



# AUTO TOUR

AAA Washington Travel Services

## *Idaho Panhandle*

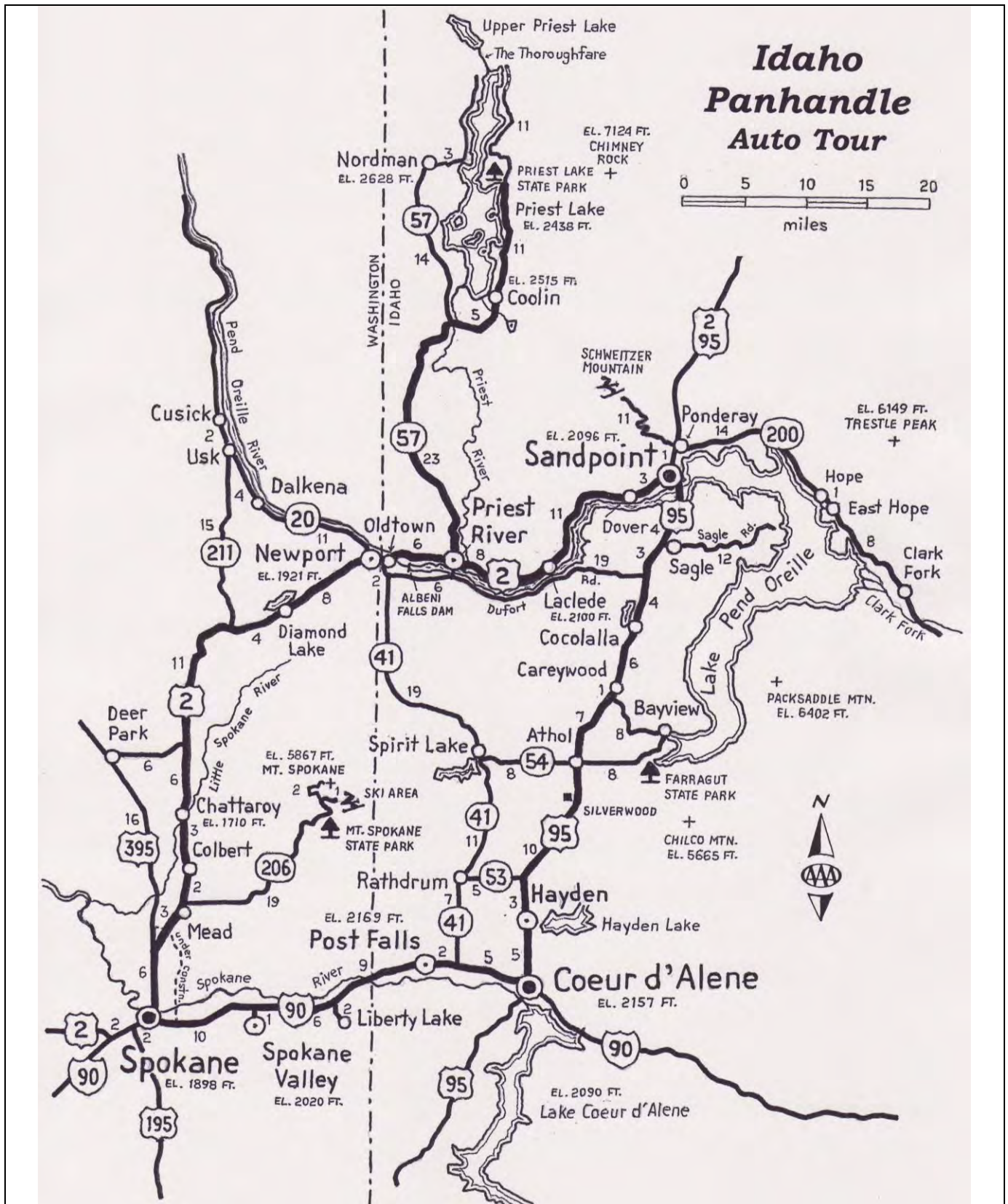
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Idaho's aquatic jewels – Priest Lake and Lake Pend Oreille – are popular day trip and weekend destinations. Whether it's boating, fishing, skiing or mountain biking the Lakes District has all the necessities to be as rustic or luxurious as you like.



