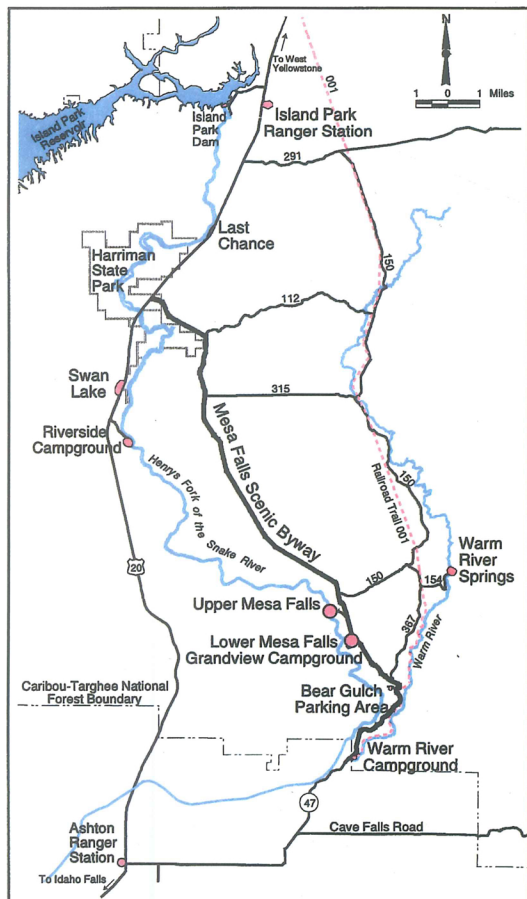


MESA FALLS SCENIC BYWAY



Welcome to the
Mesa Falls
Recreation Area



Distances from Upper Mesa Falls

Yellowstone Park, West Entrance	51 miles
Ashton, ID	16 miles
North on Scenic Byway to Hwy 20	14 miles
Idaho Falls, ID	68 miles
Lower Mesa Falls	2 miles
Harriman State Park	15 miles



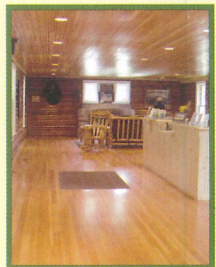
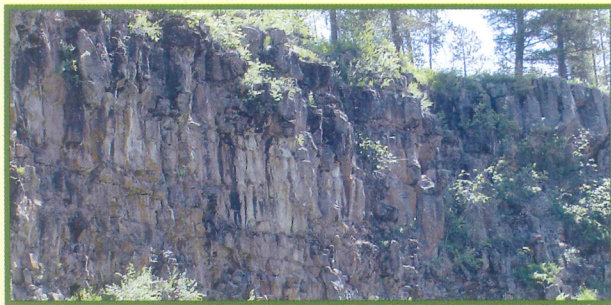
*A Cooperative Effort
Caribou-Targhee National Forest
&
Idaho Department of Parks & Recreation,
Harriman State Park*

WELCOME to the *Mesa Falls Recreation Area.*

We hope you enjoy your visit. The Mesa Falls Recreation Area, beginning at Bear Gulch, follows the Mesa Falls Scenic Byway and includes Upper and Lower Mesa Falls and Grandview Campground. It ends at the junction with Highway 20 near Harriman State Park. Your parking fee at Upper Mesa Falls is also good for Harriman and/or Henrys Lake State Parks in the same day (save your stub). A pathway and boardwalk leads from Big Falls Inn right to the brink of the Falls. The upper part of this walkway is universally accessible. The interpretive center and gift shop inside the Inn at Upper Mesa Falls from Memorial Day to Labor Day.



Approximately 1.3 million years ago, a huge volcanic eruption created an ash layer hundreds of feet deep. The ash layer was compressed into rock known as Mesa Falls Tuff. Later eruptions filled the area with basalt lava flows. For 500,000 years the Henrys Fork of the Snake River has been carving the canyon seen today. The Mesa Falls Tuff forms the ledge that the falls cascade over. Upper Mesa Falls



is 114 feet high. Indigeneous peoples used the upper Snake River Valley for centuries before the arrival of Europeans. Small and large game, fish, berries, lodgepole pine and other resources of the Mesa Falls area were harvested seasonally.

Mesa Power Company built Big Falls Inn between 1912 and 1914, probably to be an office. A dam and power generation plant were planned but never built. Instead the area became a tourist attraction and the Inn became a stage stop and



hotel for travelers going to Yellowstone National Park. Montana Power purchased the area in 1936. In later years the Inn was used as a restaurant, dance hall, and scout camp.



The Forest Service acquired the property in 1986 through a land exchange. Work to restore the Inn began in 1997. The Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation and the U.S. Forest Service became partners in managing the site. Over the next three years, the Inn was restored to historic standards and is now listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

One mile south of Upper Mesa Falls is the Grandview overlook of Lower Mesa Falls. Lower Mesa Falls is 65 ft. high. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) built the rock and mortar overlook in the 1930's. Grandview

campground is adjacent to the overlook. The Mesa Falls Scenic Byway begins in Ashton, Idaho and winds through farmland, forest, logged over areas and open meadows ending in Island Park. The roadway was rebuilt



and resurfaced in 2001. A seasonal progression of wildflowers blankets the ground in the Mesa Falls Recreation Area. Look for glacier lilies, spring beauties, and heartleaf arnica in the early spring, camas and mules ears a little later, and lupine, asters, and



indian paintbrush in mid summer. Please be safe during your visit to Mesa Falls and stay on the walkways at all times. Special group tours of the site are available throughout the summer and can be arranged by calling the Ashton/Island Park Ranger Station at 208-652-7442, Harriman State Park at 208-558-7368, or inquire inside Big Falls Inn.