

# Kootenai River Scenic Drive

*Ancient Land of the Kootenai*



4 Days/3 Nights

Gateway City: Kalispell, Montana



Envision sometime around 10,000 years ago when the glaciers were melting and Northwest Montana was becoming habitable. Native Americans began settling from both east and west. By this one stroke of geography, the culture of the Kootenai became a cross between the Plateau Indians and the Plains Indians. Men dressed in breechcloths and women in tunics made of antelope, deer, or buffalo hide. They lived in conical tepees, painted their garments, tents, and bodies in the manner of Great Plains tribes, and engaged in communal fishing, using great bark and dugout canoes like the Plateau people. In a tribe loosely divided into bands, each with their own leadership, there were no clans, classes, or secret societies. After acquiring horses, the Kootenai went further afield to engage in annual bison hunts, yet unfortunately, horses also enabled the tribe to engage in tribal warfare. The Kootenai deified the sun and like most other Native Americans, believed that a multitude of spirits pervades all things in nature. Many early explorers admired their clothing made from elegantly tanned hides and canoes constructed with exquisite workmanship. Since they knew every nook and cranny of the region, the tribe served as guides for the early explorers, with knowledge of the physical geography that was legendary. In fact, the roads and highways we travel today were originally the paths and trails that crisscrossed Kootenai territory, including the Kootenai River Scenic Drive. Enjoy the beautiful landscape as you explore this timeless place.

