

## PRIEST LAKE TRAILS

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The varying terrain in the Priest Lake area ranges from river bottoms with an elevation of 2,600 to 7,500 ft. Valley bottoms, dense forests, meadows and occasional clearings and barren ridges are harmoniously mixed with streams, rivers and lakes.

Because of the wide variety of plant communities, there is a great diversity of animal and bird life. White tail and mule deer, [mountain caribou](#), [grizzly bear](#), black bear, moose, mountain lion are found in the forest along with mink, marten, weasel, porcupine, beaver, bobcat, [lynx](#), coyote, squirrel, chipmunks and other small animals.

Bird species include many blue and ruffed grouse, jays, ravens and songbirds. Osprey, [bald eagles](#), and golden eagles are found because of the water and fisheries resource.

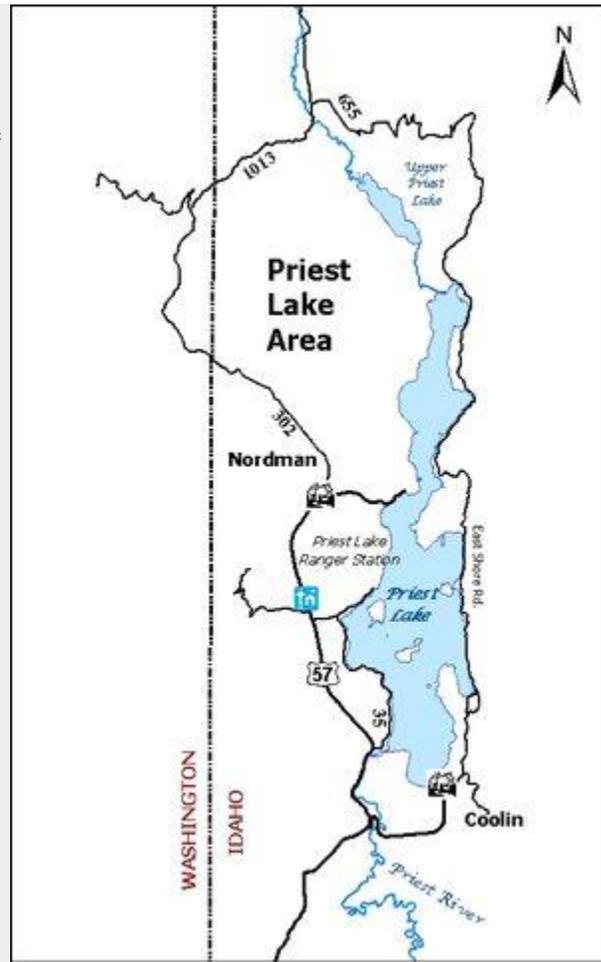
The Aleutian Low dominates North Idaho's weather from late September to late June. Cool, moist storm systems are borne eastward from the Pacific by prevailing westerly winds. Contact of these maritime air masses with the cold, dry air of the plains can result in short bursts of heavy precipitation, but most spring, fall and winter storms are of low intensity and long duration. At last, as July approaches, the subtropical Pacific High moves northward and summer arrives in North Idaho. This is the period of thunderstorms, the worst of which are triggered when cool northern Pacific air meets warm, moist California coast air. Late August often sees a brief but intense invasion of this cool northern air that leaves snow on the higher mountains. September 20, is the average time for the abrupt transition back to cool, wet weather.

Many trails on the Priest Lake District offer the opportunity for [dispersed camping](#). Be sure to choose a site wisely. Trenching and leveling for a tent leaves scars on the area that takes years to heal. Pick a spot where digging is unnecessary. Your site should be at least 100 feet away from the lakeshore and away from the main trail to give yourself and other travelers the solitude you are seeking. Remember "Leave No Trace"!

There may be hazard associated with drinking untreated "natural" water. It is an intestinal disorder called [GIARDIASIS](#) (gee-ar-dye-a-sis). It can cause severe discomfort. Play it safe and carry a supply of water from home or other domestic source.

Exploring our trails can be an adventure in discovery for you and your family or friends. We hope you enjoy your time on the Priest Lake Ranger District.

**More information contact:** [Priest Lake Ranger District](#)



TRAIL INFORMATION						
Trail #	Elev. Begin	Elev. Ending	Length in Miles	Use Level	Difficulty Level	Trails Open to:
<a href="#">48</a>	2440 ft.	2440 ft.	6.0	H	E	F
<a href="#">49</a>	2400	2400	2.5	H	E	F
<a href="#">269</a>	2640	2560	5.3	M	D	F,P,M,MB
<a href="#">365</a>	2480	2520	4.2	L	M	F,P,M,MB
<a href="#">176</a>	2450	3400	2.9	M	M to D	F,P,M,MB,A
<a href="#">177</a>	2380	3400	2.5	M	M to D	F,P,M,MB
<a href="#">178</a>	2200	3400	6.0	M	M to D	F,P,M,MB,A
<a href="#">179</a>	2440	2520	6.0	M	M to D	F,P,M,MB
<a href="#">192</a>	2500	2370	10.4	M	E to M	F,P,MB
<a href="#">294</a>	2600	2480	7.0	H	E	F,P,MB
<a href="#">291</a>	2480	2700	8.1	H	E	F,P,MB
<a href="#">295</a>	2500	3000	6.0	L to M	D	F,P,MB
<a href="#">302</a>	2630	2440	5.0	M	E	F,P,MB
<a href="#">308</a>	3300	2760	8.1	H	E	F,P,MB
<a href="#">28</a>	4240	3400	2.3	H	D	F,P,MB
<a href="#">349</a>	2960	6050	4.7	M	D	*F

Key			
Use Level	Difficulty Level	Trails Open to:	*
L - low	E - easy	F - foot	<b>Not Recommended for horses</b>
M - medium	M - moderate	P - pack/saddle	
H - high	D - difficult	M - motorcycle	
		MB - mtn. bike	
		A - ATV	

Last updated: 05/23/05

## BEACH TRAIL (#48)

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**Access:** (two access points and may have a small fee for parking)

1) Off of Highway 57, turn onto (milepost 31¼) Kalispell Bay Road. Travel approx. 1 mile and turn right onto the West Lakeshore Road towards the Priest Lake Marina. Just past the marina, turn left at the Kalispell Bay Boat Launch. Trail access is south of the parking area.



View of Priest Lake from the Beach Trail.

2) Off of Highway 57 turn (milepost 26) onto Outlet Bay Road. Travel approx. ¼ mile, turn left onto Lakeshore Rd. approx. ½ mile turn right at the Outlet Bay campground. Trail access is at the campground.

**Route length:** 6.0 miles

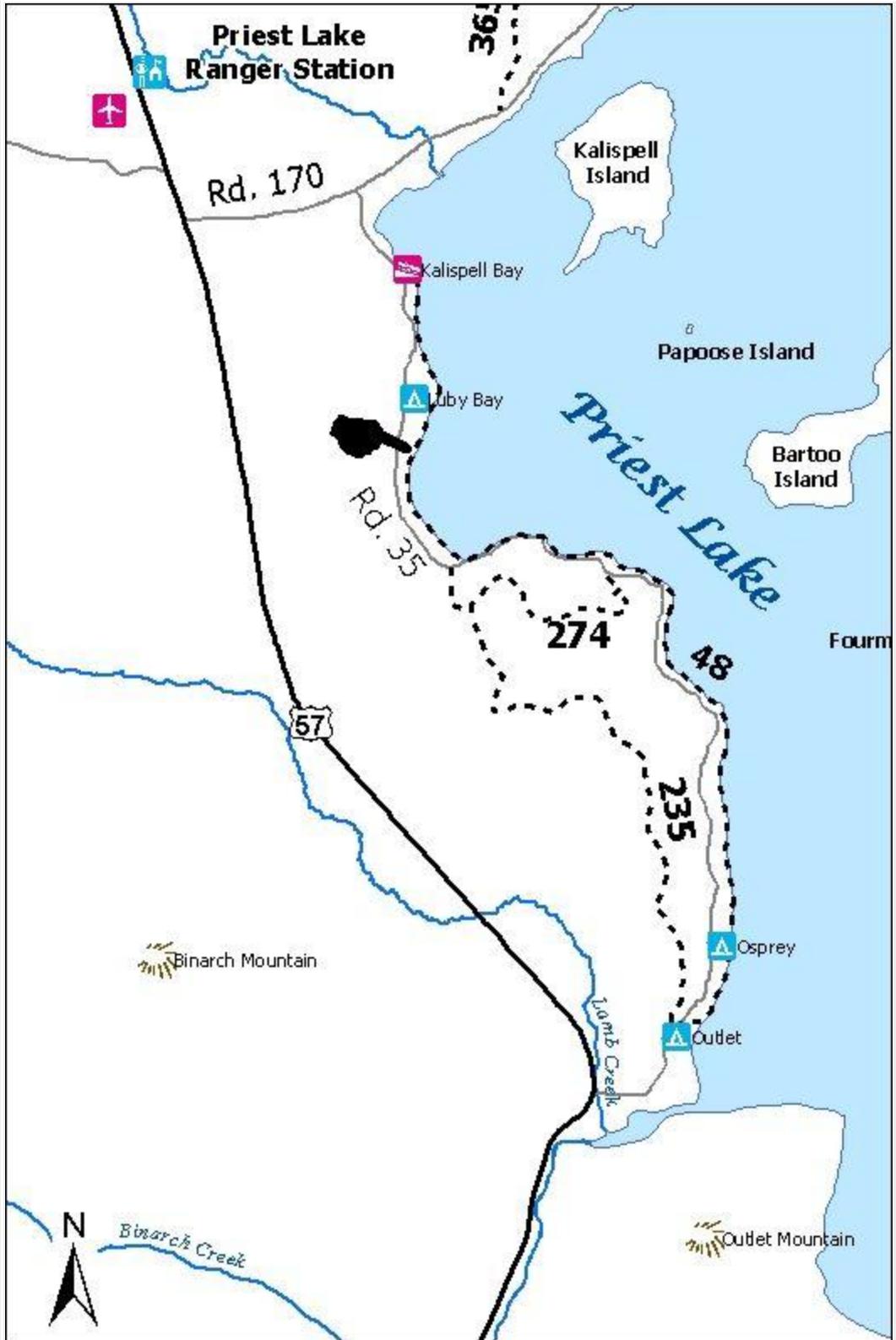
**Difficulty:** Easy

**Usage:** High

**Restrictions:** Open to foot traffic only

**Comments:** This trail is an easy hike which follows along the lakeshore and passes in front of several summer homes. Twice the trail leads out to the Lakeshore Road and one must follow the road until the trail takes off into the woods again which is marked by a white diamond on a tree. This trail goes to Hill's Resort and also passes by Luby Bay Campground.

