



Frenchglen (Photo by Bill Renwick)

National Back Country Byway

Diamond Loop



Narrows (Photo by Marcus Haines)

For further information, contact:

**Bureau of Land Management
Burns District Office**
28910 Hwy 20 West
Hines, Oregon 97738
541-573-4400
www.or.blm.gov/burns



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Introduction

As you travel the Diamond Loop Back Country Byway, you will find a patchwork of high desert terrains. From the deep blues of mountain vistas and the dusky sage-covered hills, to the red rimrock canyons and the grassy reaches of marshes and valleys, you will find 69 miles of new adventure waiting for you.

If you are a wildlife watcher, keep an eye out for wild horses, mule deer, or pronghorn antelope. Bring along your binoculars to spot the waterfowl, shorebirds, hawks, and eagles that traverse the Pacific Flyway through the area.

Whether you are exploring a lava flow, stopping at small historic towns, or passing the ranches scattered throughout the valleys between the Steens and Riddle mountains, you will travel back country roads that lead to attractions right out of the "Old West."



Inside Round Barn

How to use this Brochure

This brochure offers the option of three starting points:

- Near Princeton on State Highway 78 (north)
- The junction of State Highway 205 and Diamond Lane (west)
- Frenchglen on State Highway 205 (south)

Check the map in this brochure or at the byway interpretive shelters to determine your location. Then choose the route that will take you to the features you want to explore and some you didn't even know existed.



Little Red Cone, Diamond Craters

Tips for Travelers

- Road conditions in the area can change without notice.
- Be cautious when going up or down the grade between Diamond and Happy Valleys.
- Please respect private property. Do not wander onto meadows and ranchlands without getting permission from landowners. During spring and fall, watch for cattle herds on the byway.
- If you see something of interest and you wish to stop, drive your vehicle onto the road shoulder as far as safely possible, or choose a pull-out to get completely off the road. Be aware of others who may have done the same, particularly during the spring waterfowl migration.
- Respect natural and cultural artifacts. Leave them as you found them.
- Nearest gas and food is at The Narrows on Highway 205 at the turnoff to the Malheur Refuge headquarters.

Time to Explore. Time to Explore. Time to Explore...

Round Barn

The Peter French Round Barn, circa 1880s was built by cattle baron Peter French for training ranch horses during the winter months. The barn's unusual design is perfectly suited to its purpose. It is 100 feet in diameter, has a 60-foot wide outer circle corral surrounded by a 20-foot wide outer circle paddock, and has an umbrella-type center truss with centrally supported rafters. The structure is located in land donated to Oregon State Parks by the Jenkins family who opened a visitor center and museum nearby in 2004.

