

# MONTANA DRIVING & HIKING RECOMMENDATIONS

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*For more detailed information you can Google most of these places and use the Montana Highway Map – Places like the Trailhead outdoor shop in Missoula have Forest Service maps.*

## Missoula

- Hike to McLeod Peak in the Rattlesnake Wilderness.
- Cross-country ski or snowshoe in the Lolo Pass area.
- Travelers Rest State Park at Lolo—just a mile or so up from Hwy 93 towards Lolo Pass.
- Hike into the Great Burn Roadless area northwest of Missoula off of I-90 – look at a Lolo National Forest map for directions – Fish Creek exit leads to one route.

## Bitterroot

- Explore the many canyons of the Bitterroot Mountains.
- Bitterroot Valley—south of Darby take Hwy 473 to Nez Perce Pass and hike south on the state line-Bitterroot Mountain Crest. Excellent autumn-mid October.
- Bitterroot Mountains—climb 10,157' Trapper Peak - there are several routes and access the standard route from Hwy 473 that leads to Nez Perce Pass. Elevation gain is 3,800' and the trip is 8.5 miles round-trip.
- Visit the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge north of Stevensville in the Bitterroot Valley. There is an excellent walking trail on the east side of the river.
- Hike to the summit of St. Mary Peak in the Bitterroot—it is the easiest climb in the range.
- Hike up Tin Cup Creek in the Bitterroot Mountains to Goat Lake, El Capitan Peak and the south side of the Como Peaks – 2 to 3 days.

## Rocky Mountain Front

- Rogers Pass—carries MT Hwy 200 from Missoula to Great Falls. From Missoula take Hwy 200 at Bonner and drive through the Blackfoot Valley to the pass. You can travel north or south from the pass walking along the Continental Divide. Best hike is to climb the steep incline on the north and walk as far as you like viewing the prairie to the east and the Scapegoat Wilderness to the west and northwest. This pass is special in that in March, it is a major migratory route for golden eagles and other birds of prey. They are heading from the western mountains to summer on the prairie. In October just the reverse is true, they will come back on the winds that flow through Rogers. It is also the place where the coldest temperature in the lower 48 was recorded, 70 degrees below zero.

- South Fork of the Teton River - Rocky Mountain Front. From Choteau head north about 7 miles. Then take the road towards the mountains and follow the South Fork Teton Road to its end and the trail to Headquarters Pass and the Bob Marshall Wilderness boundary. The trip will take you into the alpine and below the north face of the highest summit on the Rocky Mountain Front, Rocky Mountain Peak, itself an excellent climb. This is a one day hiking trip, or you can camp in the cirque or the trailhead. Headquarters Pass is only 3 miles from the end of the road. For the climb ascend to the East Ridge from the cirque.
- Near Lincoln, MT following Hwy 200 east—go to Red Mountain and Heart Lake in Scapegoat Wilderness. Heart Lake is a 10 mile round-trip. There are other lakes in the area and one can climb Red Mountain from here.
- Rocky Mountain Front—Drive into the Sun River Canyon from Augusta to Gibson Lake and the roads end on the north side – hike along the lake into Big George Gulch – sheep and goat habitat.
- Rocky Mountain Front—hike 5 or 6 miles up the Dearborn River through the Front’s overthrust reefs to Devils Glen. Just beyond Devils Glen is a good camping site and the fishing in the area is fair.
- Rocky Mountain Front—drive the full expanse of the Rocky Mountain Front as the highway is in close proximity to the wall of the mountains. Follow Rogers Pass through to Hwy 287 going north passing through Augusta, Choteau and then onto Hwy 89 to Browning on the east side of Glacier National Park. Then cross historic Marias Pass on US Hwy 2 to Columbia Falls and then south on Hwy 206 to Bigfork. Then head towards Hwy 83 and the Swan Valley south to the Blackfoot River coming back to Missoula on Hwy 200. This route should be a multi-day trip to enjoy the full expanse of seeing both sides of the Continental Divide including some of Montana’s finest scenery. Instead of going over Marias Pass you could also tie-in (if it’s the right time of the year) going north to St. Mary on Glacier National Park’s east side, crossing the Going-to-the-Sun Highway -then return through the Swan Valley as directed above.

## **Glacier National Park**

- The North Fork of the Flathead River—drive to Polebridge, then cross the river to Bowman and Kintla lakes in Glacier National Park – great scenery in spring when the larch trees begin regaining their needles and again in the fall when they turn gold, usually mid-October. Snow on the summits. Can ski to Bowman in winter 5 miles.
- Hike the North Circle route in Glacier National Park out of Many Glacier region – from Swiftcurrent Lake - take at least five nights/six days.
- Drive the Going-to-the-Sun Hwy from West Glacier to St. Mary.
- Siyeh Pass—a point-to-point 10.5 mile trip. Start from the Siyeh Bend Trailhead on the east side of Logan Pass and come out at Sunrift Gorge.