**More information contact:** [Priest Lake Ranger District](#)



## KALISPELL ISLAND TRAIL (#49)

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**Access:** (direction to the Kalispell public boat launch)  
Off of Highway 57, turn (milepost 31¼) onto Kalispell Bay Road. Travel approx. 1 mile and turn right onto the West Lakeshore Road towards the Priest Lake Marina. Just past the marina turn left at the Kalispell Bay Boat Launch.



Beach area on Kalispell Island.

This trail is only accessible by boat. Boaters can access the island by going to Kalispell Vista or Sandy Point Day Use areas. Once on the island, the trail can be accessed from any point.

**Route length:** 2.5 miles

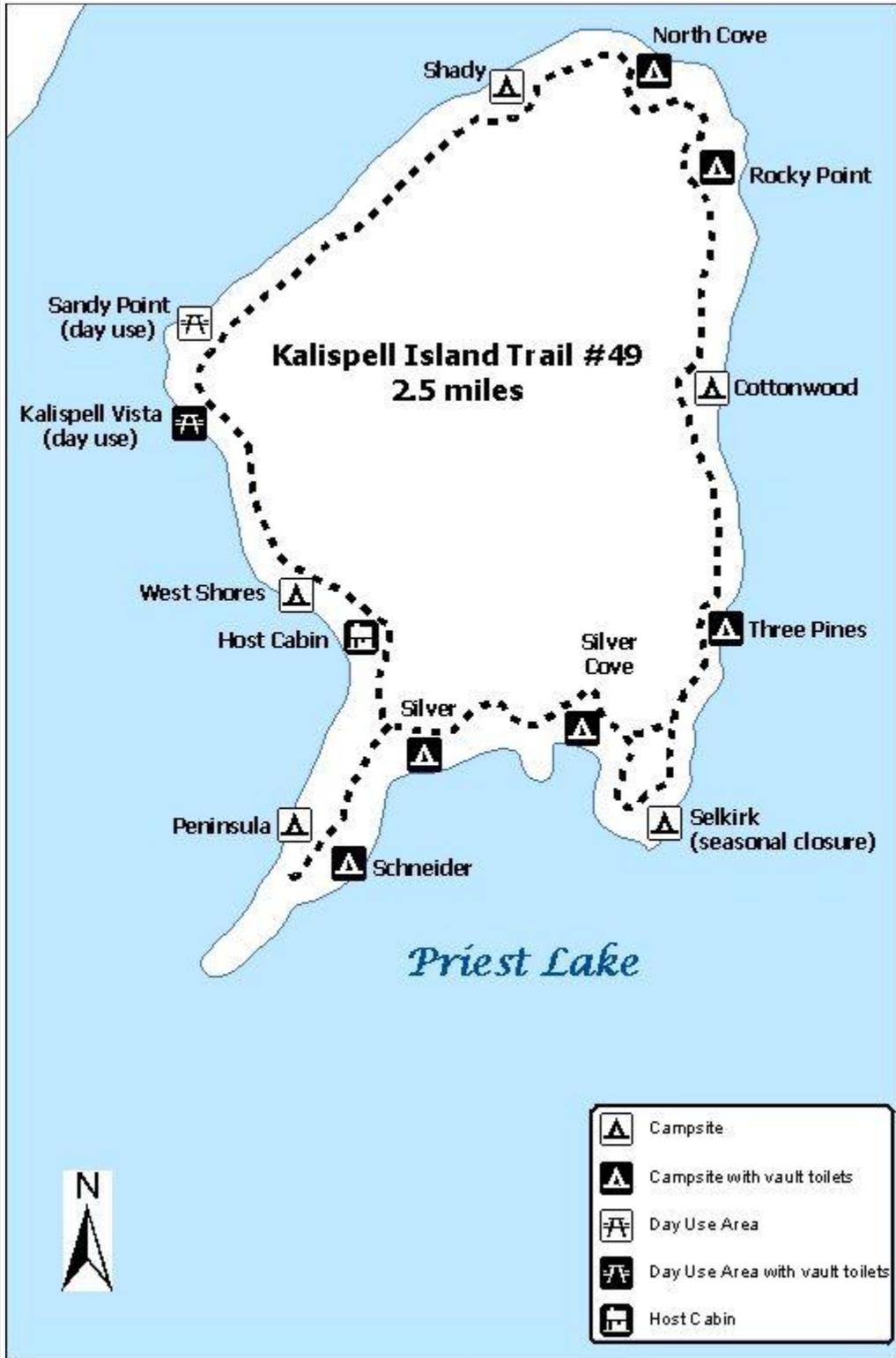
**Difficulty:** Easy

**Useage:** High

**Restrictions:** Open to foot traffic only

**Comments:** This trail is an extremely easy hike around Kalispell Island. The trail runs along the back of campsites, so staying on the trail is important.

**More information contact:** [Priest Lake Ranger District](#)



## LAKEVIEW MTN TRAIL (#269)



**Access:** Located on Hwy 57, between milepost 35 and 36 across from Bismark Meadows. Parking limited to about 4 vehicles or 2 stock trailers. Back in parking. Other access is at the intersection with Trail #365.

**Route length:** 5.3 miles

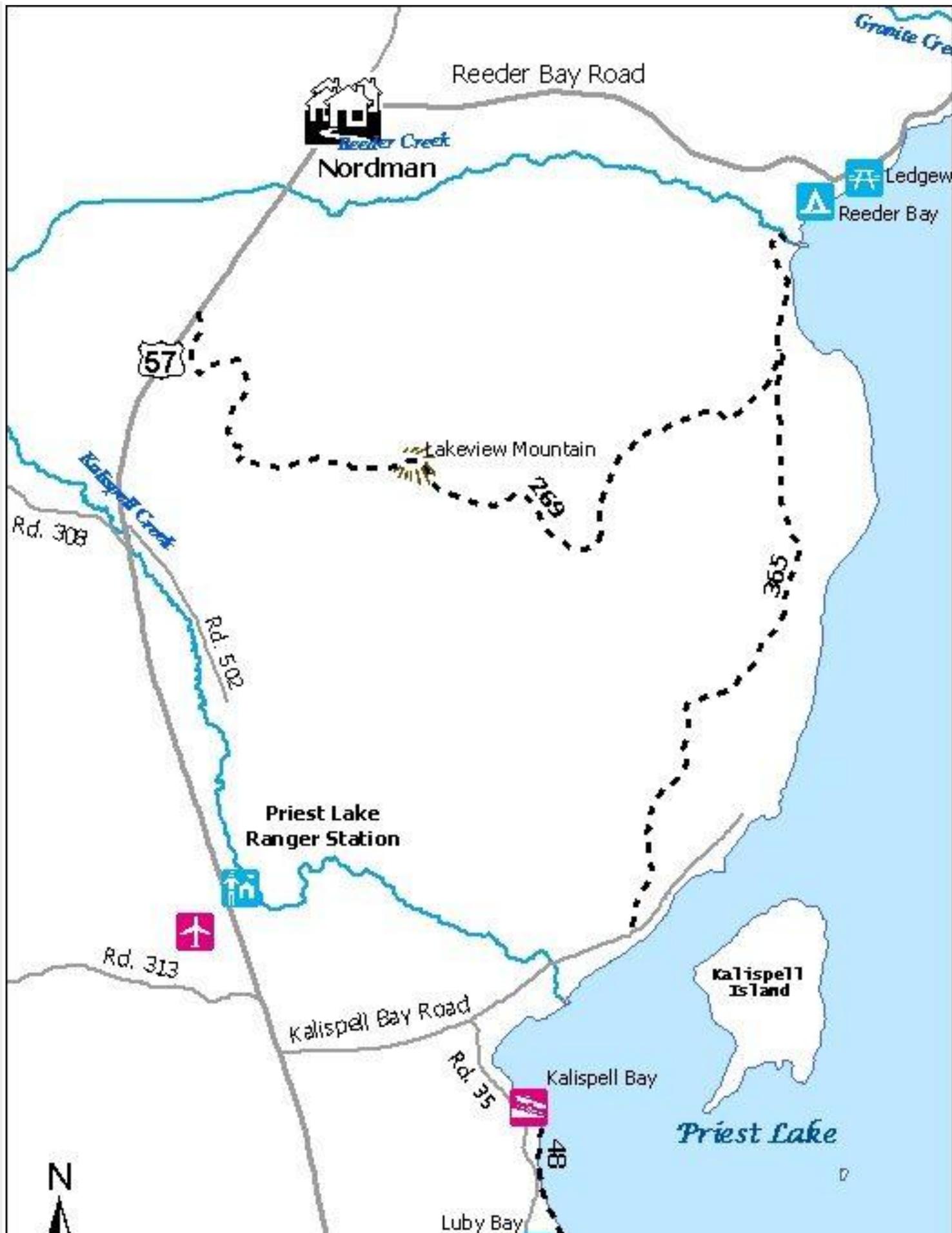
**Difficulty:** Difficult

**Useage:** Low

**Comments:** Takes off from Hwy 57 and starts to switchback up Lakeview Mountain. The first views of the lake and its surrounding area is offered 2 miles from the start where one may take a short hike to an open hillside. If one continues on the trail, several more views of Priest Lake are offered until the trail starts to gradually switchback down the east side of the mountain. This passes through stands of alder, pine, young cedar and open hillsides of brush. Trail is narrow and steep in places.

