

THE INTERNATIONAL SELKIRK LOOP

METALINE FALLS – NELSON – CRESTON – SANDPOINT – PRIEST RIVER
APPROX. 450 KM/280 MI



Top: Kokanee Creek Park, Crawford Bay
Bottom: Nelson, Creston Wildlife Centre

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Wildlife viewing in the Selkirk Mountains
- Heritage City of Nelson
- Artisans
- Creston Valley Wildlife Centre & Kootenai National Wildlife Refuge
- Sandpoint & Lake Pend Oreille
- Priest Lake Country

Nature, of course, pays no attention to national boundaries, but as you follow this circle route, plan on stopping twice for customs and immigration. The tour explores the Selkirk Mountain Range from the beautiful Pend Oreille Valley in Washington State, north to the magnificent Kootenay Lake in British Columbia and south through the Idaho Panhandle. It is designated as one of the Top-10 Scenic Drives in the Northern Rockies.

From Spokane, begin heading north on Hwy #2 which connects with Hwy #20 at Newport, to Metaline and Metaline Falls. The town of Metaline Falls is known as one of America's 'Top 100 Best Small Arts Towns'. It is also

home to the Cutter Theatre, a 1912 restored schoolhouse. Popular area attractions include the Mill Pond Historic Trail and a free guided tour of Gardner Caves.

From Metaline Falls, head N on Hwy #31 to the U.S./Cdn border at Nelway and along Highway #6 to the community of Salmo—famous for its murals made from locally quarried stone that depict local historic themes—then on to Nelson. Nelson's brick and stone downtown core is the centerpiece of a small city that boasts over 350 heritage buildings. The city's two self-guided tour brochures can be extremely helpful, but be warned: there are many distractions including sidewalk cafes and specialty shops.

Your drive on Highway #3A by Kokanee Creek Provincial Park leads you to the Balfour ferry landing. Enjoy the 45-minute scenic and free ferry ride across beautiful Kootenay Lake. Pilot Bay Provincial Park to the south of the ferry landing offers several hiking trails including one to the Pilot Peninsula Lighthouse. Just a short drive from the ferry terminal is Crawford Bay that is home to many unique artisan shops and galleries.

Follow scenic Highway #3A south along Kootenay Lake to Creston. Along the way, take some time to tour the Glass House in Boswell. Its construction was started in 1952 and was created out of over 500,000 square embalming fluid bottles.

Upon your arrival to Creston, watch for signs to the Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area. Lush wetland habitat stretches 17,000 acres from the southeast tip of Kootenay Lake to the USA. Take a voyageur canoe tour or stroll along the marshes on a boardwalk to one of two three-story observation towers. An estimated 300 species of birds call this area home. It's a very short drive from Creston to the international border at Rykerts and you'll be back in the United States again.

Follow Hwy #1 until it reaches Highway #95 and then head south to Bonners Ferry, Idaho where the primary attraction is the community's year-round outdoor recreation. Visit the charming historic downtown district to catch a glimpse of the original turn of the century buildings before visiting the Kootenai National Wildlife Refuge just west of downtown. The refuge hosts more than 230 species of birds, 45 species of mammals and 22 species of fish and has a 4-mile auto-tour route.

Continue south on Highway #95 to the city of Sandpoint situated on Lake Pend Oreille. Water sports enthusiasts of all types explore this vast aquatic playground.

Lake Pend Oreille Cruises offer excellent interpretive tours from City Beach all summer long. Schweitzer Mountain Resort offers year-round recreation including mountain biking, hiking and world-class skiing. Cultural activities are also plentiful—the restored, historic Spanish-styled Panida Theatre is a vibrant centre for the performing arts.

From Sandpoint, take Highway #2 west to Priest River. The Priest River Museum & Timber Education Centre displays historical artifacts from the logging industry, as well as earlier pioneer family furnishings. A short drive north on Highway #57 are the resort communities of Priest Lake—spend a couple days stretched out on the white sand beach and swim in crystalline waters. Priest Lake is also known for their premier season of huckleberries and mushrooms—many of the area restaurants offer delectable dishes featuring these woodland treats.

Once you're back on Highway #2, continue west to Newport, Washington. This city's heritage is rich in timber, mineral and agriculture which visitors can relive by visiting original structures, such as the Northern Railway Depot (1908) that houses the Pend Oreille Country Historical Museum. From Newport and Highway #2, you may head south towards Spokane again, only 72 km (45 mi) away.

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