

Beartooth Highway - Montana

The Beartooth Highway in Montana is one of the most spectacular alpine highways in North America. It offers sweeping vistas of snow-covered mountains, unlimited outdoor recreation opportunities, unparalleled wildlife watching, and panoramic views of hundreds of tiny ponds and lakes in glacial depressions.



Length:	30 miles / 48.0 km
Time to Allow:	One hour to drive or 1.5 hours to enjoy the Montana part of the Byway.

Local Information

Cooke City Chamber of Commerce
406-838-2495
info@cookecitychamber.org
<http://www.cookecitychamber.org>

Red Lodge Area Chamber of Commerce
406-446-1718
information@redlodge.com
<http://www.redlodge.com>

Before You Go

Montana and Wyoming fishing licenses are available at Top of the World store, along with many other services. Island Lake and Beartooth Lake campgrounds both have boat launches. Many area outfitters and guides provide a broad range of services to enjoy the three National Forests. Rock Creek Vista Point, 20 miles south of Red Lodge, is a Montana Dept. of Transportation Rest Area. It has several overlooks, large parking lot and restroom facilities.



Bicycle/Pedestrian Facilities

A growing number of visitors experience the byway and its surrounding areas with bicycles, motorcycles, ATV's, and hiking trails. There are hundreds of miles of designated trails that are easily accessible from the byway for those who are interested in getting out of their vehicles and enjoying the backcountry. Although the byway can be biked from end to end, stretches of the route require careful and cautious travel.



Camping

Nine Forest Service Campgrounds are located along the Montana portions of the Highway from 5 miles south of Red Lodge to Cooke City. Gallatin National Forest in the west offers 3: Chief Joseph, Colter and Soda Butte. Custer National Forest in the east offers 6: Sheridan, Rattin, Parkside, Limber Pine, Greenough Lake, and "M-K." Most of these Forest Service camps have parking spurs, tables, fire rings, and vault toilets ("M-K" may not have all services.) The lower elevation campgrounds are open by Memorial Day Weekend; whereas, the camps near Beartooth and Island Lakes may not be open until mid to late June, depending upon snow conditions. Full service RV campgrounds are available near Red Lodge.



Food

Red Lodge, Cooke City and Silver Gate offer a variety of dining and food services.



Gasoline

Red Lodge, Cooke City and Silver Gate offer gasoline and service stations.



Lodging

Red Lodge and Cooke City in Montana offer lodging services. Travelers should also contact Yellowstone Country, (800) 736-5276, for additional lodging reservation needs.



Phone

Public phones are available along this byway.



Retail

The neighboring communities of Red Lodge, Silver Gate and Cooke City offer a wide variety of businesses and vendors with many shopping opportunities.



Restrooms

Rock Creek Vista Point, 20 miles south of Red Lodge is a Montana Dept. of Transportation Rest Area. It has several overlooks, a large parking lot and restroom facilities.



Information

There is an authoritative information center along this byway.

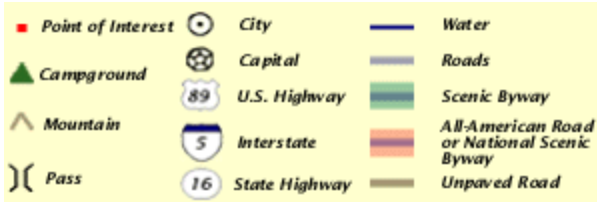
Special Considerations

Alpine climate is rigorous, and severe weather conditions can occur any month of the year. For example, during the summer temperatures range from the 70s on sunny days to below freezing during sudden snowstorms.

Restrictions

The Montana portions of the byway are generally open seasonally from Memorial Day weekend to mid-October depending on snowfall. To check road conditions and opening and closing dates travelers should call the Red Lodge Chamber of Commerce at 406-446-1718. The road is normally plowed by Memorial Day, but closures are common through June due to spring snow storms. From the opening near Memorial Day, the road is seldom closed more than one day to remove the snow. It is not uncommon to experience blizzard type conditions both in the spring and the fall, especially at higher elevations. When these events occur, travel is slowed considerably or the highway is closed until it can be reopened by maintenance crews.

