

This Free E-Book is brought to you by Natural-Aging.com.

100% Effective Natural Hormone Treatment
Menopause, Andropause And Other Hormone Imbalances
Impair Healthy Healing In People Over The Age Of 30!

Side-Tripping in Montana

By Anita Paul

Side-Tripping in Montana by Anita Paul

Nightlife in Big Sky, Montana is more exciting than you would think. Especially for a pair of happy-go-lucky California girls in town just for the heck of it, on a spur-of-the-moment vacation in search of a Western adventure. Not the kind of west-coast adventure you'd find on a sunny San Diego beach covered with half-nude bodies dripping with SPF 15 tanning lotion. Or the kind you'd find on a Big Bear ski slope watching bikini babes race down the black diamond hills with sun screen-covered noses.

This vacation was more of a "good girls" version of Thelma and Louise hitting the open highway to see what we could see. With no concrete plans, no hotel reservations and no idea what to expect, we arrived in Billings, grabbed a few visitors brochures and decided to at least try to visit Bozeman, Big Sky and Yellowstone National Park.

After one night's stay in Bozeman at a lovely bed and breakfast and a breathtaking hike the day before up to Fairy Lake—a peaceful, secluded lake surrounded by tall pines and absolutely no noise at all—we awoke to the sight of a light snowfall (a real treat for Southern Californians), the smell of Canadian bacon and the bark of the inn keeper's golden retriever, Bailey. It was time to hit the road.

Our drive through Bozeman traced past charming little antique shops, down-home diners, and the usual small town sights, then to the outskirts of town. After a few stops to check out some antiques, and about two hours later, my girlfriend and I found ourselves in the friendly town of Big Sky feeling like two fish out of water, but ready to breathe in some more of that smog-free air through our gills and get to know the place—if only for a few days.

Our inquiries as to where to find some adventure in this ski town during the off season led us to the horse stables for some Western-style sight seeing. A two-hour horseback ride guided by a real-life cowboy was a challenge for my tender hind parts, but I had to tough it out because my friend, the experienced rider that she is, struck up a friendly conversation with our trail guide (need I say, "flirting"). And besides that, the views from the trail were unreal. I felt like I was riding through a scene from the old TV show Big Valley.

Side-Tripping in Montana

After a much-needed soak in a deep tub of hot water overflowing with bubbles (literally) in our cozy room at the Rainbow Ranch Lodge, I perked up and my travel buddy and I trekked down to a little restaurant on the side of the road that served the freshest, most tender beef we'd ever eaten this side of ... well, anyplace. When one of the locals, a handsome "Marlboro Man" type seated on a barstool, kindly invited us to drop by the local watering hole, Staci's Old Faithful Bar, the next night for a little Western hospitality and a lesson in how to really two-step, we knew we couldn't miss that opportunity.

So the next night, we hopped in our Subaru Outback (we had to "look" the part of locals, right) and headed down the dark two-lane highway very slowly so as not to accidentally encounter one of those deer we were warned to beware of from the road signs posted every twenty paces. The fear of killing Bambi was ever in our consciousness. As my friend drove tentatively, I sat anxiously with eyes wide

open ready to scream, "Stop!" at the first sight of anything that remotely looked like a darling deer ready to prance in front of our rental car. Talk about stress!

As we neared our destination and noticed the flickering red neon sign out front and the rickety wood-framed screen door smack shut behind a few cowboys, doubt set in big time. Suddenly we weren't so sure we should be there. Would we be safe? What if something happened to us, who would know? Yes, safety was a concern. But that's why two crazed, adventurous minds are better than one. So we threw caution to the wind, took a deep breath and headed into Staci's.

Remember that scene from the movie comedy 48-Hours when Eddie Murphy steps into a country/western bar and the whole room screeches to a halt. Well, just keep that in mind. I don't think I have ever felt more aware of my being than at that moment when my curly, blonde-haired friend and I, an African American woman, walked into that bar. All eyes on us, we tried to look like we "belonged" there. And to our credit we were cool as cucumbers—on the outside.

