

Hells Gate State Park

Introduction: There is more to see and do at Hells Gate State Park than might be thought. A first impression would be that it is a great aquatic access park in a very mild climate area. And it certainly is, with one of the longest recreation seasons (from March until November) for any of the Idaho state parks and it has a marina, a swimming beach, a multi-lane boat ramp and a well landscaped campground and day use area. The green lawns and large shade trees of the campground and day use area are attractions in themselves. But Hells Gate, as the name implies, is a gateway to both Idaho's Lewis and Clark country and to Hells Canyon, the deepest river gorge in North America. So it offers a great opportunity to see some scenic wonders as well as learning about Idaho's early history. It also boasts its own geologic wonder. The park lies on a river bottom left over from the great ice age floods that happened about 15,000 years ago. At the south end of the park are basaltic columns from the Pomona flows 14 million years ago. Upstream from the park is Hells Canyon National Recreation Area. Visitors can arrange for tours by jet boat of Hells Canyon at the park's marina. Then not to be forgotten is a great trails system. A paved bicycle trail starts at the park and connects with miles of trail along the Snake and Clearwater Rivers in Lewiston, Idaho and Clarkston, Washington. Then the south end of the park is covered with hiking trails that run along the Snake River and climb up into some upland areas and along tops of cliffs. Located just 5 miles upstream from the great confluence of two of Idaho's greatest rivers, the Snake and the Clearwater, Hells Gate State Park is the largest recreation area, in terms of land area and attendance on the Lower Granite Reservoir project.

Getting There: From Lewiston, Idaho, take Snake River Avenue south from Hwy. 12. Proceed south for about 4 miles and you will see the park entrance on the right.

Major Features:

The Rivers and the Reservoir: The park lies primarily on the shores of the Snake River. It is the seventh longest river in the United States. It begins in Yellowstone National Park, makes a u-turn through Idaho, then turns west at Lewiston. It joins the Columbia River at Pasco, Washington. The Snake River is the largest river flowing into the Columbia. It drains a 109,000 square mile area of 37 million acre-feet of water each year. Idaho diverts about a third of the water for irrigation and other uses. Even so, an average of 50,000 cubic feet of water flows into the Columbia every second. One of the Snake River's largest tributary is the Salmon River which joins the Snake about 32 miles upstream from the park. The Salmon River is one of the longest river segments in the lower 48 states that has no dams or impoundments on it. It is Idaho's famous "river of no return."

Another tributary that joins the Snake down river about 4 miles from the park is the Clearwater River. The Clearwater River watershed drains most of the western slopes of the Bitterroot Mountains.

Hells Gate State Park actually sets at the edge of Lower Granite Reservoir. This reservoir backs up into both the Snake River and the Clearwater River. This reservoir results from the impoundment of the Snake River at Lower Granite Dam 33 miles down river from Lewiston. Lower Granite is the first of four dams between here and the Columbia River. It is one of 23 dams along the 1,036 mile length of the Snake River. Almost 50% of the Snake River is

impounded behind dams. The reservoir contains 8,900 surface acres.

The Scenery: The immediate area around the park offers views of the Snake River with the town of Clarkston, Washington on the opposite bank. An impressive basalt rock formation called the Swallow's Nest towers over the scenery across the river. The park itself has some spectacular basalt cliffs that rise above the river at the south end of the park. Then there is the majesty of the Hells Canyon, the deepest river gorge in America, which has its mouth about 30 miles upstream from the park. Jet boat tours of the lower canyon can be arranged at the park's marina.

The Park: The park is rather well developed with a number of different use areas. About 200 acres of the park's 960 acres have been developed with recreational facilities. Upon entering the park, the first use area is the large parking lot adjacent to the marina. The marina has been constructed with a protective levee and has 4 docks with 100 slips available. The slips have 30 amp electrical service available. There is a separate dock along side the marina store that is used for boarding tour boat passengers. The marina store has all the supplies of a typical convenience store, improved restrooms and plenty of parking. Kayak and Canoe Rentals are available from May to September. Snake River Adventures & River Quest Excursions operates its jet boat tours of Hells Canyon in an office in the marina building. Arrangements for tours can be made here. Additionally there are two other tour operators: Beamers Hells Canyon Tours and Snake Dancer Excursions operate in the area and arrangement with them can be made to pick visitors up at the passenger loading dock at the marina.

Next to the marina is a 6 lane boat launching ramps. The boat launching ramp has a paved parking lot providing pull through parking for vehicles with their trailers. There is also improved restrooms here and 3 picnic tables. The paved bicycle trail that leads north to Lewiston and south to the day use area and campgrounds can be accessed either from the marina parking lot or the boat ramp parking lot.

Just south of the boat ramp area can be found the Lewis and Clark Discovery Center. This is the park's main visitor center, office, and registration desk. This is a destination visitor center that is devoted to the interpretation of the Lewis and Clark Expedition and its travels through the state of Idaho. There are several exhibits and displays to view both indoors and outdoors. The Center has a two acre outdoor interpretive plaza on the banks of the Snake River with a beautiful moving stream with sculptures by artist Rip Caswell. A short trail takes you out to a point for expansive views of the river and the scenery across the river. The visitor center also offers the showing of the documentary film: *From the Mountains to the Sea: Lewis and Clark in Idaho*.

Hells Canyon National Recreation Area

The Hells Canyon National Recreation Area was established in 1975. It is managed by the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. Hugging the borders of northeastern Oregon and western Idaho, this national showcase holds 652,488 acres of beauty and adventure, where you can let your senses run as wild as the landscape. The deepest river gorge in North America. Scenic vistas that rival any on the continent. World-class whitewater boating. Spectacular mountain peaks. Vast reaches of remote wilderness for hiking or horseback riding. Diverse and abundant wildlife. Artifacts from prehistoric tribes and rustic remains of early miners and settlers. It is a special place to enjoy and see, whether you choose to explore by road, trail, or boat.

