

SOUTHWEST MONTANA

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Even when you're not cross-country skiing to ghost towns, checking out the Old Montana Prison or digging for sapphires, you'll stumble into history everywhere in Southwest Montana. It's in the ornamental details of Helena's West Side Mansion District, testament to boom-year prospectors who struck it rich (and in Reeder's Alley's one-room shanties, proof of those who didn't). History is plentiful in Butte's towering mining structures—homage to the “Richest Hill on Earth”—and in the Native American pictographs along the limestone cliffs at the Gates of the Mountains.

Southwest Montana's ample outdoor options don't skimp on history, either. Hikers at the Big Hole National Battlefield retrace the action on self-guided trails. In Anaconda, the Old Works Golf Course features antique processing works and black tailings piles discarded as early as 1884. Even quaint mom-and-pop ski hills, complete with home-grilled buffalo burgers and hot springs down the road evoke a bygone era.

This region doesn't stop at offering a window into the past—it invites visitors to try it out. Sampling old-fashioned candies and pasties (a miner's delicacy), taking in live plays at restored theaters and slumbering in historic hotels, travelers here tend to find themselves in a time gone by. Or has it?



Left: Another roadside attraction along the Pintler Veterans' Memorial Scenic Highway

Above: Historical Uptown Butte

AT A GLANCE

- + Around the end of December, Lewis and Clark Caverns State Park tour guides show off the caves the old-fashioned way—by candlelight. Generally the caverns are closed for the winter.
- + At the massive candy shop dubbed *The Sweet Palace* in Philipsburg, look upstairs for a tiny “chapel.” The owner jokes it's where patrons can pray the calories don't turn into pounds.
- + More than a few generations of Butte miners passed through the 43 rooms of the *Dumas Brothel* (now a museum in Butte), which started serving clients in 1890 and finally closed in 1982 due to tax violations.
- + At the *Old Montana Prison Complex* in Deer Lodge (now a self-guided museum), convicts were forced to build their own barracks and grounds in the 1890s.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

BEST TIME TO VISIT

Montana's mild, pretty summers are a popular time to visit, making for wildflower-strewn hikes, pleasant horseback rides and perfect golfing weather. Historic towns like Virginia City and Philipsburg are popular summertime destinations, so make sure to reserve your accommodations early. While there might be more patrons at museums, historic sites and popular recreation spots, "touristy" in Montana is a very relative term, and most visitors find our definition of "crowded" charming. Nonetheless,

fall and spring often provide gorgeous weather and dramatically fewer tourists.

Winter here means gathering at Southwest Montana's less well-known (but no less terrain-packed) ski hills, zooming around on snowmobiles and schussing around on cross-country skis (try Bannack Ghost Town for a unique ski trip). It also means bikinis—at hot springs ranging from historic to rustic to resort-y. Southwest Montana does receive ample snow in the winter, but roads and highways are generally plowed and safe.

HOW TO GET HERE

Both Butte and Helena host regional airports, and most drivers will come to the area via I-90 or I-15. Trucks ascending

Homestake Pass east of Butte on I-90, often slow down to make the climb or descent. Sit back and enjoy the scenery.

WHAT TO PACK

Comfort is the deciding factor in this region, usually dictating plenty of layers and comfortable walking or hiking boots. In the winter, bring extra layers and a weatherproof parka (here, Gore-Tex will be more readily accepted than Gucci). Expect to see (and go ahead and wear) sweatshirts, tennis shoes, ball caps and jeans even at nice establishments. And when we say jeans, we mean Wranglers, Carharts or Levis.

