

Garnet Back Country Byway

Ghost Towns A'Plenty



4 Days/3 Nights

Gateway City: Missoula, Montana



Old ghost towns give us a glimpse of gold miners' dreams of striking it rich and saloon girls' hopes for better days. They also show how hard the miners worked to find the ore and get it out of the ground. Today, Montana has a great collection of 60 ghost towns, because the heart of Montana was one of the most productive mining regions in then world. The prospectors who discovered the first gold in Helena tried to keep it quiet to avoid a rush. But then, as with all booms, there are busts, leaving us with landscapes from another era. The Garnet Back Country Byway takes you to one of the best-preserved ghost towns in the state. Named for the semi-precious ruby-colored stones found in the area, the surrounding mountains were also rich in gold-bearing quartz. Miners first collected gold by panning, then by using rockers and sluice boxes to capture free-floating gold. The 12-mile backcountry journey through the Garnet Mountain Range climbs 2,000 feet into the evergreen forest and delivers outstanding panoramas of the Blackfoot River Valley, the Swan Range, the Mission Mountains, and the Bob Marshall Wilderness. Garnet boomed in 1895 thanks to a processing mill and miners pouring into a haphazardly laid out community. When the town went bust, they left so fast the town became a time capsule with more than 20 historic buildings. It is not the only ghost town in the area. The Last Chance Gulch in Helena became a Historic District and Elkhorn State Park, Marysville, and Coloma are nearby. For ghost town aficionados, you can also visit Virginia City and Nevada City, further afield.

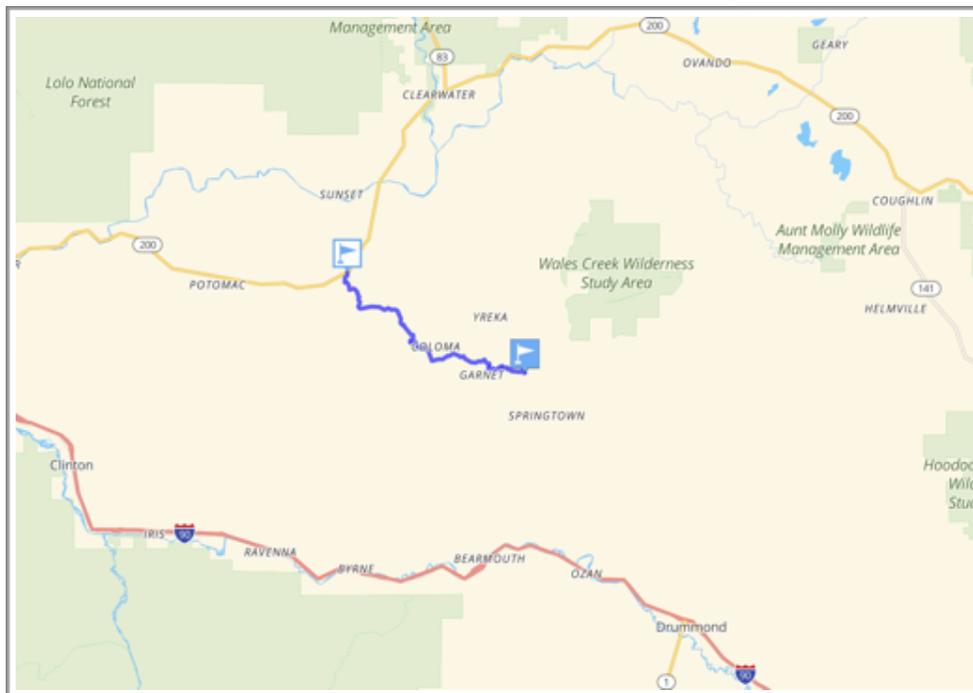
Touring the Byway

We recommend starting your journey in Missoula where you can take the Downtown Missoula Historic and Art Walking Tour, visit the Montana Natural History Center, the Montana Museum of Art and Culture, and the Historical Museum of Fort Missoula, and take the Riverfront Walking Trail before staying at the Blue Mountain Bed and Breakfast. From there, you'll be headed to explore the Garnet Ghost Town, which 100 years ago was a thriving, bustling place. Coloma, another Ghost Town, is just up the road. Moving on, in Drummond, you can visit the Ohrmann Museum and Gallery, plus the New Chicago Schoolhouse Museum.

