

A GIRLFRIEND GETAWAY WEEKEND IN BILLINGS, MONTANA'S TRAILHEAD

Where shadows of the towering Rimrocks meet the mystic waters of the Yellowstone River, Billings serves as the trailhead for the perfect girlfriend getaway under big Montana skies. Billings seamlessly blends metropolitan amenities like spas and fine dining with rugged outdoor exploration that one expects from the region. Spend mornings hiking or biking along the more than 47 miles of trails weaving their way through the city and its wild western outskirts, then kick back and relax at one of the local spas or sample a few of the local craft beers and ciders along the Billings Brew Trail - Montana's only walkable beer trail.

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 getaway with the besties.

DAY 1:

Upon arriving in Billings, treat yourself to an indulgent lunch of comfort foods at **The Marble Table**. Along with lighter salads, soups and appetizers, the menu boasts a number of hearty sandwiches entrees to help you fuel up for the adventure ahead, like fried chicken, braised beef Bolognese, shrimp risotto and General Tso's cauliflower.

Next, stop by **Onyx Wellness Studio** and Spa for some relaxation after your travels to Billings. Onyx offers a full menu of holistic services ranging from massage to yoga and barre classes. Try something new with a visit to Onyx's halotherapy area and relax in a zero-gravity chair in a room with walls covered in Himalayan sea salt. The natural antibacterial particles of salt disperse in the air to aid in stimulating the body's internal process for cleansing the respiratory system, removing build-up of foreign particles that cause various respiratory ailments, and strengthening respiratory function.



Fancy a walk along a popular trail? One of the favorites among locals and visitors alike is the **Billings Brew Trail**, Montana's only walkable beer trail. Six breweries along with a cider mill and two distilleries dot the 1.5-mile trail that weaves a path through historic Downtown Billings and its many galleries, eateries and boutiques.

If you haven't filled up on the delicious foods served up by many of Billings' local breweries, head to the James Beard Award nominated **Walker's Grill**. Chef Nick Steen has crafted a skillful menu full of small plates like spicy cauliflower and pork belly tacos, as well as succulent entrees like coldwater prawns and apple-brined pork shanks. Walker's is no stranger to celebrity guests either, having served prominent people like poet Alan Ginsberg, actor Lou Gosset, Jr. and former president Bill Clinton.

Before turning in for the evening, take in a show at the historic **Alberta Bair Theater**. Created in 1987 with a dream of bringing the excitement of the performing arts to the people of the Northern Rockies and to enhance the quality of life in Billings, 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. Check their website for listings.

DAY 2:

Start the morning with some attitude made from scratch with breakfast at the **Sassy Biscuit Company**. Try the namesake cinnamon vanilla pressed shortcake, the Sassy, served with buttermilk gravy. The menu is full of sweet and savory shortcakes, griddle cakes and spoon cakes, along with a number of sandwiches and a la carte items.

By now, Billings' iconic landscape will have beckoned you to explore its every type of terrain. 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. For some of the best views, explore the **Four Dances Recreation Area** atop the Rimrocks.

While certain spots along the Rimrocks can be accessed by car or leisurely hikes, **Zimmerman Park**, **Acton Recreation Area** and **Phipps Park** all take the adventure up a notch, offering more challenging hiking options for those seeking a stronger rush of adrenaline among the sandstone formations.

Or, rent some bikes and check out an additional 7 miles of trails along with several parks adjacent to the Yellowstone River, including **Dover Park**, **Riverfront Park** and **Two Moon Park**, which are perfect for leisurely rides while taking in the foliage and wildlife.



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).

Begin to immerse yourself in Billings' art and culture seen with a visit to the **Yellowstone Art Museum**, where you can also grab lunch at **Raven's Café d'Art**. Chef Lyle's menu of creatively crafted sandwiches, salads and vegetarian fare is the prefect starter for your artistic exploration.

The Yellowstone Art Museum was founded in 1964 to focus on contemporary, avant-garde work originating in the northern Rockies region, and today collects art from all historic periods, emphasizing artists working in Montana and the American Northwest. The museum is home to the largest gathering of drawings, paintings, books and memorabilia of cowboy illustrator Will James, as well as works by famous regional artists like J.H. Sharp, Charles M. Russell and others. Exhibits frequently rotate so visitors should check out the museum's website to learn what is currently on display.

You can mosey a little further into Billings culture by saddling up and exploring Billings cowgirl style! 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.

For dinner, check out **Ciao Mambo** and enjoy "mountain Italian" cuisine amid a happening ambiance. Sample delicious entrees like Cozze E Salsiccia, which is steamed mussels, sausage and peppers in a sauce, along with the classic linguini and meatballs. 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 your meal.

Skip the traditional after-dinner sweets and stop by **Doc Harper's Tavern** for one of their famous dessert beverages. The menu includes a bevy of tasty drinks like the Birthday Cake, the Chocolatini and the Cookies 'n' Cream, along with fruity varieties like the Strawberry Shortcake and the Key Limetini. With so many tempting options, feel free to have a few!



DAY 3:

Bernie's Diner offers the perfect cure if you might have overindulged at Doc Harper's the night before. Located in **the Northern Hotel**, Bernie's serves upscale renditions of classic diner favorites like eggs benedict, kobe beef and eggs and hearty breakfast skillet along with sweet treats like banana-stuffed French toast and Belgian waffles.

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.

Before departing, be sure to check out some of the shops, boutiques and galleries in **Downtown Billings** to take home some memories. Explore specialty boutiques like SOMETHINGchic, Cricket Clothing, Liberty & Vine and Aspinwall, all set in the historic downtown area.

Harry Koyama Fine Art is the studio/gallery of Montana native Harry Koyama and a must-see for downtown visitors. A full-time painter, Koyama concentrates on immortalizing subjects of the American West, including of western wildlife, Native American subjects and local landscapes. His work demonstrates his passion for impressionism to create dramatic artwork with the use of the painting knife and a bold color scheme.