



Discover Lost River Valley Development of a New Destination

National Travel Center was first contacted by economic development officials in Mackay, Idaho to help them decide what to do with the Peaks to Craters Scenic Byway. The specifically designated route that passes through town had been recently added to their portfolio of responsibilities, due to the fact that as part of a relatively defunct scenic byway program in Idaho, Byways were left to their own resources to manage the Byway and attract visitors.

As we began to research the resources and assets along the Byway, we became aware of the astounding collection of attractions available to promote that included Mackay sitting right at the edge of a Gold Level Dark Sky Preserve, a Professional Circuit Rodeo held right in town, and the Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve, right down the road. In conversations with local officials we also became aware that the community had lost its mining industry and efforts to revive it had stalled for more than two years. The most stunning realization was that no organization was promoting the resources and assets in the area, even though economic development officials expressed they were desperately seeking ways to keep the small businesses in Mackay, in business.

At that point, we suggested investigating the possibility of developing tourism as a means to deliver economic development and wrote a US Department of Agricultural Rural Business Development grant, for the purpose of creating an economic development/tourism plan. The first two questions to be answered were: (1) did the Lost River Valley have an adequate overall portfolio of resources and assets to attract visitors, and (2) did the area have adequate capacity and the visitor service locations to serve visitors. If the answer to those questions was yes, further questions encompassed, (3) what visitor markets were now being attracted, (4) what did the community think about the effort, (5) what were competitors doing, (6) what trends would affect success, and (7) what would be the most effective growth strategy to move forward.



Task One: Development of a Comprehensive Inventory

The most important first step any destination can take in an effort to expand visitors is to develop a comprehensive inventory of resources and assets throughout the area. The inventory should encompass all resources and assets within a 30 mile radius because that is the distance that most visitors will travel from the destination they have chosen as their travel home base, to visit something that interests them.

There was a general recognition that Mackay was part of a discrete physical area referred to as the Lost River Valley. The region included both Mackay (population 473) and Arco, (population 908), the Lost River Mountain Range, and the rivers that run through the area. It appeared prudent to focus on the region, which in its entirety was not being promoted as a tourism destination.

Even though when the assessments for the plan began, we had become aware of the major visitor resources, no one had an idea of what the comprehensive collection of resources and assets looked like. We were also not aware whether Sun Valley, located 40 miles away on Trail Creek Road which passes directly through the Dark Sky Preserve, or 111 miles on the US highway routes, was promoting the entire collection, like so many other DMOs do to extend their appeal.

One rarely comes upon a collection of resources and assets of this scope that is not being promoted and believed it to represent a tremendous opportunity to deliver economic development in both Mackay and Arco. However a major concern when beginning a project of this type in a lightly populated rural area, is that the area may not have adequate visitor service locations and the capacity to adequately serve visitors after attracting them.

The resource and asset portfolio what was discovered follows.



Primary Attractions



Central Idaho Dark Sky Reserve

<https://idahodarksky.org/>

208-352-3153, idahodarksky@gmail.com, Daily 24-hours

The Central Idaho Dark Sky Reserve (CIDSR) is a 1,417 square mile swath of remote, rugged lands in the Sawtooth Mountains of central Idaho. Preserving clear, unobstructed night skies that cover a significant area in the region, the Central Idaho Dark Sky Reserve was first International Dark Sky Reserve in the US and one of only a dozen in the world. Three wilderness areas: the Sawtooth Wilderness, White Clouds Wilderness and Hemingway-Boulders Wilderness encompass the core of the reserve, bisected by Idaho RT-75. Since the challenging topography of the Sawtooth Range has historically discouraged the development of major infrastructure, the land has largely resisted mass electrification and the high levels of artificial light that result, making Central Idaho one of the last significant ‘pools’ of natural nighttime darkness left in the United States. The northeast section of the reserve within Custer County is easily accessed from Mackay, to reach the forest roads that are generally open from May through November. Numerous trails lead to more remote locations for stargazing.



Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve

<https://www.nps.gov/crmo/index.htm>

1266 Craters Loop Road, P.O. Box 29, Arco, ID 83213, 208-527-1300, Daily, 24-hours

President Coolidge designated the Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve which spans over 1,117 square miles in the area, in 1924 to preserve what he called “the most unusual and unearthly lunar landscapes.” The preserve encompasses a unique volcanic landscape characterized by vast lava fields, cinder cones, and lava tubes that resulted from a series of volcanic eruptions when Idaho was on the edge of the Pacific Ocean about 15,000 years ago. Shoshone legend speaks of a serpent on a mountain who, angered by lightning, coiled around, and squeezed the mountain until liquid rock flowed, fire shot from cracks, and the mountain exploded. The flowing lava created a stark, otherworldly landscape that is now also populated with a variety of unique plants and animals that have adapted to life in the extreme environment. Some have said that the ocean of lava flows and cinder cone islands at Craters of the Moon is a "weird and scenic landscape peculiar to itself. “ And in fact, it is so unique that Apollo astronauts used the area to learn to detect good rock specimens in an unfamiliar and harsh environment. Visitors at the Visitor Center indicate that the geologic story told at Craters of the Moon is better than the one told at Yellowstone.



Mackay Rodeo

<https://www.facebook.com/RodeoMackay/>

Mackay Rodeo Grounds, Mackay, ID, 83251, mackayrodeo@gmail.com

The 75th Annual Mackay Rodeo, "Idaho's Wildest Rodeo" now on the Professional Rodeo Cowboy Association Circuit, is held over a weekend every June. The event begins with a 7:00 PM rodeo event and continues with a parade on Saturday before the PM start of rodeo action. The event concludes with a concert Saturday night on Main Street and a dance following the rodeo action. Past headline performers have included Steven Nix.



Mount Borah Peak

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/recrea/scnf/recrea/?recid=76194>

Borah Peak, the highest in Idaho looming over the landscape at 12,662 feet is located right outside of Mackay, part of the Lost River Mountain Range in the Challis National Forest. It is a popular destination on the bucket list of mountain climbers, in addition to attracting hundreds of hikers each year for treks on the lower reaches. Scaling the peak is considered a challenging endeavor, and proper preparation and equipment are necessary for a safe ascent. A 5,000 foot hike up the mountain from the trailhead to summit, lets you log your name in the summit box. The USGS officially recognized Mt. Borah as Idaho's only active glacier in 2021. To reach the mountain, take US 93 20 miles north of Mackay to the Borah Peak Access Road.



King Mountain Hang Glider Launch Site

<https://www.kingmountaingliderpark.com/>

3237 West 3400 North, Moore, ID 83255, 208-407-7174

The launch site at King Mountain, which hosts a 12 day festival each year, is known for its challenging conditions, strong winds and thermals, which make it a popular destination for experienced hang gliders seeking an adrenaline rush. The park, located on the western flank of King Mountain, primarily has prevailing winds are from the west that combine with ridge lift. Despite its difficulty, King Mountain is popular with hang gliders from around the world due to its stunning views and unique flying conditions. The site of numerous competitions and world record attempts, reaching the upper launches requires a hike up the mountain.



ATV Capitol of the West ATV Tours

<http://mackayidaho-city.com/home-2/>

Five available ATV tours cover some hundreds of miles in the Lost River Valley can be accessed from Mackay and ATV rentals are available at lostriveradventures.com.

- Mackay Mine Hill Tour
- The Pahsimeroi Valley: A Little Switzerland Adventure
- Copper Basin: An Alpine Lakes Adventure
- Little Lost River Valley: An Enchanted Forest Adventure
- Arco Pass: Gateway to Adventure

Free trail maps of all five adventures are available at 14 local locations.



Mackay Mine Hill ATV Tour

This tour takes you on an exciting adventure through the historic mining district above Mackay, beginning at the base of the Mackay Mine Hill, once the site of a rich silver mine dating back to 1879. You'll be treated to stunning panoramic views of the Lost River Range and the White Knob Mountains as you travel up winding switchbacks and pass through remnants of the old mining operations, including the mine shafts, buildings, and tailings. At the top of the hill, you can explore historic mining structures and take in even more breathtaking views.



The Pahsimeroi Valley: A Little Switzerland Adventure ATV Tour

In an area known as the Swiss Alps of Idaho, the Pahsimeroi Valley, named by the Shoshone the shining waters and grove by the stream, is the location of the ATV tour begins at the site of the 1983 Mount Borah Earthquake Fault north of Mackay. After climbing over the Double Springs Pass, the route drops into a valley that was home to early pioneers who arrived in the late 1880s in search of a new life. As you explore, you'll be treated to expansive views of the snowcapped peaks of Mount Borah , Leatherman Peak and Mount Breitenbach.



Copper Basin: An Alpine Lakes Adventure ATV Tour

The Copper Basin ATV Tour presents the opportunity to explore a remote valley at an elevation of over 8,000 feet, with over 500,000 acres between the Pioneer Mountains and White Knob Mountain Range. As you meander, expect to see cattle grazing in pastures rich with grasses, ponds, streams, wildflowers and wildlife. If you're particularly adventurous, there is an 11-mile loop trail to Lake Creek, which ascends to five Alpine Lakes, each stocked with a different type of trout. Bring a picnic and enjoy it among the spruce, fir, pine, and aspen forests.



Little Lost River Valley: An Enchanted Forest Adventure ATV Tour

Heritage in the Lost River Valley dates back to the Lemhi and Shoshone Native American tribes who were family to Chief Sitting Bull. The first European fur trappers arrived from Scotland in 1819, before explorer Captain Bonneville traveled through Pass Creek to Clyde and wrote extensively about his journey. The Little Lost River Valley, bordered by the Lost River Range and Lemhi Range, begins at the base of the Pahsimeroi Valley, extends for about 50 miles at elevations between 4,800 and 6,100 feet. It's here that the river disappears into the ground before reaching the Snake River, giving the area its name. The high desert and densely forested areas landscapes are dotted with old mines and the remnants of historic buildings from days gone by.



Arco Pass: Gateway to Adventure ATV Tour

Pictographs sketched into the rocks and archeological evidence including stone tools and ancient campsites, point to people living on the lands surrounding Arco Pass for more than 10,000 years. The Shoshone migrated here from Pocatello to locate a good source of water and hunting grounds. Fur trappers also encountered the Blackfoot tribe in the early 1800s, when the British North West Company and Hudson Bay Company led brigades of trappers here in 1820. As you meander the region of the pass, the landscape delivers majestic views and unique geological formations including the 80 foot limestone King Mountain Natural Arch.



Peaks to Craters Scenic Byway

<https://visitidaho.org/things-to-do/road-trips/peaks-to-craters-scenic-byway/>

Start in either Picabo, ID or Challis, ID

Millions of years ago, Idaho lay at the edge of the Pacific Ocean, anchored by a land mass resting on the North American Plate. That plate began clashing with the Pacific Plate, lying at the bottom of the ocean, driving it deep into the earth's crust. Molten magna began shooting up from chambers created as the plate was buried, cooling into craggy crystallized granite rocks. More magna coming up through a crack in the plate became linear mountains ranges thrusting skyward, with liquid rock exploding through the mountain peaks. Shoshone living in the area some 12,000 years ago, witnessed this geologic disruption every 3,000 years. Together, these dynamic geologic events created the landscapes you will witness as you explore the Peaks to Craters Scenic Byway in southeastern Idaho. On the route, Craters of the Moon, one of the youngest volcanic areas in the region, is expected to erupt again within the next 1,000 years, coming on behind the last geologic events that occurred about 2,100 years ago. Because the volcanic rock at Craters is so young, domes, cinder cones, shields, lava flows, lava tubes, spatter ramparts and pressure ridges cover the earth. Not only did the geologic events create a landscape in some place that looks like it could have fallen off the moon, the same eruptions of molten rock also deposited precious and useful minerals that are still being mined in the area. The two

phenomena together created a story that intertwines the geologic landscape, one that you will not encounter anywhere else in the United States, with mining heritage, ghost towns, and other elements of the rugged west. As you make the 140-mile drive through ever changing landscapes, you can stop to explore mining towns like Mackay, Arco, and Challis, and the ghost towns of Bonanza, Custer, and Bay Horse, quaint places where residents live a timeless western lifestyle that has not changed a great deal in a couple of centuries. This gorgeous byway adventure is said to be the most diverse stretch of road in Idaho—boasting everything from sky-piercing peaks to captivating craters along its course.



