

THE GREAT AMERICAN ROAD TRIP IN BILLINGS

A GETAWAY FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY



Where shadows of the towering Rimrocks meet the mystic waters of the Yellowstone River, Billings serves as Montana's trailhead for whatever awesome adventures visitors seek under big skies. Billings' Great American Road Trip treats families (including the four-legged members) to an opportunity shut off the electronic devices and connect with one another exploring some of the West's most iconic locales in and around Billings - The Trailhead of Awesome.

There's no one best way to explore a city with as much to offer as Billings, so the destination simply invites visitors to forge their own path toward a memorable visit. But here is a sample itinerary to help get you started planning your next Great American Road Trip.

DAY 1:

Upon your arrival in Billings, stop for lunch at **Montana Brewing Company** to fuel up. Montana Brewing Company opened in 1994 and is the state's first brew pub, offering a full menu of appetizers, sandwiches and flatbreads (or pizza, as the kids will call it), and has everything the family needs to fill up for the day ahead. Montana Brewing Company is also one of six breweries along the **Billings Brew Trail**, Montana's only walkable beer trail, which also boasts two distilleries and a cider mill, just in case mom and dad are looking for a few places to sneak in some adult libations.

Next up, begin exploring the iconic Montana landscape at the many parks and trails in Billings. The stretch of trail along the Rimrocks - sandstone bluffs estimated to be at least 70 million years old - is a must-see and perfect for gaining a bird's eye vantage of the surrounding territory of mountain ranges, plains and the iconic Yellowstone River, the last free-flowing river in the lower 48 states. For some of the best views of the surrounding region and to learn about native Montana vegetation, explore the **Four Dances Recreation Area** atop the Rimrocks, an area teeming with sagebrush, grassland, cottonwood riparian and ponderosa pine in the rocky outcrop areas near the river cliffs.

Or, rent some bikes if you didn't bring your own and explore the trails adjacent to the Yellowstone River at **Two Moon Park**, which are perfect for leisurely bike rides while taking in the foliage and wildlife. Two Moon Park borders the Yellowstone River on the south and a steep, forested bluff to the north. On the downstream end of the park, discover the famous Weeping Wall, which seeps natural spring and mantles the cliffside with sheaths of ice in the winter. Now everyone can go back to their friends at home and tell them all about the "crying wall" you visited!

For dinner, check out **Ciao Mambo** and enjoy "mountain Italian" cuisine amid a happening family ambiance. Sample delicious entrees like Cozze E Salsiccia, which is steamed mussels, sausage and peppers in a sauce, along with the classic and simple linguini and meatballs for the pickier eaters in the family. Ciao Mambo also serves 12 different kinds of pizza including the traditional varieties in addition to some with a unique twist like Pizza Volpetti, which is topped with roasted red potatoes, mozzarella, crispy pancetta and cream sauce. An extensive wine menu is sure to include the perfect complement to the adults' meals to help unwind after a day of family adventure.

Then, treat the family to a show and soak up some local culture at the historic **Alberta Bair Theater**. The Alberta Bair Theater has hosted the finest performers in every discipline of the performing arts, including classical and popular music, country music and jazz, opera, ballet, modern and ethnic dance, comedy, drama and musical theater. The rousing performances are sure to help create lasting memories. Check the theater's website for listings.



Or, head over to the **Art House Cinema at the Babcock Theater** to take in a classic film from your younger years. The theater has recently screened films like Batman (the Michael Keaton version), Spaceballs and Beverly Hills Cop, perfect to take the kids on a trip with you down memory lane. Constructed in 1907, the Babcock Theatre was once a venue for stage shows and boxing matches, and today the Babcock is now a venue showcasing films for the public and other private events like weddings and parties.



DAY 2:

Mom, let dad and the kids sleep in and sneak off to **LimberTree Studio**. Yoga your way to a refreshed you amid views of the Beartooth Mountains during a rooftop yoga class, or spend some time upside down in an aerial yoga course. If the rest of the family us up for it, LimberTree also offers courses for the kids so the whole family can enjoy yoga together.

Next, enjoy a classic, homemade breakfast just like Grammy Sophie used to make. Founder and owner Stacey Hettinger opened **Sophie's Kitchen**, serving made-in-house foods with the goal of treating Billings residents and visitors alike to the flavors and atmosphere of her grammy's warm, inviting kitchen. Fill up with breakfast staples like eggs, French toast, buttermilk pancakes, and sausage gravy and biscuits before heading out to play.

Saddle-up and explore Billings cowboy style with the whole gang! Family-owned and operated **Bitter Creek Outfitters** offers leisurely guided horseback tours on a 7,000-acre cattle ranch, including the area's distinctive Rimrocks, ponderosa pines and fields of wildflowers. In addition to the natural landscape, wildlife such as mule deer and wild turkeys are often visible during the journey. Bitter Creek Outfitters is a woman-owned business and has been featured on Travel Channel's Hotel Impossible and on the cover of Distinctly Montana Girl magazine.

