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## **Take A Vacation in Your Own Montana Backyard**

*Governor Schweitzer Chooses National Tourism Week to Urge Residents to Get Out and Explore Their Home State*

(HELENA) – Travelers from around the USA – and all over the globe – travel to Montana each year to enjoy their vacations. With all of our state’s world-class scenic beauty, charming towns, outdoor recreation, western history, cultural hotspots and one-of-a-kind destinations, it is no wonder tourism has become one of Montana’s most vital economic drivers.

Nevertheless, many Montanans readily acknowledge not having scratched the surface in exploring their own Big Sky backyard. In the spirit of National Tourism Week - that runs from May 9<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> – Governor Brian Schweitzer issued a challenge to all Montanans to get out and experience a new corner of our state this coming year.

“We are so blessed to be able to live, work and play in such a beautiful and diverse state. Make it a priority this summer to get to know our Montana a little better. Travel our backroads, take in our national parks and along the way, meet our friendly neighbors,” said Governor Schweitzer.

“With lower gas prices and vibrant main streets to discover,” said Montana Department of Commerce Director, Anthony Preite. “Be sure to put a Montana road trip on your itinerary in the next few months. You never know what you might discover just a car ride away.”

In these economically challenging times, opting for a vacation a little closer to home makes more sense than ever. With the vast range of authentic, off-the-beaten-path destinations that exist all over Montana, you could spend a lifetime traveling the back roads of our Treasure State. Take a cue from all those national and international visitors; they’re onto something big. Montana – Take a vacation in your own backyard.

Here is a list of ten prime Montana destinations for you to put on your travel agenda.

**1. Glacier National Park:** Known as “The Crown of the Continent,” Glacier National Park and the surrounding region offer some of the most scenic beauty in the lower-48. Between now and early July, savvy Montanan’s can tap into the Park’s “secret season” before the official summer season begins. Similarly, post-Labor Day offers another prime window for in-the-know locals to experience Glacier’s abundant elbowroom. [www.nps.gov/glac](http://www.nps.gov/glac)

**2. Beartooth Highway:** Wind your way up this highway to heaven – from Red Lodge to Cooke City – and see why esteemed travel journalist, Charles Kurault, called it “America’s most beautiful highway.” Immerse yourself in this 45-mile stretch of outdoor recreation bliss: hike, fish, camp, bike, backpack or simply let the landscape recharge your batteries. Generally open as of Memorial Day weekend, don’t forget your skis if you head over the pass in June, as the backcountry skiing can be excellent. [Beartooth Scenic Byway](#)

**3. Dinosaur Trail:** Did you know that our state has yielded some of the world’s most significant paleo discoveries? Visit all 15 stops spread across Montana’s Dinosaur Trail and be sure to bring along your new Prehistoric Passport. Prizes are awarded to those that receive stamps from all the various museums and digs. [www.mtdinotrail.org](http://www.mtdinotrail.org)

**4. Miles City Bucking Horse Sale:** Fast approaching, this spirited western event determines “the horse that can’t be rode” and “the cowboy that can’t be thrown”. Celebrating its 59<sup>th</sup> year, this classic gathering takes place the weekend of May 14<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> and offers everything from mutton bustin’ (new for ’09) to wild horse racing to, of course the event’s signature bucking horse sale. [www.buckinghorsesale.com](http://www.buckinghorsesale.com)

**5. Whitewater Rafting on the Alberton Gorge:** With the way the snowpack has been stacking up this spring, the Alberton Gorge is poised to go off over the next few months. Located 30-minutes west of Missoula on the Clark Fork River, Alberton Gorge offers exciting whitewater thrills in a beautiful river setting. Want an alternative to rafting? Try river boarding! [River Adventure](#)

**6. National Folk Festival:** One of the country’s largest and most prestigious celebrations of the arts, the 71<sup>st</sup> Annual National Folk Festival Comes to Butte July 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>. This FREE, three-day event celebrates the roots, richness and variety of American culture. This “moveable feast of deeply traditional folk arts” offers music, dance, traditional craft, storytelling, food and more. [www.nationalfolkfestival.com](http://www.nationalfolkfestival.com)

**7. Fort Peck Lake:** With a shoreline longer than the entire California Coast, Fort Peck Lake is a favorite of anglers seeking trophy walleye, northern pike or even pre-historic paddlefish. For non-anglers, be sure to check out Montana’s own life size dinosaur “Peck’s Rex” at the Fort Peck Interpretive Center. [Fort Peck Lake Reservoir and Recreation Area](#)

**8. Virginia and Nevada City:** Get in touch with your inner-outlaw and take in one of Montana’s finest historical treasures. Explore the boardwalks and back streets of this authentically preserved frontier town. Be sure to catch one of their Living History weekends which are held Memorial Day through Labor Day. [www.virginiacitymt.com](http://www.virginiacitymt.com)

**9. Little Bighorn Battlefield:** Visit the site of Montana's most famous battle between Custer's cavalry and Sitting Bull's warriors. Observe a landscape that has changed little over the past century. [www.nps.gov/libi](http://www.nps.gov/libi)

**10. C.M. Russell Museum:** One of Montana's greatest artists, you'll find a complete range of Charles M. Russell's work at this fine museum located in Great Falls. Part entertainment, part history exhibit, the C.M. Russell museum also showcases other prominent Montana artists like Evelyn Cameron in their changing exhibitions.

[www.cmrussell.org/](http://www.cmrussell.org/)

Tourism and recreation is one of Montana's leading industries. In 2008, 10 million people visited Montana spending \$3 billion during their stay. Over 42,000 jobs are directly and indirectly supported by nonresident travel, resulting in over \$1 billion in total personal and proprietors' income for Montana residents.

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