GHOST TOWN ETIQUETTE

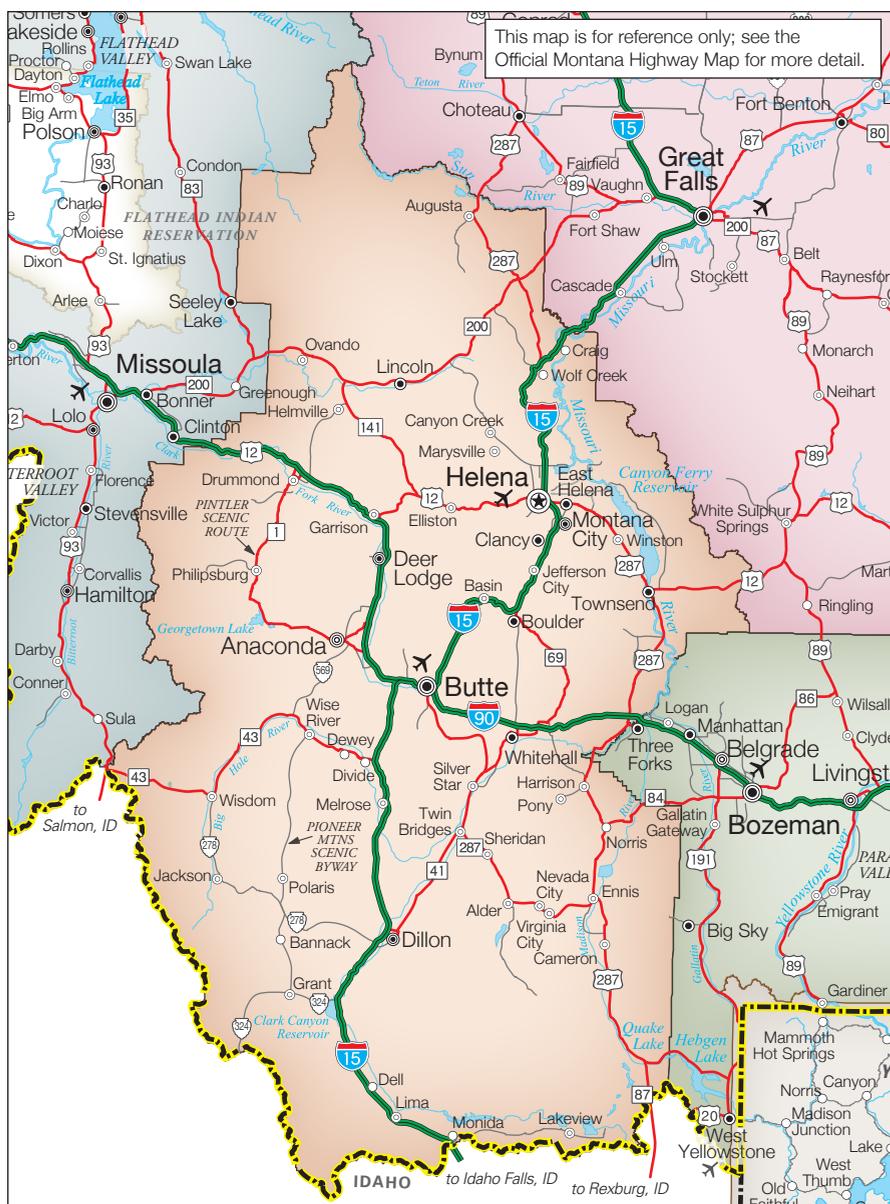
As well-preserved and accessible as Southwest Montana's ghost towns are, it's easy to forget that they are actually delicate antique structures. On self-guided tours, take care and help preserve these treasures. Look, but don't touch, and the towns might be around to impress the next century's visitors.

MINES

Hikes in this area will sometimes take you right up to unmarked (and sometimes unobstructed) open mineshafts. While it's highly unlikely you'd accidentally fall in while hiking, don't let children approach or explore mineshafts. Montana's mines are long abandoned and go on for miles—they're not a safe place to play.

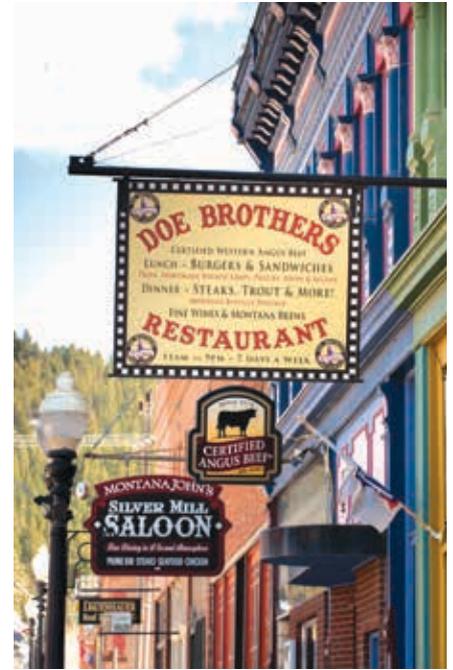
FOOD

Health-foodies, your best bets are in Helena and Butte, where health-conscious bakeries, coffee shops and cafes have been around for a while. Elsewhere, dig into European-style bakeries, hearty steakhouses and home-style cafes. Epicureans with a historical leaning should sample Butte, where pork chop sandwiches are legendary and century-old cafes (and newcomers) serve up the city's signature dish and miner lunchpail staple: the pasty. (Courtesy of Welsh and Cornish miners, this buttery meat- and veggie-packed pastry is pronounced pass-tee, not pay-stee.)





Along the Pioneer Mountains Scenic Byway



Philipsburg's colorful Main Street

PLACES TO GO

COMMUNITIES

ANACONDA sprang up when the giant Anaconda Copper Mining Company of Butte needed a smelter for its vast amounts of copper ore. Smelting operations were suspended in 1980, but “The Stack” remains an important landmark and state park. Clearly visible from I-90, the smokestack stands 585 feet tall, one of the tallest freestanding masonry structures in the world. Anaconda is a winter gateway community for the Discovery Basin Ski Area and Mount Haggin Nordic Ski Area, while Georgetown Lake is a hot spot for snowmobiling and ice fishing. Stop and visit the Copper Village Museum and Art Center or the ornate Washoe Theater to learn about the city’s rich history. Golf enthusiasts should visit Old Works Golf Course and play Montana’s only Jack Nicklaus signature course—a truly challenging experience. **406.563.2400**
www.discoveranaconda.com

