



Hub-and-Spoke from Missoula

The Best of Missoula, the Bitterroot Valley and Montana's Jocko Valley

Day 1: Missoula—The Garden City

Missoula is Montana's cultural hub and sits at the confluence of three rivers. The city boasts nine historic districts, funky boutiques, live theater and music, a symphony and delectable dining. It's also home to the state's oldest university—The University of Montana—and the Montana Grizzlies.

Begin your day in Missoula with one of many self-guided tours and maps offered by the Missoula Downtown Association. Caras Park, located in the heart of downtown Missoula, is a great place to start. Many of the city's events take place here, including Garden City River Rod, Garden City Brewfest, Hemp Fest, Germanfest, Out to Lunch and Downtown Tonight. Be sure to stroll over to the Brennan's Wave overlook, where you are likely to see a kayaker (or several) playing on this man-made whitewater wave on the Clark Fork River.

Nearby you'll find various locations that host Missoula farmers markets and People's Market (open Saturdays, May – October), as well as some of Missoula's most popular festivals such as International Wildlife Film Festival and Big Sky Documentary Film Festival.

Have lunch or dinner at one of Missoula's downtown eateries that specialize in Montana cuisine and feature locally sourced products including Dixon melons, wild huckleberries and grass-fed beef.

You are in elk country, so a visit to the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation Visitor Center is in order. More than a museum, the Elk Foundation's Visitor Center features a number of interactive exhibits where you can learn more about elk, elk country and the role the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation plays in conservation throughout North America. If time allows visit the wooded nature trail that meanders through 22 acres, where you may catch a glimpse of white-tailed deer, turkeys, bald eagles, owls and other wildlife.

No visit to Missoula is complete without a visit to the Smokejumper Visitor Center, located near the Missoula International Airport. As the nation's largest training base for smokejumpers, the visitor centers showcases displays, dioramas and videos related to the lore of America's legendary parachute wildfire fighters. Take a guided tour of the parachute loft and see the brave men and women that face these wildfires.

If local history is what you are looking for, visit The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula. Built in 1877, the fort sits on 32 acres and features 13 historical structures. It also provides a rich history lesson about the search for gold in the area and the impact the railroad had on western expansion. The Rocky Mountain Museum of Military History, also located at Fort Missoula, tells the story of the United States Army, from frontier times to present day.

For an evening out, check out sporting games or concerts at The University of Montana. Several venues in downtown, including the Wilma Theatre, often host live music performances. You can



also catch a Missoula Osprey baseball game, Missoula Maulers hockey game or the Hellgate Rollergirls for some roller derby.

IF YOU GO:

Missoula Downtown Association – 406.543.4238 – www.missouladowntown.com

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation Visitor Center Association – 406.523.3495 – www.rmef.org

Smokejumper Visitor Center Association – 406.329.4934 – www.smokejumpers.com

Historical Museum at Fort Missoula Association – 406.728.3476 – www.fortmissoulamuseum.org

The Rocky Mountain Museum of Military History – 406.549.5346 – www.fortmissoula.org

The University of Montana – 406.243.4051 – www.umt.edu/griztix

EATS:

Tamarack Brewing Company – 406.830.3113 – www.tamarackbrewing.com

Biga Pizza – 406.728.2579 – www.bigapizza.com

Scotty's Table – 406.549.2790 – www.scottystable.net

Big Dipper Ice Cream – 406.543.5722 – www.bigdippericecream.com

Day 2: The Bitterroot Valley

A short 15 minute drive south of Missoula on Highway 93 is Lolo, home to Travelers' Rest State Park and Holt Heritage Museum. Travel back in time and experience this centuries-old gathering place and campsite where Lewis and Clark rested and prepared for their journey to and from the Pacific Ocean over 200 years ago. It is one of only two sites with physical evidence of their journey. The Holt Heritage Museum (tours by appointment only) includes memorabilia and an expansive collection of American Indian artwork as well as western wear, including hats and boots worn by some pretty famous cowboys and cowgirls.

Continue south on Highway 93 to the town of Florence and travel east on the East Side Highway to the Lee Metcalf Wildlife Refuge. A naturalist's paradise, look for tundra swans, woodpeckers, bald eagles and white-tailed deer from the comfort of your vehicle or walk the 2.5-miles of nature trails near the Bitterroot River. Continue south on the East Side Highway to the community of Stevensville, with a quick detour to Fort Owen State Park—one of the most important commercial centers in the northwest for many years in the mid-1800s.

The first permanent pioneer settlement in Montana, Stevensville is home to the historic St. Mary's Mission. At the mission, you'll learn the story of remarkable people in a turbulent time and the assimilation of two very different cultures against the backdrop of the American frontier. Walk through history and see, touch and hear this fascinating, dramatic and important chapter of this nation's past.

After lunch at a local eatery, be sure to stroll through the downtown shops with a stop at Valley Drug and Variety for something sweet at the old-fashioned soda fountain.



Your afternoon takes you further south with a visit to the Daly Mansion—just outside of Hamilton. The summer home of Copper Baron and millionaire Marcus Daly, his wife Margaret and their four children has evolved from a two-story farmhouse into a 24,000-square-foot mansion with 25 bedrooms and 15 bathrooms on 50 stunning acres in the heart of the Bitterroot Valley.