The visitor center contains a state park gift store that sells souvenirs, books and even ice cream. There are kayaks and bicycles available for rent here. The center has improved restrooms and 2 picnic tables available. The visitor center parking lot has pull through slots for RVs.

Across the park access road from the Lewis and Clark Discovery Center are two gravel parking lots. One parking lot is for the park's archery range and the other is a trailhead parking lot for the park's extensive hiking and equestrian trail system. Equestrian users can park their vehicles with horse trailers here. There is a vault toilet available here.

Continuing south from the Lewis and Clark Discovery Center is the large and expansive day use area that includes picnic facilities and the swimming beach. The broad waters of the Snake River is the focus here. The area is well landscaped with lawns and shade trees. The parking lot is conveniently located along a loop road that has the beach and bike trail on one side and the picnic facilities on the other. There are improved restrooms here along with a playground, benches, and a volleyball court. There is 1 group shelter available and 5 individual family shelters. There are 50 picnic tables scattered throughout the day use area.

Directly across the park access road from the day use center is the turn off for the Jack O'Connor Hunting Heritage and Education Center. It displays the hunting trophies of outdoor writer and conservationist Jack O'Connor and tells the story of America's hunting heritage. This is a private organization that rents the building that housed the state park's original visitor center and office. It is well worth seeing. It has a paved parking lot, an improved restroom, and 1 picnic table. It sits on top of a hill that provides outstanding views of the park and the surrounding area. This parking lot can also be used as a trailhead for the park's trail system. In fact, there is a trail here that connects with the Lewis and Clark Discovery Center.

The park's access road ends with the three loops of the park's campground. These loops offer quiet, grassy, and shady campsites along the shores of the Snake River. There is a total of 86 campsites. There are 10 sites with full hookups, 49 sites with water and electrical hookups, and 27 sites without hookups. Additionally, there are 8 camping cabins available for rent here. Each of the three campground loops have their own improved restrooms that have showers. The RV dump station is located back near the park entrance and can be used upon exiting.

Beyond the campground to the south can be found the park's wildlands where five miles of trails climb the grassy slopes reaching up from the Snake River.

Geology: Hells Gate State Park is within a geologic area known as the Clearwater Plateau. This plateau is part of the Columbia River Basalt Group. Prior to the Miocene Epoch, the Clearwater Plateau was constructed of Permian and Triassic sedimentary and volcanic rock from the Seven Devil's Complex, as well as Cretaceous granite from the Idaho Batholith. The basement rock is composed of the Precambrian Belt series metasedimentary complex.

Dominating the geology of the Clearwater Plateau are the Columbia River Basalts. The Columbia River Basalt Group is composed of basalt erupted from 300 identified high volume basalt flows over a period of 11.5 million years. Eighty-seven percent of these eruptions occurred over a period of 1.5 million years. Underlying the Clearwater plateau are the Saddle Mountains, Wanapum, and Grande Ronde Basalts. These basalt flows erupted from fissures during Miocene times (6-17 million years ago) and covered much of eastern Washington, northern Oregon and adjacent parts of Idaho.

Following the formation of the Columbia River Basalts, the Clearwater Plateau experienced a period of structural deformation from the late Pliocene to early Pleistocene time

period. Deformation from tilting and faulting created such features as the east trending Lewiston syncline and the northeast trending Craig Mountain anticline, which is dissected by the Limekiln Fault (also known as the Lime Point Fault and the Waha Escarpment).

Erosive forces contributed to the geology present today. The Snake River began carving Hells Canyon out of the plateau about 6 million years ago. Then massive floods played their part. During the Ice Ages, water filled the Great Salt Lake Basin and overflowed into the Snake River Basin in Southeast Idaho. Utah's Great Salt Lake is the present-day remnant of that huge prehistoric inland sea. Around 15 thousand years ago, Lake Bonneville exploded into Hells Canyon with about a thousands times more water than you see today. The flood's force carried away truck-sized boulders, scoured and polished the Snake River Canyon walls, creating waterfalls, and depositing giant gravel bars. These were the second greatest flood flows in history.

To the north the great Glacial Lake Missoula had formed. The hills around the area of the park are actually sandbars deposited by Glacial Lake Missoula flood. They are mixed with gravel bars from the Lake Bonneville flood. At the same time Lake Bonneville filled, glaciers were creeping south out of Canada. Glacial ice crept far enough south to dam the Clark Fork River at today's Lake Pend O'Reille, creating Glacial Lake Missoula. This ancient lake flooded the entire Clark Fork Valley in western Montana. Over and over, the ice dam broke. Water, ice and debris thundered across eastern Washington and north-central Idaho, scoring the earth and depositing boulders the size of school buses. These floods filled the Columbia Gorge and backed up water into the Snake and Clearwater Rivers all the way to the area around Hells Gate.

The Snake River Canyon is deeply cut into an unknown thickness of lava formations that underlie much of Idaho and southeastern Washington. The course of the river is generally controlled by the structure of the rocks. Upstream of Lewiston, from the river reach of Asotin to the confluence of the Grande Ronde River, the course of the Snake River is controlled by a sequence of geologically older rocks. Within the Lewiston Basin, the Snake River is controlled by the folding and faulting that originally created the basin. Downstream, the river is controlled by the regional dip of the basalt strata and the structure of the Blue Mountains.

There are two distinct geological features at and near the park. Rising predominately on the opposite side of the river from Hells Gate is a rock feature that leaves a person wondering, what is that? The feature is called Swallows Nest. It is a large erosional remnant of twisted basalt. It is located along the Snake River one mile south of Clarkston, Washington, along Hwy 129. It consists of a basalt stratus, which has eroded to its present unique shape. This basaltic rock is geologically young intra-canyon basalt, likely to be less than one million years old.