**More information contact:** [Priest Lake Ranger District](#)

Click on a trail or trail number for information about the other trails on this map



## KALISPELL-REEDER BAY TRAIL (#365)



**Access:** (trail has two access points)

South trailhead #365: Parking is located on the south side of Kalispell Bay Road at the day use area. The trail is located on the north side of Kalispell Bay Rd. Follow the road behind the gate for approximately 1 mile until you see a sign for the Lakeview Trail #365 to the right.

North trailhead #365: Located at the southern end of Elkins Resort parking lot, near the lodge. Cross bridge across Reeder Creek and follow trail from that point.

**Route length:** 4.2 miles

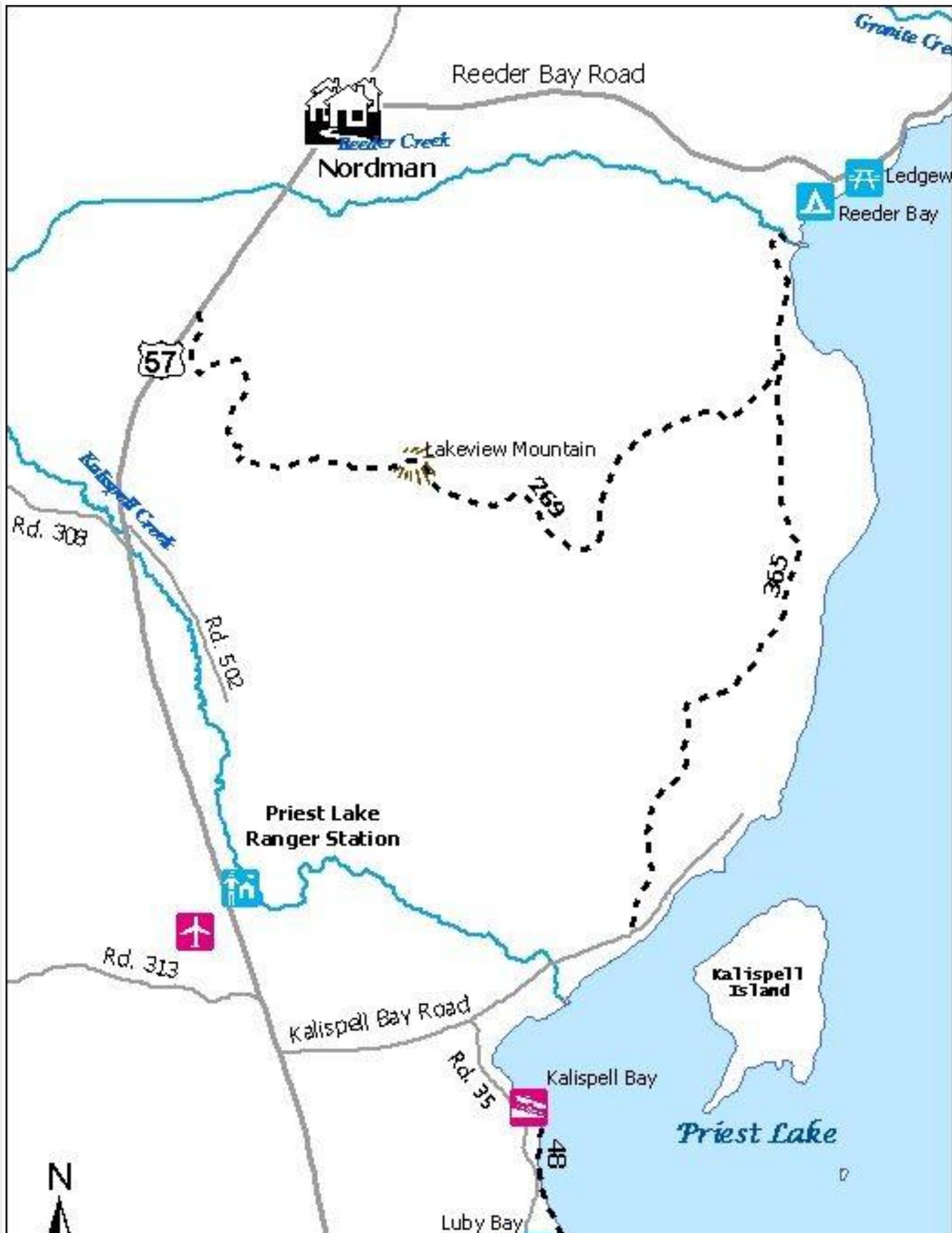
**Difficulty:** Moderate

**Useage:** Low

**Comments:** Trail #365: Has several scenic views of the lake along the trail. The trail crosses an old ski hill on the southern end and passes through private land on the north end. This trail is an ideal day's trip for parties with two vehicles who can leave a vehicle at either end of the trail. Tread is narrow & steep in places.

**More information contact:** [Priest Lake Ranger District](#)

Click on a trail or trail number for information about the other trails on this map



## JOHN WAYNE (#176) TRAIL



**Access:** Hwy 57, across from the Falls Inn Tavern 8.7 miles up turn onto the Peterson Road and travel approx. 2 miles. Trailhead is located on the left hand side, with limited parking available on the opposite side of the road in a pullout.

**Route length:** 2.9 miles

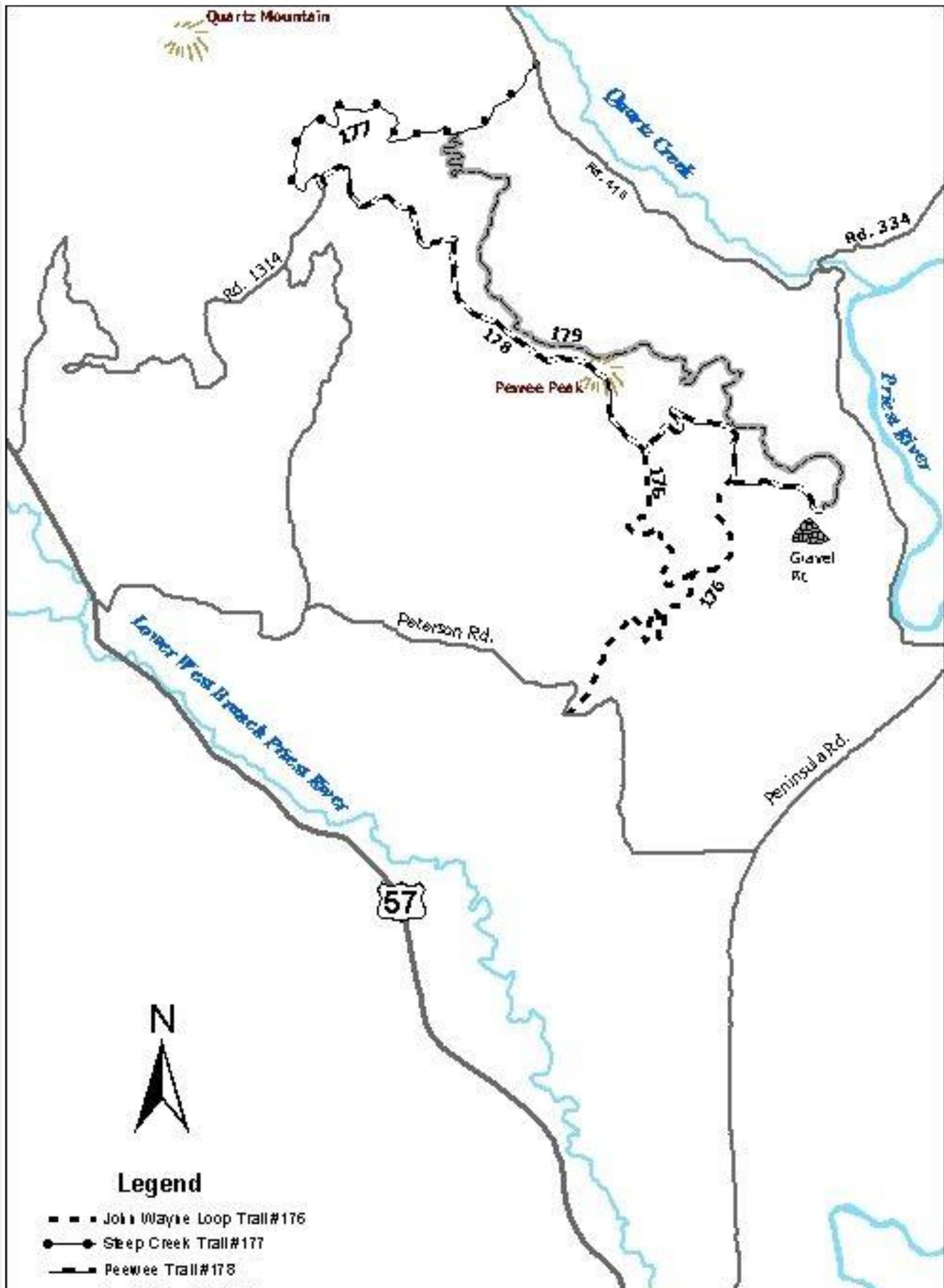
**Difficulty:** Moderate to Difficult

**Usage:** Moderate

**Comments:** Open to ATVs. Part of the Peewee/Steep Creek trail system. Trail system is a series of interconnected loops and each trail can be accessed from several different points. Some loops gain elevations that view the Priest & Pend'Orielle River Valley's. Some sections are located on the old road bed while others are steep and rocky.