Additional Attractions

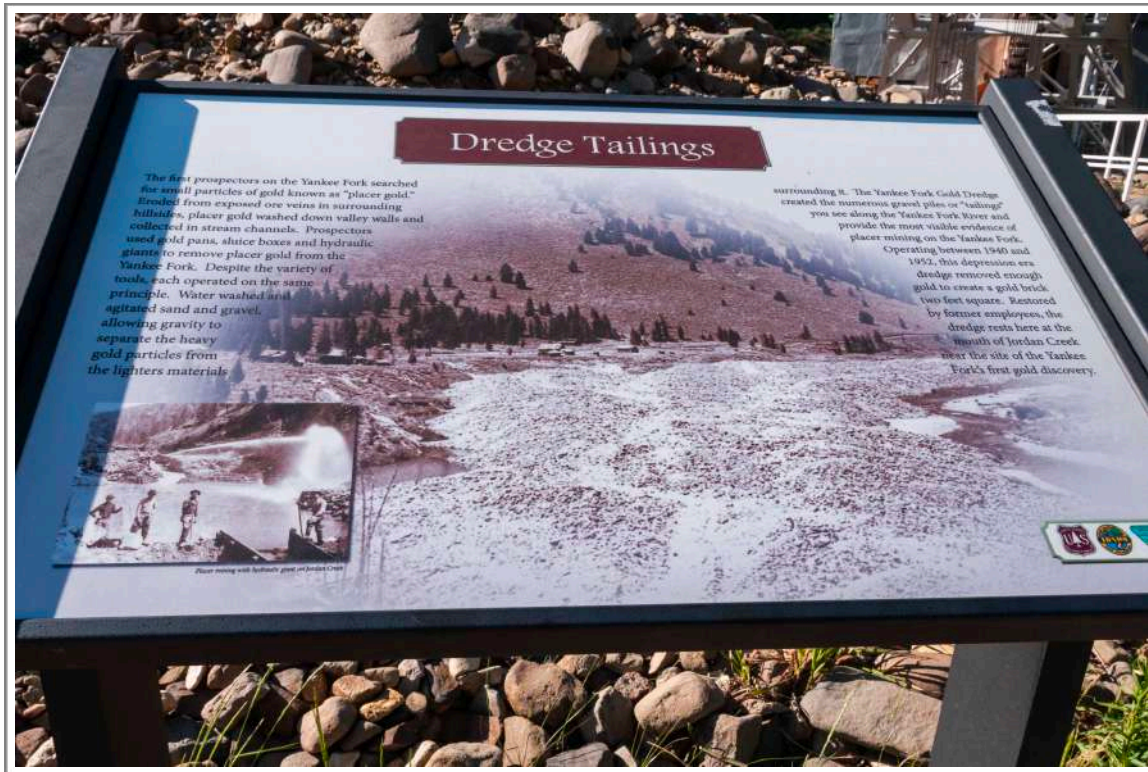


Land of Yankee Fork State Park and Interpretive Center

<https://parksandrecreation.idaho.gov/parks/land-yankee-fork/>

24424 Highway 75, Challis, ID 83226, (208) 879-5244, Daily 7AM-10PM

Land of Yankee Fork State Park and Interpretive Center preserves a mining camp established on the Salmon River, named because everyone in the party was a Yankee. Today, the park interprets Idaho's frontier mining history, including the ghost towns of Bayhorse, Bonanza, and Custer. No gold was discovered immediately, yet tenacious prospectors stayed on and finally found gold in 1870. Soon after, the Yankee Fork Mining District was organized and after the discovery of the General Custer Mine in 1876, the area began to flood with miners. By 1910, the three popular sites were all but deserted. The interpretive center illustrates the mining heritage of the area through exhibits, a gold panning station, and audiovisual programs. The grounds also feature a rare well preserved gold dredge, as well as a ¼ mile trail detailing the archeological finds of a nearby Challis Bison Jump Site.



Custer Motorway Adventure Road (Yankee Fork Road)

https://www.blm.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2021-11/Custer-Motorway_508.pdf

Accessed from Challis on US Hwy 93, or from Sunbeam on ID State Hwy 75.

The Custer Motorway Adventure Road, also known as the Yankee Fork Road, the once stage and freight wagon toll road used by mining supply trains running from Custer and Bonanza delivering gold bullion to Challis, is now a scenic driving route that follows the historic path of the Custer Motorway, built in 1919 as a route between Challis and Stanley. The 25 mile route which offers stunning views of the surrounding mountains, forests, and rivers meanders past historic mining towns and buildings, including the ghost town of Custer and the Yankee Fork Gold Dredge. For an authentic Idaho mining town experience, explore this stage and freight wagon toll road. The route is suitable for passenger cars but may be challenging for larger vehicles, and visitors should be aware of potential hazards such as narrow roads and steep drop-offs.



Sacajawea Interpretive, Heritage and Cultural Center

<https://www.sacajawecenter.org/>

2700 Main Street, Salmon, ID 83467, 208-756-1188, Summer hours Tu-F 10AM-4PM

Paying homage to one of America's greatest historical heroines, this educational and cultural center celebrates Sacajawea's role in the Lewis and Clark expedition. Born around 1788 in the Salmon Valley, she traveled with the team as an interpreter and served as an indicator of the peaceful intent of the expedition party. The Center highlights her historic trek, the Agaidika Shoshone-Bannock perspective, as well as the deep connections between Western frontier life and the natural environment. Walking trails and a presentation in the Meriwether Theater are also available.



Idaho National Laboratory

<https://inl.gov/>

1955 N Fremont Ave, Idaho Falls, ID 83415, 208-526-0050, tours@inl.gov

The Idaho National Laboratory was established in 1949 as the National Reactor Testing Station and has since grown to become one of the nation's leading nuclear research laboratories.

Operated by Battelle Energy Alliance on behalf of the U.S. Department of Energy, its mission is to conduct nuclear energy research, develop advanced technologies for energy production and conservation, and support national security and environmental management initiatives. If you've never seen a nuclear reactor or how electricity is generated from nuclear energy, you can find the answers on an audio driving tour and a tour of INL. Public tours are limited to individuals 18 and older and small groups.



EBR-1 National Historical Landmark and Atomic Museum

<https://inl.gov/experimental-breeder-reactor-i/>

U.S. Highway 20/26 between Idaho Falls and Arco, 208-526-0050, Memorial Day Weekend through Labor Day Weekend, Daily, 9AM–5PM

After touring the Idaho National Laboratory, visit Experimental Breeder Reactor No. 1 (EBR-I) and Atomic Museum which tells the story the world's first nuclear power plant. Colorful, interactive displays also tell the story of EBR-I's sibling, Experimental Breeder Reactor No. 2 (EBR-II), which once powered much of the site and operated with a novel closed fuel cycle. The museum also has two aircraft nuclear propulsion prototypes, a reactor control room, remote handling devices for radioactive materials, radiation detection equipment, and more. You can walk through the museum using the self-guided tour instructions or take a guided tour.

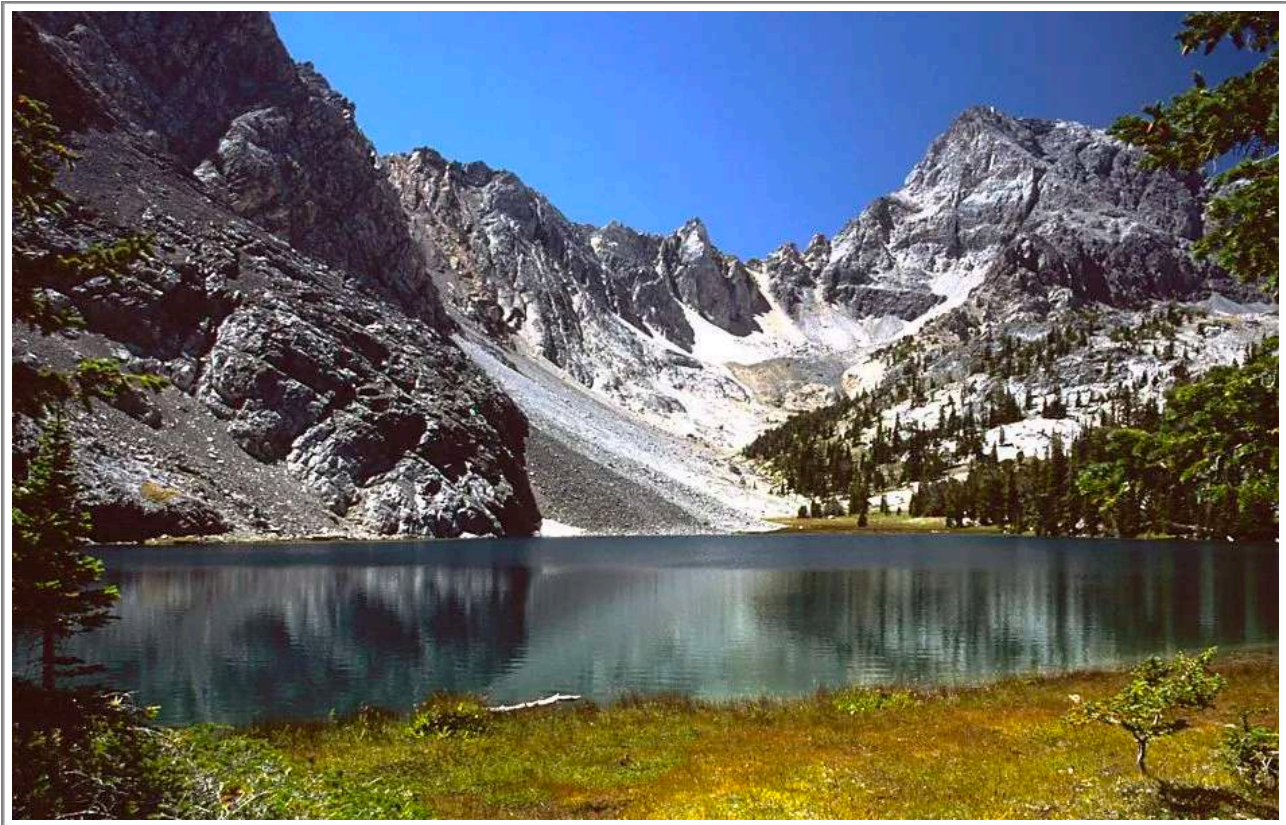


Silver Creek Preserve

<https://www.nature.org/en-us/get-involved/how-to-help/places-we-protect/silver-creek-preserve/>

165 Kilpatrick Bridge Rd, Bellevue, ID 83313, 208-788-2203, Daily 24-hours

A 1979 purchase of 479 acres of the Sun Valley Ranch by the The Nature Conservancy enabled development of a flagship preserve at Silver Creek that also launched a landowner conservation effort along the stream to protect an additional 12,000 acres. The Preserve now covers over 880 acres of land along Silver Creek, home to a variety of wildlife, including bald eagles, river otters, mule deer, and more than 150 species of birds. It is also one of the premier trout streams in the country, known for its abundance of rainbow, brown, and cutthroat trout for world-class fly fishing.