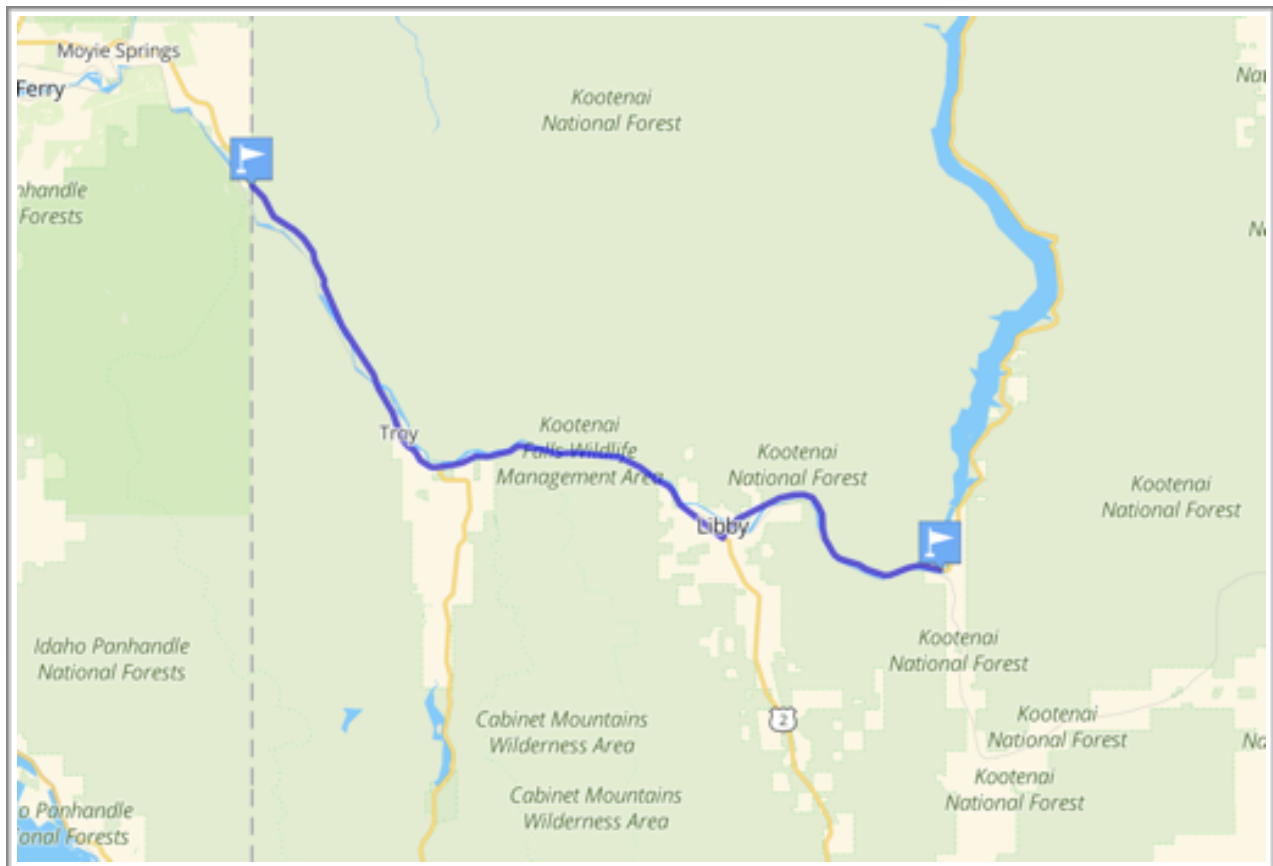


### **Touring the Byway**

We recommend starting your journey in Kalispell where you can get to know the city on the Downtown Historic District Walking tour and explore the Conrad Mansion Museum, and the Northwest Montana History Museum, while staying at the Kalispell Grand Hotel. From there, you'll be on your way to Eureka in far Northwest Montana, where you can explore the Tobacco Valley Historical Village and take the Riverwalk before moving on to Rexford. Then, you'll be traveling the Lake Koocanusa Scenic Byway on your way to Libby to reach the Kootenai River Scenic Drive.

After a night at the Venture Inn and exploring the Heritage Museum and the Libby Dam Visitor Center, you can take the Kootenai River Scenic Drive, which begins at the junction of Montana 37 and Forest Development Road 228, right past the Libby Dam, all the way to Troy and the Idaho border. After you visit the City of Troy Museum and Visitor Center and some lunch, you can travel to the Idaho border, where it will be best to backtrack the 16 miles to Troy and catch Montana 56, which is also the Bull River Scenic Drive. Otherwise, it's quite a long drive to your accommodations for the evening. At the end of the Bull River drive, drop

down to Thompson Falls, named after the first European to pass through the area in 1808. After a stay at the Rocky Point Ranch, you'll be on your way to the St. Regis-Paradise Scenic Byway and the Clark Fork Scenic Drive on the way to Missoula. Wrap up your trip in Missoula with the Downtown Missoula Historic and Art Walking Tour, and a visit to the Montana Natural History Center, the Montana Museum of Art and Culture, and the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula before taking the Riverfront Walking Trail while staying at the Blue Mountain Bed and Breakfast. From there, we wish you safe passage if you're traveling another Montana Scenic Drive, or a safe and pleasant journey home.



## DAY ONE



### **Kalispell**

Kalispell was platted by Charles Conrad when he realized the railroad was going to come through. Named the Salish word for “flat land” or prairie above the lake, Kalispell became a division point for the railroad between St. Paul, MN and Seattle. Soon after “the iron horse snorted through” the remaining buildings from a neighboring town gone bust were moved to Kalispell on log rollers. The first brewery was established in 1894, and today local craft breweries produce more than 40 varieties of ales and lagers made with Montana-grown malts, hand-picked local hops, huckleberries, and Flathead cherries.

### **Downtown Historic District Walking Tour**

Take a walk past buildings from the 1890s and early 1900s including the Conrad Mansion, the Hockaday Museum of Art, Kalispell Grand Hotel, and the Northwest Montana History Museum. The tour includes Main Street and First Avenue East from Depot Park on Center Street, south to the 400 block. Near the tour route, St. Matthew’s Catholic Church, dating from 1910, remains the city’s most commanding Gothic landmark. 602 South Main Street, 406-752 678



### **Conrad Mansion Museum**

The residence of Charles Conrad sits proudly on three landscaped acres atop a bluff overlooking the valley. The shingle-style Norman building, a revivalist version of vernacular architecture in Normandy, France, is surrounded by large ever-blooming flower beds that provide constant color during the summer season, plus hedges, evergreens, and lawns.

330 Woodland Avenue, Kalispell, MT 55901, 406-755-2166, self-guided and docent led tours offer year around, May 15-Oct 15, docent led tours 11AM and 1PM. Adults \$20

### **Northwest Montana History Museum**

Housed in the restored Central School building, this museum features exhibits about history of the Northwest Montana region and Flathead Valley including artifacts, documents, and photographs that tell the story of Big Sky Country. In addition to permanent exhibits, rotating curated exhibits are presented throughout the year.

124 Second Avenue East, Kalispell, MT 55901, 406-756-8381, M-F 10AM-5PM, Sat 10AM-3PM, Adults \$5



### **Destination Distinctive Accommodations**

**Kalispell Grand Hotel** 100 Main Street, Kalispell, MT 59901, 406-755-8100

The Grand was one of the first hotels built on the frontier and the only one remaining in Kalispell. It hosted the well to do at double the going rate for running water, door locks, and wake-up calls.

### **Destination Distinctive Dining**

**Hops Downtown Grill** 121 South Main Street, Kalispell, MT 59901, 406-755-7687 Try the bison burger and other interesting tastes.