BUTTE Once known as the “Richest Hill on Earth,” Butte’s history is full of adventure with deep roots in its mining history, cultural diversity from immigrant workers and early days as a booming, precious-metal metropolis. Its colorful history can be seen in its preserved Victorian uptown business district and stately mansions on the National Historic Register. The Copper King Mansion,

with 32 rooms of exquisite antiques and architectural detail, is a must-see stop on your uptown tour. The Charles W. Clark Chateau Mansion features changing art exhibits, marvelous collections and elegant architecture. The Granite Mountain Mine Memorial offers visitors a stunning panoramic view of Butte and the nearby mountains including Our Lady of the Rockies, a 90-foot statue on the East Ridge overlooking the city. The Mineral Museum includes a fascinating geological collection that holds 1,500 specimens. The Berkeley Pit, Butte’s largest attraction, has a viewing stand that allows visitors to fully appreciate the size of this former truck-operated open-pit copper mine. Wander through Hell Roarin’ Gulch or tour the Orphan Girl Mine at the World Museum of Mining. Check out the audio tour at visitmt.com/audiotour. **406.723.3177**
www.buttecvb.com

DEER LODGE More museums and historical collections can be found here than in any other town in the Northwest. The Old Montana Prison opened its doors in 1871 and was in use until 1979. Self-guided tours lead visitors beyond the gray stone wall. The Montana Auto Museum is a unique museum with interpretive exhibits and over 150 antique cars on display. The Frontier Montana Museum contains the best display of cowboy collectibles between Cody, Wyoming and Calgary, Alberta. Memories of your youth will come alive when you step into Yesterdays

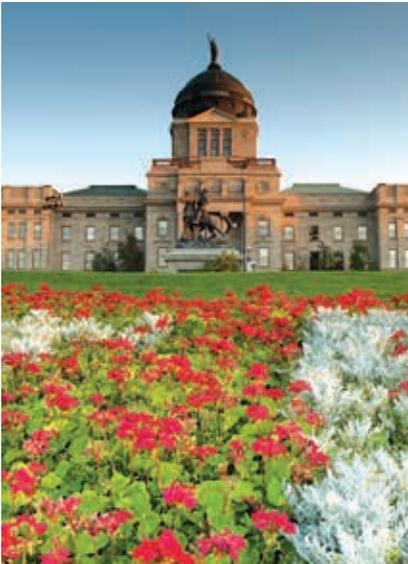
Playthings, where a collection of Raggedy Ann and Andy dolls are on display. Deer Lodge’s 1,500-acre Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site illustrates the development of the Northern Plains cattle industry from the 1850s to recent times. **406.846.2094**
www.powellcountymontana.com

DILLON and its surrounding communities carry on a centuries-old tradition of hospitality that began with the meeting of Lewis and Clark and the Shoshone Indians at Camp Fortunate. Today, the Beaverhead, Big Hole, Grasshopper, Horse Prairie, Centennial and Red Rock Valleys still offer much to see and do. The landscape is wide open and ringed with peaks over 10,000 feet high. The climate is cool and dry, and wildlife abounds. **406.683.5511**
www.beaverheadchamber.org

ENNIS is surrounded by three beautiful mountain ranges: the Madison Range, the Gravelly Range and the Tobacco Root Mountains. In addition to its majestic mountain views, Ennis also offers access to some of the finest fishing locations in the state, including the Madison River, which is renowned for its first-rate trout fishing. **406.682.4388**
www.ennischamber.com

STATE CAPITOL

Peek inside the richly adorned historic Capitol building in Helena to view lavish interiors and a gallery or two's worth of paintings, including a renowned piece by Charles M. Russell. In the massive rotunda, four circular paintings introduce you to quintessential notable Montanans—there's one of Chief Charlo, to represent American Indians; another of Jim Bridger, celebrating trappers and explorers; a third depicting a gold miner; and one more of a cowboy.



Capitol building in Helena

Outside, architecture buffs will note the Capitol's Greek Renaissance style, built from sandstone and granite and topped with a dome of Butte copper and a Liberty statue.

Self-guided tours are available daily, group tours are offered by reservation only, and guided tours are available May through September.

406.444.3695
www.visit-the-capitol.mt.gov



Inside the Capitol

HELENA An 1864 gold strike touched off a boom era that transformed Helena into the “Queen City of the Rockies” and Montana’s capital city, as seen by its 19th-century mansions, historic businesses and restored pioneer dwellings. The Last Chance Tour Train features informative, entertaining tours of the city that begin at the Montana Historical Society, complete with a lesson in Helena’s colorful past. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Archie Bray Foundation was established in 1951 and is located three miles from downtown Helena. It was formerly a 26-acre brickyard, and is now internationally recognized as a gathering place for emerging and established ceramic artists. Helena’s lively performing arts scene includes a wide variety of entertainment to enjoy. Live! at the Civic, in its 85th year, has monthly performances in Helena’s Civic Center, and the Helena Symphony Orchestra, founded in 1955, performs 4 to 6 times a year. Canyon Ferry Reservoir, just 20 miles east of Helena, offers year-round outdoor recreation. Helena offers world-renowned geo-caching and mountain biking opportunities.

406.442.4120
www.helenamt.com

LINCOLN is a gateway community for the Scapegoat Wilderness and provides access to the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex. It’s a town where the wildlife wander right down Main Street. The Continental Divide bisects this region and gives you the best on both sides: the Sun River Canyon on the east slope and the beautiful Blackfoot Valley on the west. Stop at the Lincoln Ranger Station to view the taxidermy display of a large 12-year-old male grizzly bear weighing 830 pounds and standing about 8 feet tall. Lincoln is a paradise for snowmobilers, with trails starting right in town. The Ponderosa Snow Warriors heated clubhouse is the hub of snowmobile races and events in the area, which offers 250 miles of groomed trails and limitless play areas.

