

# Pioneer Mountains Scenic Byway

*History Hidden Beneath Your Feet*



3 Days/2 Nights

Gateway City: Butte, Montana



Granite peaks topping 10,000 feet thrust skyward from a thick pine forest that cradles the Pioneer Mountains Scenic Byway as it gradually rises to 7,800 feet following a crystal-clear flowing river. The Pioneer Mountains are bounded on the west by this beautiful drive that meanders through heavy forest, giving way from time to time to broader meadows. Exploring here, you'll never guess what lies below. Over 70 million years ago, molten magma released aluminum, arsenic, cadmium, cinnabar, copper, gold, iron, lead, manganese, mercury, quartz, silver and zinc. When placer deposits (those that are panned from rivers) were exhausted, miners cut deep shafts, ultimately riddling the mountains with hundreds of miles of tunnels buried far below the surface. Between 1881 and 1900, 12,000 acres of lush pine forest were also stripped away to create 19 million bushels of charcoal to power the smelters. The forest has now been restored and the story of the region blends seamlessly with the scenic beauty, although in some places, you can still see remnants of small operations that scratched out a living with isolated veins of silver, lead, or zinc. Explore the ghost town of Coolidge, the abandoned Elkhorn mine, and search for quartz at Crystal Park. Near the end of the Byway, Bannack preserves over 60 structures from its mining roots. The ever present mountain peaks accompany you for the drive, as you follow the footsteps of the trappers, traders, mountain men, and miners, who trod this ground.

