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Until it receded more than 12,000 years ago, North America's continental ice sheet often covered part of North Idaho. Its maximum advance reached Coeur d'Alene, where rocks and soil it deposited blocked a river system and formed Coeur d'Alene Lake. Farther north, it dug out Lake Pend d'Oreille, and blocked rivers from Montana to form a series of enormous lakes (usually referred to as Lake Missoula) that reached a depth of about 2,000 feet at Cabinet Gorge. (As North America's climate cooled off and warmed up, North Idaho's ice sheet advanced and receded, so that different lakes would gain depth and then disappear over long periods of time.) Even at Missoula, one or more of those lakes reached a depth of about 950 feet. Farther north, Kootenai Valley lakes and floods resulted from a similar experience. As a result, North Idaho mountains and valleys display a lot more evidence of glaciation than those that indicate local ice formation that occurred in other mountainous areas.

(This information has not been edited.)

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