406.362.4949
www.lincolnmontana.com

PHILIPSBURG Voted as one of the “Prettiest Painted Places in America,” Philipsburg is home to the state’s oldest operating school, jail and opera house, all part of a walking tour of remarkable architecture. Granite ghost town, sapphire and ruby mining, a silver mining museum and a grand candy store, The Sweet Palace, combined with some of the friendliest folks you have ever met, will make your visit complete. Discovery Ski Area is conveniently located nearby.

406.859.3388
www.philipsburgmt.com

VIRGINIA CITY/NEVADA CITY

It’s been over 150 years since gold was struck in Alder Gulch, in the very much alive Victorian ghost town of Virginia City located just 90 miles by road from Yellowstone National Park. It’s a true Montana gem set within an incredibly rich area of beauty, recreation and history. During the winter months, snowmobiling is permitted around town, and building tours can be arranged for groups. Within sledding distance of town is a trail system that opens into the Gravelly Range. Nevada City, a mile and a half away, offers more than 100 buildings, a museum, restaurant, gift shop, music hall, hotel, cabins, train rides and weekend living-history programs sure to put you into another era. Check out the audio tour at visitmt.com/audiotour.

406.843.5555
www.virginiacitychamber.com

NOTABLE SITES

BANNACK STATE PARK, near Dillon, is the best preserved of all Montana ghost towns. Bannack, Montana’s first territorial capital, was founded in 1862 after a group of prospectors struck gold on Grasshopper Creek. More than 50 buildings line Main Street with their historic log and frame structures recalling Montana’s formative years. Bannack Days features historical displays, activities and events and is held the third weekend in July each year. In the winter, enjoy ice skating at the rink complete with warming hut. The visitor center provides tours and is open from Memorial Day through Labor Day and on weekends in May and October; the park is open year-round. For more information on the park or for camping reservations, go to stateparks.mt.gov.

406.834.3413

BIG HOLE NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD

The Battle of the Big Hole on August 9 and 10, 1877, was a turning point of the Nez Perce War, a five-month war in which U.S. Army forces tried to place one-third of the Nez Perce tribe on a reservation. Self-guided tours take you to many points on the battlefield. The walks each take about an hour. Ranger-conducted programs are offered in the summer; introductory presentations and exhibits are available year-round. Ten miles west of Wisdom. Open all year.

406.689.3155
www.nps.gov/biho

CANYON FERRY RESERVOIR

Take the kids camping or boating at Canyon Ferry, which offers a variety of recreational opportunities including year-round fishing, sightseeing, picnicking, hiking, waterskiing, nature study and swimming. The reservoir is a popular winter destination for ice fishing and ice boating. Canyon Ferry is one of Montana's foremost recreation areas because of its proximity to Helena, Great Falls, Bozeman and Butte.

406.475.3921

www.usbr.gov/gp, search: Canyon Ferry

GATES OF THE MOUNTAINS

Named by the Lewis and Clark Expedition, this stunning stretch of the Missouri River features towering rock formations and gorgeous canyons. Most visitors enjoy the beauty of the Gates of the Mountains from one of three tour boats. The 105-minute cruise starts at a marina just three miles off I-15 in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains near Helena. Aboard a comfortable open-air river boat (covered in case of rain), you'll glide through magnificent country that has not changed since the days of Lewis and Clark. Open Memorial Day weekend through mid-September.

406.458.5241

www.gatesofthemountains.com

GEORGETOWN LAKE

is a popular recreation area for boating, fishing, camping and windsurfing. The 3,000-acre high-mountain lake is surrounded by the Flint Creek mountain range to the north and the Pintlers to the south. Popular fish species include kokanee salmon and rainbow trout. There are four public boat ramps. In winter the area offers snowmobiling, ice fishing, snowkiting and downhill and cross-country skiing.

406.859.3211

www.visitmt.com/georgetownlake

GRANT-KOHR'S RANCH

The 1,500-acre Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, near Deer Lodge, illustrates the development of the Northern Plains cattle industry from the 1850s to recent times. This was the headquarters of one of the largest and best-known 19th-century range ranches in the country. Guided tours of the house, self-guided walks and exhibits are available. Open all year.

406.846.2070, ext. 250

www.nps.gov/grko

LEWIS AND CLARK CAVERNS STATE PARK

located between Three Forks and Whitehall, is Montana's first and best-known state park and features one of the largest known limestone caverns in the Northwest. Naturally air conditioned, these spectacular caves are lined with stalactites,



Big Hole National Battlefield near Wisdom

stalagmites, columns and helictites. The park is open year-round, and guided cavern tours are conducted daily between May 1 and September 30. The park has a visitor center, interpretive displays and evening programs presented during the summer months. The visitor center is open all year. For more information on the park or for camping reservations, go to stateparks.mt.gov.

406.287.3541

MADISON CANYON EARTHQUAKE AREA AND VISITOR CENTER

Get an eerie yet fascinating reminder of nature's violence just south of Ennis on US 287. In 1959, an earthquake slid a mountain into a canyon, creating a giant dam and Quake Lake. The visitor center lies at the western end of the Madison Canyon Earthquake Area and overlooks Quake Lake, offering a view of the Madison slide. The center features interpretive programs about the 1959 earthquake and a working seismograph. Open during the summer months.

