

FLAGSTAFF HILL

National Historic Oregon Trail



Photo by Doug Petty



National Historic Oregon Trail Center at Flagstaff Hill

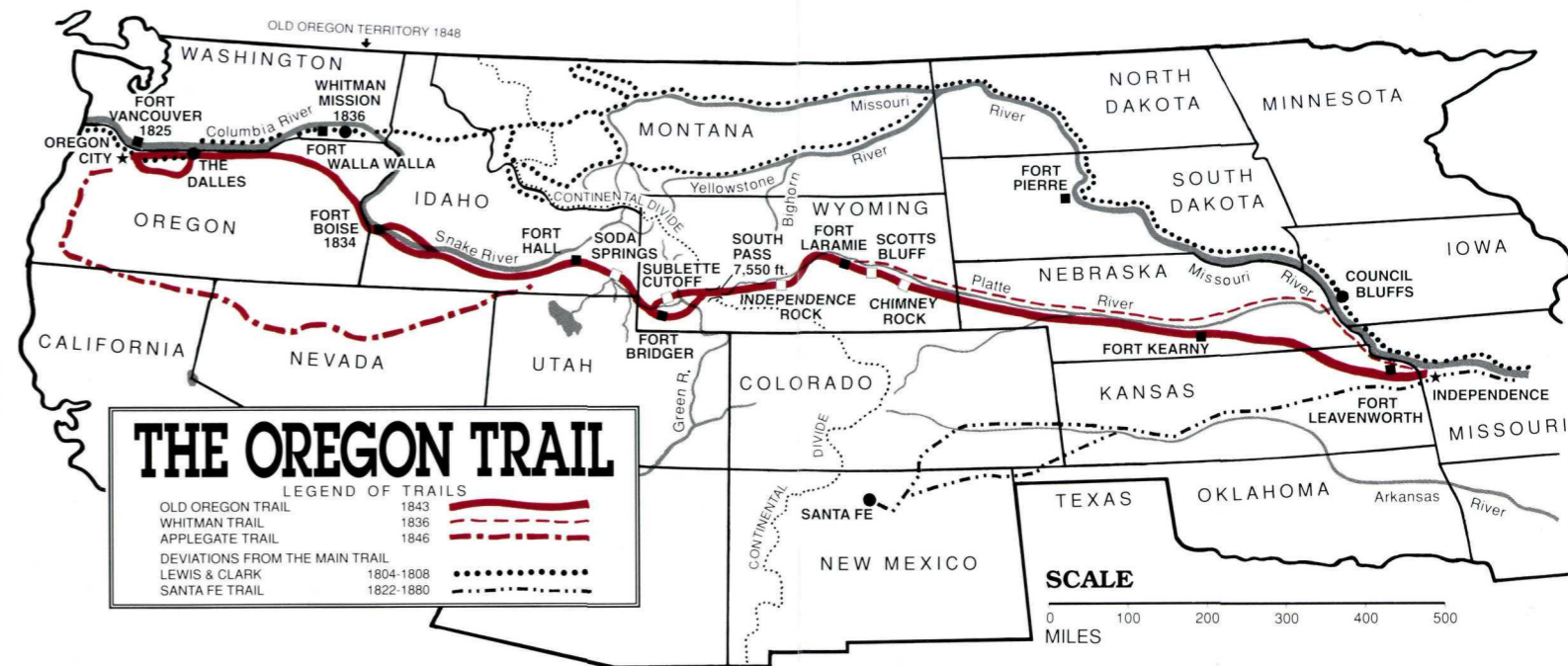
For more information, write or call:

National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center
 Bureau of Land Management
 Post Office Box 987
 Baker City, Oregon 97814
 (503) 523-1843

OPPORTUNITIES AT FLAGSTAFF HILL

The Oregon Trail Center draws visitors into one of the major events in American history. Overland emigration was of national significance. It helped shape the course of development of the western third of the country. Flagstaff Hill overlooks an important segment of well-preserved Oregon Trail ruts. Its setting is the great sagebrush steppe between the Rockies and the Cascades. The place and programs invite visitors to feel, see, and learn about the past.