## Other

- Big Hole Valley—see the Chief Joseph Battlefield and Jackson Hot Springs, then head to Bannack and then south to the Horse Prairie Valley and then over Lemhi Pass coming back to Missoula from Idaho over Lost Trail Pass. Allow at least 2-3 days.
- Centennial Valley and Red Rocks Lake National Wildlife Refuge—hike to the Continental Divide and top of the Centennials – great place for birds in the spring or fall.
- From Quake Lake-Hebgen Lake area drive up Beaver Creek Road to the Sentinel Creek trail and trek 8 miles into Hilgard Basin in the Madison Range/Lee Metcalf Wilderness – camp at Expedition Lake.
- In the Absaroka Beartooth Wilderness from the Cooke City area, hike to Rough Lake and Lone Elk Lake and the Sky Top drainage below the south face of Granite Peak.
- The Bighorn Canyon and Pryor Mountains - to the top of the Pryors to Dry Head overlook - reached from Bridger, Montana. Bighorn Canyon below Pryors reached from Lovell, Wyoming.
- Big Snowy Mountains—from the road into Swimming Women Canyon on south side hike to the top of the range and climb Great House Peak - two days and carry a couple of jugs of water to the top – no water available up there unless it is the spring when there are still snow banks – can do in one day but it would be long.
- Canoe from Coal Banks Landing (Virgelle) to Judith Landing—take two nights and three days or canoe from Coal Banks Landing to Kipp Landing taking six night and seven days.
- Hike Jewel Basin out of Bigfork - do in one day - go over Noisy Face pass above Twin Lakes and then hike south and then down through the gap back to the trailhead.
- In southeast Montana, drive between Ekalaka, past the Chalk Buttes to Powderville and then south to Broadus on the east side of the river. Before leaving Ekalaka visit the Medicine Rocks State Park just to the north or go south into the Long Pines.
- Drive the Musselshell River Valley—from the South Fork headwaters area at Lennep, take a seven mile side trip to the ghost town of Castle. Returning to Lennep, follow the road through the Valley to US Hwy 12 past Harlowton, Roundup and the town of Musselshell. If you have time, continue on to Melstone at the big bend and follow the dirt road north to Lonesome Highway 200. Then head back west on highway 200 through Lewistown and back to the Musselshell Valley through Judith Gap and then the North Fork to White Sulphur Springs. Takes several days to see it properly.
- From Jordan go to Snow Creek and the Missouri Breaks, hiking the badlands along the way.
- East of Jordan to the Haxby Road and the beautiful badlands to the Gilbert Creek area and the Big Dry Arm of Fort Peck Lake.
- Hike to Twin Lakes in the Crazy Mountains by walking up Big Timber Canyon- can be a day trip but camping at the lakes is better.
- Visit the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center in Great Falls – this is a fabulous interpretive center and museum that will acquaint you with the Corps of Discovery and the Northern Plains Indians.

- Take in Crow Fair at Crow Agency, Montana in the third week of August – for the exact date each year contact the Crow Tribal offices at Crow Agency, Montana.
- Visit the Yaak River Country and climb Northwest Peak, an easy trek up to the highest point in the far northwest corner of Montana. You can get directions to the trailhead from either a Kootenai Forest map or at the Dirty Shame Saloon in Yaak.
- Hike the Welcome Creek Wilderness from one of the trailheads off of Rock Creek to the east of Missoula.
- In winter, in the northwest corner of Yellowstone, on the road between Bozeman and West Yellowstone, ski towards Fawn Pass or ski in the Gallatin River Meadows on the way to Bighorn Pass. Each of these areas is approximately 21 miles north of West Yellowstone.
- Hike Inspiration Point in the Swan Valley - an 11 mile round trip. The point looks down on the Sunburst Glacier and up to the north face of Swan Peak. It is a rather strenuous walk, but you start up high - look for Napa Point Lookout on the Forest Service map.
- Rainy Lake in the Swan Valley—ski, snowshoe, or in summer, drive into the lake. In summer use a canoe or kayak. Short trip and a beautiful view of the Swan Range.
- Climb Eighteen Mile Peak in the far southwest corner of Montana—it's southwest of Lima and is the highest point on the Continental Divide between Banff and the Wind River Range of Wyoming. Great views and an area seldom visited.