

Seven Summits



Seven Summits: the ultimate hike in Pocatello.

Here's my 40 mile route for walking the entire northern Bannock Range in just one or two days. There are ways to trim off a few miles and get it down to 33 or so, if you go overland.

I have to admit that given the elevation change and lack of water, I've never wanted to do this in one day myself, though I have no doubt there are ultra-fit mutant Pocatelloans who would find this a typical day's workout. Knock yourselves out, guys.

Two days for this route has been my preference. One can either spend the night at the Scout Mountain Campground and then plow through to Wild Mountain the following day, or get picked up at West Fork Trailhead on the South Mink Creek Road, snag a shower and a meal, and begin again the next morning. There's hardly any good water available along this walk.

About 10 miles of this route is off trail; that can be increased if you save a few miles by dropping straight down the slope from Scout Mountain's summit (avoiding the campground).

Seven Summits: Beta

Parts of this long walk involve Class 2 and 3 scrambling, so attempt the route only if you are comfortable with steep slopes and exposure to heights.

Part 1: Garden Creek Gap to Scout Mountain Campground

Begin at Garden Creek Gap and scamper up the edge of the north cliff until you gain a sage and juniper-covered ridge. Follow this up through a ledge section at the south end of Sun Wall, then ramble along the lengthy, open ridge line to the summit of Old Tom.

From here, continue along the narrow rocky ridge to a conical summit at the north end of Old Tom proper. Descend the sage-covered slope to an obvious track and follow this north to the saddle between Old Tom and Scout Mountain. Various tracks will meet up; take a right and follow the main trail to the summit of Scout, which zigzags eastward to gain a ridge then westward to follow the main ridge to the summit.

Leaving Scout's summit gives you many options: (1) retrace your steps back to the saddle and follow the trail downhill to its junction with Valve House (shortest route by trail if you want to continue on to West Fork Trailhead); (2) continue along the track north over the shoulder of Scout and down to the Crestline Trail, which you can follow to a trail junction that leads to the roadway about a mile below Scout Mountain Campground (best route if you want to camp); (3) try your luck with a direct descent westward through the main cliff band (there are at least two gullies that make this easier), follow the slope downhill toward the scuzzy pond at its base, then join the Valve House trail westward (best route for those who prefer overland fun).

Part 2: Scout Mountain Campground to Wild Mountain

If you camp at Scout Mountain Campground, you will want to start the next day heading south through the campground to the trailhead and follow the main trail uphill for a ways until you reach Valve House Trail.

Take this long, ATV-choked track gently overland then downhill to its meeting with South Mink Creek Road. From here, it is slightly uphill and across the street to gain the West Fork Trailhead. Begin up West Fork until you reach the somewhat subtle connector that leads northwards uphill to the Slate Mountain Trail. When you reach the open saddle, turn left and climb the sagebrush-covered slope to the summit of Slate Mountain.

Head north along the ridge line, occasionally finding a footpath. When you reach a small ridge that leads down to Slate Mountain Trail on the right, take a left instead and head overland down to a grassy knob along a broad ridge that connects you to Gibson Mountain. Cross over the knob and climb up the steep slope to reach the main trail to the peak.

Follow this to the summit of Gibson, then backtrack a little and take the westward trail down into Elk Meadows.

When you reach the meadows, turn right at the junction and continue along the main road past the turnoff to Gibson Jack Trailhead and on to a track that leads up the barren slope of Rock Knoll. Summit, then continue north along the open grassy slope, following it out around the broad drainage to the east. You'll meet a track that will take you on to Horse Lake. From there, turn right (east) and head along the open ridge to Kinport Peak.

Leave Kinport Peak on the east side and follow the track along to Wild Mountain, the last of the Seven Summits. There are at least two ways to exit the summit: (1) backtrack to the trail that runs northeast below the summit of Kinport (watch for mountain bikes) and take this down to the City Creek Trailhead; or, (2) head south into the basin, going either overland or by path to Gibson Jack Trailhead.



Seven Summits tour: Old Tom summit, looking north toward Scout Mountain.

| Seven Summits Landmarks | Trail? | Estimated Mileage |
|--|--------|-----------------------|
| Garden Creek Gap to Old Tom summit | No | 4.0 |
| Old Tom summit to Scout Mountain summit | No/Yes | 5.5 |
| Scout Mountain summit to Scout Mountain Campground | Yes | 4.1 |
| Scout Mountain Campground to West Fork Trailhead | Yes | 6.7 |
| West Fork Trailhead to Slate Mountain summit | Yes/No | 3.2 |
| Slate Mountain summit to Gibson summit | No | 2.6 |
| Gibson summit to Rock Knoll summit | Yes | 2.6 |
| Rock Knoll summit to Horse Lake | No/Yes | 2.3 |
| Horse Lake to Kinport Peak | Yes | 1.7 |
| Kinport Peak to Wild Mountain | Yes | 1.4 |
| Total | | 34.1 |
| Exit 1: City Creek | Yes | 4.8 (38.9 mi) |
| Exit 2: Gibson Jack Trailhead | No/Yes | 2.6 (36.7 mi) |



Five Summits: the northern five of the seven summits.