The second geological feature is located within Hells Gate State Park. The park has several outcroppings of the dark rocks called basalt. Much of these were formed as a result of the Pomona flows 14 million years ago. Moving toward the south end of the park on the river run hiking trail, the basalt cliffs begin to rise abruptly from the Snake Rivers edge. Soon there is only a small area of fairly flat ground between the river and the cliff face. In some places you can view very symmetrical straight up and down columnar masses of basalt. In other spots, the columns are extremely distorted and bend in all directions. One particular cliff face exhibits very long columns that gently curve towards the tops of the cliffs. In other places, the columns look like stacked up petrified firewood. This geologic wonder is seldom visited. But it is worth the hike.

Ecosystems and Plant Communities: At 733 feet in elevation, Hells Gate State Park is at one of the lowest places in Idaho that has a long season of warm weather which gives rise to Lewiston's reputation as Idaho's Banana Belt. The area is in a location known as the Palouse Slope. There are four ecosystems present in the park: Camas Prairie grassland, shrub-steep, riparian, and river.

Camas Prairie Grasslands: Most of the wildlands in the park are represented by the grassy slopes of this ecosystem. It is dominated by wheatgrass-bluegrass, wheatgrass-fescue, bluebunch wheatgrass, yarrow, sunflower, and needle-and-thread grass. Past agricultural practices have also introduced a number of invasives here including: cheatgrass, star thistle, tumbleweed, spotted knapweed, and Canada thistle.

Shrub-steep: This ecosystem is present in sheltered areas and includes: big basin sagebrush, Wyoming big sagebrush, rabbit brush, antelope bitterbrush, golden current, mountain ash, and grasses. Invasives that are also common are invasive cheatgrass, Russian olive, and tree of heaven.

Riparian. The river banks and some intermittent streams that run through the park have some riparian vegetation such as: western hackberry, blackberry, poison ivy, wild rose, water birch, black cottonwood, sycamore, alders, aspens, wild asparagus, Oregon grape, sandbar willow, pacific willow, and poison hemlock. .

The keynote species is the western hackberry (*Celtis reticulata*). It is also known as netleaf hackberry, Douglas hackberry, netleaf sugar hackberry, palo blanco, and acibuche, It is a small- to medium-sized deciduous tree native to western North America. Its easternmost natural range is in the hills of Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Louisiana. In its central range it is found in the Rio Grande watershed and the Chihuahuan Desert in southern Arizona and New Mexico, western Texas, and northern Sonora-Chihuahua-Coahuila. It is also found in the Madran Sky Islands of the Sierra Madre Occidental in northern Sonora, and in the White Mountains and along the Mogollon Rim in Arizona. The banks of the Colorado River also provide suitable habitat, from the Grand Canyon northeast through Utah to western Colorado. At its western edge, the tree's natural range includes the Columbia River Basin of Oregon, Washington, and western Idaho. It is commonly found growing along river edges at lower elevation. The Hells Canyon State Park area is one of only a few places in Idaho where this tree grows.

It usually grows to a small-sized tree, twenty to thirty feet in height and mature at six to ten inches in diameter, although some individuals are known up to 70 feet high. It is often scraggly, stunted or even a large bush. It grows at elevations from about 1,600–5,600 ft. Hackberry bark is grey to brownish grey with the trunk bark forming vertical corky ridges that are checkered between the furrows. The young twigs are covered with very fine hairs. The blade of the leaves can be half an inch to three inches long, usually about two inches. They are lanceolate to ovate, unequal at the base, leathery, entire to serrate, clearly net-veined, base obtuse to more or less cordate, with a dark green upper surface and a yellowish-green lower surface. The flowers are very small averaging 1/12 of an inch across. They form singly, or in clusters. The fruit is a rigid, brownish to purple berry.

River/Reservoir: The reservoir is generally a warm water fishery. However, it is also a major migration corridor for many of Idaho's anadromous fish. Fish known to be in the river/reservoir include: bluegill, pumpkinseed, sunfish, bullhead catfish, catfish, crappie, largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, rainbow trout, steelhead trout, chinook salmon, coho salmon, sockeye salmon, tiger muskie, yellow perch, and sturgeon.

About 200 acres of the park are highly developed with recreation facilities and are well landscaped with: silver maple, black locust, ginkgo, blue spruce, tree of heaven, Russian olive, sweet gum, and box elder.

Wildlife:

Mammals: The mammals known to be present in the park include: mule deer, otter, muskrat, big horn sheep, beaver, raccoon, skunk, badger, and Columbia ground squirrel.

Birds: The birds known to be present in the park include: mallard, Canada goose, bufflehead, goldeneye, osprey, great blue heron, bald eagle, golden eagle, red tailed hawk, northern harrier, Cooper's hawk, raven, belted kingfisher, wild turkey, American coot, northern shoveler, common loon, western grebe, pied-billed grebe, white pelican, double-crested cormorant, common merganser, western bluebird, western tanager, Bullock's oriole, willow flycatcher, black-capped chickadee, rock wren, canyon wrens, white-throated Swift, cliff swallow, California quail, pheasant and chukar.

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Sockeye salmon is the keynote species. Sockeye salmon (*Oncorhynchus nerka*), is also known as red salmon, kokanee salmon, or blueback salmon. It is an anadromous species of salmon found in the Northern Pacific Ocean and rivers discharging into it. This species is a Pacific salmon that is primarily red in hue during spawning. They can grow up to 2 ft 9 inches in length and weigh 5 to 15 pounds. Juveniles remain in freshwater until they are ready to migrate to the ocean, over distances of up to 1,000 miles. Their diet consists primarily of zooplankton. Sockeye salmon are semelparous, dying after they spawn. Some populations, referred to as kokanee, do not migrate to the ocean and live their entire lives in freshwater.