Exhibits, audio-visual programs, artifacts, films, a trail system, and living history, where center staff and volunteers play the parts of pioneers, tell the story of the Oregon Trail. Flagstaff Hill is a point for gaining understanding. It is a place of the present with a long vantage into time.



THE OREGON TRAIL

Lure of the West

The Oregon Country had a magic ring to it in the mid-1800s. Americans stirred to the fur riches, potentials for missions, and prospects of fertile land. They read the narratives of Lewis & Clark, John C. Fremont, and Washington Irving. Both scientific accounts and travel literature spoke of lofty forests, lush meadows, runs of fish, and a healthy climate. Drawn by adventure, the prospect of a new beginning, escape from debt and creditors, or selling out from good real estate speculation—pioneers had a mix of motives in responding to the magnetism of the frontier.

Westward Ho!

Thousands came west. Some said it was Manifest Destiny and the will of God that America should expand from sea to sea. Others saw it as opportunity. The Indians viewed the whole affair as trespass. Whatever its course, westward migration was of consequence. Between 1841 and 1850 nearly 10,000 outfitted their wagons, secured teams, and set out over the Oregon Trail. And others continued coming by wagon for several more decades.



Grouping and reorganizing, some emigrants set up military-like companies, discussed the routes and distances, and in April and May gathered at "jumping-off" points along the Missouri River frontier. When all was ready, they turned toward the setting sun for a journey across the continent.

Travel Between the Rockies and Cascades

At South Pass, 864 miles west of Independence, Missouri, emigrants entered the great, arid interior of the American West. The next 1,000 miles tested teams and tenacity. Beset by hot days, chilly nights, swirling dust, and Indians eager to barter for clothing, tools, and food, the emigrants had to cope with an environment unlike anything they had previously known. Residents of the meadows and woodlands of the eastern United States, they found no place to hide in the great sagebrush plains.

The Snake River tantalized travelers. Sparklingly clear and filled with fish, it cut through a deep canyon hundreds of feet below the trail. At fords, its swirling waters took a terrible toll, drowning hapless emigrants. Northeastern Oregon, however, hinted at the promises luring emigrants westward. The majestic Blue Mountains, stands of pines, and the well-watered bottomlands along the Powder River confirmed the value of the trip.

And some stayed. The discovery of gold in the Blues in 1862 sparked a major rush and widespread settlement. A new frontier grew in the mountainous interior of the West.



Those who pushed on crossed the Blues, the Columbia Plateau, and finally the Cascades. Those who could afford it or were willing to risk it descended the Columbia Gorge by water. Beyond lay the fertile valleys of western Oregon and Washington.

Interpretive Center

The Interpretive Center contains both permanent and changing programs. It houses a theater, meeting rooms, a gift shop, restrooms, and administrative offices.

Amphitheater

This outdoor facility uses Baker Valley and Blue Mountains as a backdrop for special programs. Events and times are posted at the Interpretive Center.

Encampment

The pioneer encampment, operating on a seasonal basis, is a point of living history interpretation. It brings to life everyday experiences and adventures from the era of overland emigration.

Lode Mine

This lode mine, another seasonal living history site, illustrates the important role of mining in the development of northeastern Oregon. The lode mine includes accurate mining structures, ore carts and tools.