Continue a few minutes south and you'll soon be in Hamilton—the largest town in the Bitterroot Valley. Experience the buzzing art scene with many galleries and shops full of work from local artisans, ranging from original paintings to sculptures and woodcarvings. Depending on the time of year, catch live art with the Bitterroot Performing Arts Series, a Montana A Cappella Society Concert or the Hamilton Players live theater.

Other great activities include sapphire mining for that perfect gem at Sapphire Studios in Hamilton, casting a line on the Bitterroot River or continuing south for 15 minutes to Darby and visiting Jimmy “the hat man” Harrison at Double H Custom Hat Co. for a custom handmade felted fur hat.

For dinner, stop at one of the Bitterroot Valley’s four craft breweries for a taste and a tour. Enjoy a wood-fired pizza or burger and a microbrew before returning to Missoula on Highway 93.

IF YOU GO:

Travelers’ Rest State Park – 406.273.4253 – www.travelersrest.org

Daly Mansion – 406.363.6004 – www.dalymansion.org

Hamilton Players – 406.375.9050 – www.hamiltonplayers.com

Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge – 406.777.5552 – www.fws.gov/refuge/lee_metcalf

Fort Owen State Park – 406.273.4253 – www.stateparks.mt.gov/fort-owen

St. Mary's Mission – 406.777.5734 – www.saintmarymission.org

Valley Drug and Variety – 406.777.5591 – www.mainstreetstevensville.com

Bitterroot Valley Chamber of Commerce – 406.363.2400 – www.bitterrootvalleychamber.com

EATS:

Bouilla (Hamilton) – 406.361.0223

Bitter Root Brewing (Hamilton) – 406.363.7468 – www.bitterrootbrewing.com

Romeo’s Italian Kitchen (Stevensville) – 406.777.4499 – www.romeositaliankitchen.com

Lolo Peak Brewing Company (Lolo) – 406.493.6231 – www.lolopeakbrewery.com

Day 3: American Indian History

Head north on Highway 93 out of Missoula and you'll soon be on the tribal lands of the Flathead Indian Reservation. The reservation encompasses 1.3 million acres and is home to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai tribes.

At Ravalli, travel west on Highway 200 and north on Route 212 to the National Bison Range— one of the oldest wildlife refuges in the nation. With more than 18,000 acres, the range is home



to 350 – 500 head of bison, as well as black bear, bighorn sheep, pronghorn antelope, elk and whitetail deer. Be sure to bring along your binoculars for the best viewing opportunities.

After leaving the National Bison Range, continue north on Route 212 to the town of Charlo, named in tribute to Chief Charlo of the Flathead Indian Tribe. Stop at Allentown Restaurant (located in Ninepipes Lodge) for lunch and enjoy the breathtaking views of the Mission Mountains from the dining room. Following lunch, stroll over to the Ninepipes Museum of Early Montana to experience a treasure trove of information including exhibits, artifacts and displays from early settlers. There is also a life-size Indian village along with traditional Indian beadwork, dress and weaponry.

From here, travel 20 minutes north on Highway 93 to the community of Pablo. Named in honor of tribal member Michel Pablo, a rancher that played a role in saving the bison of Montana from extinction, Pablo is also the headquarters for the Flathead Indian Reservation. For an integral look at the Salish, Pend d'Oreille and Kootenai tribes, visit The People's Center. The center offers numerous educational courses and events throughout the year, including history presentations and beading classes (available to groups if you call ahead). Self-guided tours of the museum are available, but we suggest you schedule a tour with a guide for a truly memorable experience.

On your way back to Missoula, stop at the St. Ignatius Mission. The mission was established in 1891 by American Indians and Jesuit missionaries and has 58 hand-painted murals adorning the walls and ceilings. The murals were painted by Brother Joseph Carignano, a self-taught artist who worked as the mission's cook and handyman.

Round out the day with a visit to a local brewery visit in Missoula, with tours and tastings available for groups.

IF YOU GO:

National Bison Range – 406.644.2211 – www.fws.gov/bisonrange/nbr

Ninepipes Museum of Early Montana – 406.644.3435 – www.ninepipesmuseum.org

The People's Center – 406.883.5344 – www.peoplescenter.org

St. Ignatius Mission – 406.745.2768 – www.glaciermt.com/St-ignatius

Local Brew + Spirits – 406.532.3250 – www.destinationmissoula.org/breweries

EATS:

Allentown Restaurant – 406.644.2588 – www.ninepipeslodge.com/restaurant.html

The Depot Missoula – 406.728.7007 – www.depotmissoula.com

Kettle House Brewing Company – 406.728.1660 – www.kettlehouse.com

Montgomery Distillery – 406.926.1725 – www.montgomerydistillery.com

SLEEPS:

Holiday Inn Downtown at the Park – 406.721.8550 – www.himissouladowntown.com

Best Western Plus Grant Creek Inn – 406.543.0700 – www.bestwestern.com/grantcreekinn



Broadway Inn Conference Center – 406.532.3300 – www.broadwayinmissoula.com

Hilton Garden Inn – 406.532.5300 – www.missoula.hgi.com

Doubletree by Hilton Missoula-Edgewater – 406.728.3100 –
www.missoulaedgewater.doubletree.com