The sockeye salmon is sometimes called red or blueback salmon, due to its color. Sockeye are blue tinged with silver in color while living in the ocean. When they return to spawning grounds, their bodies become red and their heads turn green. Sockeye salmon range as far south as the Columbia River in the eastern Pacific. The farthest inland sockeye salmon travel is to Redfish Lake, Idaho, over 900 miles from the ocean and 6,500 feet in elevation. Although they are sometimes referred to as Snake River Salmon, their primary migration route is up the Salmon River since they are unable to bypass the dams in Hells Canyon. This fascinating migration to the central mountains of Idaho has made them the most famous salmon in Idaho.

Sockeye salmon exhibit many different life histories with the majority being anadromous where the juvenile salmon migrate from freshwater lakes and streams to the ocean before returning as adults to their natal freshwater to spawn. The majority of sockeye spawn in rivers near lakes and juveniles will spend one to two years in the lake before migrating to the ocean,

although some populations will migrate to saltwater in their first year. Adult sockeye will spend two to three years in the ocean before returning to freshwater. Females will spawn over a period of several days. The eggs usually hatch within six to nine weeks and the fry typically rear in lakes before migrating to the ocean

United States sockeye salmon populations are currently listed by the National Marine Fisheries Service as an endangered species in the Snake River. The Snake River sockeye salmon was listed as endangered in November 1991, after the Shoshone-Bannock Tribe at Fort Hall Indian Reservation petitioned the National Marine Fisheries Service. Other sockeye populations in the upper Columbia River and in Puget Sound are not listed under the Act.

Cultural History: There is ample evidence that Nez Perce and Palus people have lived along the Snake and Clearwater Rivers in the area of the park for thousands of years. The park was once the site of a Nez Perce village. Some depressions south of the campground are the remnants of pit houses used for years at this site where they fished for lamprey near Asotin Creek.

The Nez Perce have lived in this area for more than 8,000 years and called themselves the Nee-mee-poo. The horse was acquired in the mid 1700s and the Nez Perce became excellent breeders of the well-known Appaloosa Horse. The Nez Perce Indians lived in scattered villages in the Plains west of the Rocky Mountains. About 4,000 in number, they were excellent horsemen and owned the largest horse herd on the continent. They fished for salmon along the Clearwater and Snake rivers, and harvested camas plants in mountain meadows. Their ancestral lands were vast and included much of eastern Oregon, eastern Washington, and north central Idaho.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition first encountered the Nez Perce in 1805. The Expedition had stumbled out of the Bitterroot Mountains in nearly starving condition. The Nez Perce in this village had never seen white men before. Nez Perce legend has it that tribal members wanted to kill the explorers, but an old woman in the village convinced them to befriend them. As evidenced by the Lewis and Clark journals, the Nez Perce treated them with great hospitality and introduced them to the staples of their diet, mainly dried salmon and a bread made from the camas root. Although, this change in diet made many of the explorers ill, it never-the-less ended the starvation they had been suffering. The Nez Perce would help them in many ways and it could be said that the success of the Expedition was due in large part to the Nez Perce.

From 1700 to 1830 the name "Nez Perce" was given to the tribe by early Euroamericans. Their horses enabled them to travel to the plains, and many elements of Plains Indian culture were adopted. Also, items from Euroamerican culture were traded to the Nez Perce. By 1880, some Nez Perce adopted Euroamerican technology, dress, language, and religion while others maintained their traditional lifeways.

In 1855, the Nez Perce signed a treaty with the U.S. Government reserving 7.5 million acres of land. The Nez Perce Indians were the only tribe in the Northwest to ally with the Americans even before the 1855 Treaty. The reservation established by this treaty included parts of Washington and Idaho and much of what would later become Clearwater County.

Then gold was discovered in 1860 by E. D. Pierce, bringing gold-hungry miners onto the reservation illegally. Rather than try to keep non-Indians off the reservation a new treaty was proposed. The 1863 Treaty took away about 90% of the reservation land and created a split in the tribe between Treaty and Non-Treaty Indians.

In 1887 the Dawes Act opened the reservation to homesteading that resulted in non-Indians owning parcels of fee-patented land within the reservation next to Indian trust

allotments. The land was first allotted to each tribal member according to age, status in the tribe and gender. The land not allotted to an Indian on the reservation was then opened for non-Indians to homestead.

History: It is believed that the first people of European ancestry to visit the Lewiston area were members of the David Thompson expedition of 1803. Thompson was looking to establish fur trading posts for the Hudson's Bay Company of British North America. However, this expedition departed and the first white settlement in Idaho, MacKenzie's Post would not be established until 1812.

It would be the Lewis and Clark Expedition that would forever place an indelible mark upon the Lewiston area. The sister towns of Lewiston, Idaho and Clarkston, Washington are named for the leaders of the Expedition. They passed through this area in October 1805 and they returned on their eastward trip from the Pacific in the spring of 1806.

The Corps of Discovery entered present-day Idaho at Lemhi Pass, near Salmon on August 12, 1805 and would leave Idaho just past the confluence of the Snake and Clearwater Rivers, just a few miles from Hells Gate State Park. They spent a total of 60 days in present-day Idaho/western Montana on their journey to the Pacific Ocean.

Fifteen months after they left St. Louis, the Corps of Discovery finally reached the headwaters of the Missouri River. It was then time to secure horses for their mountain journey. They were not sure how hard or how long their passage through the mountains would be, but they realized that their hopes of an easy portage were unrealistic. What they didn't know was just how difficult that passage would be.

The Corps was desperate to find the Shoshone people who lived at the foot of the Bitterroot Mountains. They had hired Toussaint Charbonneau as an interpreter because his wife, Sacajawea, was a member of the Lemhi Shoshone tribe. She had been kidnaped by another tribe and taken east five years earlier. When Meriwether Lewis finally made contact with a group of Shoshone, Sacajawea discovered to her joy that the band included her brother, Cameahwait, who was now chief. The Corps was able to trade for horses and secure a guide named Toby who had traveled west through the mountains as a boy.