**More information contact:** [Priest Lake Ranger District](#)

Click on a trail or trail number for information about the other trails on this map



**Legend**

- John Wayne Loop Trail #176
- Sleep Creek Trail #177
- - - Peewee Trail #178

## STEEP CREEK (#177) TRAIL



**Access:** Approx. 3.5 miles up Hwy 57 turn onto the Peninsula Road. Travel approx. 4 miles. Turn left on Forest Service Rd. #334 (Gleason-McAbee Falls Rd.), which is right before the Green Owl Tavern and continue 2.2 miles and turn left on road #416 and go approx. 2 miles. Trailhead is located on the left.

**Route length:** 2.5 miles

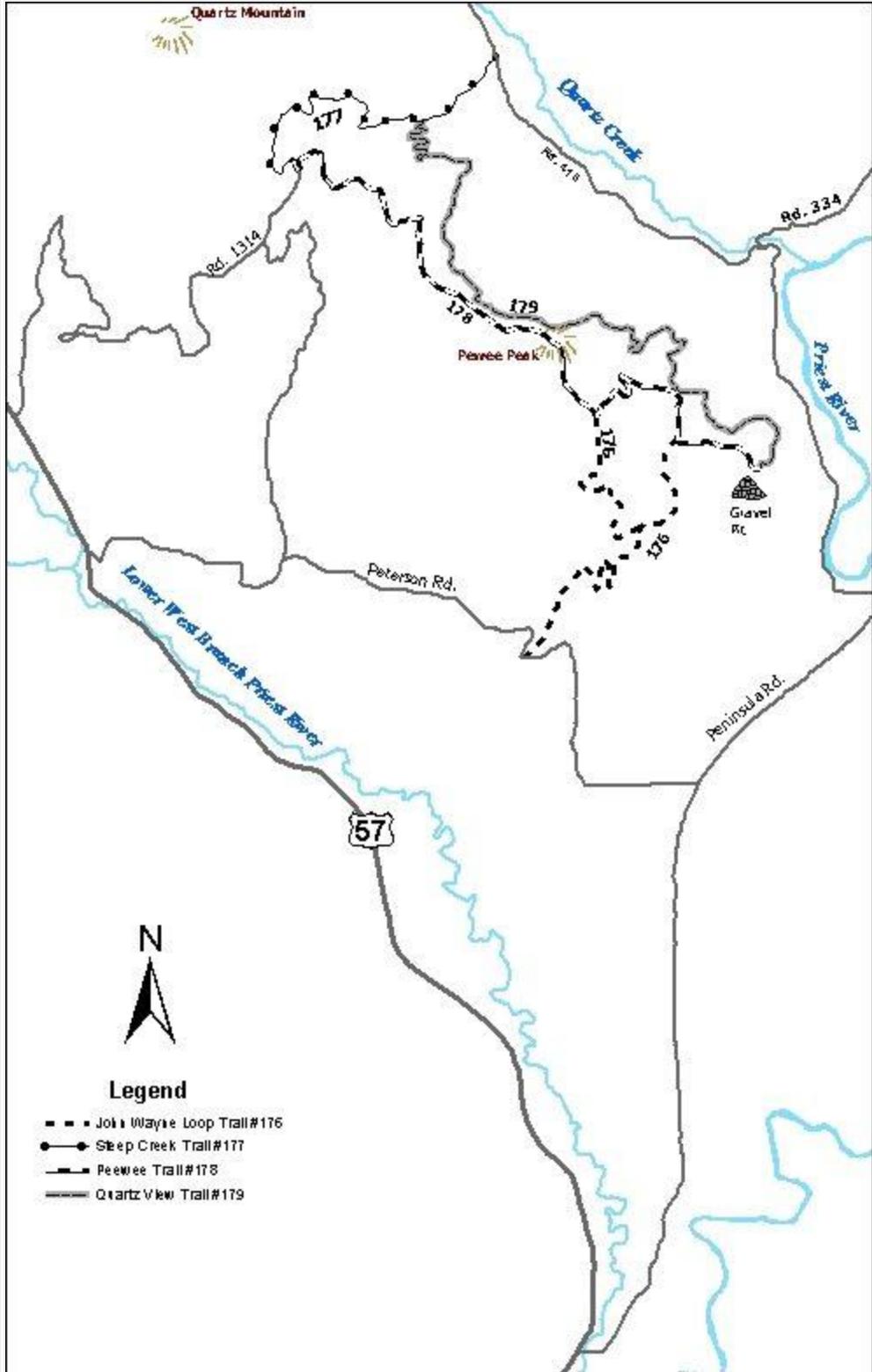
**Difficulty:** Moderate to Difficult

**Useage:** Moderate

**Comments:** Part of the Peewee/Steep Creek trail system. Trail system is a series of interconnected loops and each trail can be accessed from several different points. Some loops gain elevations that view the Priest & Pend'Orielle River Valley's. Some sections are located on the old road bed while others are steep and rocky.

**More information contact:** [Priest Lake Ranger District](#)

Click on a trail or trail number for information about the other trails on this map



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**Access:** Approx. 3.5 miles up Hwy 57 turn onto the Peninsula Road. Travel approx. 4 miles. Turn left on Forest Service Rd. #334 (Gleason-McAbee Falls Rd.), which is right before the Green Owl Tavern and continue 1 mile. Trailhead is located past the gravel pit on the left.

**Route length:** 6.0 miles

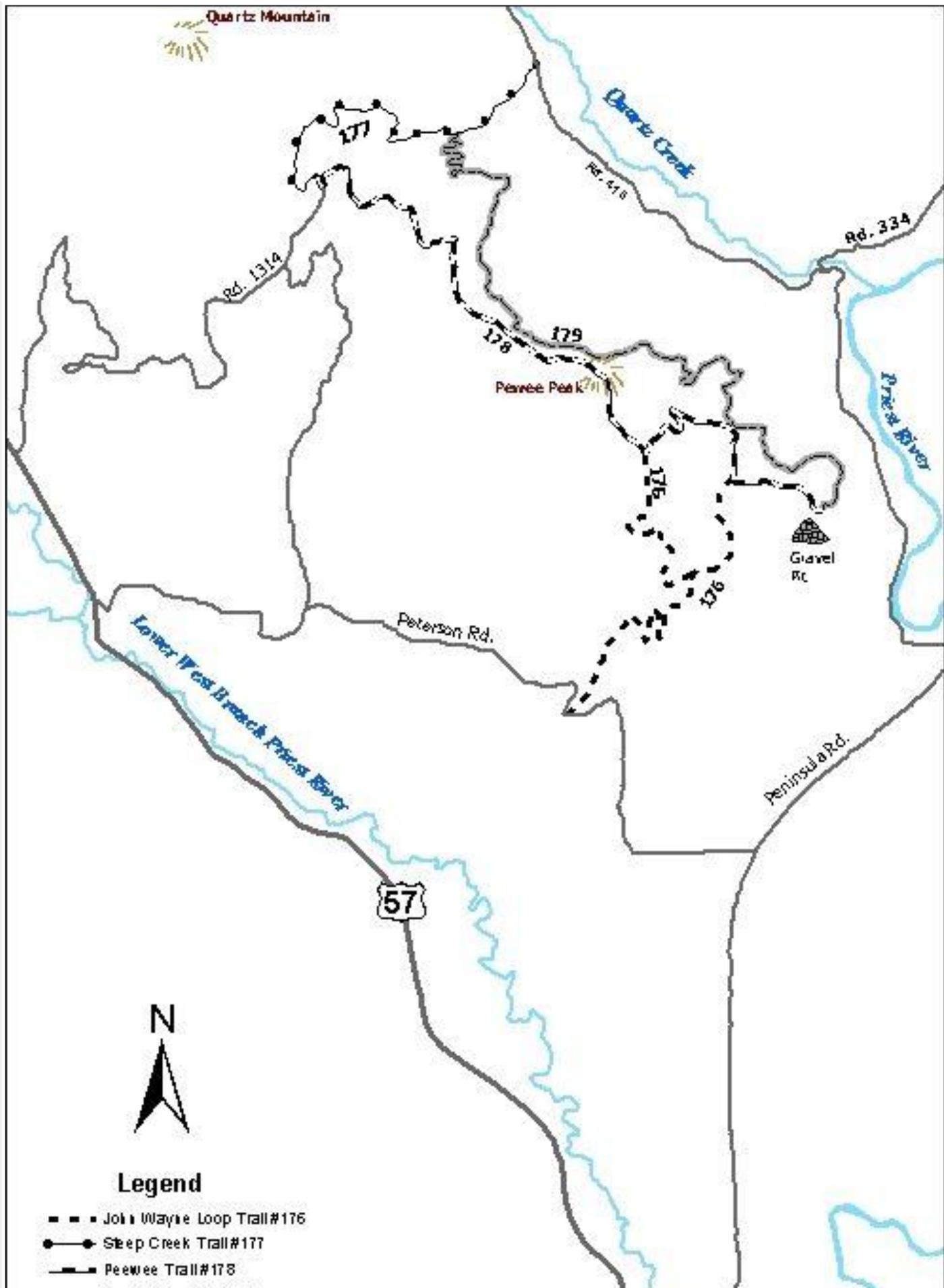
**Difficulty:** Moderate to Difficult

**Useage:** Moderate

**Comments:** Open to ATVs. Part of the Peewee/Steep Creek trail system. Trail system is a series of interconnected loops and each trail can be accessed from several different points. Some loops gain elevations that view the Priest & Pend'Orielle River Valley's. Some sections are located on the old road bed while others are steep and rocky.

