

# Trail of the Coeur d'Alenes



## The Early Inhabitants

Since time immemorial, this has been the homeland of the Schitsu'umsh, The Discovered People. The vast abundance of this region sustained generations of tribal members and created sharing and commerce among the many tribes of the region. Tribal lore tells us that French Canadian trappers and traders came to the region in the late 18th century, representing the first contact with non-Indians and the beginning of great change for those living here. "Coeur d'Alene," they called the native people or, "heart of the awl" in the French translation. The sharpness of the awl, or the "pointed hearts" was in reference to the age old experience and tough trading skills of the Indians. Circling Raven, a powerful leader of that era, foretold in a vision that men would eventually come, wearing black robes and carrying crossed sticks, and bring even greater change to the tribe and tribal life. In 1842, a runner brought word that a Blackrobe had arrived in western Montana on a mission among the Blackfeet and Flathead Tribes. An invitation was sent. When Father DeSmet arrived on the north shore of Lake Coeur d'Alene that summer, the vision of Circling Raven was complete as the tribe embraced the priest and the Catholic religion. Across the river from the Trail, the Cataldo Mission was established in 1848, with the church completed in 1853. Because of development and heavy metal pollution in the river, the mission was moved south to DeSmet, Idaho in 1878, the Coeur d'Alene's relationship to the Catholic Church remaining strong. This homeland, abundant in fish and wildlife, spans almost five million acres, stretching from Sandpoint to Moscow and from Spokane to the Clark Fork River in Montana. President Grant's Executive Order established the original reservation in 1873. A series of agreements reduced it to its present size, 345,000 acres, by 1890. In the lakes, rivers and streams, the bounty included West Slope Cutthroat and Bull Trout, harvested for the good

of all from fish traps in the river. Waterfowl have always come. The deer and elk roamed forested mountains and flowered meadows. The Discovered People traveled here, along this river and on this trail, long before railroads and vast development.

Photos courtesy  
Father Connolly  
Collection



## Rails to Trails

Since the mid 1800's rail lines have stretched across America from the East coast to the West coast, from Mexico to Canada. These trains carried passengers, goods, and wild-eyed adventurers across America. Since the middle of the 20th century people began to see a decrease in rail line usage. In turn, interest groups began converting abandoned railroads into recreational sites for the public. In 1983, the U.S. Congress amended the National Trails System Act to create the rail banking program. Rail banking is a method by which rail lines proposed for abandonment can be preserved through conversion to trail use. In 1991 the Coeur d'Alene Tribe filed a complaint against the Union Pacific Railroad to recover damages to natural resources caused by years of transporting and building rail beds with contaminated material along the



Wallace and Mullan Branch in Idaho. In 1995, the United States Department of Interior and the State of Idaho joined in the complaint filed against the Union Pacific Railroad. All parties proposed that the defendants submit a good-faith offer to settle potential claims of natural resource damage. In 1999, the Union Pacific Rail Road filed a Notice of Intent to Complete Abandonment of its Wallace and Mullan Branch. Before abandonment, the Coeur d'Alene Tribe and Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation filed with the Surface Transportation Board an issuance of a certificate of Interim Trail Use through the rail banking program for the Wallace and Mullan Branch. The Trail of the Coeur d'Alenes, which stretches 72 miles from Plummer to Mullan, Idaho, has been an ongoing project for nine years. The Union Pacific Rail Road has invested millions of dollars in remediation of the trail's right-of-way. Work included cleaning and removal of rails and rail ties (which were salvaged), excavation and removal or containment of rail bed materials, and installation of protective barriers such as a clean soil cap, asphalt and wire fencing. The trail section between Harrison and Plummer, due to the possibility of high river levels and flooding, it is susceptible to recontamination. Once Union Pacific Railroad Company fulfills its obligations to the Tribe and the State, the trail's right-of-way will be transferred to and managed by the Coeur d'Alene Tribe and the State of Idaho. The increasing importance of outdoor recreation within the United States has created a nation wide rail banking trend converting unused rail lines into trails. The Trail of the Coeur d'Alenes will provide individuals and families a safe place to walk, bike, roller-blade, exercise, and reconnect with nature. The trail will re-join people and towns, promote recreation and increase tourism dollars. Most of all, it will encourage preservation of lands so future generations can enjoy the quiet beauty of the area the trail spans.



