

BIGHORN CRAGS

SALMON-CHALLIS NATIONAL FOREST



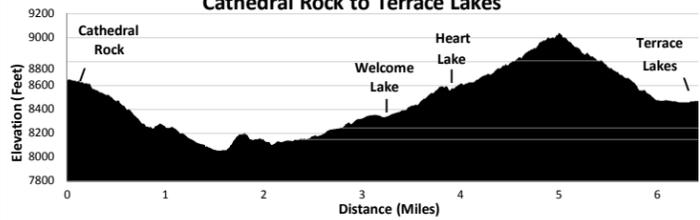
Scale: 1:50,000 Contour Interval: 200 Feet

- Campground
- Trail
- Stream
- Wilderness
- Roads
- Lake / Pond

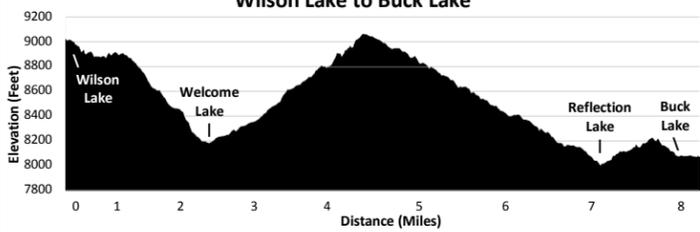
Crag CG to Ship Island Lake



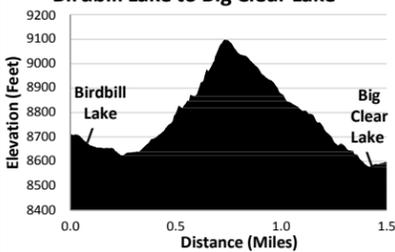
Cathedral Rock to Terrace Lakes



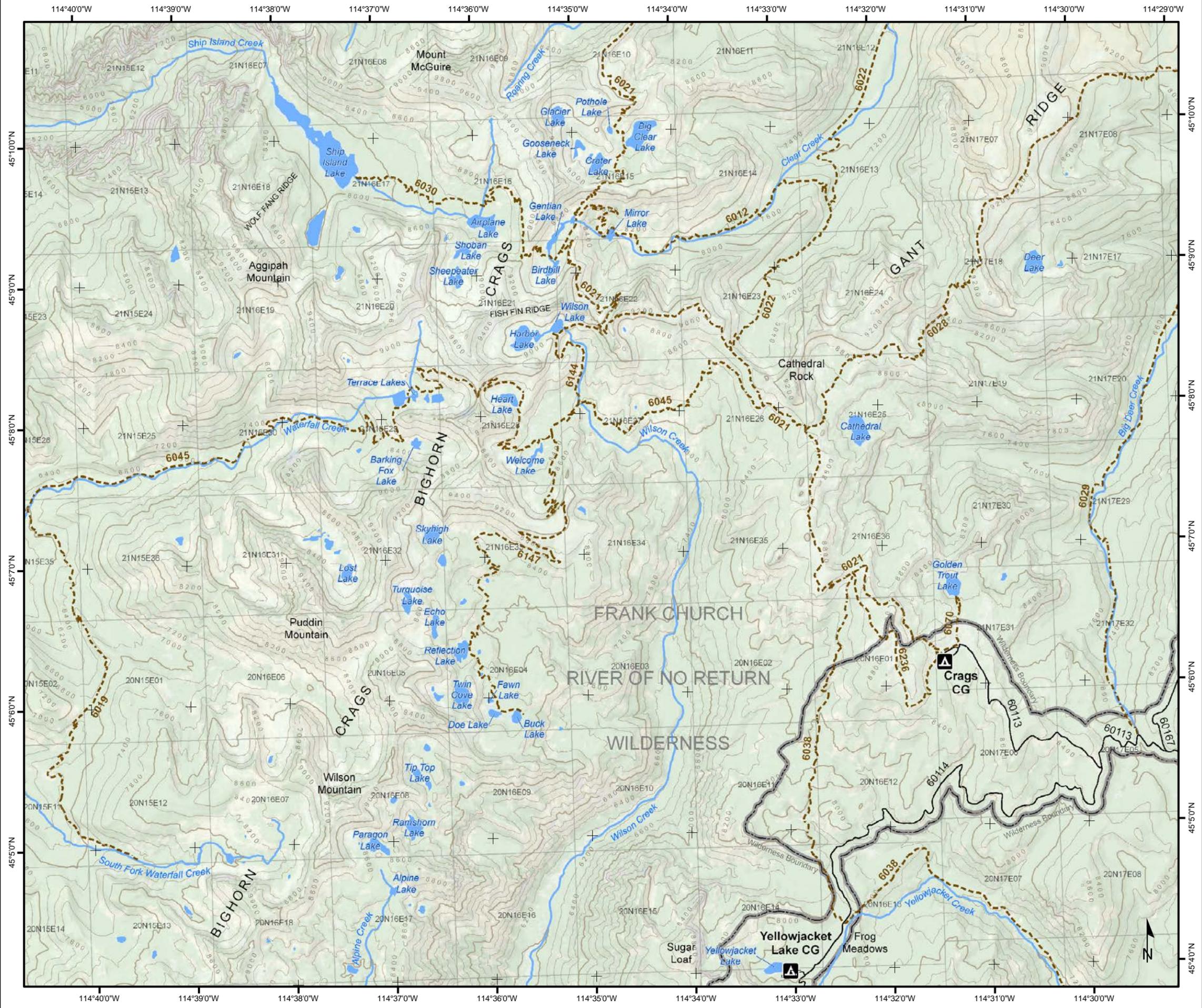
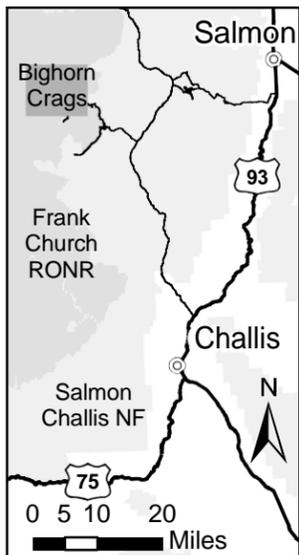
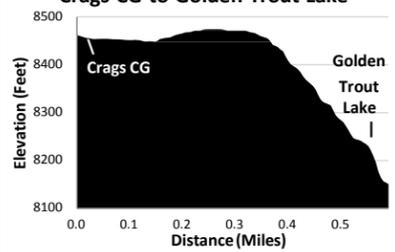
Wilson Lake to Buck Lake