406.682.7620

www.visitmt.com/earthquakecntr

MONTANA AUTO MUSEUM AND OLD PRISON COMPLEX

Take a drive through time at the Montana Auto Museum, part of the Powell County Museum and Arts Foundation in Deer Lodge. View the transition from the carriage to the car and the effect that the automobile has had on our lives. You will see cars of the 1920s through the 1960s. In the Old Prison, you can visit the enclosed courtyard where

the convicts exercised, walk through their austere cell blocks and feel the chill of the maximum-security cells built by the convicts in the late 1800s. Open April to December and limited winter hours. Call for information.

406.846.3111

www.pcmf.org

OLD WORKS GOLF COURSE

in Anaconda is a Jack Nicklaus signature golf course. Rich in history, the site was the original location for Anaconda's first copper smelter. The uniqueness of the site, the Nicklaus design, the clubhouse facility and the friendly service make Old Works a premier daily-fee golf experience in the state and the Northwest.

406.563.5989

www.oldworks.org

TIZER BOTANIC GARDENS AND ARBORETUM

Take a self-guided tour down garden paths to explore thousands of high-altitude plants, including annuals, roses, wildflowers, herbs, vegetables, perennials and bulbs in an amazing setting. This is an internationally accredited arboretum and an official test and demonstration garden for the Denver Botanic Garden and Colorado State University's "Plant Select" Program. Located near Jefferson City. Open May through September.

406.933.8789

www.tizergardens.com



Ghost town of Bannack State Park near Dillon



Bagpipe players at the annual St. Patrick's Day Parade in Butte

THINGS TO DO

EVENTS

For exact dates and a complete listing of all events go to visitmt.com/events.

BIG HOLE VALLEY WINTERFEST/SKI JORING – WISDOM, FEBRUARY

Come and enjoy our annual two-day ski joring event where horses, riders and skiers compete as a team. Competitors of all skill levels are invited. Those without partners will be matched up for the Saturday event. The race is run down Main Street in the middle of Wisdom, Montana. **406.689.3260**

RACE TO THE SKY SLED DOG RACE – HELENA, FEBRUARY

This 350-mile cross-country sled dog race starts near Helena. Send the teams off and follow their progress as they go through the checkpoints and back to the finish near Lincoln. All checkpoints are accessible by car, and spectators are encouraged to follow the race. **406.881.3647**

ST. PATRICK'S DAY EVENTS – BUTTE, MARCH

Events include the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick's Banquet Shellelagh Shindig, crowning of St. Urho, bagpipes, lunch with the pipers and the St. Patrick's Day Parade. **406.723.3177**

LIVING-HISTORY PROGRAM NEVADA CITY OPEN AIR MUSEUM – NEVADA CITY, WEEKENDS MAY-SEPTEMBER

The outdoor Living History Museum in Nevada City consists of over 100 historic buildings and close to 70 living-history interpreters. Living-history weekends are held Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend. Experience the Old West in Nevada City. **406.843.5247, ext 206**

GOVERNOR'S CUP ROAD RACE – HELENA, JUNE

Montana's largest race ends with a fitness fair and arts and crafts fair. The event features Montana's finest handmade items, food booths, live entertainment and the race award ceremony. **406.437.7990**

ART IN THE PARK – ANACONDA, JULY

Art in Washoe Park is one of the best shows in southwest Montana, with 80 juried arts and crafts booths. Ethnic foods and professional entertainment is offered all three days. **406.563.2422**

BANNACK DAYS – BANNACK, JULY

Return to the early days in Montana's history with a celebration of mining and life in Montana's first territorial capital. Take part in a wagon ride, candle making, gold panning, Main Street gunfight, old-time dancing, pioneer craft demonstrations and lots of music and family fun. **406.834.3413**

FLINT CREEK VALLEY DAYS – PHILIPSBURG, JULY

Philipsburg celebrates its heritage with a children's parade on Friday; a parade, games and a street dance on Saturday; and a hot rod show and ice cream social on Sunday. **406.859.3388**

GRANT-KOHR'S RANCH DAYS – DEER LODGE, JULY

Grant-Kohrs Ranch presents this annual celebration of the cattleman's West, which includes roping, branding, chuck wagon cooking, blacksmithing, traditional cowboy music and poetry. Speakers and cultural demonstrators interpret the open-range cattle era at this historic working ranch preserved by the National Park Service. **406.846.2070**

MONTANA FOLK FESTIVAL – BUTTE, JULY

The Montana Folk Festival is a large, free outdoor event located partially within the fascinating Uptown Butte Historic District. A mix of open-air and tented sites provide a variety of performance venues ranging from intimate to amphitheater-size stages. **406.497.6464**

AN RI RA MONTANA IRISH FESTIVAL – BUTTE, AUGUST

The An Ri Ra Montana Irish Festival celebrates the Irish culture and heritage of Butte. This family-oriented event provides an excellent opportunity to learn the language and culture of the Irish people who came to Montana. Enjoy Montana and Irish authors, musicians and dancers. **406.498.3983**

COMMEMORATION OF THE BATTLE OF THE BIG HOLE – WISDOM,

AUGUST The Battle of the Big Hole was fought on August 9 and 10, 1877, between the U.S. military and the Nez Perce. Ceremonies, demonstrations, traditional Nez Perce music and park ranger presentations help visitors understand and learn about the battle. 406.689.3155