Next up is Helena, where you can explore the Last Chance Gulch, site of the original gold discovery, visit the Montana Historical Society, the Original Governor's Mansion, and explore art galleries before a stay at the Carolina Bed and Breakfast, located in the Mansion District.

If you'd love to see more of the scenic beauty surrounding Helena, take the two hour Gates of the Mountains Boat Tour. Or if you're a ghost town aficionado, you can travel to Marysville Ghost Town north of Helena and Elkhorn State Park Ghost Town south of town. To end your trip, travel to Virginia City and Nevada City, both Ghost Towns one mile apart, further afield from Helena.

From there, we wish you safe passage if you're traveling on another Montana Scenic Drive, or a safe and pleasant journey home.



DAY ONE



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.

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 20th 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.



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 TWO



Garnet Back Country Byway

Over one hundred years ago, Garnet was home to more than 1,000 gold miners and their families, working hard to carve out a community in the heart of the mountains. There was a school and crime was low. Liquor flowed freely in the town's many saloons, serving tired, dirty men moving tons of rock. Today, this preserved 1890s gold-mining town is home to compact log cabins with period furnishings. Pay dirt from the Top-O-Deep is available for purchase at the Visitor Center and there are water troughs and pans, if you'd like to pan for gold.

Coloma

Coloma is reached from Garnet Range Road, via Bear Gulch Road and Centennial Road, and was once known as the Mystery Camp. It started as a mining camp in 1865 when prospectors found gold at Bear Gulch and Elk Creek. Within weeks, more than 6,000 people moved into the Garnet Mining District. A larger lode of gold was discovered in 1897, causing the population to burgeon and ore processed in two mills. The Mammoth Mine would ultimately yield about \$200,000 of gold over the next 20 years. The town was all but deserted by 1918.



Drummond

The first ranchers arrived in Drummond in the 1870s, and within a decade, the Northern Pacific Railroad arrived to move cattle to market. The town still gives you a glimpse of the unadorned ranching lifestyle, with the motto “Home of the World-Famous Bullshippers.” While in town, you could see ranchers discussing the weather, hay crops, or calving, or cattle being driven to catch the train to market, or no traffic at all.

Ohrmann Museum and Gallery

This gallery showcases the paintings of rancher and artist Bill Ohrmann who expressed a no holds barred view of man's inhumanity to nature, to each other, and to the creatures with which we share this planet. Alternating with scenes of mayhem and dire predictions are hopeful, inspiring scenes of how it was or how it should be. Life-sized welded steel sculptures of elk, buffalo, bear, and a woolly mammoth, plus bronzes, woodcarvings and clay sculptures compliment the paintings.

6155 Highway 1, Drummond, MT 59832, 406-288-3319



New Chicago

Once a thriving community located on Flint Creek at the junction of Mullan Road and the road to Phillipsburg, New Chicago once had two hotels, two stores, two saloons, a flour mill, a telegraph station, several stables, a stage station, and a Wells Fargo office. A double murder, a hotel fire and a nearby railway line dashed hopes for the community, which slowly ceased to exist. It can easily be seen from Interstate 90.

New Chicago Schoolhouse Museum

The 1874 New Chicago Schoolhouse was moved from the now ghost town New Chicago to Drummond to features the story of Emma Davis Wilson, a pioneer teacher who homesteaded with her husband and two sons in the area in 1874. A quilt depicts the history of the Drummond area and other exhibits tell more of the story.

Destination Distinctive Dining

Parker's Restaurant 32 East Front Street, Drummond, MT 59832 Enjoy a variety of burgers and other American food choices.