As we strolled over to the only two empty barstools, I felt as if we were moving in slow motion—and so were the hundred or so pairs of eyes that followed us. Even the cigarette smoke swirls were flowing through the air like low fog hovering over a still country pond in the early morning. But once we sat down, the room quickly returned to its previous lively condition and we were able to exhale. Whew, the hard part was over.

I must say, our cowboy bar experience was chock full of interesting sights—a live band talented enough to make it to the second round of Star Search, dancing couples proficient in the latest country/western and dirty dancing moves, photos of local rodeo celebrities who had visited Staci's, even a lively bartender who could whip up a drink in the blink of an eye.

As appealing as our cowboy bar experience had been, we couldn't stay all night because the morning held the promise of more adventure. So after a few more strange stares from some of the locals and suspicious smiles from others, we departed Staci's and headed back down that dark road.

The next day we awoke bright and early and headed out towards Yellowstone National Park. Upon entering the town of West Yellowstone, I immediately felt as though we had gone back in time to some familiar yet unknown place that was a cross between Mayberry and the Twilight Zone. But as we

Side-Tripping in Montana

followed the signs into Yellowstone National Park, a feeling of anticipation rose up inside of me, and I must admit that I was secretly on the lookout for Ranger Bob, Yogi the Bear and his little friend, Boo-Boo.

The sights of the natural hot springs and clay-like mud pots were breathtaking. Watching bison graze at a distance as we sat eating fruit and nuts on a log by the side of the road, we were very careful not to litter this pristine wilderness obviously created by the sovereign hand of God. It was all so surreal.

Traipsing through what we had hoped wasn't off-limits territory reserved only for the bison, I realized that we should head back to our car when we noticed enormous piles of bison poop in the tall, golden brush. Hmmmm, how fast can a bison run, and could I outrun one if motivated by the fear for my life? I wasn't convinced I wanted to find out, so after much whining and sharing my fears of hypothetical situations of the two of us being eaten by a family of bison, my friend finally consented to my cowardice and we headed back to the safety of the parking lot civilization.

Further up the road into the Park, we came to the spot known world wide for its perfect timing—Old

Faithful geyser. Amazingly, we arrived within only two minutes of the moment of truth, the geyser's eruption, which is said to take place every 80 minutes on average. Watching the gentle puffs of steam become a graceful gush of water shooting powerfully high up into the air, I was indeed impressed by nature's awe-inspiring display of beauty. And just as quickly as it had begun, it all ended in a slow, quiet lull of nothingness—until the next time.

Our walking tour of the other geysers around the Old Faithful site was equally awesome. Sturdy wood-beamed pathways led us over the bubbling pools of mud and steaming hot springs. Careful not to lean too far forward or to drop anything into the pools, we carefully heeded the warning signs about their intense heat, reportedly hot enough to boil the rubber off of a jogging shoe (not to mention the tender skin off of my bones!).

But suddenly the heat of the pools wasn't a concern, when just up ahead about 30 feet we noticed a big, hairy mass of flesh munching away at the brush on the side of the walking path. A real life bison, up close and personal. We froze in our tracks awaiting any sign that this big fella might be intimidated by our presence, or even worse, that he might begin to see us as two tasty morsels just ripe for eatin'. We were stuck between fear and the almost uncontrollable urge to laugh out loud at this unbelievable sight. And wouldn't you know it—no more film in the camera! We slowly eased past the mammoth beast keeping our four eyes on his two and ready to run like Flo Jo if the threat presented itself. With that experience, there was no doubt that Yellowstone was the highlight of this trip.