**More information contact:** [Priest Lake Ranger District](#)

Click on a trail or trail number for information about the other trails on this map



Quartz Mountain



Quartz Creek

Peewee River

Lower West Branch Peewee River

Peewee Peak

Gravel Rd.

Peterson Rd.

Peninsula Rd.

57



**Legend**

- John Wayne Loop Trail #176
- Sleep Creek Trail #177
- - - Peewee Trail #178

## QUARTZ VIEW TRAIL (#179)



**Access:** Approx. 3.5 miles up Hwy 57 turn onto the Peninsula Road. Travel approx. 4 miles. Turn left on Forest Service Rd. #334 (Gleason-McAbee Falls Rd.), which is right before the Green Owl Tavern and continue 1 mile. Trailhead is located past the gravel pit on the left.

**Route length:** 6.0 miles

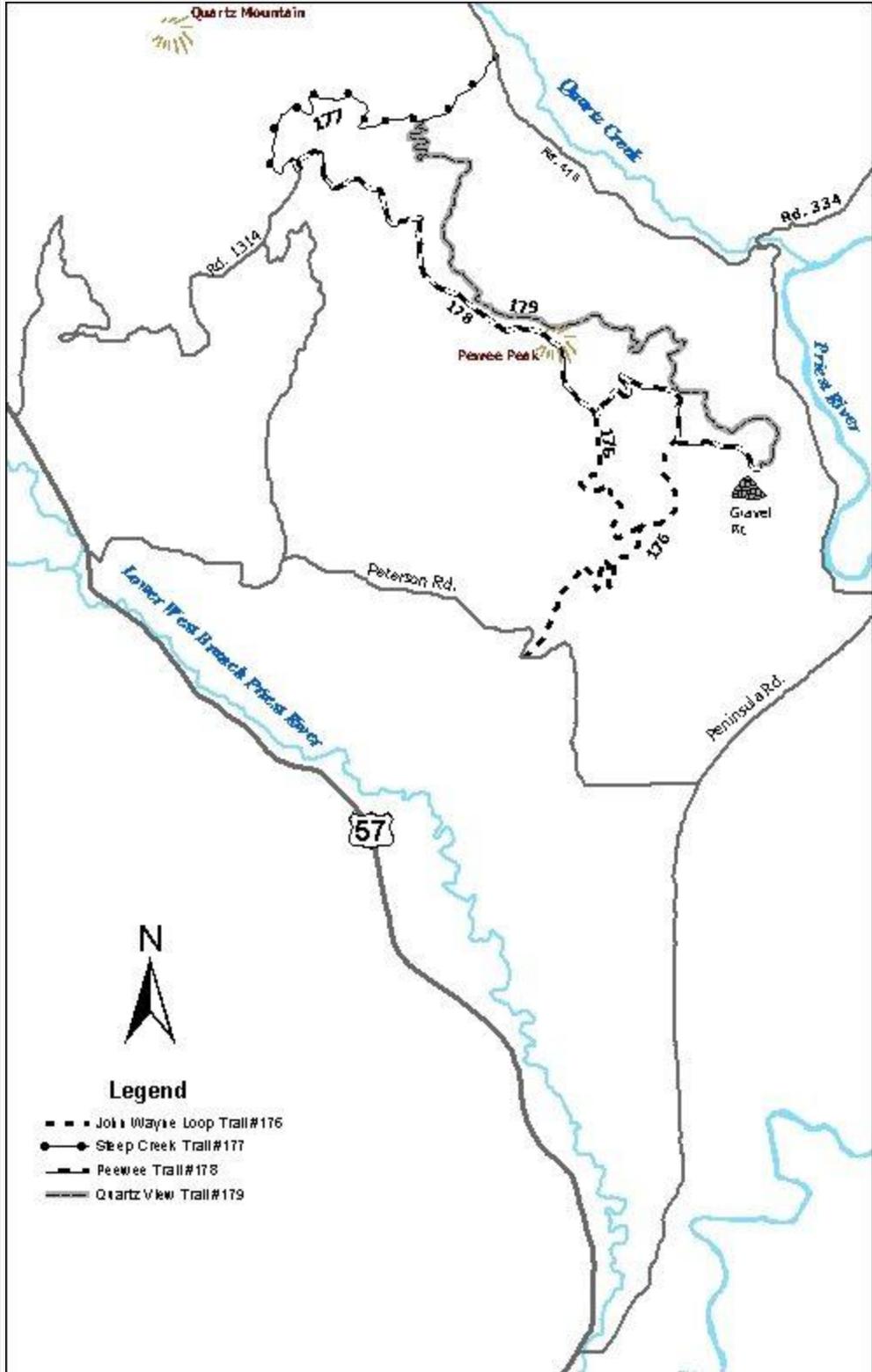
**Difficulty:** Moderate to Difficult

**Usage:** Moderate

**Comments:** Part of the Peewee/Steep Creek trail system. Trail system is a series of interconnected loops and each trail can be accessed from several different points. Some loops gain elevations that view the Priest & Pend'Orielle River Valley's. Some sections are located on the old road bed while others are steep and rocky.

**More information contact:** [Priest Lake Ranger District](#)

Click on a trail or trail number for information about the other trails on this map



## CHIPMUNK RAPIDS TRAIL (#192)



**Access:** From Priest River, Idaho, go north 22.3 miles on Highway 57 to the Priest Lake Information Center. The trail is located behind the kiosks to the east. Stock trailer parking is at the gravel pit about 0.2 miles north of the Information Center. There you will find trail access behind the locked gate.

**Route length:** 10.4 miles

**Difficulty:** Easy to Moderate

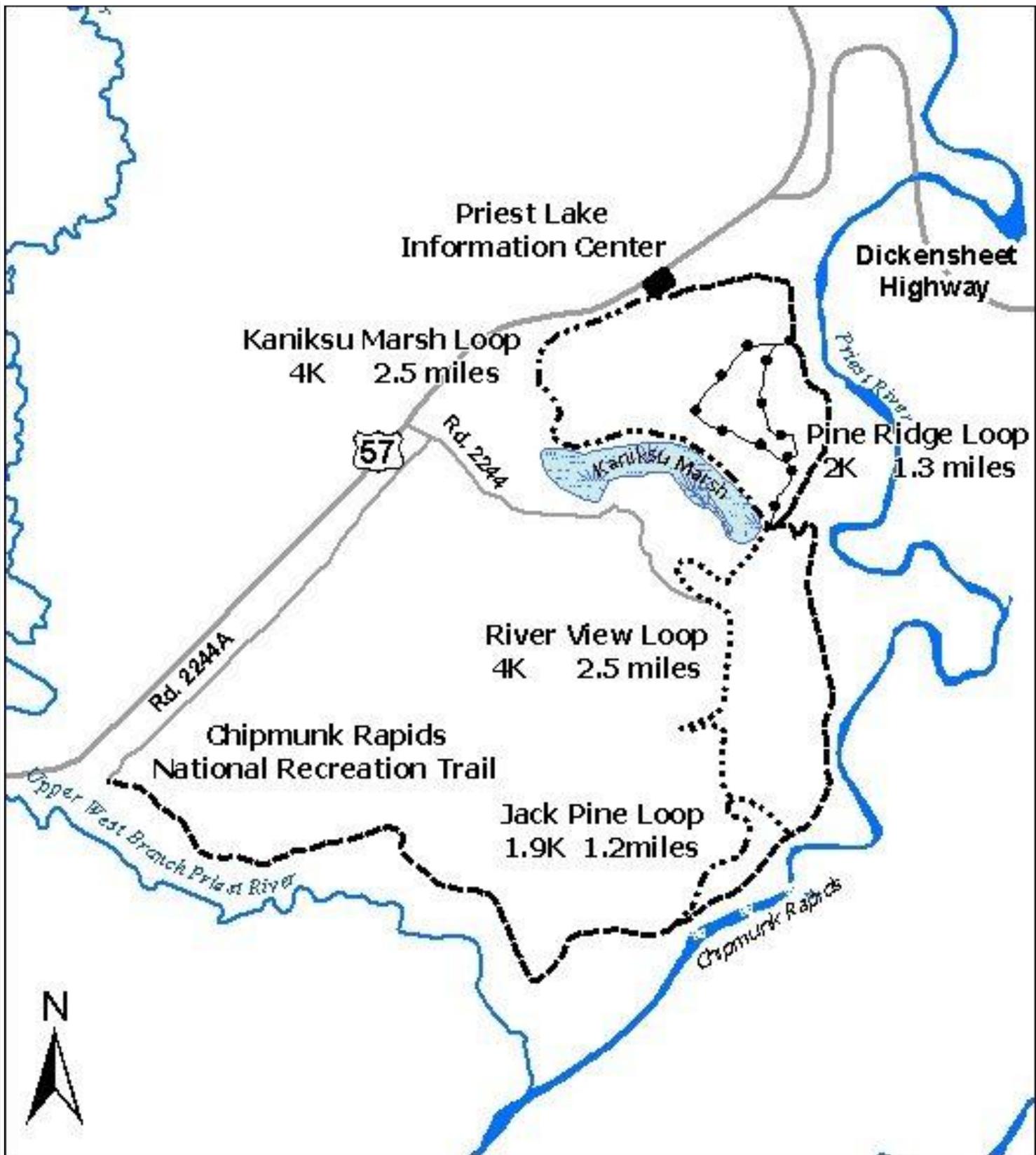
**Useage:** Moderate

**Comments:** This trail utilizes, for the most part, an old road system so the trail is quite wide. High points along the trail is the Kaniksu Marsh, Priest River and Chipmunk Rapids. Watch for moose, deer, and waterfowl that frequently use the marsh. A long loop can be done utilizing road 2244A but be aware that this road is open to vehicles.

