Orofino Community

Orofino is a rural community of approximately 3,000. Lewiston, Idaho, population: 32,000 and its next door neighbor, Clarkston, WA, population: 7,000 are 31 miles away as the crow flies. But highway 12 is a curvy, 45-mile road – hemmed in on either side by the Clearwater River or rock mountainsides, and frequented by the many deer frolicking in headlights. In good conditions, it takes about 45 minutes to get to Lewiston. The river and mountains are especially beautiful but can be challenging in winter with early darkness, ice, snow, and logging trucks. So Orofino feels a little more rural than a normal small town that is near a city.

The community is nestled in the Orofino Creek valley and a bit of flat area next to the Clearwater River. Everyone else lives perched on the mountains, or up on top in the prairie.

Orofino sits in the Northeast corner of the Nez Perce Reservation. The modern location of Orofino between the Clearwater River and the mouth of Orofino Creek started as a homestead and trading post the year after the government opened the reservation to non-tribal settlers in 1895. The Northern Pacific Railway connected Lewiston to Orofino in 1899 and really fueled the growth of the town. By 1930 the population exceeded 1,000.

Orofino served as a hub for agricultural and, of course, logging was a major economic contributor in early days. The late ’90s saw trouble in the lumber industry and a drop in population was the result. Today the major employers are Nightforce Optics, the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Clearwater Valley Hospital & Clinic, Idaho Correctional Institution, Orofino School District, State Hospital North, Tri-Pro Forest Products, and Clearwater County.



Aerial photo of the Dworshak Dam
and Reservoir

For recreation, there are many outdoor things to do. The Clearwater River with sandy beaches and the Dworshak Dam and Reservoir provide swimming platforms and swim areas. There is trout fishing in Tunnel Pond, and world class Steelhead and Chinook salmon fishing in the Clearwater River. At the dam, there are Kokanee, bass, trout, and black crappie – and many watersports can be enjoyed. Camping and hunting for deer, elk and bear, surround us. Some folks say, "Why go camping? My backyard is better than most campgrounds I've been to!"



Kids enjoying
Augie's ice cream!

For eating out, Orofino offers Subway, Pizza, a hot dog stand, Chinese Palace, Fiesta En Jalisco, a bakery (Ronatta's!), the bowling alley has great burgers, the Ponderosa and Krystal Cafe. For fine dining there is The Edge right across from our beautiful Best Western on the Clearwater River. Augie's Deli is great for sandwiches, ice cream and Thomas Kemper coffee. There are two drive through coffee shacks in addition. The city has a park on the river with a pavilion and picnic tables, playground equipment and a new splash pad. We also have a park up at the Dworshak Dam about 10-15 minutes from town. See the Chamber website for more information and events.



Orofino's Junior/Senior High School and Elementary School mascot: The beloved Maniac

Recently, the old high school has been demolished and soon Shopko will begin building a store and pharmacy right across the street from the library.

There are three area elementary schools (Orofino, Peck and Cavendish) and the high school building is shared by junior high and high school students. The school mascot is the famous/infamous "Maniac."

Where will you meet moms and their kids on a rainy day? Where will you hang out while you wait for your mom to get off work? Where can you study for a few hours? Where will you go to look for a job and write your resume if you have no computer or internet access? Where can you read the local paper for free, check out and audio book for the road, borrow a DVD for the weekend? The library, of course!



One of the library's three workstations

The library offers three computer stations and a child section of computers. Newly offered is an x-box corner! There are some cozy sitting places scattered among the books. Where can you chat on your phone? In the vestibule. The children can chat quietly and play with blocks, dinosaurs (they are library dinosaurs, they whisper *_roar_*), board games and puzzles in the children's section.



Library story time with Mrs. Shanon

The last expansion project for the library was more than thirty years ago when a wing was built with a lot of volunteer labor. In 1984, when the new wing was opened, the collection of books and other materials numbered 25,412. Thirty-six years later, in the same amount of space, the library contains 38,622 items, over 13,000 more books, dvd's, magazines, and computers. Without expansion, volunteers have made room for these materials, building shelves for books (7.5 feet tall!) and cubicles for computers to meet the growing demand. Even without

more space, the library staff has kept up with modern progress by becoming part of the inter library loan system (VAL-net) and installing computers with up-to-date broadband functions.