwater>. There, you can obtain maps, check the status of wildfires, or reserve a lookout.

*The Complete Journals of Lewis and Clark* by Gary Moulton:  
<https://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu/>

*Discover Lewis & Clark!*: 2400+ webpages of all things Lewis and Clark: <https://lewis-clark.org>

*Lewis & Clark Trail Experience*: a travel site at <https://lewisandclark.travel>

*We Proceeded On*: the journal of the Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance at <https://lewisandclark.org/wpo>

*Trail Research*: This archive of trail research provides in depth analysis of the Lolo Trail Corridor and features the research of Steve F. Russell and others. <https://trailresearch.org>.

The Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail: <https://nps.gov/lewi> and <https://nps.gov/lecl>

The Nez Perce National Historic Trail: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/trails/nez-perce-nht>

Ralph Space's original 1964 "The Clearwater Story" can be found at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/nfs/files/r01/nezperce-clearwater/publication/clearwater%20story.pdf>

## Kooskia to Lolo via US 12

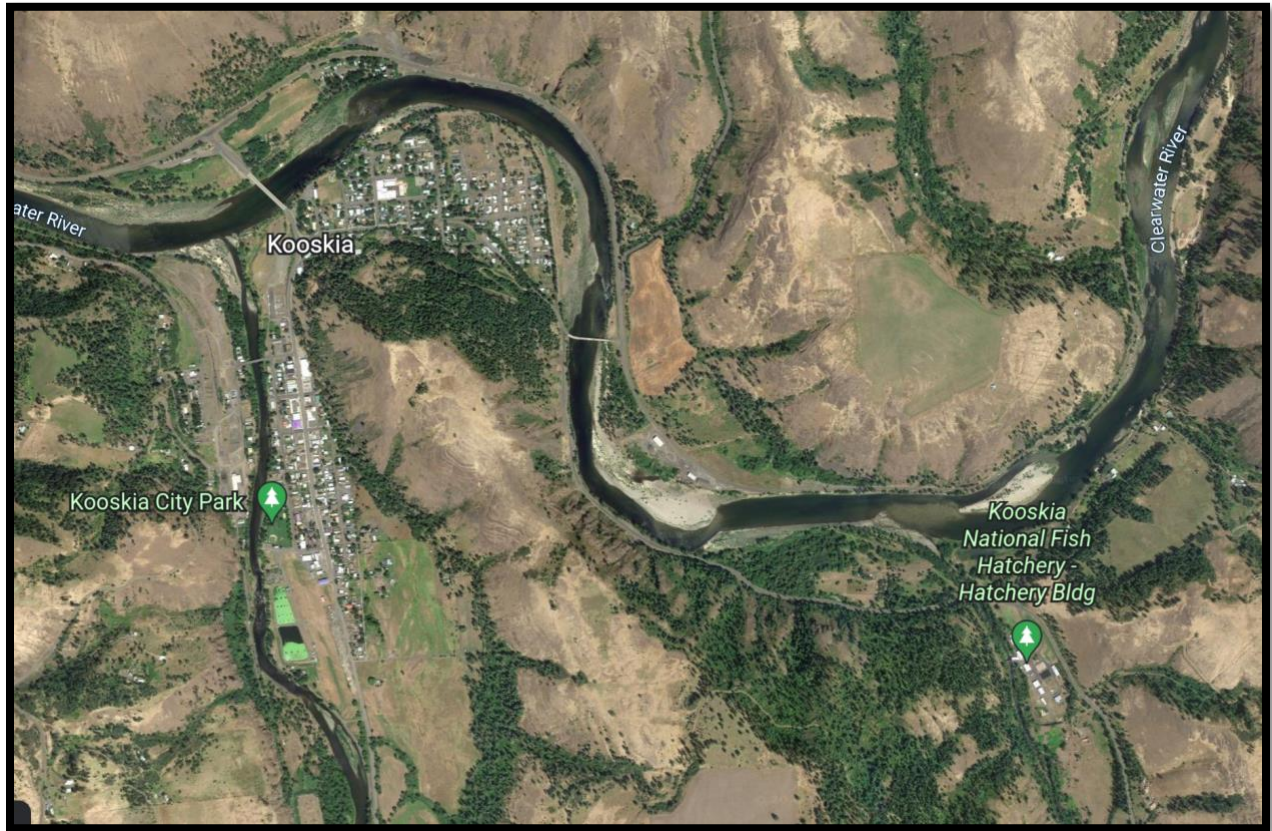
A wagon road connecting Idaho and Montana along the Middle Fork of the Clearwater River and Lochsa River had been a dream of Lewiston merchants from the 1860s. By 1900, it only reached Syringa. It was initially opened by prospectors but undoubtedly followed a route used by the Nimípuu for generations. Two railroads surveyed routes over Lolo Pass, but that was late in the railroad building era, and the railroad was never built.

The railroad surveys from the General Land Office gave the Forest Service a good base for their maps. During the Great Depression, there was a federal prison camp working to extend the highway east, but it was slow going. Japanese interment workers continued the work during World War II, but the road did not reach the Lochsa Ranger Station until the 1950s. During the early 1960s, the road was finally completed connecting with the road coming west from Lolo, Montana.

## Kooskia, Idaho

Mile 0: 46.1480, -115.9825

## Kooskia, Idaho



*The tour starts at the north end of the bridge shown the upper left. The highway remains on the north side of the river as it goes east. The Fish Hatchery is where the village of Chief Looking Glass was located when it was attacked by the U.S. Army in the 1877 war.*

Start at the information Plaza and Weigh Station at the junction of US 12 and HW 13 from Stites and Grangeville. The information plaza was built with Lewis and Clark Bicentennial funds in the years leading up to the 2005–06 commemoration and has some interesting information about the area. It is opposite the mouth of the South Fork Clearwater River which drains the mountains to the southeast. The Battle of Stites in the 1877 Nez Perce War took place about five miles south.

From 1900 to 1934, Kooskia was the home of the Selway National Forest. In 1934, a fire burned much of the forest and that winter, the Regional Forester came over from Missoula, Montana by train. He met with the three local Forest Supervisors here. The meeting went well into the night, and when the people of Kooskia got up the next morning, the Selway Forest office was

dark and empty. The desks, records and tools had all been hauled away. The Selway Forest was no more; it had been split between the Clearwater and the Nez Perce forests.

→ Continue eastbound on US 12 for 1.3 miles

### Bridge to Kooskia, Tahoe Ridge, and Clear Creek

Mile 1.3: 46.1409, -115.9643

Note the Osprey nest on the power pole at the end of the bridge. An osprey family has been using this for many years.

→ Continue 1.2 miles

### Tukaytespe Picnic Area

Mile 2.5: 46.1368, -115.9456

Parking is limited so no trucks or trailers. Tukaytespe (skipping stones) was the name children in the Nimíipuu (Nez Perce) village across the river—called the calm area of the river. When white miners and then loggers and homesteaders showed up, the site served a variety of uses. When the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act was passed in 1968, the Forest Service was directed to purchase land and easements on private property along the river. As part of one deal, this land came under Federal ownership and administered by the Forest Service. The original purchase had a clause that the current business could remain for a few years. Interestingly, that business was a brothel, known as Maggie’s Bend, and while not legal under state law, it’s presence was being ignored by local officials well into the 1970s. The legal process required the Forest Service to issue a special use permit for any private business on Federal land. The permit was issued with a few vague sentences about the business and continued to operate for several years. Alas, time ran out, the business moved, the building was torn down, and now we have a nice swimming and picnic area.

The Nimíipuu village of Chief Looking Glass was up the valley across the river. This “traditional religion” band joined the non-treaty bands in their long flight to Montana, then to prison in Oklahoma, and finally to exile in Colville, Washington. Consequently, there were few tribal members in the area when the Bates Act opened the land to White settlement. For this reason, there are limited Nimíipuu living in this area.

→ Continue 1.7 miles

### Harris Ridge Road and Penny Cliffs Area

Mile 4.2: 46.1504, -115.9281

Harris Ridge was the access road for the original Lolo Motorway. The road went over Woodrat Mountain to Smith Saddle, and then to the Lolo Motorway at Canyon Junction. This route was undoubtedly a Nimíipuu trail adopted by whites. The Selway National Forest was

headquartered in Kooskia so their rangers would have traveled this trail when heading to today's Fish and Hungery Creeks.

**Penny Cliffs Dam** was once planned for this area. It would have backed water up past Lowell and into both the Lochsa and Selway Rivers. This dam became a rallying cry to stop dam construction in the United States and resulted in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968. The Middle Fork Clearwater River was the first Wild and Scenic River listed in the Act.

**Private Property Easements** One of the provisions of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act is to keep the river looking scenic, and that includes the privately owned land within sight of the river. The Forest Service was directed to buy the development rights to the properties within sight of the river. These easements were quite expensive at the time but cheap compared to today's prices. The purchases were done in the 1970s and in some cases the cost of the development right was nearly full appraised value. If you buy a lot with a home today and want to build an addition, you must submit plans and get written permission. This has turned out to be a nightmare for all concerned. Landowners often buy without looking at the title or understanding what the easement means. Too many build something and are outraged when the Forest Service comes knocking. However, the bottom line is that the scenic corridor along the river is not being overrun with "McMansions".

→ Continue 10.5 miles

### Smith Creek Road (FS 101)

Mile 14.7: 46.1366, -115.7514

Smith Creek Road is a "log -haul" standard road with access to the Lolo Motorway at Canyon Junction.

→ Continue 1.4 miles

### Syringa

Mile 16.1: 46.1499, -115.7282

Syringa is a small community on private land within the National Forest. This land is not subject to the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act provisions.

**Bridges and Aerial Tramways** At several locations along the river, you may see aerial trams across the river. These provide access to privately owned homes on the opposite shore. Most of them have road access from Tahoe Ridge but it is long, steep, muddy and often unusable for much of the winter.

One private bridge in Syringa was owned by an older man who was a bit of a recluse. Worried about trespassers he wired a motion sensor on his bridge so if someone crossed it an alarm sounded in his home. As he wasn't always a pleasant man, especially when dealing with people fishing the river from "his" property, and he was avoided by most locals. Several times, when

the High School in Kooskia had won a game and the kids were looking for something to spice up their evening, a few of them would jump up and down on his bridge and then jump in their car and leave. The recluse would grab his shotgun, but he never found any trespassers.

→ Continue 3.7 miles

### Three Devils Campground

Mile 19.8: 46.1391, -115.6641

This is a small campground next to the river. At one time there was a large rock in the river that was bad news for boats or log rafts headed down river. The rock was blasted out of the way, but in the spring, high water can still present a hazard to boaters.

→ Continue 1 mile

### Wild Goose Campground

Mile 21.8: 46.1362, -115.6262

Another small campground next to the river.

→ Continue 1.2 miles

### Interpretive Sign Turnout

Mile 23: 46.1393, -115.6022.

In addition to the interpretive sign, there is a good view of the Lochsa and Selway rivers merging to form the Middle Fork Clearwater River.

→ Continue 0.3 miles

### Selway-Lochsa Confluence and Selway Road

Mile 23.6: 46.1428, -115.5986

These names are white man's interpretation of the Nimíipuu names meaning gentle (Selway) and rough (Lochsa). For about a dozen miles, the Selway here has a much more placid nature than the Lochsa River and has several camping areas. Fenn Ranger Station is about six miles upriver with buildings built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. It is still a working station, and the receptionist will be proud to show off some of the station's features.

→ Continue 0.3 miles

## Lowell

Mile 23.9: 46.1477, -115.5943

Lowell is a small community with a speed limit reduction, and perhaps your last chance for gas. At the time of this writing, the gas station is not always open.

→ Continue 1.7 miles

## Pete King Creek

Mile 25.6: 46.1657, -115.5886

This creek was named for a miner and homesteader who built a cabin within sight of the river. For many years this was the end of the wagon road and further travel was by trail. Note the gate used to close the highway when winter storms overwhelm the snowplows.

→ Continue 4.9 miles

## Canyon Creek

Mile 30.5: 46.2109, -115.5422

Just a few feet up the canyon is the site of a prison labor camp used in the 1930s and 1940s to build this highway. In the early days of World War II, it became an internment camp for Japanese men. Not much remains, but the visitor can still find fruit trees, a water collection tower, and the concrete slab used as a tennis court.

→ Continue 0.4 miles

## Apgar Campground

Mile 30.9: 46.2146, -115.5371

Apgar is a small but pleasant family campground along the river. The house of the internment camp's director was here.

→ Continue 2.4 miles

## Deadman Creek

Mile 33.3: 46.2267, -115.115.5013

The name "Deadman" comes from the body found in a cabin in 1908, about three miles up the creek. He had apparently been dead for a while as all they found were bones.<sup>13</sup>

Before the CCC built a trail through Black Canyon during the Great Depression, this was the end of the road. For those going to the upper Lochsa River, they converted to hiking or horseback at this point. Before the Great Depression, the trail climbed 3,700 feet to Middle Butte, then on to

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<sup>13</sup> Space, *Clearwater Story*, p. 151.

Fish Creek Butte, and then down a very steep trail losing 3,400 feet to the mouth of Fish Creek. To eliminate this tough trip, the Forest Service and Civilian Conservation Corps built a trail through Black Canyon.

→ Continue 1.6 miles

### Knife Edge Campground and River Access

Mile 34.9: 46.2275, -115.4742

Most springtime rafters and kayakers pull out here, so there is good river access with a restroom. There are also 3 camp units.

→ Continue 3.2 miles

### Split Creek Trailhead and Boater Access

Mile 38.1: 46.2311, -115.4167

**Black Canyon (mileposts 113 – 119)** Black Canyon is the portion of the Lochsa River between Split Creek Pack Bridge and the mouth of Fish Creek. The highway through here was not built until after WWII.

**Black Canyon Trail** It was not until the 1930s that the Forest Service with CCC help was able to build a trail through Black Canyon. Today, it is a nice recreation trail above the highway with detours into steep canyon streams with impressive waterfalls. It emerges about ¼ mile up Fish Creek Road. From there, the hiker or packer can continue to the ranger station or the current site of the Wilderness Gateway Campground.

**Split Creek Trail** First, cross the suspension bridge which was built in the 1930s with help from the Civilian Conservation Corps. The trail soon returns to its heritage—a Nimípuu trail climbing for the high country. After crossing Split Creek, it becomes a stiff climb up Split Creek Ridge gaining 3,000 feet elevation in about three miles.

→ Continue 1.2 miles

### Riverside Pull-Out and Wilderness Interpretive Sign

Mile 39.3: 46.3064, -115.3721

**A long-lived sign** Most interpretive signs here have a life expectancy of about 10 years. This sign was installed just after Congress established the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area in 1964 and although a bit battered by snowplows and discourteous people, it still survives.

**Rock pit** When the road from the east met the road from the west, it was time to pave it. Across the river is a gravel bar they could use, so the state built a bridge and extracted the gravel for paving rock. When completed, they leveled the site, removed the bridge, and flood

water “naturalized it”. A few years later, it became wilderness. Getting rock for repaving is now a bit more expensive.

→ Continue 2.5 miles

### Fish Creek Bridge and Road

Mile 41.8: 46.3335, -115.3464

Fish Creek enters from the north. There is a one-mile road to a trailhead with limited parking. For those interested in visiting parts of the lower Hungery Creek and Fish Creek areas, this provides excellent primary access.

→ Continue 0.2 miles

### Fish Creek Boat Access and Restrooms

Mile 42: 46.3351, -115.3446

A large pull-out here provides boater access and has a pit toilet.

→ Continue 1.2 miles

### Lochsa Historic Ranger Station

Mile 43.2: 46.3378, -115.3285

Before roads reached here, this ranger station was a central management and supply center. Today, it is a living museum staffed during the summer by volunteer docents. Park in the lower lot and walk up the stairs to the welcome room which at one time was the Assistant Rangers cabin. Other parts of the historic station include a cook room, an office, a supply room, and a dispatch center which was connected by phone lines to remote lookouts and work centers. The many hitch rails were used to tie pack animals while loading them with the supplies, tools, and gear for treks to stations located days away. The two-story Ranger’s cabin was the only “real” home because he was the only one allowed to bring his wife to the station. A prize feature of the Ranger’s home is a cast iron bathtub that took several men two days to skid to the station from the mouth of Deadman Creek—more than 20 miles by the trail they had to follow. All in all, the station gives us a good look at a lifestyle that has passed.

→ Continue 0.6 miles

### Turnout at Highway Bend

Mile 43.8: 46.3394, -115.3149

This area has dispersed camping and picnicking overlooking the river and “Beaver Flats”—now known as Wilderness Gateway Campground.

→ Continue 0.1 miles

## Wilderness Gateway Campground

Mile 43.9: 46.3448, -115.3087

A road to the south quickly crosses the river to a large flat area which today is Wilderness Gateway Campground. Prior to 1920, a ranger station was located on this flat, but when the State of Idaho decided to route the Lochsa River Highway on the north bank of the river, they decided to move the Ranger Station to a site near the highway. A barrier the rangers faced at that time was crossing the river in the spring when the water was high and fast. For a time, they had an overhead cable system to move men and materials across the river which must have been quite a thrill. The original log cabin built at the flats was taken apart, the logs were numbered and then floated down to the new station site where it was rebuilt.

→ Continue 0.1 miles

## Sherman Creek Trail and Dispersed Camping

Mile 44: 46.3460, -115.3083

On the north side of the river (uphill from US 12), a short spur opens to a dispersed camping area and the trailhead for the Sherman Creek Trail. This trail is a third-generation trail with an even grade to No-See-Um Meadow on the Lolo Ridge. It climbs to 5,900 feet in elevation—a gain of nearly 3,000 feet. The trail must have been high priority, as this would have been a major capital investment. Prior to the construction of the trail, there was a Nimípuu trail that climbed up the ridgeline to Sherman Peak. It met the trail coming up Pagoda Ridge from the mouth of Willow Creek at a point called Grouse Point on old Forest Service maps. That point is at 5,900 feet elevation in the SE1/4 SE1/4 sec 9 (46.3853 x 115.3362) on today's Clearwater National Forest map. From Grouse Point, the combined trails continued up the ridge about three miles until just below Sherman Peak. The trail then contoured around the west and north sides of Sherman Peak until it tied into the Lolo Trail. After the Sherman Creek trail was completed, both the Pagoda Ridge Trail and the Sherman Ridge Trail were abandoned and virtually forgotten.

→ Continue 4.7 miles

## Old Highway Maintenance Station

Mile 48.7: 46.3832, -115.2379

At one time there were homes here but when a highway washout down the river and avalanches up the river isolated the families for several months, Idaho Transportation abandoned the station in favor of stations at Lowell and Powell.

→ Continue 4.2 miles

### Big Curve Turnout

Mile 52.9: 46.3831, -115.2331

On the river side of the highway is a leveled-off ridgeline jutting into the river. It was a highway maintenance area now used for highway rock storage and dispersed camping.

**Trail #215**—or 2150 depending on which map you use—crosses the river, but the trail is difficult to find, the crossing is only useable during low water.

→ Continue 1.2 miles

### Nine-Mile River Access

Mile 54.1: 46.37.3832, -115.2379

→ Continue 4.2 miles

### Interpretive Sign Turnout

Mile 58.3: 46.4504, -115.084

On the north side of the road (mountain side) is a wide turnout with Lolo Trail interpretive signs. To stretch your legs, you might look at the old river channel which makes a loop against the mountain to the north. There was an island here, so when the highway was built, it cut across the island and left an old river loop against the mountain.

→ Continue 0.4 miles

### Saddle Camp Road (FS 107)

Mile 58.7: 46.4532, -115.0789

Saddle Camp Road provide key access to the central portion of the Lolo Motorway. US 12 to the junction with the Lolo Motorway at Saddle Camp is only about 10 miles but it takes  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an hour to drive. Don't push your speed, the consequences could be significant.

From Saddle Camp, you can turn west on FS 500 to visit Smoking Place and Bald Mountain or head east toward Howard Camp, Indian Post Office, and Bears Oil and Roots Camp. See the Lolo Motorway chapter for descriptions of these sites.

→ Continue 2.5 miles

### Weir Creek Hot Spring Trailhead

Mile 61.2: 46.4581, -115.0350

This trailhead has a small parking area and a restroom on the north side of the highway. A user-built trail scrambles about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile to the springs.

→ Continue 0.9 miles

## Eagle Mountain Pack Bridge

Mile 62.1: 46.4618, -115.0146

Here is another wooden, towered suspension bridge built in the 1930s. All together, four were built. The one at Wilderness Gateway crossed Boulder creek and was unneeded when the campground roads were constructed. When it needed an expensive repair, it was removed. The three remaining bridges all cross the Lochsa River and all have maintenance problems because the highway was built over the top of their anchors. This makes inspection and repair of the connection cables difficult.

→ Continue 4.7 miles

## Colgate Campground

Mile 66.8: 46.4676, -114.9433

Colgate Campground is a small area next to the river where the sound of the river helps many people sleep. In late summer, the site is popular with fly fishermen.

→ Continue 0.2 miles

## Colgate Licks Rest Stop and Interpretive Trail

Mile 67: 46.4644, -114.9405

This area is named—although misspelled—for the cook of the ill-fated Carlin Party, George Colegate (see sidebar). The springs on the hill above the parking area are a warm seep, so the vegetation is different from the surrounding mountains. The trees seem short lived, so much of the area is open, meadow-like ground. Take the time to walk the interpretive trail. In the winter especially, wildlife congregates around the warm seeps. This was the prime hunting ground the Carlin Party.

→ Continue 2.4 miles

## The Carlin Party

The Carlin party was a group of young men who came to Idaho to camp and hunt in September 1893. They hired a guide from Spokane, and their cook was George Colegate, a settler from Kendrick, Idaho who was a bit older and not in good health. It was late September before they reached the mountains via Weippe, Idaho. They followed the Lolo Trail east for several days, often struggling with the downed trees which had not been cleared since the 1877 Nez Perce War. They camped in fresh snow every night until descending to the Lochsa River just east of here, near present Jerry Johnson Campground.

Mr. Colegate suffered from prostrate troubles and needed a catheter to urinate. But he hated the catheter and left it at home, somehow hoping the problem would go away. By the time they reached the river, he was clearly incapacitated. At the river, they were surprised to meet Jerry Johnson who the year before had built a cabin where the campground with his name is now located. The group camped nearby and began to hunt. Both Johnson and their hired guide from Spokane warned them that winter was coming, and they might want to get out while they could. The party thought Johnson wanted the hunting to himself and refused to leave. They were poor hunters. Finally, after a few weeks, it was time to leave, but by then it was early November and when they tried to climb back to the high ridges of the Lolo Trail, they found the way blocked by snow.

They returned to the river, but by then things were really getting cold in the mountains. They built a raft to float down river, but it only lasted a day. They decided to go down the river on foot, but travel was slow and difficult. After a week, Colegate was too weak to travel, so they abandoned him and continued down river. Travel was slow, difficult, and cold. They entered Black Canyon and used most of an entire one week to go the few miles through it.

Meanwhile, relatives in the outside world had been worried and sent out three search parties: one from Missoula coming from the east over Lolo Pass, one coming from Weippe over the Lolo Trail, and one up the Lochsa River. The Lochsa group met the survivors November 22<sup>nd</sup>. When word got out that they had abandoned Colegate without food or a gun, there was public outrage. The next spring and summer two parties searched for his remains. The camp where he had been left had flooded sometime during the winter. Finally, eight miles downriver some remains were found, collected, and carried upriver to today's Colegate Licks where they were interred. Look between the highway and the river for a marker.

### Why Did Lewis and Clark Go Hungry When Others Found Plenty of Game?

Lewis and Clark crossed the mountains in late September and were following the ridgeline to the north which is 4,000 feet higher in elevation than Colgate Licks. A storm had already brought snow along the trail. Most deer and elk winter on south facing mountain slopes and move down as snow increases on the ridge. Lewis and Clark were too late in the year for the animals to be on the ridgeline or in the north-facing meadows where the hunters searched for food. The animals were probably mid-slope and would not be pushed to the lower elevations until heavy winter snows drove them down.

We must also recognize that there were fewer animals at that time for a variety of reasons. First, in the spring, deer and elk were concentrated in groups where bears, wolves and other prey animals could easily harvest a large percentage of the newborns. Beginning after 1900, “bounty hunters” removed many of the predators (cougars, bears, wolves) so that by the 1960s, the “game” population had exploded. Another help to the game animal population were the 1910 fires that burned much of the Bitterroot Mountains. Huge areas had the tree cover disappeared followed by new brush that provided ample forage for the game animals. By the 1990s, new tree growth suppressed much of the brush, and populations have since crashed.

### Jerry Johnson Campground

Mile 69.4: 46.4755, -114.9056

You may notice that his modern campground lacks trees. The trees suffered from a rot in the tree roots. The Forest Service, being rather narrow-minded, didn’t want trees falling on campers, so they cut the trees.

**Jerry Johnson’s cabin** was located here. He was a prominent player in the area's before and after the turn of the 20th century. He built his cabin in 1893 and lived at this location year-round. His stated purpose was to look for a lost mine near the Black Lead–Williams Peak area to the north. His name surfaces in several lost mine stories, and he was a prominent player in the George Colgate story (see above).

**Indian Post Office Access Trail** Until Doe Creek Road was built in the 1930s, the primary access to Jerry Johnson Lookout and to Indian Post Office Lookout was up a trail starting here. This was another Nimíipuu trail that the miners and Forest Service adopted. The Carlin party came down this trail in 1893 on their ill-fated hunting trip. They tried to return up the ridge, but by early November, the snow was too deep.

