

Big Sheep Creek Back County Byway

Out in the Back of the Beyond



4 Days/3 Nights, Optional Days 5-7
Gateway City: Butte, Montana



It's where you go when you really want to get away from things! Out here in the back of the beyond in far southwest Montana, you could drive the Big Sheep Creek Back Country Byway without seeing anyone else. Wilderness, isolation, seclusion, and serenity abound, along with the opportunity to see Big Sky Country as it was experienced by Native Americans, mountaineers, and miners. The Byway is named Big Sheep because bighorn sheep frolic, graze, and shelter, on the steep hillsides. The road meanders through an open valley before reaching Big Sheep Creek and Big Sheep Creek Canyon, meandering, twisting, and turning, as it follows the spring-fed creek. Driving through landscapes that resemble the 1880s in the beautiful Medicine Lodge Valley, cradled by the Beaverhead and Tendoy Mountains, you may find an occasional sheep shed still standing from when ranchers raised sheep out here. If you're in the area in the evening and worried about wild animals, you'll have to bring your own. The quiet of the evening is not disturbed by the usual coyote yips, nighthawks, or jumping porcupines. This is truly one of Montana's Last Best Places, undisturbed by development, human life, or commotion. Enjoy this Byway, a hidden gem buried in the mountain canyons and tall rocky cliffs. Ease into the remote solitude of this wilderness area that appears as it did to the people who lived here hundreds of years ago - a truly unique experience.



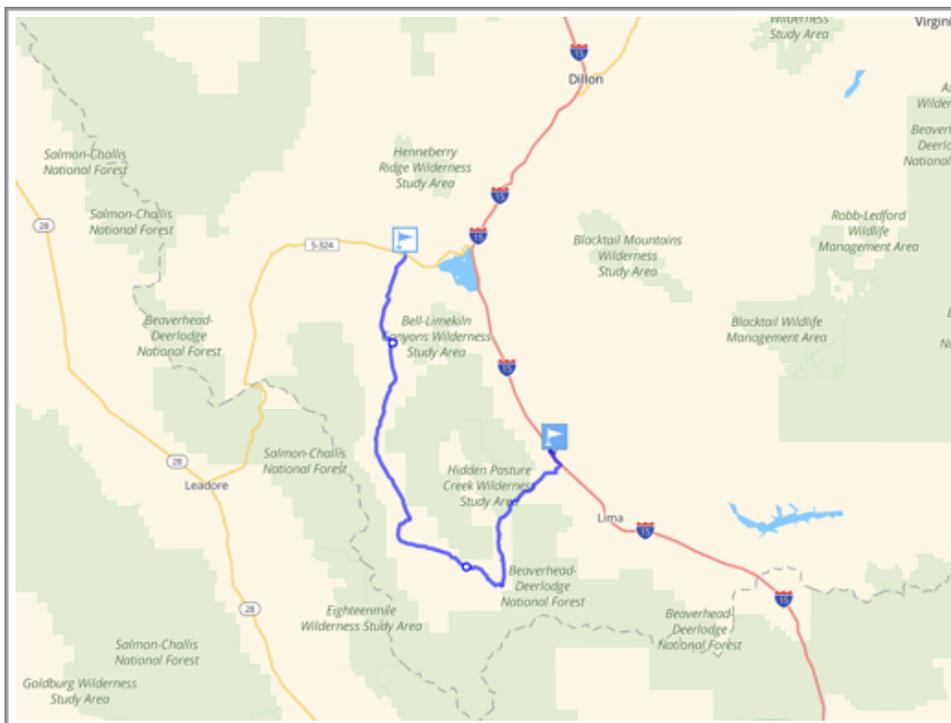
Touring the Byway

We recommend starting your journey in Butte, where you can enjoy learning about the heritage of the Old West in a delightful Montana mountain city. Take the Butte Trolley Tour for an overview of the city and then visit the Carle Gallery, filled with works that depict Butte, the Clark Chateau, built by the son of the Copper King, and the World Museum of Mining, with more than 50 structures from the Hell Roarin' Gulch mining camp. Be sure to take the underground mine tour before checking into the Cooper King Mansion, which you should also be sure to tour. As you drive around Butte, from time to time you'll catch a glimpse of Our Lady of the Rockies sitting atop the Continental Divide overlooking the city.

