

# Hells Canyon Scenic Byway

Journey from river's edge to mountain top and down to valley floor. Savor panoramic views of rugged basalt cliffs and fertile fields, rimmed by snow-tipped peaks. Tour foundries, galleries, and museums. Touch the weathered track of the historic Oregon Trail. Watch the majestic Snake River tumble through North America's deepest canyon.



## Local Information

Length: 218.43 miles / 349.5 km

Time Take six hours to drive or to three days to enjoy this

Allow: byway.

### Eastern Oregon Visitors Association

541-963-8588

800-848-9969

## Visitor Services



### Bicycle/Pedestrian Facilities

Distances between destinations make pedestrian activity impractical along much of the byway, except along Hwy 351 around Wallowa Lake. Most of the local pedestrian activity occurs in the communities along the route where there are sidewalks and crosswalks.



### Camping

Camping is offered in the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest at Two Color Guard Station. To reserve a campground there, go to Recreation.gov: + [Two Color Guard Station]([http://www.recreation.gov/camping/Two\\_Color\\_Guard\\_Station\\_Or/r/campgroundDetails.do?contractCode=NRSO&parkId=75228&topTabIndex=CampingSpot](http://www.recreation.gov/camping/Two_Color_Guard_Station_Or/r/campgroundDetails.do?contractCode=NRSO&parkId=75228&topTabIndex=CampingSpot))



### Food

There are numerous opportunities to stop to grab a bite to eat, such as in the communities of Baker City, La Grande, Wallowa, Enterprise, Joseph, and several others.



### Gasoline

Stop to fill up in Baker City or La Grande before starting on your trip. Several communities along the byway, including Joseph, Wallowa, and Richland, offer the chance to refill your gas tank.



### Information

Visitor Centers are located at: \* Wallowa Mountains Visitor Center \* National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center at Flagstaff Hill \* Nez Perce Interpretive Center near Wallowa \* La Grande City Visitor Center at 102 Elm Street \* Enterprise City Visitor Center at 936 West North Street \* Baker City Visitor Center at 490 Campbell Street



### Lodging

Lodging is offered in the town of Minam.

### Special Considerations

- There are no services between Joseph and Halfway. Make sure you have plenty of gas before leaving these two communities.
- You can drive the byway in about six hours, but to really enjoy it, you will need a few days. We recommend you reserve lodging accommodations prior to your trip.
- Before starting out, take notice of the travel times as well as mileage between stops and keep your fuel tank as full as possible.
- If you plan to hike, ski, snowmobile or otherwise explore off the main byway routes, pick up detailed maps at local information centers.
- Be prepared for temperatures that vary as much as fifty degrees as the day wears on.
- Remember to take along your camera, extra film, binoculars, a picnic or snack foods, plant and wildlife guides, first aid kit, drinking water, blanket, and jackets.

### Restrictions

Wallowa Mountain Loop USFS Road 39, between Joseph and Halfway, is closed from November through February due to heavy snow.

### Seasons

#### Best Time to Drive

Late May to October is the best time to drive the byway. From May to June, you'll see spectacular snow-capped mountains, lush green hills, wildflowers, and trees in bloom. Newborn animals are everywhere in the fields and mountains.

#### High Season

July and August are the busiest months on the byway due to recreation season.

# Map and Directions



## Legend:

Point of Interest	Campground	Featured Byway	Water	State Border
Park	Picnic/Rest Area	America's Byways	Wildlife Refuge	Urban Area
Mountain	Interstate	Other Byway	Wilderness Area	Tribal Nation
City	U.S. Highway	Other Road	Other Federal Lands	Military Base
Capital	State Highway	Trail	Other State Lands	

## Driving Directions

- Take Highway 86 west, passing through the towns of Richland and Halfway before entering the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest.

- Drive north on FS 39 through the forest and the Eagle Cap Wilderness Area.
- Exit the forest and continue west on SR 82, passing through the towns of Joseph, Enterprise, Wallowa, Minam, Elgin, and Imbler.
- The byway ends in the town of La Grande.

### Getting to the Byway



#### Nearby cities

**La Grande, OR** (2 miles / 3.22 km, 5 minutes)

#### Start:

- Intersection of US-30 & OR-82 La Grande, OR  
[N 45.325° W 118.088° \[?\]](#)

#### Directions:

- Take OR-82 northeast toward Island City.
- The byway begins just after I-84.