The trail went first to Johnson Lookout, then up the ridge to meet the Forest Service pack trail—the old Bird-Truax trail—just east of Indian Post Office. The packer hauling supplies to the lookout would leave the river in the morning, and it was a long day before he got home.

→ Continue 1.2 miles

### Warm Springs Trailhead

70.6 Miles: 46.4746, -114.8855

Warm Springs is a popular trail. In addition to some nice hot springs just a half mile up the trail, the trail accesses a large chunk of the Selway Wilderness and Bear Mountain Lookout, which is just outside the wilderness area. The parking area for stock trucks is ¼ mile up the highway on the river side.

→ Continue 2.5 miles

### Doe Creek Road (FS 566)

Mile 73.1: 46.4931, -114.8580

The stream here is Waul'aalamnime Creek, which replaced the name "Squaw Creek" still found on older maps. Just ½ mile from HW 12, Doe Creek Road turns left (west) and follows Doe Creek for about 5 miles to Deep Saddle at GPS 46.5256, -114.9289.<sup>14</sup> The left (south) road goes to the site of Jerry Johnson Lookout, but it fades away before getting there. Instead, go north and continue climbing until you reach the Lolo Motorway at GPS 46.5561, -114.9576.

→ Continue 4.4 miles

### Wendover Ridge Trail and Wendover Campground

77.5 Miles: 46.5109, -114.7832

The trailhead and campground are on opposite sides of the highway.

Lewis and Clark were lost. They missed the turn-off near Lolo Pass and then climbed a mountain and dropped back down to the Lochsa River. They camped at today's Powell Ranger Station. As the Lewis and Clark Expedition moved down the Lochsa River from Powell, the mountains began to crowd the river. Finally, it was necessary to get out of the canyon bottom and climb to the ridge above where they would find the correct trail. At today's Wendover Ridge, you can follow FS Trail #25 up the ridge.

The vegetation today is quite lush compared to what the expedition encountered. Captain Clark recorded:

*"...here the road leaves the river to the left and ascends a mountain winding in every direction to get up the Steep assents & to pass the emence quantity of falling timber*

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<sup>14</sup> Note that there are two Deep Saddles in this Forest, the other one near Willow Ridge about 20 miles west.

*which had falling from drift. Causes i e. fire & wind and has deprived the Greater part of the Southerly Sides of this mountain of its green timber...”*

—Capt. Clark, September 15, 1806

→ Continue 0.2 miles

### Whitehouse Pond

Miles 77.7: 46.5097, -114.7796

On the north side of US 12, a turnout has historic and Idaho state interpretive signs. As the Corps of Discovery headed down today’s Lochsa River and past recently vacated Kootenai Salish salmon fishing sites, Private Whitehouse was the only one to note the pond which today is near the highway. Private Whitehouse’s journal often noted things of interest in the area and provides a different flavor than the other journals that were kept on the Lewis and Clark Expedition. However, a change in water drainage has nearly erased the pond and the viewpoint has grown over—as if an intentional effort has been made to remove this as a historic tourist attraction.

→ Continue 0.1 miles

### Whitehouse Campground

Mile 77.8: 46.5083, -114.7783

This is a nice campground between the road and the river.

→ Continue 0.4 miles

### Group Dispersed Camping Area

Miles 78.2: 46.5083, -114.7706

On the north side of the highway, a small road leads to a camping and storage area.

→ Continue 2.9 miles

### Powell, Idaho

Mile: 81.1: 46.5139, -114.7196

This is a major, well-marked turn-off from US 12. You will see signage for Lochsa Lodge and Powell Campground.

**Downriver Trail** The construction of US 12 removed most of the old downriver trail. For the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Commemoration, the Forest Service built a new trail down to Wendover Ridge. You can follow this trail by heading for Powell Campground and looking to your right (uphill) just before the campground entrance gate.

**Lochsa Lodge** is the only commercial lodging and restaurant between Lowell, Idaho (MP 99) and Lolo Hot Springs in Montana. They operate the restaurant year-round, offer cabins, gas, grocery, and the gift shop offers a nice collection of books about the area.

**Lewis and Clark's camp of September 14, 1805**—dubbed "*Colt Killed Camp*"—is now the site of the Powell Ranger Station. The Corps was very "hungry" when they arrived here. (Captain Clark's spelling). The area at that time of year had no salmon and no game was to be found. So, they killed a young colt brought along for that purpose, and everyone dined well, although the colt's mother was likely a bit distraught. The horses were herded onto the island—now timbered, but it must have been grass covered in 1805. The original site has been altered to provide a large, level area for the large ranger station compound.

**Salmon and the Kootenai Salish Indians** Until the early 1900s, there were significant salmon runs up the Lochsa River and its tributaries. Lewis and Clark both remarked on the fishing and camping sites they found near Powell and just downriver. For the Salish people living in present Montana, this was their only source of salmon because Thompson Falls on the Clark Fork River blocked salmon migration. Salmon is a very "fatty" fish and provides a critical source of nutrients. The trail to this area from Lolo, Montana was probably the heavily used trail that Lewis and Clark followed. The Kootenai Salish people would have camped here every year for a considerable length of time. While the men were fishing or hunting, the women were cleaning and drying the fish. But they also would have made trips to berry fields and other food sources in the nearby mountains.

**Grizzly Bears** also depended on salmon. They too, like the Native Americans, had a seasonal round of places to visit for food, and the mid-summer salmon run was critical to their survival. In the early 1900s, Potlatch Lumber Company built a dam on the Clearwater River near Lewiston to catch logs delivered to their mill by the river. The dam was small but effective at stopping the logs. Unfortunately, it was also effective at blocking fish passage.

No one thought much about the missing salmon. But later that summer, grizzly bears began coming into the Bitterroot Valley communities of Hamilton and Stevensville. They also came for livestock. There had not been many bear incidents until, and there would not be such bear problems in future years because most of the bears were killed. It was years before people connected the loss of salmon in these streams with the hungry bears in the Bitterroot Valley.

→ Continue 0.2 miles

## Parachute Hill Road (FS 569)

Mile 81.3: 46.5154, -114.7153

Parachute Hill Road provides primary access to the east end of the Lolo Motorway and Rocky Point Lookout. It is a connector road to access the Lolo Motorway.

→ Continue 1.4 miles

### Side Trip to Rocky Point Lookout

If you want to go up Parachute Hill Road, set your trip odometer to “0”. At 2.6 miles, there are some minor roads departing, and you pass through a meadow area which usually has a camper. Keep going.

At 4.4 miles, FS 5650 switchbacks to the right (east) at GPS 46.5673, -114.7034. You can continue north on FS 569 to Powell Junction or first go directly Rocky Point Lookout.

- 1) On FS 569, it is 1.5 miles further to Powell Junction and the Lolo Motorway at GPS 46.5791, -114.7183.
- 2) On FS 5650, you can visit Rocky Point Lookout and then continue to the Lolo Motorway—1.9 miles from the start of FS 5650, GPS 46.5780, -114.6906.
- 3) In both cases, refer to the Lolo Trail Driving Tour for details.

## Side Trip to White Sands

Mile 82.7: 46.5200, -114. 6876

Turn onto FS 111 to “White Sands and Elk Summit”. Go south to the two bridges crossing Crooked Fork and White Sand/Colt Killed Creek. The two bridges are just a ½ mile from US 12. The second stream is Colt Killed Creek; named by Lewis and Clark in 1805 because they killed a young horse for food when they camped two miles downstream. The stream was renamed “White Sands” Creek in the early 1900s, but that name was dropped when the Board of Geographic Names in the 1990s returned to the Lewis and Clark name 1805 name. Just below the bridges, the two streams merge and become the Lochsa River. The distinctive white sands you find in the streambed comes from the white granitic formation that forms the Idaho Batholith—the heart of the mountain range to the east.

**Lewis and Clark Trail**, GPS 46.5091, -114.6811. FS Trail #56 starts between the two bridges, and you can follow it back between the two creeks until it begins to climb the mountain—at about 46.5657, -114.60. This trail is likely a Forest Service adoption of an old Indian trail and is probably what Lewis and Clark followed. The trail received heavy use from the Kootenai Salish People to gather salmon along present Lochsa River. When the trail enters a cedar grove, look for trees where the bark was axe-cut across the bottom and then peeled, or ripped up, leaving a scar with a flat bottom and pointed top. Think about the women heading up the mountain to pick huckleberries to accompany the salmon their men caught in the river. They needed a basket to hold the berries, so they stopped at a likely tree, ripped off some cedar bark and wove it into a basket as their horse took them up the hill to the berry fields.

Note: A trip to the bridge over “Colt Killed Creek” will add about 2.5 miles to your overall trip length.

→ Return to highway and continue east to the next stop

## DeVoto Grove

Mile 84.3: 46.5811, -114.6108

Dr. Bernard DeVoto (1897–1955) was an American historian, conservationist, and writer. His book, *The Journals of Lewis and Clark* is still one of the best single-volume overviews of the expedition perhaps bested only by *The Lewis and Clark Expedition Day by Day* by Dr. Moulton (2018). When DeVoto was writing his book, he spent considerable time working and editing at this grove now named for him.

→ Continue 1.6 miles

### Side Trip: Shotgun Creek Road (FS 109)

Mile 85.9: 46.5763, -114.6223

Shotgun Creek Road (FS 109) turns off US 12 opposite a large chain-up area on the river side of the highway.

**Main Trail Crossing** About 2.5 miles north on this road, you cross a ridgeline, GPS 46.5888, -114.6087. The Indian trail Lewis and Clark were following came down this ridgeline to the point in the creek below, crossed the creek, and then climbed out and up the ridge on the other side. If you look over the hillside, it is difficult to follow the old Forest Service trail because it is heavily used by elk switch-backing down to the creek for water. In the 1877 War, some of General Howard's lead scouts saw salmon in the creek and not having a fishing gig, started shooting at the fish. Troops farther behind, thinking the Nez Perce were making a rear-guard action spurred their horses to join the battle. They all ended up spending a very uncomfortable night on the gravel bar which was not big enough for everyone and their horses.

**Follow FS 109** to a narrow rocky road to "Imnamatnoon Likoolam" saddle and junction with the Lolo Motorway, about 10 miles. From there it is about 1 mile east to Powell junction and 5 more miles to Rocky Point Lookout.

→ Continue 0.7 miles

### Side Trip: Brushy Fork and Beaver Ridge

Mile 86.6: 46.5812, -114.6107

From US 12, turn south at the east (upper end) of the US 12 bridge over Crooked Fork Creek. Follow the road to the mouth of Brushy Fork. The Lewis and Clark Expedition and Kootenai Salish crossed here to get from one ridge to the next on their way to the Lochsa River fishery. The climb up Beaver Ridge from here gains 1,800 feet before dropping down to the Lochsa.

Today, it is so easy to travel down Crooked Fork on US 12 that it is difficult to imagine just how thick and impregnable the canyon bottom would have been 200 years ago. Downed logs, beaver dams, and incredibly thick brush made travel impossible. With the Indian's penchant of going in direct line, you can be sure there would have been a trail down the creek if passage was feasible.

If desired, you can continue to FS 5670 (Pack Creek Road) to reach Packer Meadows and Lolo Pass. This left fork takes a bridge over the Brushy Fork and continues up the Pack Creek drainage to Packer Meadows. The right fork, FS 5673, goes around Beaver Ridge to Colt Killed Creek. Neither road follows the ridgelines used by Lewis and Clark or the Kootenai Salish people on their annual salmon fishing trek.

→ Continue 1.5 miles

### Interpretive Sign Turnout

Mile 88.1: 46.5957, -114.5999

From here, you can look west across and up to Rocky Point Lookout and then look down at Crooked Fork. On the Lewis and Clark Expedition's return trip on June 29, 1806, it was raining as they climbed up past this point. On the west bound trip, they remained on the ridge above and later descended south to Brushy Fork, crossing it just above its mouth and then climbing 1,800 feet to today's Beaver Ridge. They then followed that ridge down to the junction of Colt Killed and Crooked Fork Creeks which today form the Lochsa River.

If you want to look for old trail or to climb to the point where the Corps missed the turn-off, go down the highway to the large cutbank and climb the bank to the side ridge above. Follow it up to the main ridgeline. It was along this stretch of trail that the contracting firm of Wellington Bird/ Truax ran out of money and quit building in 1866. The Forest Service reopened the trail after 1900 and used it to service Rocky Point Lookout until a road was built to the lookout in the CCC era.

→ Continue 3.0 miles

## Lolo Pass Visitor Center

Mile 91.1: 46.6353, -114.5803

The center provides restrooms, excellent interpretation of the Lolo Travel Corridor, and often staffed by a knowledgeable ranger. For many, the relief map of this part of the mountains is the highlight. You can run your fingers over the jagged ridges and the streams and valleys. There are several outside exhibits relating to the use of the Lolo Trail.

**Packer Meadows** is one of the premier stops along the Lewis and Clark Trail, especially when the camas are blooming—typically in June. A short drive down FS 373 from just north of the Visitor Center quickly becomes a gravel road. Follow it east past the junction with FS 5670. Keep left to reach the meadows. The interpretive sign for the meadow is at 46.6329, -114.5540.

On the Lewis and Clark 1806 return trip, all the journalists mentioned the “quawmas flats” and the fine grazing. They stopped for lunch and to graze their horses. At this point, they had used up the preserved food they had carried from Kamiah and Weippe. Fortunately, the hunters brought in several deer that morning. The meadows provided food for both people and for stock. The good grasses for stock grazing were quite a relief from the unpalatable beargrass found in most of the Bitterroot Mountains.

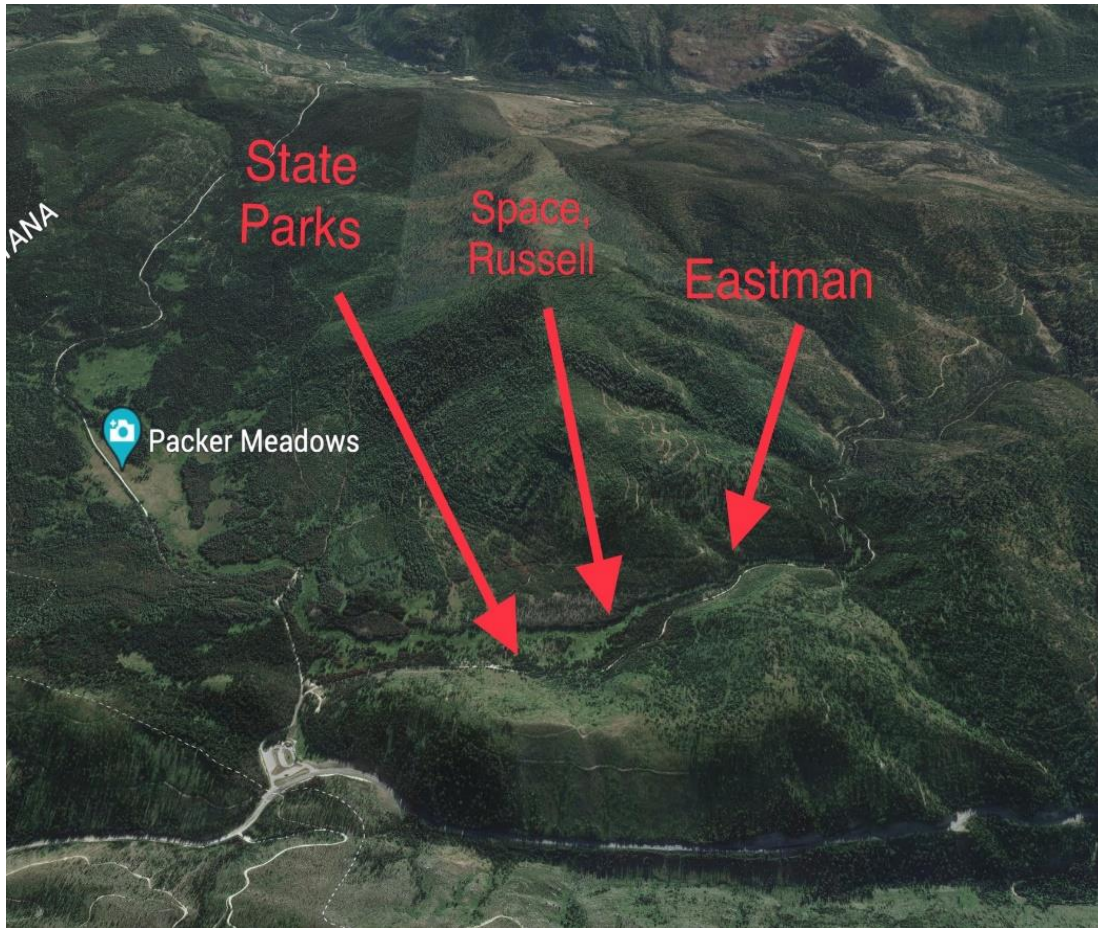
For people, the meadows supplied camas bulbs as well as meat from deer and elk. In the 1800s, the meadows would have been much larger than what we see due to frequent fires that ran through the meadow later in the summer when soil moisture dropped and many of the grasses were dry and flammable. Since the camas is a high moisture plant, it too dies back, but the fires don't impact the underground bulbs. However, their brush and tree competition is wiped out, and the camas fields would have been significantly larger with much larger bulbs than today.

**Lewis and Clark campsite interpretation (Idaho Parks)** Going west on FS 5670 (Pack Creek Road), there is a newer interpretive area about ¼ mile down the road at 46.6276 -114.5759. It was installed as part of an agreement with Plum Creek Timber to preserve Packer Meadows.

**Lewis and Clark campsite (Space)** Continue a short distance down FS 5670 until you reach an old-style, wooden Forest Service sign for Glade Creek Camp (GPS 46.6329, -114.5758). A short, user-made trail takes you down to Space's proposed camp area. The camp has been called “Glade Creek Camp by Space as per Captain Clark's journal:

*“...we fell on a Small Creek from the left which Passed through open glades Some of which ½ mile wide, we proceeded down this Creek about 2 miles to where the mountains Closed on either Side crossing the Creek Several times & Encamped.”*

## Packer Meadows and Glade Creek Camp



*Three possible locations for the Lewis and Clark Campsite near Lolo Pass.*

**1910–1930s era trail** Not far from the Space campsite is the junction of an old Forest Service trail. One fork went down today’s Pack Creek to Powell and Beaver Ridge, and the other crossed over the ridge to the west, dropped down to Crooked Fork and climbed up to today’s Rocky Point Lookout. In short, it was the old Indian trail—followed by Lewis and Clark—but rebuilt with steel tools. It was not until the 1930s that there was road access to Powell. Unfortunately, west of FS 5670, the private land was logged, and trail traces were obliterated.

**The missed turn** On the morning of September 14, 1805, the Corps followed a trail up to the ridge here and then followed it down to mouth of Brushy Fork. Somewhere on that ridgeline, (about 46.5977, -114.5893) they missed the turn to the west which dropped down to today’s Crooked Fork, crossed it, and then climbed the ridge to the west. This turn was the correct Lolo Trail. Their Lemhi Shoshone guide, Toby, would have likely been headed to the Lochsa Fishery whenever he traveled this way, so the expedition went the way he knew. On the return trip, they followed the Lolo Trail—as traveled by the Nimípuu—avoiding this strenuous detour.



## Lolo Hot Springs

Mile 98.5: 46.72.52, -114.5324

Lolo Hot Springs have long been a natural stopping place for travelers, and early visitors had dammed the warm water for bathing. Capt. Clark stuck his finger in the water and “*at first could not bare it in a Second*”. Several men drank the water and washed up a bit. Their journals record that “Toby”—their Shoshone guide acquired in present Salmon, Idaho—had not been over the trail in 20 years. When they were leaving the hot springs, he missed the trail and led them on a diversion to the north before the captains figured out the correct route.

→ Continue 2.1 miles

## Highway Maintenance Station

Mile 100.6: 46.7512, -114.5132

Between here and the next stop—Howard Creek—the trail that Lewis and Clark followed was high up on the ridge to the north of US 12. Westbound on evening of September 1805, they descended to the valley bottom near the maintenance station and camped just as the light faded. The station is not open to the public and no evidence of the camp has been found.

→ Continue 5.4 miles

## Howard Creek Trailhead

Mile 106: 46.7727, -114.4393

The trail going west from Howard Creek may be one of the more significant and interesting pieces of trail in the whole system. Just off US 12 on FS 238, Howard Creek has not only a trailhead, but interpretation, parking, and picnic tables.

An old trail climbs the hill to the west. It’s a steep climb for a bit but then the trail levels out. As the trail works its way west above Lolo Creek, it takes you into a big open ponderosa pine stand. This trail is “user built”. That is, the users were the Native Americans who pioneered this route over the mountains. The Kootenai Salish used it to go to the Lochsa fishery, and the Nimíipuu used it to hunt buffalo and to trade.

The wagon road between Lolo and Lolo Hot Springs was built by 1899. When the Forest Service was established in this area after 1900, they had no need to use the original trail up on the ridge. This leaves us with an original trail—never maintained by any company or agency.

→ Continue 3.1 miles

## Lolo Creek Campground and Picnic Area

Mile 109.1: 46.7759, -114.3827

With a nice campground and picnic area just across Lolo Creek, this is another nice place to rest.

→ Continue 4.9 miles

## Fort Fizzle

Mile 114: 46.7463, -114.1732

In the 1877 Nez Perce War, the seven non-treaty bands fleeing their homelands in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho thought they were leaving the war behind when they headed east. The Army chasing them had telegraphed ahead to Fort Missoula informing them that the Nez Perce were headed over the Lolo Trail. A small detachment of men from Fort Missoula tried to block the fleeing Nez Perce by building a barricade across the trail. It was quite a shock to the Nimípuu people when they encountered them. The advance guard stopped for a bit while all the Nez Perce climbed the ridgeline to the north and bypassed the blockade. Most of the soldiers and volunteer civilians were quite relieved to avoid a fight and nicknamed the place “Fort Fizzle”.

→ Continue 4.2 miles

## Traveler's Rest State Park

Mile 118.2: 46.7568, -114.0894

Travelers' Rest has long been a campsite for travelers. Westbound sojourners needed to get ready for the mountains and eastbound travelers needed to recover from their encounters. Today, this Montana State Park presents the history of the site and provides a good introduction to the Lolo Trail.

Travelers' Rest is one of the few camp sites that the Lewis and Clark expedition named and one of the few we can reliably locate today. As you follow the Lolo Trail, most camps have names given by various authors, and many camps have multiple names. True "Historians" are horrified at this naming practice. This author says "nuts"—he can't remember dates, but he can remember a name.

→ Continue 0.3 miles

## US Highway 93

Mile 118.5: 46.7568, -114.0822

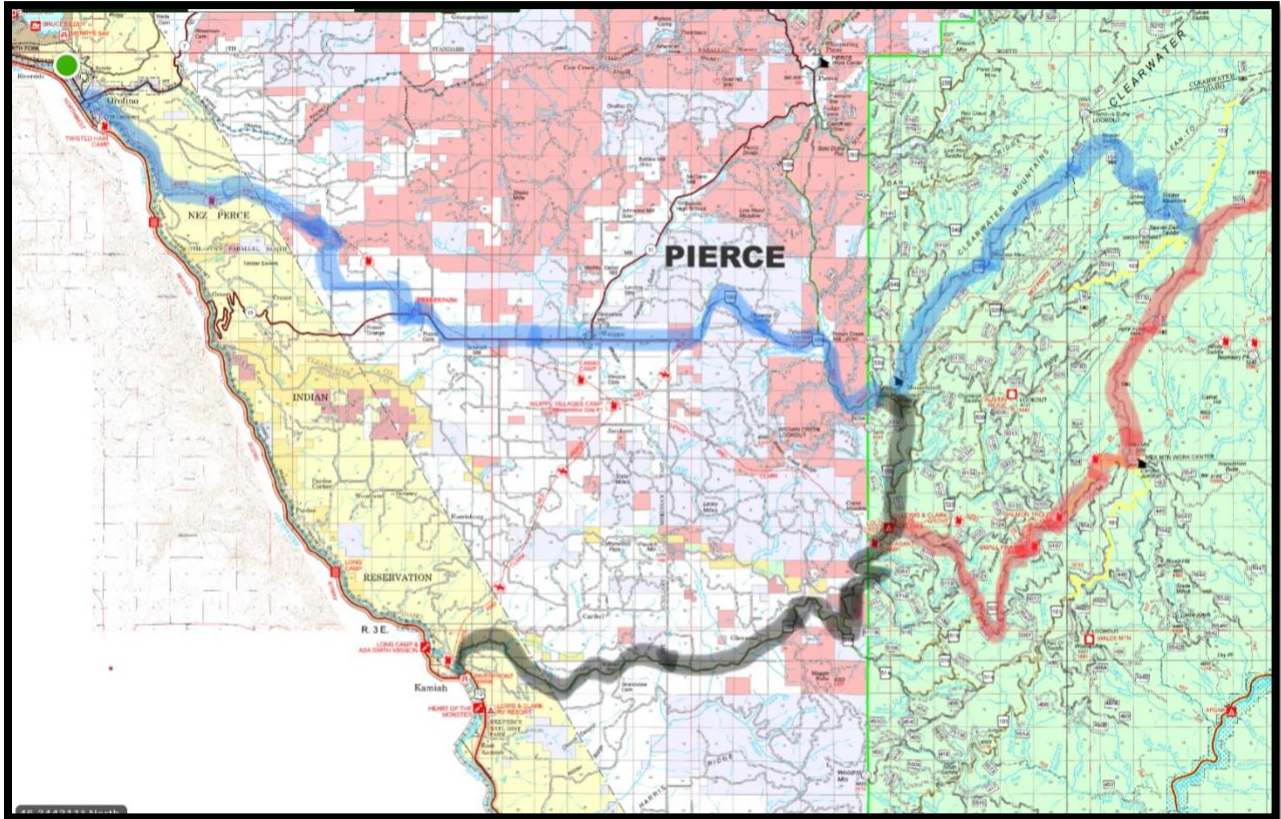
You are now within the commercial district of Lolo, Montana. The traveler can head north to Missoula, Montana and follow the rest of the "Road to the Buffalo" by going over Lewis and Clark Pass on Montana State 200. After that, the Great Falls of the Missouri await. You can head south and retrace the route of the Expedition through the Bitterroot Valley, the Lemhi River Valley, and cross the Continental Divide at Lemhi Pass.

