

# Welcome to Missoula

## Missoula's Beginnings

Known as the “Garden City” for its dense trees and lush green landscape, Missoula is nestled in the heart of the northern Rockies in Western Montana. A community of nearly 100,000 residents, Missoula lies in a mountain forest setting where five valleys converge. Missoula is 140 miles from Glacier National Park and 270 miles from Yellowstone National Park. The search for gold in the West and the completion of the Mullan Road, which opened travel from Fort Benton, MT., to Walla Walla, WA., brought people to the valley in 1860. Missoula began as a settlement called Hell Gate and was later renamed Missoula, taken from the Salish Indian word that means “near the cold, chilling waters.”

## Culture & Entertainment

Cultural Tourism wasn't invented in Missoula, but the Garden City has come close to perfecting it. Even before Captains Lewis and Clark and their Corps of Discovery visited, the rivers and mountain valleys of this region were well-traveled routes. Pioneer settlers added their ethnic mix to the Native American culture, and frontier heritage continues to be one of Missoula's greatest attractions. Just as intriguing is Missoula's contemporary and cosmopolitan culture.

Montana's most culturally diverse city, Missoula thrives on events and attractions. Sporting events, the symphony, live theatre productions, gallery events, public markets, festivals and fairs offer an abundance of entertainment. World-famous artists appear with the symphony orchestra. Jazz, pop and country music stars appear regularly in venues ranging from large concert halls to intimate pubs and outdoor settings. In the visual arts, Missoula abounds in museums, galleries and art studios exhibiting everything from western and wildlife paintings and sculpture to contemporary art. The literary and dramatic arts thrive here in such abundance that Missoula has an international reputation as Montana's “Cultural Superstar.” The annual Montana Festival of the Book, International Wildlife Film Festival and International Choral Festival are among the many events with growing international appeal. Attractions such as A Carousel for Missoula, Garnet Ghost Town, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and the Smokejumper Visitor Center, in addition to many others, bring tourists to Missoula year after year. Additionally, The University of Montana provides a continuous schedule of cultural activities in addition to its year-round Grizzly sports program.

Missoula serves as the center for education, medicine, retail and the arts. Its largest employers are Community Medical Center, Plum Creek Timber, St. Patrick Hospital, Southgate Mall and The University of Montana.

## Outdoor Opportunities

While the high arts of the Garden City are remarkable, they aren't the only thing that draws tourists to the valley. Missoula also offers an abundance of exceptional recreational opportunities. Three major rivers (Bitterroot, Blackfoot and the Clark Fork of the Columbia) run through the area, and Rock Creek, Known for its blue ribbon trout fishing, is just 20 minutes from Missoula. There are several major lakes within an hour's drive of Missoula, including Flathead Lake, the largest freshwater lake in the Western United States. Hiking, biking, camping and rock climbing abound in Western Montana, as Missoula is within 100 miles of seven wilderness areas: Bob Marshall, Mission Mountains, Anaconda-Pintlers, Rattlesnake, Scapegoat, Selway-Bitterroot and Welcome Creek. Mount Sentinel, Mount Jumbo, Lolo Peak and Squaw Peak, in addition to the Blue Mountain and Pattee Canyon recreation areas, provide hiking, biking and skiing opportunities without the drive. Opportunities for skiing and snowmobiling are abundant during the winter months. Snowbowl Ski Area is a 20-minute drive from downtown Missoula and features a continuous vertical drop of 2,600 feet, one of the steepest in the country. Discovery Basin, Lookout Pass and Lost Trail are all within 100 miles of Missoula. Groomed cross-country trails and countless miles of snowmobiling trails can be found within an hour's drive. Missoula is also rich with golfing opportunities for both the advanced and the novice golfer. There are seven golf courses in the area (Highlands, King Ranch, Larchmont, The University of Montana, Missoula Country Club, Linda Vista, and Phantom Hills).

## Visit Today!

One of the most desirable places to live and visit in the United States, Missoula has something for everyone. The majestic mountains and forests that surround us shape Missoula's culture, and the rivers inspire writers, artists and crafters. Recreation is an art form as well with visitors combining rafting, hiking and biking activities with concerts, plays or poetry readings. Downtown is a vibrant cultural district in itself, and the communities surrounding Missoula also provide a varied menu of experiences. Missoula is the “gateway city” for travel routes and loop trails throughout Western Montana; a visitor's experience is incomplete without traveling through the cultural corridors.