On Day Two, you'll be heading to Dillon where you can explore the former ghost town at Bannack State Park with more than 60 structures from the 1800s, Clark's Lookout State Park, and the Beaverhead County Museum, before staying at the Andrus Boutique Hotel. The next morning, leaving Dillon, it's time to drive the Big Sheep Creek Backcountry Byway, the 55 mile gravel route through the Beaverhead-Deer Lodge National Forest.

Be prepared for this drive. Bring snacks and food with you and have a full tank of gas. There are no services on the two-lane gravel route, (with a short section of one lane dirt surface) that can be safely traveled between May and early October. When you encounter a fence along the way, please shut the gate after you go through.

At the end of this Back Country drive, you'll be headed to Dell for lunch. About 15 miles south, you'll discover Monida on the Continental Divide. The pass gets its name from "Mon" for Montana, and "-ida" from Idaho, since it's right on the border. Here, you can prepare for the Centennial Valley Back Country Drive, which lies between you and West Yellowstone. Here, Heritage Park dates from the early railroad days and the Museum of the Yellowstone tells the story of travel to and in the Park. The Yellowstone Giant Screen is an opportunity to see the dramatic film "Yellowstone" and the Grizzly and Wolf Discovery center is home to live grizzlies, wolves, and more. From there, explore Yellowstone National Park, where, if you take both the North and South Loop Drives, you will see all the famous spots before heading back to Montana. 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.

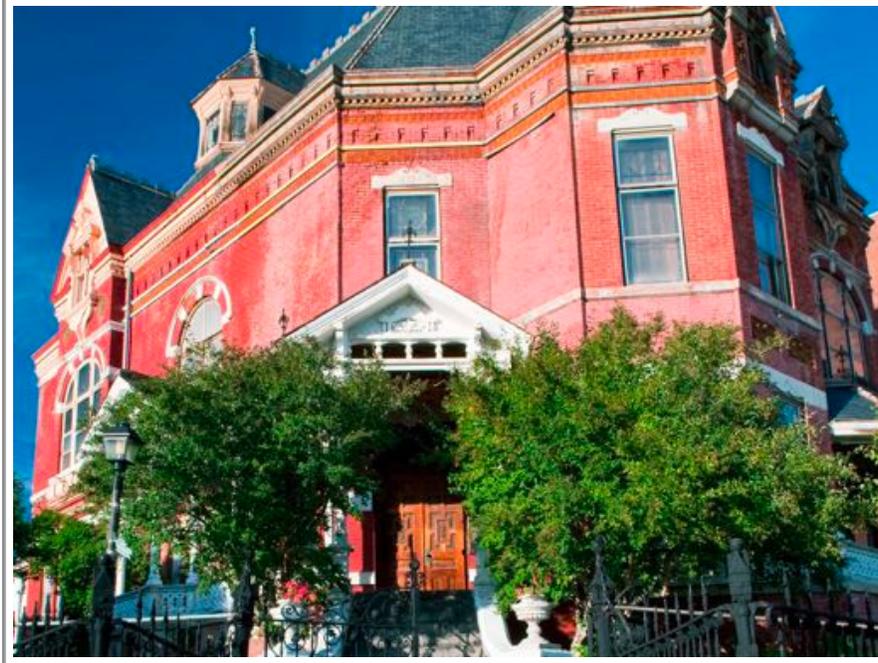
321 West Broadway Street, Butte, MT 59701 406-565-5600, Th-Sun, Noon-4PM, Adults \$7



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

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.



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, Bannock'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

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



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



Big Sheep Backcountry Byway

From Dillon, traveling through the Beaverhead-Deer Lodge National Forest, Montana's largest, it's time to drive the 55 miles of the Big Sheep Back Country Byway. Try not to rush. Enjoy the unique scenery. At the end of the drive, you'll be near the town of Dell where you can get lunch.

Dell

Nestled between the Blacktail and Tendoy mountains, the picturesque ranching town of Dell began as one of the many railroad towns in the area and has continued as a local supply center.

Destination Distinctive Dining

Schoolhouse Café 435 Oregon Shortline, Dell, MT 59725 This one-room 1903 brick schoolhouse complete with bell tower and bell, was transformed into a community café, decorated with the maps, chalk boards, hardwood floors, and schoolbooks.

