

# Rock, water, wildlife and something more... in the Scotchmans

The Scotchman Peaks are carved almost entirely out of one block of stone that began twisting eons ago on an axis dictated by the collision of the North American and Pacific tectonic plates. As one corner rose, the other sank; until the difference in strata along the Hope Fault (which marks the southwestern edge of the Scotchmans) is now measured in tens of thousands of feet.

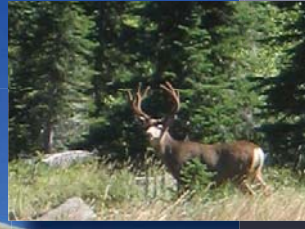
Glaciers have since shaved off the top layers, and a mere 12,000 years ago, the end of the Wisconsin Ice Age put the finishing touches on the peaks and canyons between Lightning Creek in Idaho and Bull River in Montana.

Now, this base of glaciated Precambrian stone — some of the oldest on the planet — is the foundation for a diverse and beautiful place full of things wild and lovely. Mule deer. West slope cutthroat trout. Moose. Ptarmigan. Elk. White tail deer. Pileated woodpeckers. Black bears. Rainbow trout. Martens. Weasels. Wolverines. Flickers. Mountain lions. Golden eagles. Grizzly bears. Mountain goats. This is just a partial list of hundreds of species thriving in this wild place.

These mountains, too, are the source of billions of gallons of clean water, "manufactured" annually by Mother Nature and delivered via dozens of streams into the Clark Fork, Bull and Kootenai Rivers.

For humans, the resources of the Scotchmans are irreplaceable. Besides water and hunting and gathering opportunities, there are the priceless benefits of solitary recreation, silence and that rarest commodity, the chance to be self-reliant and self-directed in a world sans the trappings we have come to depend on almost automatically.

In the wilderness, we can — and find we need to — stop taking things for granted, including ourselves.



## Hikes in the Scotchmans



### 1 Morris Creek Trail #132

On a hot summer day the shaded canopy of Morris Creek will keep you cool. The modest rise in elevation is far less demanding than some of the "Peaks" but will still make you earn your rewards. Wildflowers, mushrooms and occasional views of Blacktop Peak or a good look back at Beetop are a delight.

### 2 Goat Mountain Trail #35

Goat Mountain is arguably the steepest trail in Idaho — or anywhere — gaining 4,000 feet in less than 3 miles. Loose sand and gravel compound the challenge in many places on the lower trail. Open slopes filled with grass and brush often obscure the trail. Navigation skills and good knees are needed. This trail is a knee buster — no wonder that it's called "Goat Mountain!"

### 3 Scotchman Peak Trail #65

The "grand-daddy" of all hikes in this area. A relatively short (4 miles), steep climb up the namesake peak, Scotchman. The well-worn trail tread is usually in good shape and leads to the highest point in Bonner County (7,009 feet). Stunning panoramas of Lake Pend Oreille begin two thirds of the way up and continue to unfold as you reach the summit. Snow can linger late into summer.

### 4 Star Peak via Big Eddy Trail #998

The easiest access to Star Peak is the Big Eddy Trail, which starts near the Clark Fork River and climbs into the heavens. The 4,000 foot elevation gain is comparable to Scotchman Peak, but spread over 5 miles (one way), the grade is slightly more forgiving. Pillick Ridge Trail #1036 offers another route option to the summit of Star Peak. This is a dry trail.

### 5 Pillick Ridge Trail #1036

This route is Star Peak the hard way, 11 miles beginning with a 3400-foot hump through heavy timber up from Bull River to the top of Pillick Ridge. From there, the ridge rolls west another 8 miles to Star, affording spectacular views of the Star Ridge, Bull River Valley, the Cabinet Mountains Wilderness and the Clark Fork River. A great open loop can be made by combining Trails #998 and #1036 in any order. Pack lots of water.

