

MONTANA



THE ULTIMATE WINTER EXPERIENCE

ADVERTISEMENT

No other winter experience in the U.S. is quite like Montana's. It's the crisp air, the stunning mountains, vast and diverse terrain and immense snowfall. The state has high-end modern amenities and easy accessibility to airports, and yet these mountains rarely have crowds. Still, Montana's greatest allure might be the people—a breed of hard-working, tough, genuine folks who prize authenticity above all else. Of course, those people love skiing and snowboarding, too. And in Montana, there's plenty of it. Ski areas dot the state—Montana has 14 in all, from charming family-owned gems to world-class resort destinations. The Big Sky State truly has something for every visitor, including more than skiing and snowboarding. The national parks—Glacier near Whitefish in the northwest part of the state and Yellowstone near Bozeman in the southwest—are practically mind-altering. Wildlife is ubiquitous throughout the state. The state is also full of great hot springs, spas, restaurants and lodges. This is why the winter experience in Montana is unlike anywhere else in the world.



WHITEFISH



BIG SKY



WHITEFISH



BIG SKY

WORLD-CLASS RESORT EXPERIENCES AT

Big Sky & Whitefish

Montana's two largest ski resorts are premier destinations. About 45 miles south of Bozeman, Big Sky Resort is known for its immense size, consistent snow, and modern slopeside accommodations. Whitefish Mountain Resort, which is only 26 miles from Glacier International Airport in Kalispell, has some of the best tree skiing in the country, a quintessential ski town and legendary après. Both resorts also offer great skiing for any ability, fantastic restaurants and options for other forms of outdoor adventure, like snowshoeing, cross-country skiing and snowmobiling.

Big Sky

The ride to the 11,166-foot summit of Big Sky's Lone Peak, a pyramidal mountain that dominates the skyline, is almost as breathtaking as the skiing it offers. This is one of the most unique ski experiences in North America—a massive playground of steep, technical descents, wide-open powder fields and the bucket list-worthy Big Couloir. Of course, with 5,800 skiable acres, 4,350 vertical feet, limited crowds and 36 lifts at its disposal, Big Sky has plenty of terrain for every type of skier. The rolling groomers of Andesite Mountain are as great for families as Lone Peak is for thrill seekers, and the deck surrounding Everett's 8800 is an amazing spot for hot cocoa (get a bloody mary for yourself); the perfectly spaced trees off the Challenger Triple and Lone Tree Quad hold powder for days after a storm. There are so many distinct areas throughout Big Sky, comparisons to the Alps aren't far off—it's so big and varied, it certainly has what any skier is looking for on any given day.

EATS

Andiamo Italian Grille

Located at the base of the ski area, this casual fine-dining spot has delightful pastas and entrées, like the wild boar rack and veal chop.

Gallatin Riverhouse Grill

In Meadow Village, eight miles down the road from the resort, Riverhouse has great bbq, especially the ribs, and live music.

Lotus Pad

Arguably some of the best Thai food of any ski area in the U.S., Lotus Pad offers fresh Asian cuisine with original spices and creative dishes.

Ousel & Spur Pizza Co.

A casual dining spot right in the Meadow Village, this spots features authentic thin-crust Italian pizza, including the Montanan, which includes locally sourced elk sausage.

DRINKS

Scissorbills Saloon

A short walk from the base area, this local classic includes the usuals—affordable beer, bar food (try the chicken wings) and salty bartenders.

Carabiner Lounge

A popular après spot, the Carabiner sits right at the base and often features live music to pair with pub food fare and good drinks.

Montana Jack

Wash down a delicious burger with one of 30 beers on tap at the base of the lifts.

Lone Peak Cinema

Right next door to Ousel & Spur and Lotus Pad in the Meadow Village, this independently owned theater features a full bar and happy hour.

Whitefish

Whitefish Mountain Resort perfectly reflects one of the most beautiful stretches of wilderness in the country. The dramatic pitches of Hellroaring Basin, East Rim, and Connie's drop into lower angle glades like those found off the new Chair 11 or wide groomers like Big Ravine, Toni Matt and Inspiration. A day exploring all this terrain will help you understand why people fall in love with the mountains of northern Montana. New to skiing? The resort has one of the premier ski schools in the country—especially for kids. This is the backyard resort for the passionate outdoorsmen and women of nearby Whitefish, which may be why the mountain allows uphill traffic. Check the trail maps for designated routes and, for a real challenge, try earning your turns for a morning. Regardless of whether you skin up or take the lift, don't miss the view of Glacier National Park from Chair 1. There's nothing like it anywhere in the world.