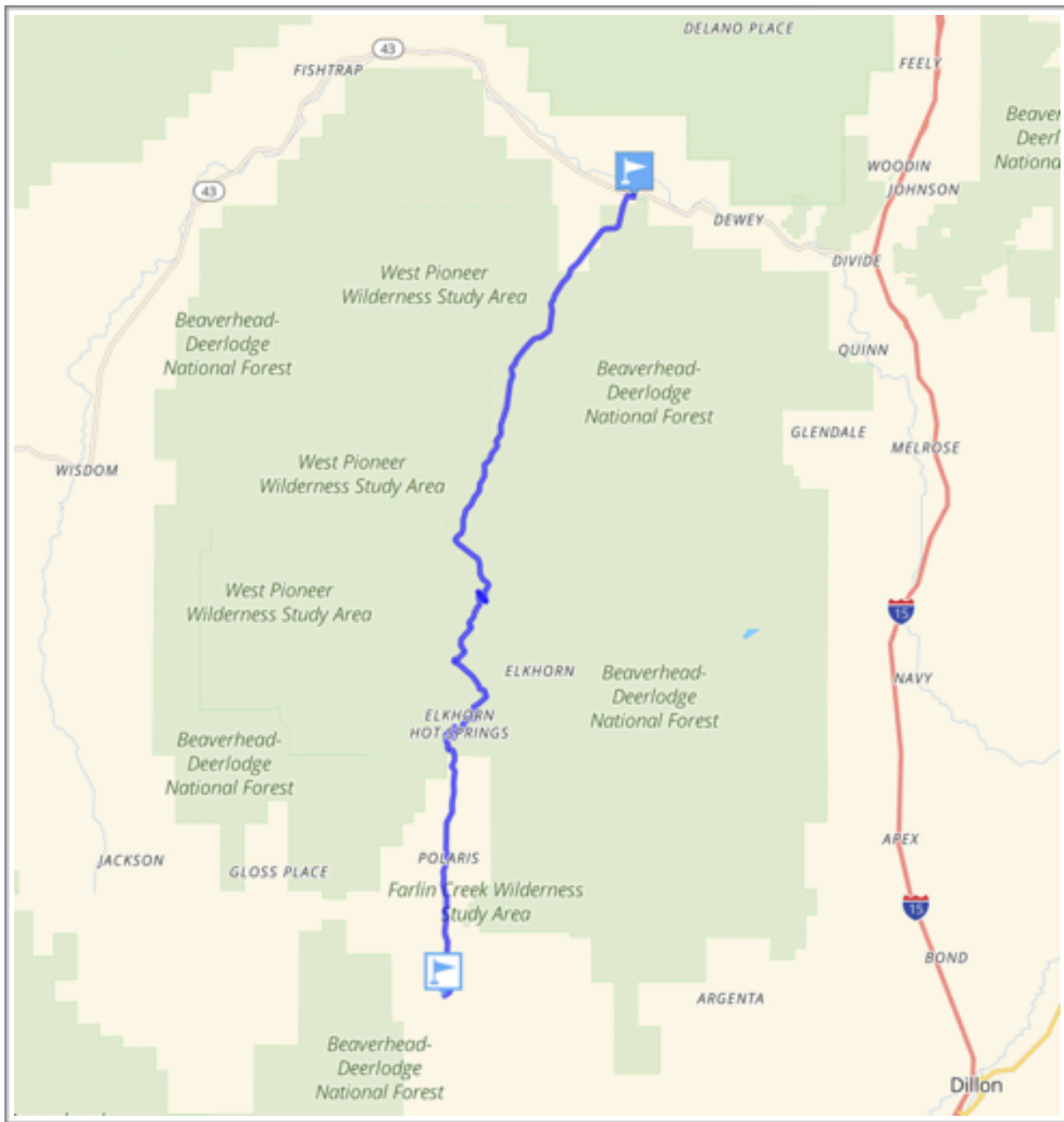


### **Touring the Byway**

We recommend starting your journey in Butte, traditionally the mining capital of Montana where over 200 mines riddled the ground beneath the city. You can learn about the city on the Butte Trolley Tour, visit the Carle Gallery, filled with works of art that depict Butte, the Clark Chateau, and the World Museum of Mining with 50 original structures from the mining camp, before a stay at the Copper King's Mansion. As you drive around Butte, from time to time you'll catch a glimpse of Our Lady of the Rockies, which sits atop the Continental Divide overlooking the city.

On Day Two, you'll travel over Homestake Pass, six miles south-southeast of Butte in the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, to the beginning of the Byway on Montana State Highway 43 in the town of Wise River. When you reach Crystal Park you can search for quartz crystals and from there, explore the now abandoned Elkhorn Mine and Coolidge Ghost Town, have lunch and/ or a soak at the

Elkhorn Hot Springs, and explore Bannack State Park, considered the best preserved Ghost Town in Montana. When you reach Dillon, you can learn more of the region's story at the Beaverhead County Museum and Clark's Lookout State Park before moving on to Virginia City and Nevada City. If you wish, you can stay overnight in a Ghost Town before wrapping back to Butte. From there, we wish you safe passage if you're traveling another Montana Scenic Drive, or a safe and pleasant journey home.



## DAY ONE



### **Butte**

Butte was once the largest city in Montana, and for a time, the largest between Chicago and San Francisco. It began as a mining camp for gold and silver until the massive demand for copper began in the 1890s. By the 1900s, copper mining was consolidated among the three Copper Kings: William A. Clark, Marcus Daly, and F. Augustus Heinze. A combination of their operations resulted in the Anaconda Copper Mining Company. Workers from all over the globe came to mine, creating a unique city with a hardscrabble place where anything was possible. The cultures of many ethnic groups can still be found in Butte, primarily in food like Cornish pasties, Slavic povitica, and Scandinavian lefse.

### **Butte Trolley Tour**

Experience Butte on a 2-hour trolley tour offered by the Butte-Silver Bow Chamber of Commerce. Local experts who narrate the city's rich and colorful history take you through the the National Historic Landmark District, home to Copper King Mansion, Dumas Brothel, World Museum of Mining, Berkeley Pit Viewing Stand, Mai Wah Museum, Clark Chateau, Montana Tech, and much, much more.

1000 George Street, Butte, MT 59701, 800-735-6814, Daily, Memorial Day-Labor Day, Adults \$20.

### **Carle Gallery**

The Carle Gallery is a tribute to John Carle whose murals and paintings depict Butte's historic buildings and people. In order to support local artists, the gallery has expanded to include the work of regional artists.

226 West Broadway Street, Butte, MT 59701, 406-723-3361, M, F, and Sat, 9AM-5PM, Tu, W, and Th, 9AM-7PM

### **Clark Chateau Museum and Gallery**

Built for the oldest son of the Copper King, Clark Chateau, features exhibits that span the history of Butte, its Copper Kings, opera singers, music schools, Senators, Fez Clubs and more, in addition to information about the influential families who lived in the residence over the years.