Destination Distinctive Retail

Dell Mercantile 24 Main Street, Dell, MT 59725, 406-276-3332

Monida

Located at the top of Monida Pass on the Continental Divide, Monida was founded in 1881. Today, it is basically a ghost town with garages from the time it was a stop on old US 91.

Centennial Back Country Drive

Leaving Monida, you'll be on the 53-mile Centennial Valley Back Country Drive. Even though it's a gravel road, it's generally all-season. Once again, you'll be in a vast, wide, empty place. A few homes in Lakeside support the Red Rock Wildlife Refuge. There are also active ranches and remnants of old dwellings. The valley, on the other hand, has two beautiful lakes connected by the Red Rock River. Lush grass suddenly comes up against steep mountains and marshy bogs along the edges of the lakes. At the end of the drive, you'll be about 30 miles from West Yellowstone.





Destination Distinctive Accommodations

The Historic Madison Hotel 139 Yellowstone Avenue, West Yellowstone, MT 59758, 406-646-7745 When this simple log hotel was built in 1912, the six original upstairs rooms were warmed by a cut-stone fireplace in the lobby. Each room had a pitcher, wash basin, and a chamber pot. Today, it is the only hotel remaining from the early days of tourism in Yellowstone National Park, with much improved amenities of course.

Destination Distinctive Dining

Madison Crossing Lounge 121 Madison Avenue, West Yellowstone, MT 59758 406-646-7621 The Madison Crossing Lounge, located in the first grade classroom of the West Yellowstone School built in 1918, retains its original floor and ceiling beams. Homeroom was converted into a specialty shop featuring furniture, kitchen accessories, framed artwork, gift items, bedding, bath products, and more.

Serenity Bistro 38 North Canyon Street, West Yellowstone, MT 59758, 406-646-7660 Cozy, elegant eatery offering refined regional dishes and wine pairings.

Destination Distinctive Retail

Yellowstone Silver Company 110 Canyon Street, West Yellowstone, MT 59758, 406-646-7512

Eagle's Store 3 Canyon Street, West Yellowstone, MT 59758, 406-646-9300
A pioneer family business founded in 1908.

DAY FOUR

West Yellowstone

West Yellowstone began growing when the Union Pacific Railroad and Monida and Yellowstone Stage Line built a railroad from St. Anthony, Idaho to the park. Starting with three businesses, within five years, there were more than 50. Freeing the land from the US Forest Service made it possible for West Yellowstone to become a town where the “Yellowstone Special” from Salt Lake City, arrived daily.

Heritage Park

Heritage Park fills the main Union Pacific Railroad structures that were built between 1909 and 1929. The city converted the complex into the Dining Lodge Convention Center, Yellowstone Museum, the West Yellowstone Clinic, and the Court House.

179 Firehole Avenue, West Yellowstone, MT 59758

Museum of The Yellowstone

The Museum of the Yellowstone tells the story of how the town, including the Historic District developed, plus early transportation, and travel to Yellowstone National Park over the years. Walking tours of the historic district are on offer.

104 Yellowstone Avenue, West Yellowstone, MT 59758, 406-646-1100. May-Oct 10AM-6PM, Adults \$10

Yellowstone Giant Screen

A rare opportunity to view the stunning film “Yellowstone,” to see what the area was like 100,000 years ago, and 100 years ago.

101 South Canyon Street, West Yellowstone, MT 59758, 406-646-4100, Adults \$9.75

Grizzly and Wolf Discovery Center

See live grizzlies, wolves, otters, and more at this AZA Accredited Wildlife Park, view live Bird-of-Prey exhibits, two wolf packs, and a naturalist cabin, and/or participate in programs including Wolf Enrichment, Safety-in-Bear-Country, ranger talks, a world class bear museum, films and presentations.

201 South Canyon Street, West Yellowstone, MT 59758, 406-646-7001, Daily 9AM-6PM, Adults \$15

OPTIONAL DAY FIVE

Yellowstone National Park

The creation of Yellowstone National Park and protection of the astounding resources here was not without challenges. At first, the Park Act called for administration with no cost to the United States. Unfortunately, this did not protect the land and the wildlife from poaching, squatters, and more. When the second superintendent was appointed in 1877, he was able to begin constructing roads, appoint a “gamekeeper,” and campaign against hunters and vandals. When that still didn’t work, the U.S. Army arrived in 1886 to develop and enforce regulations, evict troublemakers, and patrol park lands. Finally, recognizing that America’s National Parks needed cohesive management, the National Park Service was established in 1916.

