

The Native American Vacation

Big Hole National Battlefield

The Big Hole National Battlefield is a memorial to the brave men and women who fought and died here in August of 1877. The battle was one of the many the Nez Perce fought with the U.S. Cavalry on their epic flight from Idaho to Canada. The historic site features a visitor center with interpretive video and a museum with photographs, artifacts and interpretive displays. You can also take a self-guided tour of the battlefield and visit the deeply moving tipi memorial along the Big Hole River. Every August, a commemoration of the battle is held, featuring ceremonies, demonstrations, traditional Nez Perce music and interpretive discussions with park rangers.

Take I-15S to exit 102/hwy43. Take hwy 43 through Wisdom and on to the Big Hole National Battlefield.

Beaverhead Rock Overlook

For generations of Shoshones, Beaverhead Rock served as an important landmark of tribal summer grounds to the west, in what is now known as the Big Hole Valley. Sacagawea, the teenage Indian girl who guided Lewis and Clark through this region, knew the area well from her childhood; sure enough, it was near here that the expedition first connected with the Lemhi Shoshones in 1805. Visitors today can see this landmark, which literally looks like a beaver's head at waterline, between Dillon and Twin Bridges, off state Route 41. A pullout with N interpretive sign marks the signature vantage point. Take hwy. 69 S to Whitehall. Turn south on hwy. 55 to hwy way 41 and continue to the Beaverhead Rock Overlook.

Camp Fortunate

After passing Beaverhead, the Corp of Discovery followed the river south where they met the Shoshone. There, Sacagawea recognized her brother, Chief Cameahwait, and through her translations horses were obtained for the trip west through the Bitterroot Mountains to the Columbia River. Today, travelers can walk in their footsteps visiting Lewis & Clark Memorial, Camp Fortunate Overlook and Cameahwait Campground.

Continue south on hwy 41 from the Beaverhead Rock Overlook to I-15 S to the Clark Canyon Dam and Recreation Area, exit 43.

Madison Buffalo Jump

Situated on the edge of a broad valley carved by the Madison River, this high limestone sliff was used by Native Americans for 2,000 years – ending as recently as 200 years ago. Native people stampeded vast herds of bison off this massive semicircular cliff, using them for food, clothing, shelter and provisions.

“Runners,” highly skilled young men trained for speed and endurance, wore buffalo, antelope or wolf skins to lure bison to the “pishkun” or cliff. The buffalo jump was often

the key to existence of native peoples. Although the introduction of horses led to the abandonment of this jump sometime after 1700, the rugged outcropping now serves as an inspiring monument to the region's early inhabitants.

Take hwy. 69 south from Boulder Hot Springs to I-90 (turn left at the flashing red light). Take I-90 E to exit 283 toward Logan. Turn right onto Buffalo Jump Road. Turn left to stay on Buffalo Jump Road. The Buffalo Jump will be on the left.

North American Indian Alliance Pow Wow

Once a tribal tradition largely isolated from outside cultures, modern-day powwow provide a powerful means for native and non-native people alike to experience American Indian culture at its richest. The North American Indian Alliance Pow Wow offers participants and visitors an unforgettable immersion in the colorful regalia, captivating dancing and moving music of the traditional powwow, while creating new bonds of community across tribes and cultures. Held annually since 1985, the three-day powwow takes place at the Butte Civic Center every September. Call 406-782-04461 for detailed schedule information.

Last Chance Community Pow Wow

While all powwows are family-oriented events, the Last Chance Community Pow Wow holds particular appeal because of its focus: honoring the children. The annual Helena Powwow draws participants from across Montana and the greater West for three days of dancing, singing, drumming and other activities. Held every September at the end of Native American Week at the Lewis & Clark County Fairgrounds, the Last Chance Community Pow Wow is a colorful reminder of the enduring traditions that sustain Montana's diverse Native American culture. For schedule information, call 406-439-5631.

Montana Historical Society Montana's Museum

Founded in 1865, the society houses art, artifacts, archives and photographs. The museum features the work of cowboy artist C.M. Russell, and American Indian and Montana history exhibits. Discover your roots at the Research Center and find a Montana treasure at the gift store. Located near the State Capitol at 225 Roberts in Helena.

From Boulder take I-15N to Helena. Take the Capitol exit and proceed west/left turn on Prospect Avenue. Take a left at the light on Roberts and proceed south 4 blocks to the stop sign at the corner of N. Roberts and 6th. Parking is available in the lot on your left.

Check their [website](#) for current hours and more information.

Gates of the Mountains Boat Ride

Meriwether Lewis named this spectacular canyon north of Helena. Steep limestone cliffs flanking the Missouri River create the illusion of a gate that seems to open as you travel toward these cliffs. Native American pictographs as well as the possibility of seeing a

variety of wildlife are features of the 120 minutes narrated boat tour. Check their [website](#) for a boat tour schedule and ticket information.