



DAY TRIP TO CUSTER

From Challis · Custer County, Idaho



GOLD MINING



Photo: shelleylyn from USA, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 2.0

HISTORIC SITE

Managed by the Forest Service and Idaho Parks and Recreation as part of the Land of the Yankee Fork Historic Area. Free walking tours Memorial Day to Labor Day.

This summer plan assumes a Wednesday through Sunday, when the interpretive center is open. From Challis, Custer is a full day: nearly two hours each way along the Salmon River, with the Yankee Fork dredge and Bonanza on the last ten miles. Start at the park's interpretive center on the edge of town, which has the museum and the maps.

A SAMPLE DAY

- ☐ 8:30 a.m. Open the day at the Land of the Yankee Fork Interpretive Center in Challis.
- ☐ 9:30 a.m. Drive US 93 and ID 75 up the Salmon River to Sunbeam, then Yankee Fork Road.
- ☐ 11:30 a.m. Look at the Yankee Fork dredge and Bonanza from the route on the way up; check separately for tour availability.
- ☐ 12:30 p.m. Custer. Lunch at the picnic tables, then the walking tour from the schoolhouse.
- ☐ 3 p.m. Head back down the Yankee Fork and the Salmon River to Challis.

From Boise, allow more than four hours each way. Stanley, 21 miles away, is the closest place to stay.

WHAT TO PHOTOGRAPH

- **The Empire Saloon.** Its painted gable faces the road. Afternoon light from the west lights the front.
- **The schoolhouse.** The yellow museum with the mining machinery in front of it. Step back across the road for the whole building.
- **The stamp battery.** The cams and stems of the mill machinery make close-ups against the sky.
- **The McKenzie house and the cabins.** Squared logs and hand-split shingles; the flagpole beside one cabin marks a grave.
- **The dredge.** The 988-ton dredge stands downstream of Bonanza. Confirm tour availability separately.



DAY TRIP ESSENTIALS

 DRIVE	55 mi, about 1 h 46 min each way from downtown Challis. From Boise: 156 mi, about 4 h 16 min.
 SEASON	Walking tours run Memorial Day to Labor Day "during business hours," per the Forest Service. Neither agency posts clock hours for Custer; call 208-879-5244.
 ADMISSION	Free at Custer, per the Forest Service. The state park page lists a \$7 motor vehicle entrance fee for the park and \$2 a person (\$1 students, \$5 a family) for the interpretive center.
 INTERPRETIVE CENTER	24424 Highway 75, Challis. Wednesday to Sunday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., closed Monday and Tuesday, as of October 19, 2026.
 RESTROOMS	Vault toilets at Custer. No potable water, so fill bottles in Challis.
 FOOD	The Empire Saloon sells refreshments in summer. There's no restaurant. Pack lunch for the picnic tables.
 WALKING	The tour is a 23-stop loop along the single street and up the bench. Pick up the free guide at the schoolhouse.
 WEBSITE	parksandrecreation.idaho.gov/state-park/land-of-the-vankee-fork-state-park

BEFORE YOU GO

- Check the status with the land manager before you go; conditions change.
- Stay out of mine shafts, tunnels and unstable buildings.
- Leave artifacts where they lie. Removing them can be a crime.
- Carry water, a paper map and a charged phone; signal is often poor.

Coordinates 44.38750, -114.69583 · 44°23′15″N
114°41′45″W

Full guide abandonedtowns.com/idaho/custer/

Directions [Google Maps](#)

Details checked October 2026. Hours, prices and access change: confirm before you go.