321 West Broadway Street, Butte, MT 59701 406-565-5600, Th-Sun, Noon-4PM, Adults \$7

### **World Museum of Mining**

The World Museum of Mining lets you experience a mining camp once known as Hell Roarin' Gulch. Over 50 exhibit buildings, countless artifacts, and 66 exhibits in the mine yard reveal the story of the Gulch and the Orphan Girl Mine. As you tour underground, you can almost see the blackened faces and hear the exhausted sighs of the miners who toiled each day.

155 Museum Way, Butte, MT 59701, 406-723-7211, Daily April 1-Oct 30, 9:30AM-5:30PM, Adults \$9, Underground Mine Tour, Adults \$21



### **Destination Distinctive Accommodations**

**Copper King Mansion** 219 West Granite Street, Butte, MT, 59701, 406-782-7580 Before checking into your accommodations, be sure to take a tour of the Copper Kings Mansion, which reveals the history of the 34-room Romanesque Revival Victorian residence. After law school, William Clark grubstaked a gold mine in Colorado before heading to Bannock in southern Montana to stake a claim. He decided he was better at helping miners manage their claims than being a miner, and bought a team to haul supplies to mining camps, recorded claims for miners, and made loans, which generated an income of \$17 million a month. In addition to serving as a US Senator, Clark owned newspapers, mines, sugar plantations, and oil wells, as well as the Clark Wire Company in New Jersey, and the Henry Bonnard Bronze Company in New York. He even financed the railroad through Montana and established a ranch in Nevada to help miners and railroad workers recover in the dry desert climate. To better negotiate when collecting European art, he learned French and German. A wing was added to the Corcoran Art Gallery in Washington, DC to house his collection.

### **Destination Distinctive Dining**

**Uptown Café** 47 East Broadway Street, Butte, MT 59701, 406-723-4735 White-tablecloth restaurant serving Continental cuisine at dinner and more relaxed fare for lunch.

**Casagranda's Steakhouse** 801 Utah Avenue, Butte, MT 59701, 406-723-4141 Varied fare, from steak to pasta to sushi, plus beer and wine, served in a warehouse built in 1900.

### **Destination Distinctive Retail**

**Butte Silver Bow Arts Foundation** 113 Hamilton Street, Butte, MT 59701, 406-479-4979

**Butte Copper Company** 2125 Harrison Avenue, Butte, MT 59701, 406-494-2070

## DAY TWO

### **Wise River**

Surrounded by a half-million acres of peaks, lakes, and rivers, in the Pioneer Mountains, the city offers some of Montana's most breathtaking scenery.

### **Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest**

At one point, the Beaverhead National Forest included all or parts of more than 15 mining districts: Bald Mountain, Ajax, Beaverhead, Bryant (Hecla), Calvert, Elkhorn, Lost Creek/Rock Creek, Polaris, Utopia, Norwegian Creek, upper and lower Hot Springs, Washington, Pony, Sheridan, Meadow Creek, and Tidal Wave. Lode mines discovered in the late 1880s produced from 1880 to 1907, while "free milling" mines contained free gold and enjoyed a greater longevity. Some were worked until 1942, when the US Government placed restrictions on mining during World War II. The forest has now been restored.

### **Crystal Park**

Search for the hexagonal six-sided prisms with a pointed face at each end, that are scattered through the decomposed granite on 220 acres reserved by the Forest Service for rockhounds. Most of the crystals found here are white, or gray, with some highly prized purple ones called amethyst.







### **Elkhorn Mine/Coolidge Ghost Town**

Prospectors flooded into the area when silver was discovered near a pair of elk horns in the Pioneer Mountains in 1872. Unlike other Montana mining towns that went bust, mining continued in the Elkhorn area until 1965. The Coolidge mining camp was formed in 1914 and supported the miners until 1950. Ultimately, the total production from the entire district rendered 1,184 ounces of gold, 208,593 ounces of silver, 383,580 pounds of copper, 857,679 pounds of lead, and 4,800 pounds of zinc. Before full operations were established, ore was hauled to Utah and sent to San Francisco for processing. After narrow gauge railroad tracks were laid, began moving in and by 1922 the town had telephone service, electricity and a post office. Most of the 350 residents had moved on by the time a dam failure wiped out most of the infrastructure 10 years later.

### **Elkhorn Hot Springs**

You can have lunch and/or a soak at the Elkhorn Hot Springs in pools that are 100% naturally heated by geothermal energy. The water flows fast enough that it does not need chemical treatment for daily use. Temperatures range from 92-102 degrees, and the indoor wet sauna heats up to 104-106 degrees.



