

General Information about the Flathead Indian Reservation
in Western Montana

The Flathead Indian Reservation includes the Flathead valley, the Jocko valley, and the Camas Prairie country. It originally comprised 1,243,969 acres, but it now consists of 632,516 acres within these valleys. It was originally known as the Jocko Reservation. This reservation is located between the cities of Missoula, and Kalispell, Montana. It is about 65 miles long from north to south and about 35 miles wide. The mission mountains form its eastern boundary. The Cabinet National Forest bounds it on the west, and the Lolo National Forest on the south. The northern boundary is an arbitrary straight line about 24 miles south of Kalispell. This line approximately bisects Flathead Lake.

Flathead Lake covers approximately 189 square miles. It is one of the largest fresh water lakes, outside the "Great Lakes" on the continent. Flathead River is the outlet. This river meanders southward through the reservation, turns sharply west at Dixon, and joins the Missoula River at Paradise, 24 miles west. These two rivers form the "Clark's Fork" River after they come together.

There are two other rivers on the reservation; the Jocko in the southern end, and the Little Bitterroot in the northwestern part. These are small rivers. They flow into the Flathead. The Jocko is considered a good fishing stream.

The magnificent Mission Mountains on the eastern boundary of the reservation are sometimes referred to as one of the world's most beautiful ranges. They contain many small lakes and rugged peaks, among which are Grey Wolf Peak about 9,200 feet high, and McDonald Peak about 9,500 feet.

Two of Montana's main highways traverse the reservation. No. 10-A enters the reservation at Evaro, 16 miles northwest of Missoula, and leaves it at Knowles about 5 miles east of Paradise, a distance of about 45 miles. No. 93 branches off 10-A at Ravalli, and runs northward to Kalispell, a distance of 87 miles. Both highways are paved.

The Northern Pacific line from Missoula to Paradise, runs through the reservation. It practically parallels Highway 10-A. A branch line takes off at Dixon, and runs to Polson, almost through the middle of the reservation lengthwise. It serves each of the towns on its route with sidings, stockyards, loading shoots, etc.

There are some 15 artificial lakes or reservoirs in the Flathead valley. They were constructed by the Indian Irrigation Service as a part of the project works of the Flathead Irrigation Project. Two of these reservoirs have been set apart by the Department of the Interior as "Wildlife Refuges". They are operated as such by the Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department.

There is also a large Wildlife Refuge on the reservation known as "The National Bison Range". This was established in 1908. It comprises about 18,500 acres of land. The headquarters of this refuge is at Moiese, Montana, which is just three miles north of the Indian Agency headquarters. This refuge operates and maintains a herd of buffalo of about 500 head. In addition there is a herd of deer, and a herd of elk maintained on the refuge lands. These herds at present are partially operated for the benefit of the Indians. The excess animals are made available for stocking the Indian Game Reserves on other parts of the reservation.