**More information contact:** [Priest Lake Ranger District](#)



Rafters on Chipmunk Rapids.



- Chipmunk Rapids
- - - National Recreation Trail
- · · Kaniksu Marsh Loop \*
- ● Pine Ridge Loop

## LAKESHORE TRAIL (#294)



**Access:** (several access points)

1) At Nordman, turn onto Reeder Bay Road. Approx. 4¼ miles Reeder Bay Rd. turns into Forest Service Rd. #2512. The first trailhead is located approx. ½ mile on your right marked "Lakeshore Trail". Two additional access points can be found along the #2512 Rd.

2) Trail can also be accessed at the Beaver Creek Campground located approx. 12 miles north of Nordman. Trailhead is located south of the parking area. Parking is limited for stock trailers at all trailheads. First trailhead for parking is best. Beaver Creek has no parking for stock trailers.

**Route length:** 7.0 miles

**Difficulty:** Easy

**Useage:** High

**Comments:** This is a popular and well used trail on this district. Easy hiking parallels Priest Lake and crosses five streams. Many views of the lake are offered. This trail passes through dog hair stands of timber and also upon hillsides of brush. There are numerous campsites along the trail offering beaches, isolation and wind protection.

**More information contact:** [Priest Lake Ranger District](#)

Click on a trail or trail number for information about the other trails on this map



Dusty Peak



Rd. 1347

Blacktail Mountain



Granite Mountain



Rd. 638

Granite Creek



Nordman

Rd. 302

Nickelplate Mountain



Nordman

Lee Bay Road

295

Beaver Creek

Beaver Creek  
Canoe Launch

291

Beaver Creek

Rd. 2512

297

Distillery  
Bay

Priest Lake

Watson Mountain



## NAVIGATION TRAIL (#291)



**Access:** (several access points)

1) At Nordman turn east onto Reeder Bay Road. Stay on the main road approx. 14 miles to Beaver Creek Campground. Turn right toward the campground then left uphill to the trailhead. Pull-through park available for trailers.

2) North on Hwy 57, Hwy 57 turns into graveled Forest Service Rd #302 approx. 4 miles past Nordman. Travel north on Rd. #302 approx. 14 miles until it turns into Rd. #1013 at the Granite Pass junction. The road to the trailhead is on the right side, located 5.5 miles up Rd. #1013. (1 mile past the Hughes Meadows turnoff.) Stock trailer parking available.

3) Trail can also be reached via Plowboy Mtn. Trail #295.

**Route length:** 8.1 miles

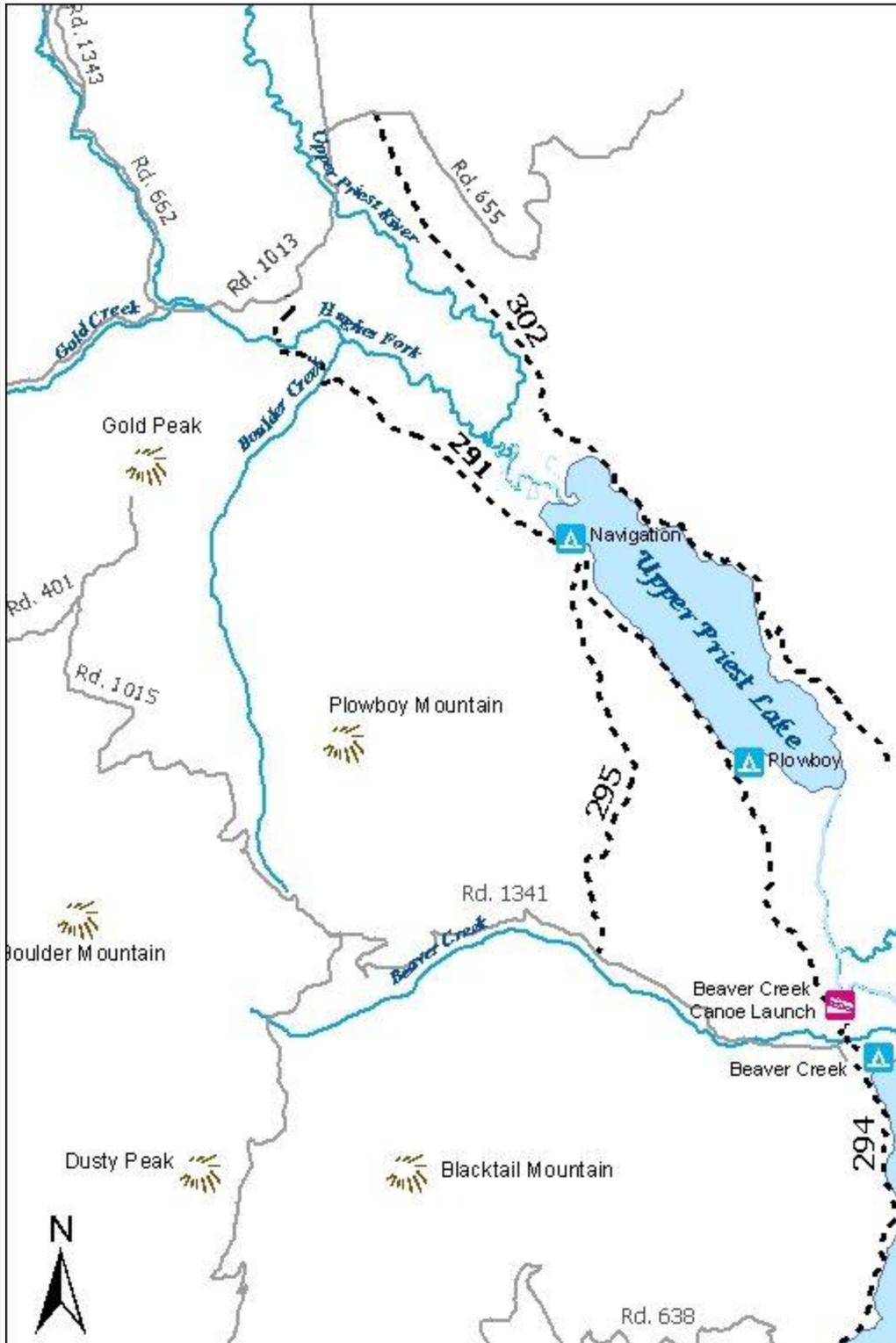
**Difficulty:** Easy

**Useage:** High

**Comments:** This is an excellent trail. Developed campgrounds located at the north end of Upper Priest Lake (Navigation Campground) and the south end of Upper Priest Lake (Plowboy Campground). The trail passes through valley and sidehill terrain. Along the trail there is an old trappers cabin, beaver ponds, abundant wildlife and scenic views.

**More information contact:** [Priest Lake Ranger District](#)

Click on a trail or trail number for information about the other trails on this map



**PLOWBOY MTN TRAIL (#295)** 

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**Access:** (several access points)

1) At Nordman turn east onto Reeder Bay Road. Stay on the main road approx. 14 miles to Beaver Creek Campground. veer left on Forest Service Rd. #1341. Trailhead is approx. 2½ miles on your right.

2) Trail can also be reached via Navigation Trail #291.

