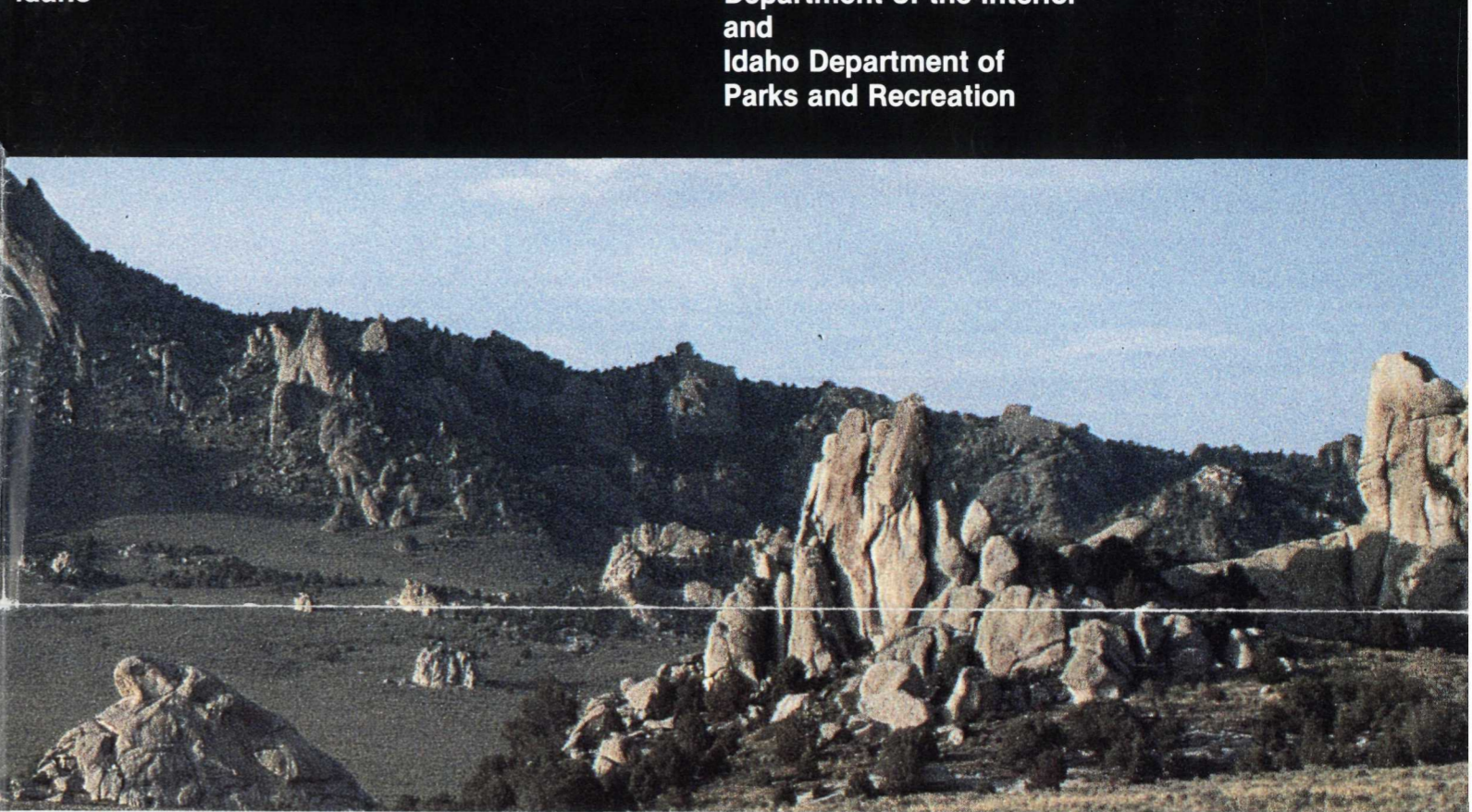