→ Tour ends here

## Chapter 3

## Lolo Trail Driving Tour

## West End of the Lolo Motorway



*This is an image from the Clearwater National Forest map—a necessary tool for finding your way around the forest.*

*Blue: Access from US 12 via Greer and Weippe, Idaho (HW 11 and county roads)*

*Black: Access from US 12 via Kamiah, Idaho*

*Red: West end of the Lolo Motorway*

This tour follows the legendary “Lolo Motorway” most of which was built in the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps and hasn’t been improved much since. Most of this road closely follows a Nimípuu route to the buffalo country beyond the Continental Divide. It winds among the dividing ridges north of the Lochsa River and south of the North Fork Clearwater drainage. It is a narrow, rocky, and dusty dirt road except when it is muddy and slippery—or covered in deep snow. High clearance vehicles with tough tires are important.

## Two Access Options

**Highway 11 via Greer and Weippe** Seven miles east of Orofino, turn north from US 12 onto Idaho State Highway 11 at Greer. After passing through this small community, the Greer Grade climbs steeply to the Weippe Prairie with several hairpin turns.

Continue on HW 11 to Weippe. In town, the highway makes a sharp turn to the north. Go straight—east on Pierce Street. The road leaves town, turns to gravel, and becomes Musselshell Road. The gravel road turns north up a nice meadow before turning east again and climbing over a ridge. After another few miles it opens into a new meadow, passes some homes, and comes to a paved road—Pierce-Kamiah Road (FS 100). Continue on the paved road which turns south and follows Lolo Creek. Go past the junction with FS 500 and continue to the large Pheasant Camp interpretive sign. You have reached the beginning of our story.

**FS 100 from Kamiah** At the east end of Kamiah, cross the river on US 12 and turn left at the end of the bridge—Mill Road. Follow Mill Road downriver (west) about 0.5 miles and then right on Glenwood Road—the first major road and sometimes called Tom-Taha. Follow this paved road along its many twisting miles. Google Maps labels this road both Glenwood and Beaverslide, but it eventually becomes FS 100. When you reach the Pheasant Camp interpretive sign on the left, you have reached the start of our story.

## Pheasant Camp

Mile 0: 46.2888, -115.758

The Pheasant Camp interpretive sign has a pull-out overlooking Lolo Creek (Idaho) and the Pheasant Camp site. The westbound main party (Lewis) camped here September 21, 1805. On their 1806 return, they stopped here for lunch.

Pheasant Camp



*Campsite of the main party September 21, 1805.*

In 1805, Lewis was having a bad day; the horses had strayed the previous night and it was 11 am before they got them collected, packed up, and started traveling. Lewis's journal records:

*“...we killed a few Pheasants, and I killed a prairie wolf which together with the balance of our horse beef and some crawfish which we obtained in the creek enabled us to make one more hearty meal, not knowing where the next was to be found ... I find myself growing weak for the want of food and most of the men complain of a similar deficiency and have fallen off very much.”*

The next morning, the expedition climbed the steep ridge above Pheasant Camp and in two miles, met one of Capt. Clark's hunters, Reubin Field with dried salmon and roots from the Nimípuu villages at today's Weippe.

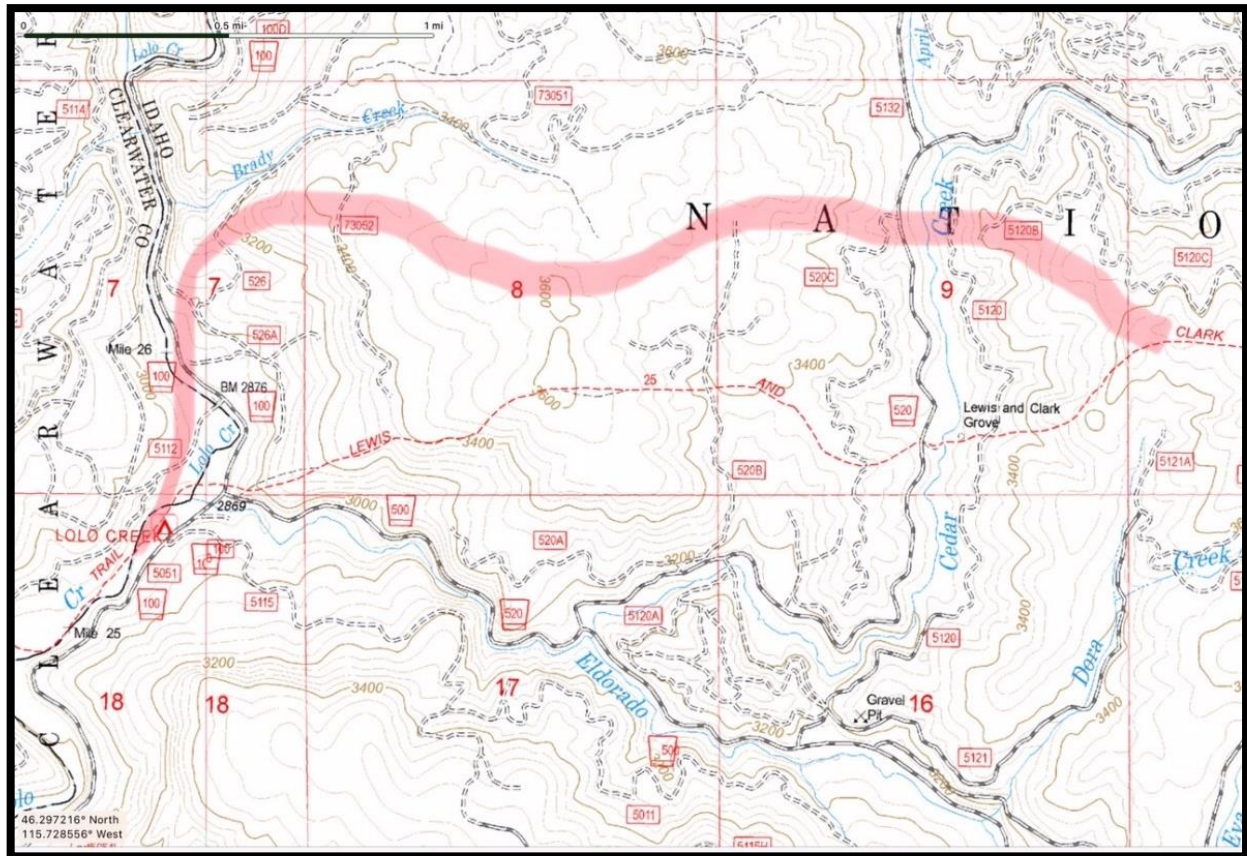
The trail Lewis and Clark followed from this camp to Weippe crosses private land and the landowners are not eager to see people wander across their lands.

→ Continue north on FS 100 0.5 miles

## Lewis and Clark Trailhead (Trail 25)

46.2953, -115.7489

## Western Edge of the Clearwater National Forest



The Lewis and Clark line on the map is the Forest Service trail that followed a *Nimíipuu* trail in the early 1900s. Researchers think it might have moved over the century between Lewis and Clark passage and the arrival of the Forest Service. The broad red line is one possible route.

About 100 yards north of the FS 500 junction, look for an interpretive sign and concrete toilet. This is also the trailhead for the Lewis and Clark Trail, Trail 25. The trail comes from Lewis and Clark Grove—a *Nimíipuu* (Nez Perce) trail adopted by the Forest Service in the early 1900s. Recent researchers believe the trail came across a little further north. See the above figure and the discussion at Lewis and Clark Grove below.

**Access to Pheasant Camp** Just a bit north and across the road from the trailhead area is a bridge across Lolo Creek. If you want to visit the campsite of September 21<sup>st</sup> you can cross the bridge and work your way down the creek on an old road.

→ Return to the junction of FS 500

## FS 500 (The Lolo Motorway)

46.2949, -115.7491

This starts the many miles along the Lolo Motorway. The first few miles of the road are along Eldorado Creek while the trail that Lewis and Clark followed mostly follows a low ridgeline to the north of this road. The trail does come down and follow the creek in its upper reaches. After a dozen miles, the road leaves the valley bottom and climbs to a north-south ridgeline to Canyon Junction. At Canyon Junction, the road turns north and becomes a classic first-generation road. That is, a single-lane road with little drainage and the natural ground as surfacing.

- If continuing to Small Prairie Camp, continue eastbound on FS 500 for 7.3 miles.
- If taking the Lewis and Clark Side Trip, continue eastbound on FS 500 for 1.1 miles.

### Lewis and Clark Grove (side trip)

While traveling east on the Lolo Motorway, turn north (left) onto FS 120 at 46.2902, -115.7309. Continue north for about 1.2 miles and look for an interpretive sign and concrete toilet on east side of the road at 46.2990, -115.7245.

A trail is just a few hundred feet before (south of) the toilet. In 1805, Clark was traveling with a few hunters ahead of the main party and may have camped here September 19, 1805. The main party with Lewis passed by on September 21<sup>st</sup>. In recent years, some researchers think the trail was about ½ mile north.

The reconstructed Lewis and Clark hiking trail crosses the road here and you can follow the trail in both directions. To the west is a short trail of about two miles to the trailhead near Bradford Bridge. To the east the trail crosses Cedar Creek, climbs along a low ridgeline, and crosses (FS 5124) before dropping back down to the 500 Motorway near Small Prairie Camp on Eldorado Creek.

In the 1960s, word got out that someone had found Capt. Clark's name carved on a tree. Space checked and sure enough, he found a carved "*Wm Clark*" on a tree. But was it real? After a bit of time, someone came in and confessed to a prank.

**Lewis and Clark Grove changes** Many of the trees in this area were Western White Pine (*Pinus monticola*) which until recently grew in huge stands in the Northern Rocky Mountains. Western White Pine has an even grain and is ideal for carving, pattern making, and furniture construction. It is used to make plywood, veneer, boxes, wooden matches, and interior millwork.

Unfortunately, white pine is susceptible to blister rust, a disease introduced to North America in the late 1890s. By the 1930s, the disease was killing whole stands of the trees, and no control had been found. A research program on growing disease resistant trees was started but with trees, it takes decades to see the results. After WWII, most landowners including the Forest Service concluded the only practical way to deal with the issue was to salvage the trees before they died or burned in massive fires. Consequently, huge stands were logged in the 1950s and '60s. This cedar grove was kept to showcase the early giant white pine in the area. Unfortunately, most these trees have succumbed to blister rust, and are falling as their roots deteriorate and are unable to hold them up.

→ Return to FS 500 and continue east for 6.2 miles

## Small Prairie Camp

46.2862, -115.6623

On June 15, 1806, the expedition reached this spot in one rainy day's ride from Weippe. All the journalists tell of fallen timber and other annoyances of the travel. Capt. Lewis wrote:

*"...the fallen timber in addition to the slippery roads made our march slow and extremely laborious on our horses."*

→ Continue 1.3 miles

## Salmon Trout Camp

46.2979, -115.6458

In 1806, the expedition camped here on the nights of June 18–20. The Corps had braved the mountains and retreated to this spot to wait for the snows to melt and for Nimíipuu guides to join them. Finally, on the 21<sup>st</sup>, they were running out of meat and returned to "Quawmash flats"—present Weippe, Idaho. The quandary they faced in giving up crossing the mountains for another unknown period of time takes up considerable space in their journals. To fully understand their dilemma, go to this area in a wet spring day, sit down against a tree, ignore the mosquitos, and think about where they had been and what was ahead of them.

The decision to return and not to force a crossing over the mountains may be one of the more important decisions on the whole expedition. Had they continued, they might not have survived the crossing. On June 26 and 27, they tried again but with help from Nimíipuu guides. Both these days were 'hard march' days as the guides had a goal for each night. Both camps were without snow, but they traveled on snow of significant depth during each day. The journals record the snow between camps and the inability to find the blazes that they had made on the way west. Capt. Clark recorded:

*"...the marked trees on which we had placed Considerable reliance are much fewer and more difficult to find than we had apprehended. Those Indians are most admirable pilots; we find the road wherever the Snow has disappeared tho it be only for a few paces."*

—June 27, 1806

→ Continue 0.2 miles

## Full Stomach Campsite via Trail 25 (hike)

46.2994, -115.6452

At Eldorado Creek Bridge, the Lolo Motorway makes a 90° bend, while FS 524 continues along the creek. Here, Trail 25 can be accessed to the area the main party camped westbound in 1805. The previous day, Capt. Clark's hunters had killed the horse and hung it in a tree for the main expedition to find. The main party with Capt. Lewis found the horse, ate some, and brought the rest with them:

*“in the evening we encamped on a ridge where ther was but little grass for our horses, and at a distance from water. however we obtained as much as served our culinary purposes and suped on our beef.”*

*—Meriwether Lewis, September 20, 1805*

From this story, Ralph Space named both Horsesteak Meadow and Full Stomach Camp. Due to the lack of a knowledgeable guide, it was bad campsite. When they finally camped, they dined well, about the only thing that went right that night.

The trail climbs northeast about 3 miles following a ridge. It was never a good trail and has received little maintenance in recent years. The upper end is about one and a half miles north of Canyon Junction on Motorway. The actual “Full Stomach” campsite is unmarked and about halfway up the trail. An interpretive sign for Full Stomach Camp is located on FS 500. (See below)

→ Continue 1.6 miles

## Full Stomach Camp Interpretive Sign

46.3226 - 115.6172

As the Lolo Motorway climbs from Salmon Trout Camp to Canyon Junction, there is a large interpretive sign about Full Stomach Camp. For the story and trail to the actual area they camped, see “Full Stomach Campsite via Trail 25” above.

→ Continue 1.7 miles

## Canyon Junction

46.3204, -115.6025

This is a five-way junction with several worthwhile interpretive signs. One road is the entrance to the primitive section of the Lolo Motorway. The five roads are:

**FS 500 West** This is the log-haul standard portion of the western Lolo Motorway. It returns to Eldorado Creek and ends at FS 100 which connects to Weippe and Kamiah.

**FS 500 North** This is the primitive “Lolo Motorway” that travels through the Lolo Corridor and the road this tour follows. The reason that this junction is the “traditional” entrance to the Lolo

Trail is that the road you were on has been rebuilt for log truck hauling. Motorways designate a road designed to be traveled at slow speeds—from 5 to 10 mph. From here, the Lolo Motorway remains true to its original standard. That is, just the top of the ground was scraped off to form a roadbed. Maintenance consists of a grader blading the road every few years. There have been a few loads of rock to fill a mud hole or a backhoe might have dug a ditch to drain a muddy patch, but for the most part, it is a very slow-going road especially where the ground's original rocks lay exposed. Most pickup and SUV drivers plan on speeds between 5 to 10 miles per hour.

**FS 483 East** This is an old travel route—now a road—to Fish Creek Butte with a couple of trails that drop down to Fish Creek.

**FS 5647 East** Half a mile down this road is the trailhead for Trail #224 which drops down to Fish Creek Meadows and the upper reaches of Fish Creek. Trail #230 from Fish Creek Meadows to Boundary Ridge is difficult to follow. (See “Visiting Fish Creek” below)

**FS 101 South** Also named Fish Creek Road, this log-haul standard road takes you to US 12 near the community of Syringa.

→ Continue on FS 500, the Lolo Motorway, for 2.6 miles

### Visiting Fish Creek

Two points provide the quickest and easiest access to Fish Creek: one at its source and the other near its confluence with the Lochsa River. A trail runs between the two points.

**Source** East of Canyon Junction—about 1.5 miles on FS 5547—Trail #224 is a short drop to Fish Creek Meadows. In the 1920s, there was a Ranger Station in meadows. By the map, it must have been located where the trail came down from the ridgeline to the west. The trail that follows the creek to its mouth has not been maintained in the center portion for close to a century.

**Mouth** FS 462 leaves US 12 along the Lochsa River at 46.3336, -115.3464. That road ends at the head of Trail #2240. The trail is maintained as far as the mouth of Hungery Creek, but it continues up Fish Creek to the trail coming down to Fish Creek Meadows.

## Lewis and Clark Trail Crossing

46.3430, -115.6094

About 2.6 miles from Canyon Junction, a small sign marks the trailhead for Trail #25. This is the segment that starts at Eldorado Creek Bridge.

Most researchers think that the expedition came out of Fish Creek and crossed the ridgeline near this point. Expedition journals record they came up and out of Fish Creek and traces of an ancient trail descending to Fish Creek Meadows have been found, but after that, there is little agreement.

How the expedition reached this point from Bald Mountain three days earlier is open to debate. (See Appendix “The Hungry Creek Question”) This is the lowest point on this north-south ridgeline, so the Nimíipuu would have known that this area would have the least snow. From here they dropped down into Fish Creek for early spring travel east. To continue that thought, there was an Indian Trail down Fish Creek to the Lochsa River that was adopted by early Forest Service Rangers and shows on early Forest Service maps.

→ Continue 3.3 miles

## Boundary Junction

46.3854, -115.5844

Early access to this campsite was trail from Austin Ridge Lookout which is still in use. The trail passes near a spring here that provides good water all summer. For this reason, this has served as a base camp for those needing to spend time in the area—a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) crew was based here to build the Boundary Ridge Road that heads east from here. Since they had heavy equipment, they made some flat spots for their tents which you can still find just over the west side of the ridge. In 2015, a fire burned through this area killing the timber. Heavy brush followed, changing the appearance from the CCC days.

Note that some early maps name this Pete Forks Campground which today is about 2.5 miles east.

→ Continue on the Lolo Motorway 3.5 miles

### Side Trips to Hungery and Fish Creeks

**Boundary Ridge Road (FS 485)** This road follows the ridgeline east between Fish and Hungery Creeks. It was intended to drop down the mouth of Hungery Creek and then down Fish Creek to the Lochsa River and Lochsa Historic Station. Tough terrain stopped it near Boundary Peak. Access to Horsesteak Meadow is located on this road as is a trail to Fish Creek Meadows.

**Trail 230 to Fish Creek** 46.3714, -115.5789. The trail south into Fish Creek is an old Indian trail upgraded by the Forest Service, that receives little maintenance but is not difficult to follow. Trail researcher Steve Russell believes that Lewis and Clark came up from Hungery Creek here, and that they then descended to Fish Creek Meadows along this route.

**Hungery Creek Trail 69** (4 miles from Boundary Junction) 46.3717, -115.5409. From the Windy Saddle, the trail drops down steeply and crosses Hungery Creek (no bridge). It then traverses Horsesteak Meadow. Note that Hungery Creek is one of two east flowing streams in this area. It joins Fish Creek just about 3 miles above Fish Creek's mouth on the Lochsa River which flows west. At Horsesteak Meadow, the trail can be hard to follow due to fires and blowdowns. In June, the mosquitoes are fierce.

**Lewis and Clark Campsites** There are five unmarked campsites along Hungery Creek, but the trails—shown on old Forest Service maps—are not maintained and brushed over. It is not recommended that anyone try to hike to these sites

## Pete Forks Junction

46.4153, -115.5566

At Pete Forks, FS 500 and FS 104 form an important junction. This is the end of this book's "Western Nee-Me-Poo Trail" tour. FS 104 also provides the quickest access—or escape—to Musselshell Meadows.

Pete Forks has long been a popular camping area, but the 2015 fire that killed the trees on the east side of the saddle has lessened its popularity. There is an "antique" pit toilet in the trees on the west side which is still in service. The road junction is in a saddle just north of a small knob that held a series of events.

**Quick escape** Just one mile west on FS 104 is Beaverdam Saddle, and the junction with FS 103, a well-engineered log-haul road that will take you 18 miles back to FS 100.

→ Continue on the Lolo Motorway 1.5 miles

## Gass Creek Overlook

46.4306, -115.5410

The Gass Creek overlook gives the Motorway traveler a glimpse of the Lewis and Clark Trail far below. Gass Creek headwaters are below Rocky Ridge, and the stream flows south to Hungery Creek. The creek was named by Ranger Hartig, Lochsa District 1943–1967, for Sergeant Gass of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. A large interpretive sign provides context and orientation.

→ Continue 1.6 miles

## Rocky Ridge Lookout Site

46.4158, -115.5572

A few miles past the Gass Creek overlook, the road runs along the edge of a nearly flat ridge. Pass through a small saddle that swings to the south side of the ridge and look for evidence of an old road or trail continuing up the center of the ridge. Park in the saddle and then hike the short ½-mile to the site.

The lookout has been removed, but this spot provides an excellent viewpoint of the western end of Lolo Trail Corridor. To the west is the high prairie country around Weippe and the Columbia Basin. To the north, is the North Fork Clearwater River with peaks of the Mallard-Larkin Pioneer Area forming an impressive backdrop. Looking east you can follow the dividing ridgeline to Sherman Peak. To the south are the headwaters of Hungery Creek, and across the Lochsa River, the Selway Craigs in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness dominate the skyline. Snow hangs in the Craigs until late summer.

→ Continue 1.3 miles

## Rocky Ridge Lake Viewpoint

46.4407, -115.4983

A short ¼ mile trail takes you to a view of Rocky Ridge Lake. In the distance, Little Weitas Butte stands out. Bring your camera!

**Lost Cannonball** In the late 1980s, the Forest Service received a letter from a man in New Mexico who had worked on the Musselshell District near the end of WWI, or at least before 1920. He had been one of two men assigned to be the Rocky Point Lookout. There was no tower, just a platform that held a fire finder and a ground return phone. They lived in a near-by tent. In those years, there were sheep grazing along the Lolo Trail and a lot of traffic supporting the miners, shepherders, and travelers living summers in the mountains. One diversion from lookout duties was to hike over to the Rocky Ridge Lake viewpoint and look to see who their neighbors were. They began to speculate as to just how deep the lake was. One cloudy day with nothing to do, they hiked down to the lake and to build a raft. They gathered logs from around the lake and wired them together with phone wire. Once built, they paddled out into the lake and tied a cannonball left behind by the 1877 Army to a wire and lowered it into the lake to check the depth. They don't remember the depth, because about then, the raft started coming apart and at least one of them could not swim. The wire and cannonball were dropped, and all attention was given to getting back to shore. Alas, today we wonder what happened to the cannonball—and any others left behind during the Nez Perce War.

→ Continue 0.8 miles

## Rocky Ridge Lake Campground

46.4382, -115.4912

At scenic Rocky Ridge Lake, you will find the only formal campground along the Lolo Motorway. Fire rings and picnic tables define each campsite, and a modern pit toilet is provided. Fishing for some people is good, but not reliable. The sites are large enough for smaller trailers, but towing one in cannot be recommended due to the narrowness of FS 500.

→ Continue 0.1 miles

## FS 557 to Weitas Butte

46.4386, -115.4891

At the end of FS 557 (about 4 miles from the Motorway), there is a classic tall wooden lookout tower. At one time, it was for rent, but time and the elements made some parts unsafe. At the time of this writing, there is no timeline for reopening this unique “cabin in woods”.

→ Continue on the Lolo Motorway 1.5 miles

## Weitas Meadows

46.4351, -115.4831

Turn off the road (typically signed) and go south to the meadow's edge. Today's Nee-Me-Poo Trail skirts the northern (lower) edge of the meadows on a bridge. (Lewis and Clark never came through here.) After the bugs diminish in late July, there is good camping along the west side of the meadow, so this spot has seen lots of visitors over the years. From the early years into the 1940s, the Forest Service had a ranger station just a bit west of the meadows. There are still some artifacts hidden in the brush. The remains of two wooden causeways across the meadows have been found, as well as a "hole in the ground" that might have been a "cool room" for a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp. In the 1930s, the CCC set up camps for fire crews, trail maintenance, and road construction.

**Naming Weitas** Originally, it was "Wet Ass" Meadows as there is much soggy ground here—especially after a lot of horses traveled through the bottoms. However, the map makers could not be that politically incorrect, so they added the "i" and removed one "s". It is a classic irreverent backwoods name.