### **Bannack State Park**

The now ghost town of Bannack was founded in 1862 when gold was discovered in Grasshopper Creek. It served as the first Territorial Capital of Montana beginning in 1864. From the late 1860's to the 1930's, Bannack's population fluctuated with mining fortunes. In the 1950s, when the gold had dwindled and most folks had moved on, Montana declared Bannack a State Park. Today, it features over 60 original structures from the 1800s, including the hotel, governor's mansion, Masonic Hall, and Methodist Church of the Territorial Capital.

4200 Bannock Road, Dillon, MT 59725, 406-834-3413, \$8 per vehicle

### **Dillon**

Dillon has served as the hub for extreme southwest Montana since Lewis and Clark passed through in 1805. In 1869, when settlers brought sheep into the area, it established the town as an agricultural center and when the railroad arrived in 1881, the town became a supply point for the Montana gold fields.



### **Destination Distinctive Accommodations**

**The Andrus Boutique Hotel** 33 South Idaho Street, Dillon, MT 59725, 800-337-3981  
It was the best hotel in Montana in 1917 and is again today. The Renaissance Revival Andrus is now outfitted with time-honored traditions blended with modern luxury. It is located within walking distance from art galleries, museums, dining, nightlife, shopping, and more. Enjoy the Donna Jones Rooftop Garden and a horse drawn carriage ride.

### **Destination Distinctive Dining**

**The Atlantic Street Mercantile** 435 South Atlantic Street, Dillon, MT 59725, 406-683-2051  
American café with vegetarian and vegan options.

**Beaverhead Brewery** 218 South Montana Street, Dillon, MT 59725, 406-693-6611 Great selection of beers and ales.

### **Destination Distinctive Retail**

**Atomic 79 Boots & Western Wear** 104 North Montana Street Dillon, MT 59725, 406-988-0221. M-F 10AM-6PM

**Tendoy Fine Art Gallery** 35 East Bannack Street, Dillon, MT 59725, 406-660-3007

**Mountain View Pottery** 34 North Idaho Street, Suite 1, Dillon, MT 59725, 406-925-9849

## DAY THREE

### **Clark's Lookout State Park**

This 8-acre park encompasses the hill overlooking the Beaverhead River where William Clark of the Lewis and Clark Expedition took three compass readings of distant landmarks in 1805.

950 Lovers Leap Road, Dillon, MT 59725 406-834-3413, \$5 per vehicle



### **Beaverhead County Museum**

The Beaverhead County Museum, which has been collecting local history for over 50 years, includes the log building complex where the museum is housed, an authentic homesteader's cabin, the first flush toilet outhouse in Dillon, mining and agriculture equipment, a Lewis and Clark diorama, a natural history exhibit, small theater, one room schoolhouse, and the 1909 Union Pacific Depot.

15 S Montana Street, Dillon, MT 59725, 406-683-5027, M-Sat 10AM-5PM

## **Virginia City and Nevada City**

As the story goes, in 1863, six prospectors camped along a small stream seeking to prospect in a place with rimrock. One dug the dirt and filled a pan while the other washed the pan in hopes of getting enough gold to buy tobacco. When the first pan turned up with \$2.40 of gold (nearly \$50 in today's dollars), they knew the gulch had great potential. When word spread of the discovery, miners covered the hillsides with tents, brush shelters and crude log cabins. The Varina Town Company platted Virginia City and supporters of the Confederacy intended to name the new town after Jefferson Davis' wife. However, the newly elected miners' court judge was an equally stubborn Unionist and when the time came to file the official documents, he submitted the name Virginia instead. The town was designated the new territorial capital in 1865, at a time when Alder Gulch held most of Montana's population. At its peak, 10,000 people flooded the area named "Fourteen-mile City" for the numerous settlements that lined the gulch.

## **Nevada City Old Town Museum and Music Hall**

Relive the excitement of the Gold Rush era at the outdoor museum in Nevada City, which houses one of the largest collections of Old West artifacts outside the Smithsonian, in 100 buildings that date from 1863 to the early 1900s. Exhibits and artifacts help you experience the culture and time of early Montana.





**Destination Distinctive Accommodations**

**Governor Meagher Cabin, Virginia City**

Rich in Virginia City history, this completely restored cabin, which sleeps 2, is located one block from the historic district. It has been completely refurbished with a very comfortable living room, a fully furnished kitchen, full bathroom and air conditioning.