EATS

Cafe Kandahar

One of the top culinary experiences in the region, this local gem has been operating for 28 years and is a great place for creative fine dining.

Whitefish Lake Restaurant

Built in 1934 as part of FDR's new deal, this restaurant on the golf course is a bit off the main drag and a nice alternative with good food and views.

Tupelo Grille

Located in downtown Whitefish, this is a great casual dining spot with a diverse menu full of delicious options.

Wasabi Sushi Bar

Sushi in a ski town? Chef Phil aims to please and surprise with delicious sushi after a long day skiing and riding.

DRINKS

The Hellroaring Saloon

Order a plate of nachos and toast the mountain's oldest building, constructed in 1949.

Bierstube

Enjoy one of the best ski bars in the country, where dancing in ski boots shoulder to shoulder with strangers is encouraged.

Spotted Bear Spirits

A new, locally owned distillery that produces its own whiskey and vodka.

The Great Northern Bar & Grill

Entertaining locals and tourists since 1919, The Northern is an ideal spot to have one more beer after dinner, or anytime, especially when live music is on the bill. The bar also serves pretty good hamburgers, has 29 beers on tap and \$2 tall-boy Kokanees every Tuesday.

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ELKHORN HOT SPRINGS

DOWN-HOME AND DEEP AT LOST TRAIL, TURNER, BEARPAW AND MAVERICK

THE SOUL OF SKIING is alive and strong in Montana. It lives on in community-oriented ski areas; affordable lift tickets, rentals and lessons; and classic double chairs. In this day and age, more and more ski areas are part of group passes and major conglomerates, and yet Montana is full of down-home, family-owned slopes where it's all about the skiing—and keeping it real. Places like Lost Trail Powder Mountain, Turner Mountain, Maverick Mountain, and Bear Paw Ski Bowl are where the heartbeat of ski culture keeps ticking.

Lost Trail Powder Mountain

They call them Powder Thursdays. It's the first day of the week that Lost Trail is open, and it's usually, well, powdery. The ski area gets 325 inches of annual snowfall that fills into steep rock outcroppings, cliffs, chutes and trees. Fifty miles south of Hamilton, at the top of the Continental Divide in the Bitterroot Wilderness in an off-the-grid locale, this ski area that straddles the Montana/Idaho border is a hidden jewel. Lost Trail opened in 1938. In 1967, Bill Grasser purchased the resort and it's now run by his children, Scott and Judy Grasser. It has 60 marked trails over 1,800 vertical feet and 1,800 acres of skiing, five lovely double chairs and three T-bars, lifties who create intricate snow-creatures in their spare time and adult lift tickets that are only \$46. The double-black diamonds in the White House and the backcountry skiing off the backside of the plateau are steep and sporty for the advanced skier, but Lost Trail really shines in its intermediate glades, cruisy groomers and embrace of its family-oriented culture that make this ski area unlike any other.

Turner Mountain

Turner Mountain, located 23 miles north of Libby in the Kootenai National Forest in Northwest Montana, is only open Friday through Sunday and holidays. A busy day here means a couple hundred skiers, many of which sit on tailgates in the parking lot drinking beers or grilling burgers come afternoon. So while Turner has just one double chairlift, that's all this ski area needs. The lift, which not so long ago replaced the longest T-bar in North America, rises 2,110 vertical feet to the 6,000-foot summit. The skiing falls through wide-open intermediate groomers and low-angle glades. It's the ideal place for a company offsite—Turner allows skiers to rent the entire ski area for a reasonable rate—seasoned skiers, families and children, for whom a lift ticket costs just \$21. When the day is done, head down the mountain to the Red Dog with the rest of the day's skiers for a cold one.