**The DeSoto Grill** 227 First Street West, Kalispell, MT 59901, 406-314-6095 Great food and great service.

### **Destination Distinctive Retail**

#### **Art Galleries**

**Montana Modern Fine Art** 127 South Main Street, 406-755-5321, **Sassafras Arts, Crafts**

**and Antiques** 120 South Main Street, 406-752-2433 and **Paint, Metal and Mud** 8 First Street East, Suite 104, 406-755-8886

**Western Outdoors** 48 South Main Street, Kalispell, MT, 59901, 406-756-5818

Featuring more than 2,500 boots and 1,500 hats.

**Bear Country Gallery** 4054 US Highway 93 South, Kalispell, MT 59901, 406-752-6735

**Flair Gifts and Cards** 123 Main Street, Kalispell, MT, 55901, 406-407-7210

## DAY TWO

### **Eureka**

Until the railroad pushed through the region, this area was home to the Kootenai tribe. In 1904, a longer and easier railroad route through the Tobacco Valley was constructed to replace the existing route, and Eureka was born. Today, it radiates the classic, rural Montana lifestyle. Highway 93 is better known as Main Street.



### **Kootenai National Forest**

The Kootenai National Forest here covers nearly all of the land in the region with thick forest landscape punctuated with striking cliffs, spires, river canyons, and the magnificent peaks of the Cabinet, Wilderness, and Whitefish Ranges. Over 191 species of birds have been recorded, along with elk, whitetail and mule deer, mountain goats and bighorn sheep, moose, black bears, mountain lions, grizzly bear, coyotes, weasels, mink, beaver, otter, squirrels, bobcats, lynx and other smaller mammals who roam the land. Fairy slipper orchids, cactus, columbine, violets, phlox and Indian paintbrush add some color.





### **Tobacco Valley Historical Village**

The village features nearly a dozen structures built between the 1880s and the 1920s including a general store, schoolhouse, library, church, two log cabins, a hand-hewn house, railway depot, caboose, and fire tower. Several of the buildings, rescued from the Libby Dam, are all filled with exhibits and artifacts from the founding of Eureka. The Fewkes General Store serves as a museum and depository for archival materials donated by organizations and residents of the Tobacco Valley.

4 Dewey Avenue, Eureka, MT 59917, 406-890-0625 Memorial Day-Labor Day, 1PM-5PM

### **Eureka Riverwalk**

A 2-mile loop trail that leaves the Historical Village area and continues southeast along the Tobacco River has natural and historical interpretive sites, exercise stations, and benches.

### **Destination Distinctive Dining**

**Front Porch Dewey Burger and Fish Company** 307 Dewey Avenue, Eureka, MT 59917, 406-297-1234 Great burgers and American choices.

**Café Jax** 207 Dewey Avenue, Eureka, MT 59917 Try the breakfast pancakes and other comfort food goodies.

### **Destination Distinctive Retail**

**Front Porch Trading Company** 307 Dewey Avenue, Eureka, MT 59917, 406-297-9090

**Mountain Gift Shop** 205 Dewey Avenue, Eureka, MT 59917, 406-297-2321

**Silver Fish Gallery** 301 Dewey Avenue, Eureka, MT 59917, 406-207-7660

## **Libby**

John Fisher and Stephen Allen first searched around Libby for minerals in the early 1860s and named the town for Allen's daughter Elizabeth (Libby). Their success on Libby Creek in 1867 attracted nearly 600 men to the mining camp. Fortunes varied, with some miners making as much as \$1.25 per pan while others made only two cents per pan. Most men left when winter came and by the 1870s, the camp was virtually deserted. Later when the Snowshoe lode was discovered in 1889 on Leigh Creek, the area was unprepared for a major find requiring the ore be shipped to Great Falls before the mine could be electrified.

## **The Heritage Museum**

This unique twelve-sided, 130-foot diameter log structure preserves artifacts from the region focusing on early settlement, mining, and logging, coupled with the Museum Cookhouse, Outdoor Pavilion, and Swamp Creek Community Hall. 34067 US Highway 2, Libby, MT 59923, 406-293-7521, May-Sept, M-Sat 10AM-5PM, Sun 1PM-5PM, Donations accepted

## **Libby Dam Visitor Center**

Take a tour of the Dam and take advantage of picnic sites, fishing, golf, the bookstore, and lake and river access.

17877 Montana Highway 37, Libby, MT 59923, 406-293-5577





**Destination Distinctive Accommodations**

**Venture Inn** 1015 West Ninth Street, Libby, MT 59923, 406-293-7711

Northwest Montana's finest place to stay, featuring a full-service restaurant, pool and hot tub, and unlimited outdoor recreation.

