

THREE AWESOME DAYS FOR DUDES 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 getaway for guys 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 wash it all down with a pint or two on the Billings Brewery Trail - Montana's only walkable beer trail. Or, take the vertical route to the 70-million-year-old peak of the Rimrocks then reminisce about the experience over a mouthwatering steak dinner.

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 boys.

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. In addition to a stocked bar and craft beers, a full menu of appetizers, sandwiches and flatbreads has everything your group needs to fill up for the days ahead.

You probably didn't visit Billings just to eat and drink. 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. The trail to Four Dances Recreation Area features steep drop-offs of up to 500 feet in some locations that give an added sense of adventure.



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 sandstone formations, minor badlands and steep drainages. About a third of the trails in these parks are rated “difficult” treating hikers and mountain bikers to climbs and descents of hundreds of feet over challenging terrain.

There are many leisurely trails in Billings as well, but 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. There are many paths visitors can forge through the town to hit all the stops along the Billings Brew Trail, but perhaps the easiest is to keep the compass stowed away in your pack and just follow the loop.

If you still have an appetite, head on over to **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.



DAY 2:

Bernie's Diner offers the perfect cure if you might have overindulged along the Billings Brew Trail 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.

Having already explored some of the Billings terrain by foot, your next move is to check out some of the magnificent waterways in the region. The Stillwater River, which begins in the Beartooth-Absaroka wilderness and flows into the Yellowstone, is a great site for exhilarating water sports. **Adventure Whitewater**, featured on ESPN, offers guided trips down the Stillwater. The river follows a meandering path through a one-sided canyon with plenty of whitewater rapids along with views of Montana's abundant mountain peaks. Keep an eye open for some of the stunning wildlife including jumping trout, bear and deer that call this wild river region home.

Along with the Yellowstone, the Stillwater and Bighorn Rivers are among Montana's premier flyfishing waters. 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 direct you to the best spots to begin exploring Montana's top cold-water streams teeming with rainbow trout, brook trout and the occasional brown trout.

Don't worry if you didn't catch any "keepers" out of the river as there are plenty of places to grab a bite for lunch in Billings. You might have visited **UberBrew** while exploring the Billings Brew Trail, but along with being a great watering hole, UberBrew is a local hotspot for lunch too. The brewery offers a menu of upscale casual food like smoked wings, bison burgers, and fish and chips.

Spend the afternoon learning about the history of Billings and the Yellowstone River Valley region by exploring parks, monuments and museums in the area.

For a cave experience without the need for spelunking gear, visit **Pictograph Cave State Park** and explore three 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, visitors also will encounter interpretative displays identifying and explaining the natural features, prehistoric



Pompeys Pillar National Monument is a rock outcropping reaching 200 feet high and overlooking the Yellowstone River. Hundreds of markings, petroglyphs, and inscriptions left by visitors including William Clark of the famed Lewis and Clark Expedition have transformed this geologic phenomenon into a living journal of the American West. Today, in order to preserve this treasure, it is prohibited to add your own inscriptions, but feel free to take home a few pictures.

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. 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 and moments in time like the 1890 Ghost Dance (the world's largest collection of such objects), the museum showcases cowboy and western artifacts through exhibits exploring an 1890s saloon, antique firearms and a 1901 steam engine.

As evening arrives, indulge in a meal at **Buffalo Block Prime Steakhouse** in the historic Rex Hotel. Built in 1910, the Rex was a popular hangout for western legends like Will James, Buffalo Bill and Calamity Jane. Today, the hotel is the site of Buffalo Block, which serves delicious, mouthwatering steaks that are aged perfectly and served with your choice of sauce. In addition to steaks, Buffalo Block's menu features a nice variety of dishes, like the chef's double bone-in porkchop, diver scallops and burgers along with appetizers like crab cakes, wood-fired brie and escargot.

Head back to Northern Hotel where you'd had breakfast at Bernie's Diner for a nightcap at **TEN**. In addition to prohibition-inspired drinks like the Sidecar (cognac, Cointreau and lemon) and Corpse Reviver #2 (beefeater, Cointreau, absinthe and lemon) the drink menu includes seasonal cocktails and draught beers, many of which are brewed locally in Billings.



DAY 3:

Start the day off with 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.

Rent some bikes if you didn't bring your own and explore 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 bike rides while taking in the foliage and wildlife. Or head back to Zimmerman Park, Acton Recreation Area and Phipps Park to tackle some of the steeps you'd hiked on Day 1.

Before departing, be sure to spend some time cruising the **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.