*A clear day on Priest Lake, with Bartoo Island in the foreground*

Our **Idaho Panhandle Auto Tour** covers 220 miles and takes about five to six hours to drive – without stops. The trek leads north from Spokane along US-2 into the Gem State, then strikes north to Priest Lake on Idaho Highway 57. Upon returning to Priest River, the tour continues eastward to Sandpoint on the shore of Lake Pend Oreille. After a scenic side trip to Schweitzer Mountain and/or the Pend Oreille Scenic Byway, the tour turns south on US-95 to Coeur d'Alene, then west to close the loop at Spokane.



### 1. Spokane to Priest River (via US-2)

Our auto tour follows Division Street (US-2 and US-395) north from downtown **SPOKANE** (pop. 220,100, alt. 1,893 ft.). The six-mile arterial forms one of the city's commercial districts, flanked by strip malls and a variety of retail establishments. A freeway bypass for US-395 is taking shape east of Division with completion scheduled in 2029. Follow US-2 when it splits off from Highway 395 and heads northeast.



**MEAD** (pop. 7,300, alt. 1,906 ft.) is an outer suburb of Spokane near the base. Here Highway 206 branches east to climb up to **Mount Spokane State Park**. The peak (elev. 5,867 ft.) is the southernmost part of the Selkirk Mountains. **Cat Tales Zoological Park** is a preserve for large cat species doubling as a vocational school for prospective zookeepers. Visitors can observe lions, tigers, pumas and leopards as well as a number of reptile varieties. Guests aged 8 and older can also accompany keepers to hand-feed the big cats.

Highway 2 continues northward another 17 miles through Spokane County farmland and the hamlets of **COLBERT** (pop. 120, alt. 1,834 ft.) and **CHATTAROY** (pop. 400, alt. 1,709 ft.). After crossing into Pend Oreille County, farms give way to the densely-forested foothills of the Selkirk Range. The pavement makes its great eastward swing toward Idaho. The cutoff road for Metaline Falls (an hour's drive north of US-2) at SR-211 appears a short distance after the highway crosses the divide between the Pend Oreille and Spokane watershed basins.

Eight miles farther US-2 approaches **DIAMOND LAKE** (pop. 300, alt. 2,342 ft.). A number of small motor inns dotted the lake's shore along the highway in the 1950s and 60s before giving way to private homes and lodges. The lake is a favorite with trout fishers and paddlers.

**NEWPORT** (pop. 2,120, alt. 2,115 ft.) and **OLDTOWN** (pop. 207, alt. 2,109 ft.) straddle the Washington-Idaho border formed by the centerline of State Street. The Idaho town was settled first in 1893 – and was originally known as Newport. After a train depot fire, Great Northern rebuilt a new station on the Washington side. Newport became the seat when Pend Oreille County was created in 1911 – Washington's last county. The town hosts two annual festivals – *Pioneer Days* in July and the *Pend Oreille County Fair* in late August – and serves as home to the **Pend Oreille County Historical Museum**, housed in the restored 1908 train depot. Exterior exhibits include three log cabins and a railroad car display.

Newport is also Washington's gateway to the **International Selkirk Loop**, a 290-mile circuit through Washington, Idaho and adjoining British Columbia. Stretching from Kootenay Lake down to Lake Pend Oreille, the loop is the only federally-designated International Scenic Byway in North America.

Having entered the Gem State, our auto tour next passes the **Albeni Falls Dam** (pictured at right). The Army Corps of Engineers erected this structure, featuring a 400-foot wide spillway, from 1951-55. The Corps maintains a picnicking area and a scenic viewpoint. Its visitor center features two short films and interactive exhibits showing the reach of the Northwest hydroelectric system. 50-minute guided tours to the powerhouse overlook are offered during the summer months.