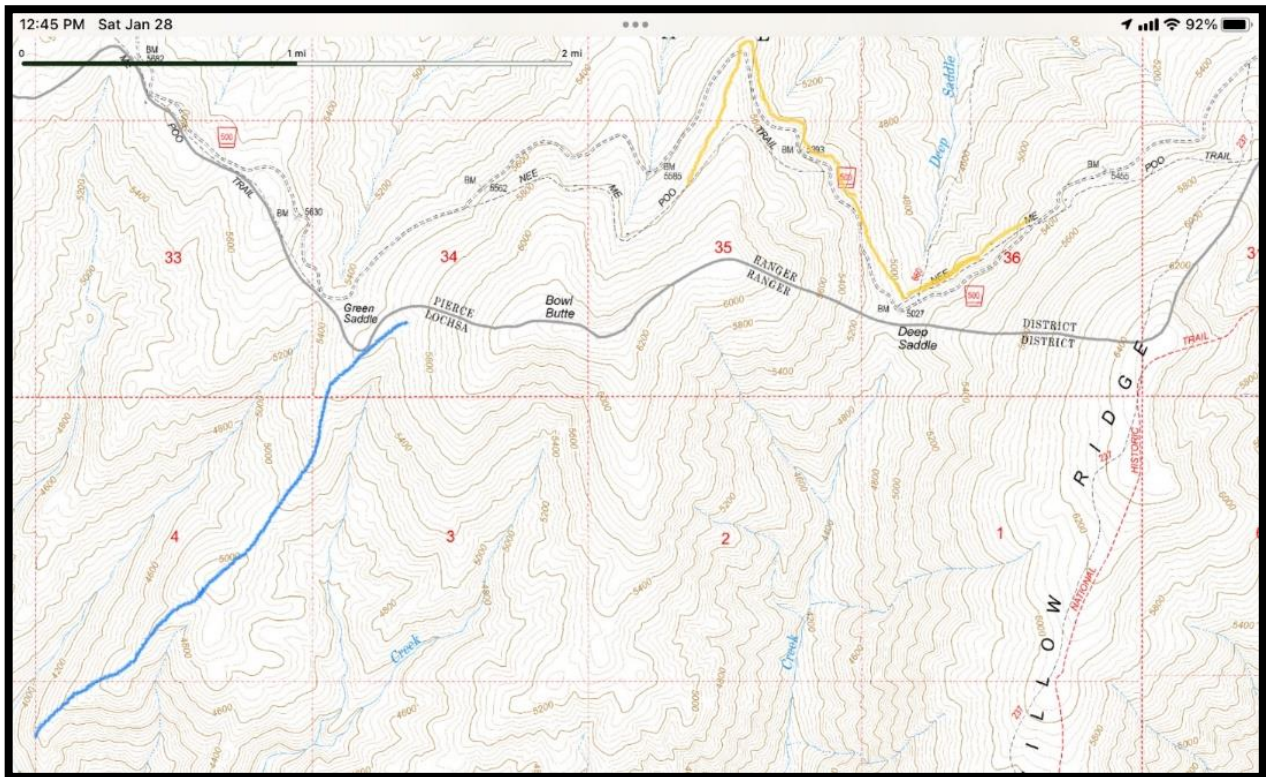
→ Continue 2.4 miles

## Green Saddle

46.4162, -115.4559

Green Saddle is another good campsite, and one researcher thinks the Lewis and Clark Expedition dropped down to Hungry Creek from nearby Bowl Butte. The Nee-Me-Poo Trail was on the south side of the road, but road building moved it to the east for about one-half mile. Look for a National Historic Trail signpost on the upper side of the road. See also the map below.

Green Saddle



*The blue line above approximates an old Nimiipuu trail that descends into Hungry Creek. The yellow line is the present location of the Nee-Me-Poo Trail. Notice it crosses the road at the ridge and is below the road until Deep Saddle. Older Forest Service maps incorrectly show the trail on the other side of the Lolo Motorway.*

→ Continue 1.5 miles

## Nee-Me-Poo Trail Crossing

46.4291, -115.4242

The Nee-Me-Poo trail drops below the road until reaching Deep Saddle ahead.

## Deep Saddle

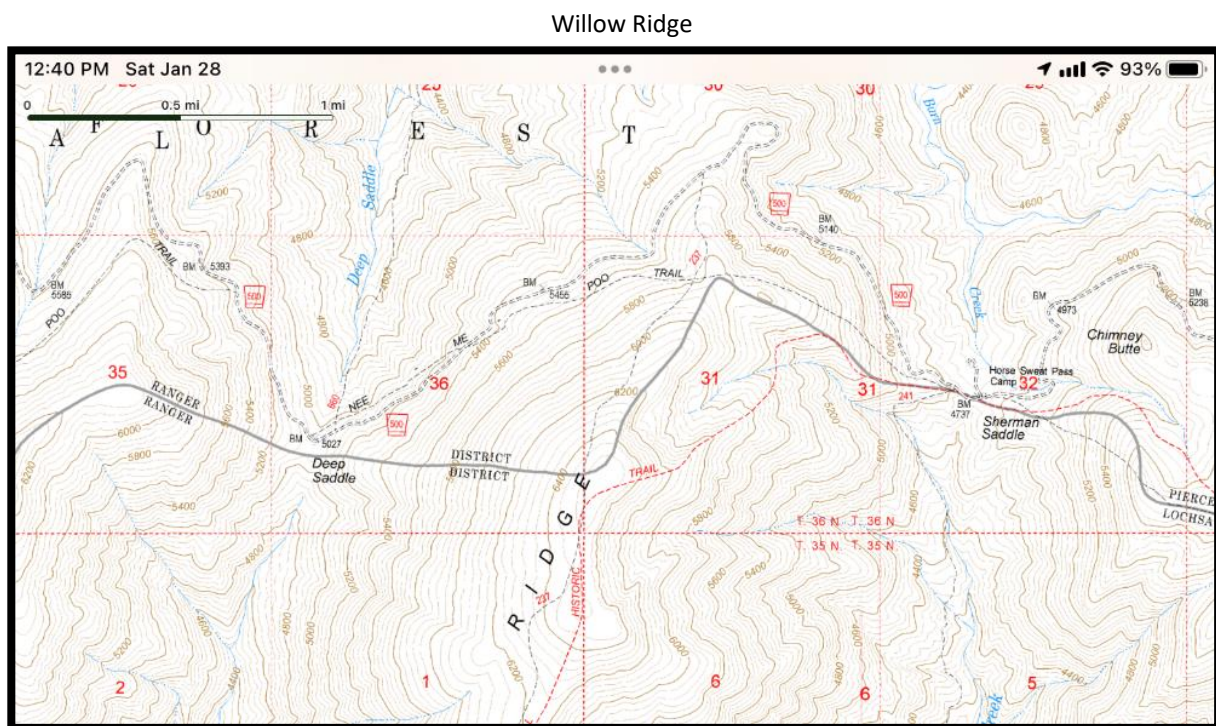
46.4155, -115.4122

Below the road, there is a nice campsite with a spring that provides cool water year-round. The Nee-Me-Poo trail passes through the camp. The trail just to the east passes through a wet area with a profusion of flowers dubbed “*Fairyland Trail*” by some volunteer trail workers who maintain this section of trail.

→ Continue 0.6 miles

## Willow Ridge Trail

46.4243, -115.3901



Many Forest Service maps show a hiking trail descending from Willow Ridge to Hungry Creek—shown in red above. This is actually an old, unmaintained Nimipuu trail that Lewis and Clark may have used. It is no longer a hiking trail although this editor had no problem following it as far as Cache Mountain. Hiking further south cannot be recommended.

The trail up the ridge takes you on one of the possible routes that Lewis and Clark used to reach Hungry Creek. The trailhead is marked with a very small sign at a wide spot in the road with limited parking. The trail climbs Willow Ridge to the south and crosses the Nee-Me-Poo trail in about ¼ mile. Willow Ridge Trail then climbs in earnest to 6,400 feet. The climb takes most people over an hour.

The ridgeline on top is nearly flat, offering some great views to the south and southwest, especially where the ridge terminates about a mile south of the top. Space believed the Lewis

and Clark Expedition used this ridge as a route to Hungry Creek. None of the trails that various maps show dropping off the south end of the ridge have been maintained in the past 50 years. The final drop into Hungry Creek is a bit of a challenge and the trail along the creek shown on maps is not discoverable by most people.

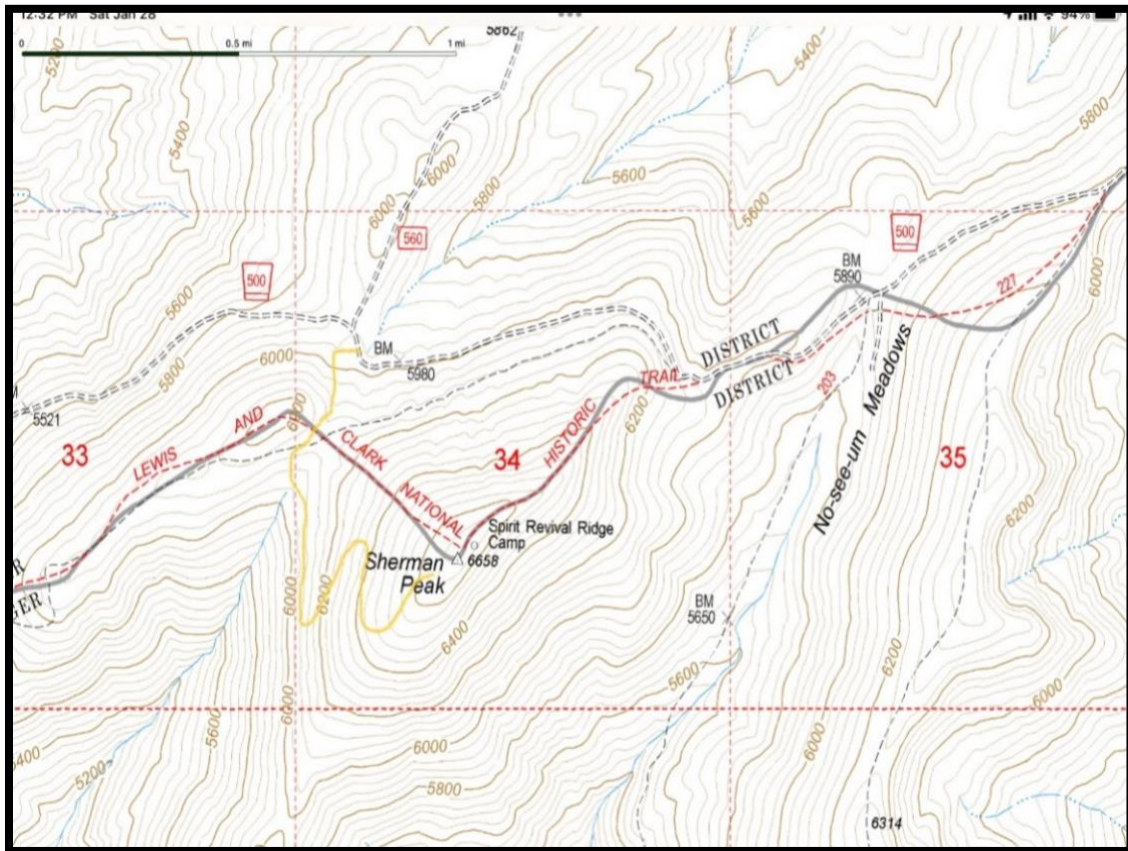
→ Continue 2.5 miles

### Sherman Saddle 46.4176, -115.3672

Here, there is a nice spring and campsite just below the saddle on the northside. Two trails are shown on a map, one coming up Willow Creek from the south and one going north. Neither have been maintained in many years. If one climbs straight up the ridge to the west, one can find faint traces of an old Nimípuu trail going steeply up the mountain. It's possible that the Lewis and Clark expedition followed that trail. (See Appendix “The Hungry Creek Question”)

→ Continue 2.5 miles

Sherman Peak, Liz Butte, and No-see-um Meadows



*Shown in yellow is a modern trail to the top of Sherman Peak. In red, the Nee-Me-Poo Trail is shown. It is unlikely that that Lewis and Clark went to the top of Sherman Peak if they went here at all. They were following a Nimípuu trail that was probably the same as used by Bird-Truax and thus became the Nee-Me-Poo Trail. Spirit Revival Ridge Camp is a cartographer's misunderstanding, and it is unlikely that any historical travelers would have camped at the top of a peak.*

## Liz Butte Road (FS 560) and Sherman Peak Trail

46.4221, -115.3291.

Here the road to Liz Butte, the Nee-Me-Poo Trail, Lewis and Clark Trail #25, and trail to the top of Sherman Peak merge within a relatively small space.

**Liz Butte Road (FS 560)** goes two miles north to Liz Butte Lookout. The one-room log cabin that housed the personnel remains, but the lookout is gone. The cabin is maintained by a group of volunteers who snowmobile here in the winter, and during the summer, it can be rented. Heavy maintenance is critical for log structures to remain intact, and in recent years, they have replaced some of the logs.

The roof has 36-inch-long hand split cedar shingles. Now that is old technology! Hand split shakes have a life span of 20 to 40 years if well maintained.

**Sherman Peak** Just a bit east of the road junction is the trail to Sherman Peak (Trail #12). It offers some great views and is considered by some historians as the location where Lewis and Clark first saw the plains to west:

*“ . . . to our inexpressable joy discovered a large tract of Prairie country lying to the S. W. and widening as it appeared to extend to the W. through that plain the Indian informed us that the Columbia river, in which we were in sutch run. this plain appeared to be about 60 Miles distant, but our guide assured us that we should reach it's borders tomorrow the appearance of this country, our only hope for subsistance greatly revived the sperits of the party . . . .”*  
—Meriwether Lewis, September 19, 1805

On some Forest Service maps, Sherman Peak is labeled as Spirit Revival Ridge. About ½ mile from the trailhead, this trail crosses the Nee-Me-Poo Trail.

→ Continue on the Lolo Motorway 0.7 miles

## Nee-Me-Poo Trail

46.4225, -115.3165

This is the eastern end of a long segment beginning at Weitas Meadow.

To the east, the trail wraps around Sherman Peak to a saddle on the west side of the peak. About ½-mile west, it passes some nice springs and then breaks into the open at a small saddle. The saddle was once a Nimípuu family campsite, and a study of Google Earth or even a USGS map reveals a significant number of meadows and berry sites within quick reach. At one time, there were cooking implements here—now gone. A well-worn grindstone once caught an archeologist’s eye. He essentially said: *“This started as a water-worn rock, probably in the Lochsa River and was carried up here by a woman—a wife and a mother. She passed this stone on to her daughter who passed it to her daughter. I wonder how many generations it served?”*

To the east, the trail was obliterated by construction of the road, but it does resume.

→ Continue 0.7 miles

## No-See-Um Meadows

46.4229, -115.3042

With a name like No-See-Um, who would want to camp here? Well, quite a few people have camped here and enjoyed it. It is one of very few sites that can hold groups of 20 or more people. The meadows on both sides of the ridgeline have evidence of old camps—hunters and gatherers of the Nimiipuu and pioneer variety. With lush meadows draining each side of the saddle, hunters of all generations have been successful for eons.

**Spring box** At the head of the meadow to the north, you can still find the old wooden “spring box” built by the CCC when a road construction camp was based here in the late 1930s.

**Sherman Creek Trail and the Idaho Centennial Trail** This modern-era trail leaves No-See-Um meadow and reaches the Lochsa River—a stiff downhill jaunt of 8 miles. The Idaho Centennial Trail was designated in the late 1980s as a north-south trail through Idaho. From No-See-Um Meadow, it follows the road west, then north on the Liz Butte Road. At the cabin, it follows a series of trails north to the Idaho-Montana state line.

**Lost Cannon** The world is full of stories of the missing mines and lost cannons; so here is our story. Ever since the 1877 Nez Perce War, there have been stories that the army lost a pack howitzer somewhere on the Lolo Trail crossing. The Army denies that they lost a cannon, and most people had given up looking by the 1940s. There were, however, many reports of cannon balls that had been left behind, although I’ve yet to see one. The ones in a museum in Orofino are from gold mines that converted to ball mills when stamp mill technology became old hat.

In the late 1940s, a California hunter was camped with some buddies on the Lolo Motorway in one the saddles between Weitas Meadows and No-See-Um Meadows. On their last day, they planned to pack up in the afternoon and head out. Not feeling too energetic, he didn’t go far from camp and wandered out a ridge from the Lolo Motorway and was enjoying the view. He pulled a sandwich from pack, sat on a rock and while munching he noticed down the hill below him something that just didn’t look “right”.

After finishing lunch, he headed down to look. What he found was the barrel of a cannon. Covered in brush, it would be hard to get out, and it was very heavy. Oh well, not his thing. He returned to camp, packed up, and headed out. The next day the party was waiting to catch a train back to California, and he had some time to kill. He wandered into a sporting goods store and got to talking to the co-owner about his cannon story. The salesman thought it was interesting, so he wrote down the man’s name and address. He left the note on his desk and when home for the weekend. The next day being his day off, he didn’t come in. When he did return, his partner had cleaned the desk and the note was gone. All he could remember was the

general location: “Uphill from where the Forest Service map showed Lochsa Ranger Station”. That would be about Sherman Peak, No-See-Um Ridge, or Willow Ridge. Good hunting!

→ Continue 0.6 miles

### No-See-Um Ridge Trail and Nee-Me-Poo Trail

46.4261, -115.2925

Between this point and Bald Mountain to the east, various Nee-Me-Poo trail segments are available. All are accessible from the Motorway. In other words, a through hike is possible by walking on the road at times.

**No-See-Um Ridge** One trail researcher thinks Lewis and Clark went out on this ridge on their way to Hungry Creek. Whether they did or not, this gentle hike—Trail #227—quickly levels out providing great views of the surrounding Bitterroot Mountains. To the west, Camas Prairie near Grangeville, Idaho can plainly be seen—one of several places that could be Lewis’s Spirit Revival Ridge. The hike is especially enjoyable when the beargrass is blooming.

→ Continue 1.1 miles

### Dry Camp

46.4370, -115.2753

Key to understanding how Lewis and Clark got to Hungry Creek is the location of Dry Camp—Lewis’s camp of opportunity:

*“we marched 18 miles this day and encamped on the side of a steep mountain; we suffered for water this day passing one rivulet only; we wer fortunate in finding water in a steep raviene about ½ mile from our camp.”*

*—Meriwether Lewis, September 18, 1805*

Ralph Space gave his best guess as to the location and placed a metal stake at what he dubbed “Dry Camp”. This is the traditional location assuming they went up and over Willow Ridge.

→ Continue 2.0 miles

### Bald Mountain

46.4520, -115.2435

As you drive around the south side of Bald Mountain, you get some great views of the Selway Craigs to the south, Castle Butte to the southeast, and the ridgeline you just traveled on. Getting out of the car is recommend as veering of the side would be catastrophic. Take care to pull far enough to the side so other vehicles can get by.

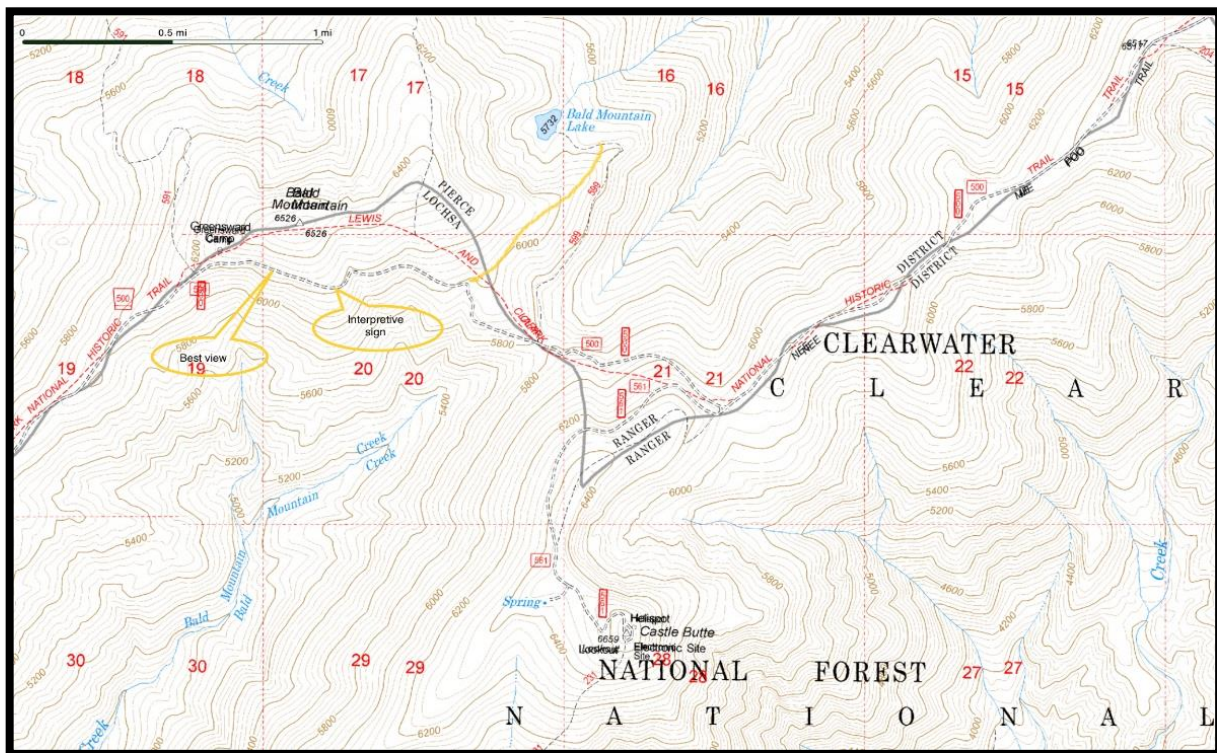
The area has been a favorite place to camp for many travelers. Two ranger cabins and at least one fur trapper cabin were built near the spring. The spring is also the likely location of the Lewis and Clark Expedition's camp on their 1806 return:

*"late in the evening much to the satisfaction of ourselves and the comfort of our horses we arrived at the desired spot and encamped on the steep side of a mountain convenient to a good spring. here we found an abundance of fine grass for our horses. the grass was young and tender of course and had much the appearance of the greensward. there is a great abundance of a species of bear-grass which grows on every part of these mountains it's growth is luxuriant and continues green all winter but the horses will not eat it"*

—Meriwether Lewis, June 26, 1806

From the above journal entry, many historians have since named this Greensward Camp.

#### Bald Mountain



The Lewis and Clark trail shown red is, in most cases, today's Nee-Me-Poo Trail. Bald Mountain Lake Trail is shown in yellow.

**Bald Mountain Lake Trail** is incorrect on USGS maps. The correct location is shown above in yellow. This is a short and easy hike to the lake—a beautiful alpine cirque that doesn't get too cold until you swim out to deeper water.

**Road Maintenance** There is a spring in the draw near the old road that led to a Ranger Station in the early 1900s. When the spring spills onto the Motorway, it can be quite muddy. If water is

running down the road, please get your shovel out, and divert it to the side. Official road maintenance is a once in ten years event, so we all need to help keep the road useable.

**1877 Nez Perce War** General Howard’s troops camped here, and one journal writer commented that the General slid down the hill as there was no flat spot to sleep. Wandering around on the bald hillside, you can find shallow dips that might have been dug by a soldier trying to get a good night’s sleep.

**Great views** can be had of the Selway Craigs to the south and Castle Butte to the southeast. To the southwest and west, the ridgeline that holds the main ridgeline trail is visible.

→ Continue 1.0 mile

### Bald Mountain Saddle

46.4485, -115.2258

This saddle is not a dramatic site and is rarely noticed. On the south side, there is water not far from the road. To the north, you can find the un-maintained Nee-Me-Poo trail which climbs nearly directly up to Bald Mountain. To the east, there are segments of Nee-Me-Poo trail on the hillside climbing the ridgeline out to Castle Butte. Most of the Nee-Me-Poo Trail appears to have been taken out during road construction.

→ Continue 0.7 miles

### Road to Castle Butte Lookout

46.4454, -115.2132

Here, a 1.5 mile, severely rocky, road leads to the Castle Butte Lookout—a rental lookout and radio repeater site for the Forest Service, State Highway Department, and others. If you drive up, the road gets quite rough near the lookout, so park in the first lot on the right, and walk (climb) the remaining distance. If someone is renting the lookout, there will be private cars nearby. Unless they invite you up, give them some privacy. You can always walk around and under the lookout. There are great views in all directions. The Coolwater Craigs to the south are most spectacular. To the north is a view of the unending mountains and valleys. You can spend a lot of time trying to identify the various peaks.

→ Continue 4.0 miles

Note: For the next four miles, there are many Nee-Me-Poo segments visible from the road.

## Smoking Place Trailhead

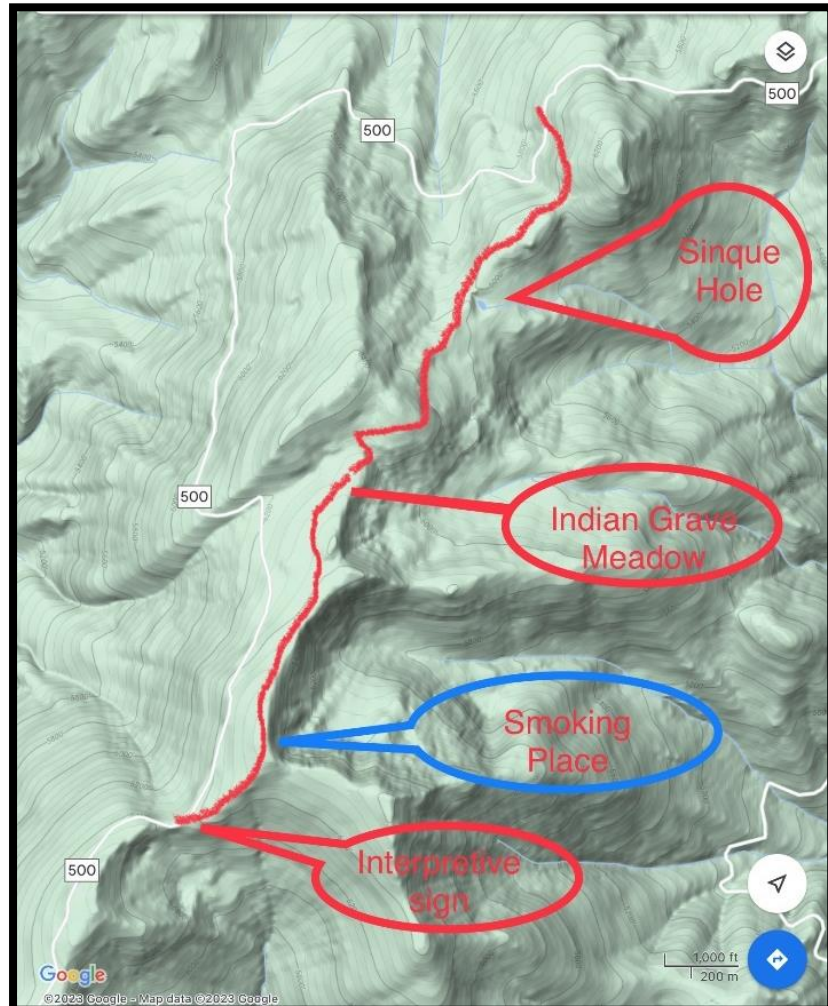
46.4836, -115.1578

Many people consider these three miles of trail trad the “*Crown Jewel*” of the historic Lolo Trail.