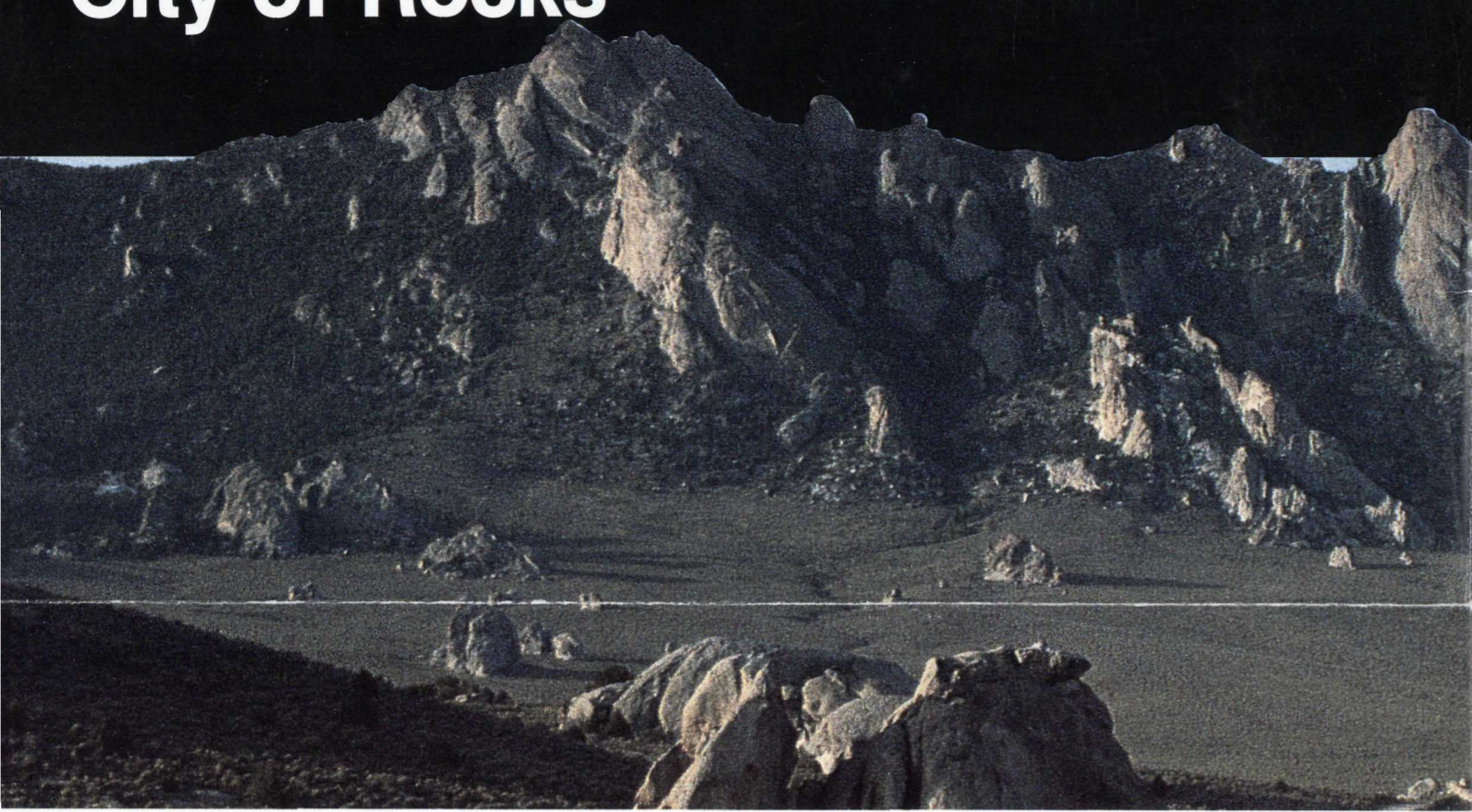