Maverick Mountain

In 2015, Kristi Borge, age 29, a middle school teacher in Bozeman, and Erik, her husband, age 31, a real estate agent, decided to flip their life upside down. They quit their jobs, sold everything, borrowed some money and bought Maverick Mountain Ski Area. For the lifelong skiers, it was a fantasy come true. Located in the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, five miles north of Polaris, in southwest Montana, Maverick is a gem to the region. In addition to some great owners, it has 2,020 vertical feet, 450 skiable acres, consistent fall line skiing and one trusty double chair. It's the type of place where families fall in love with skiing, or where interlopers rediscover the genuine joys of mountain culture. The terrain has several beginner and intermediate groomed runs on its flanks and steeper, ungroomed black diamonds underneath the chairlift, as well as tight trees. When the ski day is exhausted, there's always après. The cheery Thunder Bar features four taps from Beaverhead Brewery in Dillon. Meanwhile, Elkhorn Hot Springs is only 10 minutes down the road from Maverick Mountain.

Bear Paw Ski Bowl

It's an unlikely spot for a Bikini Beach, but that's the name of the run and a sign of the fun at Bear Paw Ski Bowl, located 30 miles south of Havre, Montana. The Chippewa-Cree Tribe has allowed Bear Paw to run the ski area, which is located on the Rocky Boy Reservation, since 1959. With a double chair, a handle tow, 900 vertical feet and a \$20 lift ticket, if this isn't the spirit of skiing, it's hard to know what is. The ski area uses local volunteers to help keep the lifts spinning, which it only does a couple days a week. When Bear Paw is open, it offers one of the most unique cultural experiences in this great ski country.

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Family Getaway

AT RED LODGE MOUNTAIN AND DISCOVERY SKI AREA

Montana has an unpretentious, accessible ski culture that's ideal for families that want a true winter experience. Ski areas across the state offer affordable lodging and package rates that include rentals and lessons, and varied terrain that suits everyone's needs. Discovery Ski Area, 18 miles south of Philipsburg, and Red Lodge Mountain, about 60 miles southwest of Billings in the Beartooth Mountains, are two quaint ski areas—especially for kids. Both are situated near charming Western towns and have fun events, slopes, and amenities the whole family will enjoy.

RED LODGE MOUNTAIN

Red Lodge's Miami Beach is a whole lot more kid-friendly than its more well-known counterpart of the same name. Montana's version is a very low-angle green circle run that's ideal for children and adults who are learning to ski. The ski area sells tickets to access just the Miami Beach double chair. All-day tickets for kids ages 6 to 12 on this lift are only \$15. Meanwhile, the magic carpet is also free for anyone and kids 5 and under always ski and snowboard for free throughout the ski area. For those ready to graduate to blue squares, the Palisades quad offers a friendly stepping stone. The Columbine and Paradise runs are both slow rolling groomers with little risk. Of course, it isn't all pizzas and french fries at Red Lodge. Skiers looking for something a little more challenging will have plenty to explore, too. The Grizzly Peak chair tops out at 9,416 feet and accesses steeper blue circles and easier black diamonds. The zone is a natural progression from the blue squares off of the Triple and Willow Creek chairs. Want it spicier yet? The Cole Creek quad leads to a number of steeper, narrower double-black diamonds, like the tight trees in the Headwaters.

It's more than just skiing at Red Lodge, though. The ski area has some of the most entertaining events in the state. The Cardboard Classic, a part of the annual Winter Carnival festivities in late February, celebrates good old fashioned Montana ingenuity and pluck. The challenge is to sled down a portion of the ski hill, but contestants only get to use cardboard, duct tape and glue to construct their ship. The winner takes home a \$1,000 prize. Red Lodge also hosts torchlight parades throughout the season. The beautiful display of lights snaking down the dark mountain will inspire awe in anyone.

EATS AND DRINKS

Red Lodge Pizza Company
Family-friendly joint with pies for the whole family, in addition to local beers from Red Lodge Ales Brewing Company.

Mas Taco
A James Beard nominee, this restaurant is the best menu in town with truly exceptional cuisine.

Blue Ribbon Bar
A classic dive whose Blue Burger, served on an electric skillet, is simple and delightful.

WHERE TO STAY

Yodeler Motel
Classic, comfortable, affordable and well-managed—it's run by a young outdoorsy couple.