Helena

When it began as a mining town, Helena could have been many things: Crabtown, named after one of the original successful prospectors, Pumpkinville or Squashtown, names bounced around by other miners. The original gold discovery was named Last Chance Gulch. The city was ultimately owed its name to a group of Minnesota miners which reminded of their hometown, St. Helena. When word got out about the gold strike, Helena became a boomtown with several hundred businesses and more than 3000 residents. When gold ran out in Bannock, which had been the Territorial Capital, and miners began relocating to Helena in 1875, it was decided that Helena would be the capitol. A capitol building was constructed on a hill about a mile from Last Chance Gulch and the railroad arrived in 1883, sealing the fate. A massive fire that swept through led to the historic fire tower that still stands at Last Chance Gulch.



Destination Distinctive Accommodations

Carolina Bed and Breakfast 309 North Ewing, Helena, MT 59601, 406-422-0418 Enjoy the splendor of this magnificent Victorian home located in the heart of Helena's Mansion District. The original craftsmanship, mahogany woodwork, and beautiful leaded glass reflects the luxury of Helena's past.

Destination Distinctive Dining

Lucca's 56 North Last Chance Gulch, Helena, MT 59601, 406-457-8311 Rated the city's best Italian.

Steve's Café 1225 East Custer Avenue, Helena, MT 59601, 406-457-8311 Enjoy unique cuisine at this highly rated restaurant.