# City of Rocks

National Reserve  
Idaho

National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
and  
Idaho Department of  
Parks and Recreation



Lying just two miles west of Almo and eighteen miles southeast of Oakley in south central Idaho, the City of Rocks is named for its skyline of rock pinnacles, many 60-70 stories high, resembling a silent city.

The historical and cultural resources of City of Rocks are profound. The Shoshone and Bannock Indians traveled, hunted and gathered pinyon nuts here; emigrants traveled the California Trail and the Salt Lake Alternate Trail beginning in 1843. An estimated fifty thousand people traveled these trails through City of Rocks in 1852 on their way to the California gold fields. The Kelton, Utah, to Boise stage route passed through here from 1869 to 1883. Many emigrants left their names with axle grease on rocks and their journals provide vivid accounts of impressions and adventures experienced during their stay.

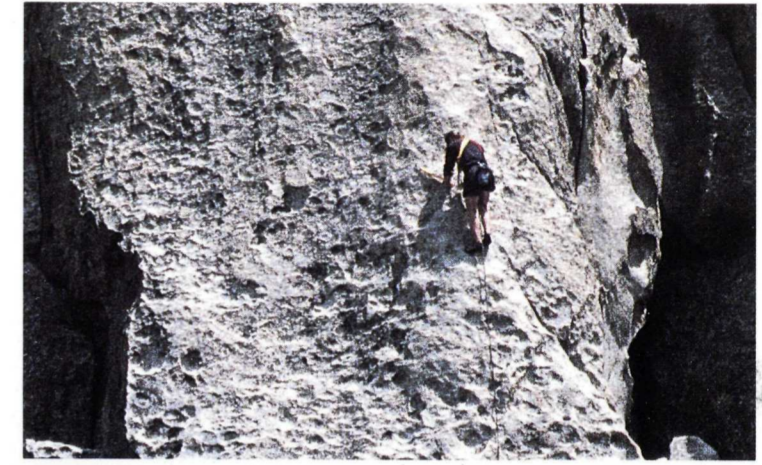
By the late 1800s settlers began to move into the area in and around City of Rocks. Farming declined during the drought years of the 1920s and 1930s, but ranching survived and cattle grazing continues to this day.

For more than 100 years this area has been known for its scenic values and as a milestone on the emigrant trails west. More recently it has gained national renown for the outstanding rock climbing opportunities it provides. The area is at the northern extension of the single-leaf pinyon pine tree and contains some of the oldest rock west of the Mississippi in the United States. It is also designated as a National Historic Landmark and listed on the National Registry of Natural Landmarks.

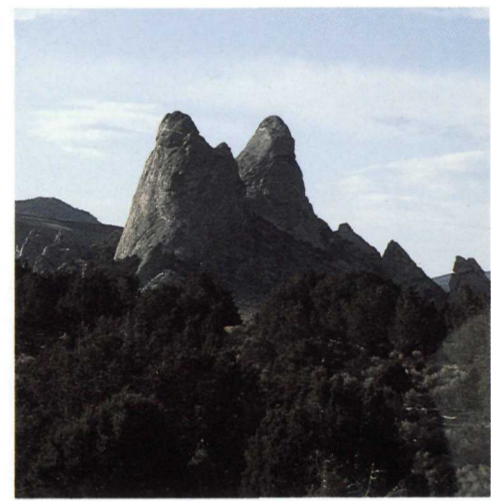
City of Rocks National Reserve was established by Congress

on November 18, 1988, "in order to preserve and protect the significant historical and cultural resources; to manage recreational use; to protect and maintain scenic quality; and to interpret the nationally significant values of the reserve."

A Reserve is a unit of the National Park system that is cooperatively managed by federal and local authorities. City of Rocks National Reserve is cooperatively managed by the National Park Service and the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation. The Reserve is approximately 14,300 acres in size. About 7,300 acres is publicly owned. The other 7,000 acres is privately owned. Your cooperation in respecting the rights of the private landowners is needed to help preserve this area.



## GEOLOGY



The creation of the City of Rocks is as fascinating to those visiting today as those of old. Many theories of their creation have been raised ranging from volcanic flows to earthquakes. But the basic cause of the formations is erosion.