On August 23, 1805, Clark explored the upper Salmon River Canyon and found that the river they hoped would carry them west "runs with great violence from one rock to the other on each Side foaming & roeing thro rocks in every direction." This caused them to detour to the north through the Bitterroot Valley.

It would take them four days to journey uphill from the Bitterroot Valley. Having traveled about 12 miles from their previous nights campsite along Lolo Creek, the Corp of Discovery would finally cross Lolo Pass and then it would truly be "downhill" from there to the Pacific Ocean. At the headwaters of the Lochsa River, they camped along what they called Glade Creek (today's Glade Creek State Park) on the night of September 13, 1805.

William Clark wrote of this place on September 14, 1805:

We fell on a Small Creek from the left which passed through open glades. Some of which ½ mile wide, we proceeded down this Creek about 2 miles to where the mountains Closed on either Side crossing the Creek Several times & encamped. The Creek we Came down I call glade Creek.

Meriwether Lewis entered into his journal:

S. 30 W. 7 miles over a mountain to a Dividing ridge of that gradey land to a Creek from the left passing into a glade of ½ mile in width, keeping down the creek 2 miles & Encamped. The country as usual except the Glades which is open and boggy, water Clare and Sandey. Snow topped mountain to the S.E. ... I killed 4 Pheasants & Sheilds killed a Black tail Deer.

They would sit down to a meal of “pheasant” and venison. This would be their last significant meal for awhile. Unbeknownst to them, the Lolo Trail would provide only scant provisions to them for many miles and days to come.

On September 14, the expedition set out early. They traveled in the rain and hail and an occasional snow shower. They traversed seventeen difficult miles and camped at what they called “killed colt camp” (near the present-day Powell Ranger Station). At Colt Killed Creek Camp on September 16, 1805, William Clark wrote:

...the snow in the morning 4 inches deep on the old snow, and by night we found it from 6 to 8 inches deep...I have been wet and as cold in every part as I ever was in my life ... men all wet cold and hungry. Killed a Second colt which we Supped on haritly on and thought it a fine meal ...

On September 18, 1805, Clark and six men scout ahead, hoping to find game they can send back to the rest of the company. They enter upon the Nez Perce villages on September 20. Clark wrote:

West 3 miles to an Indian Camp in a leavel rich open Plain. I met 3 boys who I gave a pice of ribin to each & Sent them to the Villages, I soon after met a man whome I gave a handkerchief and he escorted me to he Grand Chiefs Lodge ... those people treated us well ...

They had emerged from the mountains, nearly starving and the Nez Perce would provide them with desperately needed food. The Nez Perce called themselves the Nimiipuu – “the people” Most of them had never seen a white man before. On the evening of September 22, 1805, the main party arrived at the first village. Clark wanted them to be cautious about eating too much dried fish and camas bread, but to no avail. Just about all of the men became violently ill from the change in diet.

But they made it over the mountains nevertheless, and on September 22, Lewis wrote:

...the pleasure I now felt in having tryumphed over the rocky Mountains and descending once more to a level and fertile country... nor was the flattering prospect of the final success of the expedition less pleasing.

On September 24, 1805, Clark established a camp near the river camp of Chief Twisted Hair. Lewis was so ill that he was barely able to ride a horse. Game remained scarce, and the men were forced to continue on their new diet of dried salmon and camas bread. On September 26, Clark moved them down river. Here they would chop down trees to make canoes for the last leg of their westward journey. They name the spot Canoe Camp. Clark wrote on September 27:

All mean able to work commenced building 5 canoes. Several taken sick at work, our hunters returned Sick without meet.

Clark identified five Ponderosa pines on the south side of the river and set the men to work. They were to carve out four large canoes and one small one. Chief Twisted Hair gave them advise on how to use fire to speed the process, since many of the men were too weak to work.

First the trees had to be felled. Then the branches needed to be trimmed off and the trucks debarked. Only then could the real work of hollowing out the interiors begin. Hot coals helped to burn out the interior and season the wood. It would take ten days to complete the canoes.

On October 5, as the party prepared to take to the river, they branded their horses and Chief Twisted Hair promised to take care of them until they returned in the spring. Clark wrote on October 6:

... all canoes finished this evening ready to put into the water. I am taken verry unwell with a paine in the bowles & Stomach. ...The river below this forks is Called Kos Kos Kee it is clear rapid with Shoal and swift places.

On October 7, the party of 35 began packing their gear, that had required 10 pack animals to haul, into the canoes. After a frenzied day of readying the five dugout canoes they push off into the Clearwater River and for the first time since they left St. Louis, the current was at their backs. On that day, one of the canoes hit a rock and sank. Fortunately the water was shallow and the baggage, though wet, was saved. Clark commented on the situation of October 8:

...passed 15 rapids four Islands ... and was nearle turning over...

The Corps would paddle 45 miles and navigated 39 rapids and descend nearly 300 feet before reaching the confluence of the Clearwater and Snake Rivers on October 10. Clark commented on that part of the journey:

...at 8 ½ miles lower we arrived at the heade of a verry bad rifle at which place we landed near 8 Lodges of Indians...arriving at a large Southerly fork ... the water of the South fork is a greenish blue, the north as clear as cristial. ... The cuntry about the forks is an open plain on either Side with one Indian cabin.

After four days since they left Canoe Camp, they set up camp down river from the confluence, about a mile from today's Chief Timothy Park in Clarkston, Washington. The Corps had reached a landmark. Their tough journey across northern Idaho had ended. Ahead of them lay the salmon-filled Columbia River and the Pacific Ocean beyond. Here they said goodbye to the Shoshone guide Toby and his son as they were to return back to their people. Toby had guided the Expedition since August 20. They also bought some dogs and dried fish from the local Indians. Clark drew a map of the Clearwater converging with the Snake River in his journal.

