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## ***What To Do In & Around Great Falls, Montana***

Wondering what to do before or after your canoe trip? Located in the heart of Russell County, named after renowned Western artist Charles M. Russell, Great Falls is a place reminiscent of the classical Old West. The town lies on the Missouri River near a series of five mighty waterfalls, hence the name Great Falls. The area offers a surprising number of cultural centers and a variety of recreational activities, creating a fun way to spend a day before or after your trip.

Great Falls features several first-rate attractions for Lewis & Clark enthusiasts. Chief among these is the **Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center**, a recently opened joint project of the US Forest Service and a private organization. It is a remarkable facility offering self-guided exploration as well as video presentations and lectures/activities daily. Also check out a view of the falls that the Corps of Discovery so painstakingly portaged during their westward journey in 1805. You can enjoy vistas of some of the falls via a ten-mile paved recreational pathway known as the **River's Edge Trail**. This is great for walking, biking or rollerblading and is closed to motorized traffic. Ask at the motel desk about bike rentals in the area. The Interpretive Center's phone number is 406-727-8733, and it is open daily from 9am-6pm in summer, 9am-5pm after Labor Day. *We strongly recommend that you arrive early enough the day before your trip, or allow time after the trip, to see the center.* There is also an annual **Lewis & Clark Festival** held in town the third weekend of June; contact the Great Falls Chamber of Commerce for more details at 800-735-8535.

You may also be interested in touring any of the following museums. All are staffed by friendly folks eager to share history and local flavor with you. The **C.M. Russell Museum**, which we highly recommend, includes paintings by Charlie Russell and other Western artists as well as his home and log-cabin studio. It is open Monday-Saturday 9am-6pm and Sunday 12pm-5pm; call 406-727-8787 for details.

The **Montana Cowboy's Bar and Museum** is another favorite for those in love with the Old West; 406-761-9299. For those traveling with children, you can stop by the **Children's Museum and Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art**; 406-727-8255. And, what town can boast Old West ambience without a tribute to the steam locomotive? Train lovers much check out the **Mehmke's Steam Engine Museum**; 406-452-6571.

The **Ulm Pishkun State Park**, a prehistoric bison kill site, is an awe-inspiring landmark that captures the spirit of the Native American hunter. It is located 12 miles southwest of Great Falls just off I-15. A new educational center opened its doors recently, adding yet another phenomenal interpretive center to the Great Falls area. It features exhibits highlighting the Native American heritage and the Pishkun itself. This is believed by many to be the longest buffalo jump in the US and offers a breathtaking view of surrounding mountains and plains. Call the Great Falls Chamber of Commerce for more information about the center.

You can check out all of the above easily by renting a car for the day or by joining a guided tour. The **Great Falls Historic Trolley** and the **Tour de Great Falls** offer journeys along the Lewis and Clark trail and allow visitors to discover the historic city. The trolley tour visits the sites within Great Falls including the C.M. Russell Museum, Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center, Giant Springs State Park, three of the Missouri's waterfalls, Paris Gibson Square, the historic home and railroad districts, and original town homes and churches.

The cost of the trolley tour is \$20 per adult, and \$10 for children 12 and under. The trolley tour runs Monday-Thursday at 10am and 4pm, and Friday-Sunday at 10am, 1pm, and 4pm. The **Tour de Great Falls** offers a "cultural tour" which is similar to the trolley tour, but in a 21-passenger motorcoach. Their "Natural Parks" tour includes Giant Springs, the fish hatchery, Wildlife and Parks Visitors' Center, River's Edge Trail, three waterfalls, Malmstrom AFB, and Gibson Park. The Tour de Great Falls also offers custom tours to Ulm Pishkun, Ryan Dam, Hutterite Colony, the Steam Engine Museum, and more. All Tour de Great Falls tours are by reservation only. Call 406-771-1100 for further details on departure times and prices.

The **Montana State Fair** in Great Falls runs annually in late July/early August and features concerts, ice skating, a carnival, rodeo, square dancing and more. Pick up a brochure locally for event schedules, or call the Chamber of Commerce.

Because we head northeast on our canoe trip, you may find a road trip to the south or west a good way to see more of Montana. 90 miles south of Great Falls is **Helena**, Montana's capital city. Helena is a beautiful town in the heart of the Helena National Forest. One of the many filming locations for "A River Runs Through It," Helena is a town of superlative beauty. If you are a fishing enthusiast, a visit to the area is a must. In Helena, visitors can also ride a tour train; check locally for information.

To the northwest from Great falls, about a 3-4 hour drive, lies **Glacier National Park**. The park is well worth the time and effort if have never seen this magnificent area. If you go, plan to spend at least 1-3 days exploring Glacier Park and its sister, Waterton Park. **Waterton International Peace Park** links the US and Canada and is the only place one can freely cross the border (on a guided tour only).

There are many recreational opportunities for an extended stay in Big Sky Country, Montana. Call our office if you have any questions or need more ideas.

Drop us a line about any new experiences you had while visiting the area. We're always looking for fresh ideas. Thanks again for choosing ROW for your vacation!