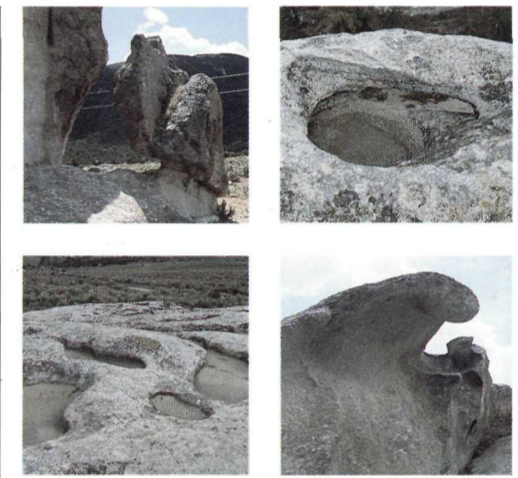
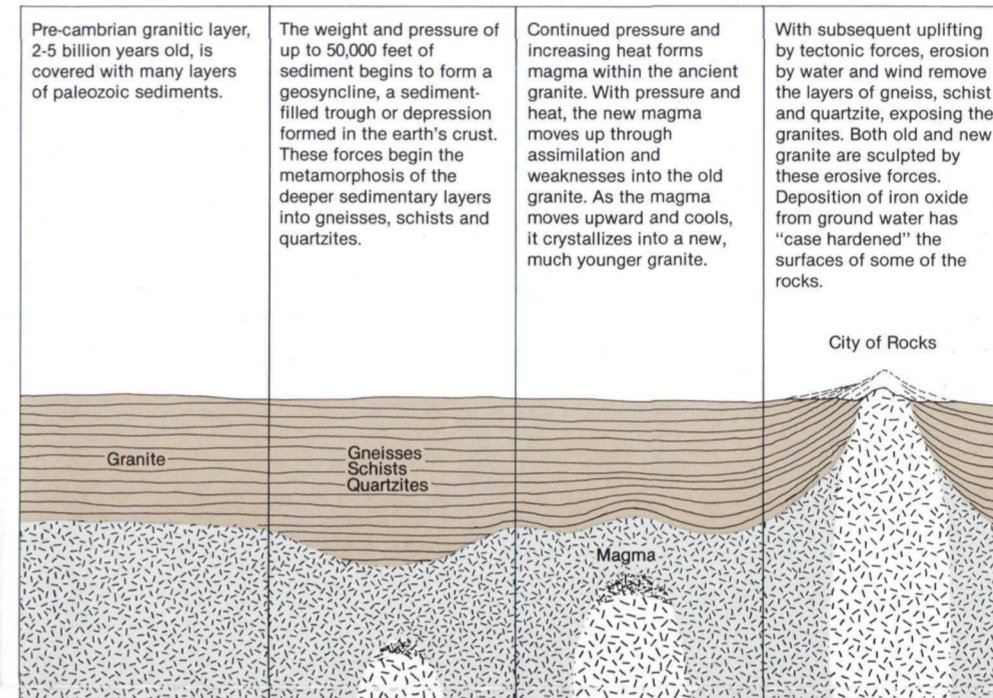
The formations you see are composed of granitic rock (light-colored, coarse-grained rock with dark specks—salt and pepper) formed deep within the earth's surface. When first formed in the earth's crust, the granitic rocks were covered by layers of quartzite, schist, and gneiss. With the passage of time, the overlying rocks and granite cracked, fractured, and eroded. Along the cracks and fractures erosion occurred faster until the underlying granite was exposed.

Most of the granite is part of a "small" batholith (large mass of formerly molten rock below the earth's surface) of the Almo Pluton formation which covers approximately forty square miles. Thirty million years ago, this formation intruded much older (2.5-billion-year-old) granitic rock, the Green Creek Complex, which is some of the oldest that can be found in the continental United States. Both of these granites can be seen at Twin Sisters, each spire being a different granite. The darker Twin of the Twin Sisters

is 2½ billion years old. The lighter one is 25 million years old. They are not really "twin" sisters at all, but perhaps "mother" and "daughter."

The shaping of the granite is a result of weathering and case hardening. The top of the rock is dissolved by rainwater, and redeposited minerals, such as iron oxide, form a more resistant, crust-like cap. This iron oxide-enriched outer layer is more resistant to weathering and is a darker color than the underlying material. Once the more resistant covering rock is gone, the inner granite is subjected to the erosive forces that mold the granite into the caves, arches, bathtubs, and hollow boulders that we see today. The sides of the spires, where water seeps into the cracks, undergoes frost wedging which chips off pieces of rock, an action known as exfoliation. These three processes give the rocks their present shape.