Four miles up the road is **PRIEST RIVER** (pop. 1,775, alt. 2,082 ft.). Located at the confluence of the Pend Oreille and Priest rivers, this is the jumping-off point for adventurers into the **Idaho Panhandle National Forest**. The town has a bevy of swimming spots in the Pend Oreille and a free public boat launch is available at **West Bonner Park**. The **Priest River Museum and Timber Education Center** provides local history exhibits documenting the town's legacy as a forest products center.

## 2. Priest Lake (via Idaho 57)

State Highway 57, the **PRIEST LAKE HIGHWAY**, emerges north from Priest River and quickly dispenses with civilization. Dense old-growth ponderosa pine forest looms along both sides. The wide road bed is well-marked and excellent for trailers and RVs, and sufficient passing opportunities are available for speedier tourists. Once the National Forest is reached eight miles up the road the forest changes character slightly – the cleared-out undergrowth suggests a much more managed landscape. Cell phones are useless for a major chunk of this stretch of wilderness.

At Milepost 22 a crossroads is reached – West Shore or East Shore? The federally-managed western side has fewer public access points to the lake but has more services and attractions, while the state-owned eastern

half features the state park and the lake's only shorefront town.

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### Side Trip – West Shore

Continue on Highway 57 north along the west side of Priest Lake. Six miles farther along on the left is the small community of **PRIEST LAKE** (alt. 2,450 ft.), a campers' resupply point with food and gas available. Keep a sharp eye out for bicyclists in this particular area. Across the highway from the town's center is **Priest Lake Golf Course**, an easily-walkable public 18-hole layout. In the winter the course doubles as a cross-country skiing center.

Just past the northern edge of Priest Lake village, turn on Luby Bay Road, then make a left onto the dirt Lakeshore Road down to the **Priest Lake Museum and Visitor Center**. Adjacent to one of the lake's largest private resorts, the volunteer-staffed museum provides a glimpse into life in the 1930s with a retro-decorated kitchen and living room. Exhibits on forestry, mining, recreation and natural history are also presented. The museum abuts a small day-use beach that has probably the best public access to this side of the lake.

Three miles farther north on Highway 57 a grassy patch breaks up the forested flatland. This is the Forest Service's local airstrip that is used as a base for *smokejumpers* – firefighters who parachute into the forest's most remote terrain to battle blazes. The landing zone is also available for general aviation. Directly across the highway is **Priest Lake Ranger Station**, an information center for four on-shore campgrounds as well as rustic campsites on Kalispell and Bartoo Islands in the center of the lake. Wildlife flourishes the further you get from the high road – deer are a common sight and bears lurk just beyond the human domain.

The hamlet of **NORDMAN** (pop. 120, alt. 2,628 ft.) is the last stop on the road at milepost 37 and the state highway ends shortly after. A turn onto Reeder Bay Road leads to several resorts and campgrounds and pavement ends after about three miles. From there, feel free a Forest Road continues north into the **Upper Priest Lake Scenic Area**. Residents rejected a proposal in the 1980s to build a road to circumnavigate the lake. The dirt road ends after ten miles at the Forest Service's Beaver Creek campsite.

### Side Trip – East Shore

The turnoff for the East Shore at Dickensheet Road marks the boundary between federal and state land. The road curves to the right and passes several camping units of **Priest Lake State Forest**.

After a swing back to the northeast and two more miles, Priest Lake's only lakefront town, **COOLIN** (pop. 300 /summer pop. 900, alt. 2,454 ft.) comes into view. Several lodgings and RV parks comprise the core. Continue straight ahead as the road descends to Bayview Drive and **Bishop's Marina**. An inconspicuous public boat launch is down here – continue 200 yards past the souvenir-laden **Leonard Paul Store**.

Return up the hill from the shore and make a left onto Cavanaugh Bay Road – the beginning of the East Shore's main access. This road is much different from SR-57: the pavement is more narrow and winding and the centerline is occasionally invisible. Lake views are much more spectacular here, although the turnouts for picture-taking are fewer and farther between. After the private Rocky Point turnoff the road's name changes to East Shore Road.

