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West-Central Idaho - Boise, Hells Canyon, Payette River, Riggins, Lewiston & Beyond



Synopsis

This hour-glass-shaped slice of western Idaho is anchored by bustling Boise and the Treasure Valley cities of Nampa and Caldwell on the south, by the inland seaport city of Lewiston on the north. In-between, the fertile fields of the Treasure Valley, named for the earthly treasures growing there in irrigated abundance, give way to an intriguing jumble of mountains sliced by deep valleys. On the west, the Snake River lazies through pungent onion fields and widens to create Brownlee Reservoir before plunging over Hells Canyon Dam into 5,500-foot-deep Hells Canyon, the deepest river gorge in North America. Across the Seven Devils and 9,393-foot He Devil Mountain lies Riggins, at 1,800 feet above sea level. North of Riggins is the beautiful Camas Prairie, ancestral home of the Nez Perce. On the region's eastern edge, the arid foothills above Boise give way to the conifer-forested slopes of the Payette National Forest. Auto touring here is so spectacular that you may never get around to more active adventuring. The Payette Rivers, Hells Canyon and Clearwater Canyons Scenic Byways fall within this area. Each trails through country rich in human history and abounding in natural beauty. Here, perhaps more than in other sections of the state, you can lollygag along at a leisurely pace, taking your fun where you find it. Advance planning is usually not necessary for a Salmon River day float from Riggins or for a hike in the Payette or Boise National Forest. Except in isolated Hells Canyon, the conveniences of modern life are seldom far away. Boise and other I-84 corridor cities offer amenities that are often longer on comfort than on atmosphere. Elsewhere, the restaurants, lodgings, shops and such assume a resort-flavored rusticity that fits the river-running, hiking, fishing and backpacking ethos. This area's jumbled mix of valleys, rivers and lakes creates vistas of breath-catching drama. Spring and summer are clothed in hues of green and blue. The deep green of pine-clad slopes, the softer green of valley pastures, the sparkling blue of lakes, the whitewater-splashed blue of rivers are all topped by a hard blue sky that Idahoans insist is the world's biggest. From Boise to Caldwell & the Treasure Valley, Weiser, Hells Canyon, the Payette River, New Meadows, Riggins, to Clearwater Canyons and Lewiston - everything about this stupendously beautiful region is explored in detail, and with hundreds of color pictures. Restaurants, places to stay, skiing, canoeing, hiking, fishing, camping, sightseeing, fun for kids - it's all covered.

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