The City of Rocks looks much the same as it did to the pioneers, though the exfoliation process is continuing to change the rock and has had time to chip off many of the pioneers' inscriptions. Many people see animals, or faces, or buildings in the rocks. What you see is limited only by your imagination.



## HISTORY



The first trails in the City of Rocks were used by Indians to hunt game, gather food and travel from camp to camp hundreds of years before the first white man. The Shoshone-Bannock Indians were the main users of the area and their way of life was greatly changed by the coming of the horse and the many emigrants that would pass through their homelands. Most emigrants did not see Indians but some journals recorded smoke signals in the high hills and surrounding mountains. The Indians came to resent the intruders, but there was little that they could do to halt the growing stream of wagons every summer from 1843 on.

Granite pass was discovered in 1826 by Peter Skene Ogden and his Snake River trapping brigade. This area was not rich in beaver and did not hold an attraction for the trappers. After

1840, mountain men began to guide emigrant parties bound for California. Two such men were Joseph B. Chiles and Joseph R. Walker. Returning from California to Missouri in 1842, Chiles found that Granite Pass offered a practical emigrant route for California traffic and a year later Walker led an emigrant party following that route. City of Rocks, just north east of Granite Pass, became a major landmark along the route.

By 1846, Oregon traffic was also passing through the City of Rocks as Jesse Applegate encouraged them to use his route to reach the Willamette Valley. The California gold rush of 1849 brought thousands of fortune seekers through the City of Rocks. During 1849 the B.M. Hudspeth and J.J. Myers trail from Soda Springs to Cassia Creek was used as a short cut for the

traveling gold seekers. This route bypassed Fort Hall and was thought to be shorter and faster.

A new route was started in 1848 by the Mormons to get from California to Salt Lake. They found that after coming through Granite Pass, they could branch from the City of Rocks route and go directly to Salt Lake without going to Fort Hall. This route became known as the Salt Lake Alternate. The trail was also used by those seeking California who wished to come by way of Salt Lake.

Emigrant journals and diaries reveal a great deal of information concerning life during western travel and reactions to City of Rocks.

... During the forenoon we passed through a stone village composed of



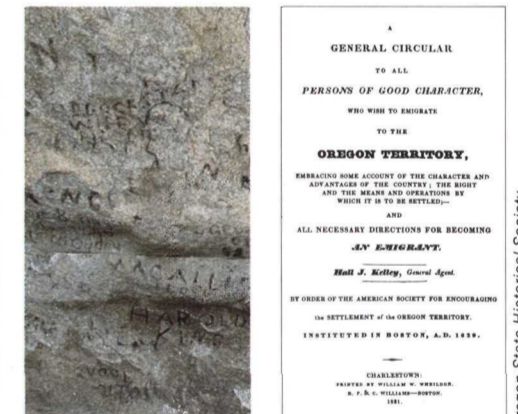
huge, isolated rocks of various and singular shapes, some resembling cottages, other steeples and domes. It is called "City of Rocks," but I think the name "Pyramid City" more suitable. It is a sublime, strange, and wonderful scene! one of nature's most interesting works. . . . [Margaret Ann Alsip Frink, July 17, 1850]

We entered a very extraordinary valley. . . . A couple of miles long, and probably ½ mile broad. A light grey decipitating granite, in blocks of every size, from that of a barrel to the dimensions of a large dwelling-house; . . . worn. . . into strange and romantic forms. . . . [Bruff, Aug 29, 1849]

. . . Some of them are several hundred feet high and split from pinnacle to base by numerous perpendicular cracks or fissures. Some are domelike and the cracks run at different angles breaking up the large masses into huge blocks many of which hang tottering on their lofty pointed beds. . . I have not time to write the hundredth part of the marvels of the valley of rocks. . . . [Lord, August 17, 1856]

At the time the trails were being opened, Granite Pass was in Mexico possession and less than a mile from Oregon Territory. After 1850, the area became part of Utah Territory, but wound up in Idaho in the 1872 Idaho-Utah boundary survey.