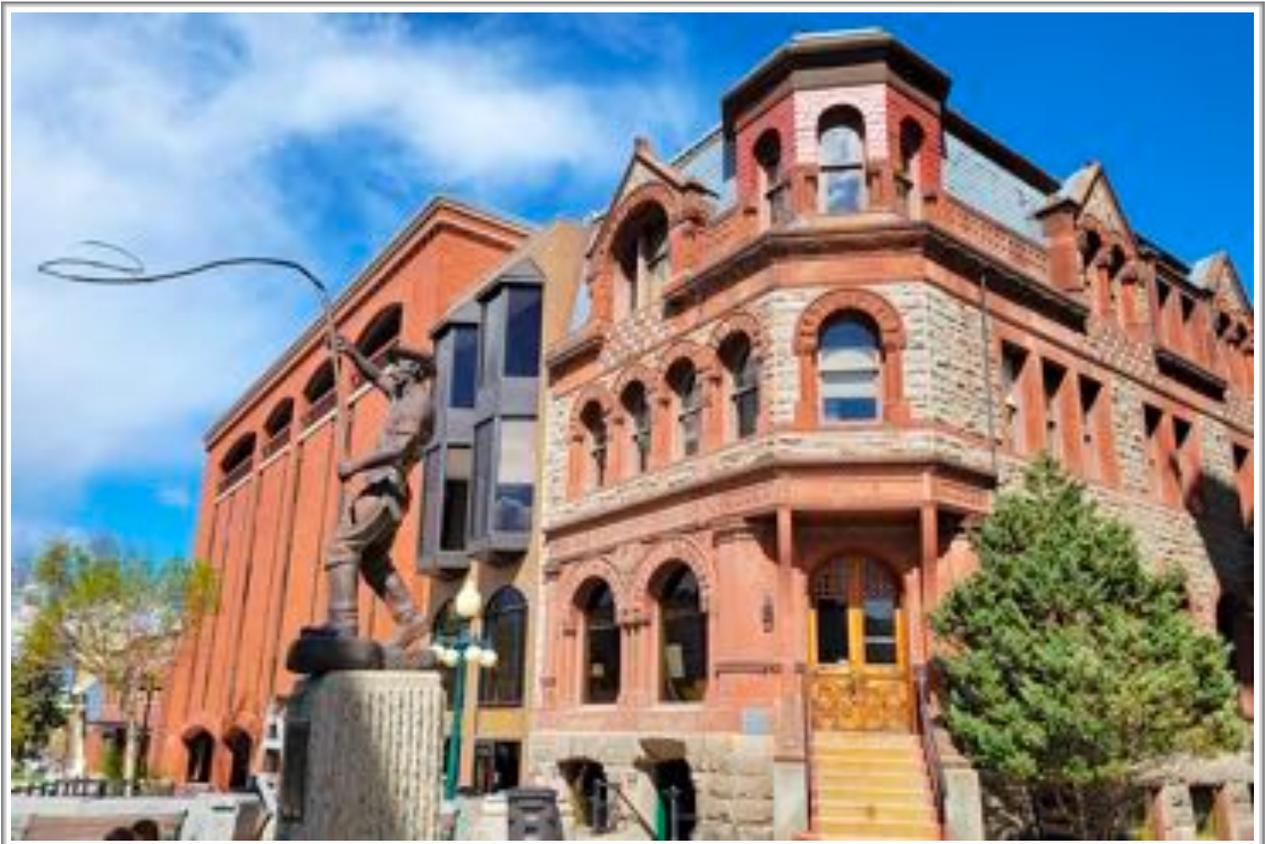
Destination Distinctive Retail

Enjoy the huge complement of art galleries in Helena: Mountain Sage Gallery, Ghost Art Gallery, Jmacs Pottery, A C Swanson Gallery, Jailhouse Gallery, Sage and Oats Trading Post, Boxwoods, The Painted Pot, Buds and Beasley's, and 1+1=1 Gallery.

DAY THREE

Last Chance Gulch Walking Tour

A 36-stop walking tour takes you through the area where the first gold was discovered in 1864 by a group of miners from Georgia, down on their luck. Before leaving for good, they decided to take one more look through the gulch and finally, on the last try, found gold. In the great frenzy to stake claims, miners stripped the landscape of everything green, churned up the soil, and built buildings on their claims. Working tirelessly, miners in the Gulch ultimately produced 19 million dollars' worth of gold in the first four years. After that, hydraulic mining took over and workers used powerful pressure hoses to viciously wash the hillsides. The tour begins in Reeder's Alley.





Montana Historical Society

A collection of over 50,000 artifacts, art, and objects that cover all aspects of Montana history includes 6,000 artifacts from the Blackfeet, Sioux, and Salish tribes, a 2,500 piece archaeological collection, 3,100 pieces of costumes and textiles including Governor and Mrs. Sam Ford's inaugural outfits of 1941, garments worn by Chinese immigrants in the 1890s, a 1910 ore wagon used at the Garnet mines, and a wheel from the 1900 Missouri River steamboat "Rose", coupled with documents and other interesting papers such as a 1912 calendar depicting early Charlie Russell watercolors, firearms, agriculture, cattle, and mining industry objects, over 200 Russell works, and the bronzes of wildlife, frontier figures, and native people by Bob Scriver. Special exhibits include the Mackay Gallery of Russell Art, Montana in the time of Lewis and Clark, and the Homeland Gallery. 225 North Roberts Street, Helena, MT 59620, 406-444-2694



Original Governor's Mansion

A part of the Historical Society's collection resides in the Original Montana Governor's Mansion where 3,000 pieces serve as the furnishings of this stately 3-story, red brick Queen Anne mansion built in 1888. It served as the official governor's residence for nearly half a century between 1913 and 1959. 304 North Ewing Street, Helena, MT 59620

DAY FOUR

Gates of the Mountains Boat Tour

To enjoy more of the scenery in central Montana, take the Gates of the Mountains Boat Tour, located 20 miles north of the city.

3131 Gates of the Mountains Road, Helena, MT 59602, 406-458-5241, 2 hour trip, Adults \$20

Marysville Ghost Town

North of Helena, Irishman Thomas Cruse twice struck it rich in Marysville, first when his Drumlummon Mine produced more than \$50 million in gold. Cruse then got out of mining, moved to Helena, and built a cathedral and a bank. When his wife died, he returned to found the Bald Mountain Mine, rich in gold, silver, copper and lead. The town had 4,000 people at its peak and mining still goes on. Today, the Marysville Steak House is open 4PM Wed-Sun and the Catholic church still serves the community. Several of the old mining buildings are well preserved. Take the Lincoln Road exit off Interstate 15 north of Helena. Head west on Lincoln Road to Silver City. Turn left onto Marysville Road.