Salmon Challis National Forest

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/scnf>

1206 S. Challis Street, Salmon, ID 83467, 208-756-5100, Office hours M-F 8AM-4:30PM

The Salmon-Challis National Forest which covers over 4.3 million acres in east-central Idaho includes the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness Area, the largest contiguous wilderness area in the continental United States. Named after the Salmon River and the Challis River, which run through a diverse landscape of mountains, canyons, alpine expanses, and high desert, the forest delivers outstanding recreational opportunities. You can escape into the backcountry in the Lemhi, Bitterroot, Pioneer, or Lost River Mountain Ranges or venture to the Bighorn Crags within the Frank Church. The forest is also rich in heritage, with historic cabins, ranger stations, lookouts, mining ghost towns, and the Lewis and Clark and the Nez Perce National Historic Trails linking visitors to the past.



Borah Peak Wilderness

<https://www.blm.gov/visit/borah-peak-wilderness-study-area>

Multiple access points including Borah Peak Trailhead, off Idaho RT-93 North of Mackay, ID, 83251

The Borah Peak Wilderness Area covers 47,175 acres characterized by rugged mountains, deep canyons, and alpine lakes, with elevations ranging from around 6,000 feet, to Borah Peak at over 12,000 feet. The stunningly beautiful region offers hiking on the Borah Peak Trail, Chicken Out Ridge Trail, and Leatherman Peak Trail, fishing in the Salmon River and Big Lost River, mountain biking the Mackay Reservoir Trail and the Antelope Creek Trail, and horseback riding on the Fish Creek Trail and the Mill Creek Trail.



Sawtooth National Recreation Area

Stanley Ranger Station located on FR-433, approximately 3.4 miles south of Stanley on ID-75, 208-774-3000, M-F 8:30AM-5PM

Featuring 756000 acres with views of the Sawtooth Mountains, the area is known for its rugged beauty and wide range of recreational opportunities. The headwaters of four major rivers, over 700 miles of trails, 40 peaks rising over 10,000 feet, and over 300 high-mountain alpine lakes beckon adventure enthusiasts of all types including hiking, backpacking, rock climbing, kayaking and whitewater rafting, mountain biking, and wildlife viewing.

The Stanley Ranger Station in Custer County is the recreation area's best entrance point from which you can easily access numerous trails and lakes as well as obtain information, area maps, and a narrative automobile tour highlighting the area's history and most impressive sights.



Mackay Dam and Reservoir Site

The Mackay Dam and Reservoir Site, a water management and recreation area on the East Fork of the Big Lost River, was constructed in the 1930s by the Bureau of Reclamation as part of a larger irrigation project in the area. The approximately 14,000 acre-foot reservoir, stocked with trout and Kokanee salmon offers opportunities for boating, fishing, camping, hiking, and wildlife viewing. A developed campground has showers and RV hookups alongside primitive camping areas. Located on HW-93 approximately six miles north of Mackay.



Big Lost River Access Trail

<https://www.blm.gov/visit/big-lost-river-access-trail>

Challis National Forest

The Big Lost River Access Trail located near the Mackay Dam and Reservoir Site follows the river for approximately 4.5 miles to provide access to several prime fishing spots along the way. It is well marked with minimal elevation gain that lets you enjoy the scenic beauty of the river valley, the surrounding mountains and the ecosystem along the riverbanks. Located approximately 1 mile northwest of Mackay.



Idaho Science Center and Devil Boat

<https://idaho-science-center.edan.io/>

440 South Front Street, Arco, ID 83213 208-527-3770

The so-called Devil Boat - otherwise called the “Submarine in the Desert” - is actually the preserved sail of the submarine USS Hawkbill. The number 666 displayed on the sail was actually her hull number, and has no connection to the occult. After being decommissioned in 2000, the monument was placed in the roadside Idaho Science Center to honor Arco’s long association with the Navy and the nuclear fleet in particular. Two small museums on the site feature Navy involvement in the area and artifacts related to scientific research in the area.



Lost River Museum

109 Main St, Mackay, ID 83251, 208-588-4500

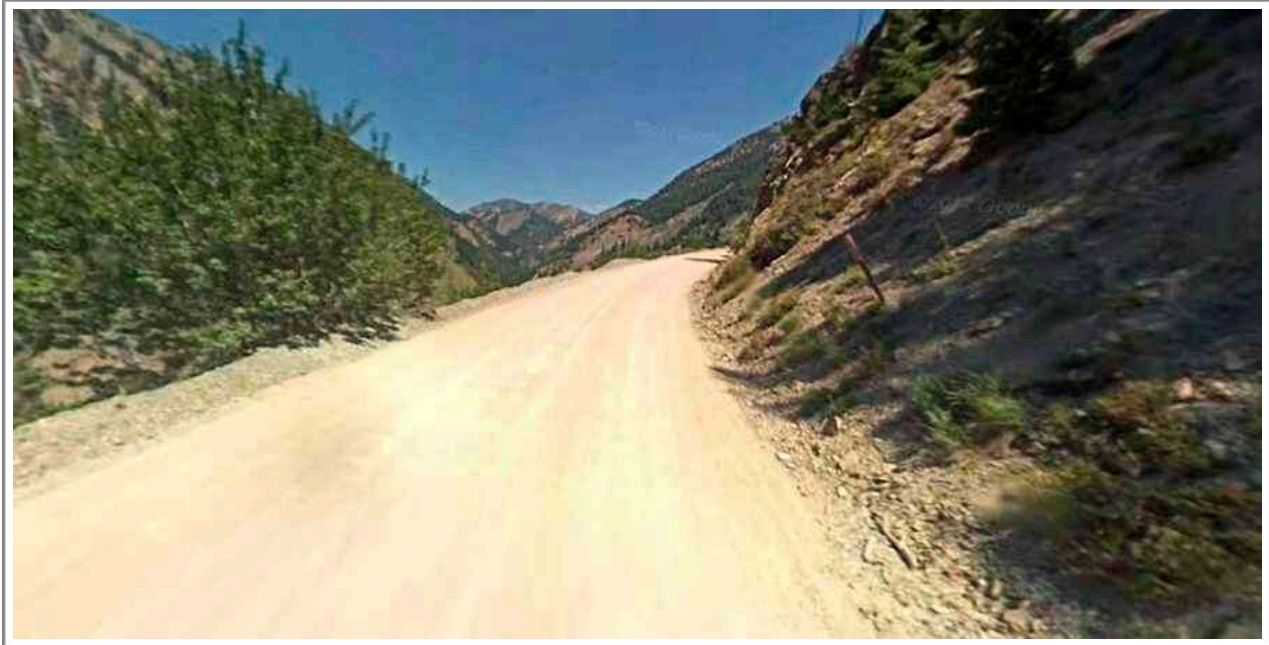
Operated by the South Custer County Historical Society, the Lost River Museum showcases a variety of artifacts including mining tools, ranching equipment, vintage clothing, household utensils, railroad memorabilia, theater memorabilia, local moonshiners, and historical photographs illustrating life in the past. Highly recommended for any Western History buffs.



Lower Cedar Creek Falls Trail

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/scnf/recreation/recarea/?recid=76598&actid=50>

Trailhead located at the end of Lower Cedar Creek Road, about 12 miles south of Mackay. The Lower Cedar Creek Trail is a 3-mile out-and-back hike that follows Cedar Creek following the creek through a forested canyon, with spectacular views of the surrounding peaks and valleys. At 1 mile, you will come upon an old hydroelectric plant that supplied electricity to the town of Mackay from 1912-1940. Old wooden pipes, reinforced by mental wiring are found following the creek. Just past the plant, the creek forks and then it's just a short 0.2 mile push up to the "hole in the wall" waterfall which gushes over a million gallons per minute. The trail is generally considered to be moderate in difficulty, with some steep sections and rocky terrain.



Trail Creek Scenic Drive

<https://valleychamber.org/trail-creek-summit-creek-road/>

Ketchum Ranger District, 208-622-5371

The Trail Creek Scenic Drive which runs between Mackay and Ketchum connects the Lost River Valley with Sun Valley. The drive winds through the Sawtooth Mountains for about 40 miles, through scenic forests, meadows, and mountains, offering spectacular views of the surrounding landscape. There are several opportunities for hiking, fishing, and wildlife viewing as the road passes through the Sawtooth National Recreation Area. In fall, when the trees turn golden and red, nature creates breathtaking display of colors.

Idaho Motorcycle Rodeo

<https://rodeoimra.com/rodeo-dates>

Mackay Tourist Park, Mackay, ID 83251, 208-588-2274

The best biggest little biker bash in Idaho features in three fun filled days that include an official Friday night kickoff party with live music and a bonfire in the campground, followed by an escorted bike parade through downtown Mackay before a main rodeo event at 1PM. On Sunday, participants are invited to explore the historic sites and mountain scenery in and around Mackay. Food and specialty vendors will be onsite.

Wings Over Mackay

409 Spruce Street, Mackay, ID 83251, 250-9495

Five days of fun flying are combined with other events including biking, ATV rides, fishing and hiking. This family friendly event is open Radio Controlled Flying. An AMA is required along with a \$5 landing fee for all 4 days. Turbines are welcome with on-site dry camping at the Airport.

Outfitters & Guides

Big Lost River Outfitters

<https://www.blroutfitters.com/>

Adventure Location: Salmon Challis National Forest, Office Location: P.O. Box 836, Duncansville, PA 16635 Fred Imler, Owner, 814-934-6927, fimler@imlerspoultry.com

Offering outdoor adventures combined with breathtaking scenery. Trips include elk, mountain lion, and antelope hunts, trail riding and more, leaving from a full-amenities lodge.

Silver Creek Outfitters

<https://silver-creek.com/>

500 N. Main St., Ketchum, ID 83340, 208-726-5282, M-SA 9AM-6PM, SU 10AM-5PM

Terry Ring, Owner, 208-726-5282, terry.ring@silver-creek.com

Family-owned hunting/fishing gear and apparel seller offering an assortment of guided fly fishing trips. Equipment rental is also available.

Sun Valley Outfitters

<https://sunvalleyoutfitters.com/>

415 Sun Valley Rd East, Ketchum, ID 83340, 208-928-7843, TU-SU 10AM-5PM

Jack Rizzo, General Manager,

Fly shop and guided fly-fishing outfitter in the Wood River Valley.

Idaho Wilderness Company Outfitters

<https://www.idahowildernesscompany.com/>

505 River Run Road, Challis, ID 83226, 208-879-4700

Steve Zettel, Owner, 208-879-4700

Offering elk, mule deer, bear, and wolf hunts in Idaho, along with Salmon River fishing and multi-day rafting.

Idaho Angling Services

<http://www.angling-services.com/>

208 Picabo Desert Road, Bellevue, ID 83313, 208-720-8169

David Glasscock, Owner

Offering guided fly-fishing day or multi-day trips on Silver Creek, the Big Wood and Lost Rivers.