## Management

Tribal Trail Manager, Coeur d'Alene Tribe  
P.O. Box 408  
Plummer, ID 83851  
208-686-7045  
E-mail: dchapman@cdatribe-nsn.gov

State Trail Manager, Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation  
Old Mission State Park  
P.O. Box 30  
Cataldo, ID 83810  
208-682-3814  
E-mail: old@idpr.state.id.us

## Emergency Services

Coeur d'Alene Tribal Police: 208-686-0137  
Shoshone County Sheriff: 208-556-1114  
Beneah County Sheriff: 208-245-2555  
Kootenai County Sheriff: 208-664-1511  
Idaho State Police: 208-772-8585  
Ambulance: 911

Hospitals  
Shoshone Medical Center: 208-784-1221  
Silver Valley Medical Center: 208-752-1248  
Beneah Community Hospital (St. Maries): 208-245-5551

## Clinics

Kellogg Medical Clinic: 208-786-7300  
Pinchurst Medical Clinic: 208-682-2151  
Beneah Medical Center (Plummer): 800-325-7371

## Other Agencies

Coeur d'Alene Tribe Department of Natural Resources: 208-686-8502  
Idaho State Division of Environmental Quality: 208-783-5781  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: 800-424-4372  
Panhandle Health District: 208-786-7474  
USFS Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District: 208-752-1221  
Heyburn State Park: 208-686-1308  
Old Mission State Park: 208-682-3814  
Idaho Department of Fish and Game: 208-789-1414

## Tribal Government

Coeur d'Alene Tribe: 208-686-1800

**City Governments**  
City of Mullan: 208-744-1774  
City of Wallace: 208-752-1147  
City of Osburn: 208-752-1147  
City of Kellogg: 208-783-7751  
Kellogg Parks and Recreation: 208-784-5595  
City of Smelterville: 208-786-3351  
City of Pinchurst:  
City of Harrison: 208-689-3212  
City of Plummer: 208-686-1641

## County Governments

Shoshone County: 208-752-8891  
Kootenai County: 208-769-4450  
Kootenai County Park District: 208-772-9239  
Beneah County: 208-245-3212

## Visitor Services

Harrison Chamber of Commerce: 208-689-9164  
Historic Silver Valley Chamber of Commerce: 208-784-0821 (www.kellogg-id.org)  
Plummer Visitor Information Center: 208-686-6505  
St. Maries Chamber of Commerce: 208-245-3563  
Snowmobile conditions: 208-682-3814

## Camping along the Trail

Contact local Chamber of Commercences, Visitors Services and State and U.S. Government land management agencies.

## Trail Donations

Send trail donations to:  
The Trail of the Coeur d'Alenes  
Coeur d'Alene Tribe Rails to Trails Program  
P.O. Box 408  
Plummer, ID 83851

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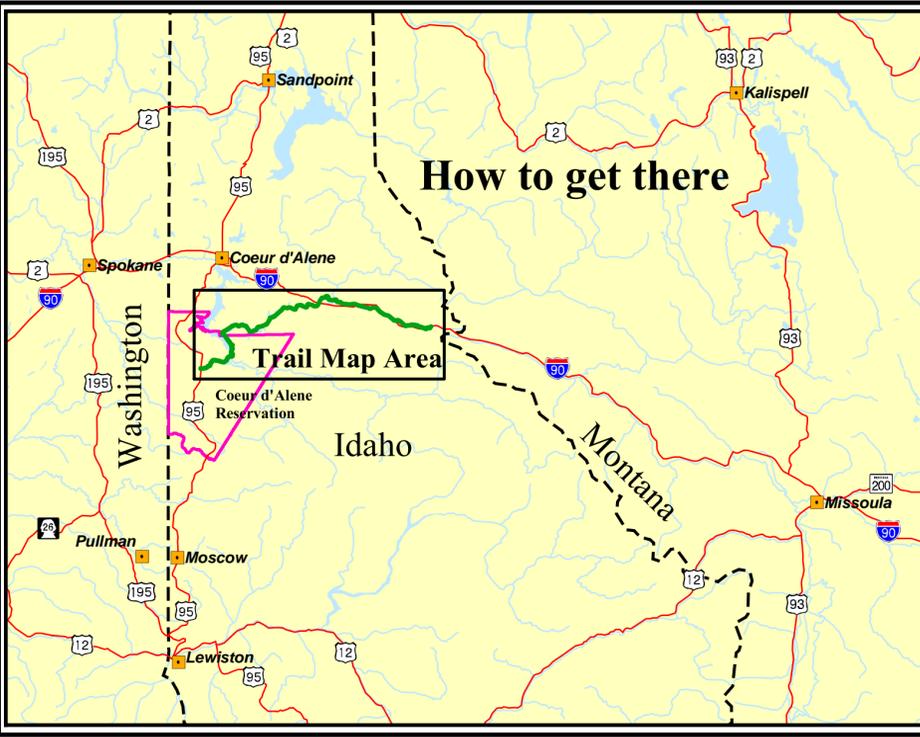
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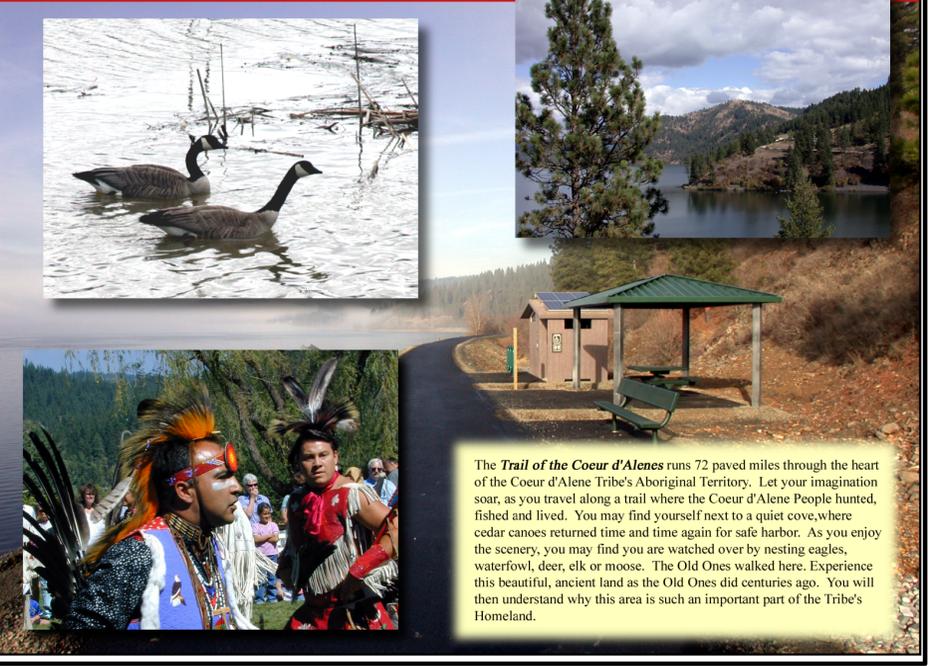
## Mining and the Railroads

