

## How to get there:

From I-90, take exit 104 and travel 4 miles north on Van Buren Street and Rattlesnake Drive to the main entrance on the west side of Rattlesnake Creek. Travel a little further north on Rattlesnake Drive to reach the horse trailhead on the east side of the creek.

*"The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD).*

*To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer."*

**For additional information and maps, contact:**

**Missoula Ranger District  
Building 24-A, Fort Missoula  
Missoula, MT. 59804  
(406) 329-3814**

Printed on Recycled Paper

R1-98-96

# THE RATTLESNAKE National Recreation Area and Wilderness

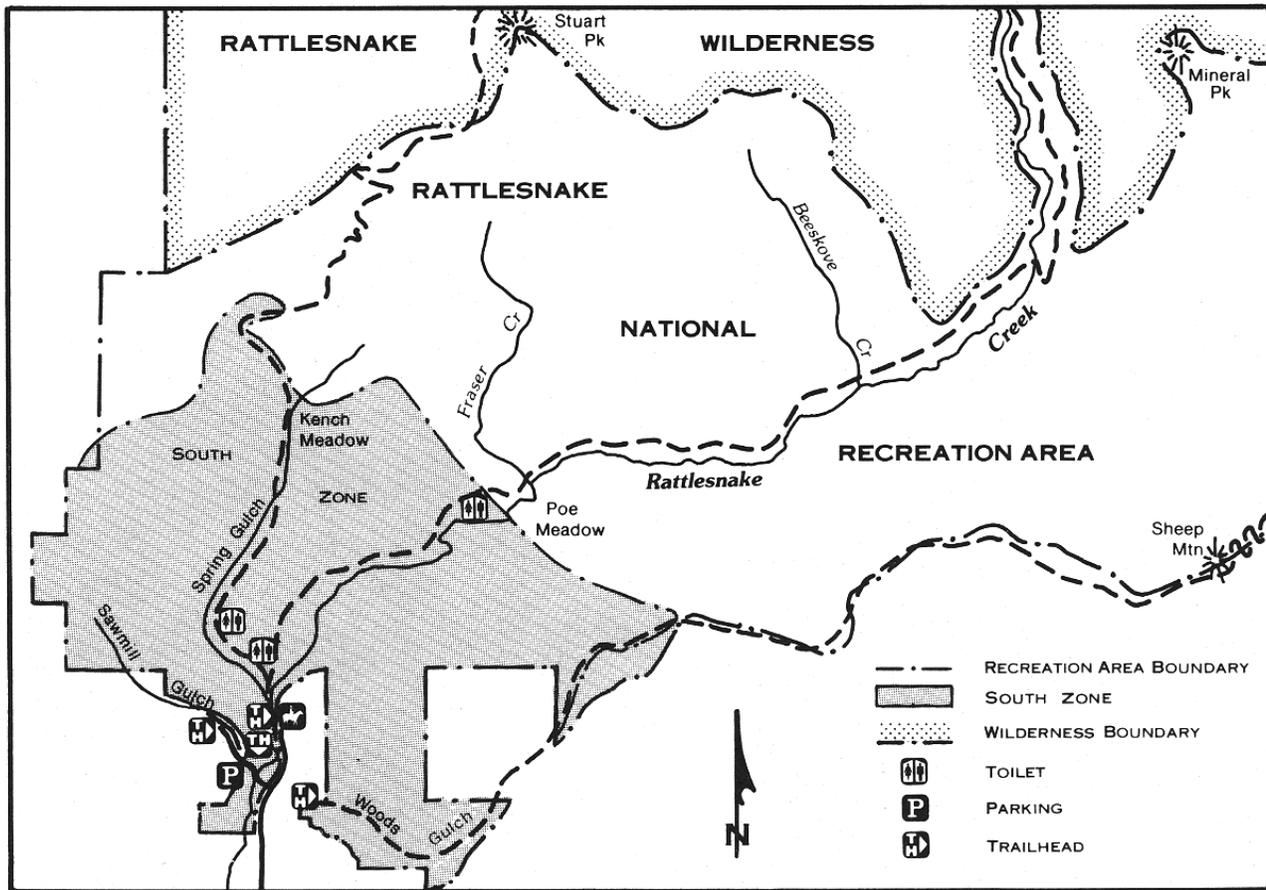
## *Questions and Answers*



---

**Missoula Ranger District  
Lolo National Forest**





From its readily accessible valley floor to its remote subalpine lakes, the Rattlesnake National Recreation Area and Wilderness offers outdoor activities year-round. In 1980, an act of Congress set aside 61,000 acres in the Rattlesnake drainage to foster watershed, recreation, wildlife and education. 28,000 acres were designated National Recreation Area; the remaining 33,000 acres were designated wilderness.

Most people use the lower end of the Rattlesnake, going no further than about three miles from the main entrance, which is across the creek from Rattlesnake Drive. This area, known as the **SOUTH ZONE** includes the main trailhead, the horse trailhead, Sawmill, Woods, Spring and Curry gulches and the area south of the Curry Trail to Kench Meadow, over to Poe Meadow, and southeast to the recreation area boundary.

## How do I access the Rattlesnake?

You can drive to eight different trailheads. The Lolo Forest Visitor Map shows where the trailheads are.

You cannot enter the Rattlesnake via the Flathead Indian Reservation. Public Access is prohibited along the reservation boundary.