The Expedition returned to present-day Idaho on May 5, 1806. By May 14, they encamped at Camp Chopunnish, near Kamiah, Idaho. They spent the next 26 days waiting for the deep snows to melt so they could cross the treacherous Lolo Trail. On May 14, Lewis wrote:

Our situation was within 40 paces of the river in an extensive level bottom thinly timbered with the longleafed pine ... in short as we are compelled to reside a while in this neighbourhood. I feel perfectly satisfied with our position ..." He continued on May 15, 1806 with, "... here we have summer spring and winter within the short space of 15 or 20 miles.

The Captains sent Sergeant John Ordway and privates Frazer and Weiser to bring back fish from the Salmon River, a projected half-day's trip from today's Kamiah, Idaho. The Nez Perce guided them, put the men up in lodges, shared their food, and caught the salmon. Their villages were impressive settlements, Ordway described the lodge on the Snake River where they

dined on May 29, as 100 feet long and 20 feet wide. He described this experience as follows:

...they invited us in, spread robes for us to sit on, and set a roasted Salmon before us, and some of their white bread which they called uppah.

Ordway's mountainous trek had turned into a seven day, 62-mile adventure, from May 27th to June 2nd. To find the early returning salmon runs, they rode horses past the Salmon River to an Indian Village on the Snake River at Cougar Rapids Bar. Ordway called that final descent "the worst hills we ever saw a road made down." Ordway returned to Camp Chopunnish with only 17 salmon, most were rotten. On June 2, Lewis wrote:

...Sargent Ordway, Frazer and Wiser returned with 17 Salmon ... The distance from which they had brought the fish was so great that most of the fish were nearly spoiled. The fish as fat as any I ever have seen ... The Salmon that were sound were extremely delicious ...

When Lewis and Clark had first seen the Snake River entering the Clearwater, they called it Lewis' River. Indeed, the Lemhi River flows into the Salmon (Lewis's), and the Salmon into the Snake. But on their return journey, the Nez Perce showed them a sketch that revealed the Snake as the larger of the two rivers. Captain Lewis described this event on May 8:

The relation of the twisted hair and neeshneparkkeook gave us a sketch of the principle watercourses of the West of the Rocky Mountains a copy of which I preserved; they make the main southwardly branch of Lewis's river much more extensive than the other, and place many villages of the Shoshonees on it's western side.

The Corps set off around June 17 to begin their crossing of the Bitterroot Mountains. Their departure was a bit premature as the mountain snow caused them to back track to Wieppe Prairie and wait once again. On June 17, Lewis wrote:

Here was winter with all it's rigors .. Under these circumstances we conceived it madnes in this stage of the expedition to proceed.

But with the help of Nez Perce guides to lead them over Lolo Pass, they began to make some progress by June 27, when Clark wrote:

Those indians are most admireable pilots; we find the road wherever the snow has disappeared tho' it only be for a few paces.

The Expedition left present-day Idaho on June 29, 1806, 56 days after entering Idaho. It would now be several years before the Nez Perce would again encounter the Euroamericans. The Pacific Fur Company had not forgotten the exploration expedition of 1803 conducted by David Thompson. A party led by Donald MacKenzie returned in the fall of 1812 and established a Pacific Fur Company trading post located along the Clearwater River near present day Lewiston. It was called MacKenzie's Post. It was in an area inhabited by the Nez Perce tribes. MacKenzie built this post with only a store and two houses because he quickly found that the Nez Perce were unwilling to trap and process beaver pelts. As a result, there were few beaver pelts to be traded along this stretch of the Clearwater. MacKenzie returned to the headquarters of the Pacific Fur Company at Astoria Oregon on January 13, 1813 and got the news from Montreal that the War of

1812 had broken out. He returned to his post on the Clearwater on March 31, 1813 to close out the fur season and bring out what furs he had obtained. He closed down the post and departed on June 12, 1813. The Nez Perce were once again left without the Euroamericans in their midst.

It would be over 20 years later that Euroamericans would once again make contact with the Nez Perce. But this time the journey to the Nez Perce country came by a more roundabout route. They would travel over southern Idaho on what would become the Oregon Trail. Henry H. Spalding and Marcus Whitman arrived to bring Christianity into this region in 1836. Spalding started a mission on present day Lapwai Creek at Spalding, Idaho. Whitman established a mission in Walla Walla Valley in Washington State. Henry Harmon Spalding (1803–1874), and his wife Eliza Hart Spalding (1807–1851) were prominent Presbyterian missionaries and educators who would become missionaries to the Nez Perce. They traveled overland where only fur trappers and Native Americans had tread. They reached Fort Hall on August 3, 1836 and Old Fort Boise on August 19. Eleven days later they were at Fort Walla Walla. They journeyed to Lapwai and settled into their new home on November 29, 1836. When the Spaldings established their mission to the Nez Perce, they also established the first white home in what is today the State of Idaho. They were also responsible, in 1839, for bringing the first printing press into the territory. Spalding was generally successful in his interaction with the Nez Perce, baptizing several of their leaders and teaching tribal members. He developed an appropriate written script for the Nez Perce language, and translated parts of the Bible, including the entire book of Matthew, for the use of his congregation.

Lewiston was established at the confluence of the Snake and Clearwater Rivers as a result of Captain E.D. Pierce's gold discovery in 1860. Since the shallow bed of the Clearwater River was an obstacle to steamboat traffic, Lewiston was the natural choice for a supply center at the head of navigation. Although the actual mining took place in the wilderness of the Clearwater and Salmon Rivers to the east, Lewiston flourished during the mining era.

In early 1863, Lewiston was incorporated as a village in the Territory of Washington. Later that year, when Idaho Territory was established, Lewiston was given a charter and was the first recognized municipality in the new territory. However, Lewiston was not platted until 1874. Lewiston retained its original charter, which had certain advantages but also restrictions, until January 1970 when it was abandoned to allow annexation of the Orchards.

At the time of the gold discovery, the land where Pierce and Lewiston would be located was still part of the Nez Perce reservation. Only framed canvas tents were used until 1863, in order to comply with regulation and scarcity of lumber, only temporary structures could be placed on reservation land, earning Lewiston the nickname “Ragtown, “ named by a Portland, Oregon reporter.