With opening of Idaho mines in the 1860s, a demand for supplies was created. Freight from



Utah traveled the Salt Lake Alternate trail, then turned north towards Oakley. Stage routes were established from southern railroads—one being John Halley's stage line from Kelton, Utah, to Boise. A stage station is a half mile east of the junction of the California Trail and the Salt Lake Alternate.

Portions of the trails are still visible, as are names of emigrants applied with axle grease on the rocks. Viewing landscape and examining portions of the trail, one can almost visualize the wagon trains coming up the steep slopes with oxen, horses, or mules. Did all the emigrants whose names appear on these rocks reach their destination?

## PLANNING YOUR VISIT



The City of Rocks National Reserve Ranger and Information Station is located in Almo, Idaho. Almo is at the end of the paved county road 45 miles south of Burley. Please stop by the Ranger and Information Station for more information and current reports on roads, weather, camping and restrictions that may be in effect.

City of Rocks National Reserve is located on



of Rocks.

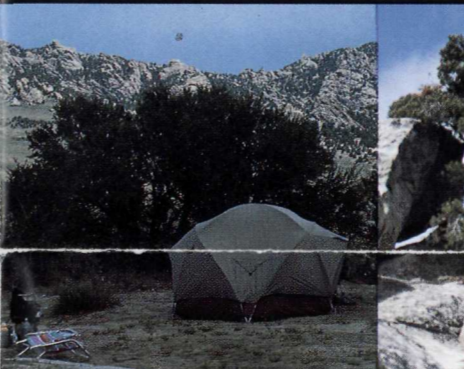
Temperatures get very cold and very hot. At 5,000 to 7,000 feet above sea level, City of Rocks National Reserve has occasional subfreezing temperature even in July and August, but it can also have midday summer temperatures of 100°. High elevation sunshine is intense—be careful.

**Wildlife and Vegetation**  
The combination of environmental

extremes causes a mosaic of lodgepole pine, limber pine, and Douglas fir at high elevations; quaking aspen, cottonwood, and mountain mahogany at mid elevations; and sagebrush, juniper, and pinyon pine at low elevations. The tallest pinyon pine in Idaho at 55 feet is located here in the Reserve. In the spring and summer wildflowers are found. Over 450 different plant species have been recorded.

Wildlife is as varied as vegetation. Buffalo once roamed the area but now elk and mule deer are the largest mammals found in the Reserve. Other mammals include: mountain lions, badgers, bobcats, porcupines, coyotes, ground squirrels, rabbits and bats. The Reserve is part of the Mindoka Bird Refuge and a variety of birds are found. Eagles, falcons, hawks, vultures, hummingbirds, jays, sparrows, doves and Idaho's

**Facilities and Information**  
Facilities at the Reserve are primitive and restrooms are located throughout.



Potable water is available at the hand pump well at the summit of Emery Canyon Road, about ¼ of a mile above Bath Rock. THIS WATER IS FOR DRINKING PURPOSES. PLEASE HELP US KEEP THE

**WATER SOURCE SAFE FOR ALL.** All other water in the Reserve should be boiled before using. Please use a marked campsite and the established fire grill or ring.

A Quick Response Unit is located in Almo in case of an accident. Please send someone for help as soon as possible. You may contact the Reserve Headquarters, Tracy Store in Almo or dial 911. A pay phone, food

supplies and gasoline are available at Tracy Store. Overnight accommodations are available in the surrounding towns. Please inquire locally.

Reserve Headquarters.

**Rock Climbing**  
City of Rocks National Reserve is internationally known for technical rock climbing. It is not unheard of for a European climber to fly here solely to climb Morning Glory Spire, Animal Cracker Dome or the Bixtop.

American climbers have made it one of the favorite areas in the West. DO NOT CLIMB UNLESS YOU HAVE TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE.

**SERIOUS ACCIDENTS CAN OCCUR WHEN ROCK SCRAMBLING.** Please stop by the Ranger Station for current status and regulations for climbing.

