

# Glacier Country MONTANA

## Motorcoach Itinerary A loop tour from Missoula International Airport (MSO)

### *Day 1: Missoula*

Begin with a visit to the nearby Smokejumper Visitor Center (.8 mile from airport), the largest active smokejumper base in the nation. The Smokejumper Visitor Center is a unique opportunity to learn about this unusual, demanding, and dramatic occupation. As you walk through the center you will visit the National Smokejumper Memorial, go inside a replica of a 1930's lookout tower, and a tour of the smokejumper loft, where the smokejumpers work when they are not fighting fires. (1-1 ½ Hour Guided Tour)

A bit further down the road toward Missoula, stop in at The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation's visitor center (3.7 miles from Smokejumper Center). The center celebrates the conservation of public wildlands, working ranches, and forests where elk herds can thrive. The autumn bugling of lustful bulls is a call to arms for hunters seeking winter meat and trophy antlers. (One Hour Self Tour)

Enjoy one of the several downtown Missoula eateries. From here explore downtown Missoula (6 miles from the airport), ride one of 38 wooden ponies carved to restore this 1918 carousel, while hearing a 400-pipe organ play notes directed by perforations in continuous paper rolls or stroll trails along the Clark Fork River. While enjoying the river views at Caras Park, you'll notice nearby Brennan's Wave, a man made engineered whitewater playpool for kayakers.

Travel south on Highway 93, to the Travelers' Rest State Park in Lolo. This National Historic Landmark marks the location of a centuries-old Native American campsite which Lewis and Clark's used in 1805 and 1806. In 2009, Montana state Parks opened the Holt Museum and Visitor Center at Travelers' Rest. This exciting new addition to this timeless place gives visitors glimpses of the time before and immediately after the Lewis and Clark Expedition traveled through the Bitterroot Valley.

Continue south on Highway 93, through the high, jagged Bitterroot mountains and on to charming Hamilton (47 miles/50 minutes from Missoula), the hub of the Bitterroot Valley.

Tour the Daly Mansion to see how the famous "Copper King" lived. Marcus Daly's 24,000 square foot summer mansion is a 42-room home with seven Italian marble fireplaces. (1 Hour Guided Tour)

Tour the Ravalli County Museum, the original county courthouse built in 1900, that now houses what is considered by many to be the finest little museum in the northwest. Permanent collections include a native American collection, Ricketts Museum commemorating the development of the Rocky Mountain Laboratory, an antique kitchen, miner/trapper room, a veteran's display, Ernst Peterson photo exhibits, extensive archives, Victorian rooms and Lewis and Clark room.

Overnight in Hamilton.

### IF YOU GO:

- Smokejumper Visitor Center • (406) 329-4934 • <http://smokejumpers.com>
- Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation's Visitor Center • (406) 523-4545 • [www.rmef.org](http://www.rmef.org)
- Missoula Downtown • (406) 523-4238 • [www.missouladowntown.com](http://www.missouladowntown.com)
- Travelers' Rest State Park • (406) 273-4253 • [www.travelersrest.org](http://www.travelersrest.org)

- Daly Mansion • Hamilton • (406) 363-6004 • [www.dalymansion.org](http://www.dalymansion.org)
- The Ravalli County Museum • Hamilton • (406) 363-3338 • [www.brvhsmuseum.org](http://www.brvhsmuseum.org)

#### EATS:

- MacKenzie River Pizza Co • Missoula • (406) 721-0077 • [www.mackenzieriverpizza.com](http://www.mackenzieriverpizza.com)
- Edge Restaurant & Sportsbar • Hamilton • (406) 375-0007 • [www.theedgerestaurant.com](http://www.theedgerestaurant.com)
- The Bitterroot Brewery • Hamilton • (406) 363-7468 • [www.bitterrootbrewing.com](http://www.bitterrootbrewing.com)

#### SLEEPS:

- Bitterroot River Inn • Hamilton • (406) 375-2525 • [www.bitterrootriverinn.com](http://www.bitterrootriverinn.com)
- Townhouse Inns of Hamilton • (406) 363-6600 • [www.townhouseinnhamilton.com](http://www.townhouseinnhamilton.com)
- Best Western Inn • Hamilton • (406) 363-2142 • [www.bestwesternmontana.com/hotels/best-western-hamilton-inn](http://www.bestwesternmontana.com/hotels/best-western-hamilton-inn)

### *Day 2: Flathead Lake*

Head north on Highway 93 toward the majestic Flathead Lake, the largest natural freshwater lake west of the Mississippi.

St. Ignatius Mission was founded in 1854 by Jesuit missionaries. The mission, and especially Brother Carignano's remarkable frescoes, are a must see for anyone who appreciates historical landmarks. (.5 Hour Self Tour).