The Two Bears Inn Bed and Breakfast
This mid-range hotel, tucked into the pines of Haywood Gulch, offers beautiful views of Mount Maurice and Point of Rocks.

The Pollard
A historic hotel in downtown Red Lodge, this higher-end option offers luxurious rooms in a brick building constructed in 1893.



RED LODGE

DISCOVERY SKI AREA

At Discovery, the experience is the quintessential Montana ski experience: authentic, big-hearted, family-oriented and lots of challenging, fun terrain full of untracked powder. In addition to the uncrowded slopes, the Kids Kinderski (ages 3-6) and Kids Kruizers (ages 7-12) programs offer a full day of lessons with four kids to an instructor, with a lift ticket, and rentals, for just \$60. For those older than 12, the Snow Sports School has half day group lessons for \$22. The terrain is well-suited for learning to ski or snowboard. Beginners should start on the Easy, Totemoff, or Jubilee chairs, where green circle and blue square groomers are perfect for getting comfortable linking turns together. When those runs feel natural, the Rumsey and Anaconda chairs access steeper blues and a few less technical blacks.

As much as Discovery is known for how it caters to family, its wild terrain on the backside is equally as famous. The lifts at Discovery access 2,200 acres and 2,388 vertical feet of skiing, none of which has more sustained, steep fall line skiing than the runs off the Granite and Limelight chairs. For steep trees, narrow chutes and sporty lines, the backside of Discovery, in particular the double-black diamonds from Limelight, are as technical as any lift-accessed terrain in Montana. Hit it on a powder day and the experience could be enough to keep you in Philipsburg forever.

EATS AND DRINKS

The Philipsburg Brewing Company
Opened in 2012 in a building erected in the 1880s, it features award-winning beers—try the Pumpkin Spice Beer—and live music on Fridays and Saturdays in an intimate, classy bar.

Bricks Pub
Gourmet burgers pair with a wide selection of microbrews at this Philipsburg pub.

UpNSmokin BBQ House
Mouth-watering barbecue in Big Sky Country, UpNSmokin also offers Western-themed Friday Night Pizza.

WHERE TO STAY

The Broadway
Located in the heart of town, it was restored in 2003 in a colorful brick building that dates back to 1890. It has modern, comfortable rooms with character.

Marcus Daly Motel
Look for great stay-and-ski deals at this budget-friendly option.

Fairmont Hot Springs Resort
An hour from Philipsburg, Fairmont has reasonable deals, as well, and it comes with a massive, twisting water slide and a pool that every kid (and adult) will appreciate.

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the ROAD LESS TRAVELED



ITINERARIES FOR THOSE LOOKING TO EXPERIENCE SEVERAL SKI AREAS AND TOWNS ON ONE TRIP



WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS

With empty two-lane highways, pastoral landscapes, charming small towns, 14 ski areas dotting the state and the freedom for whimsical plans, a road trip through the state of Montana is practically an American rite of passage. Every road trip should be different, and in Montana, there's any number of ways to string together a ski adventure in a different location every day while driving some of the most scenic countryside in the U.S. Here are a couple of ideas to get started.



BRIDGER BOWL



GREAT DIVIDE SKI AREA



MONTANA SNOWBOWL

THE MISSOULA WAGON WHEEL

The gateway to Western Montana, Missoula acts as a great hub and jumping off point for the adventurer, with Missoula International Airport offering nonstop daily flights from 12 major U.S. markets, including Dallas, Chicago, Phoenix, Minneapolis, San Francisco and Atlanta to name a few. More importantly, the 70,000-person town is the home of University of Montana and sits at the convergence of five mountain ranges: the Bitterroot Mountains, Sapphire Range, Garnet Range, Rattlesnake Mountains and the Reservation Divide. Thirteen miles north of town, **Montana Snowbowl** is an unheralded ski area with loads of snowfall, 2,600 vertical feet of exceptional tree skiing, and one of the best bars in skiing: The Last Run Inn. Start the day hunting powder stashes in Far East and end it with a wood-fired pizza and legendary bloody mary at the bar. A few hours north on the forested Highway 93, overlooking Flathead Lake, awaits another gem: **Blacktail Mountain**. Closed during the early week, Blacktail hosts weekly Powder Thursdays on its great, low-angle glades. Heading back to Missoula, stop at the Tamarack Brewery and fill up a growler at Lakeside APA. After a fun night toasting quality adventure and skiing, head for **Lookout Pass**, just over 100 miles west of Missoula, nestled on the Idaho/Montana border. Known for its abundance of snowfall—around 400 inches (that's 33 feet)—and 1,150 vertical feet of playful, mellow terrain, you can ski a whole powder day at Lookout and never cross another skier's tracks. For après, hit the Historic Pass Lodge, the second oldest ski lodge in the Northwest. After every one of these day trips, you'll return to Missoula and find Montana's highest density of amazing craft brewers, plus great local cuisine and unique lodging options.

