

For the Intrepid Traveler

Nee-Me-Poo Trailhead to Dug Bar



Miles: 7.9, one-way

Map: Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, north half

The Dug Bar campground, with two or three primitive campsites, is 7.5 miles past the Nee-Me-Poo trailhead. If you are planning to camp, bring your own water as there is no potable water here. The campground lies at the lower end of Dug Bar.

The sign commemorating the Nez Perce Crossing stands at the upper end of Dug Bar. To get to the sign, drive through the gate and observe the courtesy of leaving the gate as you found it (open or closed). The road doesn't exactly end in .4 mile at the ranch house, but park there or along the road, not in the alfalfa field. Although unmarked, public access is between the barn and the river. A short walk crosslots southeast toward Birch Creek, crossing a fence in the process, will bring you to the sign located at the edge of the river.

Nez Perce Crossing

The Joseph band crossed the Snake River here at the end of May. Today there are dams to control the spring flooding caused by rains and snowmelt. In 1877, there was probably a lot of water in the river at the end of May.

We gathered all the stock we could find, and made an attempt to move. We left many of our horses and cattle in Wallowa, and we lost several hundred in crossing the river. All my people succeeded in getting across in safety.

Chief Joseph

Due to the raging spring runoff, people and horses landed perhaps half a mile or more downstream from their starting point. As you look across to the other side, it is pretty difficult to imagine just where the Nez Perce might have ascended a ridge to continue their journey east.

The Joseph band did not know they were actually leaving their homeland forever. They imagined they would be coming back to dig roots, hunt game, and care for the graves of their ancestors. Some stock was left behind unintentionally because all their thousands of horses and cattle could not be rounded up in just a couple of weeks. Settlers and rustlers appropriated the homeless stock, which the Nez Perce never saw again.

Return to Joseph and join either the Adventurous Traveler or the Mainstream Traveler there.