ENNIS ON THE MADISON FLY FISHING FESTIVAL – ENNIS,

SEPTEMBER A family-oriented festival on Main Street in Ennis celebrating all things fly fishing with celebrity speakers, seminars, casting instruction and competition, fly tying demos, exhibitors, live music and great food. The festival benefits the Madison River Foundation's mission to preserve and protect the Madison River. Visit Ennis on Labor Day weekend and "Tie One On!" 406.682.3148

LABOR DAY RODEO, CONCERT & PARADE – DILLON, SEPTEMBER

The Dillon Jaycees host this annual event over Labor Day weekend with rodeo action on Saturday and Sunday. The concert begins Sunday night followed by a parade on Monday morning. 406.683.5771

LINCOLN ROD RUN – LINCOLN,

SEPTEMBER Lincoln Rod Run is a great time for family and fun. This car show attracts over 200 entries; registration is held at Lambkins Restaurant and Bar and begins at 9 a.m. Trophies are given to cars in 20 different categories. The Saturday poker run starts at noon. 406.362.4271

GHOST WALKS – DILLON, OCTOBER

Bannack State Park's wild past comes alive at Ghost Walks. The ghosts of Henry Plummer, Chief Snag, Dutch John Wagner and others come to life in this spooky and entertaining Halloween event. Reservations required. 406.834.3413

HOLIDAY CANDLELIGHT TOURS AT LEWIS AND CLARK CAVERNS – WHITEHALL, DECEMBER

Lewis and Clark Caverns State Park offers holiday candlelight tours in December, weather permitting. Nonrefundable tickets are available for purchase after Thanksgiving weekend. See the cave as the original discoverers did, by candlelight. 406.287.3541

CULTURE/HISTORY

BERKELEY PIT Over a mile wide and 1,800 feet deep, Butte's Berkeley Pit is an open-pit mine that was created in 1955 to answer the huge post-war demand for copper. Now, after producing one billion tons of copper, silver, gold and other useful metals, the exhausted pit is slowly filling with toxic water leached from abandoned mine shafts. Oddly, the pit has also spurred life: certain fungi and bacteria strains have specially adapted to the pit's toxic lake. These "extremophiles" are being studied for their ability to clean the lake and even fight cancer. Open March to November. 406.723.3177

www.visitmt.com/berkeleypit

EXPLORATIONWORKS, located in Helena, is an innovative, hands-on museum of science and culture, where learning is active, participatory and reciprocal. The programs and exhibits appeal to diverse audiences in an engaging discovery of the sciences, technology, social sciences, humanities, culture and everyday life. Open all year. 406.457.1800

www.explorationworks.org

MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Founded in 1865 to preserve Montana's heritage, the society houses a rich collection of art, artifacts, archives and photographs. Visit the museum to view work by famous cowboy artist Charles M. Russell as well as Native American culture and Montana history exhibits. Located across the street from the Capitol building in Helena. Open all year. 406.444.3695

www.montanahistoricalsociety.org

ORIGINAL GOVERNOR'S MANSION

The history of this Helena mansion is as much a history of the people who resided here as it is of a building. In 1913 the state of Montana acquired this handsome brick mansion as the first official governor's residence. Between 1913 and 1959, it was home to nine Montana governors and their families. Open all year, and only on Saturdays during the winter. 406.444.3695

www.montanahistoricalsociety.org

R.L. WINSTON ROD COMPANY SHOP AND MUSEUM

Since 1929, their goal has been simple: to make the best fly rods in the world. The museum, located in Twin Bridges, features historical displays and photos of the company. Open all year. 406.684.5674

www.winstonrods.com

ROCKING OUT

Rockhounds in Southwest Montana dig up a glittering haul of buried treasure—sapphires, crystals, garnets, amethysts, quartzes and yes, even gold. In most hot spots there's no need to feel guilty about swiping a few jewels—the supply is more or less inexhaustible. True, the abundance means you won't get rich selling your all-too-common find, but the thrill of the hunt and the sentimental value of cutting your discovery into a one-of-a-kind necklace or ring more than makes up for it.

Many Montana sites are open to the public, and we've listed a few here along with what you can find in each location, but we recommend you contact the local Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management office for other opportunities.



Raw sapphires

Anaconda Area - Scheelite, epidote, argillite and quartzite. 406.563.2400

Butte Area - Smokey quartz and amethyst.

Calvert Hill Mine (west of Wise River) - Epidote, aquamarine and garnets.

Crystal Park (north of Polaris) - Quartz crystal, amethyst, smokey, scepter, double terminated and Japanese Law Twin forms. 406.683.3900

Helena Area - Montana sapphires. 406.227.8989, www.sapphiremine.com

Lima Area - Tempered rocks, lava and fossils. 406.276.3535

Philipsburg Area - Manganese minerals and Montana sapphires. 800.525.0169, www.philipsburgmt.com

Ruby Reservoir - Calcite, opalite and garnets. 406.683.8000

Sheridan Area - White and banded calcite.

