

# Bear River

HERITAGE AREA

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May Day Celebration,  
Wellsville, Utah

## Welcome to the Bear River Heritage Area

**Early Shoshone and Ute Indians, nineteenth-century Mormons, modern entrepreneurs and outdoor enthusiasts have all been attracted to this region. We hope you'll enjoy exploring the unique people, places, arts, crafts, activities and institutions that make this our home.**

### Native Americans and Trappers

The Indians migrated back and forth through this region with the seasons, taking advantage of the best weather and making use of plants and wildlife in their daily lives. The old Shoshone name for the Bear River is "Bia Ogoi," or "Big Water." Then in the early 1800s, when the fur trade was brisk, trappers of European extraction entered the area seeking beaver and other furs. They gathered annually at rendezvous to sell their furs, buy new supplies, share news, and meet old friends.

### Nineteenth-Century Immigration

The Oregon Trail brought thousands of immigrants through this region. The Mormon migration took place in the 1840s-1870s, when believers in the new religion fled

persecution to make a new home in a remote area they thought would be safe. This settlement had a profound effect on the landscape you see around you as you drive through the Heritage Area, from the layout of towns and farms to the architecture of barns, fences, and Mormonism's most sacred buildings, the temples. On May 10, 1869, the transcontinental railroad was completed at Promontory, Utah, just north of the Great Salt Lake.

### Reading the Landscape

The heritage of the Bear River Heritage Area shows in its landscape, people, economy and culture. Agriculture is still a primary occupation here. Many businesses and institutions that were established early in the region's history still operate today: farm supply stores, Utah State University in Logan, the raspberry farms around Bear Lake, the orchards on the western slopes of the Wasatch Mountains, and the family farms and ranches found throughout the region. See if you can absorb the spirit of the people here. They place a high value on self-sufficiency and independence. Stay a while and discover why the Bear River Heritage Area is Blessed by Water, Worked by Hand.

GOLDEN SPIKE CACHE VALLEY BEAR LAKE COUNTRY PIONEER TRAILS

Itinerary Map

Blessed by Water Worked by Hand



Engine #119, Golden Spike  
National Historic Site



Old Main, Utah State University



Highway 89/Bear Lake Vista



Tolman/Loveland House,  
Chesterfield Townsite, Idaho

## Golden Spike

Your adventure begins with bird-watching at the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge, a 74,000 acre National Wildlife Refuge with a stunning new visitor's center near Brigham City. You'll see thousands of birds during every season including shorebirds, up to a half-million ducks and geese, over 30,000 tundra swans, northern harriers, rough-legged hawks, bald eagles, prairie falcons, and many more. Visit the Golden Spike National Historic Site where East met West in 1869 when the Southern Pacific and Union Pacific railroads joined the nation with the driving of the Golden Spike. Get up close to steam locomotives and enjoy a reenactment of this legendary event.

While you're in town, don't miss buffalo steaks and burgers or famous fried chicken at Maddox Ranch House and hand-dipped chocolates from Idle Isle Candies—both are decades-old traditions. Take a leisurely drive down Utah's colorful Fruit Way. This 2-mile stretch of historic Highway 89 meanders past more than 10 family-owned fruit farms where you can sink your teeth into a wide variety of the freshest fruits and vegetables of the season as you head through Sardine Canyon (Highway 89) to beautiful Cache Valley.

## Cache Valley

Utah & Idaho

Cache is pronounced "cash" and is a French word that means "to hide or store one's treasure." You'll find plenty of hidden fortune in this high mountain agricultural valley known for outdoor adventures, hands-on heritage experiences, and performing and fine arts. Mountain biking, canoeing, fly fishing, bird watching, hiking, rock climbing, skiing, snowshoeing, and snowmobiling are a few outdoors attractions. Stop in at the American West Heritage Center, a 160-acre living-history center where you can experience firsthand the history of the Old West through Native Americans, mountain men, farmers, and pioneers. For a true taste of the area you'll enjoy the Cache Valley Food Tour. Sample famous foods made in the area including cheeses, chocolates, coffee, cookies, honey, fruit, ice creams, and pastries. The city of Logan is home to Utah State University, a dozen art galleries and specialty shops, great examples of early Mormon pioneer architecture, and the stunning 1923 Ellen Eccles Theatre, home of the renowned Utah Festival Opera company and other nationally touring productions. Between Logan and Bear Lake you'll drive through dramatic mile-high limestone cliffs and forested canopies along the Logan Canyon National Scenic Byway. To the north, Cache Valley, Idaho, is home of the Franklin Historic District, Preston, the Bear River Massacre Site, and Pioneer National Historic Byway.

## Bear Lake Country

One glimpse of Bear Lake and you'll know why it's known as the Caribbean of the Rockies. Its intense turquoise water spans 20 miles long and 8 miles wide in both Idaho and Utah. Surrounded by traditional ranching country, the lake is a mecca for sailing, fishing, boating, and other recreation. The wetlands on the north and south ends of the lake are a haven for all types of birds; the flatlands near the lake host raspberry fields and historic Mormon towns; the steep mountains on the west are part of the Wasatch-Cache National Forest, with its fir-juniper forests, mountain streams, trails, and wildlife. Try horseback riding, hiking, and cycling. Explore America's past and discover the stories of the hearty souls who settled this area as you travel along the Oregon Trail-Bear Lake Scenic Byway to the National Oregon/California Trail Center in Montpelier. At the Trail Center, you can participate in a simulated wagon train headed west, guided by a wagon master and live cast of pioneers, whose dialogue and stories will make the adventure come alive. Don't miss Minnetonka Cave—a 9-room cave of stalactites, stalagmites, and banded travertine with 444 stairs.

Photos left to right above: Paul Larsen, USU Public Relations & Marketing, Lisa Duskin-Goede, and Julie Hollist  
Photos front cover and inside front cover: Julie Hollist

## Pioneer Trails

### West

Historic roads and trails crisscross Oneida County including part of the Oregon Trail and the Oneida Wagon Road, a toll road that ran from Malad to Blackfoot, Idaho. The toll road was also known as the Gold Road, and bandits repeatedly robbed the stagecoaches that carried gold from Montana mines to Salt Lake City. Legend has it that some of the robbers' loot is still hidden in the Samaria Mountains behind an old iron door. The western part of the county is home to the Curlew National Grassland where the Dust Bowl drought left the land severely eroded. Today the area is a model for land reclamation.

### East

The Oregon/California Trail passes through Caribou County, which is home to some famous landmarks important to the nineteenth-century emigrants. Sheep Rock, west of Soda Springs is the point at which the Hudspeth Cutoff of the Oregon Trail headed due west to California. Early Mormon settlements here had beginnings quite different from those of typical Mormon settlements in Utah. General Patrick Connor assisted the Morrisites, a breakaway sect from the Mormon Church, in the first settlement. He also established Camp Connor to protect Oregon/California emigrants from Indian attacks. This region is rich in mineral and geothermal activity. Phosphate mining has been the mainstay of the local economy, along with agriculture, including the famous Idaho Potato, for over 100 years.