There are two trailheads—one on the north end and this one on the south end. Most visitors go to the southern trailhead and park near the large interpretive sign—half hidden in the trees on the north side of the road.

**Smoking Place** Watch for a metal pipe horse hitch above the trail on your right. Leave the “official” trail and work your way up the gentle slope. The timber ends as you near the crest (46.4871, -115.1530). You will see rock cairns along the treeless ridge. There were several here at one time, but some have succumbed to vandals.

Lewis’s journal describes why this site is so significant to past and present travelers:



*“we halted by the request of the Indians a few minutes and smoked the pipe. on this eminence the natives have raised a conic mound of stones of 6 or eight feet high and on it’s summit erected a pine pole of 15 feet long . . . from this place we had an extensive view of these stupendous mountains principally covered with snow like that on which we stood; we were entirely surrounded by those mountains from which to one unacquainted with them it would have seemed impossible ever to have escaped . . . after smoking the pipe and contemplating this scene sufficient to have damp the sperits of any except such hardy travellers as we have become, we continued our march”*

—Meriwether Lewis, June 27, 1806

**Indian Grave Meadow** A Nimípuu family out of Kamiah was camped here in the late 1890s when the whole family became ill. One son died and was buried not far from the meadows along the Lolo Trail. A cenotaph marker has been placed at the Grave Creek crossing, and the family still maintains the memorial. Grave Creek, Indian Grave Peak, and Indian Grave meadow all derive their names from this tribute.

Indian Grave Meadow is a natural camping spot with good water, fuel for both horses and campfires, and is somewhat protected from wind. You can find old campfire rings throughout. After a hundred years of fire suppression, lodgepole pines have significantly encroached on the meadow.

**The Sinque Hole** was named from a journal entry from Pvt Whitehouse:

*“... Camped at a Small branch on the mountain near a round deep Sinque hole full of water.”*

*—Joseph Whitehouse, September 17, 1805*

The Sinque Hole is down the trail about 1/3-mile from Indian Grave Meadows. Many people who have studied the matter feel that the camp would have been at the meadows rather than the sink hole. For one thing, there was not room at the sink hole for 32 people and their horses to camp, horse feed was very limited, and the water was subpar. Whitehouse did not define “near” nor did he say “at” and Indian Grave Meadow has several sink holes as well. A careful reading of the other journal entries indicates they continued to Indian Grave Meadow before stopping for the day. Still, the traditional camp next to the Sinque Hole persists in modern literature.

At the northern trailhead, there is only a small sign marking the trail and barely room for two vehicles to park.

→ Continue 0.9 miles

### Indian Grave Peak Road

46.4953, -115.1532

The road to Indian Grave Meadow and Peak has been closed for many years but there is parking and a turnaround spot for about three vehicles. Walkers can easily 'scale' the berm left by the bulldozer, making this the quickest and easiest access directly to Indian Grave Meadow. The old road continues to the top of Indian Grave Peak, the site of a dismantled lookout.

→ Continue 1.3 miles

## 12 Mile Saddle

46.5098, -115.1548

This popular camping area has access to three trail systems. One goes down to Weitas Creek with access to the Liz Creek Cabin area. Another trail heads north to Cook Mountain and on to the North Fork Clearwater River and Fourth of July Pack Bridge. Another branch of that trail heads northeast to Lookout Mountain, Switchback Hill, Scurvy Mountain, and road access at Kelly Creek. Thus, 12 Mile is the easiest and highest elevation trailhead to 600,000 acres of steep, roadless lands.

→ Continue 1.1 miles

## Sinque Hole Trailhead

46.5096, -115.1378

This is the northern trailhead to Sinque Hole and Smoking Place. For a description of the trail, see “Smoking Place Trailhead” above. Going east, the Nee-Mee-Poo Trail is under the road for the remaining distance to Saddle Camp.

→ Continue 2.2 mile

## Saddle Camp Junction

46.5135, -115.1005

Here you have three roads and a trail to choose from, most notably Saddle Camp Rd (FS 107) that connects to US 12.

**Saddle Camp Rd (FS 107)** This road heads south to US 12 on the Lochsa River and is a primary access route to specific areas on the Lolo Motorway. It is a long, steep, constant grade that takes a little less than an hour to drive. Shift to a lower gear and don’t ride your brakes so much that they overheat and you become a “run-a-way”.

**Gravey Creek Rd (FS 107)** North of Saddle Camp Junction, FS 107 becomes Gravey Creek Road on most maps. Gravey Creek flows north to Cayuse Creek, Kelly Creek, and the North Fork Clearwater River. Originally the name was Grave Creek for the Indian grave along the Lolo Trail. Since there already was a Grave Creek and this creek does not arise near Indian Grave Peak, a mapping team changed the name by adding a “y”.

**Mire Creek Rd (FS 587)** This road head north and west from the junction.

**Bird-Truax/Nee-Me-Poo Trail** On the east side of the road junction, look about 100 feet down the Gravey Cr Rd and you can see the trail reopened by Nimípuu Tribal members. The trail is a stiff climb to the ridge near Devil’s Chair.

→ Continue east on the Lolo Motorway for 1.3 miles

## Nee-Me-Poo Trail

46.5151, -115.0839

This is the other end of the trail that comes up from Saddle Camp. The continuation east along the ridge has not yet opened.

→ Continue 0.2 miles

## Devils Chair

46.5170, -115.0805

Devils Chair has a nice bench with a nice view in the big rock to the side of the road. But if you climb the rock and jump to the bench, be warned that getting out is far more difficult. In 2022, natural wildfire burned the small timber around the rock making for better views.

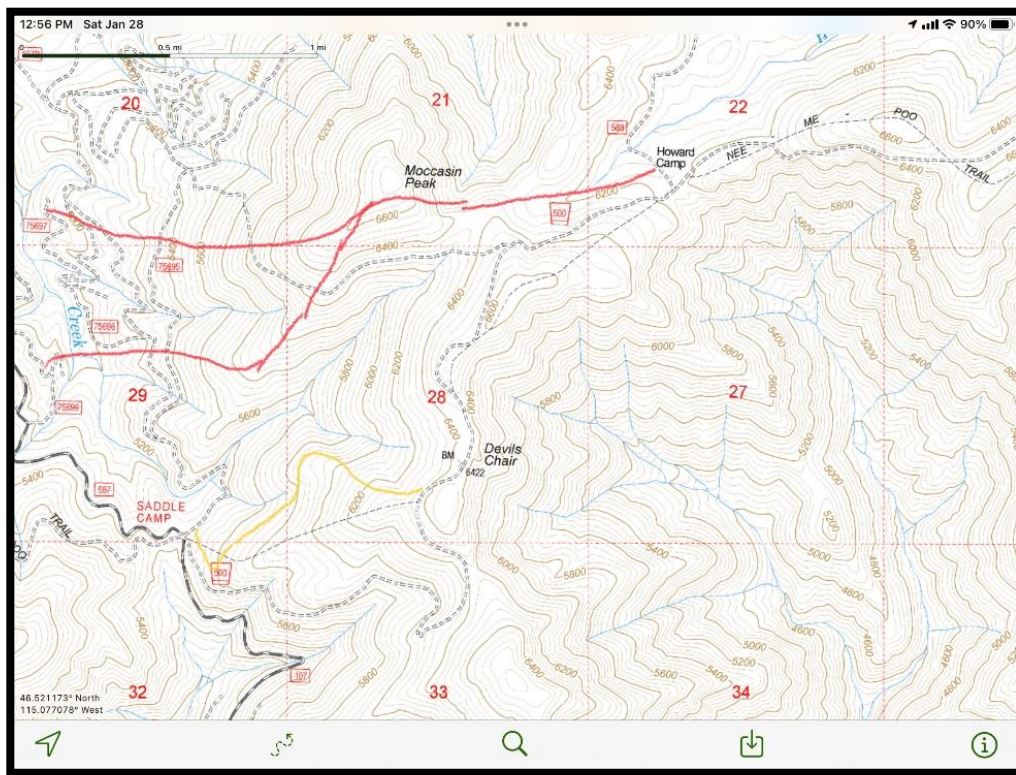
→ Continue 1.4 miles

## Howard Camp

46.5301, -115.0659

General O.O. Howard led the Army forces chasing the Non-Treaty Nez Perce in the 1877 war.

Howard Camp



*Red lines are possible Nimípuu trail routes that Lewis and Clark may have followed. The yellow line is a recently opened section of Nee-Me-Poo Trail.*

**Lewis and Clark Route:** From Howard Camp, the Nimiipuu trail that Lewis and Clark followed probably went to the west over Moccasin Peak or perhaps west along the ridgeline before they dove off to the headwaters of Gravey Creek. Part of Moccasin Peak has been logged, so if there were trail traces there, they are probably lost. Just where their trail crossed Gravey Creek is an open question. The USGS Topographic map used Ralph Space’s route, but even Ralph admitted that the lower Moon Creek location was wrong shortly before his death.<sup>15</sup> The journals say they crossed two streams flowing north, and the above map above shows two possible routes.

**1877 Nez Perce Route** The Nez Perce passing here mid-summer of 1877 had hoped they had left the war behind. They surely had sad feelings about leaving their homeland. The seven non-treaty bands traveled independently, so it is impossible to know which band was where on a given day. The Army journalists comment on the meadows being churned to mud from the Nimípuu horses and that some horses that had been injured were left behind. The Bird-Truax trail had not been maintained by anyone since it was built 11 years earlier. The Nez Perce had to work their way around or over down trees and other blockages. They had left a larger number of cattle behind but had quite a significant horse herd. By contrast, the Army hired civilian woodsmen to cut out the Bird-Truax trail for the troops.

**Peeled trees:** There are peeled lodgepole trees along the ridgeline here. Typically, the traveler would make a series of axe cuts across the base of a tree about 18 to 24 inches long. She would then get hold of the piece of bark and rip upward. The bark piece being removed tapered down to a point as it was ripped up leaving a scar on the tree—square on the bottom and pointed on the top. The inner cambium bark could then be used as food for humans and horses. This was usually only done when horse feed was scarce, typically in the spring when traveling over snow. Lodgepole is a short-lived tree of 90 to 100 years, so most of the peeled trees once seen here are gone.

**Historic Camping** Most camp sites were near the road junction and the creek just to the north.

**Long way for help** Ralph Space was based here in 1924 when access was by trail from the end of the road just out of Kooskia, Idaho. In his book “The Lolo Trail” Space tells of a co-worker kicked by a mule which broke his leg just above the knee. They splinted the leg as best they could, then Ralph went to Horseshoe Lake Lookout and phoned for help. He then returned to the patient, but the splinted man could not sit on a horse. That afternoon, they made a stretcher from two poles and added a harness so two stretcher bearers could carry some of the weight on their shoulders.

With the patient and stretcher, the load was about 200 pounds. The man in front had the heavy part—about 125 pounds, and the man in back carried just 75. There were just four men to do the carrying. The day after the injury, they started out. The first day was a tough downhill from Howard Camp to Saddle Camp and then a stiff climb to Indian Grave Meadow—a distance of

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<sup>15</sup> Personal communication between Charles Raddon and Ralph Space.

seven miles that took five hours. It began to rain, but they proceeded on and reached Castle Butte Lookout by 7 PM. A doctor from town had come to meet them, and he installed a true cast on the leg. The stretcher bearers by then were exhausted, their blisters broken and bleeding.

They rested the second day. The third day, they found with the cast, the patient could sit on a horse, but the leg stuck out awkwardly. When they encountered a tree, they had to either steer the leg around the tree or take the patient off the horse, go past the tree, then reload him. It took four men to manage 11 miles in seven hours arriving at the Boulder Ranger Station (at today's Wilderness Gateway Campground) for lunch. After lunch, they started the long climb out of the Lochsa Canyon arriving at Fish Butte Lookout about 8 PM—another 11 miles in seven hours. After another night out, they reached the end of the road—15 miles by 3 PM. They were met by cars that took him to a hospital in Lewiston, and the stretcher crew started the return trip to Howard Camp.

**Horseshoe Lake Lookout** This site is at the end of the road to the north. It provides good views of the surrounding mountains, especially to the north. A great place to watch the Aurora Borealis and August meteor showers.

**A Difficult Road** About 1.9 miles east of Howard Camp or a mile west of Moon Saddle, the Lolo Motorway is at its most primitive condition. The road is narrow without passing places, rocky, and steeply out-sloped toward a long deep chasm. In short, you need full confidence in your driver. In the 1970s, a ranger driving west encountered a car stopped in a very narrow section of road. The driver and his passengers were just sitting in the vehicle. The ranger walked up and asked if there was a problem. They were 'freaked out' and unable to move. The ranger told them to slide over, and he drove their rig up to the next wide place. He then walked back to his rig and drove up to find them still sitting where he had left them, unable to drive. He drove them on to Howard Camp and walked back to his rig. This time, they had driven on west, but he again came on them in a steep narrow area a mile east of Saddle Camp. There again, they had "frozen up". Again, he drove their rig ahead to Saddle Camp and again walked back to his pickup. By the time he got to Saddle Camp, they had recovered and headed down to the Lochsa Highway and "out of the mountains".

→ Continue on the Lolo Motorway 2.7 miles

## Moon Saddle

46.5359, -115.0173

**Nee-Me-Poo Trail** Just below the road at Moon Saddle, a section of the Nee-Me-Poo Trail side-hills its way to Indian Post Office emerging behind the interpretive sign there. It is about one mile long and gains about 700 feet elevation. This segment was recently restored and currently maintained by Nimíipuu Tribal members.

At Moon Saddle, the Lewis and Clark Expedition came up the draw to the north from their “Lonesome Cove” camp of September 16, 1805. They turned west and followed a Nimíipuu trail west along the ridgeline. Both the Nee-Me-Poo and early Nimíipuu trails pass through this saddle.

**Trapper Cabin** Down the shallow south side draw about 200 yards on the left (east) side of the road is the collapsed remains of a trapper’s cabin used by Willian (Bud) Moore, in the 1930s. It was quite small with such low walls that it was impossible to stand. It was built on a steep slope above the draw so that snow would fall away and not block the door. He would only spend one night here on a weeklong tour checking his traps. With his was at Powell, he also trapped the other side of the Lochsa River in the Brushy Fork-Warm Springs Creek-Elk Summit areas. He later became District Ranger at Powell and wrote about his winter activities in his autobiography.

→ Continue 1.5 miles

## Indian Post Office

46.5459 -114.9879

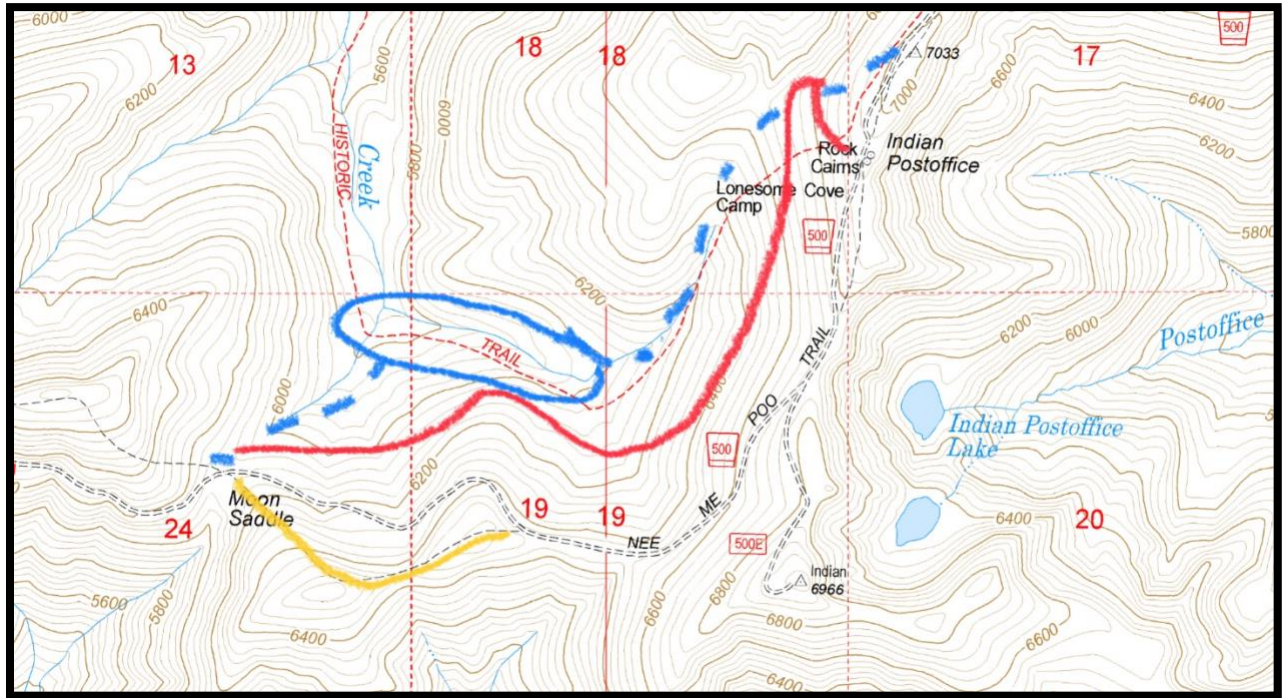
The Lewis and Clark journalists leave no hints that they ever saw Indian Post Office. They likely didn't. Like Smoking Place to the west, Indian Post Office has long been place to enjoy the view, place a prayer rock on a rock cairn, smoke, and connect. To many Native Americans, it is still a Medicine Place, so it is important that others leave everything as found.



*The red arrow is Lewis and Clark's "Lonesome Cove", and the green arrow is Moon Saddle.*

**Enjoy the view!** The pyramid shaped peak to the southeast is Grave Peak which features a hard to see lookout. It is a cupola on top of a cabin like the one that was here at Post Office Peak. Norman Maclean, author of *Young Men and Fire*, also wrote a story set at Grave Peak Lookout titled *The Cook, the Ranger and the hole in the Sky* about a young man coming of age at Grave Peak Lookout during World War I. Looking more directly due east (on a clear day) Ranger Peak crowns the Idaho–Montana line.

## Moon Saddle to Indian Post Office



The blue dashed line is the probable Nimípuu trail that Lewis and Clark followed. The camp of September 16, 1805, was likely within the blue circle. The red line is the Nee-Me-Poo Trail reopened in the mid-2010s. The yellow line is another Nimípuu trail.

**Lonesome Cove** From the interpretive sign it's about a half-hour scramble down to a small, unmarked hollow dubbed "Lonesome Cove" by Ralph Space.<sup>16</sup> It had been a wet, snowy, cold, and miserable day. Capt. Clark went ahead of the main group and was probably looking to lose some elevation, find shelter from the wind, and have good water and grass. This location provided that and would make the hunters happy too. Before the main party arrived, he built fires for each of the four messes. He wrote:

*"I have been wet and as cold in every part as I ever was in my life, indeed I was at one time fearfull my feet would freeze in the thin mockersons . . . . I took one man and proceeded on as fast as I could about 6 miles to a Small branch passing to the right, halted and built fires for the party . . . .*

*we Encamped at this Branch in a thickly timbered bottom which was Scercely large enough for us to lie leavil, men all wet cold and hungary. Killed a Second Colt which we all Suped hartily on and thought it fine meat."*

—William Clark, September 16, 1805

**Nee-Me-Poo Trail** The Nee-Me-Poo trail passes below the interpretive sign. It's a steep scramble down to the restored trail and the braided trail system on this hill can make it difficult

<sup>16</sup> If one really needs to visit "Lonesome Cove", it's easiest to approach it from Moon Saddle.—ed.

to find the correct trail. When you see a distinct tread side-hilling instead of dropping, you have found it.

**The Rock Cairns** We don't find any comments in the Lewis and Clark journals about the rock cairns found here today. It is likely the expedition dropped over the side just a bit east of the cairns and thus missed seeing them. There are a lot of theories about their origin. Many believe they were religious sites—often found not far from a small village site or camp. Individuals would have a private visit with their guiding spirits. They might say some prayers on matters of importance and after completion of the prayer, the individual would place a stone on the rock pile which would be a physical display of devotion. It may have been that members of an extended family would place their praying rocks on one pile. Unfortunately, most of the cairns along the motorway have been disturbed by whites looking for rumored treasure under the pile. As a result, the cairns that we see today are significantly smaller and less well-built than those found here a century ago.

**Indian Post Office Lakes** Fishing is reported to be good at these lakes if you have the energy for the trip down and back. To get there, look for a trail leaving the road to the old lookout. It's easy to miss so if you near the lookout, you went too far. Reportedly, Idaho Fish and Game stocks the lakes by "fish-bombing" them by fixed wing aircraft. That would be fun to see.

**Indian Post Office Peak** The knob just south of here held Indian Post Office Lookout. It was an old-style structure with the living quarters below and a small cupola on top that held the fire finder. In its day, it was staffed with two Forest Service firefighters who worked for the Powell District Ranger of the Lolo National Forest based in Missoula. This was the Lolo Forest's furthest west lookout. The forest boundary changed in the 1960s when US 12 was completed, and it was possible to have the whole west slope management under one National Forest. You can still drive to the lookout site which gives you a nice view of the lakes below and a sea of mountains to the south. The University of Idaho Library has the journal and photos of a young firefighter who worked here in 1929 and 1930 before the road was built.

### Indian Post Office Lookout



*Indian Post Office Lookout in the 1930s—an old-style lookout with the fire finder in a cupola on top of the cabin. By the time this photo was taken the log cabin was looking a little worn.*

**Peeled Trees** At one time there were several peeled trees along the ridge. For more on peeled trees, see “Howard Camp”.

→ Continue 1.6 miles

### Doe Creek Road (FS 566)

46.5561, -115.9576

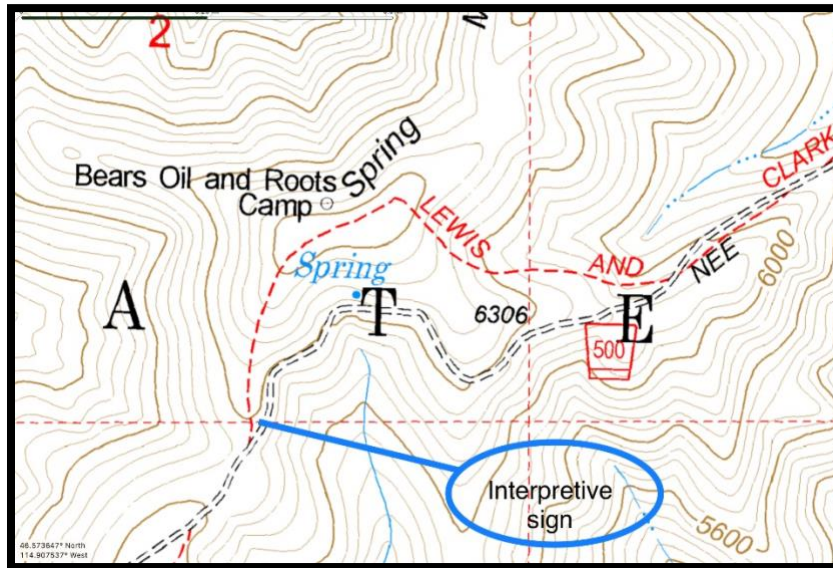
Doe Creek Road was built in the 1930s to access Indian Post Office Peak Lookout. Before the road, a trail served the same purpose. It was quite a climb up from the Lochsa River and the trail was not far from the route of the present road. The Carlin Party followed the trail with the ill-fated George Colegate in 1893. A fire in 2022 burned over the road and killed some trees which opened viewpoints for travelers. Today, the road provides quick access to Indian Post Office without as much “narrow, rocky, and rough” road as the Lolo Motorway west of Saddle Junction.

→ Continue 2.8 miles

## Spring Mountain

46.5703, -114.9129

Spring Mountain (Bears Oil and Roots Camp)



This map shows a spring next to the Motorway. Before the 2015 wildfire here, there was a trail that crossed above the road to the spring and then to the small ridge near the elevation number “6306” above.

Here an interpretive sign commemorates a camp on the Lewis and Clark 1806 return trip. They came all the way from Bald Mountain in a single day. Sergeant Ordway journaled:

*“...we came further today than we went in 2 when we came over. And Camped on the South Side of a mountain where our horses find a little grass. The day warm and Snow melts fast.”*

The “Bears Oil and Roots” name, given by Space, describes their meal that night. There is a spring on the south side of mountain about 20 feet above road. The Bird-Truax Trail passed through the spring to make watering stock easier.

There are three probable sites for camping each with very old fire pits and disturbances: one at the saddle to the west, one on the ridge to the east, and one on a flat behind the peak. Most researchers believe the expedition camped at the one behind or north of the peak and the stock grazed on the south side.

The fire that burned in 2015 removed the heavier brush and now hide the trails from easy visual identification.