Birdbill Lake to Big Clear Lake



Crag CG to Golden Trout Lake



Special Qualities of the Crag

The Bighorn Crag is a unique area of high alpine lakes at or above 8,000 feet, including cirque basins, rugged cliffs and narrow ridges climbing to over 10,000 feet. This area is located deep within the Frank Church - River of No Return Wilderness, designated by the United States Congress in 1980 as part of the Wilderness Preservation System under the Wilderness Act of 1964. The Wilderness Act endeavors to preserve lands with outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation in their natural condition without permanent improvement or human habitation. Visitors to Wilderness areas should take extra care to minimize their impacts while recreating. This is a fragile area with thin soils, short growing seasons, and heavy visitor traffic. Trees in this area may look young due to their small size but are actually very old. Vegetation takes much longer to grow in this environment than in other more moderate climates. Visitation to this area is high compared to other places in the Wilderness, and so too are the associated impacts.

The towering peaks and rocky ridges that make up the Bighorn Crag are made of granitic rock that erodes easily, especially if visitors take shortcuts around switchbacks and hike or roll rocks down steep slopes. Horses and mules create erosion when grazed on steep hillsides, along lakeshores, or are ridden off trail. These activities leave lasting impacts to the fragile alpine landscape. Numerous high mountain lakes dominate this beautiful area. The area adjacent to these lakes is the most sought after by visitors. However, these are very sensitive places, where not only humans congregate, but sensitive plants and animals as well. Care must be given to lessen the impacts to these areas to prevent water pollution, soil erosion, and conflict between visitors.

Trails and Trail Use

Several trails exist in the Bighorn Crag area for hiking and horseback riding. The main trailhead, Crag Campground, is reached via a narrow, rugged, and rocky unpaved forest road from either Challis (66 miles) or Salmon (60 miles) and is open from about mid-July to mid-October. A four wheel drive vehicle with high clearance is recommended. Stock trailers and camper trailers are not recommended. Better stock access can be achieved from Yellowjacket Guard Station and Yellowjacket Trail #6038. Access to the area can also be achieved from the Middle Fork Trail #6044 up Waterfall Creek Trail #6045. Most trails in the Bighorn Crag have a grade of less than 10 percent with short pitches of 15-18 percent. When hiking, the right-of-way belongs to pack string or horseback riders. Please move off the trail several yards downhill to avoid scaring the pack animals. As part of the trails are within designated Wilderness, motorized vehicles and power tools are not allowed.

Campsites

Campsites suitable for backpackers are abundant. However, only several campsites are suitable for horseback riders or pack strings. Recommended sites for stock are located at Birdbill, Big Clear, Airplane, Terrace, and Welcome Lakes. Groups of 10 or more should contact the North Fork Ranger Station for campsite recommendations and large group Leave No Trace tips. The maximum group size is 20.

Stock Users

Many of the trails in the Bighorn Crag are steep, rocky, may be covered in snow, and are challenging for stock. Be sure that your animals are experienced with traveling mountain trails and are in shape for the demanding routes. Check with local rangers or the campground hosts for current information regarding trail conditions. Trail 6144 between Welcome and Wilson Lakes is not suitable for stock travel.