Eleven miles north of Coolin is the East Shore's major attraction – Indian Creek Unit of **PRIEST LAKE STATE PARK**. The park features the lake's only dedicated public day-use area, a wide-ranging trail system and a slate of interpretative programs led by park staff. Accommodations include cabins, plus RV and tent sites. A boat launch and a camp store (serving gas, propane and diesel) are housed within park boundaries and pets are welcome.

While our auto tour turns back to Priest River here, farther up East Shore Road is the state park's Lionhead unit. From here access to the Upper Priest Lake Scenic Area's wilderness is by trail.

### 3. Lake Pend Oreille, Sandpoint & Schweitzer Mountain (via US-2 & US-95)

Retrace Highway 57 south to Priest River and turn east on US-2. The highway follows the Pend Oreille River for 20 miles to the Sandpoint suburb of **DOVER** (pop. 517, alt. 2,100 ft.), where the river empties from **LAKE PEND OREILLE**. Nineteenth-century French fur trappers named the lake after the earrings worn by the area's Native Americans. The largest natural lake in Idaho covers 148 square miles and measures 43 miles in length. With a maximum depth of 1,150 ft., it's the fifth-deepest in the U.S., exceeded only by Crater Lake, Lake Tahoe, Lake Chelan and Lake Superior. Pend Oreille emerged as a sport fishing destination for Kamloops trout in the 1950s and has attracted outdoor enthusiasts ever since. Fish species include rainbow and lake trout, perch, crappie, bass and whitefish. A world-record Kamloops trout (37 lbs.) was caught here.

**SANDPOINT** (pop. 8,215, alt. 2,086 ft.) is a prosperous small city with an attractive downtown at the west end of Lake Pend Oreille's North Arm. The city lies in the Purcell Trench, a 250-mile long glacier carved trough, nestled between the Purcell, Cabinet and Coeur d'Alene mountains to the east and the Selkirks to the west.

The Northern Pacific Railroad brought the first settlers to the area in the 1880s and Sandpoint has always been an important railroad town. Three railroads – Northern Pacific, Great Northern and Union Pacific – built track in the trench and the convergence of rail lines here is known as “The Funnel,” a popular area for rail fans. Sandpoint has the only Amtrak station in Idaho, a stop on the daily Seattle/Portland-Chicago *Empire Builder*.

During most of the town's early history Sandpoint was a logging center and rail crossroads. As the valley was cleared, farming and ranching became more prevalent. Today, tourism is a significant component of Sandpoint's increasingly diversified economy.

Entering the city from the west on US-2, small brown signs point the way to Lakeview Park and the **Bonner County Historical Museum**. A small outdoor botanical garden showcases the local flora, while the museum's exhibits chronicle the timber and rail industries and feature dugout canoes from the Kalispel tribe. The park offers a popular public boat launch and other recreational facilities. Next door to the park is the War Memorial Ballfield, home of the **Festival at Sandpoint** concert series in mid-August.

**Downtown Sandpoint** has well-maintained heritage architecture and an eclectic collection of shops, galleries, restaurants, coffeehouses and a lively arts and entertainment scene, including the restored historic **Panida Theatre**. The 550-seat venue opened in 1927 as a vaudeville and movie house, then sat derelict for decades before being restored in 1985 and earning a spot on the National Register of Historic Places.



*Sandpoint's City Beach fronts Lake Pend Oreille  
[Photo: City of Sandpoint]*

Another unique attraction is **Cedar Street Bridge Public Market**. Built in 1981, and inspired by the Ponte Vecchio in Venice, the 400-foot structure spans Sand Creek connecting downtown with Sand Point, and is the only marketplace on a bridge in the U.S.

US-2 joins up with the northern reaches of US-95 shortly before entering downtown Sandpoint as Pine Street. Turn left at First Avenue – ahead at Bridge Street is the turnoff for **City Beach** as well as the Amtrak station. A bridge connects downtown with **City Beach**, at the southern end of the sandy peninsula that gives the town its name. The 18-acre park offers a sandy beach (life guarded in summer), lawns, two marinas and expansive views of the lake. **Lake Pend Oreille Cruises** offers a variety of summer excursion boat trips from City Beach Dock. Boat rentals are available at the marina.

