

Finding Lake Idaho: Evidence for its Existence

Leaving the Museum, go to Warm Springs Avenue, and turn right. Turn right onto Ave. B, and continue straight onto E. Fort St. At the roundabout take the first exit onto Reserve St., and then turn left onto Mountain Cove Rd. The parking site will be about 2,000 feet from the beginning of Mountain Cove Road. Once parked, there's an easy 15-minute walk to the destination.

Stop 1: Looking north from the trailhead is a large outcrop of inclined bedding overlain by parallel bedding. This is evidence of a river entering a body of water and depositing the sediment load as a delta. The difference in bedding styles indicates this delta was growing into Lake Idaho in a westerly direction.

Return along Mountain Cove Rd. to the intersection with Reserve St. Turn right onto Reserve St., then at the traffic circle, take the second exit onto E. Fort St. From E. Fort St., continue onto Ave. B which will turn into Broadway Ave. that leads to I-84. At I-84 take a left, entering the freeway going east. A rest and assembly stop is at the Black's Creek Rest Area (at about mile marker 62). Continue east on I-84 from the rest area, exit at King Hill (Exit 121) and turn left. The next stop is about 2 miles along Old Highway 30; parking is along the right side of the road.

Stop 2: This exposure consists mostly of deep lake sediments within the Glens Ferry Formation. Looking northwest at the road cut exposes sediments about 45 feet high. Within this exposure is a one-foot-thick dark layer indicating a decline in lake levels and development of more swampy conditions. The dark layer shows evidence of root casts and organic material.

Return to I-84 westbound and take Exit 112 towards Hammett. Turn left onto ID-78. Continue on ID-78 through Hammett, and after 15 miles, turn right onto a dirt road immediately prior to the junction with ID-51. Proceed to the parking area near the water.

Stop 3: This is the Loveridge Bridge South access, where the Snake River is flowing into the C.J. Strike Reservoir. This is the lunch stop and restroom break.

Upon departure, take ID-51/ID-78 southward for about 5 miles, and at the town of Bruneau make a left turn onto Hot Springs Road. In about 7.5 miles, turn right on Hot Creek Road, cross the Bruneau River and at about 0.6 miles turn left onto a decent gravel road (Blackstone Grasmere Rd.), following it for 2.6 miles to the next stop.

Stop 4: This is the famous Hot Spring algal reef of the Chalk Hills Formation, a regular stop on previous IMMIG fossil-hunting trips in Owyhee County. A short walk along the reef cliff gives a great view of the urn-like algal bodies and the intervening streams, now filled with innumerable small snail shells. The limestone cap rock visible on the horizon is composed of these multi-layer algal structures within the Hot Spring Limestone.

Stop 5: About 0.9 miles farther along this same road is an example of basalt interacting with lake bed sediments. Uphill from this location is a striking band of orange-red sediment composed of Chalk Hills Formation baked by the Hot Creek Basalt flow. A short walk up the dry drainage gives different views of this distinctive unit, and one can trace the basalt and

underlying orange-red band across the valley, both lying well below the Hot Spring Limestone algal layer on the skyline. Close examination of this distinctive band reveals evidence of its lake bed origin.

Retrace the route back to Bruneau. Turn left onto ID-51/ID-78 for 2 miles. Make a slight right onto ID-78 and follow it for 14 miles, then take a sharp left onto Mud Flat Rd. for 11.5 miles. Parking for the destination is on the right.

Stop 7: The Shoofly Oolite Interpretative Site is managed by the Bureau of Land Management. Ooids are small, spherical sedimentary grains of carbonate minerals composed of aragonite or calcite. Ooids form in beach-like environments where wave energy moves the grains back and forth, periodically precipitating carbonate minerals and causing the grains to grow well-rounded. Within the oolite layers are fossils from the Glens Ferry Formation.

Retrace the route along Mud Flat Rd. to ID-78. Turn left at the stop sign and proceed 2 miles to the small town of Grand View.

Stop 8: Grand View gas station on the left, at the intersection of ID-78 and ID-167, is a bathroom break and source of refreshments.

Depart the gas station and head west onto ID-78, then immediately turn right onto ID-167. Drive 3 miles, followed by a left onto Bennet Rd. with an immediate left again onto Whitted Rd., following it for 1 mile. Turn right on Collett Rd. for 1 mile, then left onto Big Foot Bar Rd., where it turns into a gravel road. The destination will be in 3.6 miles.

Stop 9: This is part of the Brooks Ranch Basalt pillow delta within the Glens Ferry Formation. The exposure is a classic example of sub-aqueous (underwater) basalt forming well-defined pillows when it was flowing into Lake Idaho. The pillow delta underlies additional basalt flows which were emplaced slightly above lake level and thus lack pillows. Several of the pillows have obvious chill margins surrounding a darker interior. This exposure has been downdropped by a fault to the north long after these units formed, positioning it adjacent to the current channel of the Snake River.

Retrace the route back to ID-167 and turn left. In 7 miles is a left turn onto Simco Rd (this is a shorter way back to I-84 than going all the way to Mountain Home). I-84 will be about 20 miles north along Simco Rd.