The tire tracks up the ridge on the west were started by a tractor fighting a fire in the 1950s. Despite lots of discouragement, stopping people from trying to drive it has been difficult.

→ Continue 3.6 miles

## Old Trails

46.5939, -114.8605

After a steep climb and a switchback, the road reaches a crest, and we gain some views to the south. If you get out here and wander a bit, you can find segments of both the Nee-Me-Poo and an earlier Nimípuu trail that Lewis and Clark likely followed.

→ Continue 0.9 miles

## Cayuse Junction

46.5989, -114.8538

This junction is a noteworthy feature. The Nee-Me-Poo Trail descends from the east to meet to road near just to the east. When first built, the Lolo Motorway went up a draw whereas now it goes around a ridge (see map). The road down the draw was quite wet, and they were unable to keep the road dry enough to be useful. In the 1960s, there were rumors about a Ford Model A which got stuck and was abandoned there.

**Camping:** At one time hunters camped all over this area. With the decline in hunting and reintroduction of natural fire, this area has changed significantly in the past 30 years. One thing to keep in mind is that when seeking a campsite, all people are drawn to the same features: water, wood, protection from wind and sun as well as grazing if traveling with horses. Today, most campers turn north here and find a place along the creek  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile away from the junction. Cayuse Lake looks wonderful but is quite shallow, and we've yet to meet someone who caught a fish there.

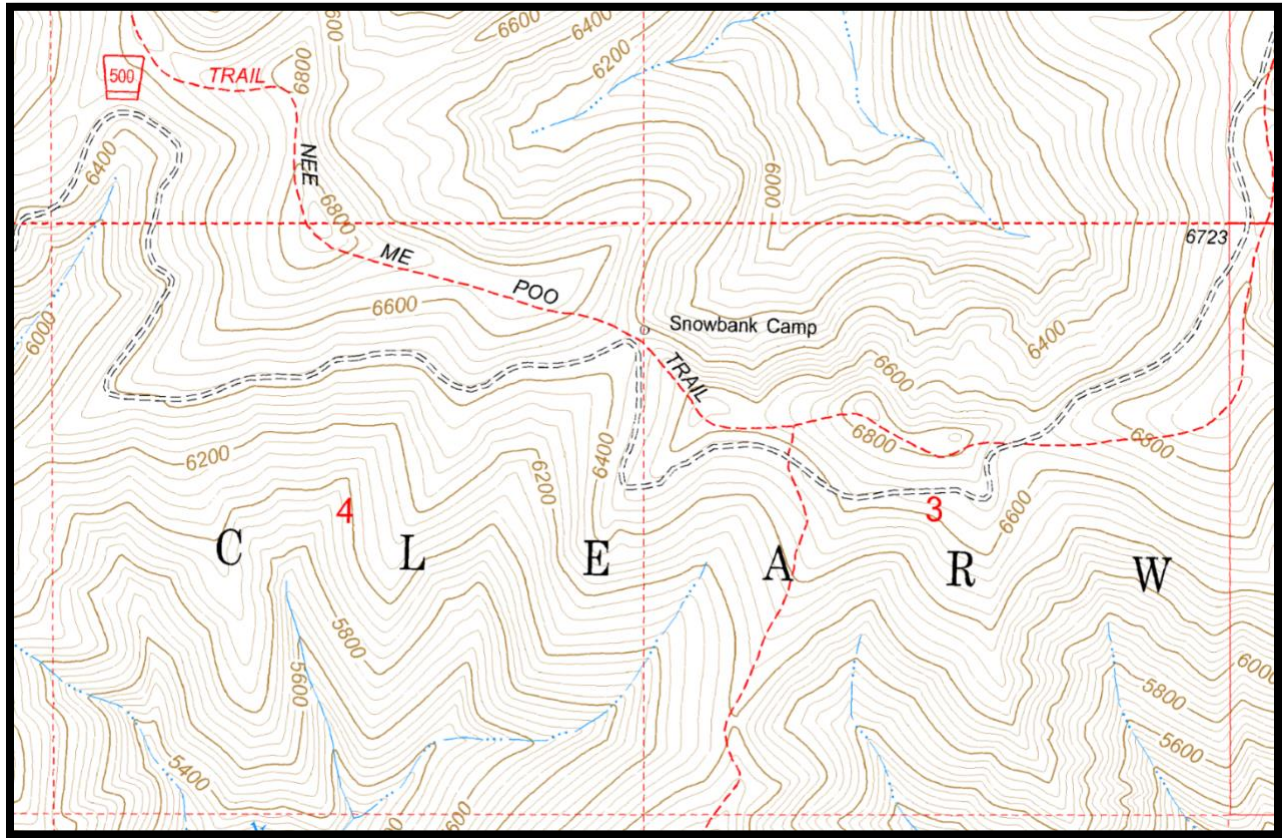
For a time, there was mining on Blacklead Mountain and Williams and Rhodes Peaks to the north and northeast. Access to the mining area was up Cayuse Creek. There are several small lakes and a high lakes alpine area to the northeast.

→ Continue 4.7 miles

## Snowbank Camp

46.5824, -114.8210.

### Snowbank Camp (Traditional)



Above: Today's Wendover Ridge Trail comes in just below the "Snowbank Camp" label. The dot was not the actual location of a Lewis and Clark campsite.

Many of the Forest Service interpretive signs along the Lolo Motorway were placed where there was a convenient place to stop. The Snowbank Camp location shown above is a classic example. The Lewis and Clark camp of September 15, 1805, was likely atop the ridge to the northwest, not the labeled dot shown on the above map. Needless-to-say, Ralph Space named the camp and placed its location near the Lolo Motorway as a convenience to motorists.

Pvt. Whitehouse wrote:

*"We proceeded on our way on the top of this mountain, until after dark, in hopes of finding water, but was not fortunate enough to find any. We encamped on the top ridge of the Mountain, where we found plenty of Snow, which from appearance had lain there during the whole Year, we melted Snow to drink & make some portable Soup, which was given to all the party, & they all retired to rest seemingly content."*  
 —Joseph Whitehouse, September 15, 1805

During the night, things turned unpleasant:

*“began to Snow about 3 hours before Day and continued all day the snow in the morning 4 inches deep on the old snows, and by night we found it from 6 to 8 inches deep I walked in front to keep the road and found great difficulty in keeping it as in many places the Snow had entirely filled up the track...”*

—William Clark, September 16, 1806

Whitehouse added:

*“...when we awoke this morning to our great Surprise we were covered with Snow...we mended up our mockasons. Some of the men without Socks rapped rags on their feet and loaded up our horses and Set out without any thing to eat, and proceeded on...”*

An unmaintained piece of Nee-Me-Poo is above the road ¼ mile east at about the same elevation as the interpretive sign. Look mid-slope above the road.

→ Continue 0.2 miles

### Wendover Ridge Trail

46.5805, -114.8153

The Wendover Ridge Trail ends—or starts— here. In 1805, Lewis and Clark used this route to climb up from the Lochsa fishery. The Forest Service has added a few bends to mitigate the grade, but in most places, one can see the old trail climbing straight up the ridgeline. No matter which tread-line you follow, it’s a tough 3,400-foot elevation change in only 7.5 miles.

→ Continue 2.5 miles

### Lost Lakes Trail

46.5963, -114.7784

**Lost Lakes Trail** The three-mile trail to Lost Lakes departs from here. A bit further on the trail is Williams Peak. Rhodes Peak—a bit further on—has an elevation of 7,930 feet.

**Road Crew Camp** Across the road to the south in the little basin burned out in the 2015 fire was a road crew camp for the original road construction. You can see the remains of roads and flat spots for tents. They took their water from the draws.

→ Continue 2.6 miles

## Innamatnoon Likoolam

46.5865, -114.7325

The Nimípuu translation is “Grizzly Bear Saddle” which seems appropriate given the area’s natural history. This is the official eastern entrance to the Lolo Trail Historic Corridor. The name change came in the years leading up to the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial. The white man’s name was Papoose Saddle which tended to offend some. Ralph Space in his book “Clearwater Story” noted that few of the Nimípuu names had survived the white mapmaker’s need to give everything a name. In the process, the original native names were lost. In recent years, the Board of Geographic Names has attempted to make a balance.

**Shotgun Creek Rd (FS 109)** It is about 10 miles or one hour down a rather narrow but evenly graded road to its junction with US 12 just below the Highway crossing of Crooked fork.

**Innamatnoon Creek Rd (FS 568)** This is not a well-maintained road. If you need to escape the high country, we suggest you go east on FS 500 to Powell Junction and take Parachute Hill Road down to US 12.

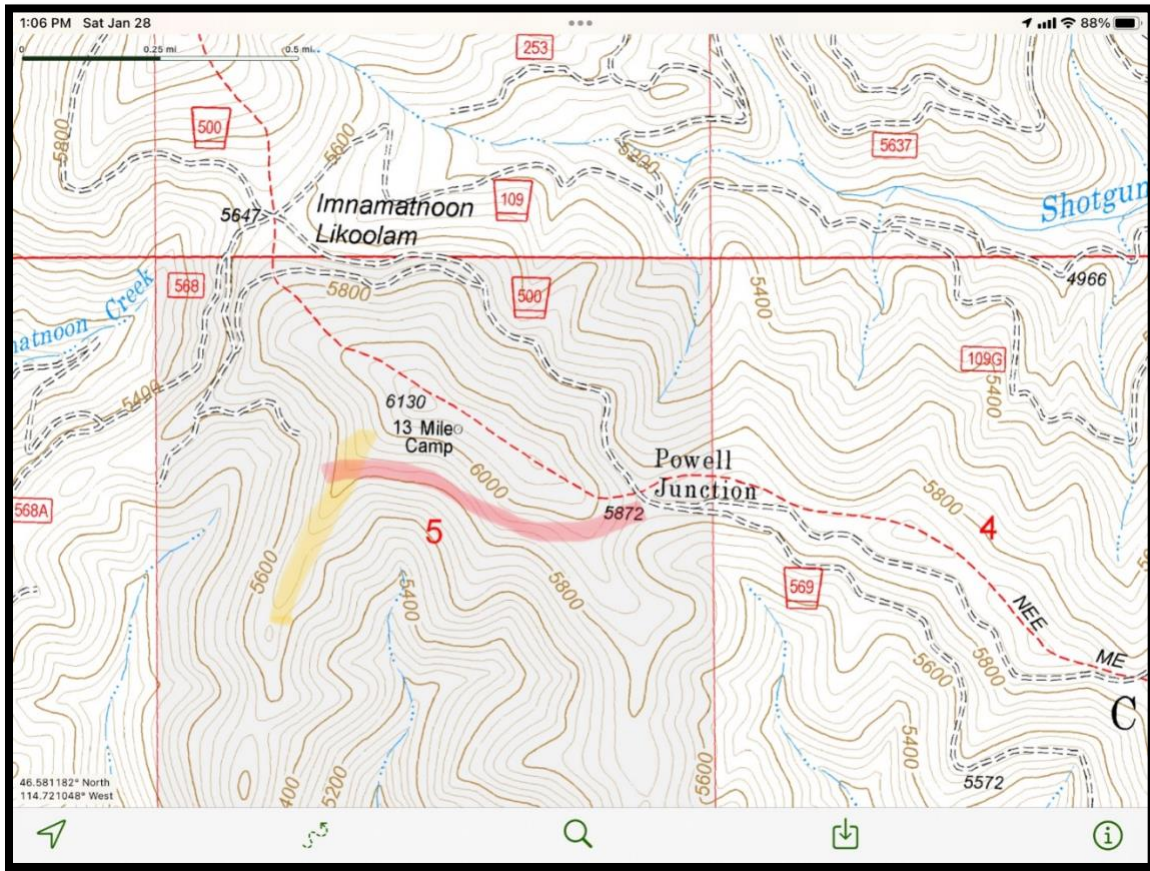
→ Continue on the Lolo Motorway 1.0 miles

## Powell Junction

46.5791, -114.7186

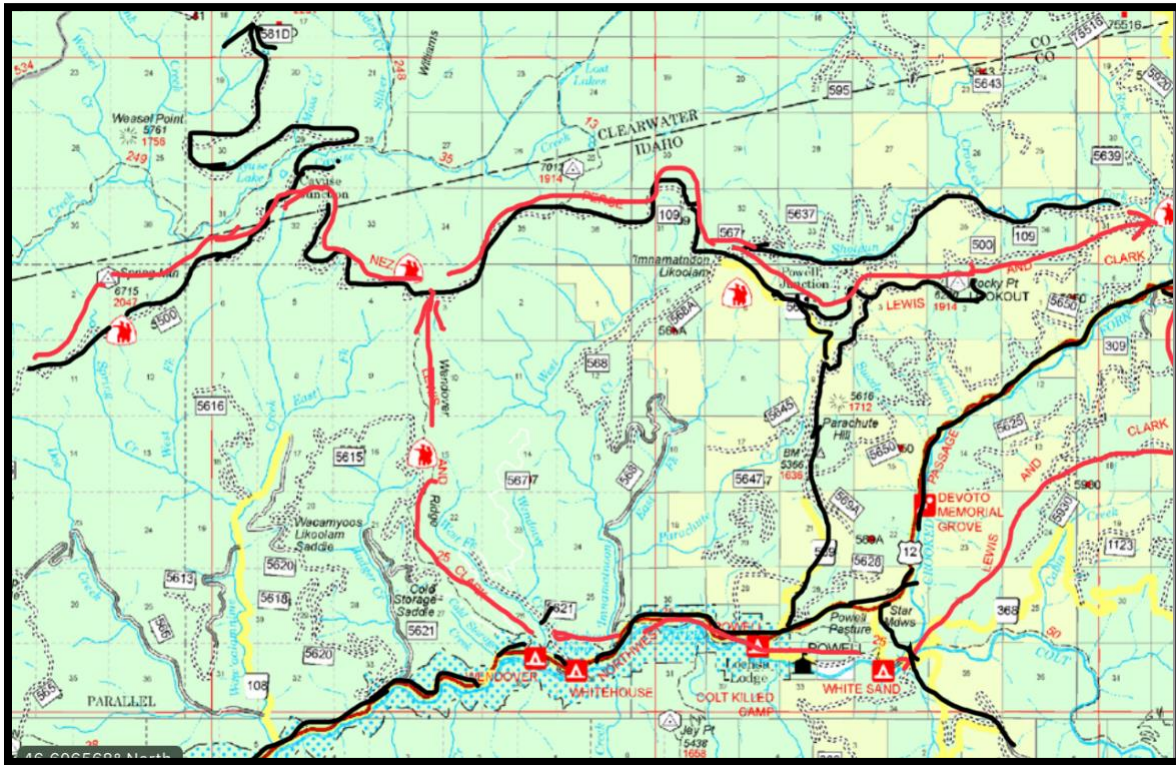
This important junction provides fast access to “civilization” at Powell and a short hike to one of the more scenic Lewis and Clark campsites.

### 13-Mile Camp



**13-Mile Camp** Park in the wide spot immediately to the west of Powell Junction. There is often a small sign pointing the way to the Lewis and Clark camp of June 26, 1806, named by Ralph Space as “13-Mile Camp”. The trail climbs gently about a ½-mile. The trees open up, and you will find yourself in a large, exposed southern slope with excellent views of the Bitterroot snow peaks. Their camp was at the top where it is level and the grass is better. The journals record that the Nimípuu guides stopped them “after traveling 13 miles only” because there wasn’t another campsite within reach before dark.

## Access Routes from and to Powell, Idaho



Black lines are modern roads. Red lines are Lewis and Clark routes. Westbound in 1805, they came down to the Lochsa River and then climbed up Wendover Ridge. Eastbound in 1806, their Nimíipuu guides kept them on the main trail that continues east to Rocky Point before dropping down to Crooked Fork—a tributary of the Lochsa.

**Powell Junction** FS 500 is the smaller road to the north (left). The main road—often labeled as the Lolo Motorway on maps—is Parachute Hill Road (FS 569) that drops down to US 12 at Powell, Idaho where you will find Lochsa Lodge (food, gas, lodging) and Powell Campground.

This tour opts to remain on FS 500 to reach Rocky Ridge Lookout to the east.

→ Continue east on FS 500 for about 2.0 miles

FS 5650

46.57785, -114.6905

This road connects with Parachute Hill Road about 1.9 miles to the south and will be used near the end of this tour.

→ Continue on FS 500 for 1.2 miles

## FS 500 Gate

46.5811, -114.6714

This section of FS 500 was built from the west starting at Crooked Fork Creek in the 1930s. It crosses large pieces of private land, and when the land was logged, maintaining the road became problematic. Occasionally, the landowner or someone leaves the gate open. Following it very far might lead you to a hard place.

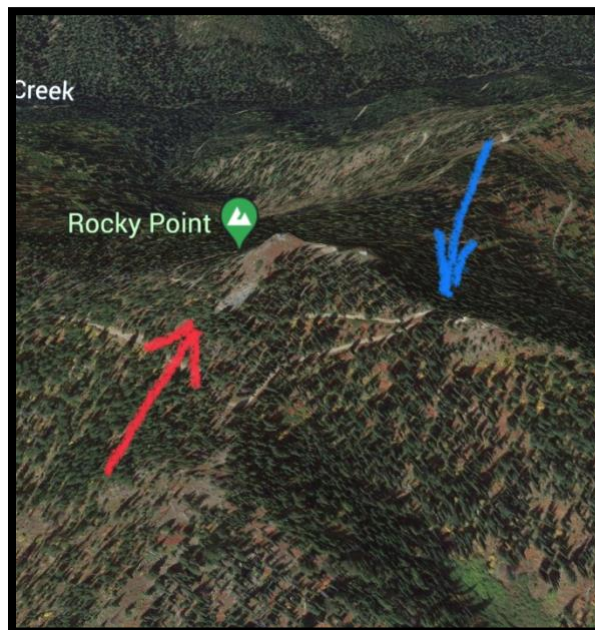
→ Continue east 0.5 miles

## Original Trail Traces

46.5829, -114.6636

Just before reaching Rocky Point Lookout, stop at the severe hairpin corner. Just to the north in a small saddle is a view of two old trails. Just below today's road, you can see the remains of the Nee-Me-Poo/ Bird-Truax/Forest Service pack trail. Then walk a bit east to the white rock which forms the heart of this point. Walk out the ridge to the east as it begins to drop down towards Crooked Fork Creek 2,000 feet below. Look at the narrow rock ridgeline, and you can see the old surface trail that Lewis and Clark followed—the earlier Road to the Buffalo. Here, the ridgeline is quite narrow. They must have traveled on those narrow ledges and steps you can see looking down the ridgeline to the east. This is one of the few places you can say with assurance “Lewis and Clark stepped right there!”

Rocky Point Lookout and Switchback



*Note how the road makes a switchback on the ridgeline to the east as marked by the blue arrow. The Nimípuu trail that Lewis and Clark followed would have skirted just below the rocky outcrop (red arrow) just as the road does today.*

→ Continue to the lookout parking area.

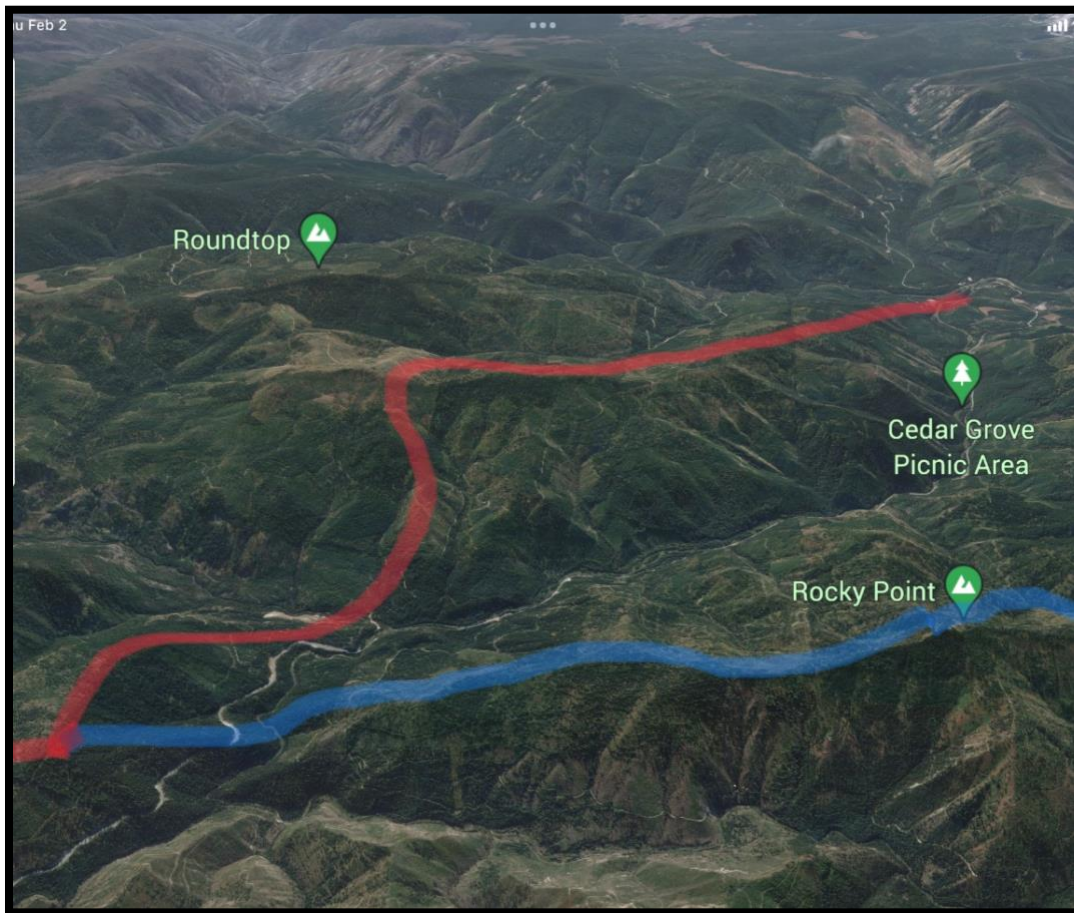
## Rocky Point Lookout

46.5828, -114.6653

This is one of the few lookouts still staffed by a person during the fire season, and you are welcome to visit at most times. When you park, don't block the turnaround area. Approach the lookout and the keeper will likely invite you up to the catwalk unless there is significant radio traffic they must attend to.

Rocky Point provides outstanding views of the route traveled by the Corps of Discovery as far as ten miles away. To the northeast is Lolo Pass and a visitor center. Across the Crooked Fork, you can see the ridges they traveled in 1805 on the way to the Lochsa Fishery. To the southwest is Wendover Ridge which the expedition climbed to reach the main Lolo Trails.

Nee-Me-Poo Trail vs. Lewis and Clark's 1805 Route



Google earth view of Lewis and Clark's route heading south from Lolo Pass in 1805. The red line is their 1805 route. The blue line is their eastbound 1806 route.

## Powell, Idaho

46.5153, -114.7152

To end this tour, return to FS 5650 (46.57785, -114.6905) and turn left (south).

FS 5650 reaches Parachute Hill Road (FS 569) in almost 2 miles.

Continue south to Powell and US 12. After a day or more on the Lolo Motorway, Parachute Hill may seem like a freeway.

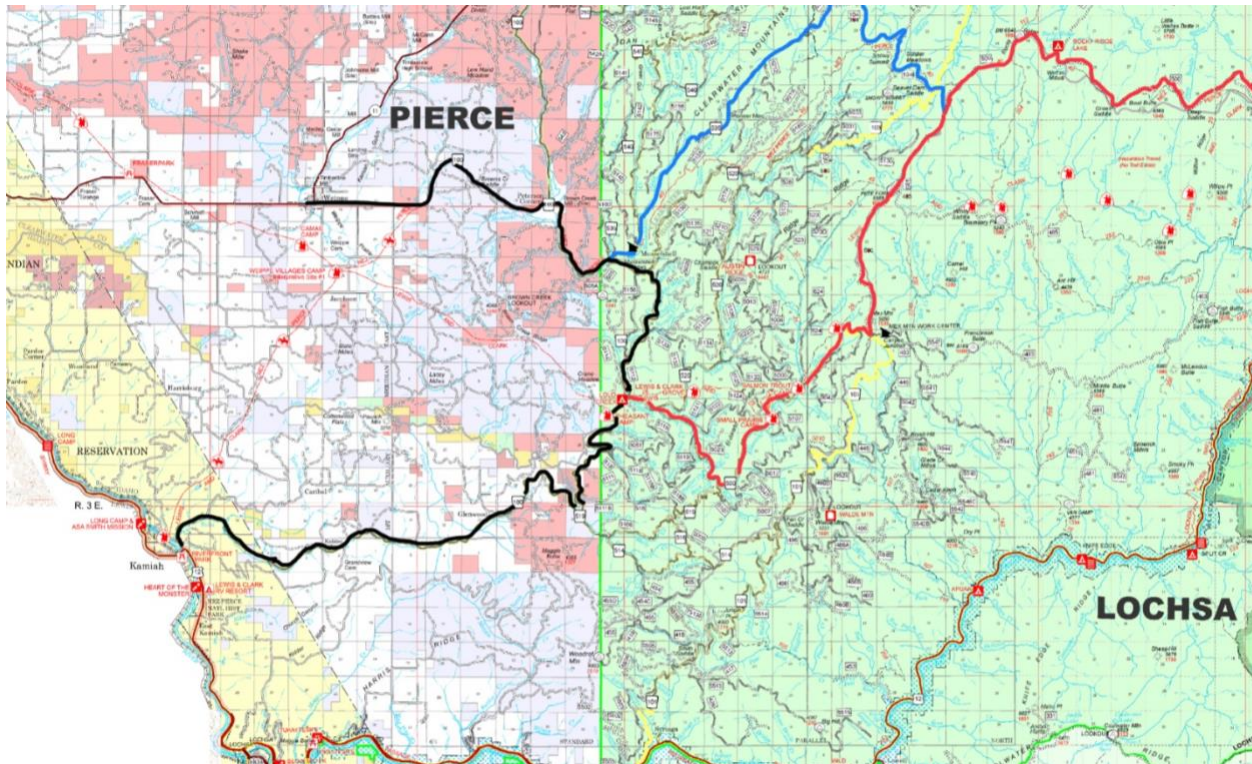
If you are looking for even more historical travel, see the previous chapter describing the historical sites of US 12.