### 6 Ross Creek Cedars Nature Trail #405

A canopy of cedar boughs provides cool respite from summer sun, and huge old growth trees offer a measure of solitude even when the parking lot fills. For profound solitude there is no substitute for a winter walk into this magnificent grove! Snow falling softly on a cathedral of cedars is magical. Here you will find the Scotchmans' silent side.

### 7 Spar Peak (Trail #324) and Little Spar Lake (Trail #143)

Beginning from the same trailhead, these two hikes lead to beautifully different destinations. A steady climb through various life zones brings one to the monolithic "thumb" of Spar Peak, with expansive views of the Scotchman Peaks interior valleys and peaks. Continue past the Spar Peak intersection for a moderate hike through the lush Spar Creek canyon, a fine example of interior rain forest, to sparkling green Little Spar Lake, one of the best overnight options in the Scotchmans. Snow melt can make an early season crossing of Little Spar Creek difficult.



We humans are guests in the wilderness and should remember that what we do (or don't do) while there will have a lasting impact on the wilderness itself and the experience of others.

A few simple rules help mitigate our presence:

- A good campsite is found, not made. Use existing campsites in high use areas. Camp at least 100 feet from lakes, streams, or trails.
- Pack it in, pack it out and be respectful of nature.
- Use biodegradable soap. Do dishes and wash at least 200 feet away from creeks, springs and lakes.
- Eschew fires or build them in places that won't harm vegetation or water sources. If you choose to build a fire, use an established fire ring. Haul out unburned trash.

## Wilderness Manners

- Do not approach animals or block their passage. Observe them from a respectful distance. This adds up to safety for humans and critters.
- Protect your food and wildlife by storing rations securely. A fed bear is a dead bear.
- Bury human waste a minimum of six inches deep at least 200 feet away from water sources.
- Dogs in wilderness, even if well trained, are problematic and reduce your chances of wildlife sightings. They are not trained to bury their own waste.
- Find out more by visiting [www.fs.fed.us/r6/w-w/recreation/wilderness/regs.shtml](http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/w-w/recreation/wilderness/regs.shtml)

## Fragile flowers tough it out in the Scotchmans

The richness of the Scotchman Peaks lies also in the diversity of flora and forest habitats. Mountain hemlock, whitebark pine and alpine larch dominate the forest canopy near the ridge tops, while the moist draws hold some of the largest trees of the Inland Northwest, including western white pine, larch and cedar.

On the high, south-facing slopes of Scotchman and other peaks, hikers pass through scree fields, ponderosa pine and meadows bedecked with beargrass in early July, as well as Indian paintbrush, yellow, peary everlasting, arrowleaf balsamroot and wild chives.

The Scotchman Peaks also are home to some classic examples of inland temperate rainforests, such as the Ross Creek Grove of Giant Cedars — where the largest trees in Montana are found. Western red cedars more than 10 feet in diameter are still growing in this grove.

Huckleberries, Idaho's state fruit, ripen in late summer, pleasing bears and humans alike.

Hikers also should keep an eye out for the mariposa lily in the dry, grassy slopes and open woodlands, while in the shady, moist forests, the tiny fairy slipper orchids grow.

As lovely as these finds can be, take only pictures. If left alone, the wildflowers of the Scotchman Peaks will return to please visitors year after year.

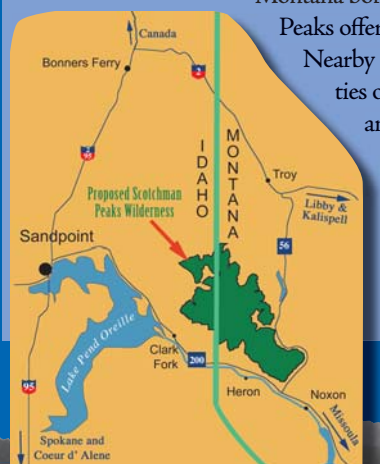


### What is a Wilderness Area?

It is federal land protected under the 1964 National Wilderness Preservation System. This Act states: "A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain."