Placer gold attracted the first miners to the Coeur d'Alene mining district in 1883, but soon thereafter discoveries of rich silver-lead ores in the area dramatically pointed to the valley's true source of wealth. These mineral finds brought rapid growth to the district, and by the 1890's, large-scale underground lead-silver mining was well established in the area. The mines also provided an economic basis for a series of bustling new communities -- including Burke, Mullan, Wallace and Kellogg -- scattered along the upper South Fork of the Coeur d'Alene River and its tributaries. The tremendous richness of the district's ores was recognized early, and successfully exploited for decades. This extensive mining activity had a dramatic impact on the tribal lands, waters, resources and way of life and still does to this day. The Silver Valley area was the world's second most productive lead district during the early twentieth century; by the 1970's, the Coeur d'Alene Valley had produced more silver than any other mining area in the United States. The successful extraction and processing of ores at such a massive scale obviously depended on the availability of efficient, economical bulk transport -- something the railroads were uniquely able to provide. Recognizing this, and attracted by the rapid economic and population growth of the Silver Valley, railway companies quickly responded to the region's 1880's ore discoveries by constructing new rail routes into the Coeur d'Alene mining district. Three such lines appeared between 1887 and 1891. The first was the Coeur d'Alene Railway and Navigation Company (CR&N), which completed a narrow-gauge line from Cataldo Mission, head of steamboat navigation on the river, to Wallace in September, 1887. The new railway gave the valley its first major transportation link, but the route was hampered by the necessity of trans-shipping all freight and passengers between rail cars and steamboats. The steamboats utilized the Coeur d'Alene River from the Mission down to Lake Coeur d'Alene and across Lake Coeur d'Alene to the town of Coeur d'Alene. All waterways were within the Coeur d'Alene Reservation and being used without permission of the Tribe. The CR&N was soon leased by the Northern Pacific Railroad, a transcontinental line with its own ambitions for the Silver Valley. The Union Pacific (UP), an important transcontinental carrier and Idaho's dominant railway, was meanwhile preparing for the construction of its own line into the region. The plan called for an all-rail standard-gauge line, considerably more efficient than the CR&N's cumbersome routing. Under the aegis of a leased subsidiary, the Oregon Railway & Navigation Company (OR&N), the UP began building eastward from the small community of Tekoa, Washington located on an already existing UP route to Spokane. Rail accessibility to Spokane was crucial, since the city was an important urban focus of transportation, industry and capital for the entire region. Progress was hindered by the legal and political efforts required to gain permission for the line to cross the Coeur d'Alene Indian Reservation. The competing Northern Pacific also slowed UP progress through both court challenges and physical confrontation. In 1888 the Washington and Idaho Railroad was granted a right-of-way by Congress across the Reservation, subject to the Secretary of the US Department of Interior obtaining prior consent of the Tribe. The Tribe subsequently authorized the right-of-way. The UP ultimately prevailed, however, and its tracks reached Wallace in December, 1889. The finished route was the product of a massive railway organized construction effort, which at its peak employed some 2,000 laborers.



Photos courtesy of Wallace Mining Museum

## What's to see along the trail...



The Trail of the Coeur d'Alenes runs 72 paved miles through the heart of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe's Aboriginal Territory. Let your imagination soar, as you travel along a trail where the Coeur d'Alene People hunted, fished and lived. You may find yourself next to a quiet cove, where cedar canoes returned time and time again for safe harbor. As you enjoy the scenery, you may find you are watched over by nesting eagles, waterfowl, deer, elk or moose. The Old Ones walked here. Experience this beautiful, ancient land as the Old Ones did centuries ago. You will then understand why this area is such an important part of the Tribe's Homeland.

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