**Hunting**  
The discharging of fire arms is prohibited in the Reserve. The only exceptions to this are hunting seasons regulated by the Idaho Fish and Game Department. A hunting license and game tag must be with the hunter at all times. For information on the

types of hunts, seasons and regulations please contact the Idaho Fish and Game Department.

# City of Rocks

National Reserve  
Idaho

National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
and  
Idaho Department of  
Parks and Recreation

## How to Reach City of Rocks

City of Rocks National Reserve is located 45 miles south of Burley, Idaho, on Route 77 and the paved county road to Almo, or via Route 27 to Oakley, and then 14 miles south on the gravel road.

From these two towns follow posted signs. The California Trail

parallels much of the road from Connor, on Route 77, to Almo and

City of Rocks National Reserve (see maps).  
For more information concerning the City of Rocks National Reserve please write or call:

City of Rocks National Reserve  
P.O. Box 169  
Almo, Idaho 83312  
(208) 824-5519

or National Park Service  
963 Blue Lakes Blvd.  
Twin Falls, Idaho 83301  
(208) 733-8398

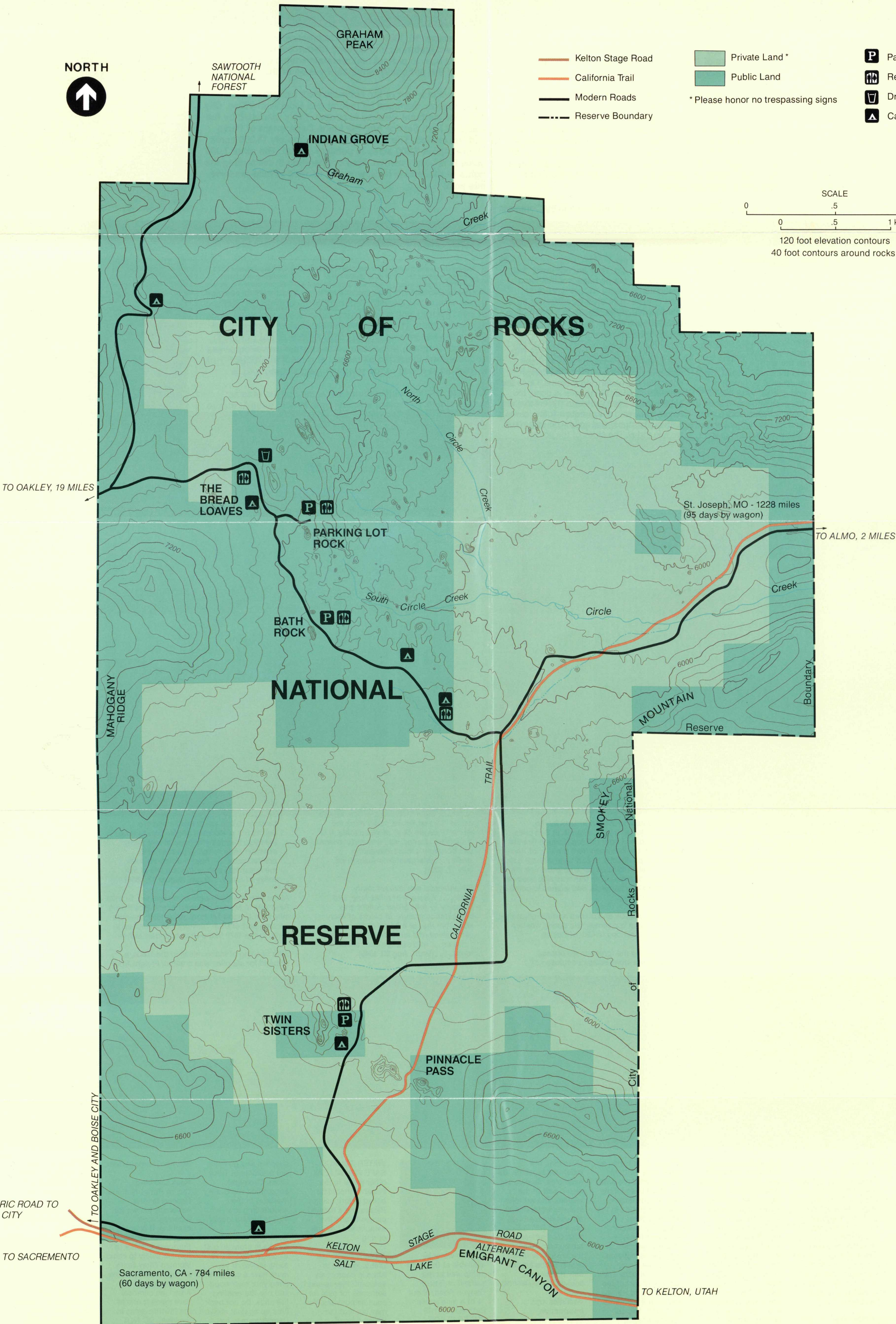
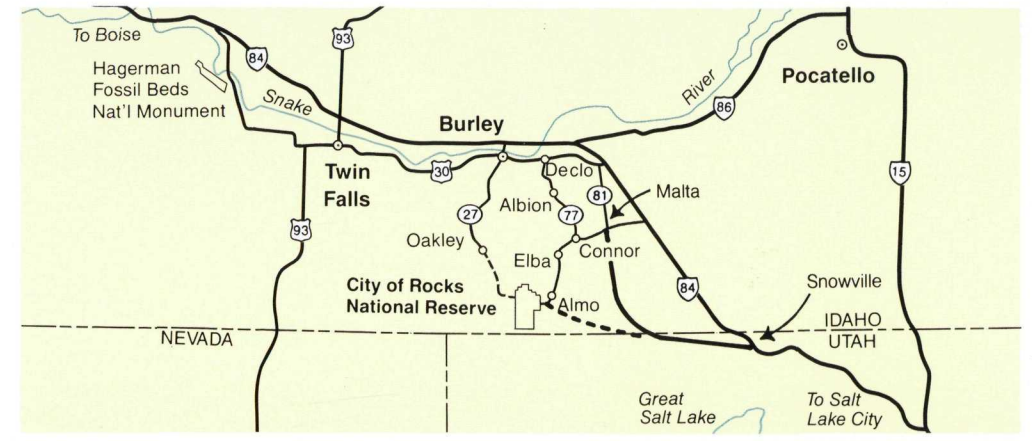
Cassia County offers a full range of activities and points of interest to resident and newcomer alike. Burley and Oakley have fine summertime rodeos. Oakley and Elba have spectacular turn-of-the-century brick homes. Oakley has a beautifully restored opera house where a number of