### Where are the Scotchman Peaks

Looming above Lake Pend Oreille and the Clark Fork River in the Cabinet Mountains, Scotchman Peak is the highest point in Bonner County, Idaho, at 7,009 feet. Straddling the Idaho/Montana border, the Scotchman Peaks offer a place of quiet refuge.



Logo: Jared Johnston  
Design: Sandy Compton

Inset map: Silvie Amezcua White; Large map (other side): Brad Smith  
Photography by Sandy Compton, Monte Dodge, Phil Hough and Jim Mellen

### About Friends of Scotchman Peaks Wilderness

The Friends of Scotchman Peaks Wilderness (FSPW) is a grassroots, all-volunteer organization formed in January, 2005, by citizens of Montana and Idaho to preserve one of the last and largest wild areas in our region — the Scotchman Peaks roadless area. We believe that the 88,000-acre Scotchman Peaks roadless area, spanning the Idaho/Montana border roughly 60 miles south of Canada, deserves permanent protection as wilderness. Since the 1970s, when the U.S. Forest Service carried out extensive evaluations of lands suitable for wilderness, this rugged, scenic and biologically diverse portion of the West Cabinet Mountains has been managed for its wilderness potential. Faced with growth and change, we want to make sure that this special place stays the same.

Our local communities will benefit from the unparalleled recreational, environmental and economic opportunities which wilderness provides. Our goal is to increase awareness within our communities about the value of wilderness designation for the Scotchmans. We hope you will use this map to explore the Scotchmans and discover first hand this special area!

To become a Friend, write to  
Friends of Scotchman Peaks Wilderness  
P.O. Box 2061 • Sandpoint, ID 83864  
e-mail: [info@scotchmanpeaks.org](mailto:info@scotchmanpeaks.org)



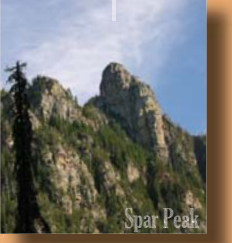
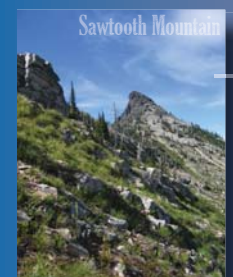
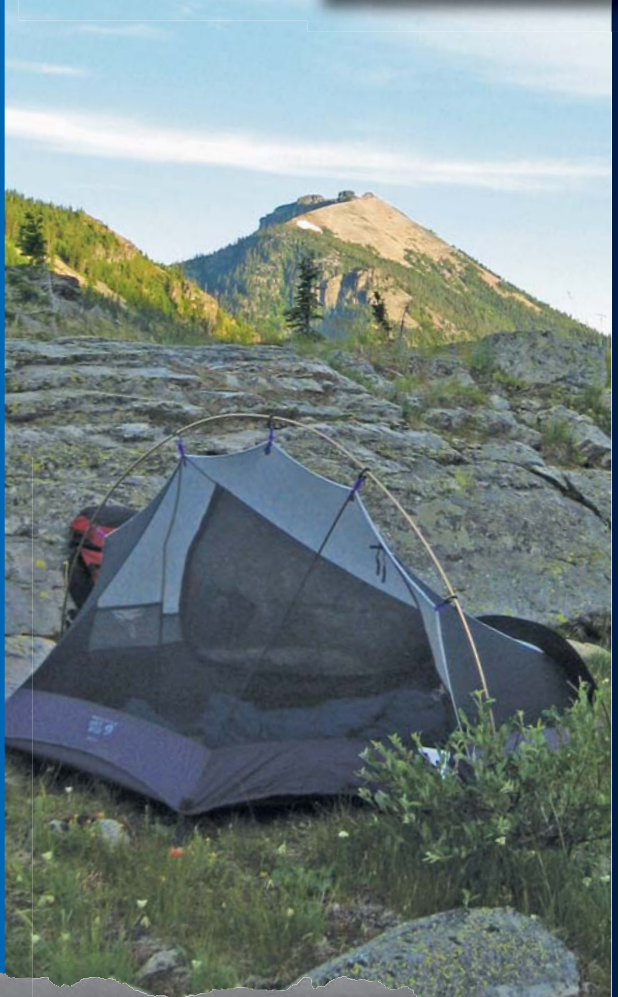
This map funded in part by the Idaho Conservation League  
[www.idahoconservation.org](http://www.idahoconservation.org) • [icl@idahoconservation.org](mailto:icl@idahoconservation.org)