At Ravalli, head toward Dixon on Hwy 200, then north to Moiese to visit the National Bison Range (95 miles/1 ¾ hours from Hamilton). It was established in 1908 and is one of the oldest Wildlife Refuges in the nation. It is home to hundreds of bison; as well as elk, white-tail and mule deer, pronghorn antelope, bighorn sheep and black bear. The Visitor Center provides interpretive displays and orientation videos as well as a bookstore and restrooms. Staff is on hand to answer questions and dispense maps and brochures. A six mile loop is accessible to motorcoaches. (One Hour Self Tour)

The Peoples Center, on mile north of Pablo (20 miles/25 minutes from St. Ignatius) on Highway 93, is the place to experience the rich cultural heritage of the Salish, Pend d'Oreille and Kootenai tribes. The center features an exhibit gallery, educational programs and Native Ed-Venture interpretive tours focusing on Native American heritage, natural history and cultural interpretation. (One Hour Tour)

The Best Western KwaTaqNuk Resort in Polson (8 miles/11 minutes from People's Center) is your next stop, beautifully located on the southern shores of the Flathead Lake. This is the perfect place to stop for a meal -- and to overnight with magnificent view of the Flathead Lake. You will enjoy exploring downtown Polson or a boat tour from KwaTaqNuk Resort marina. Choose between a narrated Bay Cruise (1 ½ hour) or cruise the shores of Wild Horse Island, the largest island on Flathead Lake, home to 100 different birds and mammals; including bighorn sheep, bald eagles, osprey, mule deer, and -- a few wild horses (3 hour). Take advantage of KwaTaqNuk's package especially for groups; including lunch and the boat cruise.

Overnight in Polson.

#### IF YOU GO:

- National Bison Range • (406) 644-2211 • <http://bisonrange.fws.gov>
- St. Ignatius Mission • (406) 745-2768 • [www.travelmt.com/mt-cities-St.+Ignatius.html](http://www.travelmt.com/mt-cities-St.+Ignatius.html)
- The People's Center Salish & Kootenai Museum • (406) 675-0160 • [www.peoplescenter.org](http://www.peoplescenter.org)
- Downtown Polson • (406) 675-0160 • [www.polsonchamber.com](http://www.polsonchamber.com)

#### EATS & SLEEPS:

- Best Western KwaTaqNuk Resort • (800) 882-6363 • [www.kwataqnuk.com](http://www.kwataqnuk.com)

### *Day 3: Seeley-Swan Valley*

From Polson, continue north on Highway 93 along the shores of Flathead Lake to Bigfork (33 miles/42 minutes from Polson), a walker's delight of galleries and eateries. This is a perfect stop to stretch your legs and do some shopping. This quaint Western village was chosen as "One of the 50 Great Towns of the West," designated as "One of the 100 Best Small Art Towns of the Nation," and was listed in National Geographic's Guide to Small Town Escapes, which is no surprise given its gourmet restaurants, fun shops, local character, and beautiful natural surroundings.

From Bigfork, travel east on Highway 82, then south on Highway 83 through the Seeley/Swan Valley. Pinched between the east slope of the Mission Mountains and the west slope of the Swan Range, the Seeley-Swan is a series of pristine mountain lakes among dense stands of ponderosa pine, Douglas fir and larch.

Experience Alpine Artisans' unique, self-guided tour of artist studios and galleries (1-4 Hour Tour) leads you on an enchanted journey where you'll have the opportunity to meet artists and watch them immersed in their passion. Download a printable version of the for the Artists' Studios, Galleries and Cultural Museums, their contact information and driving directions.

Seeley Lake (74 miles/1 ¼ hour from Bigfork) is a great choice for lunch; try the Seasons Restaurant at the Double Arrow Resort.

From Seeley Lake you may choose to travel on to Yellowstone National Park (279 miles/4 hours), or follow Highway 200 back to Missoula (78 miles/1 ¾ hours) to complete a Missoula loop route, or continue into Idaho and Washington on Interstate 90.

If traveling back to Missoula make time for The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula. The museum is located on 32 acres in the heart of historic Fort Missoula. Its collection includes 24,000 objects including 13 historic structures. As a major historical museum in Western Montana, the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula provides a valuable educational and cultural experience for the community and entire region. The museum's indoor galleries contain both permanent and changing exhibits that deal with topics of interest from the period of early exploration to modern times.

Overnight in Missoula.

#### IF YOU GO:

- Bigfork • (406) 837-5888 • [www.bigfork.org](http://www.bigfork.org)
- Alpine Artisans • (406) 892-2525 • [www.glacierparkinc.com](http://www.glacierparkinc.com)
- Seeley Lake Chamber • (406) 677-2880 • [www.seeleylakechamber.com](http://www.seeleylakechamber.com)
- The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula • (406) 728-3476 • [www.fortmissoulamuseum.org](http://www.fortmissoulamuseum.org)

#### EATS:

- The Double Arrow Resort • Seeley Lake (406) • 468-0777 • [www.doublearrowresort.com](http://www.doublearrowresort.com)
- MacKenzie River Pizza Co • Missoula • (406) 721-0099 • [www.mackenzieriverpizza.com](http://www.mackenzieriverpizza.com)
- Scotty's Table • Missoula • (406) 549-2790 • <http://scottystable.net>

#### SLEEPS:

- Holiday Inn Downtown Missoula at the Park • (406) 721-8550 • [www.himissoula.com](http://www.himissoula.com)
- Hilton Garden Inn Missoula • (406) 532-5300 • [www.hiltongardeninn.com](http://www.hiltongardeninn.com)
- Doubletree Hotel Missoula • (406) 728-3100 • <http://doubletree1.hilton.com>
- Wingate by Wyndham Missoula • (406) 541-8000 • <http://doubletree1.hilton.com>

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call one of our travel counselors toll-free at 1-800-338-5072.*

*For group travel assistance, please call 1-800-956-6537 or visit*

*[www.touropoperators.glaciermt.com](http://www.touropoperators.glaciermt.com)*