Map and Directions



Driving Directions

Montana's portion of the Beartooth Scenic Byway, U.S. Highway 212, is comprised of two segments, reached by continuing on the same route through Wyoming. The western section travels through the Gallatin National Forest, starting between Red Lodge and Gardiner, just north of Yellowstone National Park, and ending at the state line. The eastern section resumes about 40 miles later at the state line and travels through the Custer National Forest to end at Red Lodge, Montana.

Places to Visit

Gallatin National Forest, MT

The Gallatin National Forest is the most visited national forest in the Northern Rockies, summer and winter.

To directions: The byway runs through the Gardiner Ranger District section of the National Forest near Cooke City, Montana.

Rock Creek Canyon Campgrounds, MT

This is a complex of 4 National Forest Campgrounds, including Parkside, Limber Pine, Greenough Lake and M-K. All are fee sites except M-K.

To directions: Located at the end of the Byway, one mile off of the route.



Rock Creek Vista Point Rest Area, MT

A fully developed Rest Area that has interpretive panels portraying the history of the road and mining in the Rock Creek Valley and about alpine wildlife and ecosystems. There is a short hiking trail out on a ridge with an outstanding view.

To directions: Located about 45 miles from the beginning of the Byway.



Beartooth Lake and Campground, WY

This popular campground is situated on the edge of Beartooth Lake. Several hiking trails radiate from the campground. Spectacular fishing and boating are readily available.

To directions: Located 20 miles from the beginning of the Byway.

Location: On the edge of Beartooth Lake.



Clarks Fork Overlook, WY

From this point, the visitor can see the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone Canyon, Wyoming's only designated Wild & Scenic River. You can also see the aftermath of the 1988 Clover Mist Fire which was nearly 400,000 acres and originated in Yellowstone.

To directions: Located about 15 minutes from the start of the Byway.

Clarks Fork Trailhead, WY

This is a major trailhead facility for entrance into the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness. The site has a large parking lot, restrooms and modest picnicking amenities.

To directions: Located at the beginning of the Byway.



Clay Butte Lookout, WY

An old fire lookout, this site now affords panoramic vistas of dozens of mountains over 11,000 feet and the overall Beartooth Plateau. Inside the lookout, there are interpretation displays of the 1988 wildfires.

To directions: Located about 20 minutes from the start of the Byway.



Crazy Creek Cascade, WY

A small pull out on the east side of the road for the Crazy Lakes Trail also doubles for parking to view this impressive cascade of Crazy Creek. Picnicking and camping facilities are directly across the highway at Crazy Creek Campground.

To directions: Located about 10 minutes from the start of the Byway.



East Summit Overlook, WY

Here the visitor will take in spectacular views of the Bear's Tooth, from which the road derives its name, the Rock Creek Valley and the Hellroaring Plateau across the expansive valley.

To directions: Located about 35 miles from the beginning of the Byway.

Gardner Lake Overlook, WY

Here the visitor can see how glaciers formed the basins and lakes of the Beartooth Plateau. Visitors will on most early summer days also see backcountry skiers testing their skills on the glaciers.

To directions: Located about 35 miles from the start of the Byway.

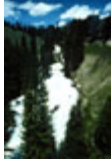
Location: Shoshone National Forest, WY

Island Lake Campground, WY

Fishing, boating and camping are popular activities. Several trails lead to other high mountain lakes and into the Absaroka- Beartooth Wilderness.

To directions: Located 23 miles from the beginning of the Byway.

Location: Clark Fork Ranger District



Lake Creek Falls, WY

A short, 200-yard hike will take you over the falls on Lake Creek on a foot bridge constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps.

To directions: Located about 15 minutes from the start of the Byway.

Long Lake Turnout, WY

Day use activities such as fishing and hiking. The parking area is within 150 feet of the lake.

To directions: Located about 25 miles from the start of the Byway.



Pilot and Index Peaks Overlook, WY

This overlook provides a high vantage point that affords great views into Montana and the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness Area and into the Clarks Fork Valley. As its name indicates, it is an excellent vantage point to see Pilot and Index Peaks.

To directions: Located about 20 minutes from the start of the Byway.



West Summit Overlook, WY

360 views of the mountains and the Beartooth Plateau are available as the visitor also experiences the harsh conditions to which plant and animal life must cling during the brief summer season.

To directions: Located 30 miles from the start of the Byway.

Location: Shoshone National Forest, WY