

The Snake River used to flow across the northern portion of the Snake River Plain, but now flows along the southern margin of the Plain. The river was pushed there by successive lava flows. Sixty-six thousand acres are within a Wilderness Study Area (WSA). The northwest end of the lava flow has been designated as a National Natural Landmark by the US Park Service. Today, three trails go across this desolate landscape, one primitive and the other two developed with interpretive signs. Even though this area looks uninhabited, it is growing and alive with wildlife and vegetation.

Hawaiian Landscape in Idaho

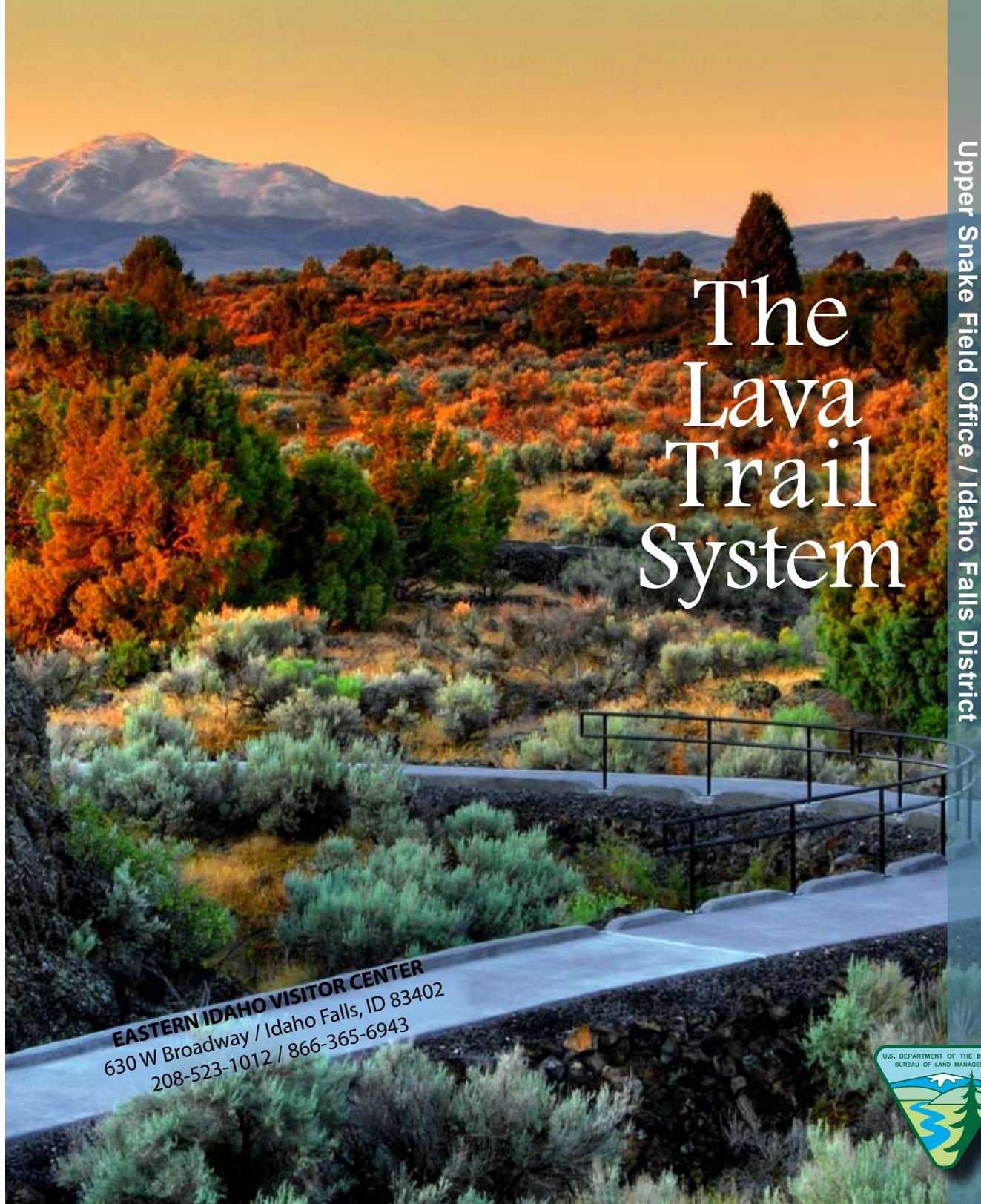
The Lava Trails traverse the desert of the Snake River Plain through contorted landscapes created from multiple lava flows. These Hawaiian-type lava flows are associated with the stretching of the earth's crust. Hell's Half Acre lava flow erupted about 4,100 years ago and is 222 square miles or 162,000 acres. The lava flowed at 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit, had the consistency of molasses, and traveled at speeds up to 30 mph.

Botany

In the spring and early summer, numerous wildflowers, such as Evening Primrose, Indian Paintbrush, wild onions, penstemon, geraniums, and Prickly Pear Cactus, color the landscape. Bright, green ferns grow in deep cracks. Plants ranging in size from tiny mosses and lichens to juniper trees hundreds of years old grow here. Other native species include sagebrush, rabbitbrush, bitterbrush, blue bunch wheatgrass, and needle-and-thread grass.

Wildlife

Wildlife roaming the lava flows include mule deer, antelope, sage grouse, bobcats, coyotes, foxes, and occasional snakes. Soaring above the flows are red-tailed hawks, prairie falcons, and golden eagles.