In addition to Leave No Trace practices, some additional efforts are necessary by visitors with horses, mules, llamas, or goats. Meadows and other grassy areas in the Crag offer sparse, poor quality feed, and are usually wet and thus easily damaged by stock. Stock users should pack in all feed needed to sustain their animals and not rely on any grazing. **Feed is required to be certified weed free.** The best way to comply with this requirement is to pack pellets, cubes, or other processed food.

Riding and pack stock must be limited to only those animals necessary for the trip. Pack lightweight gear to reduce the number of animals needed. The larger the pack string, the more impact there is to trails, campsites, and other visitors' experience. When at camp, please be sure to make every effort to lessen your impacts. Use a "high-line" (a rope strung between two 10 inch diameter or larger live trees) to contain your animals for long periods of time and overnight. Tying directly to trees is only permitted for short periods of loading and unloading. Water your stock only where creeks cross trails and not at sensitive lakeshores. Before leaving camp, scatter all manure to speed decomposition and to help the area look more natural. This also prevents other visitors from encountering manure piles in or near campsites.

Fish and Wildlife

Cutthroat trout exist in most of the lakes and many lakes also include rainbow and/or golden trout. Bighorn sheep, mountain goats, deer, and sometimes elk and bear are often seen as well as small mammals and birds. State hunting and fishing licenses are required. Check with Idaho Fish and Game for more information.

Contact Information

For more information on the Bighorn Crag, the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness, or the principles of Leave No Trace, contact:

Geoff Fast – Wilderness Ranger
North Fork Ranger District
11 Casey Road
PO Box 180
North Fork, ID 83466
Phone: (208) 865 - 2714

Leave No Trace

Out of respect for the land, wildlife, and future visitors, all visitors to wild places must make special efforts to lessen their impacts, especially in high use areas like the Crag. All visitors should strive to leave a campsite in better condition than when they found it. Below is a checklist to follow when planning a trip to any wild place.

Plan Ahead and Prepare

- Know the regulations and special concerns for the area you'll visit.
- Prepare for extreme weather, hazards, and emergencies.
- Schedule your trip to avoid times of high use.
- Visit in small groups when possible. Consider splitting larger groups into smaller groups.
- Repackage food to minimize waste.
- Use a map and compass to eliminate the use of marking paint, rock cairns or flagging.

Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces

- Durable surfaces include established trails and campsites, rock, gravel, dry grasses or snow.
- Protect riparian areas by camping at least 200 feet from lakes and streams.
- Good campsites are found, not made. Altering a site is not necessary.
- In popular areas:
- Concentrate use on existing trails and campsites.
- Walk single file in the middle of the trail, even when wet or muddy.
- Keep campsites small. Focus activity in areas where vegetation is absent.
- In pristine areas:
- Disperse use to prevent the creation of campsites and trails.
- Avoid places where impacts are just beginning.

Dispose of Waste Properly

- Pack it in, pack it out. Inspect your campsite and rest areas for trash or spilled foods. Pack out all trash, leftover food and litter.
- Deposit solid human waste in catholes dug 6 to 8 inches deep, at least 200 feet from water, camp and trails. Cover and disguise the cathole when finished.
- Pack out toilet paper and hygiene products.
- To wash yourself or your dishes, carry water 200 feet away from streams or lakes and use small amounts of biodegradable soap. Scatter strained dishwater.

Leave What You Find

- Preserve the past: examine, but do not touch cultural or historic structures and artifacts.
- Leave rocks, plants and other natural objects as you find them.
- Avoid introducing or transporting non-native species.
- Do not build structures, furniture, or dig trenches.

Minimize Campfire Impacts

- Campfires can cause lasting impacts to the backcountry. Use a lightweight stove for cooking and enjoy a candle lantern for light.
- Where fires are permitted, use established fire rings, fire pans, or mound fires.
- Keep fires small. Only use sticks from the ground that can be broken by hand.
- Burn all wood and coals to ash, put out campfires completely, then scatter cool ashes.

Respect Wildlife

- Observe wildlife from a distance. Do not follow or approach them.
- Never feed animals. Feeding wildlife damages their health, alters natural behaviors, and exposes them to predators and other dangers.
- Protect wildlife and your food by storing rations and trash securely.
- Control pets at all times, or leave them at home.
- Avoid wildlife during sensitive times: mating, nesting, raising young, or winter.

Be Considerate of Other Visitors

- Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience.
- Be courteous. Yield to other users on the trail.
- Step to the downhill side of the trail when encountering pack stock.
- Take breaks and camp away from trails and other visitors.
- Let nature's sounds prevail. Avoid loud voices and noises.

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