

Lake has much to offer travelers and vacationers visiting northwest Montana. The trough for **Flathead Lake** (the largest natural fresh-water lake in the western U.S.) was carved by the massive Flathead Glacier as it descended from Canada around 10,000 years ago.

The excavated debris pushed ahead of the glacier became the Polson moraine, the lake's southern boundary and the present site of the city of Polson. When full, the lake is 27 miles long, 8 to 15 miles wide, and 370 feet deep at its deepest point in Yellow Bay.

Visitors can see the entire lake by car and portions of it by tour boat. Highway 35 runs the length of the lake's East Shore from east of Polson to Bigfork, passing by the Finley Point, Yellow Bay and Wayfarers units of **Flathead Lake State Park**. (Additional boating / fishing access available at Woods Bay.) The route affords spectacular views of the lake, the bordering Mission Mountain range and the cherry and apple orchards of the East Shore.

Traveling the West Shore, via Highway 93 between Polson and Somers, visitors can choose from the Big Arm and West Shore units of the state park, with additional lake access at Elmo and Lakeside.

The drive around Big Arm Bay includes the towns of Big Arm and Elmo, and gives visitors a good look at Wild Horse Island, the sixth unit of **Flathead Lake State Park**. In addition to wild horses, this 2,165 acre wilderness island is home to herds of bighorn sheep, mule and whitetail deer, black bear, waterfowl, and some 75 species of birds, including Bald Eagles.

Although there are private lots on the island, it has been part of the state park system since 1977 and offers a wild and pristine setting where no-trace, low-impact



The Flathead is truly a cosmopolitan river. It flows from a foreign country, Canada, past the Glacier National Park, gathering water from the Bob Marshall and Great Bear Wildernesses, passing through Flathead National Forest, many state lands, private lands, and the Kootenai Nation on its way to the Clark Fork. (photo courtesy Karen Nochols)

visiting is encouraged (overnight camping prohibited). The most popular launch point is Big Arm State Park, where access to the island is regulated.

Continuing north on Highway 93, visitors find the small community of Dayton, which boasts Montana's only winery and one of the lake's three yacht clubs.

Boaters enjoy the lake on everything from rafts and canoes to huge sailing yachts. Water-skiing, jet skiing and windsurfing are also popular activities, and several marinas offer gas, supplies and boat rentals. Fishing is permitted year-round, and the primary species taken are lake trout, yellow perch and Lake Superior Whitefish, with an occasional

cutthroat or kokanee salmon.

A Montana fishing license is required on the north half of the lake, with a tribal permit required on the southern half within the **Flathead Indian Reservation**.

For a leisurely cruise on the lake, take a ride on one of the lake's two tour boats.

FLORENCE

Its earlier settlers called **Florence** 'One Horse' for the little creek that drains through it from the Bitterroot Mountains. In 1880, the town was renamed **Florence** for the wife of A.B. Hammond. Mr. Hammond was instrumental in opening the Bitterroot Valley for lumbering, and brought the railroad to the Bitterroot to transport timber. He set up a sawmill in the center of one of the Bitterroot's best logging areas, and this site became the town of **Florence**, incorporated in 1888. There was a town to the north called Carlton, which merged with **Florence**, thus the school name Florence Carlton.

Around the turn of the century, **Florence** had a post office, railroad depot, hotel, Catholic and Disciple Churches, I.O.O.F. Hall, blacksmith shop and livery stable, school, several stores, a small creamery and, of course, saloons.

To learn more about **Florence**, contact the **Bitterroot Valley Chamber** at (406) 363-2400 or visit www.bitterrootvalleychamber.com

GLACIER NATIONAL PARK

Located approximately 140 miles north of Missoula. Park accessed from the west at West Glacier via U.S. Highway 2; from the east at St. Mary via U.S. Highway 89. Other entrances located at Many Glacier (from Babb); Two Medicine (near East Glacier via Hwy. 49); and Polebridge and Camas Creek, both via North Fork Road.

In 1910 President Taft signed a bill creating **Glacier National Park**. The park includes 1,600 sq. miles of spectacular glacier-carved mountain peaks, lakes and valleys straddling the Continental Divide in northern Montana.

Canada's Waterton Lakes National Park, adjacent to Glacier on the Canada / Montana border, had been established in 1895 (originally called Kootenay Lakes). In 1932 the Canadian Parliament and U.S. Congress "joined" the parks by creating Waterton/Glacier International Peace Park.

The first of its kind, the international park commemorates and celebrates the long history of peace and cooperation between the two nations with a natural beauty and abundance of wildlife oblivious to international borders.

