



Recommended Excursion Locations

Bannack Ghost Town

Bannack is one of the original gold rush towns in the area. It is unique in that it is preserved, rather than restored, protected rather than exploited. Gold was discovered in Grasshopper Creek in 1862. This strike set off a massive gold rush that swelled Bannack's population to over 3,000 by 1863. When the gold ran out, the town died. Over 50 buildings remain in Bannack today, from tumbledown one-room bachelor cabins to the once-stately Hotel Meade.

- Take I-90 east from Missoula toward Butte. At the junction with I-15, take I-15 south to Exit 59 / MT-278. Head west on MT-278 for approximately 20 miles. Turn left onto Bannack Bench Road and go 3 miles, then turn left onto the gravel park entrance road.
- For GPS: 721 Bannack Road, Dillon, MT

Blue Mountain Recreation Area

Blue Mountain is a popular destination for hiking, mountain biking, running, dog walking, golfing (disc golf), and horse riding. A system of nature trails, an abandoned apple orchard, and the remains of some old, small, gravel pits are part of the recreation area.

- Travel south on Higgins Avenue. Turn right onto Brooks Street / US-12. After approximately 5 miles, turn right onto Blue Mountain Road. At the T intersection, turn left onto Forest Hill Lane; the parking lot will be on the right.
- For GPS: Blue Mountain Trailhead, Missoula, MT

Garnet Ghost Town

For a glimpse of the real "Old West" head to Garnet, one of the best-preserved ghost towns in Montana. This historic gold-mining town prospered from 1895-1911 when more than a thousand people lived here. As the gold became scarce, Garnet's population diminished rapidly. During the depression, an unsuccessful attempt to revive Garnet was made and by 1950 the only residents were "ghosts." Today you can still see many of Garnet's abandoned houses, stores, and mines, and you can rent cabins throughout the Garnet Range.

- Take I-90 east from Missoula. Take Exit 109 for MT-200 E / Bonner. Go 24 miles and turn right onto Garnet Range Road. Go 11 miles to the Garnet access road and follow signs to Garnet.
- For GPS: Garnet Ghost Town, Drummond, MT

Glacier National Park

Glacier National Park contains a million acres of the finest mountain scenery in America. Geologic processes have formed and sculpted the peaks and left about 50 glaciers and 200 lakes. Most of the glaciers are accessible only by trail, although a few can be viewed from the road. The scenic Going-to-the-Sun Road connects the east and west sections of Glacier National Park. Though Glacier is a refuge for nearly every large mammal species native to the United States, most of the animals seek the undisturbed areas and few are seen along the roads during the travel season.

- Take I-90 west from Missoula. Take Exit 96 for US-93 / Kalispell and turn right. Travel north on US-93 to Polson (approximately 60 miles). Turn right onto MT-35 to travel along the east side of Flathead



Lake. After 45 miles, turn right onto MT-206. After 10 miles, turn right onto US-2. After 15 miles, at West Glacier, turn left onto Going-to-the-Sun Road to enter the park.

- For GPS: Apgar Visitor Center, West Glacier, Glacier National Park, MT

Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge

This wildlife refuge encompasses 2,800 acres along the Bitterroot River. It provides habitat for nesting osprey and other birds and wildlife.

- Take Highway 93 south to Stevensville, approximately 33 miles. Follow signs in Stevensville to the refuge, which is located just off Route 203.
- For GPS: Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge, Stevensville, MT

Maclay Flat Nature Trail

Situated along the Bitterroot River, Maclay Flats is an open meadow floodplain offering quiet and subtle natural scenery. The area sports pines, aspen groves, reflective still water pools from irrigation runoff, and various wildlife.

- Travel south on Higgins Avenue. Turn right onto Brooks Street / US-12. After approximately 5 miles, turn right onto Blue Mountain Road. At the T intersection, go right to stay on Blue Mountain Road. About a mile further, turn right into the Maclay Flat Nature Trail parking lot.
- For GPS: Maclay Flat Nature Trail, Missoula, MT

National Bison Range

The Bison Range was established May 23, 1908, when bison were nearly extinct. In the early 1800s, up to 50 million of the woolly creatures roamed North America. During the 19th century, buffalo hunting became a favorite sport, and by 1900 only about 20 wild bison remained. Fortunately, bison populations have recovered. The Bison Range protects a herd of 300-500 buffalo on approximately 19,000 acres of grassland and forest. You might also see whitetail and mule deer, pronghorn antelope, elk, bighorn sheep, and mountain goats. Keep an eye out for other wildlife such as beaver, mink, weasel, muskrat, bobcat, coyote, and black bear. Bring your binoculars to see a variety of bird species, including ring-necked pheasants, western meadowlarks, and mountain bluebirds.

- Take I-90 west from Missoula. Take Exit 96 for US-93 / Kalispell. After 27 miles, turn left at the traffic light onto MT-200 W. After 6 miles, turn right onto MT-212 N. In approximately 5 miles, turn right into the National Bison Range. Take the fork to the right and follow the road to the Visitor Center parking lot.
- For GPS: National Bison Range, Charlo, MT

Ninepipes National Wildlife Refuge

This wildlife refuge hosts hundreds of migrating and nesting birds. The wetland area sits near the Mission Mountains and is crowded with lush vegetation and reflective pools, which makes it a beautiful location for photographing sunsets.

- Take I-90 west from Missoula. Take Exit 96 for US-93 / Kalispell and turn right. The refuge is approximately 40 miles north and there are multiple turn-outs / parking areas.
- For GPS: Ninepipe National Wildlife Refuge, Charlo, MT



Pattee Canyon

This recreation area on the southeastern edge of Missoula offers a network of dog-friendly trails, large ponderosa pines, and picnic areas. It has been a favorite recreation spot since the 1930s and is part of Lolo National Forest.

- Take Higgins Ave. to FAS 533 / Pattee Canyon Road. Turn east onto FAS 533 / Pattee Canyon Road and travel 4 miles to a parking area.
- For GPS: Pattee Canyon Parking Area, Missoula, MT

Philipsburg

Philipsburg offers an array of old-style architecture and quiet small-town charm to photograph. Granite remnants of the once-thriving 1890s silver boomtown and a renovated business district are on the National Historic Register. It also offers an opportunity to capture scenes from everyday life in a small Montana town.

- Take I-90 east from Missoula. Take Exit 153 / MT-1 toward Drummond / Philipsburg. Turn right onto MT-1 and travel for 27 miles to reach Philipsburg.
- For GPS: Philipsburg, MT

Rattlesnake Wilderness

The Rattlesnake Wilderness is characterized by scenic lakes, forested ridges, open cliff-banded slopes, and mountain peaks. The area is home to deer, elk, coyotes, wolves, mountain goats, bighorn sheep, black bears, grizzly bears, and mountain lions. The area has approximately 33 miles of trails and thousands of acres of untrailed terrain available for exploration.

- From E Broadway Street, turn north onto Old Van Buren St. After 2.5 miles, turn right to stay on Rattlesnake Drive. After 2 miles, turn left onto Sawmill Gulch Road and look for signs for the Trailhead.
- For GPS: Rattlesnake Trailhead, Missoula, MT

Waterworks Hill

Situated on the north side of Missoula, Waterworks Hill offers a spectacular view of the city and surrounding mountains. This windswept hill appears barren but is home to several low-growing and rare plants.

- Travel north on Orange Street. Go through the traffic circle, following signs to take I-90 West. After you go under the bridge, park in the parking lot. Meet at the trailhead; the group will walk together. Carpool if possible because parking is limited.
- For GPS: GPS will likely send you to the wrong spot, so we recommend following the directions above.