Elkhorn State Park

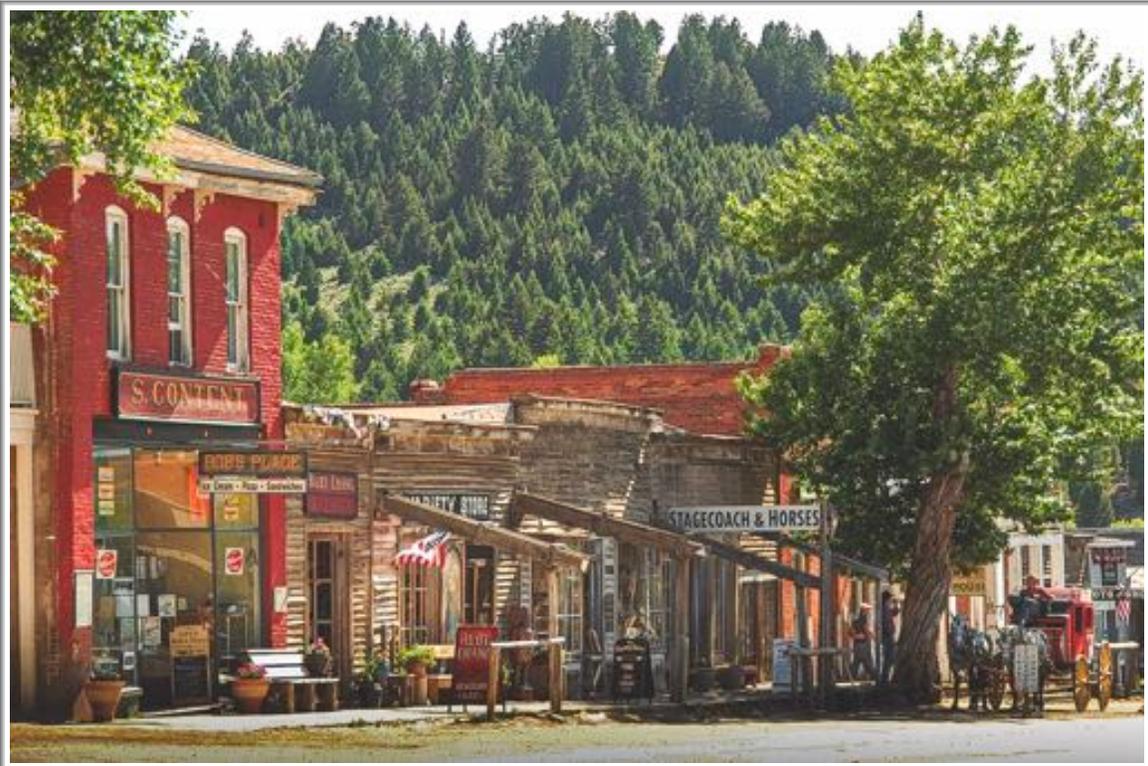
After lodes of super enriched silver were discovered here, it took another six years for a mine to be developed. Over \$14 million in silver was carried out, spurred on by the Sherman Silver Purchase Act that created a high demand. At the peak of its history, the town had 2,500 residents, a school, hotel, church, stores, saloons, and brothels. Unlike most mining towns populated by single men, the residents of Elkhorn were mostly married European immigrants with families who used Fraternity Hall for social gatherings. After the silver boom declined, an epidemic struck and railroad service stopped. Very few of the original buildings other than Fraternity Hall and Gillian Hall are still standing, but a number of cabins have been restored by the 10 residents. The now ghost town of Elkhorn is reached through a turn of the century mining landscape, nestled in the privately owned town of Boulder. Take Interstate-15 at the Boulder exit, continue seven miles south on Montana 69, and then 11 miles north on the county gravel road to Elkhorn.

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.