On US-95 at the north end of town is the **Greater Sandpoint Visitor Center**, a trove of information on local sights and activities.

Just ahead the road splits and the **PEND OREILLE SCENIC BYWAY** (SR-200) trails off to the east. Five miles down the road is **The Idaho Club**, Idaho's most prestigious (and private) golf venue featuring the only Jack Nicklaus-designed layout in the state. The Byway stretches 33 miles in length to the town of **CLARK FORK** (pop. 540, alt. 2,080 ft.) and the Montana border.





Photo courtesy Schweitzer Mountain Resort

Continuing north, US 2/95 meets the cutoff road that winds 11 miles uphill to **SCHWEITZER MOUNTAIN RESORT**, the Idaho Panhandle's largest ski area. Schweitzer features 2,900 acres of trails and has ten lifts to whisk outdoor enthusiasts around the terrain. Alpine skiers can descend from the 6,400-foot peak down to the village via Schweitzer Bowl or on the mountain's rugged posterior slope, Outback Bowl. Nordic enthusiasts can cover 20 miles of backcountry.

The resort village houses two lodges, a shopping and dining arcade and a sector of condominiums. During the summer, the resort transforms into a hiker's and biker's playground and is also popular with huckleberry pickers. RV parking is provided.

Returning to downtown Sandpoint, follow US-95 signs around a maze of one-way streets and turn right on First Avenue. The roadway crosses Lake Pend Oreille on one of two spits of earth emanating from the city shore, collectively known as **Long Bridge**. The section off to the north carries passenger and freight trains across the lake. Just across the lake a mile west of the highway is the **Sandpoint Fish Hatchery**.

U.S. highway 95 continues south through a landscape of shrub-steppe alternating with wooded hills. Several roads branch east to lakeside recreation sites. **SAGLE** (pop. 600, alt. 2,149 ft.), 4 miles south of Sandpoint on US-95, is gateway to Bottle Bay, Garfield Bay, Glengary, Talache and other settlements on the west shore of Lake Pend Oreille. The drive along the lake's North Arm from Bottle Bay to Sagle passes many residences, both substantial and rustic, and is highly scenic. The **Sandpoint Waterlife Discovery Center** on Lakeshore Drive, has interpretive trails along the river outlet of Lake Pend Oreille.

Five miles south of Long Bridge, turn left for a quick dozen-mile meander east on Sagle Road to the **Bird Aviation Museum and Invention Center**. Opened in 2007, this free museum features a wide range of exhibits. A hangar displays six mint condition aircraft (1927-72) and motor vehicles from the same period. Additional exhibits include NASA, military uniforms, models and art work. The Imagination Room honors inventors who perfected products ranging from Kitty Litter and Barbie to microprocessors and the artificial heart. An upstairs gallery display inventions of museum co-founder Dr. Forrest Bird, who invented the respiratory ventilator and the Anti "G" Suit used by high altitude pilots. Retrace your route to US-95.

Highway 95 passes **Round Lake State Park** and shortly after is **Lake Cocolalla**. Camping and boating are king throughout the entire panhandle, not just on Lake Pend Oreille.



Silverwood's Corkscrew was the first roller coaster in the U.S. to take riders upside-down  
[Photo: Idaho Tourism]

**ATHOL** (pop. 710, alt. 2,391 ft.), 25 miles south of Sandpoint on US-95, was established as a logging town in 1903. **Silverwood**, just south of town, is the largest theme park in the Northwest, featuring 65+ rides and attractions. Among its four roller coasters is the famous **Corkscrew**. Built in 1975 at Knott's Berry Farm in Buena Park, California, this was the country's first inverted coaster. It was relocated to Silverwood in 1990. The 216-acre park also has a steam train ride, a miniature mining town, entertainment venues and many places to grab a bite. The adjacent **Boulder Beach Water Park** has water slides, wave pools and water rides. The parks are open June, July and August, as well as weekends and holidays in May and September at Silverwood.

