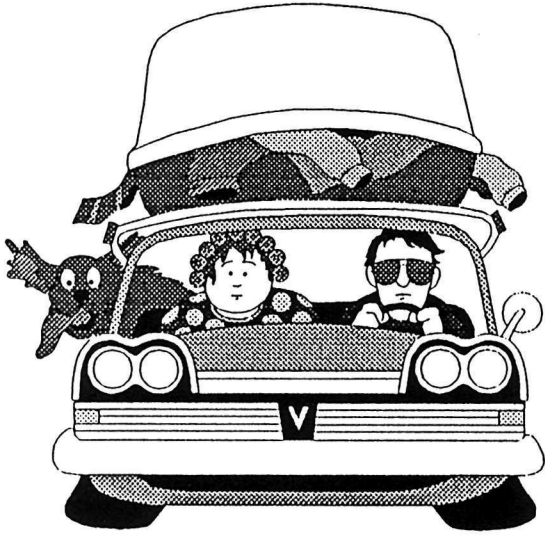


SCENIC DRIVES IN THE BIG HOLE VALLEY



There are several scenic routes in the Big Hole area that offer spectacular views from both paved and unpaved roads. Wildlife abounds, including deer, elk, moose, bears, mountain lions, pronghorn, eagles, and hawks. Drive carefully, especially during the early morning or evening when wildlife is most active.

Be sure you have plenty of gas, film, food and drinking water, as well as adequate time to complete your trip. Check on weather and road conditions before you start your drive. *All mileages are one way.*

WISDOM TO DARBY

50 miles

To reach the historic town of Darby, take Highway 43 west from Wisdom, Montana, past Big Hole National Battlefield and over Chief Joseph Pass, crossing the Continental Divide. Turn north (right) on U.S. Highway 93, dropping slightly to Lost Trail Pass, then beginning the long descent into the Bitterroot Valley. You will pass Lost Trail Ski Area, Lost Trail Hot Springs--have a soak in the springs if you wish-- and the trailhead for the Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail. Fifty miles from Wisdom, you will enter the small town of Darby, Montana.

HISTORIC TRAIL CREEK

Old Big Hole/ Bitterroot Highway

17 miles

The Lewis and Clark Expedition traveled along this route in 1806 as they returned east, as did the Nez Perce during their flight from the U.S. Army in 1877. It is a beautiful and interesting drive, but some areas are very rough and must be traveled with caution. Check with the staff at the Wisdom or Sula Ranger Stations for current road conditions. *The Trail Creek Road is closed from early winter until late spring.* Twenty-three miles west of Wisdom (mile post #7), the Trail Creek Road leaves Highway 43 to the north. The gravel road will take you over Gibbons Pass and the Continental Divide and will join U.S. 93 in the Bitterroot Valley at the Sula Ranger Station.

GIBBONSVILLE ROAD

30 miles

This well maintained gravel road leads over the Bitterroot mountains 30 miles to Gibbonsville, Idaho. It begins 4 miles west of Wisdom from Highway 43, and turns off to the south. The road winds across the valley bottom and then up into the Beaverhead and Salmon National Forests where it crosses the Continental Divide. Note the transition from the grassy valley vegetation to the pines and aspens of the higher elevations.

WISDOM TO DILLON

62 miles

State Route 278 takes you through the southern half of the Big Hole Valley. Passing through the town of Jackson, where Lewis sampled the waters of the hot springs, the road takes you past quiet ranches, the Big Hole River, and up over Big Hole Pass before descending into the town of Dillon. If possible, plan a stop at Bannack State Park, now a protected ghost town that was the first territorial capital of Montana.

WISE RIVER TO POLARIS (PIONEER MOUNTAIN SCENIC BYWAY)

40 miles

This "National Scenic Byway" connects Highway 43 at Wise River with State Route 278 in Jackson, Montana. From Wise River, the road follows the Wise River up into the Pioneer Mountains and Beaverhead National Forest. There are many camping and picnic sites along the road. Consider taking time to explore Coolidge ghost town, Crystal Park, Elkhorn Hot Springs, and Maverick Mountain Ski Area. The road is paved except for a gravel section between Highway 278 and just north of Elkhorn Hot Springs. *Sections of this route are closed and impassable in winter; inquire locally.*