## Where do I park?

Most people park at the main trailhead on the west side of Rattlesnake Creek. Limited parking is available at the other trailheads as well.

Parking at the horse trailhead is *only* for vehicles that support horse use. The horse trailhead is *not* for bicycles or overflow parking, even if the main lot is full. Separating users helps prevent problems.

## Is the water safe to drink?

We suggest you boil all surface water before drinking it, or use a filtering device.

The Rattlesnake drainage is a municipal watershed for the city of Missoula. It is specifically protected by the act of Congress that established the Rattlesnake. In other words, the streams must be kept clean. By law, this responsibility is yours.

## Are there restrooms?

There is a handicapped-accessible toilet at the main entrance and another at the horse trailhead. Three more toilets are inside the South Zone; one up Stuart Peak Trail #517 in Spring Gulch and two along the main Rattlesnake "trail" (see map).

## Can I bring my dog?

*Sometimes.* Dogs are prohibited:

- from December 1 through the end of February in the Rattlesnake drainage;
- from December 1 through May 15 in Spring Gulch; and
- yearlong in Sawmill and Curry gulches.

Beyond milemarkers 1.7 in the Rattlesnake drainage and 1.3 in Spring Gulch, dogs don't have to be on leashes. These restrictions help protect water quality and wildlife and reduce conflicts.

## What animals will I encounter?

Deer, elk, coyotes, mountain goats, black bears, moose and mountain lions all spend time in the Rattlesnake, as well as many smaller mammals and birds, such as eagles, osprey, hawks and songbirds.

Grizzlies have been reported in the upper reaches of the wilderness. Remember, all wild animals, even the "cute" ones, can be dangerous. View them from a distance.

## Are camp or picnic fires allowed?

Fires are permitted only beyond the South Zone. Campfires and fire rings are one of the greatest campsite impacts in the Rattlesnake. Fire pans or fire blankets are recommended.

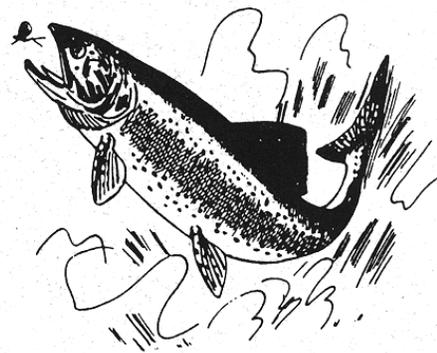
## Where may I camp?

You may camp outside the South Zone. Camping is not allowed at the main trailhead, the horse trailhead, or at the Sawmill or Woods Gulch trailheads. These all lie within the South Zone.

Backpackers should learn and use "no-trace" camping techniques. Bury human wastes and pack out all garbage.

## Is fishing allowed in the creek?

You can fish above Beeskove Creek, which is about six miles from the main entrance. Fishing in the Rattlesnake is regulated by the State of Montana. Be sure you know the regulations before you wet a line. Please don't throw fish entrails in the creek.



## **Can I hunt in the Rattlesnake?**

You cannot discharge a firearm, air rifle or gas gun in the South Zone.

You can hunt for big game and upland birds in season upstream from Frazer Creek in the Rattlesnake Valley and above the head of Spring Gulch. Hunting in the Rattlesnake is also regulated by the State of Montana, so you'll need a state license. Check on current regulations.

Bowhunting is permitted everywhere as long as you are 150 yards away from people. Bow hunters should be especially careful near popular trails.

## **Are bicycles allowed in the Rattlesnake?**

You can bicycle on any designated system trail. Bicycling is prohibited off system trails. Use moderate speeds, slow down when approaching others, and speak, especially to horseback riders, when approaching from the rear. The lower 0.6 miles of the main Rattlesnake trail has a 10 mph speed limit.

Because they are mechanical devices, bicycles and hang gliders are prohibited by regulation from the wilderness area.

## **Are motorcycles, ATVs and over-snow vehicles allowed?**

Except for Road #2120 leading from the main Gold Creek Road to Mineral Peak, the Rattlesnake is closed to motorized vehicles.

Snowmobiles are allowed in the Mineral Peak and Shoofly Meadow areas.

Vehicles belonging to the Forest Service, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks or Mountain Water Company, may

be seen now and then on the main Rattlesnake trail or in lower Spring Gulch.

## **Are horses allowed?**

Horses are welcome but there are some limitations.

Horses are not allowed at the main trailhead or on the main Rattlesnake trail between the main trailhead and Spring Gulch. You can get to the horse trailhead via Rattlesnake Drive. The horse trailhead is for horse users only.

In the wilderness area, a group can have no more than 10 horses and mules and no more than 10 people. Grazing is limited; bringing supplemental feed is recommended. Certified weed free feed is required.

Certain trails are off-limits to livestock, both for safety reasons and to protect fragile lakeshore ecosystems. These trails are:

- Twin Lakes Trail #330
- Glacier Lakes Trails #521 and 522
- Boulder Lake Trail #333
- Fly Lake Trail #336
- Sheridan Lake Trail #328

Riders should be kept to a walk, especially in the heavily used South Zone. Riders need to watch for anything that might startle the animals or cause an accident.

## **WARNING!**

Backcountry travelers may encounter a variety of dangerous conditions. It is your responsibility to inform yourself about those risks and to take appropriate precautions.