**Farragut State Park**, 5 miles east of Athol on SR-54, features a diversity of habitats at the edge of Lake Pend Oreille. The park has an extensive system of hiking, biking and equestrian trails. Winter draws cross-country skiers to its network of groomed trails. In 1942 the U.S. Navy built the world's second-largest naval training center here, processing nearly 300,000 sailors. The station brig, now a museum, is the only remaining structure from this period. Deactivated in 1946, the site became a state park in 1965. Its extensive facilities attract numerous special events and activities. A visitor center has displays about the park, area natural and human history, and the Farragut Naval Training Station

**BAYVIEW** (pop. 420, alt. 2,160 ft.), several miles beyond Farragut State Park, overlooks Scenic Bay and is the

southern gateway to Lake Pend Oreille. It was an early logging and limestone quarrying center and boomed when the Farragut Naval Training Station was operational during World War II. The town has groceries, boat launches and moorage and a number of small resorts. Boating is very popular and the houseboats that line the shore give the settlement the air of a seaside resort. Small craft still deliver mail to isolated residences along the shore, inaccessible by road. The Navy maintains a presence here with its **Naval Underwater Research** facility at the southern edge of town.

Highway 95 proceeds further south into suburbia, passing through **HAYDEN** (pop. 14,135, alt. 2,278 ft.) adjoining Coeur d'Alene on the north. On the eastern edge of town **Hayden Lake** nestles at the base of the timbered Coeur d'Alene Mountains. The main portion of the lake measures 7 miles long by 1 to 2 miles wide, but its many arms extending into the mountains give it a shoreline totaling 40 miles. Hayden's crystal clear waters, sandy beaches and picturesque forested shores make it one of North Idaho's most beautiful and popular lakes. **Triple Play Family Fun Park**, on US-95 and Orchard Avenue, features **Raptor Reef**, an indoor waterpark.

## 4. Coeur d'Alene

**COEUR D'ALENE** (pop. 50,300, alt. 2,157 ft.), pronounced *Core-duh-LANE*, is the largest city in The Panhandle and seat of Kootenai County. Located on the north shore of its namesake lake just east of the Spokane River outlet, it's known as "The Lake City." At its eastern edge, the forested Coeur d'Alene Mountains rise to heights exceeding 5,000 feet. Rapid growth since 1990 has extended the urbanized area far out into the lowlands north and west of the city, merging with the eastward expansion of Spokane, forming a single urban region encompassing more than 680,000 people.



French trader trappers gave the local Native Americans the name *Coeur d'Alene* (translated as 'heart of the awl'), a term referring to their shrewd bargaining skills. General William Tecumseh Sherman (1820-1891) established a fort at the point where the Spokane River emerges from Lake Coeur d'Alene in 1878. By the mid-1880s the town that had grown up around the fort was a strategic transshipment point for freight and passengers traveling to and from the mining camps in the Silver Valley and settlements along the lake. The railroad arrived in 1887.

← City Park overlooks the lake [Photo: Coeur d'Alene Visitor's Bureau]

At the turn of the 20th-century Coeur d'Alene became a popular destination for holiday makers, offering immensely popular lake cruises. Fort Sherman was deactivated in 1901 and the forest products industry moved in. The first decade of the 1900s saw the population rise from 508 to 7,291. Today's economy revolves around retail trade and tourism.



On a hot summer day crowds flock City Park's beach [Photo: Coeur d'Alene Parks Department]

**Downtown** is a vibrant mix of specialty retailers and restaurants. **Sherman Avenue**, lined with shops, antique stores and galleries, is the main downtown shopping street. The proximity of the waterfront gives the district a resort air. The public docks and marinas offer lake cruises and boat/kayak rentals. At the end of City Dock, **Brooks Seaplane** offers scenic flights. **City Park**, at the western edge of downtown, has a swimming beach and playground. Its band shell is the scene of free summer concerts.