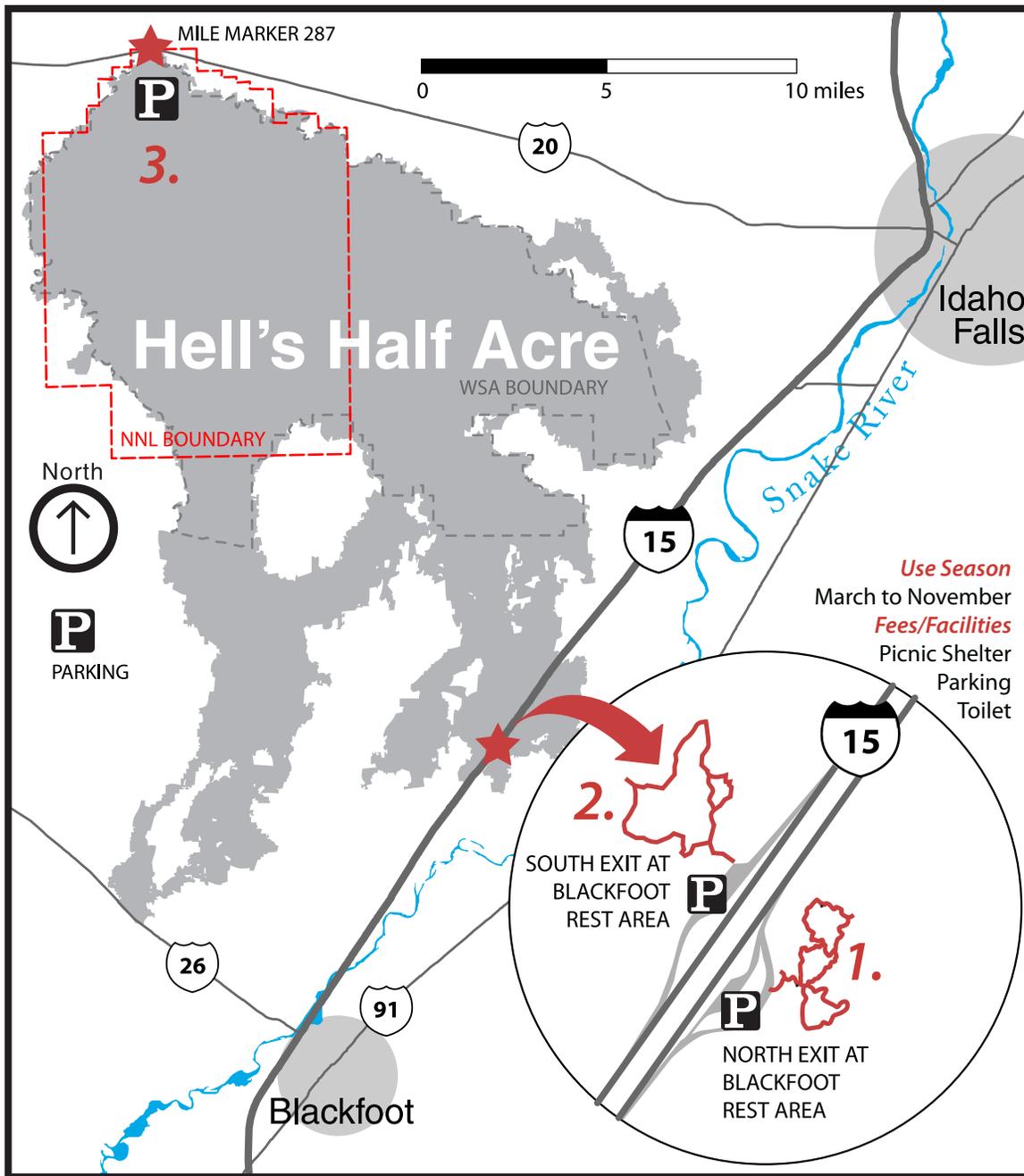
The Lava Trail System

EASTERN IDAHO VISITOR CENTER
630 W Broadway / Idaho Falls, ID 83402
208-523-1012 / 866-365-6943

Upper Snake Field Office / Idaho Falls District

BLM





Hell's Half Acre is designated as a National Natural Landmark (NNL) and a Wilderness Study Area (WSA). These designations help preserve the area so the public can enjoy and study this unique geologic area in its healthy, natural condition. The Lava Trail System is open to non-motorized recreation activities only.

Visitors can explore the Lava Trail System in three locations:

1.) Hell's Half Acre Trail (Northbound I-15)

Two developed lava trails with interpretive signs discussing geology and biology of the lava flow; popular destination for environmental education groups.

Located about 20 miles southwest of Idaho Falls and 5 miles east of Blackfoot. While traveling northbound or southbound on Interstate 15, take the "Blackfoot Rest Area" exit. The interpretive trails are close to the parking area.

2.) Hell's Half Acre Trail (Southbound I-15)

Two developed lava trails with interpretive signs discussing geology and biology of the lava flow; popular destination for environmental education groups.

Located about 20 miles southwest of Idaho Falls and 5 miles east of Blackfoot. While traveling northbound or southbound on Interstate 15, take the "Blackfoot Rest Area" exit.

3.) Twenty Mile Trail

Undeveloped trails offering scenic solitude; short 0.5 mile loop trail and a 4.5-mile trail to the main vent of the Hell's Half Acre flow. Trails are primitive and marked with poles across lava. A fire ring and other amenities are located at the trailhead.

Travel west from Idaho Falls on Highway 20 to mile marker 287. Continue 0.3 miles until reaching a sign noting "Lava Trail." Turn south onto the gravel road and continue one-quarter mile to the trailhead.