#### Junction with byway:

- \* I-84 entrance from Island Ave, La Grande, OR  
[N 45.331° W 118.072° \[?\]](#)



## Road Trip: Hells Canyon Scenic Byway Itinerary

**Departure:** La Grande, Oregon

**Destination:** Baker City/Baker Valley, Oregon

**Time to allow:** 3 days

Revel in Nez Perce, Oregon Trail and Settlement history, and in the scenery of the Blue and Wallowa Mountains, Hells Canyon country, the Snake River, ranches and farms, and small towns. (itinerary under construction--suggestions welcome.)

### Day 1

- **Start: La Grande**

**Suggested time at this stop:** 2 hours

Nestled at the edge of the Grande Ronde Valley from which it takes its name, La Grande is the home of Eastern Oregon University and is a center for commerce, education, health services, and government as well as a popular recreation base for cyclists, hikers, hunters, fishermen, skiers, as well as snowmobile and ATV enthusiasts.

While you are here, be sure to enjoy breakfast at a restaurant in a restored historic building and visit the Eastern Oregon Fire Museum in downtown La Grande.

- **Stop 2: The Grande Ronde Valley**

**From previous stop:** 20 minutes / 15 mi (24.0 km)

**Suggested time at this stop:** 2 hours

As you leave La Grande, you will travel through the Grande Ronde Valley. The largest completely enclosed circular valley in the world, it is rimmed by the Blue and Wallowa Mountains. Watch for the wide variety of crops as you drive past lush fields - smell the mint!

- **Stop 3: Elgin**

**From previous stop:** 7 minutes / 5 mi (8.0 km)

**Suggested time at this stop:** 30 minutes

From rodeos to theater, Elgin hosts many community events such as the roaring Elgin Stampede PRCA Rodeo held each July. The former location of Fort Baker and a trading area since the 1880s, this little town is also the gateway to recreation and adventure in the region. When you arrive be sure to tour the Elgin Opera House & Museum.

- **Stop 4: Historic Elgin Opera House and Museum**

**From previous stop:** same location  
**Suggested time at this stop:** 30 minutes

Built in 1912, the beautifully restored and acoustically perfect Elgin Opera House is a great place for movies, plays, concerts, and tours.

- **Stop 5: Minam**

**From previous stop:** 20 minutes / 14 mi (22.4 km)  
**Suggested time at this stop:** 1 hour 30 minutes

Stop for a picnic and fish on the Wallowa River at Minam State Park. The Minam and Wallowa Rivers meet here and flow into the Grande Ronde River a few miles down stream. The rivers offer excellent steelhead fishing, rafting, and year-round wildlife viewing. If you are traveling the Byway in winter, keep an eye out for bald eagles and other raptors.

- **Stop 6: Wallowa**

**From previous stop:** 15 minutes / 11 mi (17.6 km)  
**Suggested time at this stop:** 2 hours

Wallowa (pronounced "Wuh-lau-wuh") shares its Nez Perce name with the mountains, lake, river and valley you're now entering. The Wallowa Band of the Nez Perce knew the area for it's great fishing - Wallowa is the name of the tripod used to support their fish nets. Don't forget to visit the Nez Perce Homeland Project and museum while you are here.

Also be sure to check the schedule and make your plans for a ride on the publicly owned Eagle Cap Excursion Train; scheduled trips run twice a week from Wallowa or Joseph. Be sure to allow additional time in your trip as trips range from 1.5 to 7.5 hours.

- **Stop 7: Lostine**

**From previous stop:** 10 minutes / 8 mi (12.8 km)  
**Suggested time at this stop:** 25 minutes

This tiny turn-of-the-century town comes alive during the Lostine's big 4th of July Flea Market. Also, numerous Forest Service roads in the vicinity provide access to year-round recreation in the Eagle Cap Wilderness. A side trip up the crystal clear Lostine River leads to rustic campgrounds, trailheads, and breathtaking scenery.

- **Navigation: Enterprise**

**From previous stop:** 13 minutes / 10 mi (16.0 km)

The largest of the Wallowa Valley communities, Enterprise offers an array of shops, accommodations and back country and river outfitters. As you leave town, watch the fields to the right, between mile posts #66 and #67, for the big black Clydesdale draft horses raised here.

- **Navigation: Joseph**

**From previous stop:** 7 minutes / 5 mi (8.0 km)

Drive through Joseph, a flourishing art community with a national reputation for its top quality bronze galleries on your way to Wallowa Lake.

- **End: Wallowa Lake**



**From previous stop:** 10 minutes / 6 mi (9.6 km)

Beautiful Wallowa Lake was shaped by glaciers which covered this region three to seven times. At six miles in length, Wallowa Lake is a playground to water skiers, jet skiers, and paddle-boaters. Go-carts and miniature golf are popular pursuits on shore.