Lost River Outfitters

<http://www.lostriveroutfitters.com/>

371 N. Main St., Ketchum, ID 83340, 208-726-1706, Daily 7AM-10PM

Scott Schnebly, Owner

Professional fly-fishing guides have been a Ketchum mainstay since 1984.

Picabo Angler

<https://picaboangler.com/>

18918 US-20, Picabo, ID 83348, 208-788-3536, Daily 6:30AM-6PM

R. Chad Chorney, General Manager

Aa full-service fly shop offering guided fly-fishing, fly-tying classes, food, and lodging on the banks of world renown Silver Creek River.

Lost River Adventures

<https://www.lostriveradventures.com/>

4255 N. US Highway 93, 4255 US-93, Mackay, ID 83251, 208-588-2733,

lostriveradventurerentals@gmail.com

Lost River Adventures offers ATV rentals and adventure equipment including paddle boards, kayaks, canoes, and tents.

Idaho Wilderness Company Rafting

<https://floatidaho.com/>

505 River Run Road, Challis, ID 83226, 208-879-4700

Steve Zettel, Owner, 208-879-4700

Customized multi-day group rafting trips along the middle fork of the Salmon Ri

Task Two: Capacity Assessment

Task Two of the Economic Development/Tourism Plan focused on the capacity of the immediate area to serve visitors. When visitors are in destination for an overnight stay, they require all of the services they have access to at their home location.

- Accommodations including local hotels, chain hotels, campgrounds, vacation rentals, and RV parks.
- Dining including local restaurants, chain restaurants, fast food, and convenience food sources.
- Shopping including local unique shops, antique shops, big box stores, farms and farmers markets, and convenience stores.
- Filling stations and automobile garages.
- Rental cars, limousines, and other rental transportation.
- Medical services including clinics and emergency care services.
- Banking services.



Accommodations

Wagon Wheel Motel and RV Park

<https://www.wagonwheelmackay.com/>

809 W. Custer St., Mackay, ID 83251, 208-588-3331

16 motel rooms, 10 fully equipped cabins, and 14 RV sites, a pet-friendly, family ready escape. Rooms include full service kitchens and there is coin-operated laundry on-site.

Mackay Mansion Bed and Breakfast

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100057240258134>

217 Spruce Street, Mackay, ID 83251 208-3-337

3 room historic Bed and Breakfast originally built in 1902 to house mining company officials and potential investors.

Bear Bottom Inn

<https://bear-bottom-inn.business.site/>

412 Spruce St., Mackay, ID 83251, 208-588-2483

Each room in this quaint B&B is filled with lodge-pole pine furniture to add to the rustic appeal. Next door to the rooms is the 100+ year-old inn that operates as a restaurant and bar with good food, great pizza, and beer on tap.

White Knob Motel and RV Park

<https://www.whiteknoblodging.com/>

US Highway 93, Mackay, ID 83251, 208-588-2622

Lodging, RV Park and tent sites.

Moose Crossing RV Park

<https://www.moosecrossingrv.net/>

3794 N. US Highway 93, Mackay, ID 83251, 208-948-7207

Full hookup RV spaces with nightly and weekly rates, RV rentals, and rustic sleeping cabins.

Mackay Tourist Park and Campground

<http://mackayidaho-city.com/home-3/>

Vadan Street, Mackay, ID 83251, 208-588-2274

24 city tourist park camping spots that are free for two days and nights.

Wild Horse Creek Ranch

<http://wildhorsecreekranch.com/>

4387 Wild Horse Creek Rd, Mackay, ID 83251, 208-588-2575,

A full service ranch which accommodates guests in 4 main rooms, with 4 additional bedrooms in the bunkhouse.

Lost River Motel

<http://www.lrmotel.com>

405 Hwy. Dr., Arco, ID 83213, 208-527-3600, Mikelmac5@aol.com

Quirky, fun motel offering clean rooms that are pet and biker-friendly.

Arco Inn Motel

540 W. Grand Ave., Arco, ID 83213, 208-527-3100, Daily 9AM-12AM

Family owned motel features free internet, DirectTV and Comfort Top beds.

DK Motel

<http://www.dkmotel.com/>

316 S Front St, Arco, ID 83213, 208-527-8282

Spacious rooms and suites suitable for any budget.

Joe Fallini Recreation Site Mackay Reservoir

<https://www.recreation.gov/camping/campgrounds/10156151>

4705 US-93, Mackay, ID 83251, 208-879-6200

The only recreational site in the Mackay Reservoir with RV hookups and 26 camping spots.

Mountain View RV Park & Restaurant

<https://www.mountainviewarco.com/>

705 W. Grand Ave., Arco, ID 83213, 208-527-3707

This 17-site park features recently updated bathhouses, power supply, and internet, plus a newly completed dog park.

The restaurant offers a menu of southern food and BBQ, plus local dishes.

Craters of the Moon Arco KOA RV Park

<https://koa.com/campgrounds/craters-of-the-moon/>

2424 North 3000 West, Arco, ID 83213, 208-527-8513, arcokoa@gmail.com

This award-winning campground offers camping cabins, tent sites, RV sites, plus extended stay options.

AirBnB Mackay

<https://www.airbnb.com/mackay-id/stays>

Dining and Bars**9 Peaks Restaurant & Lounge**

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100085083459374>

503 W. Custer Rd., Mackay, ID, 208-569-6831,

Family restaurant and bar with new owners and a fresh menu in the same great location.

Scoops Corner Cafe

221 Main St., Mackay, ID 83251, 208-588-2158, M-SA 11AM-9PM

Authentic Mexican cuisine such as burritos, tacos, pulled pork, cheesecake and an old-fashioned ice cream parlor.

Ken's Club and Steakhouse

<https://www.facebook.com/annaskensclub/>

302 Main St., Mackay, ID 83251, 208-588-9903, TU-TH 11AM-9PM, F 11AM-10PM, SA 4:30PM-10PM

American fare featuring a wide variety of dishes, all prepared with fresh ingredients and care.

L7 Bar and Grill

402 W. Custer St., Mackay, ID 83251, 208-757-7979, W-SA 11AM-10PM

Homemade goodness including stacked smoked red brisket and pastrami garnering rave reviews.

Dana's Place

610 Custer St, Mackay, ID 83251, 208-721-7086, F-TU 6:30AM-1PM

Cozy spot with coffee, smoothies, pastries, breakfast burritos, brats, and more.

Perk's Bar

210 Main St, Mackay, ID 83251, 208-588-9908

Genuine, traditional, early 1900s bar with lots of character, good people, and affordable drinks.

Sammy's Kitchen

<https://www.sammysminimart.com/>

318 West Custer Street, Mackay, ID 83251, 208-588-3340, Daily 6:30AM-9PM

Located within Sammy's Mini Mart, the kitchen serves up breakfast burritos, sandwiches, appetizers, hand-crafted pizza, and more.

The Sombrero Cowboy

450 W. Grand Ave., Arco, ID 83213, 208-527-4540, M-F 11AM-8PM

Mexican fare plus Texas-sized burgers and fries.

Lost River Drive In

<https://www.facebook.com/LostRiverDriveInGreatFood/>

520 W. Grand Ave., Arco, ID 83213, 208-527-3158, M-SA 11AM-10PM

Old-fashioned drive-in with burgers, fries, milkshakes, and ice cream.

Tailgaters Sports Bar

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100057030477067>

659 W Grand Ave, Arco, ID 83213, 208-527-0114, TH-TU 4PM-9PM

Local sports bar serving beer and wine with full menu.

Pickles Place

<https://www.picklesplacerestaurant.com/>

440 S. Front St., Arco, ID 83213, (208) 527-9944, Daily 6AM-10PM

Local fresh, never frozen beef plus amazing peanut butter shakes and more.

Mello-Dee Club

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100063454491319>

175 Sunset Dr, Arco, ID 83213, 208-527-3125, Daily 2PM-2AM

Casual home-town bar no longer serving food. Head next door for burgers and more.

Burger By Number

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100069249894258>

175 Sunset Dr, Arco, ID 83213, 208-527-3125

Western burger with onion rings, tater tots, grilled chicken cordon bleu specials and more.

Deli Sandwich Shop

<https://www.facebook.com/arcodelishop/>

119 N. Idaho St., Arco, ID, 83213, 208-527-3757, SU-F 11AM-7PM, SA 8AM-10PM

Large-portioned sandwiches plus soups made from scratch and pizzas topped with fresh cut vegetables.

SJ Cafe

257 W Grand Ave, Arco, ID 83213, 208-527-2000, M-TH 6:30AM-1PM, F-SA 7:30AM-2PM, SU 8AM-4PM

Quaint cafe with coffee drinks and a rotating breakfast and lunch menu.

Jack's Travel Center

2437 US-20, Arco, ID 83213, 208-527-3577, M-TH 5AM-10PM, F-SA 5AM-11PM, SU 6AM-10PM
Truck stop, gas station, and convenience store with RV parking and a mini-diner with grilled fare.

Retail**Ivie's Grocery**

<https://www.iviesgrocery.com/>

301 Main St, Mackay, ID 83251, 208-588-3361, M-SA 8AM-7PM, SU 10AM-3P
Full service grocery store including produce, meats, dairy and general merchandise.

Sammy's Mini Mart

<https://www.sammysminimart.com/>

318 West Custer Street, Mackay, ID 83251, 208-588-3340, sammysminimart@gmail.com, Daily 6:30AM-9PM
One stop shop for clothing, food, and even hunting licenses in Mackay.

Royal Bakery

119 Main St., Mackay, ID 83251, M-F 5AM-1PM
Offers fresh bread, donuts, cookies, and assorted baked goods. Cash only.

Liar's Den Bait and Tackle

<https://www.facebook.com/LiarsDenBaitAndTackleMackayID/>

217 S. Main St., Mackay, ID, 83251, 208-588-2583, M-SA 8AM-2PM
Both equipment and the insight you'll need for your next fishing trip. Enjoy a cup of coffee and eggs or biscuits and gravy while you trade tall tales about your latest adventure.

Family Dollar

<https://www.familydollar.com/>

157 W. Grand Ave., Arco, ID 83213, 208-776-4783, Daily 9AM-10PM
Discount change which carries a variety of goods including groceries.

Antiques by Alice & Bea

<https://www.facebook.com/vickijo11>

219 S. Main St., Mackay, ID 83251, 208-588-2743
Great little antique and vintage collectibles shop where you're likely to find old western gear, tack, cowboy hats, furniture, and more.

A&A Market

<https://www.facebook.com/ArcosAAMarket/>

218 N. Idaho St., Arco, ID 83213, 208-527-8594, aamarket@atcnet.net,
M-SA 8AM-8PM, SU 9AM-6PM
Locally owned and operated grocery store serving the Lost River Valleys since 1946.

Lost River Gardens

<http://lostrivergardens.com/>

310 S. Idaho St., Arco, ID 83213, 208-313-8711, W-SA 11AM-6PM
Garden center and nursery with organically grown and heirloom veggies, flowers and vegetables, plus supplies, soils, and fertilizers.

Touch of Country Florist & Gifts

<https://www.facebook.com/people/A-Touch-of-Country-Floral-and-Gifts/100052848167435/>

118 W. Lost River Ave., Arco, ID 83213, 208-527-3747

Local stop for fresh flowers, plants, balloons, gift baskets and handmade creations by area artists.