**Route length:** 6.0 miles

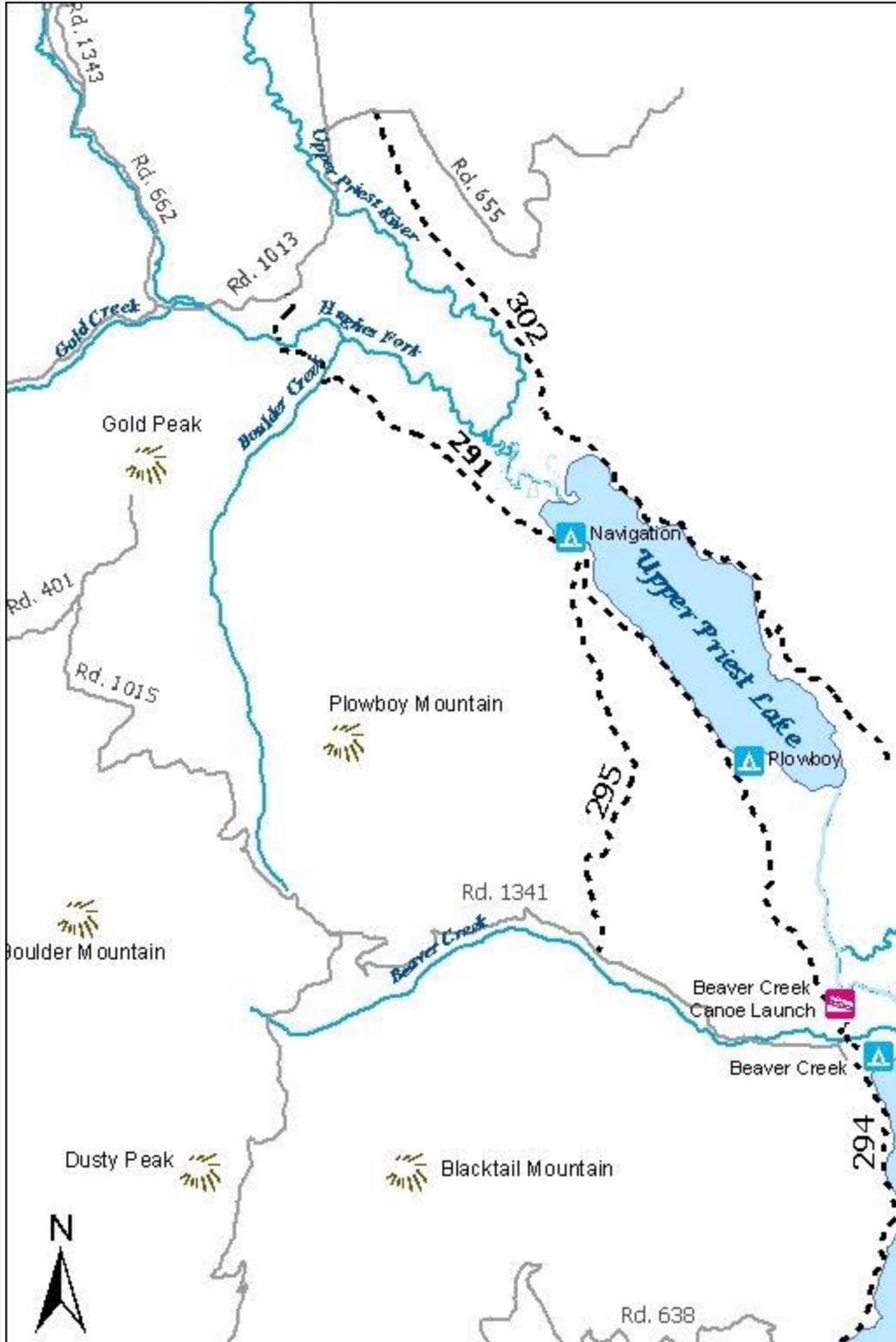
**Difficulty:** Difficult

**Useage:** Low to Moderate

**Comments:** This trail offers so much beauty in terrain and scenic views of Upper Priest Lake. This trail is very steep.

**More information contact:** [Priest Lake Ranger District](#)

Click on a trail or trail number for information about the other trails on this map



UPPER PRIEST LAKE TRAIL (#302) 

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**Access:** North on Hwy 57, Hwy 57 turns into graveled Forest Service Rd #302 approx. 4 miles past Nordman. Travel north on Rd. #302 approx. 11 miles until it turns into Rd. #1013 at the Granite Pass junction. Travel Rd. #1013 north approx. 9 miles. and turn onto Rd. #655. Trailhead is approx. ½ mile in on Rd. #655 on the left, trail is on the right. Stock trailer parking available but limited.

**Route length:** 5.0 miles

**Difficulty:** Easy

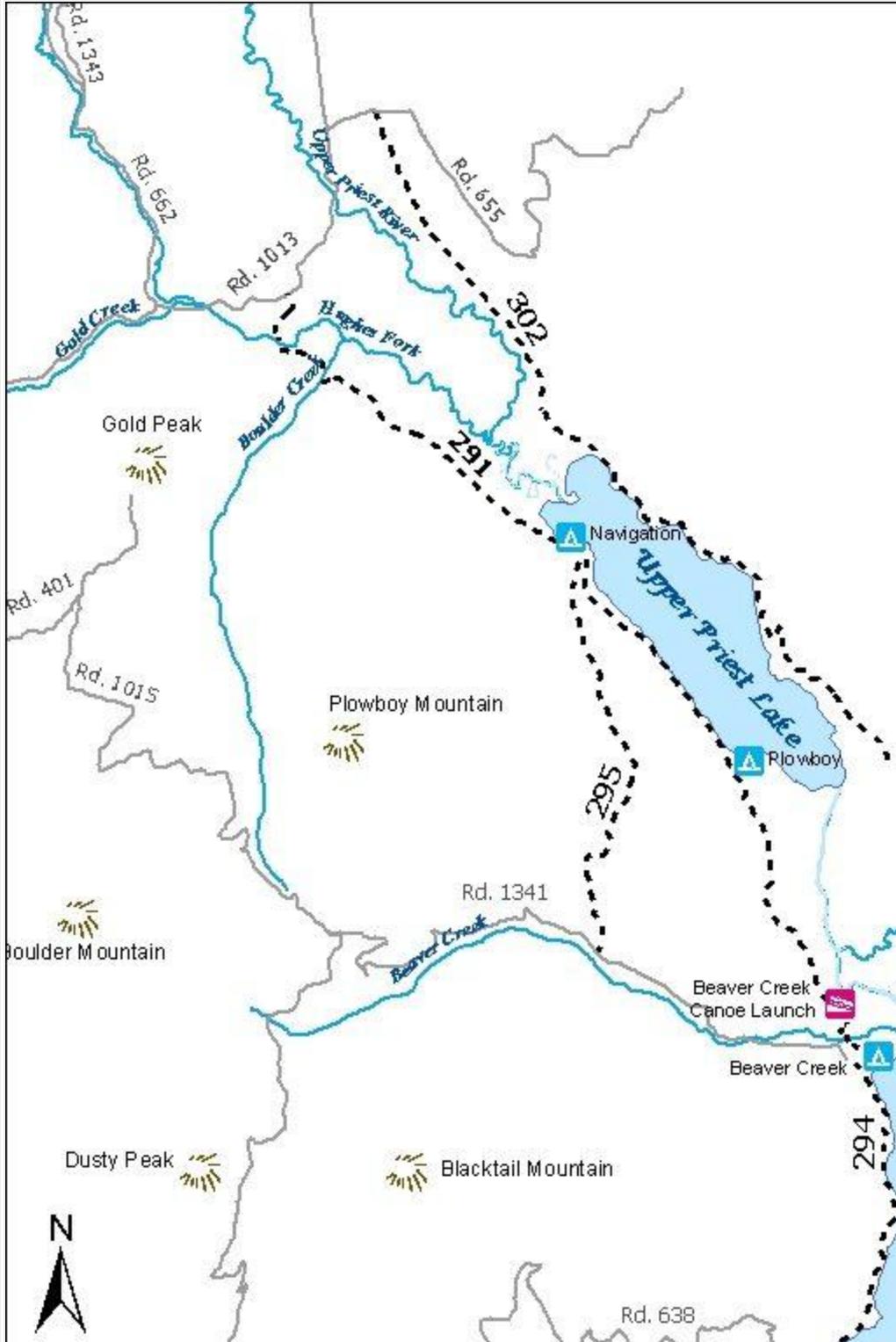
**Useage:** Moderate

**Comments:** [Grizzly bear](#)/[Caribou](#) Habitat

This trail offers a pleasant, easy hike to Upper Priest Lake. The first four miles of the trail are in timber cover until you reach the lake where it then opens up and follows the shoreline until reaching Trapper Creek Campground. The trail passes by an old mine shaft and also Coolin's cabin.

**More information contact:** [Priest Lake Ranger District](#)

Click on a trail or trail number for information about the other trails on this map



UPPER PRIEST RIVER TRAIL (#308) 

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**Access:** North on Hwy 57, Hwy 57 turns into graveled Forest Service Rd. #302 approx. 4 miles past Nordman. Travel north on Rd. #302 approx. 11 miles, until it turns to Rd. #1013 at the Granite Pass junction. Travel Rd. #1013 north approx. 11½ miles. Trailhead is located on the left side. Ample stock trailer parking is available on both sides of the road.