Virginia City Area - Gold. 406.843.5555 or 800.829.2969



Biking the Daisy Hill Trail on Mount Helena

ST. HELENA CATHEDRAL This cathedral, situated in the heart of Helena, is an outstanding example of Geometric Gothic architecture, patterned after the Votive Church of the Sacred Heart in Vienna, Austria. Stained-glass windows, white marble altars, statues carved of the purest Carrara marble and genuine gold leaf decorate the sanctuary. The magnificent lighting fixtures are of hand-forged bronze with a special lacquer finish. Outside, majestic twin spires rise 230 feet above the street. Open all year. Prearranged guided tours are available. **406.442.5825**
www.sthelenas.org

WORLD MUSEUM OF MINING in Butte is one of the few museums in the world located on an actual mine yard, the Orphan Girl Mine. With 50 exhibit buildings, countless artifacts and 66 primary exhibits in the mine yard, you can easily spend a couple of hours to an entire day lost in the unfolding story of Butte's mining heyday. Open April through October. **406.723.7211**
www.miningmuseum.org

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

BIKE TOURS/ROUTES Southwest Montana's quiet roads, scenic horizons and extensive trails make exploring Montana by two wheels a worthy proposition. Load up your panniers and wriggle into padded shorts for long hauls on two-lane back roads, or strap on your helmet and hydration pack to follow dirt ribbons through the mountains. Southwest Montana is home to part of the famous Great Divide Route for mountain bikers. If you prefer the camaraderie of riding with an entire

spandex-clad contingent, click in for organized events like RATPOD (Ride Around The Pioneers in One Day), which is famous for its roadside food including a pie stop at mile 107. For more information on routes and trails, go to visitmt.com/biking.

BIRDING Southwest Montana birding trails showcase one national wildlife refuge, two national historic sites, four wildlife management areas, two state parks, five campground/recreation areas and numerous tracts of Bureau of Land Management and national forest lands. Each area represents a unique combination of habitats, offering a wide variety of bird species. These lands provide important staging and nesting areas for habitat-dependent rarities. www.visitmt.com/birdwatching

FISHING Montana's trout streams are the kinds of places where you embrace crisp mornings and ease into lingering evenings. Visit some of the highest quality natural trout streams—Rock Creek, the Ruby, Big Hole and Madison—for some of the finest fly fishing around. In the winter, try your hand at ice fishing or just plain winter fishing. Ruby Reservoir, Clark Canyon Reservoir and Canyon Ferry Reservoir offer the best in the area. www.visitmt.com/fishing

GHOST TOWNS Montana is rich in history—places where you can reach out and touch the past, where history can be felt as you walk the boardwalks of ghost town streets or step inside dance halls or schoolrooms. Find a kindred spirit at one of Southwest Montana's 17 ghost towns. www.visitmt.com/ghosttowns

HIKING There is no better way to experience Southwest Montana than with a hike through the forest. Whether you are looking for an easy stroll or a rugged, strenuous mountain trek, we have the trail for you! If you are up for a backcountry backpacking adventure, that's available too—just be sure that you are properly prepared for the conditions. Dust off those hiking boots, strap on your pack and hit the trail—you'll be glad you did. Go to visitmt.com/hiking for a list of hiking trails in the area.

HOT SPRINGS One of the best natural features of Southwest Montana are hot springs. Native Americans bathed in the many hot springs for generations prior to the arrival of European settlers. Tribes considered many springs to be sacred ground. There are five hot springs facilities in Southwest Montana, and two serve food grown on the hot springs grounds. www.southwestmt.com/hotsprings

ICE BOATING/SNOWKITING Georgetown Lake is an up and coming favorite spot for snowkiting. Half skiing, half paragliding, this adventure sport uses enormous kites to pull skiers and snowboarders across frozen lakes or boost them into the air on a downhill descent. In March you can watch the Georgetown Lake Open, featuring racing, freestyle competitions, demos and clinics for those interested in starting the sport. Canyon Ferry Reservoir is a hot spot for ice boating, a sport where a boat similar to a sailboat is fitted with skis or runners (skates) designed to run over ice. www.southwestmt.com/iceboating
www.southwestmt.com/snowkiting

MOTORCYCLE TOURS/ROUTES Motorcycle riding in Montana provides the best of riding, including remoteness and solitude. No matter what region you are in, there are a variety of paved and unpaved roads to explore. For more information on routes, tours, rentals, motorcycle rallies and events, go to visitmt.com/motorcycletours.

RADON HEALTH MINES Since 1952, Boulder and Basin have been the home of Montana's radon health mines. Called "cave therapy," or speleotherapy, clients access underground excavations that were formerly mined for minerals such as uranium, gold, silver, copper and lead ore. Early reports of pain relief were so prevalent that these mines became a health destination, with extended-stay programs for immune system diseases and management of chronic pain.