Dragon Fly Tarps

<https://www.dragonflytarps.com/>

210 W. Grand Ave., Arco, ID 83213, 208-680-0706, M-F 9AM-5PM

Created out of the desire for serious, lightweight weather protection while river camping, these fly tarps are designed and crafted entirely in Idaho.

Automobile Services**Oasis Stop-N-Go**

<https://oasisstopngo.com/>

305 West Custer Street, Mackay, ID 83251, 208-588-3208, Daily 4:30AM-10PM

Fuel and snacks for all of your travel needs.

Sinclair Service Station

<https://stations.sinclairoil.com/id/mackay/318-w-custer>

318 W. Custer, Mackay, ID 83251, 208-588-3340, Daily 5:30AM-10PM

Full service gas station located within Sammy's Mini Mart.

United Oil Service Station

117 Custer St., Mackay, ID 83251, 208-558-2240

Chevron Mackay Service Station

<https://www.chevronwithtechron.com/>

305 Custer St., Mackay, ID 83251, 208-558-2308, Daily 4:30AM-10PM

Reimann's Major Auto Repair Service

204 W. Custer Rd., Mackay, ID 83251, 208-588-2205

General automotive repair services.

NAPA Tri-County Auto Parts Supply

<https://www.napaonline.com/en/id/mackay/store/22059>

119 S. Main St., Mackay, ID 83251, 208-588-2649, M-F 8AM-5PM, SA 9AM-12PM

Frost Auto Repair

3328 3120 North, Moore, ID 83255, 208-589-2385, M-F 8AM-6PM

Gene Davies Automobile

<https://www.facebook.com/GenesAutomotiveArco/>

218 W Grand Ave, Arco, ID 83213, M-F 8AM-5PM

Automotive service center offering vehicle maintenance, service & repair.

Parts City Auto Parts - Advanced Autoworks, LLC

<https://www.partscityauto.com/store/313>

117 Lost River Ave, Arco, ID 83213, 208-527-8526, M-F 8AM-6PM, SA 8AM-12PM

Independently owned auto parts store.

Nathan's Service Center

<https://www.exxon.com/en/find-station/arco-id-nathan'sservice-200320535>

217 N Front St, Arco, ID 83213, 208-527-8959, M-SA 5AM-10PM, SU 8AM-6PM

Offers a variety of vehicle services for ATV's, snowmobiles, motorcycles, garden equipment and more.

Health Care**Mackay Clinic**

<http://lostriversmedical.com/mackay-clinic/>

313 E Custer, Mackay, ID 8325, 208-252-7656, M-F 9AM-5PM

A primary care clinic with a range of general doctor's office services. On-site nurse practitioner and physician treat patients by walk-in or appointment.

Lost Rivers Medical Center

<https://lostriversmedical.com/>

551 Highland Dr, Arco, ID 83213, 208-252-7654, Daily 24-Hours

A 14 bed hospital that offers comprehensive, 24-hour emergency services to residents and visitors.

Bengal Pharmacy

<https://www.isu.edu/clinics/bengal-pharmacy/>

551 Highland Dr., Arco, ID 83213, (LRMC), 208-527-8201, M-F 10AM-6PM

Idaho State University pharmacy operating via a combination of traditional community pharmacy services and tele-pharmacy services.

Eagle Rock Dental Care

<https://www.eaglerockdentalcare.com/>

520 Highland Dr., Arco, ID 83213, 208-527-3472, M, W, F 8AM-5PM

Family dentistry with offices in Arco and Idaho Falls.

Banking**Ireland Bank**

<https://ireland-bank.com/>

208 South Main Street, Mackay, ID 83251, 208-588-2100, M-TH 9AM-3PM, F 9AM-5PM

Idaho's oldest state chartered bank .

US Bank

202 South Main Street, Mackay, ID 8251 208-588-2611

Full service bank.

East Idaho Credit Union

<https://eastidahocu.org/>

120 W. Grand Avenue, Arco, Idaho 83213, 800-727-9961, contactus@eastidahocu.org, M-F 9AM-5PM

Provides financial services via 11 full-service branch locations in Idaho.

What Does All This Mean?

Key Finding 1

The Lost River Valley has a major collection of resources and assets to attract visitors including nationally recognized resources, in fact, more major attractions in the appropriate proximity to promote, then were listed on Visit Sun Valley.

Key Finding 2

The Mackay/Arco area does have a certain level of capacity to serve visitors. A portion is only being utilized at a little over 50% during some time periods. At the same time, the multitude of tourism assets that the Lost River Valley has to promote did not correlate with the limited level of visitor service resources that exist in the region.

Key Finding 3

New approaches to serving visitors are being introduced in the area. For example, there are new restaurants, the museum is now operational, a Bed and Breakfast has come online, and the number of outfitters and guides available to serve the region has grown, so progress is being made.

Key Finding 4

Shopping is the number two activity that visitors participate in after dining, and the region's major deficiency is the lack of retail in both Mackay and Arco.

Key Finding 5

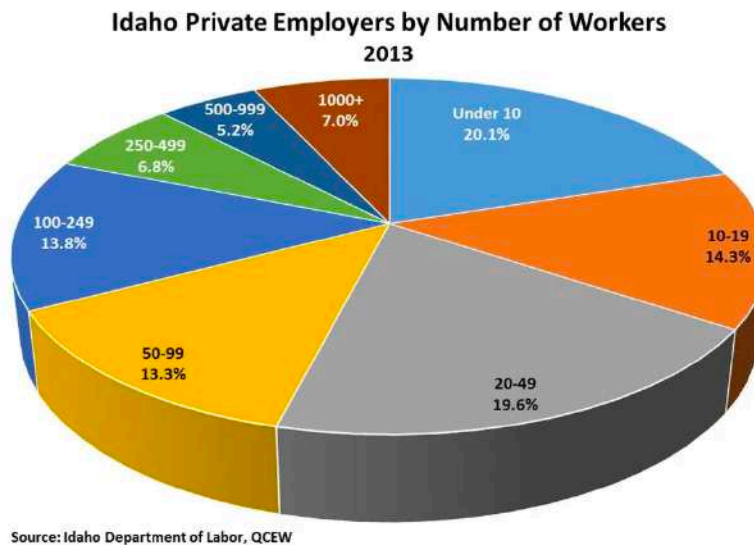
Given the level of resources available to attract visitors, there appears to be no reason, given the time and funding, that the Lost River Valley can't develop a destination. With appropriate visitor service offerings, the Mackay/Arco area can serve as a hub for visitors seeking access to the regions unique natural resources, Forest Service lands, and other public lands in the area. Doing so will take a solid identification, brand and fully illustrated visitor attraction vehicles that will have to be created from the ground up. Yet, there appears to be no reason it cannot be done.

Task Three: Development of A Visitor Profile

Task Three in the Economic Development/Tourism Plan process encompassed identifying the visitor markets that are currently visiting, coupled with a detailed portrait of those visitors who travel to the region. The first inclination was to turn to the Idaho Tourism Office for information about the visitors they have identified, which they segment regionally. Ultimately, when this data revealed significant disconnects, we realized that assembling an accurate visitor profile from that information was not possible.

Idaho Tourism Data

Tourism is very important to Idaho. In 2013, visitor spending supported 28,000 jobs throughout the state. By 2017, jobs supported by visitor spending had risen to 45,800. This number jumps to over 100,000 when restaurants and bars are included. Total tax revenues associated with the tourism sector in Idaho account for roughly \$475 million annually across the state. It is estimated that the outdoor recreation sector in Idaho accounts for over 2.7% of Idaho's total value added economic impact, ranking 8th in the US in the percentage of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) associated with outdoor recreational activities. The annual impact of outfitting and guiding in Idaho is approximately 2.1 billion, about one-third of Idaho's total recreation and tourism economy.



Even though tourism suffered some setbacks during Covid, the industry has shown considerable resiliency in bouncing back. In fact, Custer and Butte Counties, the home of Mackay and Arco, had increases in virtually every category of visitor spending during the 2019-20 period.

Idaho Visitors Overall

In 2021, Idaho welcomed over 35 million visitors to the state. Of those, 14.8 million stayed overnight, spending an average of \$158 per person per day on their trip. 84% were repeaters.

- 39% lodging \$61
- 25% dining, food and beverage \$39
- 14% transportation at destination \$22
- 12% retail purchases \$19
- 11% recreation and entertainment \$17

The result for an average 2.8 person party is \$442/day x an average overnight stay renders \$1519 per trip. Idaho Tourism data indicated that approximately one third of Idaho's overnight visitors arrive to visit friends and relatives, 14% arrive for touring, 13% to participate in outdoor activities. 6% do a city trip.

Overall, 56% of the overnight trips in Idaho were considered "marketable," namely they are not to visit friends or relatives or a business trip. According to Idaho Tourism, travel in Idaho is fairly well distributed throughout the year, with 22% of trips occurring in 1st quarter, 27%, 2nd quarter, 29%, 3rd quarter and 23%, 4th quarter. 19% of overnight visitors to Idaho are traveling alone, 63% travel with a spouse or partner and 46% have children in the traveling party. The majority of overnight visitors within Idaho are from Idaho, with 9% from California, 8% from Washington State, 7% from Utah and 5% from New York State.

The Idaho Regions and Discrepancies

Idaho divides its tourism into several regions and the main issue with those divisions is that using a Central Idaho designation lumped Custer County, location of Mackey, into the same region as Sun Valley, and Arco, the other town in the Lost River Valley, into the Southeastern Region.

The upscale resort region of Sun Valley welcomes 2.1 million visitors annually, who come primarily for skiing, paying an ADR several times higher than in Idaho in general. Incorporating the resort region into the same region as Mackay and Custer County completely skews the visitor results and the visitor profiles and buried any data about Custer County that could be discovered.

In Blaine County, the home of Sun Valley, 25.3% of employment is indicated as direct travel and tourism employment, as compared to Custer County with 15.5% travel and tourism employees, Lemhi at 3.9% and Butte County, with only .5%. This calculation put about 335 people in Custer County into the category, and only a handful in Butte County which basically has the same number of visitor service locations as Custer.

In view of the fact that Idaho Tourism listed 5.9 million total person trips in the Central Region, yet listed only 3% of the leisure visitors listed skiing as the main purpose of the trip while at the same time, Sun Valley indicated they welcomed close to a third of visitors to the central region, we became very skeptical of the accuracy of the data we could glean from state tourism research.

Further complicating the matter was the fact that other public agencies incorporate Custer County in a region termed East Central Idaho, as the third most popular region to visit in Idaho, but Idaho Tourism does not use recognize an East Central region. And placing Arco in the region with Idaho Falls did not enable gaining any information about Arco at all.

The Idaho Tourism profile for Central Idaho visitors indicated that 24% arrive from within Idaho, 8% from California, 6% from Texas, 5% for Utah and 5% from Washington. Further information indicates that visitors to Eastern Idaho originate from Idaho (21%) Utah (12%) California (8%) Arizona (5%) and Texas (5%).

All information we could locate indicated that the average number of nights spent in Central Idaho and Southeast Idaho was under three.

Top cities of arrival for the two regions reflected two different lists, with Denver and Atlanta listed as top cities of origin in 7th and 8th place in the Southeast Region information, with neither of those identified in the Central Region, where Twin Falls, ID and Seattle occupied 5th and 7th place.