As the desire for a permanent settlement became stronger, the settlers prevailed upon William Craig and Robert Newell for intervention on behalf of Lewiston. Craig and Newell had wives of the Nez Perce Tribe and were respected by the Native Americans. Some building began to take place, and in 1863 a new treaty was negotiated placing Lewiston outside the boundaries of the reservation.

In late 1862, with the discovery of gold in the Boise Basin, miners began to leave the Clearwater country for what they hoped were richer fields farther south. Lewiston's population dropped from several thousand to 300. Despite this decline, Lewiston became the first capital of the newly organized Idaho Territory in 1863. This prestige was short lived because in 1865 the territorial legislature voted to relocate the capital to Boise.

The first newspaper in present-day Idaho, the *Lewiston Teller* began publication in the

city of Lewiston, Washington Territory in 1862, and was joined by the present (and only) newspaper, the *Lewiston Morning Tribune* in September 1892.

North Idahoans were somewhat placated in 1889 when the University of Idaho was awarded to nearby Moscow, thirty miles north, and began instruction in 1892. Lewiston State Normal School, now Lewis-Clark State College, was established in 1893, as was another normal school or teacher education college, now defunct, in the south at Albion. These were the state's first three institutions of higher education. Lewiston was the site of the first public school in Idaho, in 1862. Hence, it carries the designation of Lewiston Independent School District #1.

Settlement on the federal lands in and around Lewiston would have to wait until the revised 1863 Treaty was made with Nez Perce. This revised treaty reduced the size of their reservation by 90%. This released the lands in the Lewiston area from reservation status to public domain. The Congress then need to authorized the General Land Office to survey and dispose of the lands. So settlement on the lands substantially occurred from about 1878 to 1890.

Specifically, the following persons, with the year of their patent, would take up the lands that are now included in Hells Gate State Park: George H. Lake (1890), Rueben D. Nevins (1883), Samuel Wheatcroft (1891), Frederick Wheatcroft (1891), John L. Kline (1889), Richard J. Monroe (1899), David W. Eaves (1910), Aaron S. Foredyce (1895), Dyer B. Pettijohn, Dallas Loy (1907), and John and Mary Barton (1893). All of these persons would be considered early pioneers of the Lewiston area. Only Kline, Foredyce, Pettijohn, Loy, and the Bartons filed their claims under the Homestead Act. This implies that they had begun their occupation about 5 years before receiving their patent and that they had built a residential structure that they had lived in. These "homesteads" were primarily in the south end of the park in the uplands above the river. Most of the other land entries were cash sales and involved lots and parcels along the river closer to town. The lands where the park facilities now exist were entered by Nevins and the Wheatcrofts. The Wheatcrofts were from England and had emigrated in 1884. George H. Lake became a business man, having owned a jewelry store in Lewiston. John L. Kline was an Oregon Trail pioneer who found his way to Lewiston in 1870. David W. Eaves came from Kentucky and was a law school graduate of Yale. Richard J. Monroe came from Florida and is found in Lewiston in the 1870 census as a merchant. Sometime after that he was appointed as the receiver of the U.S. General Land Office for Lewiston. He was also an Idaho Territorial Delegate.

By the 1960s, most of the land that would become Hells Gate State Park was owned by three individuals: John Earl Duthie, Wendell H. Mathison and James E. O'Neal. Duthie had been a grain dealer in Troy, Idaho and came to Lewiston after 1920 and took up the same business there. Mathison was a farmer who came from the Moscow area.

Construction on the Lower Granite Dam began in July 1965, but was halted less than two years later due to lack of funding. Work restarted in 1970, concrete was first poured in 1971, and the main structure and three generators were completed in 1975, with dedication ceremonies on June 19. An additional three generators were finished in May 1978, bringing the generating capacity to 810 megawatts, with an overload capacity of 932 MW.

Park History: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers proposed development of a park on the east banks of the Snake River as a mitigation for the construction of the Lower Granite Dam. In March, 1971, the Idaho Parks Board unanimously endorsed the new park near Tammany Creek, near the Duthie and O'Neal ranches two miles south of Lewiston. Marina construction started in September 1972. The IDPR leased the site to be used as a park from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 1973. By August 1975, the marina, with its 100 boat slips, was completed.

Construction on the campground and day use area began the following month and it was completed in 1978. In 1983, the 650 acres to the east and south of the campground was classified by the Corp of Engineers as a "Wildlife Intensive Area." Although it continued to be available for trails and backcountry use. In 1989, the park was the host of the historic steamship "Jean." It was docked in the marina and would remain there until July 2004 when it was moved to Portland, Oregon. In 1989, the park had also hosted a horseback riding concession.

Idaho Governor John Evans initially appointed the Governor's Lewis and Clark Trail Committee in 1983 to assist state agencies, the legislature, and others in better preserving and promoting the portion of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail that lies in Idaho. Governor Phil Batt expanded the size and scope of the Committee in 1995 to oversee Lewis and Clark Bicentennial activities in Idaho. The committee's activities included the preservation of pristine trail properties, development of interpretive centers, education of thousands of Idaho students, and the awarding of millions of dollars to Idaho communities to help them tell and preserve Lewis and Clark history in the Idaho story. Lewiston community members came to the IDPR with the idea for updating the old visitor's center in preparation for the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial. That idea evolved into a Lewis and Clark Discovery Center proposal. The 2001 Idaho legislature approved more than \$750,000 in funding to the IDPR to renovate the existing Hells Gate State Park visitors center into a Lewis and Clark interpretive center. But rather than a renovation project, it was soon decided that it would be better to develop an entirely new building devoted to the Lewis and Clark theme. Work began in the summer of 2001, and completion was projected for spring of 2003. Additional funding was obtained from a variety of sources to include the National Park Service Challenge Cost Share Program. The final cost of the center was \$ 1.4 million and it was opened on August 5, 2004. A dedication event was held on August 12. More than a hundred people spread across its outdoor plaza where local leaders and officials congratulated Idaho on its new Lewis and Clark Discovery Center. Senator Mike Crapo said of the center: "This is another example of Idahoans coming together to preserve our unique history and our unique heritage." The *Lewiston Star Tribune* described it as: "...a state-of-the-art tourism center complete with a babbling brook, bronze wildlife sculptures, natural landscaping and spectacular view of the Snake River." Once the park staff moved into the new visitor center, the old visitor center was leased out to become the Jack O'Connor Hunting Heritage and Education Center. It opened in 2006.