*National Geographic* once included **Lake Coeur d'Alene** in a list of the "World's Five Most beautiful Lakes." Tucked amid pine-clad mountains, the lake measures 30 miles in length by a mile or two in width. Its shoreline, indented with numerous bays, totals 109 miles and is particularly scenic. The largest concentration of ospreys in the western states nests in trees on its shores and in winter bald eagles feed



on the lake's spawned-out Kokanee salmon at Wolf Lodge Bay. Boating is immensely popular and summer lake cruises are available at Coeur d'Alene and Heyburn State Park (the latter at the lake's southern end).

The **Museum of North Idaho**, 115 Northwest Boulevard, has exhibits about Fort Sherman, railroads, lake steamboats, logging and mining. The 18-story **Coeur d'Alene Resort** dominates the shoreline at the southern edge of downtown. The resort's **Floating Boardwalk** encircles the 371-slip Boardwalk Marina. Extending 3,300 feet, it's the world's longest floating boardwalk.

**Tubbs Hill Park** crowns a wooded, hilly peninsula bordering the lake just south of downtown. The 164-acre nature area has a 2.2-mile interpretive trail looping around the peninsula, passing hidden coves and pockets of sandy beach. Other trails lead up to the 2,533-foot summit, where panoramic views extend across the city and lake, 410 feet below. East of the park are **Sanders Beach** and the famous **Coeur d'Alene Resort Golf Course**, noted for its unique floating green.



*Isolated sandy beaches dot the lakeshore of Tubbs Hill Park (Coeur d'Alene Resort at left) [Photo: Coeur d'Alene Parks Department]*

**North Idaho College** is west of downtown, overlooking the lake and Spokane River. Founded in 1933, this two-year community college has an enrollment of 4,700. Its park like campus of lawns and old trees occupies the site of Fort Sherman, and several of the fort's old structures are scattered around the grounds. **Fort Sherman Museum** has exhibits about the post and local history. The 1904 former Spokane & Inland Empire Electric Railway Substation (414 W. Mullan Street at Northwest Boulevard) houses the **Human Rights Educational Institute**, featuring changing educational exhibits on human rights, tolerance and respect for diversity. The museum is open 10am-5pm Monday-Friday.

The **North Idaho Centennial Trail** is a 24-mile paved multi-use recreational trail. It passes through the heart of Coeur d'Alene. East of the city, where the trail forms part of **Coeur d'Alene Parkway State Park**, it follows the scenic north shore of Lake Coeur d'Alene 7 miles to Higgins Point. From downtown the trail continues west 17 miles to the Washington border where it links up with the 36-mile Spokane Centennial Trail.

**Canfield Mountain Trail System** is a 32-mile network of hiking and mountain biking paths looping through the rugged Canfield Buttes (elev. 4,162 ft.) just east of the city. Fernan Lake Road (FR-268) leads to the area from I-90 Exit 15 at the east end of town.

**ROW Adventures**, downtown at 212 Sherman, offers a wide range of outdoor adventure trips including whitewater rafting and fly-fishing. **Lake Coeur d'Alene Cruises** depart from City Dock at Independence Point from late April to late October. Their narrated cruises last at least 2 hours.



## 4. West to Spokane

Interstate 90 leads 30 miles west from Coeur d'Alene following the Spokane River. **POST FALLS** (pop. 30,455, alt. 2,169 ft.) is on the Spokane River just east of the Washington border. Part of the Coeur-d'Alene-Spokane metropolitan area, Post Falls has become an important retail and distribution center. **Treaty Rock Historic Site** preserves a "contract" carved in stone in 1871 by Frederick Post and Chief Seltice, whereby Post was granted permission to build his mill beside the falls on the Spokane River. The mill was the nucleus for the town of Post Falls. The dam built at the falls in 1904 raised the level of the river and Lake Coeur d'Alene enabling year round navigation on the upstream waterway and lake.

**Falls Park** has interpretive trails and views of Post Falls and the basalt lined gorge downstream. **Q'emiln Riverside Park** (pronounced *ka-MEE-lin*) covers 90 acres of steep, rocky ravines bordering the south side of the river. Its 5 miles of trails lead to numerous historic sites, including an Indian village, mining and lumber camps and pioneer homesteads. The **North Idaho Centennial Trail** passes through Post Falls. **Stateline Stadium Speedway** features stock car racing from April through September. The **River Queen** offers 90-minute sightseeing boat trips in summer. The boat departs from the marina at Templin's Resort (boat rentals are also available).