## Chapter 4

# The Western Nee-Me-Poo Trail

Musselshell Meadows to Pete Forks

West End of the Lolo Trail Corridor



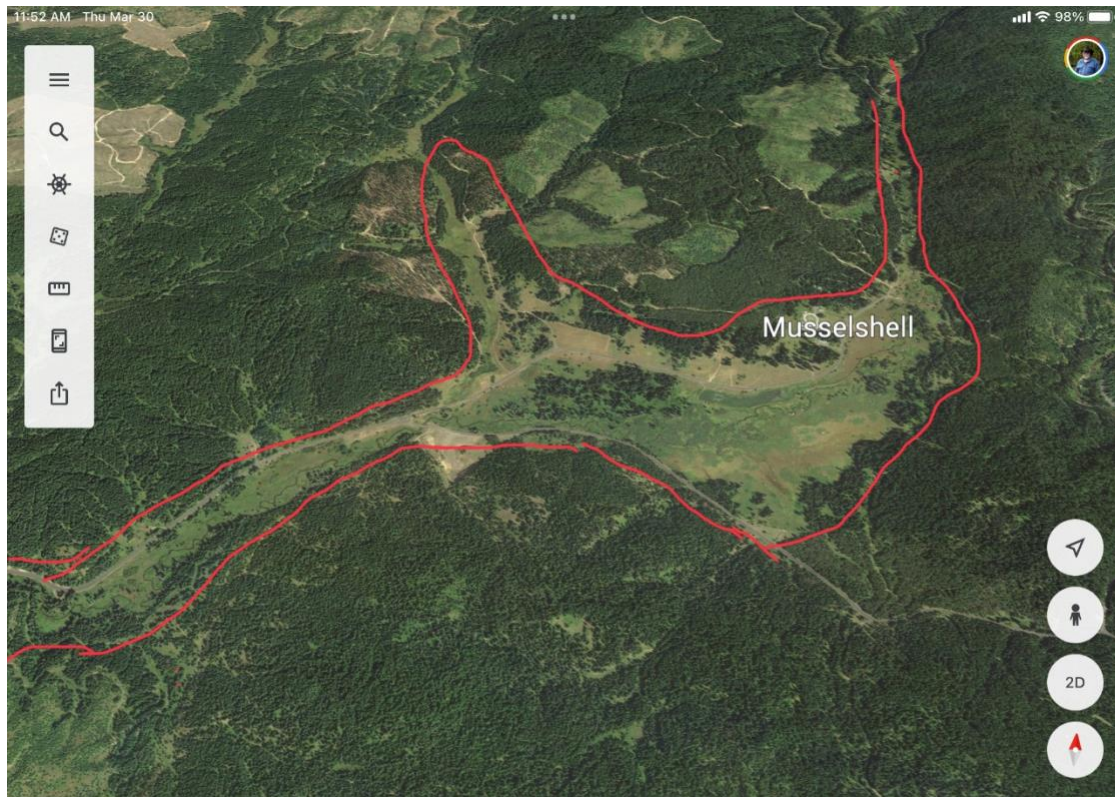
*Musselshell Meadows can be accessed via Weippe or Kamiah, Idaho. The roads are shown above in black. The Lolo Motorway is shown in red and the Western Nee-Me-Poo Trail driving tour in blue.*

## Musselshell Meadows Interpretive Sign

46.3493, -115.7471

Musselshell Meadows lies on the very edge of the Clearwater National Forest. Here is where the mountains start. To the west, the land is less steep with prairies suitable for agriculture. A Forest Service station has been here since the Clearwater National Forest was created—about 1900. It serves as a good base for exploring the adjacent public lands. Until the road system was developed in the 1930s, the Forest Service had several portals to serve the million+ acres of inroaded lands and Musselshell Meadows was one of those portals. It served as the western portal of the Lolo Trail as far east as Willow Ridge including the upper Lolo Creek country, Eldorado Creek, Weitas Meadows, Snowy Summit, Lean-to Ridge, upper Weitas Creek, and Cook Mountain. Around the meadows, you can find a representative sample of both historic events and everyday use. There is truly a lot of history here.

## Musselshell Meadows



*The red line is the probable edge of the meadows before fire control allowed brush and trees to encroach.*

**Camas Crop** Camas bulbs had long been a staple vegetable Native Americans. The bulbs were dug in the spring and placed into piles to dry. Late summer, the bulbs were baked in underground ovens. Thus preserved, the highly nutritious tubers would sustain the People through the next winter and spring. When the Lewis and Clark Expedition arrived at the nearby Weippe Meadow, the Nimíipuu were there to bake the camas they had harvested earlier.

Musselshell Meadow provides a natural camas crop that is still harvested by Nimíipuu people, but conditions are quite different than in the time of their ancestors. The meadow is fenced to keep cattle out of the camas grounds. Before modern fire control, a natural fire could be expected every 20 to 50 years, and the Nimíipuu likely set fires to burn the meadow more often. Today, the tree and shrub invasion of the meadow is significant, and the meadows are less than half the size they would have been 200 years ago.

The meadows are quite wet in the spring when the camas plant flourishes. By mid-August, the camas plants go dormant, but the bulbs are safe underground. The competing brush was vulnerable to fire and required fresh seed to blow in to start new plants—a process that takes years. During the era of natural and human-set fires, the whole area turned blue from the flowering camas that bloom in the spring. For the Nimíipuu people, the change has been quite detrimental. The bulbs are much smaller than before fire control, and there are fewer of them as the result of the brush competition.

→ Continue on FS 100 northwest and west 0.7 miles

### Gold Creek Road (FS 535)

46.3522, -115.7604

On the west side of Musselshell Meadows, turn onto the gravel Gold Creek Rd (FS 535).

→ Continue on FS 535 for 0.7 miles

### Musselshell Meadows Pond

46.3545, -115.7489

During World War II, timber was important for the war effort, so a sawmill was built to cut all the merchantable timber in the area. A thousand acres of the surrounding timber was cut for lumber. After the war, the sawmill was moved to the North Fork Clearwater River to cut the dying western white pine suffering from blister rust. Today, the mill pond has become a wildlife watching area, and deer and moose sightings are common.

→ Continue on Gold Creek Rd 535 for 0.2 miles

### Dispersed Campsite

46.3550, -115.7489

Across from the mill pond is an area used by small groups for camping. There are no formally designated camp sites, just open, dispersed camping. If you camp here, please don't build new fire rings. Instead, use an existing fire pit. The nearest public toilet is at the Nee-Me-Poo trailhead another half mile up the road.

→ Continue 0.1 miles

### US Forest Service Guard Station

46.3569, -115.7436

There are two fire crews based at the Guard Station; a crew connected with a traditional "backcountry" fire truck and a crew that works with a helicopter—a helitack—that is based here during fire season. Both crews operate seven days per week in rotating shifts. Both crews frequently travel to fires throughout the west. Additionally, other types of crews work from the station such as trail crews and timber and wildlife crews.

→ Continue 0.1 miles

## Nee-Me-Poo National Historic Trail

46.3586, -115.7416

Nee-Me-Poo Trailhead



*Google Earth image of Nee-Me-Poo trailhead. You first come to a fork in the road with some interpretive signs. Parking and camping on the right. Check out the local flowers in the butterfly garden. The trail starts north to the foot and stock bridge.*

At the north side of the meadow is the western terminus of the Historic Lolo Trail and Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail. This is where Wellington Bird and Major Truax started their road construction intent on connecting Lewiston, Idaho with the gold fields in Montana. They didn't even make it half-way through the Lolo Trail Corridor.

After crossing the foot bridge, the Nee-Me-Poo trail takes the left fork—an old wagon road. This road was built in 1866 to serve the Pioneer Mine that is about six miles up the ridge. Bird-Truax didn't have to start building their wagon road here as they could use this one until the road turned towards the mine—about three miles up the ridge.

→ Continue 0.8 miles

## Musselshell Creek Crossing

46.3696, -115.7409

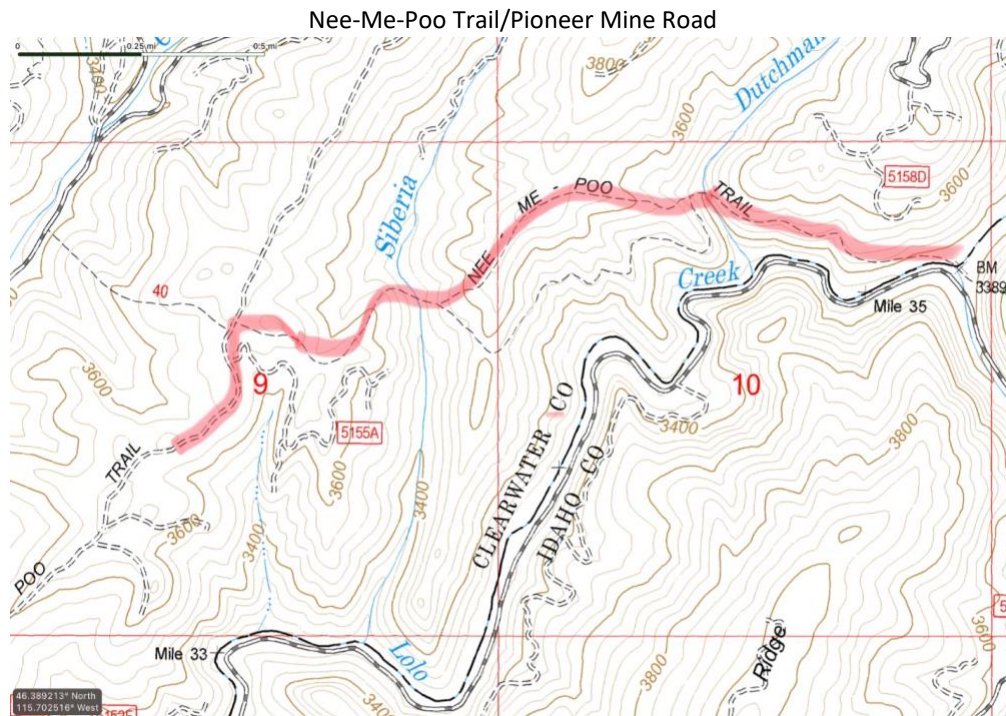
At this junction, take the right (east) fork that crosses Musselshell Creek. Just ahead, Gold Creek enters Musselshell Creek. This tour follows along the east side of Gold Creek for several miles. During the 1860s gold rush, this area was filled with prospectors, and the Pioneer Mine was one of the productive mines located along the ridge to our east.

→ Continue on Gold Creek Rd (FS 535) for 4.1 miles

## Nee-Me-Poo Trail and Pioneer Mine Rd

46.4070, -115.6974

Until this point, the Nee-Me-Poo trail follows an old wagon road that served Pioneer Mine. Heading east, actual trail tread begins here. The road to Pioneer Mine is closed, but if you walk past the gate and follow the old road back down the ridge (south), you will encounter the trail tread of the Nee-Me-Poo/ Forest Service Pack trail that serviced the west end of the Lolo Trail for many years.



*Note how the trail—shown in red—leaves a ridgeline but follows down a side ridge to cross Siberia Creek. It then climbs to a ridge above Lolo Creek before dropping to cross Dutchman Creek. It then crosses the mouth Lolo Creek at its junction with Yoosa Creek. This is typical Nimípuu trail routing through what was then "uncharted ground". We have the help of topographic maps to understand their routing. They did it with old fashioned "woodsman" skills.*

→ Continue 0.3 miles

### FS 5021

46.4095, -115.6954

The original Gold Creek Road went straight ahead here. However, to protect wildlife, the road is closed fall, winter and spring, and when open, is seldom maintained. We suggest you take the main, log-haul standard road to the right, FS 5021.

→ Turn onto FS 2021 and continue for 1 mile

### FS 5020

46.4242, -115.6807

At this junction, go left (west) onto FS 5020.

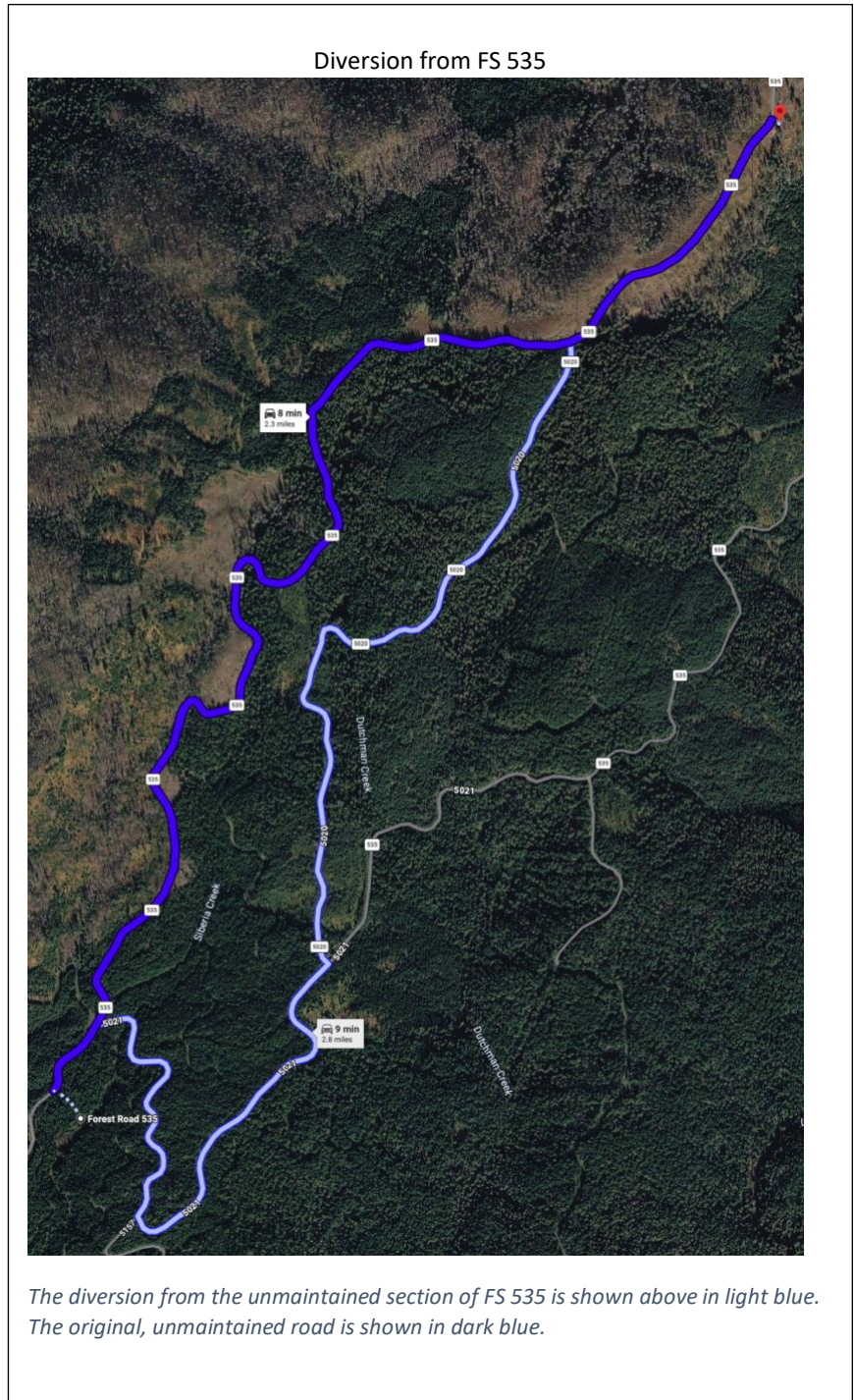
→ Continue 1.7 miles

### FS 535

46.4243, -115.6808

Here, we return to the original FS 535.

→ Turn left onto FS 535 and go northeast for 0.5 miles



## Gravel Ends, Dirt Begins

46.4290, -115.6742

If you look to the east, you can see the west face of Snowy Summit. This peak is visible far to the west and is probably what Lewis and Clark saw on May 7, 1806. After that view, they were quite discouraged when the Nimípuu informed them it would be six weeks or more before they could cross the mountains.

Looking ahead, you can see rock surfacing on the road, but where it starts up the hill it reverts to its original form of a first-generation road. The only surfacing is rock thrown in some potholes and around culverts, but for the most part the road follows a ridgeline. Ridgetop roads are difficult to maintain because water often runs down the tire ruts eroding the surface. These little gullies must often be avoided by placing one wheel in the middle of the road, and the other at the extreme side.

Start of the Dirt Road



*Here, the road gravel diminishes and as the grade steepens, disappears entirely.*

→ Continue 2.6 miles

## Bell Creek Campground

46.4487, -115.6401

If you want to get away from everyone, this campsite—once popular but now seldom used—is the place to go.

→ Continue 2.3 miles

## Beaver Saddle

46.4594, -115.6154

Here, FS 535 ends at FS 104. Both roads are old “motorway” standard roads. Note that as we continue east, there is a Beaver Saddle and Beaver Dam Saddle only a few miles apart.

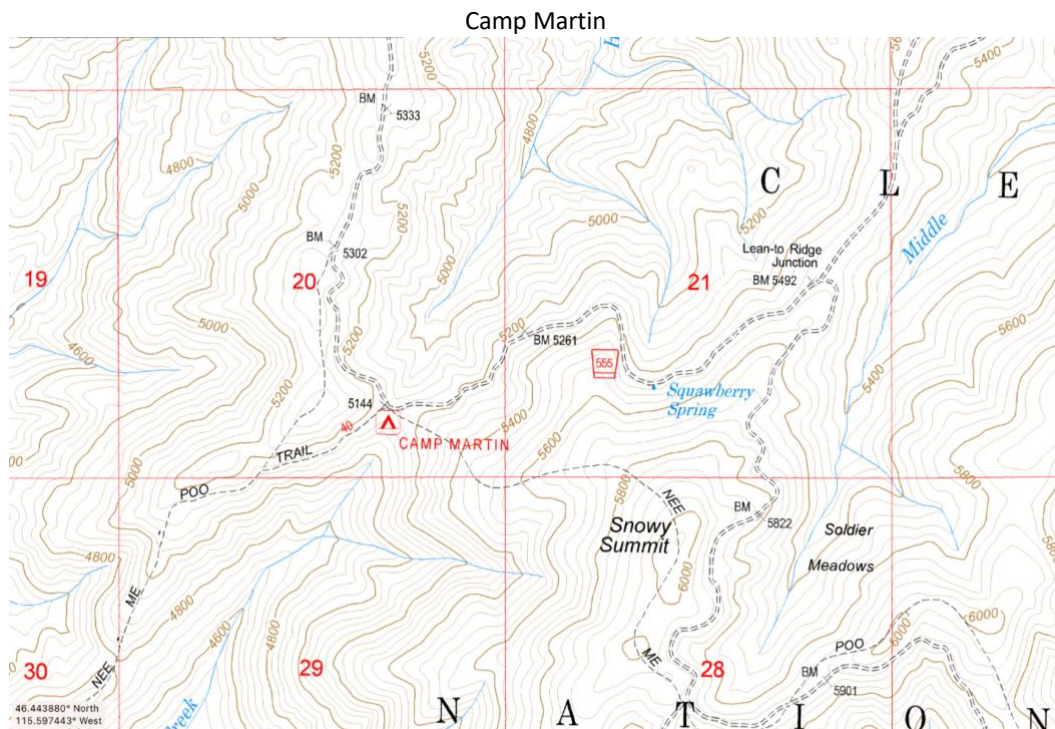
The burn through which you will be traveling is part of the “Motorway Complex” fires of 2015, which was a natural (lightning caused) fire. You will note that it burned hot in some places but not at all in others. This is a typical burn pattern for high elevation, non-wind driven fires. Many people feel that this type of fire benefits the normal pattern of life in higher elevation lands.

→ Turn right (east) onto FS 104 and continue 1.9 miles

## Camp Martin

46.4426, -115.6052

The Nee-Me-Poo trail arrives here after a stiff climb up the ridge from Lolo Forks. The route was too steep for cars—hence the “motorway” style road you are on goes the long way ‘round to lessen the grade. There is a nice spring just down the trail, which was greatly appreciated by hard working pack stock. At one time there was a cabin here owned by Bill Martin, hence the name.



→ Continue 1.6 miles

**FS 555**

46.4474, -115.5823

The meadows here are fading away due to the lack of natural fires. In the 1877 Nez Perce War, Army journalists recorded that the Nez Perce ponies had eaten everything and churned the meadows into mud. As a result, the Army horses were hungry and were given bark peeled from trees. FS 555 goes down the ridge to the northeast to the Weitas Guard Station. Along that route, one can still find phone line and insulators from the ground return phone line that ran to the station.

→ Take care to follow FS 104 as it bends sharply at the junction, and then continue 1.5 miles

**Snowy Summit Junction**

46.4315, -115.5893

The snow here remains longer into the summer than most other peaks—hence the name. A short spur road takes you to the site of a lookout, now long gone. There are good views of the Columbia Basin to the west, but trees are beginning to block the view.

→ Continue east on FS 104 for 2.1 miles

**Beaver Dam Saddle**

46.4243, -115.5615

Here is a wide saddle with parking for ATVs and stock trucks. On summer weekends, you will likely see a few rigs parked here. ¼ mile north on FS 103, there is a snowmobile warming hut and restrooms. The quickest way out of the mountains is to go south on FS 103—a log-haul standard road which goes to Musselshell Meadows.

**Interpretive Signs** Installed for the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial, these large signs give a good overview of the Lolo Trail Corridor.

**Nee-Me-Poo Trail** At the east end of the saddle, the Nee-Me-Poo a trail leaves for the ridgeline up to the east. As the ridgeline steepens the built, trail turns north to lower the grade reaching the Lolo Motorway in about two miles.

**Nimípuu Braided Trails** Where the Nee-Me-Poo Trail turns north, a braided trail system continues onto the steeper grade. As ridge trails steepens—somewhere between 35 and 45 degrees—people and animals begin to switchback often leaving a braided trail system. These traces are often quite short.

→ Continue east on FS 104 0.7 miles

## Pete Forks

46.4153, -115.5569

FS 104 ends at the Lolo Motorway (FS 500). See the previous chapter for your options traveling Pete Forks.

→ Tour ends here

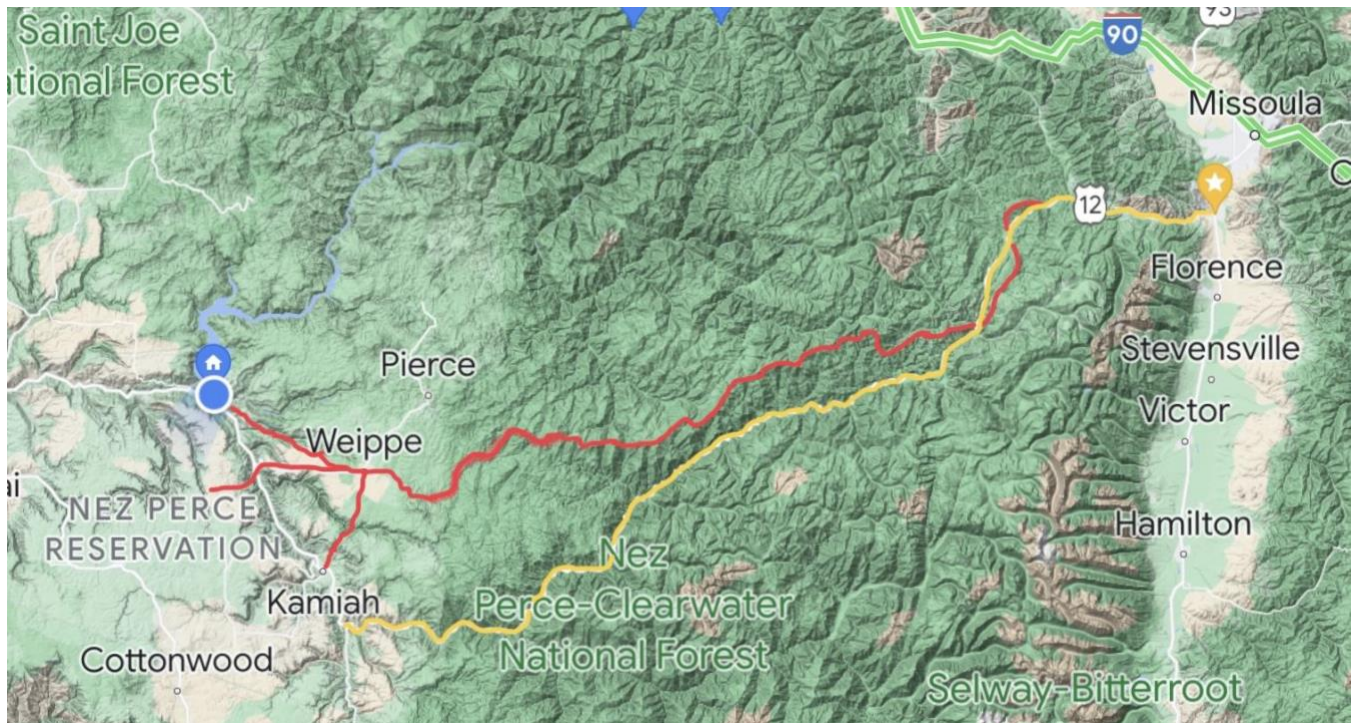
# Hiking and Horsing the Lolo Trail

For many generations, Nimípuu family groups accessed the backcountry of the Lolo Trail Corridor. It was also used by Nimípuu traveling to the Great Plains to hunt or trade. Traces of their old trail exist, but they are generally ignored in favor of the 1865–1867 trail cut by Bird-Truax with the intention of becoming a wagon road. This chapter focuses on the segments of what we shall term “Lolo Trail” that are open only to hikers and horses. These segments are part of two National Historic Trails and as such, closed to any motorized or mechanized travel.

The Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest Trail #40 is the official Nee-Me-Poo Trail through the Lolo Trail Corridor connecting Musselshell Meadows with points east. For the segments that were approximately followed by the Lewis and Clark Expedition, the hiking and horsing trail is also labeled FS #25. Because the Road to the Buffalo goes to western Montana, this chapter includes hiking trails to Lee Creek Campground just west of Lolo Hot Springs.

The Lolo Motorway and the two earlier trails merge at narrow saddles leaving today’s hiking trail highly segmented. The disadvantage is that segments can be quite short and close to the Motorway while the advantage is that vehicle support is never far away.

The Nee-Me-Poo Historic Trail



The red line is a portion of the Nee-Me-Poo route. US 12 is shown in yellow.

## Segments

1. Musselshell Meadows to Camp Martin: 12.4 miles
  - a. Meadows to Pioneer Mine Rd: 3.0 miles (open, maintained annually)
  - b. Pioneer Mine to Lolo Creek Bridge: 3.0 miles (open, spotty maintenance)
  - c. Lolo Creek Bridge to Camp Martin: 6.4 miles (open, spotty maintenance)
2. Camp Martin to Beaverdam Saddle: 4.7 miles
  - a. Camp Martin to Snowy Summit: 1.5 miles (open, spotty maintenance)
  - b. Ridgeline trail passing Snowy Summit Saddle along FS 104: 0.7 miles (open, spotty maintenance)
  - c. To Beaverdam Saddle: 2.5 miles (open, spotty maintenance)
3. Beaverdam Saddle to Weitas Meadows: 9.0 miles
  - a. Beaverdam Saddle to Lolo Motorway: 2.0 miles (open, spotty maintenance)
  - b. Along ridge to where road sidehills: (2.0 miles) = (destroyed, use road)
  - c. Old trail to Rocky Ridge Lookout site: 1.0 miles (open)
  - d. Rocky Ridge Overlook site trail: 2.0 miles (not maintained)
  - e. Rocky Ridge Overlook to road to lake: 1.0 (use road)
  - f. To Weitas Meadows: 1.0 mile (open, spotty maintenance)
4. Weitas Meadows to Deep Saddle: 5.8 miles
  - a. Weitas Meadows to Green Saddle: 2.0 miles (open, spotty maintenance)
  - b. Green Saddle via next trailhead: 0.5 miles (destroyed, use road)
  - c. Trail to north side of Bowl Butte to road crossing: 1.5 miles (open, spotty maintenance)
  - d. Road crossing to Deep Saddle: 1.8 miles (open, spotty maintenance)
5. Deep Saddle to No-See-Um Meadows: 6.0 miles
  - a. Deep Saddle to Fairyland (east): 0.4 (open, spotty maintenance)
  - b. Fairyland (east) to Willow Ridge Trail: 0.4 miles (destroyed, use road)
  - c. Willow Ridge Trail to Sherman Saddle: 0.9 miles (open, spotty maintenance)
  - d. Sherman Saddle to Sherman Peak Trail: 2.8 miles (open, spotty maintenance)
  - e. Sherman Peak Trail to road: 1.0 miles (open, spotty maintenance)
  - f. To No-See-Um Meadows: 0.5 miles (destroyed, use road)
6. No-See-Um Meadows to Bald Mountain: 5.0 miles
  - a. No-See-Um Meadows to No-See-Um Ridge Trail: 0.8 miles (not maintained, use road)
  - b. No-See-Um Ridge to traditional Dry Camp: 1.8 miles (open, spotty maintenance)
  - c. Dry Camp to Bald Mountain Trail at old road: 1.7 miles (open, spotty maintenance)
  - d. Old road to Bald Mountain crest: 0.7 miles (destroyed, missing on the ridge top)
7. Bald Mountain to Smoking Place interpretive sign: 5.7 miles
  - a. destroyed or unmaintained, use road

8. Smoking Place interpretive sign to Sinque Hole (east) trailhead: 2.7 miles
  - a. Interpretive Sign to Smoking Place: 0.5 miles (open, spotty maintenance)
  - b. Smoking Place to Indian Grave Creek: 0.8 miles (open, spotty maintenance)
  - c. Grave Creek to Sinque Hole: 0.6 miles (open, spotty maintenance)
  - d. Sinque Hole to road: 0.6 miles (open, spotty maintenance)
9. Sinque Hole trailhead to Saddle Camp: 2.2 miles (destroyed, use road)
10. Saddle Camp to Howard Camp: 3 miles
  - a. Saddle Camp to next trailhead: 0.9 miles (open)
  - b. Along ridge to Devil’s Chair: 0.2 miles (not maintained)
  - c. Devils Chair to Howard Camp interpretive sign: 1.9 miles (not maintained)
11. Howard Camp to Indian Post Office: 5.0 miles
  - a. Howard Camp to Moon Saddle: 3.0 miles (not maintained)
  - b. Moon Saddle to Indian Post Office: 2.0 miles (open)
12. Indian Post Office to Spring Mountain: 5.0 miles
  - a. Indian Post Office to FS 566 (not maintained, use road)
  - b. FS 566 to Spring Mountain (not maintained)
13. Spring Mountain to Cayuse Junction: 3.5 miles (not maintained, use road)
14. Cayuse Junction to Imnamatnoon Likoolam Saddle: 9.0 miles
  - a. Cayuse Junction to Snowbank Camp (not maintained, use road)
  - b. Snowbank Camp to Wendover Ridge Trail (not maintained, use road)
  - c. Wendover Ridge trailhead to Lost Lakes trailhead (not maintained, use road)
  - d. Lost Lakes Trailhead to Imnamatnoon Likoolam Saddle (not maintained, use road)
15. Imnamatnoon Likoolam Saddle to Rocky Point Lookout: 4.0 miles
  - a. Imnamatnoon Likoolam Saddle to Powell Junction (not maintained, use road)
  - b. Powell Junction to Rocky Point Lookout (not maintained, use road)
16. Rocky Point Lookout to Crooked Fork: 3.5 miles (not open, crosses private land)
17. Crooked Fork Creek to Packer Meadow: 4.0 miles (not open)
  - a. Packer Meadow to Lee Creek Campground: 7.0 miles (open, spotty maintenance)

## Appendix

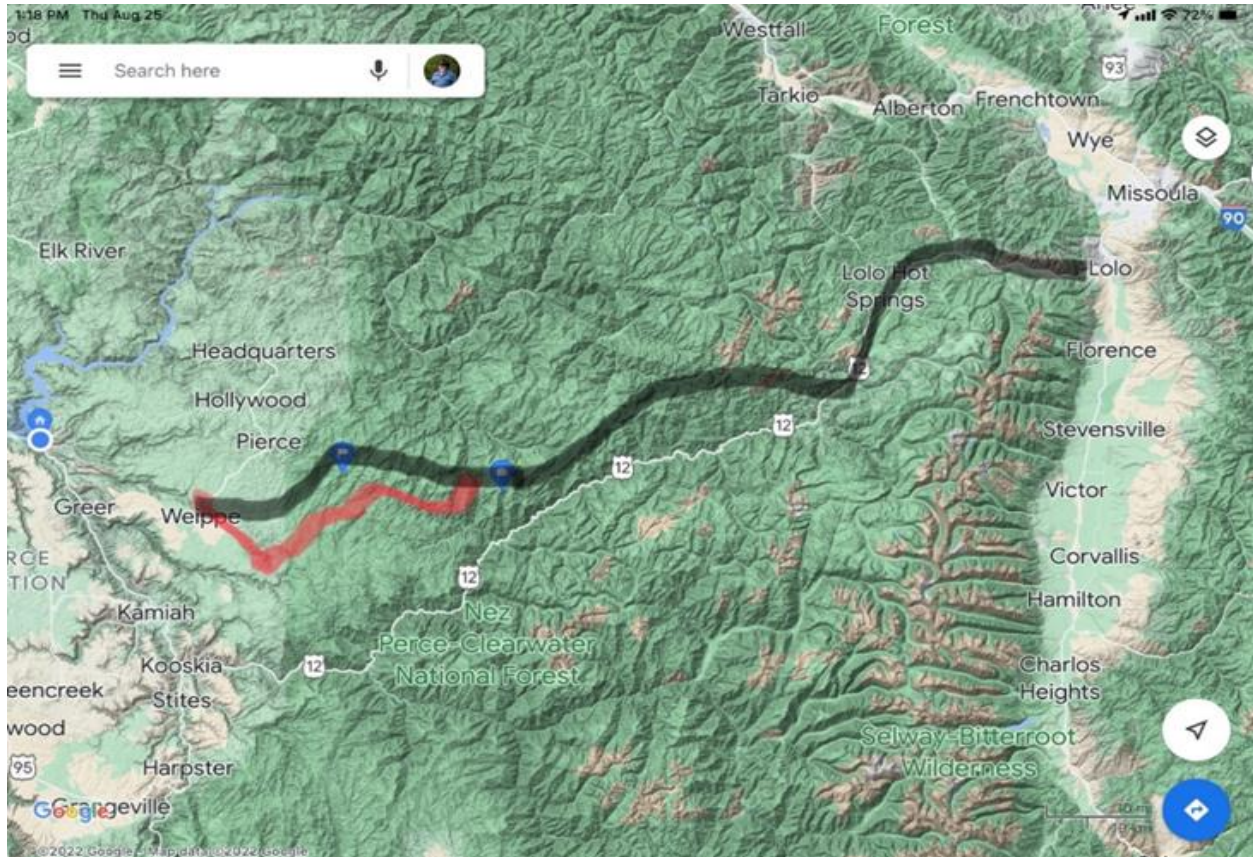
# The Hungery Creek Question

### Much Ado About Nothing

For the past 50 years there has been a minor controversy over the route the Lewis and Clark Expedition followed on their mountain crossing from the Bitterroot Valley to the Columbia Basin. The Expedition followed Indian Trails, but *which* Indian trail? Where and why did the Corps of Discovery leave the traditional Lolo Trail ridge-line route and descend into present Hungery Creek?

Researchers agree they were on Bald Mountain in the afternoon of September 18, 1805, and that late in the afternoon of September 20, they came out of the headwaters of Fish Creek. From Fish Creek they crossed the lowest point in a north-south oriented ridgeline north of today's Mex Mountain. But there is little clarity on the route they followed between Bald Mountain and that point near Mex Mountain. Adding confusion to the question is that the Corps was following an Indian trading route across the mountains which later became known as the "Lolo Trail". A ridgeline route was mapped when the Bird-Truax trail was built circa 1866, but for nearly one-fourth of that route, the Corps of Discovery was somewhere else. The traditional story is they went up Hungery Creek, and this author posits another possibility—up Fish Creek.

## Lewis and Clark's Lolo Trail Diversion



The black line is the traditional Lolo Trail from Weippe, Idaho to Lolo, Montana. The red line is Lewis and Clark's 'traditional' Hungry Creek route over Willow Ridge to Hungry Creek as located by various U.S. Forest Service personnel.

The Corps traveled much of this route *four* times—westbound in the fall of 1805 and again in the spring 1806 return journey. June 1806, they made an aborted attempt to cross the Bitterroot mountains and were forced to return to Weippe. Thus, they traversed the Hungry Creek route three times that spring. There were several journal writers: Captains Lewis and Clark, Sergeants Ordway and Gass, and Private Whitehouse (westbound only). With so many journal entries, it seems strange that the route would be so elusive.

## U.S. Forest Service Locations

The first to search and write of the Bitterroot Mountain crossing of Lewis and Clark route in a systematic way was Ralph Space. His booklet: "The Lolo Trail" published in 1962<sup>17</sup> was to become the 'Lewis and Clark Lolo Trail Bible' for many years. However, there were several places where some questioned his route. In the mid-1980s and 1990s it became apparent to

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<sup>17</sup> The 1962 version was published by the Forest Service and available online. In 1970, Space published his own book with the same title. A second edition came out in 2001 with a new publisher—Historic Montana Publishing. There are significant differences between these three versions.—ed.

some close observers that something was wrong with two significant sections of the Lewis and Clark route shown on the Clearwater National Forest map and on USGS Quad Sheets. One of those was the Moon Creek route, but in the 1990s it was by recognizing that after their night in their “Lonesome Cove” camp of September 16, 1805, the Corps of Discovery climbed up to Moon Saddle and followed the ridgeline west to today’s Howard Camp and Moccasin Peak and down to Gravey Creek. But the concerns relating to Hungery Creek were not so easily resolved.

The first week of January 1988, I arrived at the Clearwater National Forest as the new Recreation, Wilderness and Trails manager. In that job, the Lolo Trail was to take up 10–20% of my time over the next ten years. On my desk was a pencil draft plan for new Lewis and Clark interpretive signs, so an early job was getting it ready for contract. In April, the Idaho Chapter of the Lewis and Clark Trail Foundation—known now as the Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance—met in Lewiston, Idaho. I made a presentation about the new signs and Space took me to task on Capt. Clark’s spelling of “Hungery” Creek. After the presentation I was approached separately, but privately, by three individuals, two from separate academic institutions and one from an Idaho State agency and all delivered the same message, but in different format. Some of Space’s route was wrong and it needed to be corrected, and the Forest Service needed to do that.

OK, I had new marching orders, which was going to be difficult, as the Forest Service received little funding to look for historic sites unless the site was going to be impacted by a project. In that case, the new project paid for the search. No projects that impacted the Lewis and Clark Trail in Hungery Creek were being considered. Over the few years as I settled into my new job, the route questions were always in the back of my mind. I interviewed Space twice before his death in 1990. In those discussions he made two remarks that have haunted me ever since. When asked about how he had decided on a certain piece of trail he just could not remember his reasoning, but a bit later he said *“I never thought there would be so much interest in the trail location. I was just looking for campsites and only found enough trail to locate the campsite.”*

Another time we were discussing the main party’s campsite the night September 18, 1805, which Space dubbed “Dry Camp”.<sup>18</sup> The location of “Dry Camp” is important because the next morning, Lewis traveled just six miles when a ridge “terminated”, and they could see prairie to the west. They then descended into Hungery Creek. Space expressed frustration as the journal entries just did not fit the land, *“so I just put my stake where it ought to be.”* (Space put a short “T” post at Lewis and Clark campsites.)

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<sup>18</sup> In his 1970 1<sup>st</sup> edition, Space writes: “Elers Koch, at one time Supervisor of the Lolo National Forest and later Assistant Regional Forester in charge of Timer Management, did much to locate the campgrounds of Lewis and Clark. He worded the first signs that were installed in 1939, and took part in seeing that they were properly located.” He then goes on: “Usually these signs are historically correct, but here and there little inaccuracies have crept in to dramatize the event. For instance, the *Forest Service* has named many of the camps of Lewis and Clark; a thing they rarely did.” (emphasis added). Thus, Space located only the camps that Koch had not and apparently, Space did *not* provide campsite names as assumed by many. More research is needed. (Ralph S. Space, *The Lolo Trail* (Lewiston, Idaho: Printcraft Printing, 1970), p. 55.) —ed.

Another knowledgeable Lewis and Clark buff was Mr. Andy Arvish, who had been Space's Recreation Staff Officer and my predecessor several times removed. He had also retired in Orofino and one night I ran into him in the grocery store.

"Andy", I asked, *"How did the Lewis and Clark Trail get on the map?"*

"Oh", he said, *"I went to Missoula and sat down with a cartographer, and we put it on the map."*

"But Andy, how did you decide where to put it?"

*"Oh, I put it where Ralph told me. He was wrong, but he was the boss."*

## Private Researcher Locations

By the 1990s, two others began to look at the historic routes in a systematic way. Dr. Steve Russell is a professor of electronic engineering at Iowa State University. He grew up on the Lolo Trail as his family owned Lochsa Lodge at Powell, Idaho. During his summertime escapes from academia, he began to systematically map old trails of all kinds. He was the first to use GPS to record his findings, and his academic background produced well-received documents. Other researchers were Gene and Molly Eastman. Gene was raised on a hardscrabble ranch and worked as a Wilderness Fish and Game Officer supported by pack stock in the backcountry. They have a keen understanding of how the Native Americans traveled and used horses.

Eventually, most of the discrepancies were resolved except the Hungery Creek question, and three different routes have been put forth. As we entered the 21st century, the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial was set for 2003 to 2006 and interest in the "missing" piece of trail grew. There were several seminars discussing the Lewis and Clark routes. Following the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial, interest dropped, but the question on the Hungery Creek route was unresolved in many minds.

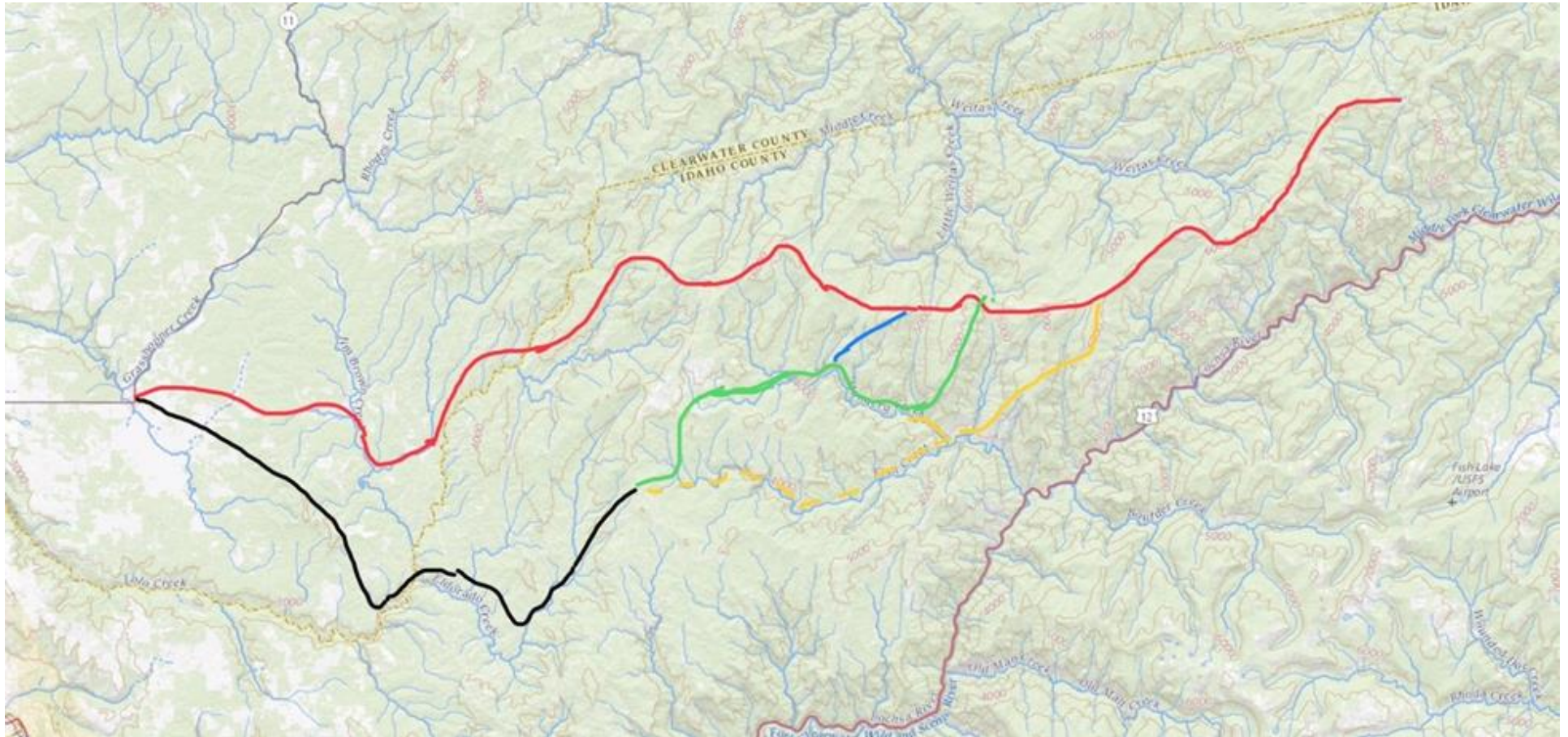
This author, like several others, had watched the various ideas proposed for the Hungery Creek question. I had hiked the alternatives, but for me, things just did not "fit" with any of the alternatives. Yes, there were significant pieces of old trail, but were those pieces of old trail the trail that Lewis and Clark followed? I compared journal entries with the route under consideration, and it "kind of fit" but not convincingly. For myself, I kept returning to the question of Dry Camp, but like Space, I was frustrated, and I could find nothing that fit.

In 2010, I was involved with Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation's Annual meeting held in Lewiston, Idaho when Gene and Molly Eastman came out with their second book proposing a route departing No-See-Um Ridge to Fish Creek and then Hungery Creek. Being busy with running the meeting, I put off reading their book, but I dismissed that route off hand. "Why would they have left the easy ridgeline route and dropped down into the Green Hell of Fish Creek?" was my rather rude comment. After another ten years of looking and finding nothing

new, I realized I had not really read the Eastmans' proposal. I dug it out, and they described finding two sections of trail dropping down. By then it was late in the fall, and the high country was closed, but I could get up to the mouth of Fish Creek from US 12. I hiked up to the mouth of Willow Creek and climbed "Pagoda Ridge". Within a few hundred feet, I was finding significant pieces of old trail running up the ridge at 20 to 40 percent grades. Hmmm.

Returning home, I dug out some old Forest Service maps. When the Forest Service was created about 1900, the new rangers spent much of their time learning the land. They hired local Indians to guide them, and they adopted the Indian's trails into the National Forest Trail System. As mentioned earlier, these trails were primitive by today's standards. The Native Americans believed in the "the shortest line" is a straight line and often used ridgelines for travel which gave them very steep grades. The early maps show trails the full length of both Fish Creek and Obia Creeks (now Hungery Creek). In both cases the trails were lightly used. They did not meet the administrative requirements of the Forest Service as most fires started closer to ridgelines, and both trails followed near the edge of the creeks.

Possible “Hungry Creek” Routes



- Red: traditional ridgeline route of the Lolo Trail as established by the 1865–1867 Bird-Truax ‘wagon road’*
- Black: Known Lewis and Clark route Between Mex Mountain and Weippe*
- Green: Lolo Trail to Hungry Creek via Willow Ridge as proposed by Ralph Space*
- Blue: Lolo Trail to Hungry Creek via Bowl Butte as proposed by Steve Russell*
- Solid Yellow: Lolo Trail to Hungry Creek via No-See-Um Ridge and Pagoda Ridge as proposed by the Eastmans*
- Dashed Yellow: Willow Creek to Mex Mountain via Fish Creek as proposed by Charles Raddon*

## No-See-Um Ridge Proposal

Both Space and the Eastmans think Lewis's Dry Camp were on separate ridges few miles west of Bald Mountain. If you use either Space's or the Eastmans' Dry Camp, the No-See-Um route is plausible. From No-see-um Ridge, there is a view to the west of Camas Prairie not far from Grangeville—a plausible "Spirit Revival Ridge". It is possible to drop off the side of No-See-Um ridge to the only fordable spot on Sherman Creek. It is then a steep scramble to a knob atop Sherman Ridge. There are traces of old trails on both sides of that knob. If correct, that would have been the Lewis and Clark Cache Mountain site from their aborted 1806 return trip.

The trail then drops down Pagoda Ridge to Fish Creek along an old trail still visible along its entire length. From old Forest Service maps, we know there were trails the length of Hungery Creek, Fish Creek, and up Pagoda Ridge. There is little doubt that those trails were Nimípuu trails adopted into the early trail system.

## Fish Creek Proposal

Given the possibility that Lewis and Clark dropped down from No-See-Um Ridge or perhaps saw the plains from No-See-Um Ridge and then dropped down Sherman and Pagoda Ridges, another question can be raised. If they dropped down to Fish Creek, wouldn't they just follow Fish Creek all the way to the ridge above Mex Mountain?

In any case, to date no one has hiked Fish Creek to look for campsites, creeks, and other places matching the journals. The area is so remote and difficult to access, it is unlikely that anyone will do so. In any case, the issue is academic. Building a recreation trail would be cost prohibitive, and Fish Creek is so important a salmon resource that a National Environmental Review process to consider building a trail would never be approved. The point is mute in any case as it is pointless to have two National Historic Trails through the Lolo Trail Historic Corridor. Additionally, interest in the Lewis and Clark trail location has greatly diminished since the Bicentennial years. The question also is only in the mind of euro-centric Lewis and Clark buffs.

To the Nimípuu Tribal Cultural Resource staff, it was obvious that Lewis and Clark went up Fish Creek. It's the only way the Nimípuu People could access the Upper Lochsa River in the spring due the impassable Black Canyon and deep snow on the ridges. It was never a question in their mind:

"Geeze, white man, DUH."

"So, why didn't you tell us instead of letting us wander around for 50 years looking?"

"So, why didn't you ask?"