

# Hells Canyon



## National Recreation Area


[Hells Canyon Overview](#)
[Things to See and Do](#)
[Life and the Land](#)
[About](#)

[Hells Canyon home](#) > [Things To See And Do](#) > [Hells Canyon Wilderness](#)

Things to See and Do

[Oregon](#)

[Idaho](#)

[Snake River](#)

[Recreation Map](#)

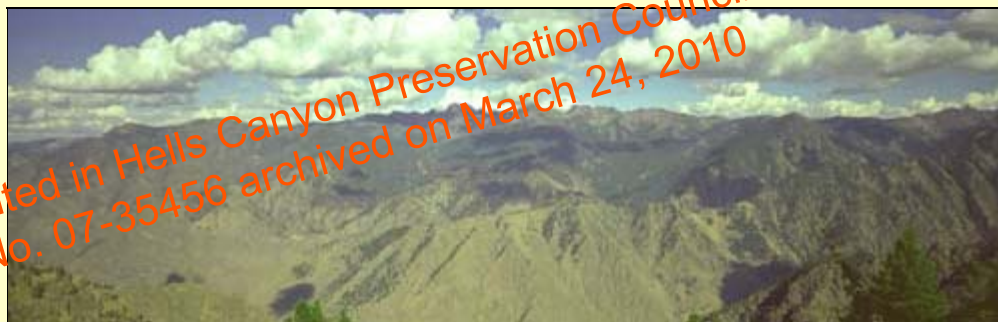
→ [Table of Contents](#)

→ [Search](#)

## Hells Canyon Wilderness

- [Hells Canyon Wilderness home](#)
- [Wilderness Description](#)
- [Regulations for Hells Canyon Wilderness](#)
- List of Trails in [Oregon](#) or [Idaho](#)
- Trailhead Locations in [Oregon](#) or [Idaho](#)
- [Current Information, Trail Conditions, Maps](#)
- [Outfitter and Guide List](#)
- Wild and Scenic Rivers: [Snake](#), [Imnaha](#), [Rapid](#)
- [Volunteer Projects](#)

*Cited in Hells Canyon Preservation Council v. USFS,  
No. 07-35456 archived on March 24, 2010*



### ***Welcome to the Hells Canyon Wilderness -***

214,944 acres of high mountain peaks, ominous canyon rim-rocks, breathtaking vistas, and quieting solitude.

Elk, bear, bighorn sheep, mountain goats, and many other species of birds and animals are common here. Split by the Snake River into two distinct areas, the Hells Canyon Wilderness straddles the Idaho and Oregon state boundary.

At lower elevations on the Idaho side, dry, barren, steep slopes break over into the Snake River canyon. In the high country are the towering peaks, rock-faced slopes, and alpine lakes of the Seven Devils Mountain Range - said to be named for a vision of seven dancing devils that appeared to an Indian lost in the area. The legend fits. Here, splendid mountain peaks rise well over 9,000 feet, and bear names like 'She Devil', 'He Devil', and 'The Twin Imps'.

[Idaho-side trailheads](#) are located at Black Lake, Windy Saddle, and Pittsburg Landing.

On the Oregon side is an even larger portion of the Hells Canyon Wilderness. This area boasts expanses of grasslands at lower elevations, where bunchgrasses and



shrubs dominate. Higher, look for scattered and sometimes dense groupings of ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir trees. Clear, free-flowing creeks dissect this expansive and isolated land. Popular Oregon-side viewpoints are McGraw, Hat Point, and Somers Point. The [Oregon side has multiple trailheads](#).

### ***Outfitters and Guides***

A number of Outfitters and Guides offer wilderness trips using backpacking, horses, and llamas under permit from the Forest Service. Many outfitters offer a range of opportunities from drop camps to deluxe services. Call the Wallowa Mountains Visitor Center for a complete list of permittees. Refer to the [Outfitter and Guides section](#) for more detailed information on services provided in each wilderness.

### ***Visiting Wilderness, When To Go, and Weather***

There are approximately 360 miles of trails scattered throughout the wilderness. In Idaho, backpackers are the dominant recreational group between June to September with the alpine lakes of the Seven Devil Mountains being the main attraction. Equestrians dominate the Oregon side with heaviest use associated with spring and fall big game hunt season. However, the lower elevations offer wilderness recreational opportunities year round. The diversity in elevation can also cause unpredictable weather with temperatures ranging from nighttime lows of 30 degrees Fahrenheit in alpine country to over 100 degrees in lower elevations near the Snake River.

A unique experience awaits the visitor to Hells Canyon Wilderness. Doing your part is vital to the future of Hells Canyon Wilderness. You will find that upon entrance of wilderness you are taken back to a time without the use of automobiles, bicycles, and luxury of mechanized equipment. In addition wilderness is closed to motorized equipment requiring all trails to be maintained by hand, utilizing primitive skills, with crosscut saws, pulaskis, and shovels. Due to budget constraints not all 800 miles of trail can be cleared each year. Contact the [Wallowa Mountains Visitor Center](#) for current information.

### ***Current Information and Trail Conditions***

- Recreation reports for [Oregon](#) and [Idaho](#) sides of the Snake River
- Wallowa Mountains Visitor Center (541) 426-5546 for Oregon information, (208) 628-3916 for Hells Canyon Idaho information
- [Map order form](#)

### **Maps and Additional Information**

Several companies are producing up-to-date, detailed hiking maps of the Hells Canyon Wilderness. They are available through recreational and sporting goods stores in the towns of Wallowa, Enterprise, and Joseph. You can also purchase a map of this wilderness from the Forest Service offices throughout the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, from the Wallowa Mountains Visitor Center, or see the map order form above.

### ***No-trace Camping***

As a designated Wilderness, special emphasis is placed on safeguarding the area's wild character. Activities which could mar the landscape or disturb the solitude - such as travel by motorized vehicles - are not allowed. We're also asking you to help protect the uniqueness of the area by practicing the following "no-trace" camping ethics:

- Know the [Hells Canyon Wilderness Regulations](#)

Avoid camping in overcrowded and fragile places.

- Camp and keep stock at least 200 horizontal feet from lakes and streams.
- Pack out all garbage.
- Dismantle all structures - such as meat racks or tent poles - before leaving. If these are needed, be sure to use soft rope (instead of nails or wire) to avoid damage to live trees.
- Don't build a fire ring. Naturalize the fire site by covering the cold remains of your fire. The best technique of all is to use a portable camp stove.
- Dig shallow holes 6 to 8 inches for human waste. Cover with dirt, and decomposition will occur naturally.
- Always do whatever you can to move lightly over the land.

*Cited in Hells Canyon Preservation Council v. USFS,  
No. 07-35456 archived on March 24, 2010*