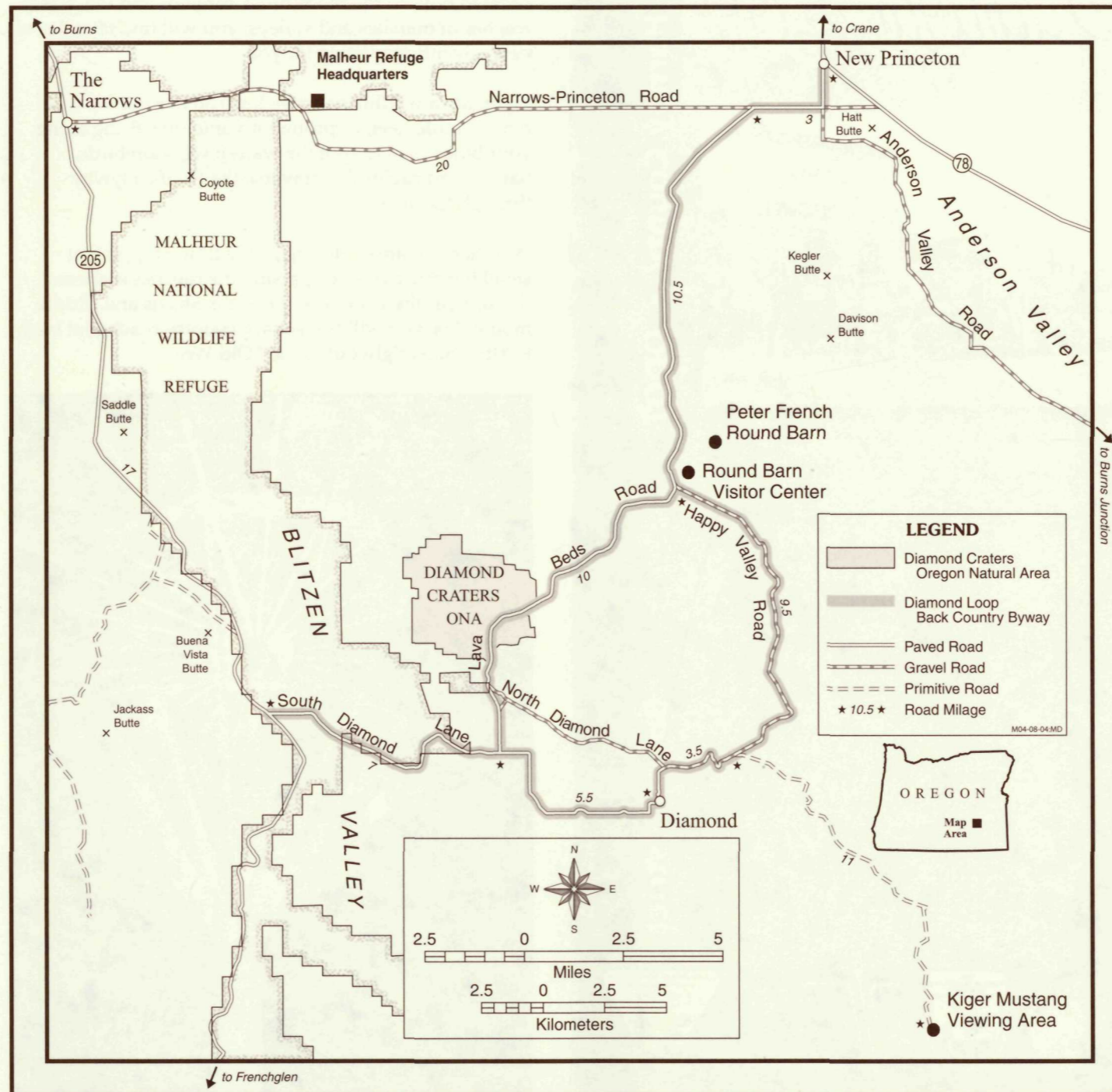
Kiger Mustangs

The Kiger mustangs, thought to be one of the purest herds of Spanish mustangs existing in the wild today, may be the descendents of the Spanish Barb horses brought to North America in the late 16th century. Among their unique physical characteristics are dun and buckskin colored coats, zebra stripes on knees and hocks, hooked ear tips, and fine muzzles.

The Bureau of Land Management has developed a wild horse viewing area accessible to high clearance vehicles from Happy Valley Road and passable only in dry weather. The Kigers and other mustangs can occasionally be seen at BLM's wild horse corrals. Tours of the facility, located on U.S. Highway 20/395 a few miles west of Hines, can be arranged at the Bureau of Land Management, Burns District Office in Hines.

Town of Diamond

Diamond, a small ranching community named for Mace McCoy's diamond brand, was established as a major supply center for ranchers, sheepmen, and travelers. At its peak, the town had a population of about 50. Today the town is almost deserted except for the newly renovated Hotel Diamond, the school, a modern community building, and a few residences. A row of 100-year-old poplar trees still shades the McWilliams' home. A stone building constructed by Charlie Hawkins still stands to remind us of bygone days. It once served as a store, post office, community meeting place, and dance hall.



Diamond Craters

Diamond Craters, an Outstanding Natural Area of 17,000 acres, has some of the most diverse basaltic volcanic features in the nation clustered within a small, accessible area. Also named for Mace McCoy's diamond brand, the area displays an entire range of eruptions possible in basaltic volcanism. This volcanic area was formed some time in the past 25,000 years, with some of the eruptions taking place as late as 1,000 years ago. With the brochure specifically designed for a self-guided tour, you will be able to identify craters and vents, cinder cones, spatter cones, lava tubes, driblet spires, a graben, and water-filled maar.

Malheur National Wildlife Refuge

Managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, this wildlife refuge was dedicated by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1908. The upper Blitzen Valley section, including the P Ranch, was added in 1935. The refuge is a favorite destination for bird watchers throughout the western United States. Approximately 220 species of birds, including migrating waterfowl, wading birds, and shorebirds can be found on and adjacent to the refuge during various times of the year. Stop at refuge headquarters for more detailed information.

Town of Frenchglen

In the mid 1920s, the Eastern Oregon Livestock Company urged the development of a town site in the upper Blitzen Valley because an increasing number of travelers were coming to their P Ranch headquarters for aid and accommodations. In 1923, a post office was established in the community, then called Somerange.

In 1930, the name of the post office was changed to Frenchglen. The new name honored well-known, local cattle baron, Peter French, and his father-in-law, Dr. Hugh James Glenn, the California wheat king. French purchased an 185,000-acre landholding to establish his cattle range. Today, the town still has a post office, school, and several residences. The hotel, which still accommodates travelers, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.