[www.ScotchmanPeaks.org](http://www.ScotchmanPeaks.org)  
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# The Scotchman Peaks Wilderness

[www.ScotchmanPeaks.org](http://www.ScotchmanPeaks.org)

Detailed Map Inside  
2010 Edition



## The Scotchmans

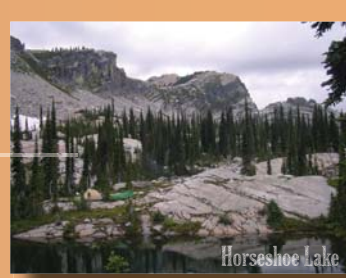
When David Thompson explored upstream from Lake Pend Oreille along the Clark's Fork River in 1811, he likely gazed upon the enormous mountain rising fortress-like above the channel-laced delta where the river empties into the lake. He did not know the name, "Scotchman Peak," but who's to say he didn't wish to be up on that lofty summit for the spectacular view from its craggy heights?

Not much about Scotchman Peak and the surrounding landscape has changed in the two centuries since Thompson passed this way. Except for a trail climbing its southwestern flank and a lookout that was erected and has subsequently fallen into a small pile of ruins, that part of the West Cabinets known as the Scotchman Peaks has remained pretty much the same for two hundred years — despite the fact that many other areas have been roaded, logged, mined and otherwise developed in some way for the convenience of modern man.

With the opportunity before us to preserve what wildlands are left on the Idaho Panhandle and Kootenai National Forests, the Scotchmans stand out as a premier wilderness, a remnant of what this country looked like long before David Thompson visited the shores of Lake Pend Oreille. For 88,000 acres — 135 square miles — the potential for wilderness protection remains an option in the Scotchman Peaks, an opportunity that shouldn't be lost.

But there is work to do for those who love backcountry places like this. The campaign for Scotchman Peaks Wilderness will be won by people willing to take a stand for its protection. You can do that by, first of all, joining the Friends, and then by writing letters, making phone calls and letting family, friends and neighbors across the United States know how special the Scotchmans are and how important they are for clean water, quality wildlife habitat and as a place of solitude and spectacular beauty.

## The big picture is made of many smaller ones.



## Resources

*Trails of the Wild Cabinets*, by Dennis Nicholls.  
Available from Keokee Press  
[www.sandpointonline.com/general-store](http://www.sandpointonline.com/general-store)

USGS Quad maps for the area include:  
Benning Mountain, Idaho; Heron, Montana;  
Sawtooth Mountain, Montana; Scotchman Peak,  
Idaho; Spar Lake, Montana

### National Forest/Forest Service Offices

Idaho Panhandle National Forest  
Sandpoint (Idaho) Ranger District  
208-263-5111 • [www.fs.fed.us/ipnf/sandpoint](http://www.fs.fed.us/ipnf/sandpoint)

Kootenai National Forest  
Supervising Office (Libby, Montana)  
406-293-6211 • [www.fs.fed.us/r1/kootenai](http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/kootenai)  
Three Rivers Ranger District (Troy, Montana)  
406-295-4693 • 12858 Highway 2 59935  
Cabinet Ranger District (Trout Creek, Montana)  
406-827-3533 • 2693 Highway 200 58974

The Friends of Scotchman Peaks Wilderness  
invite you to join us in seeking protection for  
this wild, beautiful place.