Painting A Completely Different Picture

At that point, we determined it was imperative we work with other sources to assemble an accurate visitor profile for the Lost River Valley area. Since there was no destination “so to speak,” there was no website on which to deploy surveys, a Facebook presence not widely distributed, or any organizational structure to conduct focus groups, it ultimately was the local hotels, attractions, and other visitor service locations, who understood the need to gain accurate information to increase the accuracy of their own marketing, that proved to be very cooperative partners in this search. The information painted a completely different picture and geo-spatial analysis of the results let us fill out the profiles even further.

Where Visitors Arrived From

Using zip code information obtained locally indicated a different hierarchy of originating destinations: California 8%, Utah 8%, followed by Montana, Washington, Oregon and Nevada. Local data did not reflect a percentage of arrivals from New York or Chicago, with arrivals from both of those states standing at less than 1%. The majority of visitors hailed from Idaho Falls, Sun Valley, and Twin Falls, with a contingent from Boise and about 80% of the visitors to Craters of the Moon were either on their way to or from Yellowstone National Park from the Boise area.

When They Arrive

Idaho Tourism information indicated that visitors to Idaho arrived fairly evenly during the year, while there is a definite summer surge in visitors in the Lost River Valley.

When They Plan

Most visitors planned and booked their trips within 60 days before travel and a portion did not plan at all.

Length of Stay

Very different from the Idaho Tourism data that indicated the visitors spend 2.6 nights in the area, local data pointed to an average much closer to 3 nights with about a quarter spending longer than that.

Where Visitors Stay

An even more important discovery was that even though 40% of visitors traveled to the region to visit friends and relatives, only 19% actually stayed with them. 10% of visitors stayed in their own condo/second home. That left the remaining 70% of trips as “marketable,” visitors available to book into commercial accommodations, significantly higher than the 48% of the trips that Idaho Tourism deemed “marketable” in one place and the 56% in another. The 70% number of marketable trips included the 5% of visitors who indicate they visit the region for business purposes since they can be attracted to spend extra time for leisure in the area.

What Visitors Do

Even though nearly all of the attractions in the Lost River Valley are outdoor recreation resources, in one report, Idaho Tourism indicated that 22% of visitors arrive in the area to participate in outdoor recreation, contrasting greatly with the 13% they indicated arrive statewide to participate in outdoor activities. Another of their reports indicated 65% of visitors who do not stay with family and friends engage in outdoor activities, a figure that we believe is much closer to reality. Primary outdoor recreation activities include hiking and backpacking, nature tours, wildlife watching and birding, visiting national and state parks, visiting local parks and playgrounds, and swimming.

Only 10% of visitors indicated they arrive for “touring” and the remainder attend festivals and celebrations and participate in other activities in the region.

Visitors who shop in the region are more likely to shop in convenience stores, grocery stores, and big box retailers than the national average, primarily true due to the dearth of specialty shopping in the Lost River Valley.

Who They Are

The demographics observed locally skewed older than Idaho Tourism information, which placed the average age of visitors at 39.6. The majority are couples, or parties with multiple couples. The fact that the area attracts older couples accounts for the fact that most new residents in the area are retirees.

Who They Travel With

The vast majority travel with a spouse or partner and about 15% of the traveling parties include friends.

Travel Throughout the Region

Mackay and Arco are all located on a highway loop in Central Idaho made up of the Peaks to Craters Scenic Byway, the Salmon River Scenic Byway and the Sawtooth Byway. Information received from traffic counters indicate that traffic on the section of the loop that travels through Mackay, is a fraction of the traffic at other locations along the loop and in other parts of Idaho.



What Does All This Mean?

Key Finding 1

Had we depended on the data from Idaho Tourism, we would have recommended targeting markets from the wrong geography, with a different demographic profile, the wrong length of stay, and eliminating all the visitors who come to visit family and friends from marketable trips.

Key Finding 2

As would be expected, the majority of visitors to the region arrive from within Idaho and the majority of out-of-state visitors arrive from neighboring states. Only a fraction arrive from Arizona, Texas or New York. Instead they arrive from Utah, California, Washington State, Montana, Oregon.

Key Finding 3

More trips in the region are “marketable” when the 21% of visitors who do not stay with family and friends were included.

Key Finding 4

There is always a lament that 40% of visitors arrive to visit friends and relatives. Yet that leaves 60% who do not and many families enjoy doing things in the area with their visitors.

Key Finding 5

Planning to travel to the region is done over a very short timeframe. Fully 60% of visitors planned within 2 months before travel and a significant portion of visitors do not plan at all.



Task Four: Listen to Learn Community Outreach Interviews

Task Four of the Economic Development/Tourism Plan encompassed Listen to Learn Interviews completed within a community outreach with individuals from different sectors of the visitor facing economy and municipal officials.

Interviewees

A series of 30 open ended interviews conducted with (1) guides/outfitters, (2) retail, (3) dining, (4) accommodations, (5) attractions, (6) public lands officials and (7) municipal officials, generated very cogent information related to increasing visitors to the area. The interviewer had researched the location prior to the call and used that information to open the conversation. Interviewees were informed of the effort to increase visitors to the region to increase the economic development through visitor spending from overnight visitors who dine, shop and otherwise spend in the area, with multiple night trips being the most lucrative. Throughout the interviews, interviewees pointed out situations, restrictions, rules and so on, that were barriers to increased visitors or increased offerings and some offered solutions to these situations. All in all, the interviews generated very important and helpful information that when implemented will greatly increase the ability to attract and serve additional visitors in the region.

Responses from Visitor Facing Locations

The owners of the visitor facing locations that participated in interviews expressed an appreciation that “something was being done” to increase visitors to the area and responded very positively to efforts to increase tourism in the area. Many came forward with concepts and ideas to expand visitor offerings, create new programs and expand promotion that they had considered but not implemented. One of the major expressed opportunities was the desire for new winter activities such as cross country skiing and snowmobiling that should be developed. All were very aware there was no online presence for the area.

Expressed Opportunities

The interviews pointed out that there are more outfitters and guides who serve or are willing to serve visitors who are staying in the Lost River Valley, than initially anticipated. There are opportunities to expand visitor offerings to several niche markets such as mountain climbers, RV travelers, rodeo aficionados, and scenic byway travelers can be attracted with specific marketing and messages aimed at these visitors. Plus it was apparent from the calls that communications with and between the owners of various visitor facing locations will begin to strengthen the visitor serving community to result in collective concepts and programs that incorporate more than one.

Expressed Barriers

Signage

Making potential visitors aware of what is available when they are traveling through the area is the first point from which to increase visitors to Mackay and Arco. It became apparent in the interviews that signage pointing travelers to attractions and visitor service locations are a problem throughout the region. Some signage was placed at the wrong locations, some needed are non-existent and most do not support visitors discovering locations and attractions in the region.

Public Land Restrictions/Idaho Fish and Game Restrictions

Several outfitters indicated that permitting, licensing and other processes that enable them to serve visitors in the region are already severely restricting their ability to carry out their existing offerings, much less programs to serve additional visitors. Apparently, the lack of hunting tags for outfitters, access to forest trails that is limited by the number of days available, the licensing of guides and outfitters are the most restrictive in the country, and other issues will impact the ability to attract more visitors who would choose to use a guide service or outfitter for hunting, fishing, trail riding and other natural area based activities, rather than participating on their own. Apparently in Challis one can purchase a tag over the counter, while in Mackay tags are given out by Idaho Fish and Game in a draw. It was expressed that 8 rifle elk tags had been cut back to 5, and hunts severely controlled since the 1970s, with another constraint being that all forest use days have to be used before requesting more, impacting the ability to plan for additional business. Hunters who recognize the scarcity of licenses call from California to have then pre-printed locally to make sure they are available. These situations will be particularly important to resolve because additional visitors to the area, likely unfamiliar with the terrain, fishing and so on, will choose to use a guide.

Dark Sky Reserve

Mackay sits right at the edge of the Central Idaho Dark Sky Reserve and is certainly in a position to be added to the reserve area. Yet even if it is not, the Gold Level experience has the ability to attract a significant visitor pool.

Winter Activity Restrictions

There is great potential for incorporation of cross country skiing and snowmobiling into a program of winter activities in the area. However, even though the Bureau of Land Management indicated there were no restrictions on the use of trails on their lands, there is currently no trail groomer to keep the trails on these lands in shape for skiers and snow machines.

Lack of Website Presence and Printed Materials

Virtually all interviewees, no matter what their job, were aware there was no cohesive digital presence for the Lost River Valley and believed that one was imperative to serve as a visitor destination. Identifying the resources and visitor services in Mackay, Arco and surrounds required a protracted search of more than 10 websites, some accurate, most not, to compile a list of the visitor facing resources, assets, and services. If we were not able to immediately what was discovered was accurate or valid, there is no way for potential visitors to do so. So currently, any visitors who do discover the communities are discouraged by not knowing if what they find is credible.

Lack of Opening Hours/Access

It is likely that increased visitors can be expected to be in the area any of seven nights a week. Currently, the museum is only open for limited hours on Friday, no restaurants are open Sunday and Monday nights, and other locations have opening hours Monday-Friday, even though nearly 60% of all leisure trips are either over a weekend or a long weekend.

Lack of Accommodations Capacity

Ultimately, the limited number of accommodations is going to catch up with increasing visitors and will serve to constrain further development. Already, during special events, local accommodations are filled with event producers and other technical and management personnel, leaving very few rooms to serve visitors. Less than 25% of the visitors who visit Craters of the Moon actually stay in Mackay or Arco.

Local Attitudes

It was expressed that a certain number of residents in the area appear to believe that additional visitors are a detriment to their lifestyle and that their livelihood is threatened by visitors. Others expressed that Mackay appears to be becoming a bedroom community for retirees who move to the region for low costs and lack of commotion. Others in the area have looked negatively at the success of Discover Wood River Valley and would prefer not to have that success repeated in the Lost River Valley.

Promoting Federal Lands

There are US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management locations across the country that have been featured in brochures, on websites and other promotional materials. These actions in other areas have created a much higher level of awareness than afforded to attractions in the Lost River Valley and in comparison resources on public lands elsewhere, the resources in the area are not receiving the same level of attention as resources in other locations in Idaho and across the nation.

What Does All This Mean?

Key Finding 1

Now that perceived barriers to expanding tourism are known, they can be addressed one by one to seek solutions.

Key Finding 2

Additional cooperation will be required between visitor service locations to rectify situations such as no restaurants being open on Sunday and Monday evenings.

Key Finding 3

The limited level of available accommodations is ultimately going to become a barrier to any significant expansion in the visitor population.

Key Finding 4

Local attitudes toward visitors and people from outside the local area will likely continue to have an impact on increasing visitors. All though interview respondents did say things are changing, there are still prevailing attitudes in some sectors of the community that increased visitors are not a good thing.

Key Finding 5

Stronger partnerships with Federal land management organizations will be required to maximize visitor experiences on these lands, to ensure the availability of the visitors activities as well as consistent attention and promotion.

Key Finding 6

Signage directing travelers to attractions in the area is a problem throughout the region.

Key Finding 7

Attraction partners will need to be educated about today's visitors in order to plan and deliver their offerings appropriately. Individual traveling parties have very different needs than group travelers and these will need to be addressed to attract the most lucrative visitor markets to the area.

Task Five: Competitive Assessment

Task Five encompassed a look at the destinations in the immediate area that the Lost River Valley is competing with to attract visitors. . All have strong logos and a presence as illustrated by the brief synopsis of each. Additional comparative information was included in chart form in an appendix.