**Destination Distinctive Dining**

**The Black Board Bistro** 803 Mineral Avenue, Libby, MT 59923, 406-293-4505

Outstanding find in Northwest Montana.

**Cabinet Mountain Brewing Company** 206 Mineral Avenue, Libby, MT 59923, 406-293-2739 American pub with great food and lots of options.

**Destination Distinctive Retail**

**Zero uno Zero Robotics** 28132 Highway 2, Libby, MT 59923, 406-334-7319

Highlighting fabulous and under-represented artists from all around the country.

## DAY THREE

### **Troy**

Lying at 1828 feet above sea level, the lowest elevation in Montana, the first miners arrived here in 1886 stayed in a tent camp on the Kootenai River. Later that year the Keeler Lode Claim was discovered, creating a new mining district. The town, which did not begin in earnest until the railroad came through, was saved from a fire that raged through in 1901 by railroad hoses that soaked the buildings. Stop at the Troy Museum and Visitors' Center which features Troy-related historical items, conveniently located on Highway 2 as you enter town from the east. The wooden sign in front of the museum was carved entirely by chainsaw.  
629 East Missoula Avenue, Troy, MT 59335, 406-295-4540

### **Destination Distinctive Dining**

**Main Street Perk and Pub** 509 East Missoula Avenue, Troy, MT 59335, 406-295-7375

### **Bull River Valley Scenic Drive**

About 40 miles northwest of Thompson Falls, Montana 56 is the Bull River Valley Scenic Drive that meanders through the Kootenai National Forest. Striking cliffs, spires, canyons and magnificent peaks follow your drive along the Kootenai and Clark Fork Rivers. Here, there are There are 191 species of birds here, along with elk, whitetail and mule deer, mountain goats and bighorn sheep, moose, black bear, mountain lions, grizzly bears, coyotes, weasels, mink, beavers, otters, squirrels, bobcats, lynx, and other animals who roam the forest.





### **Ross Creek Giant Cedars Grove**

Visitors to Ross Creek often say the ancient forest growing in Montana since before Columbus set foot in America, rival the giant sequoias of northern California. Loggers who cut trees in the area were the first to protect the trees before a protected area was established in 1960. A nature trail follows the banks of Ross Creek, some of which is hidden beneath the rocky stream bed. The turnoff for the grove from Montana Highway 56 is about a half mile past the southern end of Bull Lake. A scenic pull off about two miles north on 56 offers a scenic view of the Cabinet Mountains and the roar of Ross Creek Falls.

## **Thompson Falls**

The Thompson Falls area was explored by David Thompson in 1809, who also founded the North West Fur Trading Company at Saleesh House just four years after Lewis and Clark passed through Montana. The lovely falls on the Clark Fork River provide the rest of the town's name. The railroad came through in 1881, followed by a gold rush two years later in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, that spurred growth from traffic on the Murray Trail to the mines. The Thompson Falls Dam was built atop the original falls in 1915.



## **Old Jail Museum**

This museum is located in the former old jail and sheriff's residence, which is adjacent to the Saleesh House of the North West Company. It preserves historical artifacts, images, maps and more, to celebrate the pioneers who explored, mapped, settled, and farmed this corner of Montana.

109 South Madison Street, Thompson Falls, MT 59873 406-827-4002, Memorial Day-Labor Day, Daily Noon-4PM

### **Destination Distinctive Dining**

**Minnie's Montana Café** 921 Main Street, Thompson Falls, MT 59873, 406-827-3747  
American Café with vegetarian, vegan, gluten free options, and comfort food.

### **Destination Distinctive Retail**

**Linda's Montana Gifts & Gallery** 913 Main Street, Thompson Falls, MT 59873,  
406-827-4383

**Sunflower Gallery** 301 Main Street, Thompson Falls, MT 59873 Located in one of the oldest homes in Thompson Falls, built in 1900.

### **Clark Fork Scenic Drive**

After you follow the St. Regis-Paradise Scenic Drive from Thompson Falls to St. Regis, you can take the Clark Fork Scenic Drive to Missoula. It's nearly 150 miles of scenic beauty as the river winds to the southeast. It all started 12,000 years ago when most of this region in Montana, Idaho, Washington and Oregon was covered with the icy floodwaters of Glacial Lake Missoula. When the water finally flowed out to the Pacific Ocean it left behind the rocks, peaks, and landscape we see today. The area is so intertwined that the Clark Fork River is considered the headwaters of the entire Columbia River Basin. It's an interesting journey from St. Regis to Alberton where the road and the river cross back and forth under Interstate 90, 17 times. Alberton is famous for its dramatic river gorge.