Although **Glacier** has over 700 miles of hiking, horseback and cross-country skiing trails, many visitors familiarize themselves with the park by driving the breathtaking Going-to-the-Sun Road which bisects the park from West Glacier to St. Mary. (Going-to-the-Sun



Black Bear Cub (photo courtesy National Park Service)



Bear Grass looks like a grass, but really belongs to the lily family. It is about 4.5 feet tall. The flowers grow on a stalk that can be 6 feet tall with many small flowers. Each flower is creamy white, saucer shaped, and has a sweet aroma. The entire flower looks a little like fluffy, upside-down ice cream cone.
(photo courtesy Travel Montana, Donnie Sexton)

Road is generally open early June to mid-October; check with park personnel regarding vehicle size restrictions.) From west to east, the road passes Park Headquarters near West Glacier, then parallels the shore of Lake McDonald.

It climbs steadily, showcasing the sheer cliff known as the Garden Wall which is actually a stretch of the Continental Divide. The road passes the Divide at Logan Pass, a majestic viewpoint with a visitor center, exhibits, interpretive talks, guided tours, wildlife viewing and starting points for hikes to nearby attractions. From Logan Pass,

Going-to-the-Sun Road descends to St. Mary Lake, which is one of the most photographed features of the park. From here to the visitor center at St. Mary, the mountains give way to the sweeping plains of the Blackfoot Indian Reservation.

Accommodations in the park range from developed campgrounds (eight within Glacier) to hike-in chalets, semi-primitive and back country camping and several hotels.

Reservations for hotels should be made six months to a year in advance; developed campgrounds are first-come first-served and

are usually full by late morning. Lake cruises are available at Lake McDonald, St. Mary Lake and Waterton Lake. Take advantage of the many trails available in the two parks by asking park personnel about trail locations, length and difficulty.

In addition to the **Glacier Park Headquarters**, and visitor centers at Apgar, Logan Pass and St. Mary, there are ranger stations at Polebridge and Many Glacier. In Waterton, the Park Information Center is located at the Waterton Park Townsite near the Prince of Wales Hotel.

HAMILTON

In the middle of the Bitterroot Valley, in Ravalli County, is the county seat of **Hamilton**. **Hamilton** is home to over 4,000 people, and the immediate area around the town has somewhere over 12,000 people. Downtown **Hamilton** has several historic buildings with many unique shops and restaurants. Looking west on Main Street is a beautiful view of the mountains. Come visit our newly revitalized downtown. New streetscape, trees, and street lamps make way to enjoy the unique downtown shops. Highway 93, which goes all the way through town, also boasts unique shops, grocery stores, and gas stations.

Hamilton was not a pioneer village in the days it was founded. Instead, it was a planned town of wide streets and avenues, a complete economic center for an area of farms and stock ranches.

The history of **Hamilton** began when Marcus Daly, a great finance figure of the 1880 era in Butte and Anaconda mining development, made his way into the Bitterroot Valley seeking interests other than mining. About 1887, Daly bought up small saw mills west of the present site of **Hamilton** and almost overnight had established a lumber making industry on the bank of the Bitterroot River. Marcus Daly's next move was to bring two men from another state to plan and develop his dream town. They were James Hamilton and Robert O'Hara, who came from

Minnesota in 1890. Daly named **Hamilton** after James Hamilton. The town was incorporated in 1894, and Mr. O'Hara was named the first mayor. Daly's town had a bank, stores, school, and four churches – a ready-made **Hamilton!** To learn more about **Hamilton**, contact the **Bitterroot Valley Chamber** at (406) 363-2400 or visit www.bitterrootvalleychamber.com

HOT SPRINGS

Hot Springs, founded in 1910 and named for the local hot mineral springs that still bubble nearby, had its beginning during the time of the big buffalo herds. Here the "Big Medicine" waters once bubbled freely into the open, flowing up from the pit of a natural hot water spring. The steamy pool, created from the overflow, churned with volcanic mud; and the smell of sulphur was carried in the breezes, mixed with the spicy scent of wild sage. It was here that Indians constructed small log cabins in the hot water. In these improvised huts, these first settlers relaxed in the frothy water, breathed its steam and felt the soothing effects of "The Big Medicine."

Today, thousands of people seeking rest and relief from pressure travel to the town of **Hot Springs** to bathe in the fine mineral springs and mud baths of Camas Hot Springs. The log cubicles are gone, but in their place stands a hotel with a mineral swimming pool, bath and hot tub. The springs have drawn people from as far away as Finland and Taiwan to a leisurely and peaceful vacation in Montana's western mountains. Many revisit on a regular basis, enjoying the benefits and relief that the natural hot mineral waters bring in the treatment of arthritis, skin diseases, rheumatism, stomach ulcers, high blood pressure and many other kinds of ailments. These returning guests have made Camas Hot Springs one of the best known year-round health spas in the northwest.

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