Visit Sun Valley

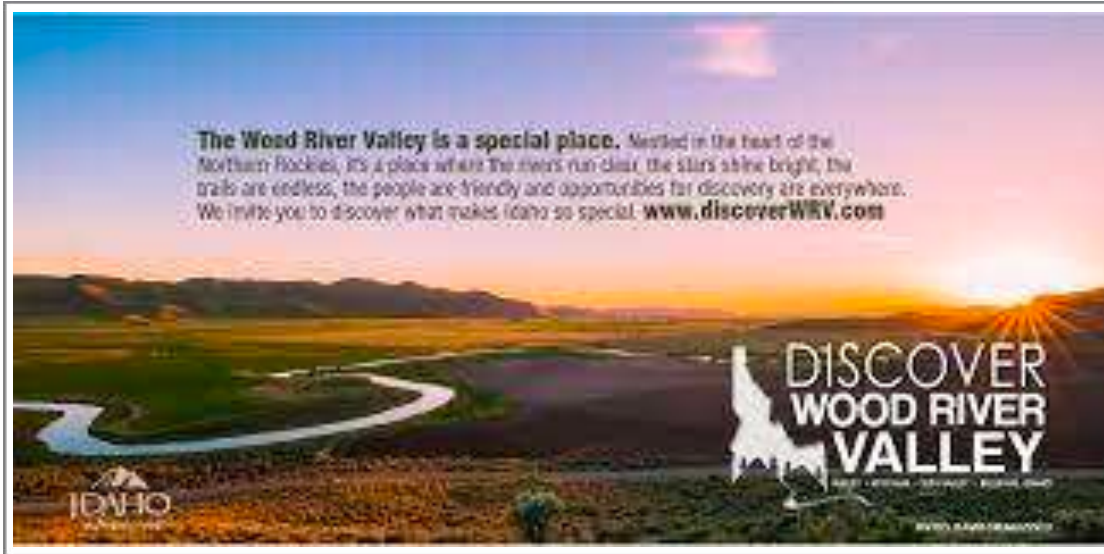
Visit Sun Valley, located in Ketchum, is considered a full-service major destination and has benefited from ongoing promotion for decades. Over 97,000 room nights were sold in 2021 at an average daily rate of \$273 - over 5 times the ADR of accommodations in Mackay. Commercial air service is available in Hailey, where over 172,000 deplaned during the year. Visit Sun Valley has an annual budget just over \$2 Million, five permanent staff and spends nearly 1.5 million on promotional expenses within a year.

Visit Sun Valley is totally focused on skiing and generating hotel room nights approached through an omni-channel marketing programs, working with media and through content partnerships with local, regional and national partnerships. They do, however, amazingly list only only 7 attractions: Central Idaho Dark Sky Reserve, Craters of the Moon, Silver Creek Preserve, Earnest Hemingway Legacy, Galena Lodge and Trails, Sun Valley Resort, Sun Valley Visitor Center, Hailey Welcome Center, and Stanley, ID.

Visit Sun Valley, is however, replete with dining, shopping and other visitor facing resources: Arts and Culture - 39 listings, Shopping - 64 listings, Lodging - 36 listings, Dining, in a variety of categories - 113 listings.

Discover Wood River Valley

Discover Wood Valley headquartered in Hailey promotes Hailey, Bellevue, Ketchum and Sun Valley. They also focus on the outdoors, promoting just over 400 members not exclusively visitor focused, serving more in a Chamber of Commerce role.



Stanley Sawtooth Chamber of Commerce

This organization, representing the same town that Sun Valley lists as an attractions, also serves as a Chamber of Commerce that promotes the location to visitors. They currently has just under 90 members.



Visit Salmon Valley

Visit Salmon Valley is a product of the Lemhi County Economic Development Office, arranged as a website specifically to attract visitors. Nearly 30 accommodations choices are listed. In addition to outdoor recreation, they have expanded their attraction categories to include Lewis and Clark locations, History and Adventure and Ghost Towns. This organization is doing everything it can to prevent tourism from becoming a major economic generator in the Lost River Valley.



Challis Chamber

This Chamber of Commerce, located in the northern part of Chester County, has approximately 70 members and 14 accommodations listings.



What Does All This Mean?

Key Finding 1

As the Lost River Valley attempts to compete with other regional organizations attracting visitors, the others are syphoning off visitors through promotion of the attractions in the Lost River Valley as their own.

Key Finding 2

The other regional economic development/chamber of commerce organizations have focused their efforts on bringing visitors to the area, rather than just serving their local members. Even though some of the five adjacent destinations are Chambers of Commerce, which normally serve local members, they have extended their efforts to serve as the visitor attraction vehicle for their particular area.

Key Finding 3

The number of accommodations properties, dining and retail establishments in the Lost River Valley are dwarfed by those illustrated on the web portals of the the competing five visitor attraction organizations in the region.



Task Six: Trends that Will Influence Success

Before getting into the ways in which the information that was discovered can be made actionable for the Lost River Valley, the below is a selection of trends that are going to affect programs to attract visitors.

Authenticity and Hyper-Local Experiences

Today's travelers in all age groups are looking for "local" experiences, authentic interactions, local cuisine and local retail shops. They are not seeking luxury, instead they wish to observe and participate in life as it is. Visitors go to rural communities for smaller scale and local experiences, in contrast to the hustle and bustle of urban areas. They are increasingly seeking off-the-beaten-path places to experience the authentic essence of the region, and 50% of visitors choose their destination for the historical attractions they offer.

Food/Culinary Tourism

Unless they bring their own food, 100% of visitors eat out when they travel, and 81% say trying local cuisine is a big part of the experience. More than 75% in a Hello Fresh (the meal delivery company) survey say they choose places to visit based on food and local areas and small communities are where authentic and local cuisine lives are high on the list! Connecting local food and drink traditions into the best of the area can serve as a magnet for new visitors. Making their eating interesting will be a draw.

Nature Retreats

Serenity and tranquility are in demand. Nearly 60% of visitors say the natural beauty and landscape are the most important factors in choosing a destination. In a Ford Motor Company survey, 54% preferred the scenic route. 38% want to explore natural areas to improve their mental clarity. Most small communities are surrounded by natural attractions that can be balanced with other assets and resources to serve as a good draw.

Blended Business and Leisure

Approximately 60% of all business trips in the United States include a leisure component and this will as workers sprung from the 9 to 5 work remotely and visit new places while they do. Small communities are the perfect location for these plans.

Longer Planning Times

In spite of much of travel planning in recent years has been done in a short time frame, more visitors who now anticipate taking more than one trip in a year, are beginning to plan earlier and make their selections of where to visit before planning the particulars of each trip. Fully informative websites with intriguing stories and all the information they need to plan and book their trip are imperative to inspire visitors and hold their attention while they browse their way to a visit. There are many long term trends occurring in the travel industry and things are always evolving.

Visitor Planning Actions

For the most part, if visitors do not start travel planning with a concrete destination choice already in mind, they start by identifying the activities they want to participate in and then book into the destination that includes these activities. The major collection of over 20 visitor attractions available to visitors in the area must appear front and center on a website, enhanced with the appropriate search engine optimization to maximize the potential of visitors seeking to visit these locations. With trip planning occurring in such a short window, it will be very important to have all the information needed to attract visitors to the region immediately when visitors become aware of it and drive promotion to the depository of visitor information.

More Single Travelers

Unlike GI and Silent Generation travelers (now 75+) who traveled in groups and Boomers who traveled with their spouses, about 50% of millennials and younger (under 40) say they travel solo. This will impact everything from accommodations that are based on double occupancy rates to outdoor activities usually made of up multiple participants.

Sustainable Travel

Approximately 50% of travelers are seeking sustainable travel options that minimize the impact on the local culture and 44% want to support local businesses.

Driving Trips

Travel in the personal family automobile remerged as a staple during the pandemic and visitors once again realized the convenience and flexibility it afforded. Those factors will not again recede into the background for some time.

Travel Spending

Since many visitors stayed home during Covid, the money they would have spent on travel often went into savings to spend later. That later is now causing dramatic increases in travel spending.

Wellness Trips

Stressed out workers now use travel to recharge, renew, engage in a new location to disconnect from their electronics, lower their blood pressure, and return home feeling much better than before their trip.

Travel Technology

Virtually every visitor is going to have a cellphone, and likely some other sort of electronic device. They expect to access information about their destination, attractions, restaurants and so on, before and as they travel.

Short Term Vacation Rentals

Along with using the family car for travel, the use of vacation rentals skyrocketed during Covid. Both of these factors that are continuing, are based on convenience.

Travel Closer to Home

More visitors are opting for trips that are easier to get to and closer to their residence, allowing more time for exploration and relaxation.

Climate Change

Climate change is having an effect on most destinations in the United States in one form or another. Diminishing snow pack, projected to decrease for the foreseeable future, warmer winters and other climate impacts are likely going to change outdoor recreation travel in Idaho in the near future. It will be important to plan ahead to adjust tourism offerings and activities to respond to the changing conditions.

Cleanliness

Even though Covid is considered over, the cleanliness that was generated during that time has spilled over into an expectation that hotels, restaurants, attractions and other locations will be clean, even though this was not the norm prior to Covid. A vital part of tourism marketing now is the need for organizations to clarify their hygiene policies.

Contactless Payments

Contactless payments have been a staple for some time now, but now every establishment, no matter how small will be expected to accommodate Google Pay and Apple Pay and others, in addition to debit and credit cards.

Artificial Intelligence

Machine learning technology is now firmly entrenched in the marketing of the tourism sector, with an increasing number of smart hotel rooms, and applications from customer service to security. Future AI tourism trends to watch out for might include self-driving vehicles and virtual guides for tourism. Unfortunately, this is another trends that small cities and rural communities will have to respond proactively to in order to stay on the radar of today's visitors.

Peer Reviews

Local reputation monitoring is becoming a higher priority as Yelp and TripAdvisor have been joined by about 10 other websites where visitors can post reviews and opinions. 72% of visitors say they trust earned media such as word-of-mouth and recommendations from friends and family about all other forms of advertising including social media posts. 81% of visitors believe user reviews are important and right at 50% of hotel shoppers won't book a hotel without reviews. The ability to share opinions instantaneously will need to be managed on a daily basis.

Social Media

Even though today's visitors don't necessarily trust the social media posts of organizations, they are now an expectation for any community seeking to be regarded as valid with visitors. 57% of Millennials post photos and updates on their travel experiences on social media at least daily, if not hourly. They and younger generations ask their friends for recommendations about where to travel and what to do while on the trip. 33% have changed their hotel, 7% have changed the destinations they visit, 10% have changed resorts, and 5% have changed airlines as a result. Constant attention now and for the foreseeable future will be required to keep these situations in hand.



Task Seven: An Actionable Growth Strategy

There was originally, there was going to be a second planning phase in this project, in which we developed a detailed plan to move ahead. Yet the further we got into the project, we determined that no amount of additional planning beyond the scope of this project would make up for the need for comprehensive, competitive visitor attraction vehicles and materials featuring the Lost River Valley. Once those vehicles are in place and the initial results have been generated, perhaps additional planning will be warranted because it will be important to determine the most effective path to increasing visitors in the region over the long term. However, at this point, short term action would be most beneficial.

