

Did You Know?

- The huckleberry was designated as the official state fruit of Montana by Governor Gianforte in 2023.
- The huckleberry plant occurs in England, Europe, and as far north as Siberia. Henry David Thoreau believed the name huckleberry came from the word “hurtleberry,” derived from the Saxon heart-berg or “the hart’s berry.” (Richards, Rebecca T., Alexander, Susan J. (2006) A Social History of Wild Huckleberry Harvesting in the Pacific Northwest, PNW-GTR-657, USDA Forest Service, Corvallis, OR).
- For thousands of years, American Indians spent summer and fall hunting, fishing, picking berries, and celebrating the plentiful gifts of the land. Indians regard the rituals of picking, preserving, and eating berries as a cultural and traditional use with religious significance.



Indian family huckleberry camp, Kaniksu NF. (USDA Forest Service Northern Region Archives—J. Russell Dahl , 1939)

Contact Information

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Libby, MT 59923
(406) 293-6211

Rexford/Fortine Ranger District

Eureka Ranger Station

949 US Hwy 93 N
Eureka, MT 59917
(406) 296-2536

Libby Ranger District

Canoe Gulch Ranger Station

12557 MT Hwy 37
Libby, MT 59923
(406) 293-7773

Three Rivers Ranger District

Troy Ranger Station

12858 Hwy 2
Troy, MT 59935
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Cabinet Ranger District

Trout Creek Ranger Station

2693 MT Hwy 200
Trout Creek, MT 59874
(406) 827-3533

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Kootenai NF

Huckleberries



Harvesting

- Huckleberries may be harvested anywhere on your National Forest for personal use unless otherwise restricted.
- **Commercial gathering of huckleberries on the Kootenai National Forest is not permitted.** Picking huckleberries with the intent to sell them is considered commercial use.
- It is illegal to damage or remove huckleberry bushes.
- It's recommended to check with your local ranger station for any closures or restrictions before you go.
- Recreational huckleberry gatherers are encouraged to pick only what they can consume so that others may also enjoy the fun of picking and tasting our delicious state fruit.
- It is best to handpick the berries to ensure that the bushes are not damaged and that only the ripe berries are harvested.



Picking by hand is recommended. (USDA photo Gifford Pinchot NF)

Safety

- Always inform someone where you are going and when you plan to return. Make sure your vehicle is in good running condition and take along sufficient gasoline for the trip.
- Drive safely and be alert for wildlife and changing conditions.
- Routes designated for motorized use are depicted on the Forest's Motor Vehicle Use Maps, which are provided free of charge at Forest Service offices, or online at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/kootenai/maps-pubs>
- Be very careful with fire. If camping, be sure to pack a shovel and a bucket for extinguishing your campfire. ALL fires must be DEAD OUT.
- Be bear aware, carry bear spray, make plenty of noise and keep dogs leashed.



- Store food in hard-sided vehicles or bear-proof containers when camping. The Kootenai National Forest has a Food Storage Order in effect. The order is available at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/full/kootenai/home/?cid=stelprdb5290154&width=full>

Tips



- Methods for huckleberry gathering vary widely, but pickers are strongly encouraged to not use rakes or other mechanical methods that may damage the plants.
- Popular huckleberry picking areas can become quite crowded. Exercise courtesy to fellow gathers and/or consider seeking out a new area if someone is there ahead of you. The Kootenai National Forest offers plenty of space for everyone!
- Huckleberries are a major source of nourishment for bears, gatherers are encouraged to leave some berries unpicked for bears and other wildlife.
- Always practice *Leave No Trace* principles whenever recreating on National Forests so that everyone can enjoy their outdoor experience. Pack out any garbage and clean up your site before leaving.