



## Know Before You Go

- Although the Birch Creek Historic Ranch is open year-round, the best opportunities for access are May through October. Accessibility is dependent on road conditions, and the road is often impassable when wet. Snow accumulations in some areas make winter access questionable. A high clearance, four-wheel-drive vehicle is recommended.
- Help preserve your cultural heritage, historic and prehistoric. Please leave artifacts where you find them – take pictures. Call 1 (800) 227-7286 to report any violations.
- Although there is one source for drinking water, it is not located near the campsites. One restroom is located by the five-unit campground.
- Contact the Bureau of Land Management Vale District office for facilities rental information, current road access conditions, and any seasonal fire closure restrictions.

## Geology

Fine-grained volcanic tuff, rhyolite, and basalt building materials were used for construction. The use of on-site materials in the construction of the Birch Creek Historic Ranch has given the buildings a very organic feel as they have weathered over time and blended with the natural setting. An associated quarry that used for building stone for some of the structures is located nearby.

## Recreational Activities

Floating the Owyhee National Wild and Scenic River is a popular spring and early summer activity. The Birch Creek Historic Ranch serves as a primary take-out site for floaters rafting from the Rome launch site. Fishing, photography, and wildlife viewing are all pleasurable pastimes in this historic setting.

A five-unit campground with fire rings is located along the river. Please check the bulletin board for current fire use restrictions.

## Wildlife

This historic area is home to numerous species of wildlife, such as bighorn sheep, mule deer, chukar, loggerhead shrikes, numerous neotropical migratory birds, and a wealth of small mammals. Specialized environments feature streamside riparian habitats, meadows, and cliffs that all lend to the area's diversity.

## Cultural

The Birch Creek Historic Ranch buildings and rubble remains give you a glimpse of the earliest Euro-American settlement in Owyhee Canyon and the significant role of Basque immigrants in Malheur County. Evidence of much earlier settlement on the site was unearthed when the Owyhee River flooded its banks in the mid 1990s, exposing artifacts and triggering excitement in the archeological community. Archeological evidence indicates the river setting is located in a transitional area with cultural traditions of both the Great Basin and Columbia Plateau regions.

For approximately 1,000 years, this area was used by the Mono-Bannock-speaking Northern Paiute and Western Shoshone Indians. The cultures consisted of semi-nomadic family groups who traveled independently. They subsisted on hunting, gathering and fishing. Evidence suggests that family groups were small, probably a reflection of available resources. It is believed that spring and fall were used to fish the rivers. In summer and early fall, seeds and berries were collected. In winter some of the Shoshone groups were known to join Flathead expeditions to the Plains to hunt bison. Those who stayed in this area during historic times came together in groups of 2 to 15 families, pooling resources to live on cached fish, roots and seeds, along with some game.

## Directions to the Site

The Birch Creek Historic Ranch is located in the southeast corner of Oregon in Malheur County. From Highway 95, 8 miles north of Jordan Valley, turn west at the Jordan Craters sign onto Cow Creek Road. Follow Bureau of Land Management Owyhee River access signs 28 miles to the ranch.

## District Contact Information

### Vale District

Bureau of Land Management

100 Oregon Street

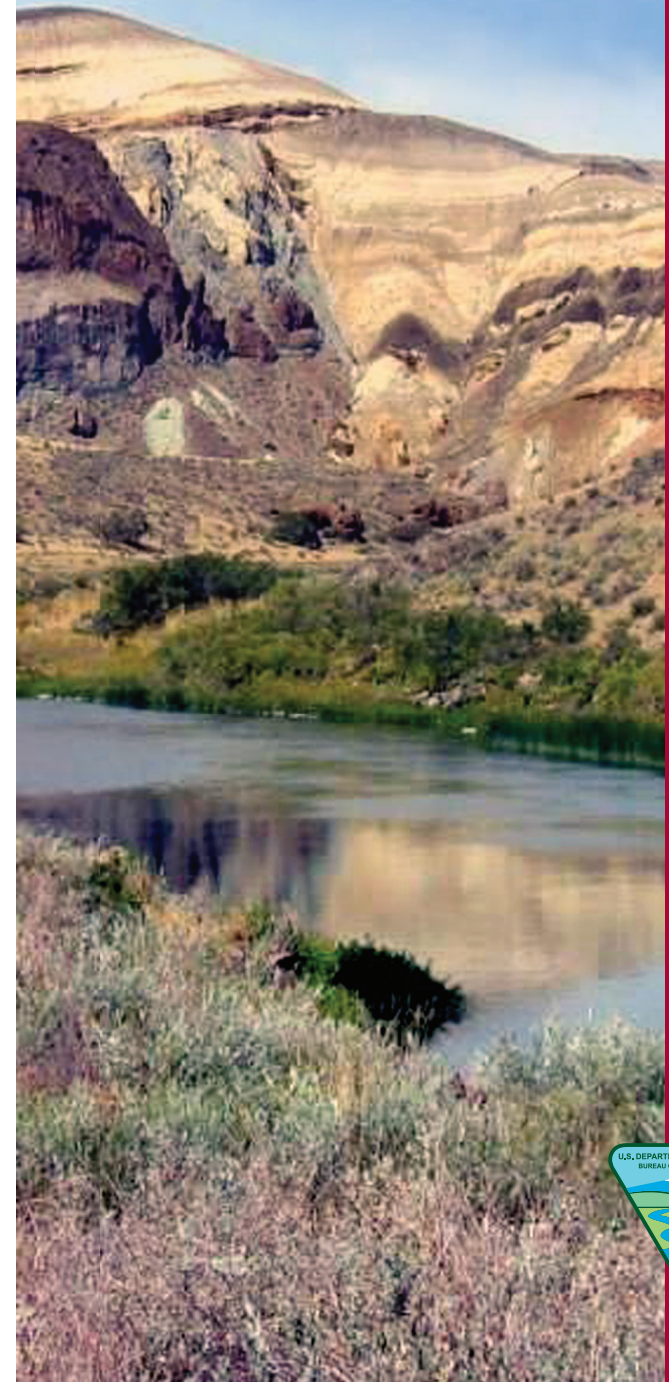
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[www.blm.gov/or/districts/vale](http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/vale)

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# Birch Creek Historic Ranch



Vale District



# Welcome to Birch Creek Historic Ranch

Nestled among cream and chocolate colored hills, barren red cliffs, and towering rock spires lays a secret oasis: the Birch Creek Historic Ranch. Established in the early 1900s, the ingenuity and determination of a Basque sheepherder and a West Virginia cattle rancher are still evident at the site today. Stone walls built in the Basque tradition still ascend the mesa. Remnants of a waterwheel hint at the lush alfalfa fields fed through the gravity irrigation system. Nineteen buildings and structures at the ranch contribute to the property's designation as a historical rural landscape on the Department of the Interior's National Register of Historic Places.

The Bureau of Land Management has managed this site since 1988 for its outstandingly remarkable historical value in the Owyhee Wild and Scenic River corridor.

