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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 - which runs from May 8<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> – Governor Brian Schweitzer issues a challenge to all Montanans to get out and experience a new corner of our state this coming year.

“Montana’s spectacular beauty, abundance of recreational and cultural activities and kind, friendly neighbors are gifts to all of us living within her borders. Make it a priority this year to take time to discover and appreciate Montana’s treasures,” said Governor Schweitzer.

“In the current economy, many folks are opting for a vacation a little closer to home,” said Anthony Preite, Director of the Montana Department of Commerce. “With just some time and a roadmap, Montana’s appealing main streets and captivating back roads are just a short drive away.”

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. If you are looking for inspiration on where to go and what to do, check out the adventures submitted by Montanans, as well as our visitors, on [GetLostMT.com](http://GetLostMT.com). Then be sure to share your own story for a chance to win a 7-day Montana vacation or an Apple iPad.

To get you started, here is a list of ten prime Montana destinations for you to put on your travel agenda.

**1. Glacier National Park:** Celebrating its Centennial anniversary this summer, Glacier National Park will offer many extra commemorative activities like special tours, photo exhibits, lectures and events. Between now and early July, savvy Montanans 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. [Glacier National Park](#)

**2. National Folk Festival:** In its third and final year in Butte, Montana, the 72<sup>nd</sup> Annual National Folk Festival happens July 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>. One of the country's largest and most prestigious celebrations of the arts, 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. [72<sup>nd</sup> National Folk Festival](#)

**3. Paddling the White Cliffs:** You can trace Lewis & Clark's fabled voyage by canoe through the White Cliffs rising up from the Missouri River. Take your pick of guided or self-guided trips to navigate specific sections (or all) of the 149-mile stretch of the Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River. The area offers non-paddle adventure as well—hiking the side trails, fly fishing and camping. [Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument](#)

**4. The Annual Crow Fair Celebration:** Explore native culture on the reservation, considered the largest modern day American Indian encampment in the Nation. See the "Teepee Capital of the World," cheer on the INFR sanctioned All-Indian rodeo, experience the daily parade showcasing each family's best bead work, buckskin and leather work as well as the evening pow-wow representing many Tribes and their different dance styles. The Apsálooke Nation invites you to share in their culture August 18<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup>. [Crow Fair and Rodeo](#)

**5. Makoshika State Park:** Explore Montana's own rugged "badlands" which offers a window to 65 million years ago when the Rocky Mountains were rising in the west. Makoshika is Montana's largest state park at over 11,000 acres and offers a landscape incomparable to any other you'd see in Montana with its fascinating buttes, spires and hoodoos. [Makoshika State Park](#)

**6. Birding Trails:** You can undoubtedly tick a few "must-sees" off your list on the birding trails throughout the state. A few enticing bird facts include: we have the largest population of trumpeter swans in the lower 48 states; Montana claims the spot where more golden eagles have been seen in a single day than anywhere else in the country; and at the Kootenai River it is possible to see up to 175 bald eagles on a single fall day. [Montana's Birding Trails](#)

**7. Fort Peck:** 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. Finish up the day by catching a performance at the Fort Peck Summer Theater. [Fort Peck Lake Reservoir and Recreation Area](#) [Fort Peck Summer Theater](#) [Fort Peck Interpretive Center](#)

**8. Summer Workshops, Helena Institute:** Why not combine a little learning with your travels? Giving you the structure and inspiration you need to set out on a new experience, the Helena Institute takes the classroom to the mountains, streams, kitchen, trails, potter's kiln, fireside, barn and many places in between. The Institute provides one-to-five-day courses designed to inspire, thrill and fascinate. Learn a new hobby or perfect a craft in courses like Get Hooked in Montana, Knitting for the Joy of It and Keeping the Harvest. [The Helena Institute](#)

**9. 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 Prehistoric Passport. Prizes are awarded to those that receive stamps from all the various museums and digs. [The Montana Dinosaur Trail](#)

**10. Beartooth Highway:** Wind your way up this highway to heaven and gateway to Yellowstone National Park– 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. [Beartooth Scenic Byway](#)

Tourism and recreation is one of Montana's leading industries. Annually, approximately 10 million people visit Montana and spend \$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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