## **Missoula**

C. P. Higgins and Francis Worden opened a trading post on the Blackfoot River in 1869, that was followed by the arrival of the Mullan Road connecting Fort Benton with Walla Walla, Washington. Fort Missoula was opened in 1877 to protect the growing community. The arrival of the railroad in 1883, along with the Missoula Mercantile Company, made the city a trading center. The University of Montana opened in 1895. Missoula's location within a heavily forested area made logging the mainstay industry until the mid-1970s. Saws could be heard over two miles away on a clear summer night.





### **Destination Distinctive Accommodations**

**Blue Mountain Bed and Breakfast** 6980 Deadman Gulch Road, Missoula, MT 59804, 406-203-3187 The gardens here frame breathtaking views of the Bitterroot River. Elegant breakfasts go along with the Inn's lovely décor. Guest rooms have private baths with jetted tubs, air conditioning and amenities, plus Wifi.

### **Destination Distinctive Dining**

**Catalyst Café** 111 North Higgins Avenue, Missoula, MT, 59802, 406-542-1337  
American cuisine café.

**Scotty's Table** 131 South Higgins Avenue, Unit P3, Missoula, MT 59802, 406-549-2790 Fine dining in Missoula.

**Tamarack Brewing Company** 231 Front Street West, Missoula, MT 59802, 406-830-3113  
American pub and bar, vegetarian, and vegan options.

### **Destination Distinctive Retail**

#### **Missoula Art Galleries**

**The Artists' Shop** 127 North Higgins, Missoula, MT 59801, 406-543-6393  
Missoula's premiere co-op fine craft gallery. M-F 10AM-6PM, Sat-Sun 10AM-5PM

**Dana Gallery** 246 North Higgins Avenue, **Murphy-Jubb Fine Art** 210 North Higgins Avenue, Suite 300, **Radius Gallery** 114 East Main Street and **The Art Hang-up** 839 South Higgins Avenue

**Lake Missoula Tea Company** 136 East Broadway, Missoula, MT, 59801, 406-926-1038 Teas from around the world, including blends made in small batches.

**Hometana** 312 North Higgins Avenue, Missoula, MT 59801, 406-224-4166

**Ducrey Chocolate Maker** 311 East Front Street, Missoula, MT 59801, 406-218-7396

## DAY FOUR

### **Downtown Missoula Historic and Art Walking Tour**

Learn more about Missoula on the downtown walking tour, which has one of the largest collections of buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places in the country. Locations like the Atlantic Hotel and the Diner Café, with huge historic neon signs, that have long been repurposed, peacefully coexist with the 1910 Missoula County Courthouse and the 1909 Palace Hotel. The downtown partnership has funded over 20 works of public art, that appear along the tour.

### **Montana Natural History Center**

The Montana Natural History Center features displays of the flora and fauna, ecosystems, and geology in the state, including the Montana Ecosystem, The Magic Planet, a Naturalist Forest Station, Glacial Lake Missoula, Explore Fossils, Explore Geology, and the outdoor Nature Adventure Garden.

120 Hickory Street, Suite A, Missoula, MT 59801, 406-327-0405, T-F 9AM-5PM, Sat Noon-4PM, Adults \$4

### **Montana Museum of Art and Culture**

Located on the University of Montana campus, this museum now has 11,000 pieces including work by Rocky Mountain artists, historic European works, and collections from Southeast Asia, American Impressionists, contemporary Native American artists, ceramics, and public art sites across the campus. European masters include Rembrandt, Delacroix, Boucher, Piranesi, and Daumier, along with 20<sup>th</sup> century artists, Miro, Toulouse-Lautrec, Chagall, Dali, Picasso, Remington, Merritt Chase, and Andy Warhol.

Across from the Adams Center off East 6th Street. University of Montana Campus. 406-243-2019. Tu-Sat Noon-6PM. Free, donations accepted.



### **Historical Museum at Fort Missoula**

Fort Missoula was established by the US Army in 1877 to protect settlers in the region. Nearly 100 years later, the Historical Museum encompasses 32 acres with over 20 historic structures and a collection of nearly 50,000 artifacts.

3400 Captain Rawn Way, Missoula, MT 59804, 406-728-3476 M-Sat 10AM-5PM, Sun Noon-5PM

### **Riverfront Walking Trail**

The riverfront walking trail along the Clark Fork River takes you past McCormick Park, the Old Milwaukee Depot, John H. Toole Park, and other scenic and historic treasures in Missoula.