On the last day of our great Montana adventure, we hit the road and did some more side-tripping. Traveling up highway 287, we passed through the town of Ennis and then journeyed through Virginia City, a little "ghost town" that has been preserved as an historic area. The old wooden buildings reminded me of the town in Little House on the Prairie. As we walked the dusty road I half expected to be caught in the middle of a shootout between the town sheriff and an unwelcome troublemaker.

Eventually, we found ourselves at Three Forks, a watery junction where three rivers (the Jefferson,

Side-Tripping in Montana

Madison and Gallatin rivers) meet to form the mouth of the Missouri River. As we stood there watching the swirl of the brown waters and feeling the drizzle of an oncoming downpour, we realized that this crossroads signified the end of our trip. One full of unexpected treasures and surprises we could have never planned. Back to reality tomorrow. But what an adventure we had experienced.

Back in Billings we hesitated a bit as we returned our rental car and headed into the airport, relishing our serendipitous escapade as we caught one last glimpse of the freshly snow-capped mountains in the distance. An adventure, indeed. One I will never forget, and one that I believe will set the standard for all future vacations for me. Plan a little, experience a lot. That is now my vacation slogan.

Anita Paul is a freelance writer, marketing consultant and owner of The Write Image, a marketing communications company that caters to small businesses and non-profit organizations. With over ten years experience in marketing and public relations, she is the author of "Take The Mystery Out Of Marketing" a guide to help business owners create, execute and evaluate a strategic marketing plan. She can be reached at www.thewriteimage.net.

Montana Casinos

By Adel Awwad

Montana is impressive in size as the fourth largest state in the entire country. It spans approximately 94 million acres. Montana boasts a sizeable mass of natural forests and millions of acres of protected wilderness. Wildlife is abundant in Montana, including bears, deer, elk, wolves, and antelope. In fact, Montana is home to about 500 species of wildlife. Winters in Montana are usually cold, but without extended periods of freezing weather. In the summer, temperatures typically hover in the 70s.

There are plenty of attractions in Montana, including the National Bison Range, Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park, the Charles M Russell National Wildlife Refuge, and Yellowstone National Park. Montana actually shares Yellowstone, the oldest national park in the world, with Wyoming and Idaho. Montana is also home to breathtaking mountains, pristine waters, and relaxing hot springs. Visitors to Montana can enjoy a plethora of activities, from hiking and skiing to dining and shopping. Furthermore, for many visitors, as well as residents, Montana casinos also hold great appeal.

Montana is truly a gambler's delight. Gamblers can enjoy video poker, bingo machines, and keno in Montana. The maximum bet for these games is \$2 and the maximum payout is \$800. Many live games are also legal in Montana casinos, such as raffles, keno, bingo, rummy, whist, hearts, cribbage, and bridge. Also available in Montana casinos are fantasy sports leagues and sports pools.

In Montana, bars and taverns are permitted to have and operate up to 20 video gambling devices, allowing patrons to enjoy bingo, poker, and keno. These machines do not pay out cash, as law does not permit that. Instead, machines located in bars and taverns supply the user with a paper receipt, which is redeemed by the establishment's cashier. Bets are capped at \$2, with payouts of \$800. As required by Montana gaming regulations, these machines return at least 80 percent.

There are several Indian Montana casinos. These casinos also provide users with paper receipts,

redeemable from a casino cashier. The maximum bet in Indian Montana casinos is \$2, with a maximum payout of \$1000. However, there are no minimum or maximum payout requirements for Montana casinos on Indian reservations.

There are many casinos spread throughout Montana, allowing for quite a large selection of games to play. The names of Montana Casinos, as well as locations and descriptions, can be found quite easily online. To gamble legally in Montana, you must be at least 18 years of age.

This article is the property of

Before you use my article(s), you must

agree to my Terms of Service



This Free E-Book has been brought to you by Natural-Aging.com.

**[100% Effective Natural Hormone Treatment](#)
Menopause, Andropause And Other Hormone Imbalances
Impair Healthy Healing In People Over The Age Of 30!**

Side-Tripping in Montana