Recreation Activities:

Camping: The park has a total of 86 campsites situated in a grassy and shady scene near the Snake River. RV hookups are available in several sites. There are also 8 camping cabins available for rent. There are three improved restroom buildings with showers.

Picnicking: There are a total of 57 individual picnic tables. Most of these are located in the day use area by the swimming beach. But there are also a few tables at the visitor centers. The day use area has 1 group picnic shelter and 5 individual family picnic shelters. There is a playground in the day use area. There is also a nearby disc golf course here.

Fishing: November and December often are the best times to fish for steelhead, the big, sea-run rainbow trout that migrate up the river from the Pacific Ocean each fall. These steelhead, typically average between 5 pounds and 14 pounds. Other fish found in the Snake river include:

Please Remember

- There is a \$5.00 per vehicle per day fee required for access to the park even if the entrance stations is closed.
- Open fires are not allowed on the beaches.
- There are no lifeguards on duty at the designated swimming beach.
- Personal floatation devices are required for any watercraft on the lake or river.
- All watercraft must display a current invasive species decal.
- Dogs must be on a leash at all times, are not permitted in the buildings and are not allowed on the swimming beach.
- Motor vehicles are to stay on established roadways unless directed otherwise.
- When hiking, biking, or horseback riding, please stay on the trails.
- Dogs are allowed on the trails when on leash, but you must clean-up after them.

bluegill, pumpkinseed, sunfish, bullhead catfish, catfish, crappie, largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, rainbow trout, chinook salmon, coho salmon, sockeye salmon, tiger muskie, yellow perch, and sturgeon.

Boating: There is a marina building and marina docks with a “harbor” protected by levees. There are about 100 slips with 30 amp electrical service available on the marina docks. There is also boat launching ramp. The boat launch parking lot has space for towing vehicles with trailers to park.

Swimming: The day use area has a large designated swimming beach. The beach is sandy and an easy walk from the day use area parking lot.

Trails: The park has 11 miles of trails that can be used for hiking, mountain biking, and horseback riding.

Horseback riding: A separate equestrian parking lot is provided in the park for parking horse trailers and their towing vehicles. There is a vault toilet located at this trailhead.

Biking: A paved bicycle path begins in the park. It extends from the campground for 3 miles and passes by day use area and the Lewis and Clark Discovery Center and to the north park boundary. From there it directly connects to a system of 22 miles of paved bicycle trails that leads to places in and around Lewiston, ID and Clarkston, WA.

Nature Study: A short hike down the River Run Trail will bring you to the park's main geologic feature. This trail also has a variety of riparian vegetation to examine along the way. Hells Gate State Park is a unit of the Idaho Birding Trail and focuses on raptors, shorebirds, songbirds, upland birds, waterbirds, and waterfowl.

Visitor Centers: The Lewis & Clark Discovery Center is located in Hells Gate State Park. It was completed in commemoration of the bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. It is Idaho's destination visitor center for interpreting the Lewis and Clark Expedition. It has interpretive exhibits and displays, maps and brochures, a theater for viewing documentary films, the park's registration desk, and a small gift shop. Kayaks and bicycles are available for rent.

The Jack O'Connor Hunting Heritage and Education Center consists of a museum displaying over 60 trophies that span a lifetime of hunting throughout North America, the Indian

sub-continent, Africa and the middle east. Also on display are some of Jack O'Connor's firearms. The center houses a museum store with clothing and other logoed merchandise as well as many original O'Connor books for sale. A tastefully appointed and well equipped meeting facility is available by reservation. Jack O'Connor was the undisputed dean of outdoor writers, a world class big game hunter, wildlife conservation pioneer and an editor for *Outdoor Life* which was the premier sportsman's magazine in his era. He was a professor of journalism at the University of Arizona from 1934 to 1945. He and his wife were residents of the Lewiston area from 1948 until their deaths. Other than the lease on the old visitor center building, the Jack O'Connor Center is not affiliated with the interpretive activities of Hells Gate State Park. But it certainly worth seeing.

Sight Seeing: Hells Gate State Park is a part of the much larger Lower Granite Recreation Area operated by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (USACE). Many of these USACE parks have restrooms, picnic tables, ample parking, river access, and access to the bicycle trails. The other "parks" that can be toured from Hells Gate State Park include: Chief Timothy Park (8 miles west of Clarkston); Chestnut Beach (Clarkston); Asotin Slough/ Chief Looking Glass Park (5 miles south of Clarkston); Clearwater Park (Lewiston); Swallows Park (Clarkston); and Lewiston Levee Parkway (Lewiston). A drive from Hells Gate State Park to the National Park Service visitor center for the Nez Perce National Historic Park is also worth the trip. It is about 10 miles east of Lewiston on Highway 12.

Resource Management Issues: The park does not have a IDPR master plan available. However, it is part of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Resource Management Plan for the Lower Granite project.

Suggestions for the Future: The following are suggested improvements to the park.

- The park is suffering from deferred maintenance issues. Specifically all of the paved surfaces are in a deteriorating condition. IDPR should consider a resurfacing project and include paving all gravel surfaces.
- IDPR should consider extending the shoreline paved bicycle trail all the way south to the basalt cliffs to provide better access to this scenic wonder.