

To the north of Boise lie mountains, mountains and more mountains. To the west, fertile farmlands. To the south, high desert plateaus and rugged canyons. To the east, more farmland and volcanic wonders of the Snake River Plain. Whether you're spending a couple of hours or the whole day, there are dozens of short trips out of Boise that will introduce you to the wonders of scenic Idaho.

#### [Idaho City](#)

A short drive up Highway 21, Idaho City was the largest town in the Northwest in 1865. It is a well-preserved relic of the bustling, brawling, boomtown days. Idaho's oldest store, the Boise Basin Mercantile, and several saloons and restaurants are open on Main Street. Idaho's oldest newspaper (the Idaho World) is still published here and the original Idaho City Hotel still rents rooms on Montgomery Street. You can visit the Territorial Jail and the Boot Hill Cemetery as well as the Boise Basin Museum, a former post office that now houses a fascinating display of Old West memorabilia including hydraulic and dredge mining artifacts. The annual Arts & Crafts Festival in June makes an excellent time to visit. 208-392-6040 or 208-392-4148.

#### [Garden Valley/ Lowman Loop Drive](#)

The Garden Valley-to-Lowman loop drive is an excellent way to tour the scenic country north of Boise. Take Highway 44 west out of the city and then head north on Highway 55 to Horseshoe Bend. Continue from Horseshoe Bend as far as Banks, then turn east on Highway 17 and follow the South Fork of the Payette to Garden Valley. Continue on Highway 17 to Lowman, passing ranches, summer homes and well-maintained picnic areas along the way. At Lowman turn south on Highway 21, passing through Idaho City and the historic Boise Basin on the way back to Boise. 208-462-5003

Another attraction in the Horseshoe Bend area is an excursion train. Relax and enjoy a mountain railroading experience aboard the Thunder Mountain Line and be transported back to a time when folks moved at a slower pace and appreciated the simpler things in life. [Thunder Mountain Line](#), 1-877-IDA-RAIL or 208-793-4425.

#### [Three Island Crossing State Park](#)

The replica of a 19th century prairie schooner is on display at Three Island Crossing to help describe this historic wagon train ford on the Snake River. A self-guided pioneer footpath includes wagon wheel ruts still visible more than 100 years after journeys over the Oregon Trail. Buffalo and longhorn cattle still graze in nearby pastures. Three Island Crossing State Park is located outside of Glens Ferry southeast of Boise on I-84. While in Glens Ferry, visit Carmella Winery, one of Idaho's growing number of award-winning vintners. 208-366-7345

[Bruneau Dunes State Park](#), located one hour's drive southeast of Boise, is home to North America's largest free-standing sand dune plus great fishing, hiking trails and camping facilities. (The park is reached by proceeding south out of Mountain Home on Highway 51.) A five-mile self-guided nature trail explains the unique geology that created the dunes and the pond that lies at their base. The Bruneau Dunes Observatory Complex with its 25" telescope is open to the public but hours vary seasonally. Drive a few miles farther south past Bruneau to the spectacular Bruneau Canyon scenic overlook. 208-366-7919.

#### [Celebration Park](#)

Just one-hour southwest of Boise, this former wintering ground for the Paiute Indians features a large concentration of petroglyphs and ancient campsites. Learn the history of this nomadic tribe at the visitor center or take in the natural history of the park on a self-guided tour. Learn ancient Indian games or try your hand at the ATLATL bow range. Take I-84 west to exit 44, travel eight miles south to Kuna. Take Kuna Road west to Southside Road. Then, head south to Melba. From Melba, head east on Baseline Road to Can-Ada Road. Follow Can-Ada Road south to Victory Lane which will drop down into the Snake River Canyon. 208-495-2745.

#### [Idaho's Wine Country](#)

When you go southwest from Boise, you're headed into Idaho's wine country. Here, on the same latitude as the famed wine regions of France, Idaho vintners are producing award-winning wines on the fertile slopes above the Snake River. Sunny Slope is home to many fine wineries. Most offer tours and tasting rooms and Ste. Chapelle, the largest, hosts outdoor jazz concerts on Sunday afternoons during June and July. To reach the Wine Country proceed west from Boise on I-84 to the Nampa Blvd. exit and then follow Highway 55 toward Marsing. Contact the Idaho Wine Commission. 208-455-8354 or 888-223-9463.

[Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area](#)

Just southwest of Boise lies an 80-mile stretch of the Snake River Canyon. This wildlife refuge protects one of the world's densest concentrations of nesting birds of prey. Falcons, eagles, hawks, owls and other raptors hunt, nest and raise their young here each spring. Spring and early summer mornings are the best time to visit, but you're sure to catch sight of at least some birds year-round. Tour information, maps and brochures are available from the Bureau of Land Management, which administers the Birds of Prey Area. A half-mile interpretive trail is located at Dedication Point where the road nears the canyon rim. Guided tours and float trips are also available through the Outfitters and Guides Association. For further information call 1-800-49-IDAHO. Take I-84 west to exit 44, travel eight miles south to Kuna, then follow the Swan Falls Road for another 12 miles. Picnic facilities and a boat ramp are located on the canyon floor at Swan Falls Dam. For information call the BLM at 208-384-3300 or the World center for Birds of Prey, 208-362-3716.

[Anderson Ranch Recreation Area](#)

A two hour drive from the capital city brings you to the scenic splendor of mountains, trees and a picturesque reservoir to fish or water-ski. Take Highway 20 just outside of Mountain Home and you will find the uniqueness of Anderson Ranch Reservoir, Atlanta, Pine and Featherville. This area is filled with recreational, historical and natural attractions both summer and winter. Contact the Desert Mountain Visitor Center at 208-587-4464.

[Silver City](#) and the Owyhee Mountains

Silver City, established in 1864, is another well-preserved ghost town. Nestled in the Owyhee Mountains south of Boise, more than 70 historic buildings still stand where a boomtown once blossomed with silver miners, gamblers and other fortune-seekers. You can visit The Idaho Hotel for food and a drink and tour other historic structures like the Post Office, Drug Store and the School House Museum. Silver City is only accessible May through September when the snows are off the Owyhees and the 25-mile gravel road is passable. On your way to Silver City, stop in the city of Murphy and visit the Owyhee County Museum which includes a homestead cabin, stamp mill, railroad depot and one-room schoolhouse. After your museum visit, proceed south on Highway 78 turning west at the Silver City sign five miles south of Murphy. 208-495-2319 or 208-583-4104

If you're not quite up to 25 miles on a gravel road, continue south past the Silver City turn to Grand View and visit Lawson's Emu-z-um, an authentic replica of an early 1800's town which is filled with antiques and memorabilia from Idaho's colorful past. 208-834-2397

[Old Fort Boise](#) & [Warhawk Air Museum](#)

For history buffs, there are two attractions that can easily be combined into one trip: the Warhawk Air Museum in Nampa and the replica of Old Fort Boise at Parma. The Warhawk Air Museum is located at the Nampa Municipal Airport and contains a great collection of WWII vintage planes and war memorabilia. To reach the museum, go west from Boise on I-84 to the first Nampa exit and follow local signage to the airport. 208-465-6446.

To reach Old Fort Boise continue west on I-84 to the Parma exit and proceed west on Highway 20/26 to the edge of Parma. Old Fort Boise is an exact replica of the original trading post built by the Hudson Bay Company in 1834 on the Snake River near present-day Parma. It provided supplies and protection for pioneers traveling the Oregon Trail. Today, this museum includes a pioneer cabin, schoolroom and blacksmith's shop. 208-722-5138.

[McCall: Idaho's Heartland](#)

Located in the 'Idaho Heartland', McCall is just a two-hour drive up Route 55 through some of the most scenic wilderness areas in the state. This small resort town is a summer and winter playground built on the shores of Payette Lake. Enjoy a variety of craft fairs, concerts, community theater and the wonderful McCall Winter Carnival and Snow Sculpture Competition. Nearby Brundage Mountain Ski Area offers skiing and snowboarding and summertime mountain biking. Great restaurants, unique gift stores and specialty shops are intermingled with homes throughout McCall. And all this sits nestled in the Payette National Forest. Call 1-800-260-5130 or email [info@mccallchamber.org](mailto:info@mccallchamber.org).

[Adventures in Cascade](#)

Located approximately 75 miles from Boise, the mountain towns of Cascade and Donnelly are built near Cascade Reservoir. This beautiful area offers the outdoor enthusiast nearly unlimited opportunity for adventure. Season by season one can enjoy water sports, camping, hiking, hunting, fishing (ice fishing in winter), Nordic skiing and snowmobiling. In either of these friendly towns, one can enjoy small, "home-cooking" restaurants that will tempt the palate as well as shops and flea markets that will tempt the pocketbook! For information about Cascade call 208-382-3833. For information about Donnelly call 325-3545.



For additional information on Idaho call 1-800-VISIT-ID