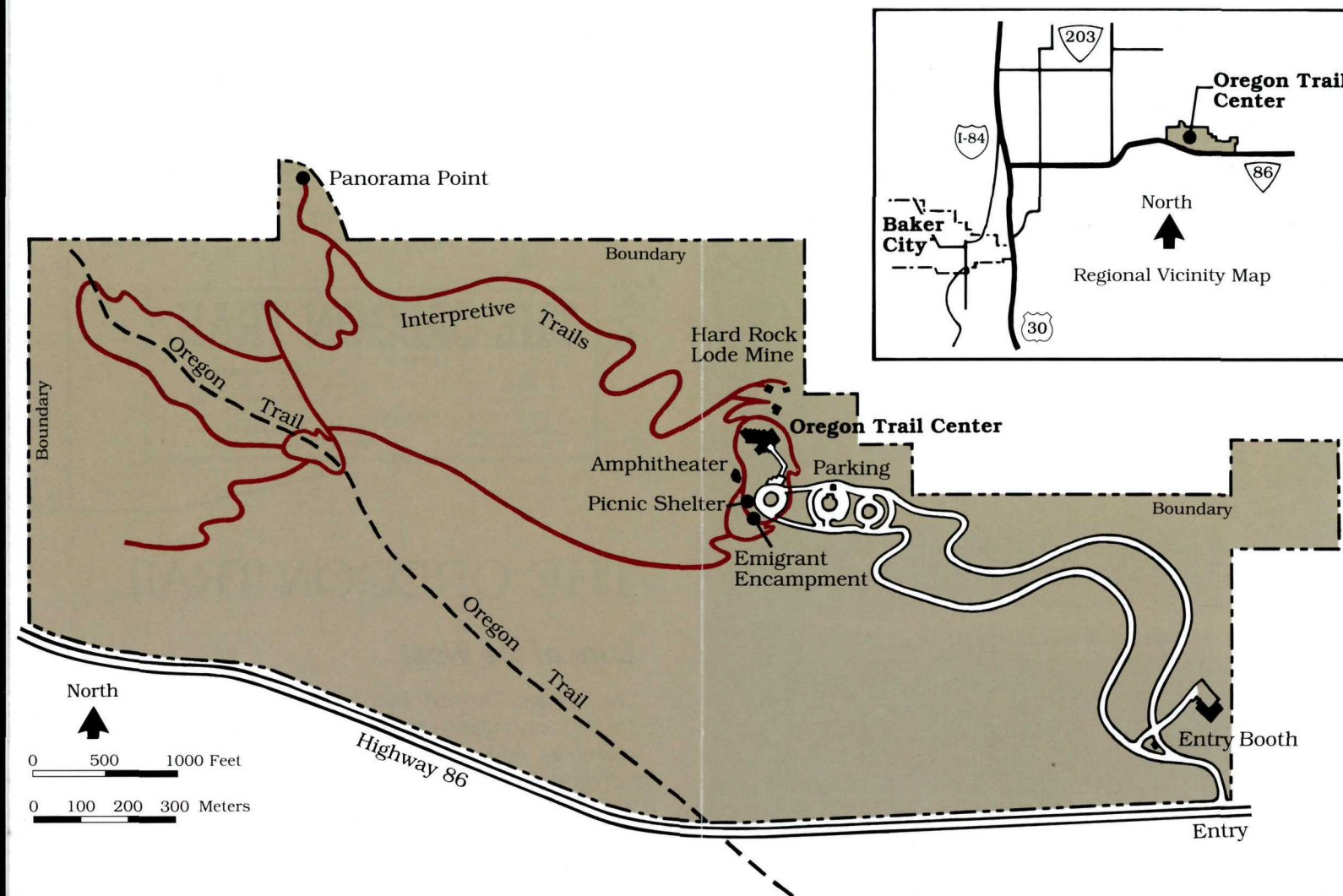
Interpretive Trail System

A total of 4.2 miles of interpretive trail systems beckons to visitors who want to explore the great sagebrush-steppe confronting the pioneers. Interpretive sites await those taking the 2.3 mile, 1 hour and 15 minute Main Loop Trail walk to and from the original ruts of the Oregon Trail.