Merry Widow— 406.225.3220
www.merrywidowmine.com

Free Enterprise – 406.225.3383
www.radonmine.com

Sunshine – 406.225.3670
www.sunshinehealthmine.com

Earth Angel – 406.225.3516
www.earthangelmine.com

RANCH VACATIONS How about vacationing in a world that feels light years away from your day-to-day routine? Let your current life disappear for a spell as you live out the Montana dude ranch experience. The best thing about a ranch vacation is you only need to bring yourself. All-inclusive vacations include meals, lodging and activities with a personalized touch. You'll be taken care of from morning to night.
www.visitmt.com/ranch

SNOWMOBILING One of Montana's better-kept secrets lies in the pristine mountains and valleys of Southwest Montana. Cold, dry powder snow comes early and stays late, ensuring great sledding. Enjoy scenic sledding routes near Polaris, Wisdom, Jackson, Georgetown Lake, Deer Lodge, Dillon, Helena, Lincoln, Virginia City/Ennis, Wise River, Elk Park and the ghost town of Garnet.
www.wintermt.com/snowmobiling

SCENIC & WILDLIFE

BEAR TRAP CANYON WILDERNESS This 6,000-acre recreation area north of Ennis offers beautiful scenery and incredible whitewater rafting, including the class IV-V "Kitchen Sink" rapid. Hiking, nature study and fishing are other ways to enjoy the 1,500-foot-high cliffs that border this dramatic canyon. Hiking access is from the north end of the canyon and boat/rafting access is at the south end. Beware of rattlesnakes and poison ivy along the trail. Open all year.
406.683.8000
www.southwestmt.com/beartrap

BEAVERHEAD-DEERLODGE NATIONAL FOREST This is the largest national forest in Montana, encompassing several mountain ranges throughout Southwest Montana. You'll find diverse wildlife habitat and fisheries, year-round outdoor recreation opportunities, the Anaconda-Pintler Wilderness, Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, Lewis & Clark and Nez Perce National Historic Trails and the Crystal Park mineral collecting area.
406.683.3900
www.fs.usda.gov/bdnf

BIG SHEEP CREEK BACK COUNTRY BYWAY is located west of Dell, Montana, 24 miles north of the Montana-Idaho state

line. The 50-mile two-lane gravel road with a short stretch of one-lane dirt surface can be safely driven from May through early October. The byway provides opportunities for solitude and exploration. Driving time is about three hours, and there are no services available along the route, so plan accordingly. Fences are encountered along the way and users are asked to please shut the gate after passing through. Portions of the road are impassible when wet.
406.683.8000

PINTLER VETERANS' MEMORIAL SCENIC HIGHWAY This 63-mile drive goes through Anaconda and Philipsburg—one of Montana's most historic towns—and by Georgetown Lake. The road travels through both conifer-clad mountains and sage-covered hills as it follows Flint Creek, and is a wonderful alternative to I-90 when traveling between Butte and Missoula. Special attractions include historic Anaconda, Georgetown Lake, Philipsburg, Granite ghost town, gem mining, fishing, skiing, camping, hiking, boating, biking and wildlife viewing. Open all year. Check out the audio tour at visitmt.com/audiotour.

PIONEER MOUNTAINS SCENIC BYWAY Bring the video camera on this tour through the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, south of Wise River, where you can travel the length of the Pioneer Mountains. Granite peaks topping 10,000 feet in elevation are to the east, with gentler, forested terrain to the west. You'll view mountain meadows, lodgepole pine forests and broad willow bottoms. At Crystal Park, a unique area set aside for recreational mineral collecting, visitors can pause for a picnic and dig for quartz crystals. Stop at the interpretive sites along the byway for an interesting history of the Pioneer Mountains, and visit the ghost town of Coolidge along the way. In the winter enjoy cross-country skiing, downhill skiing and snowmobiling.
406.683.3900
www.fs.usda.gov/bdnf

RED ROCK LAKES NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE Treat your eyes to what has often been called the most beautiful national wildlife refuge in the U.S. The rugged Centennial Mountains, rising more than 9,000 feet above the Centennial Valley wetlands, provide a dramatic backdrop for this extremely remote refuge east of Lima. The inherent solitude and ideal habitat has made this the perfect place for reviving declining populations of the majestic trumpeter swan. Open all year.
406.276.3536
www.fws.gov/redrocks

SKIING IN SOUTHWEST MONTANA

Downhill Skiing & Snowboarding

A visit to one of our ski areas in winter is a unique experience of what skiing used to be—uncrowded, friendly slopes. It's a laid-back experience with a variety of terrain for beginners and experts alike.
Visit skimt.com.

Discovery Ski Area, Georgetown Lake
888.678.7669, www.skidiscovery.com

Great Divide Ski Area, Marysville
406.449.3746, www.skigd.com

Maverick Mountain, Polaris
406.834.3454, www.skimaverick.com

Cross-Country Skiing/Snowshoeing

A beautiful and quiet sport, cross-country skiing is a great way to experience the splendor of a Montana winter. Many of our region's most beautiful areas are also blessed with abundant snowfall and offer hundreds of miles of groomed and ungroomed trails.
Visit wintermt.com/xcski.

Ski Trails in National Forests

Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest
406.683.3900

Chief Joseph Cross-Country Trails
28 miles W of Wisdom, 406.689.3243

Georgetown Lake, Discovery Ski Area
406.859.3211

Wade Lake Ski Trails, 40 miles S of Ennis,
406.682.4253

Helena National Forest
406.449.5201

MacDonald Pass, 15 miles W of Helena
406.449.5490

Cross-Country Ski Centers/Trails

Elkhorn Hot Springs
50 miles NW of Dillon
406.834.3434
www.elkhornhotsprings.com

Homestake Lodge
10 miles E of Butte off I-90
406.585.8052
www.homestakelodge.com

Mount Haggin Nordic Ski Area
Road to Wisdom, 15 miles S of Anaconda
406.533.7655
www.milehighnordic.org