**Route length:** 8.1 miles

**Difficulty:** Easy

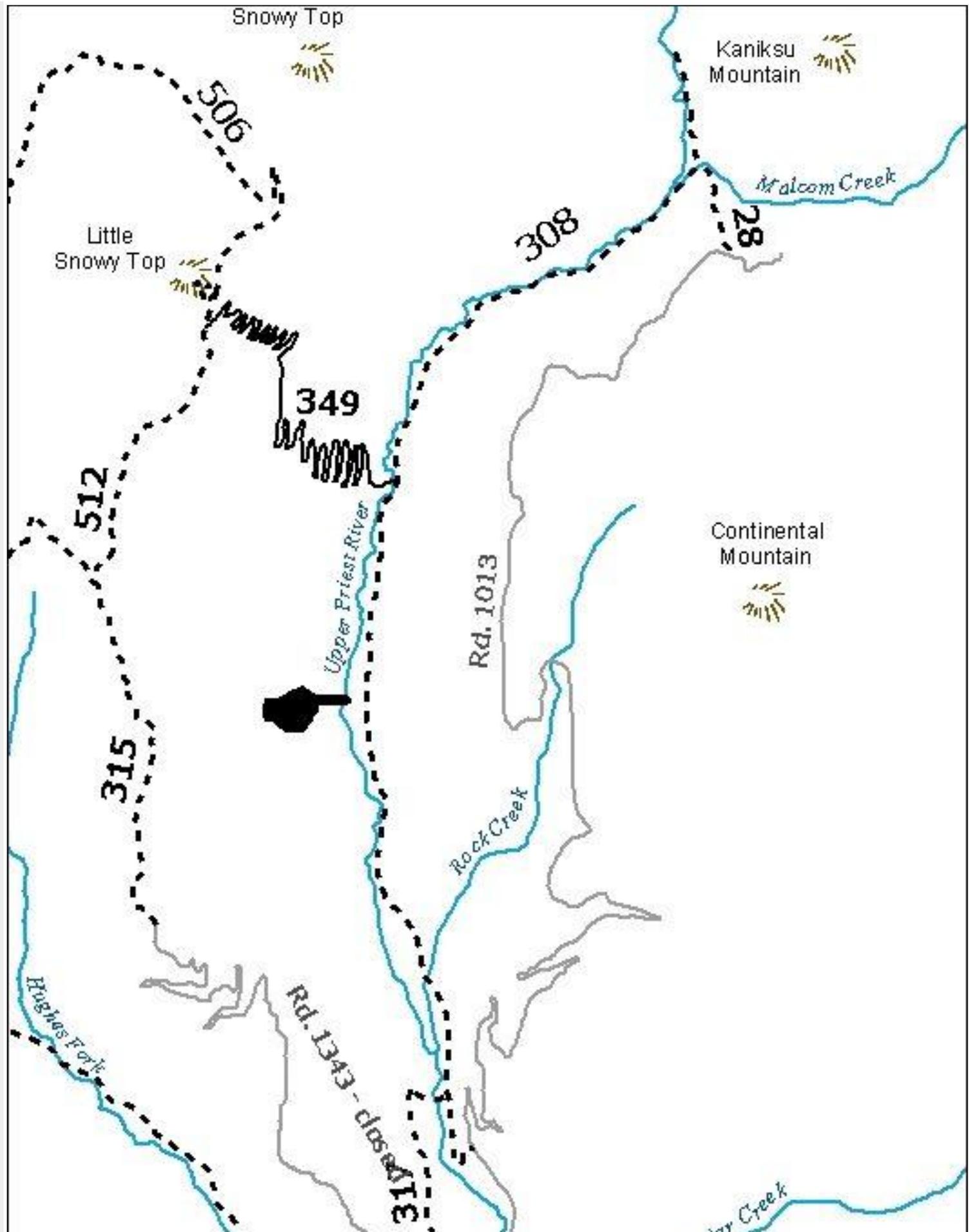
**Useage:** High

**Comments:** [Grizzly bear](#)/[Caribou](#) Habitat

This is a very scenic trail and receives heavy use. It is an easy hike and offers excellent views of old growth cedar and lush river bottom vegetation. The length of this trail follows along the Upper Priest River and ends at the junction of Continental Creek Trail, #28 which continues on to the Upper Priest River Falls also know as the American Falls. The trail has been reworked with new puncheon bridges and crossings.

**More information contact:** [Priest Lake Ranger District](#)

Click on a trail or trail number for information about the other trails on this map



## CONTINENTAL CREEK TRAIL (#28)



**Access:** North on Hwy 57, Hwy 57 turns into graveled Forest Service Rd. #302, approx. 4 miles past Nordman. Travel north on Rd. #302 approx. 11 miles until it turns into Rd. #1013 at the Granite Pass junction. Continue north approx. 25 miles. Trailhead is near the end of road on your left and just before the locked gate. Trail ends up at Upper Priest River Falls, also known as the American Falls. Road past 308 trailhead not recommended to stock trailers due to rough road and tight switchbacks.

**Route length:** 2.3 miles

**Difficulty:** Difficult

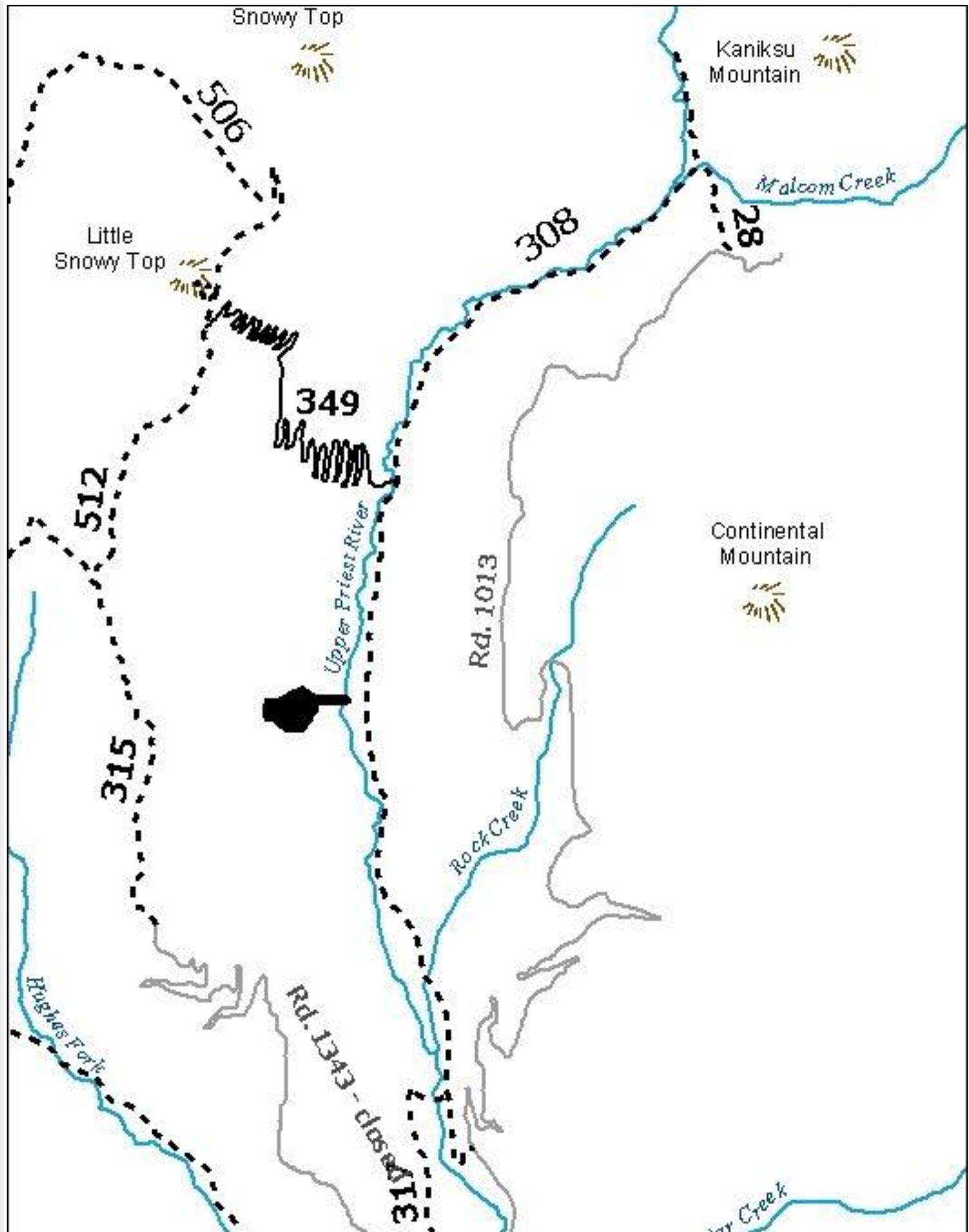
**Useage:** High

**Comments:** [Grizzly bear/Caribou](#) Habitat

This is one of the most scenic trails on the district. It switchbacks down from Rd. #1013 through an old growth cedar stand to the river bottom. Huckleberries, thimbleberries, devils club and ferns grow thick along the trail. Once to the river, the trail leads to an open flat area which offers an excellent camping spot. The trail then crosses a fork of the Upper Priest River and follows it to the falls near the Canadian Border. A short section of the trail near the falls, which climbs above the river, is steep and lacks tread. This may cause difficulty for some to hike the full distance to the falls. Use caution.

**More information contact:** [Priest Lake Ranger District](#)

Click on a trail or trail number for information about the other trails on this map



## LITTLE SNOWY TOP TRAIL (#349)

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**Access:** From the Granite Pass junction Rd #1013 travel north approx. 11½ miles to trail #308, which is on the left. Trailhead #349 is 4½ miles north on trail #308. Trail ends at junction #512.

**Route length:** 4.7 miles

**Difficulty:** Difficult

**Usage:** Moderate

**Comments:** [Grizzly bear/Caribou Habitat](#)

This trail is the most difficult hike on this district, but it is well worth the effort. It begins at the junction of Trail #308, Upper Priest River Trail and almost immediately the Upper Priest River has to be forded. Once across, the trail starts to gradually climb through an old growth stand until you reach the switchbacks. A sign on a tree states there are 72 switchbacks to the Shedroof Divide Trail #512. Sections of the trail are sloughing off due to steep hillsides. This trail is recommend for only those who want to hike an arduous trail and are in good physical shape. Not recommended for stock.

**More information contact:** [Priest Lake Ranger District](#)

Click on a trail or trail number for information about the other trails on this map