theatrical productions are staged throughout the year. Pomerelle Ski Area, located between Albion and Connor on Route 77, is considered by locals as one of the best ski areas in southern Idaho. Also on Route 77 is the now-closed Albion Normal School which, like Oakley's historic

district, is included in the National Register of Historic Places. Lake Cleveland in the Sawtooth National Forest is located near the summit of Mt. Harrison, north of the Reserve, and is a good spot for hiking and picnicking. The Independence Lakes near the summit of Cache Peak, also

north of the Reserve, are good for fishing and backpacking.

**Tourist Information**  
Burley Area  
1-800-333-3408  
Region IV  
(South Central Idaho)  
Travel Comm  
1-800-255-8946  
Idaho State Travel  
1-800-635-7820

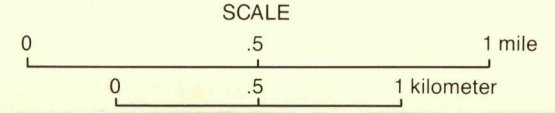


- Kelton Stage Road
- California Trail
- Modern Roads
- Reserve Boundary

- Private Land \*
- Public Land

\* Please honor no trespassing signs

- Parking
- Restrooms
- Drinking Water
- Camping



120 foot elevation contours  
40 foot contours around rocks

HISTORIC ROAD TO BOISE CITY

TO SACRAMENTO

Sacramento, CA - 784 miles  
(60 days by wagon)

TO OAKLEY AND BOISE CITY

TO ALMO, 2 MILES

TO KELTON, UTAH