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WEEKEND BREAK

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Glimpsing Oregon's farthest reaches

Joseph and Wallowa Lake provide artistic flare in the old-west

By AARON BRENNIMAN

The quiet, nestled jewels of northeastern Oregon could fill a book. And they do. But I tend to prefer the satisfaction of self-guided exploration.

Here you'll find some of the nicest people you'll meet anywhere around. There's something about the parts of this state where drivers still say "hello" with a casual wave.

I've been getting out there every year for the past few years, and only see that frequency increasing as my heart's desire grows.

Joseph is only about 420 miles and a seven-hour drive from the North Coast, but these reaches aren't for everyone. Life is slow, and nightlife nonexistent. Most of everything is closed on Sundays. But there's a simplicity of pace here and a quiet that draws my heart.

In town

Named for Nez Perce leader Chief Joseph in 1880, Joseph has recently been transformed into an art mecca. Be sure to visit Valley Bronze's Gallery & Foundry. The gallery on Main Street is

open to the public and holds regular hours, but to visit the foundry you'll need a reservation. Cost is \$15 per person.

Don't miss the Josephy Center for Arts & Culture, billed as the "gathering place for artists in Wallowa County." The most recent exhibit — titled "A River Runs Through Us: The Art and Words of the Lostine" — celebrates the nearby Lostine River interpreted by local artists.

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Sun seekers
paddle on
Wallowa Lake.

Aaron Breniman