Two Major Tourism Opportunities

There are two major opportunities to expand tourism in the Lost River Valley, which together will cover the majority of the visitor spending spectrum. The first, outdoor recreation, is obvious, the second, “touring” is less obvious. Touring will attract more lucrative visitors who stay longer and spend more, including motorcyclists, bicyclists, and RV travelers, in addition touring by car.

Outdoor Recreation Experiences

There are so many opportunities in outdoor recreation in the area and astounding array of resources in which visitors will have these experiences. This market, already the strongest in the area, can serve as the foundation of digital marketing programs, featuring locations throughout the year. Several of the guides and other interviewees expressed the importance of fishing in the area and the quality of the available fishing experience. “Lean in” to fishing they said, in order to get more visitors coming to Mackay directly, rather than staying in Sun Valley and traveling to the Mackay area only to fish.

Data from the Bureau of Land Management indicated a total of 67,606 visitors came to the Mackay area participating in nature viewing, wildlife viewing, hiking and picnicking, fishing, boating, hunting, hiking, camping and mountain biking will spread recreational visitors throughout the year.

There may be opportunities to attract winter sport visitors from other parts of the country more severely affected by changing climates. If trail grooming facilities can be identified, create experiences that expand and promote winter activities. Accommodations capacity is not constrained at this time and the presence of winter visitors will also assist in restaurants and other businesses in the area to enjoy more business during low season. Liaising with federal lands and equipment rental possibilities should begin immediately to address this opportunity.

Guide and outfitters interviewed indicated that the majority of their activity in the Mackay/Arco area were single day trips and most coming from Sun Valley rather than originating in the Mackay/Arco region. It is going to be very important to identify a collection of guides and outfitters who are willing to start their trips in Mackay, use Mackay accommodations and dining and generally support the region.

Hunting guides expressed that 95% of their activity spans from Labor Day to December, which extends the local season somewhat into winter. It will also be important to have these outfitters utilize accommodations in Mackay, and not just hunting opportunities, although some expressed that it has been so hard to get rooms in Mackay they have offered wilderness tent camping instead.

Clearly there is the basis for extended conversations with the guides and outfitters to facilitate their use of both the hunting, fishing and trail riding opportunities in Mackay as well as the use of local visitor services as well. Call backs to those who were interviewed will serve as the basis for conversations with public land officials and Idaho Fish and Game to begin to resolve these situations.

Touring Experiences

While outdoor recreation visitors are often considered on the lower end of the visitor spending spectrum, although guided hunting trips and other more upscale activities run against that perception, touring visitors are higher spenders. Pleasure driving is the largest category of outdoor recreation and second behind visiting friends and relatives in Idaho as a whole. More than 69 million Americans enjoy driving scenic roads while exploring the heritage and culture along the way. Nearly 90% of visitors to the Lost River Valley already either drive their own car, a rental, or get around by another vehicle on wheels. This market does not expect luxury, these visitors are looking for authenticity and to experience a region “as it is.” Promotion of the “driving travel” aspects of the region will serve to increase the percentage of visitors who arrive for “touring,” to deliver a substantive new target market. Data from Travel Oregon indicates these visitors spend as much as \$1,876 per trip, which would represent a significant increase in visitor spending in the region.

However, since the proportion of visitors who arrive for touring purposes is so small, this is a market that will have to be worked into, in order to more immediately focus on expanding the number of visitors who travel to the region for outdoor recreation.

It is also going to be very important to determine ways in which visitors can be pulled from the western side of the loop formed by the three Scenic Byways over to Craters

of the Moon and beyond to visit Arco and Mackay. There was considerable awareness of the Scenic Byway loop through south central Idaho and some interviewees referred to the drive without knowledge that it was the Byway loop. This 418 mile asset will benefit greatly from promotion of the experience in the area which differs so greatly from the experience further south where the Interstate cuts across a flat part of the state, with no indication that the mountains and peaks are further north.

Recommendation 1

If there is going to be a distinct and discrete destination in the Lost River Valley area, there will also need to be an entity dedicated to managing that effort. Serving as the visitor marketing and promotion entity will be a way for Lost River Economic Development to realize a sustainable income stream into the future while at the same time providing a very needed service to local attractions and businesses. This is not a new approach, many economic development offices in the United States now serve as the tourism office.

This office should also serve as the very critical single point of communication for all things related to visitors. There are many programs that will require cooperation between two or more visitor service locations and synergies that can be created between local visitor service providers without overlapping efforts. This level of ongoing communication will do more to change attitudes, work toward success, and rectifying the barriers to increasing visitors than any other action. Having one place where all the critical information is resident and one that can speak to the visitor attraction effort first hand will increase the likelihood of success of the effort as the same message is communicated throughout the region and the seriousness of the effort is recognized on all fronts.

Recommendation 2

A distinct and discreet destination must have an appropriate identifier. Even though there was hearty endorsement of the idea of creating a distinct identity for the “Lost River Valley” there was no consensus whether that presence should be (1) Visit Lost River Valley, (2) Explore Lost River Valley, or (3) Discover Lost River Valley. Discover Lost River Valley is likely the most intriguing to potential visitors, since they may be encountering a destination they are not aware of, which they will be “discovering.”

Recommendation 3

Creating a destination presence is going to require both a comprehensive and cohesive website and at least a limited number of printed materials to make visitors aware of what is available in the Lost River Valley. Destinations often create a visitor guide that can be sent out that is also digitized for downloading online. The same is true for specific brochures. In addition, brochures placed in accommodations, dining, retail and so on, will increase visitor awareness of what is available to do in addition to what they are already aware of.

Recommendation 4

To be most successful, the website and other visitor information must be coupled with a marketing effort that precisely targets the right visitors who are interested in and participate in the types of available activities, and other actions that bring information about the resources to those who are most likely to visit for those reasons.

It will important that specific messaging and promotions be carried out to attract markets such as such as mountain climbers, RV travelers, rodeo followers, bicyclists, Dark Sky visitors and other markets that can bring visitors to the region for specialized experiences. It will be important to track the results of these promotions to determine which have the most appeal at the most effective cost to attract them and then push on those marketing programs.

Visitors want to see themselves in marketing communications. There are so many different niche visitor segments already visiting Idaho, it represents an opportunity to deploy different marketing messages driving off select number of themes. The messages also need to be interesting and substantive since 80% of visitors in the United States are either college educated or have some college. Marketing messages that are centered in good storytelling will be most attractive in pulling visitors into the story while they are still reading, increasing the possibility of an actual visit.

Correct geographic targeting will also be important for digital marketing efforts, since the majority of visitors originating from within Idaho speaks to engaging them with aggressive marketing throughout the state. And since visitors from California make up a significant arrival market, it will be very important to target the regions in California from which visitors are arriving to be able to increase promotion in those specific places. The same is true of Utah, Washington State, Montana, and Oregon, that should likely include expanding the radius of marketing and promotion to include Salt Lake City, selected locations in California, and other locations beyond the customary driving travel range can be used to attract markets from urban areas to experience an authentic mountain vacation.

Events are the most efficient way to attract new visitors who are unfamiliar with a destination, because the event gives them something to do without having to do any research. Holding one event a month in order to attract more first time visitors to the area, can be very effectively promoted over social media in real time. This approach works to increase visitors without dealing with the limited supply of accommodations and promotes those who enjoy themselves to return later to explore.

Enhancements To the Offerings

There are a number of enhancements that can be made to the tourism offerings available in the area that will promote additional success.

Enhancement 1

Get into the experience business. Given the large percentage of visitors that arrive for experiences, take advantage of promoting a third night by creating pre-designed visitor ready itineraries that enable visitors to explore the area from several different perspectives. Couple those itineraries with recommendations for the most satisfying day trips and two day trips to promote the full complement of experiences available in the region. Plus, it will be important to educate local residents about the available experiences to increase participation from visitors who do stay with friends and relatives.

Enhancement 2

Work with Craters of the Moon to develop new experiences that will draw visitors further around the highway loop from Sun Valley and the Wood River area.

Enhancement 3

Address the signage issue by compiling a comprehensive inventory of existing signage and signage locations that can be used to signage problems and the basis for discussions with Idaho Department of Transportation to begin to resolve the issue.

Enhancement 4

Work to add Mackay to the Dark Skies Reserve, but in order for that to happen Dark Sky Ordinances have to be put in place, coupled with any other requirements needed to meet the criteria. Document that requirements into a cohesive presentation and present to local officials at the city and county level to evaluate the possibility of participation.

Enhancement 5

Consider a branded hotel, which even though it may cause a high stress in the visitor services community, a “brand” hotel will add significant capacity, as well as may add a certain level of additional credibility to the destination as a whole.

Enhancement 6

Make sure that attractions, accommodations, and other visitor services are equipped to serve couples, families, and very small groups of 4-6 people who visit the area, in addition to the larger groups they are now serving.

Enhancement 7

Hands on ranching experiences delivered by local residents that will introduce visitors to real ranch life - a type of experience that has had increasing levels of demand in recent years as visitors look for authenticity - will increase the visitor pool significantly.

Enhancement 8

Resumption of tours of the Idaho National Laboratory offered a few years ago, for which a bus came to Mackay on a specified schedule to pick up visitors, took them to Idaho Falls and then returned then to Mackay to tour a portion of the facilities there will greatly add to offerings.

Enhancement 9

Development of a mountain bike trail through a portion of the terrain on the Scenic Byway most desirable to riders will open up an entirely new market segment. An alternative would be to promote the Byway to specifically to bicyclists who absolutely love this type of route.

Enhancement 10

This recommendation came from a County Commissioner who believed that dispensing aviation fuel at the airport to be paid for with a credit card would allow for private planes to come into the area with visitors who are connecting with local guides and outfitters. During the eclipse the airport was filled with private planes, so there is the capacity of visitors to travel to the area by this means.

Community-Based Enhancement Strategies

Strategy 1

Communicate with the visitor services community on a consistent basis to connect visitor facing locations in the area will begin to create a synergy and band together as a “visitor service community” to coordinate their own online presence with the overall presence to be created for Lost River Valley. Training about the requirements of today’s visitors will likely be helpful to coordinate the opening hours and services available to visitors.

Strategy 2

Since Custer County is 97% public lands, the resources resident on those lands need to be utilized to a greater extent to generate additional visitor spending. Discussions regarding the importance of having a winter tourism season with federal lands officials will address the possibility of these activities being facilitated by their organizations. Consistent communications and programs developed in conjunction with public lands can be used to increase access to the various trailheads and rivers, increase the interpretation at existing attractions and plan for more developed recreation sites which can be included in future budgets. The US Forest Service has a Partnership Office which expressed willingness to continue the dialogue, but the type of partnership that would be needed did not appear to be in the purview of that office. It may be that a Board of Advisors or some other vehicle that includes federal lands officials would be beneficial to carry on ongoing conversations about various improvements that can be made in the area and influence the priorities of the improvements.



Strategy 3

It was suggested that perhaps families who have been in the area since the 1800s and appreciate the presence of visitors and their value to the local economy could have the most impact on local attitudes toward visitors and how visitors are and should be treated.

The National Travel Center was founded a decade ago to do something meaningful in the tourism industry and today, we are unique in America. Over 30 years of experience, a depth of knowledge, and client requests have led us to focus our practice on assisting small towns, small cities, rural areas and their scenic byways and heritage routes to become sustainable through realistic, effective planning and implementation. We understand the complexities and stresses in today's world and work to help clients develop strategies to revive, survive, and thrive using their strengths and resources wisely.

433 North Charlotte Street, Lancaster, PA 17603