

Sawtooth Mountains & Sun Valley: A 3-Day Road Trip

A 3-day Idaho loop out of Boise: a ski-town evening in Sun Valley, the single best mountain overlook in the state at Galena Summit, a swim at an alpine lake below jagged granite spires, a Salmon River rafting run, and a soak in a riverside hot-springs pool — with real lodges, outfitters and 2026 prices throughout.

DURATION

3 Days

BEST TIME TO GO

Jun–Sep

Highway 75 over Galena Summit is open and the Salmon River is prime for rafting; come mid-to-late Sept for golden aspens and thinner crowds

FROM

\$650 USD

for 2 people - lodging, rafting & meals

Day 1

Boise to Sun Valley

A scenic drive northeast out of Boise into ski-town Ketchum and Sun Valley for the first night.

Drive — Boise to Ketchum/Sun Valley

~2.5–3 hours via ID-21 & US-20/ID-75

A straightforward highway run east out of the Treasure Valley into the Wood River Valley, with the Boise Mountains and Camas Prairie giving way to sagebrush flats as Sun Valley's peaks come into view.

Ketchum Historic Downtown & Ernest Hemingway Memorial

~1.5–2 hours

A walkable former mining and sheep-ranching town turned ski village, with a short detour out Trail Creek Road to the quiet streamside memorial where Hemingway, who lived and died here, is remembered.

Dinner — The Pioneer Saloon, Ketchum

~1.5 hours · Est. \$30–\$50 USD / person

A Ketchum institution since the 1940s, known for prime rib and a trophy-mounted dining room that hasn't changed much in decades.

The Pioneer Saloon · +1 208-726-3139 · <https://www.pioneersaloon.com>

Overnight — Sun Valley Lodge, Sun Valley Resort

From \$350–\$500 USD / night, for 2 people

America's first destination ski resort, opened in 1936 — the lodge's wood-paneled lobby, outdoor ice rink, and mountain-view rooms make it worth one splurge night before the drive into the backcountry.

Sun Valley Resort · +1 800-786-8259 · <https://www.sunvalley.com>

Day 2

Galena Summit, Redfish Lake & the Salmon River

North over the highest paved pass in the Northern Rockies, a lake swim below the Sawtooths, and an afternoon of whitewater.

Galena Summit Overlook

Galena Summit, Redfish Lake & the Salmon River

Drive — Ponderosa Pine Scenic Byway (ID-21) to Boise

~2.5–3 hours via Lowman & Idaho City

A greener return route than the way up, following the South Fork Payette River through old-growth ponderosa forest and hot-springs country before dropping back into the Boise foothills.

Idaho City Historic District

~45–60 minutes

A wooden-boardwalk 1860s gold-rush town roughly halfway down the byway, once bigger than Boise itself — a few blocks of saloons-turned-shops make for an easy leg-stretch stop before the final run into the city.

Arrive Boise & Depart

~1 hour from Idaho City

A straightforward final descent into the city to close out the loop.