EATS

Burns St. Bistro has fabulous brunch. Notorious P.I.G. BBQ, Caffe Dolce and the Market on Front, which specializes in fine meats, seafood and wine, are all great lunch spots. For dinner, Biga Pizza has locally-sourced, hand-crafted pies, and Five on Black has robustly flavorful Brazilian food. For fine dining, a local's favorite is the farm-to-table bistro, Scotty's Table.

BEER

Draught Works Brewery is a massive pub and locals' hub that serves some of the best brews in town. Imagine Nation Brewing Co. celebrates beer and community, with regular live music and events to pair with a pint. Meanwhile, Great Burn is a brewery and taproom that does hop-forward small-batch beers, and Bayern Brewery has underrated, delicious German brews.

FROM THE CHIC SPOT TO THE CLASSIC CAPITAL

For a different kind of ski road trip, head to Montana's hippest town: Bozeman. Home to Montana State University and a thriving spot full of fabulous restaurants, great breweries, and a friendly community of passionate skiers and snowboarders, the 45,000-person town in southwest Montana acts as a fun destination to start the road trip of your dreams. Sixteen miles from Bozeman's Main Street, **Bridger Bowl** is known for strong family vibes—it's run as a non-profit—and a phenomenon known as the Bridger Bowl Cloud, or BBC. The term refers to the area's tendency to receive spontaneous and abundant snow, which is part of the reason it averages over 350 inches of powder a year. Blessed with technical, nuanced terrain off its fabled Ridge and Schlasman's, that snow tends to stack up. Add the runs of the High Traverse, and Bridger offers some of the most challenging lift-access terrain in the country. After exploring the mountain, pop into the Grizzly Ridge Station, known as "The Griz," featuring cheap beers and warm chocolate chip cookies. Next, drive two hours north to the state's oldest ski area, **Showdown Montana**. Founded in 1936, the ski area has three lifts, 640 skiable acres, 1,400 vertical feet, and far fewer leather ski boots. With 20 feet of annual snowfall, the tree skiing below King's Ridge—Dynamite, Gun Barrel and Glory Hole—can be all time. Rest those joints at the Spa Hot Springs Motel, which uses mineral-rich local spring water famed for its restorative powers. Afterward, head to 2 Basset Brewery (named for a couple of hounds, called Stanley and Leroy), where the brewery uses hops from the local Meagher Valley. The next day, head west to Montana's classic capital city, Helena, and Montana's sunniest place to ski, **Great Divide Ski Area**. Weekday lift tickets are just \$40 and get you access to the sporty terrain in the Big Open, Bull Chutes, and the tree skiing off the Wild West Chair.

EATS AND DRINKS

In Bozeman, Montana Ale Works has locally and naturally raised Montana beef and craft cocktails and beers in a building originally built by the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1916. Saffron Table has comforting curries and samosas, and Blackbird has wood-fired pizzas with local ingredients. Of course, it's a college town, so Bozeman is full of dives, too; check out The Molly Brown Bar, Scoop Bar and/or Haufbrau House.

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Endless Opportunities

1. Turner Mountain
2. Whitefish Mountain Resort
3. Blacktail Mountain
4. Bear Paw Ski Bowl
5. Lookout Pass
6. Montana Snowbowl
7. Great Divide
8. Showdown Montana
9. Discovery Ski Area
10. Bridger Bowl
11. Lost Trail Powder Mountain
12. Maverick Mountain
13. Big Sky Resort
14. Red Lodge Mountain