Or, visit **Pictograph Cave State Park** and explore three ancient caves that showcase evidence of habitation from more than 2,000 years ago. A gentle 3/4-mile loop trail descends 45 feet providing access to three separate caves - the Pictograph, Middle and Ghost Caves. Along the trail, you'll encounter interpretative displays identifying and explaining the natural features, prehistoric paintings and vegetation found in the area.



No visit to Billings is complete without a stop to ZooMontana to mingle with the animals. ZooMontana is home to some 50 different animals including a red panda, grizzly bear, an amur tiger and as of 2020, a two-toed sloth. Winston, as the sloth is affectionately known, has been a star ever since his arrival at ZooMontana. You can learn more about him and the other animals at ZooMontana he's befriended through his personal Instagram account, [@sloth_zoomontana](https://www.instagram.com/sloth_zoomontana).

Make your way back to Downtown Billings and stop for lunch at **UberBrew**, which is another location along the Billings Brew Trail. The brewery offers a menu of upscale casual food like smoked wings, bison burgers, and fish and chips – something for everyone to enjoy.

Organized in 1953, the **Yellowstone County Museum** focuses on interpreting the natural history and diverse cultures of the Yellowstone Valley of Montana and the Northern Plains. But what will probably attract your attention is the museum's decade's old mascot, the taxidermied two-headed calf named Charlie and Russell, after Old West artist and Montanan Charles M. Russell. While the actual calf only lived a few hours, the unique figure lives on at the Yellowstone County Museum. The historic McCormick Cabin serves as the entrance to the museum, which showcases more than 15,000 artifacts representing the history of the region. In addition to several Native American artifacts from the region, the museum showcases cowboy and western items through exhibits exploring an 1890s saloon, antique firearms and a 1901 steam engine. And yes, plush versions of Charlie and Russell are available for purchase in the gift shop.

Along with the Yellowstone, the Stillwater and Bighorn Rivers are among Montana's premier flyfishing waters and a perfect venue to try something new as a family. Stop in at **East Rosebud Fly and Tackle** - a full-service retail fly shop and hub for all fly fishing related activity in the Billings area. They can get you fit with all the gear you need (as well as the necessary license) and point you to where the rainbow and brook trout live so you can begin exploring Montana's top cold water trout streams. For calmer waters, check out the 64-acre reservoir, **Lake Elmo State Park** - an urban playground for outdoor adventurers, complete with a dog park. Enjoy non-motorized watersports like stand-up paddle boarding, kayaking and windsurfing, or cast a line off of Roger's Pier. Recently the new Montana state record largemouth bass was caught in these waters, weighing in at 9.575 pounds.

Indulge in a filling dinner at **Stacked, A Montana Grill** for dinner. Visitors and residents alike continue to rave about the flavorful gourmet burgers, sandwiches, tacos and entrees on the menu like the Best Bite Burger - a World Food Championships Burger with goat cheese, bacon jam and siracha bourbon sauce. If you're up for a challenge, try the Howitzer Burger - one pound of beef, three layers of pepper jack cheese, bacon, BBQ brisket, smoked sausage, pickles, onion and house made whiskey glaze. Oh, and a side of crispy fries too.

Who wants ice cream? Grab a cone for dessert at **Big Dipper Ice Cream**, which has been featured on Good Morning America and has been selected as one of America's Best by Food and Wine Magazine. Along with traditional chocolate and vanilla, try some of the unique flavors like huckleberry, cardamon and white mint Oreo along with several seasonal flavors. There's so many to choose from, maybe the best idea is to just order a little of everything and share as a family.



DAY 3:

Wake up and warm up with some fresh baked cinnamon rolls at **Stella's Kitchen and Bakery**. For more than 40 years, Stella's has been a favorite among locals and visitors alike serving breakfast all day ranging from egg dishes to pancakes. And of course those delicious pastries.

Spend the morning exploring some of the most famous landmarks in Billings, including **Pompeys Pillar National Monument**, **Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument** and **Chief Plenty Coups State Park**. These areas are perfect for learning about Native American and Western history, including the famous Lewis and Clark Expedition.

And finally, make the spectacular drive to Yellowstone National Park along the famed **Beartooth Highway**. Less than an hour from Billings, the Beartooth Highway - one of the country's most dazzling drives according to Forbes - provides breathtaking vistas from start to finish, guiding roadtrippers through the most beautiful entrance into Yellowstone National Park - the nation's first national park. The highway meanders along some of the most extreme terrain in the world, with more than 20 mountain peaks reaching and stretching into big blue skies. The drive takes a few hours depending on how long you spend gazing out at the stunning, forever views. This is one road trip where you'll never hear "are we there yet?" echoing from the back seat.