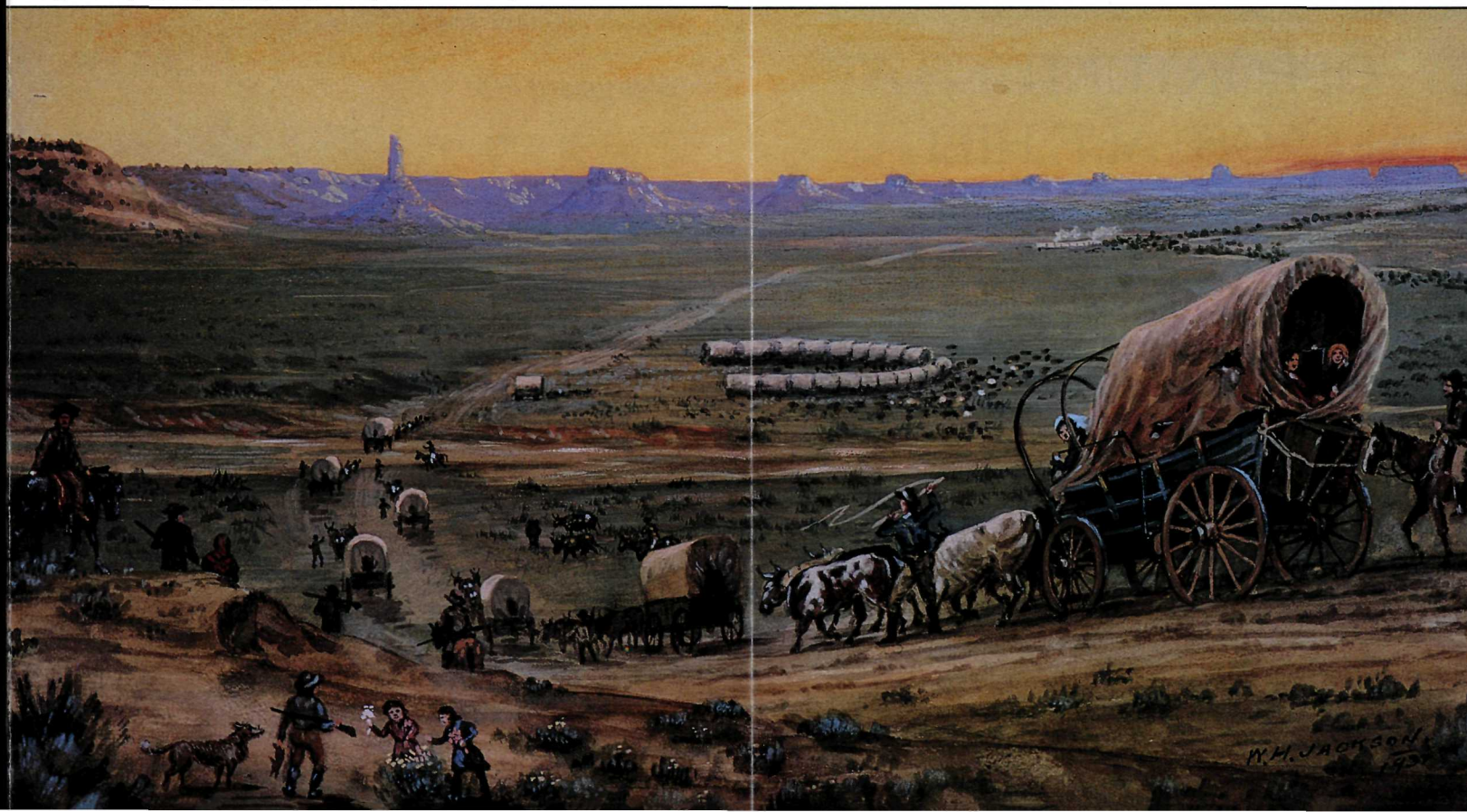
Services in the Area

The Information Desk in the Interpretive Center has brochures on lodging, food services, special features and local attractions.

For additional information contact the Baker County Visitors and Convention Bureau, Baker City, Oregon, 97814.



Approaching Chimney Rock, by William Henry Jackson. Courtesy of National Park Service.



ABOUT YOUR VISIT

Fees & Hours

Open: 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM daily

Fees: For fee information write or call the Interpretive Center

Address & Telephone Number

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Volunteers

Volunteers assist the Oregon Trail Center staff. You, too, can join the effort and help bring history alive at Flagstaff Hill.

Parking

Parking lots can accommodate cars, pickups, motor homes, and trailers up to a combined length of 49'. No overnight parking is permitted.

Safety

Smoking is not permitted in the Interpretive Center. Smoking is permitted in designated areas outside the Center.

The primary trail system is designed for barrier-free access with a 5% slope maximum. Elevational relief from the Interpretive Center to the Oregon Trail ruts is 372'. Average elevation is 3,700 feet above sea level.

Summer temperatures sometimes exceed 100° F; in winter, the temperature may fall below 0° F. Plan clothing and use of trail system in light of the elevation and season.

Insects can be bothersome; ticks can be dangerous. Stay on the trail. Check yourself for ticks following your visit. They are particularly prevalent in spring and early summer. Be alert for scorpions and rattlesnakes.