This area was part of the ancestral homelands of the Wallowa Band of the Nez Perce and a monument to Old Chief Joseph rests at the north end of the lake.

Finish your days journey here and spend the night in a bed and breakfast inn or at the historic lodge.

### Totals for Day 1

**Total Distance Traveled:** 74 miles / 118.4 km

**Total Travel Time:** 1 hour 42 minutes

**Total Stopping Time:** 8 hours 55 minutes

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## Day 2

- **Stop 1: Wallowa Lake**



**From previous stop:** same location

Breakfast at the lake, then explore the shops and ride the tramway to the top of Mount Howard on the edge of the Eagle Cap Wilderness for eye-popping views that include three states.

- **Stop 2: Joseph**

**From previous stop:** 10 minutes / 6 mi (9.6 km)

**Suggested time at this stop:** 3 hours

After lunch, return to Joseph to tour a bronze foundry and the town's renowned galleries and shops. Afterwards, travel the Byway on your way to Halfway, taking advantage of the exquisite late afternoon and evening light to highlight the canyon contours.

- **Stop 3: Salt Creek Summit**

**From previous stop:** 20 minutes / 12 mi (19.2 km)

**Suggested time at this stop:** 30 minutes

Salt Creek Summit is a favorite location for winter recreation. Improvements include a snowpark, rest stop, cross country ski and snowmobile trails, and a sledding area. There are trailheads and a mountain bike trail system for summer use.

- **Stop 4: Hells Canyon Overlook**

**From previous stop:** 45 minutes / 20 mi (32.0 km)

**Suggested time at this stop:** 45 minutes

The paved overlook provides outstanding views of McGraw Creek, Hells Canyon, and the Seven Devils Mountains. From the 5,400 foot high canyon rim, visitors can enjoy sweeping views and interesting displays about the canyon formation.

- **End: Halfway**

**From previous stop:** 1 hour / 31 mi (49.6 km)

A popular winter destination for snowmobilers, Halfway lives up to its name, as it is the midway point between the town of Pine and the gold mines of Cornucopia. Spend the night at the unique bed and breakfast inn here. Or use this as the gateway to some of the smaller towns just past Halfway to stay at the lodgings there. Several places are available to let you take your pick of resting spots to get you ready for another day of traveling.

### Totals for Day 2

**Total Distance Traveled:** 69 miles / 110.4 km

**Total Travel Time:** 2 hours 15 minutes

**Total Stopping Time:** 4 hours 15 minutes

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## Day 3

- **Stop 1: Snake River**

**From previous stop:** 1 hour 30 minutes / 21 mi (33.6 km)

**Suggested time at this stop:** 5 hours

Rise early and take a jet boat ride or raft trip on the enchanting Snake River through North America's deepest river canyon. The views are spectacular and the ride is wild! Watch for wildlife, and traces of Native American or early settler dwellings in the canyon.

- **Stop 2: Richland**

**From previous stop:** 45 minutes / 37 mi (59.2 km)

**Suggested time at this stop:** 15 minutes

Named in 1897 for the rich soil settlers found here, the area still supports farmers and ranchers and now hosts the fishing and boating enthusiasts who recreate on nearby Brownlee and Oxbow reservoirs. Take a break to enjoy the small time atmosphere here. As you leave town, look for the Hole-in-the-Wall Landslide, between mile posts #30 & #31. The 1984 landslide covered the road and temporarily dammed the Powder River.

- **Stop 3: National Historic Oregon Trail Center**



**From previous stop:** 45 minutes / 35 mi (56.0 km)

**Suggested time at this stop:** 3 hours

Drive to the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center near Baker City. This highly acclaimed center tells the stories of Native Americans, explorers, pioneers, and settlers along the Oregon Trail. It is highly regarded for the quality of exhibits and the commanding view from its hilltop location.

- **End: Baker City/Baker Valley**



**From previous stop:** 10 minutes / 5 mi (8.0 km)

Baker City sits along the Powder River between the dramatic Elkhorn Ridge of the Blue Mountains and the Wallowa Mountains. Turn-of-the-century Victorian architecture dominates the commercial and residential buildings of the city's beautiful, restored downtown, earning it distinction as a National Historic District. When you arrive, take the opportunity to stay and dine at one of the historic hotels here.

Like the other communities along the Byway, Baker City is friendly and casual.

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### Totals for Day 3

**Total Distance Traveled:** 98 miles / 156.8 km

**Total Travel Time:** 3 hours 10 minutes

**Total Stopping Time:** 8 hours 15 minutes