



### Coordinates

#### Trailhead

N 44° 08.211'  
W 115° 18.625'

#### “Lollipop Loop”

#### Junction

N 44° 09.523'  
W 115° 16.906'

**Distance:** 5.0 miles out-and-back

**Total Elevation Gain:** 400 feet

**Difficulty:**

**Elevation Range:** 4,600 feet to 4,850 feet

**Topographic Map:** Eightmile Mountain

**Time:** 2.5 to 3 hours

**Season:** Late April through early November

**Water Availability:** South Fork of the Payette River, several creeks

**Cautionary Advice:** None

**Additional Information:** Boise National Forest, Lowman Ranger District (208) 259-3361

**Pit Latrine:** No

## SOUTH FORK OF THE PAYETTE RIVER

When visiting the city of Stanley from Treasure Valley, most people drive ID 21—a beautiful roadway paralleling the South Fork of the Payette River a segment of the way. Unfortunately, the river is usually only experienced as a visual second-thought. Make no mistake, this lovely hike will give you a new respect for this remarkably unspoiled river. Its banks are lined with old-growth ponderosa pines, and the river offers a captivating mix of boulder-dotted rapids, emerald-green pools and rocky-bottomed flats.

The South Fork of the Payette River finds its headwaters on the western slopes of the Sawtooth Mountains and generally flows east to west through Grandjean, Lowman and, finally, to its confluence with the Middle Fork of the Payette River in Garden Valley. Although it has not been designated a Wild & Scenic River, it probably should be because of its remarkable scenic, geological and cultural resource values. If asked, many serious anglers will say that the South Fork of the Payette River is quite possibly the best dry fly river in Idaho.

This hike parallels the river for about 2 miles and makes a little “lollipop loop” at its end. The river is always close to the trail, and there are several picturesque locations to catch a swim in the gin-clear waters during summer. Because of the low elevation, the hike is accessible in spring when the water is wicked cold and the current too strong to swim safely. There are a couple of pleasant, level grassy locations to establish a campsite under big ponderosa pines. The only negative to the hike is that you can hear vehicle traffic from ID 21, which is located on the opposite side of the river. If you hike in the spring, the river is so thunderous you’ll only be able to hear it and your thoughts.

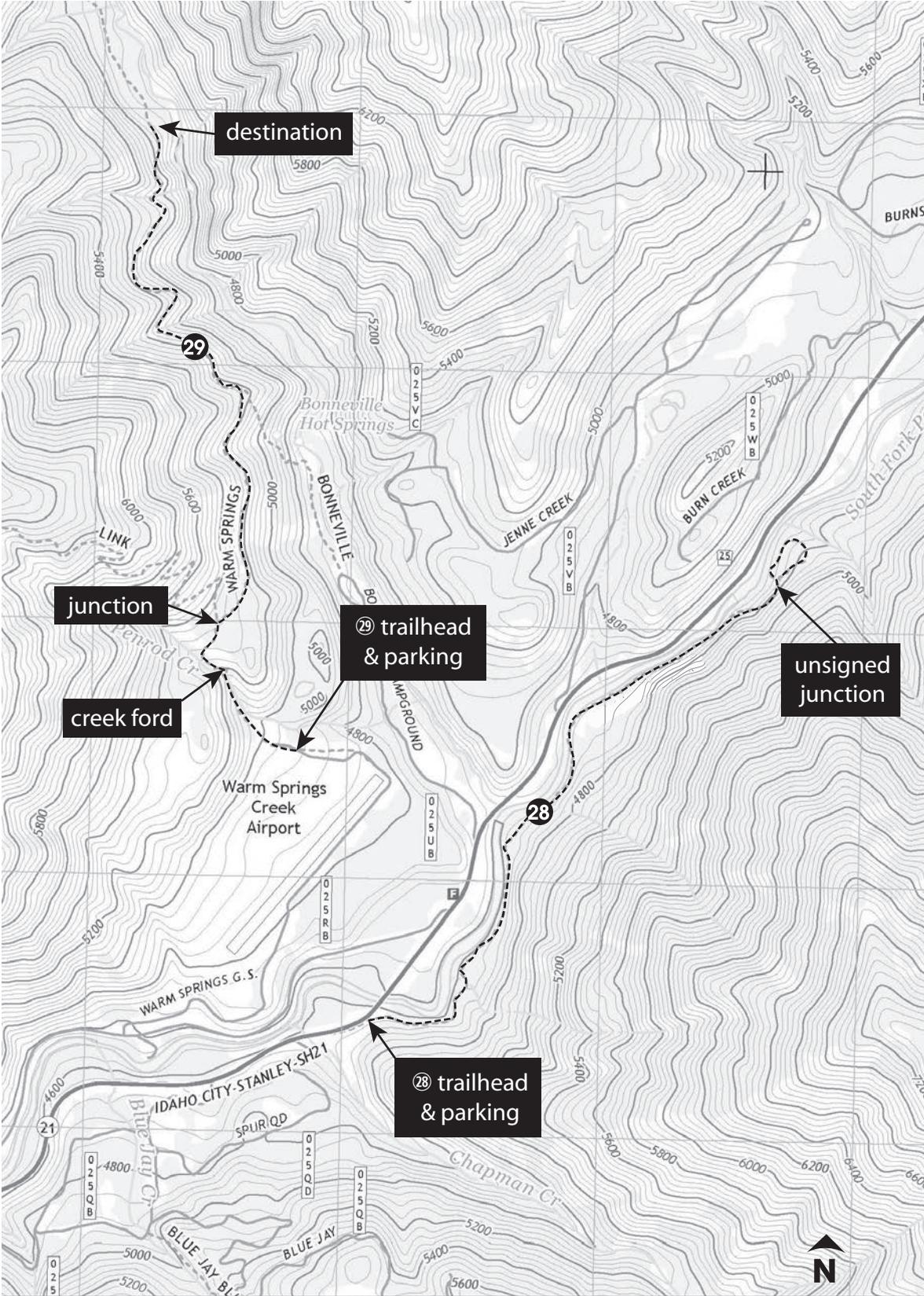
### **DRIVING DIRECTIONS**

From the junction of the Banks-Lowman Highway and ID 21, drive east on ID 21 for 18.2 miles to mile marker 91. The trailhead is on the right (south) just before the bridge over the South Fork of the Payette River. There is parking for several vehicles at the trailhead, or you can continue over the bridge to where there is additional parking alongside the road.

### **THE HIKE**

From the trailhead, head south into lodgepole and ponderosa pine forest. The trail turns east, paralleling the river in dense woods. At 0.3 mile, walk through a small clearing and then continue along relatively level ground to a grassy section along the river at 0.7 mile. This is a good location for an easy backpack. If you walk to the river’s bank, you will get a close-up view of the confluence of Warm Springs Creek and the South Fork of the Payette River. (See hike 29 to experience Warm Springs Creek.)

Beyond the confluence, the trail crosses a talus slide area and soon arrives at another level area near the river at 1.1 miles. This would also be a good backpack destination. Continue east passing a spring at 1.4 miles and then over a large, unnamed creek at 1.8 miles. The trail now rises nearly 100 feet, and the forest is a bit more open with smaller conifers and a few aspen. At 2.4 miles, reach an unsigned, faint junction. Continue east on the foot trail, and make a circle back to the unsigned junction within 500 feet. Retrace your steps 2.4 miles back to the trailhead.



**28** SOUTH FORK OF THE PAYETTE RIVER

**29** WARM SPRINGS CREEK