*Liberty Lake borders the northern edge of its namesake lake  
[Photo: Idaho-Washington Aquifer Collaborative]*

Just west of Post Falls we re-enter Washington. **LIBERTY LAKE** (pop. 10,400, alt. 2,050 ft.) nestles on the north shore of its namesake body of water two miles south of I-90 Exit 296. The city, a fast growing bedroom community for the Spokane-Coeur d'Alene urban area, has three golf courses: Liberty Lake, Meadowwood and Trailhead.

The lake, bordered by wooded mountains on three sides, is named for Etienne Edward Laliberte, who later changed his name to Steve Liberty. The lake's fishing season extends from March through October. Brown trout is a popular catch after ice melts off the lake in early spring. Once the water warms, largemouth and smallmouth bass, yellow perch, and other warm water species dominate the fishery.

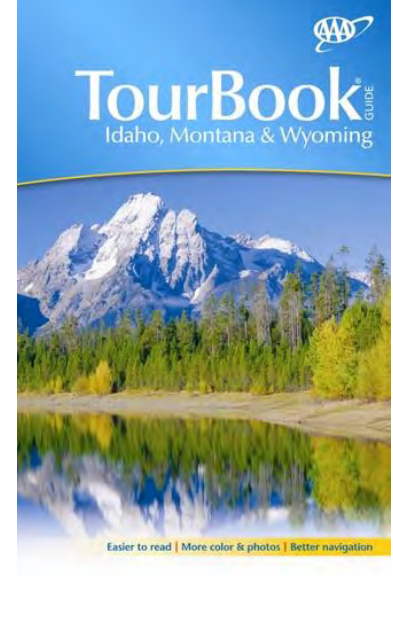

**Liberty Lake Regional Park** covers 3,591 acres at the south end of the lake. Within its bounds are wetlands, lake shore, montane forest, irrigated lawn areas, an ORV park, campground, playground and a swimming beach. The park has miles of backcountry trails and access to the popular 8.3-mile Liberty Lake Loop Trail.

Interstate 90 is the fast route west to Spokane. The freeway was built through this area in stages from 1958 to 1975. The former route of US-10, south of the Interstate offers a slower somewhat more historic itinerary. Just south of the Liberty Lake Exit (No. 296), turn west on East Country Vista Drive. After 1½ miles this becomes East Appleway (former US-10). After a further 1.6 miles it becomes East Sprague Avenue, which you can follow through Spokane Valley into Spokane proper, a distance of 15 miles. Although this is a multi-lane highway, there are numerous traffic signals throughout.

Both I-90 and East Sprague run through **SPOKANE VALLEY** (pop. 96,400, alt. 2,020 ft.), a city formed in 2003, with the incorporation of suburban communities east of Spokane. The valley is a retail destination with dozens of strip malls, big box stores and **Valley Mall**, a destination shopping center. The old central business district, on E. Sprague Avenue west of SR-27, recalls the historic community of Opportunity. **Spokane Valley Heritage Museum**, located at 12114 E. Sprague in the 1912 Opportunity Township Hall, houses changing exhibits of area history. **Splashdown Family Waterpark** offers relief on hot summer days (Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day). Other attractions in the area include wineries, the **Centennial Trail** and float trips on the Spokane River.

**Dishman Hills Conservancy** is a recreation and conservation area south of Spokane Valley (primary access from E. Sprague Avenue is via Sargent Road). Shaped by Ice Age floods, the topography is a mix of granite outcrops dotted with ravines and a few ponds. The natural vegetation is open Ponderosa pine woodland. Wildlife abounds and wildflowers are profuse in late spring. Several dozen miles of trails loop through the site, a haven for wildlife at the edge of the urban area.

Crossing Havana Street we're back in Spokane and the end of our Idaho Panhandle Auto Tour.

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Photos by Tony Mayer unless otherwise indicated, Map drawn by John King

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