Fortunately for visitors since then, Yellowstone has remained a beautiful place with incredible wildlife and more thermal features than anywhere else in the world. It is best to allow at least a day to travel each of the two Park loop roads. If you enjoy stopping at Visitor Centers and the natural attractions, it may take at least two days to thoroughly explore each loop. Accommodations are located in six different locations, affording a lot of flexibility for overnight stays.



South Park Loop Road

Coming in from West Yellowstone, you'll arrive in Madison, home to the **Madison Information Center and Trailside Museum**. Located about halfway between Old Faithful and West Yellowstone, this structure is a good example of "parkitecture" from the 1930. You can sign up for a ranger program and use the bathrooms. 307-344-2821. Between Madison and Old Faithful, take the **Firehole Canyon Drive** and **Firehole Lake Drive** to the Fountain Paint Pot, Lower Geyser Basin, Midway Geyser Basin, Biscuit Basin, Black Sand Basin and the Upper Geyser Basin right at Old Faithful. After exploring the Old Faithful Visitor Education Center, you can marvel at the famous Old Faithful Geyser from the tall front windows. Delve into the natural wonders of Yellowstone in the exhibit hall, join a ranger program, and use the restrooms. 307-344-2751

Then, it's over to West Thumb and Grant Village, both of which sit at the edge of Yellowstone Lake. Grant Village is likely the best place for accommodations on this loop. A small facility at the start of the West Thumb Geyser Basin boardwalk built in 1925, is a good example of historic ranger-station architecture in Yellowstone. 307-242-7690. At the Grant Village Visitor Center, you can learn more about Yellowstone's fires which have had a significant impact on the park over the years. Join a ranger program or use the restrooms. 307-344-2650



OPTIONAL DAY SIX

Leaving out of Grant Village at the far south end of the Park, it's 37 miles to Canyon Village and the start of the Northern Loop Road. You can learn the geologic story of the area at the **Canyon Visitor Education Center** including the Yellowstone volcano, and view a room-size relief map of Yellowstone. Be sure to watch the 20-minute film. Restrooms are available 24 hours a day. 307-344-2550. The Canyon Lodge complex, with showers, laundry, a post office, dining, and other services, serves as accommodations here.

Next up, the Norris Geyser Basin, with the **Norris Museum and Information Center** overlooking Geyser Basin. This historic 1930s building was built to serve as a "trailside museum" for people traveling in their own cars without a guide. Restrooms are located in the parking lot. 307-344-2812. There is a side trip available to the **Norris Campground and Museum of the National Park Ranger**. This 1908 facility who celebrate the history of the Park Ranger profession. After visiting here, you'll be headed through the basin to view the steam vents and geysers in this area.

From there, it's time to head to Mammoth Hot Springs, which will take about an hour to drive the 21 miles. Walk on the boardwalks above the steaming hydrothermal features or take a drive around the vibrant travertine terraces. Approximately 50 hot springs lie within the area, that is also home to the **Albright Visitor Center, Historic Fort Yellowstone, the Mammoth Springs Hotel,** the **Upper Terrace Drive** around the hot springs and the headquarters of Yellowstone National Park. Here you can explore exhibits to learn more about the wildlife and history of Yellowstone and join a ranger program. This visitor center also has free Wi-Fi. 307-344-2263. Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel, built in 1936, was added to a 1911 wine of guest rooms that included the signature Map Room containing a large wooden map of the United States constructed of 15 different kinds of wood from nine countries. Don't be surprised if you spot elk grazing outside the hotel.

OPTIONAL DAY SEVEN

At this point, you can head to Tower Roosevelt, where stagecoach rides are available, and from there, out of Yellowstone National Park, and back to Montana. As you leave the park at this entrance, you'll be headed for the Beartooth Highway All American Road. Or, you can travel back to Lake and take US 14, 16, and 20 eastward.

Yellow Bus Tours

If you don't want to drive all of Yellowstone's roads, the best way to tour is to take the Yellow Bus vintage White Motor Company buses that ferry that ferries visitors on guided wildlife-watching tours, photo safaris, sunset tours, and more. The distinctive antique yellow vehicles with retractable canvas roofs and panoramic windows, are ideal for sightseeing.

