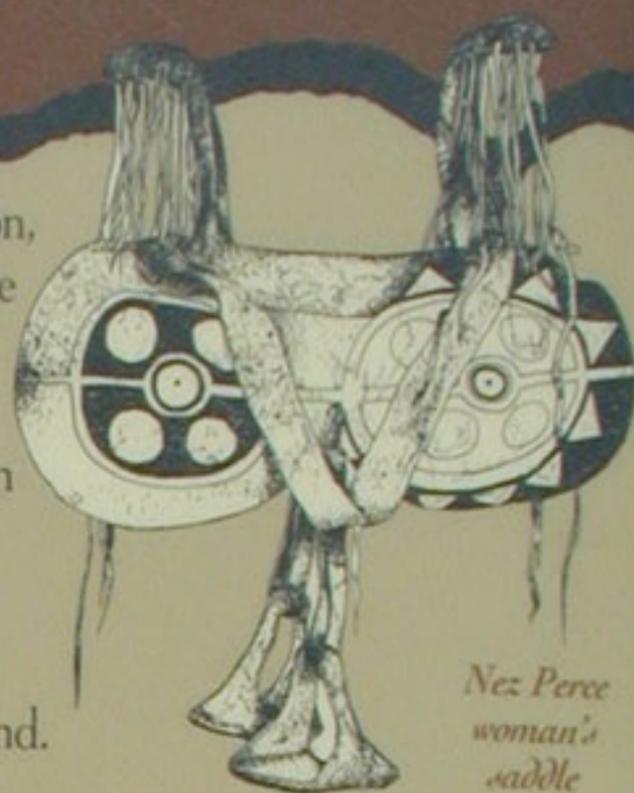


American Indian Travelers

For centuries, the Nez Perce (Nee-Mee-Poo or Nimiipu) of Oregon, Idaho, and Washington called this route "Q'u seyna Iss Kit", or "The Trail to the Buffalo Country." Hunters headed for the high plains of Montana and Wyoming in search of bison. The meat would supplement the salmon, camas, and other foods they collected within their homeland. First on foot and later on horseback, they passed through this area for hundreds of years. Sometimes months or even years would pass before they returned to their homeland.



Nez Perce and Salish wore this form of moccasin.



Nez Perce woman's saddle

The Salish of western Montana, called this route "Nap-Ta-Nee-Sha", or "The Trail to the Nez Perce." Their primary destination was often Idaho's salmon runs on the Lochsa & Clearwater rivers just over the pass to the west. This route was peaceful and uncontested for hundreds of years.



Nez Perce cradleboard

For the Nez Perce, however, traditional use of the route ended in 1877. Forced to leave hostilities in central Idaho in search of refuge, they reluctantly left their homeland on this trail. Imagine their passage through here on July 24, 1877, traveling with over 1,000 horses and 750 people, including warriors, women, children, the old and the wounded. It took more than half a day for the entire group to file down these mountains and cross Howard Creek. This was a fragmented civilization in migration. They suffered not only the loss of homeland, but also separation from tribal members who remained in Idaho. They hoped for refuge in Montana, but that was not to be.



Salish medicine case

This tragic story is told at other points along the Lolo Trail. Look for them as you continue your journey.

