1. a state in the north-western United States. Helena Mont. Montanan adjective noun Montanans

Summary Article: Montana
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State in northwestern USA, the most northerly Rocky Mountain state and the fourth largest state in the USA, bordered to the north by the Canadian provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan; to the east by North Dakota and South Dakota; to the south by Wyoming; and to the southwest and west by Idaho; area 376,981 sq km/145,553 sq mi; population (2010) 989,415; capital Helena. Montana is known as the Treasure State owing to its abundant mineral resources. The state is divided into the Rocky Mountain region, which has peaks with elevations of between 2,400 m/8,000 ft and 3,000 m/10,000 ft, and the eastern Great Plains. It is subject to climatic extremes, with cold winters and summer hailstorms in the Rockies and summer droughts on the Great Plains. Montana's economy is traditionally based on mining, lumber, and cattle ranches. Oil and gas were major resources during the 1970s, but tourism and the service industries have since become increasingly important. Farming has been greatly helped by irrigation programmes and soil improvements. The chief crop is wheat, but barley and alfalfa yields are also significant. Billings is the largest city; other cities include Missoula, Great Falls, Butte, Bozeman, Kalispell, Havre, Anaconda, and Miles City. Montana joined the Union in 1889 as the 41st state.

Physical Montana is divided into two main geographic areas: the Great Plains and the Rocky Mountain region. The Rocky Mountain region subdivides into the Northern Rocky Mountains and the Middle Rocky Mountains.

In the east, the Great Plains form part of the Missouri plateau. There are many glaciated lakes in the northern Great Plains of Montana, and fewer in the unglaciated southern Great Plains. The Great Plains roll gradually from an elevation of about 1,200 m/4,000 ft in the west to about 600 m/2,000 ft in the east. There are several groups of Rocky Mountain outliers in this region, including the Sweetgrass Hills, the Bear Paw Mountains, the Little Rockies, the Highwood Mountains, the Judith Mountains, and the Little Snowy and Big Snowy mountains. The Yellowstone River and Missouri River valleys intersect the Plains. There is an exposed region of badlands (barren landscapes cut into ravines and gullies) in the southeast and along the Missouri River, famous for wind- and water-eroded natural stone columns.

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The Rocky Mountains of Montana have wide, smooth valleys separating the mountains and clear, cold glaciated lakes. The Northern Rockies are extremely rugged and include the Cabinet Mountains, the Purcell Mountains, and the Whitefish, Flathead, Lewis, and Swan ranges. Other ranges in the Montana Rockies include the Absaroka, Beartooth, Beaverhead, Big Belt, Bitterroot, Bridger, Crazy, Gallatin, Little Belt, Madison, Mission, and Tobacco Root ranges. The highest point in Montana is Granite Peak at 3,901 m/12,799 ft, the tenth-highest mountain in the USA. Earthquakes are a constant threat in the Rocky Mountain region, owing to a large number of fault lines.

Montana's rivers drain into the Gulf of Mexico (through the Missouri River system), Hudson Bay (through the Bellys, St Marys, and Waterton rivers), and the Pacific Ocean (through the Columbia River system). The Continental Divide separates Montana's two major watersheds. Other rivers in the state include the Yellowstone, Clark Fork, the Kootenai, the Flathead, the Blackfoot, the Gallatin, the Madison, the Jefferson, the Bitterroot, the Sun, the Teton, the Marias, the Smith, the Judith, the Musselshell, the Milk, the Bighorn, the Tongue, and the Powder rivers. Montana has numerous lakes and reservoirs, of which Flathead Lake, a natural freshwater lake with an area of 495 sq km/191 sq mi, is the largest. There are 86 species of fish in Montana, 53 of which are native to the state, including the Yellow perch, walleye, whitefish, kokanee salmon, and arctic grayling.

Montana has suffered extensive loss of topsoil and erosion due to its thin soils. Forested lands in Montana cover 25% of the state’s total area and trees include hardy species such as pine, Douglas fir, and spruce. In the wetter northwest, mountain hemlock and western red cedar are found. Grasses of the Great Plains include wheatgrasses, needle and thread, and three species of blue-stem. Wild flowers in Montana include Indian paintbrush, glacier lily, and aster, and on the Plains, the purple coneflower, and the pasque flower. In mountainous areas the balsamroot, shooting star, mariposa lily, bear grass, and bitterroot are common. Montana's animal wildlife includes white-tailed deer, mule deer, Rocky Mountain elk, black bears, grizzly bears, antelope, Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, mountain goats, moose, caribou, mountain lions, bison, and wolves; smaller mammals include beavers, lynx, bobcats, and wolverines. Montana is home to many different kinds of swan, goose, duck, pheasant, partridge, grouse, and hawk. The American bald eagle, golden eagle, and kestrel are also widely seen.

Features Montana is primarily a state of outstanding wilderness areas. Chief among these are Glacier National Park (on the Continental Divide), Bob Marshall Wilderness, the Great Bear and Scapegoat wilderness area, Waterton Glacier International Peace Park (a World Heritage Site), Missouri Headwaters State Park, and the part of Yellowstone National Park that falls within the state boundaries.

The National Bison Range in western Montana is a protected area for bison, elk, deer, and antelope and there are many similar state and federal game refuges, wildlife reservations, and ranges throughout the state. Madison Buffalo Jump state park preserves a cliff where the Plains Indians stampeded bison to their deaths. Waterside state parks include Flathead Lake, West Shore, Yellow Bay, Whitefish Lake, and Salmon Lake. Flathead is the largest national forest in the state and Flathead Lake is the largest freshwater lake west of the Mississippi. The Charles M Russell National Wildlife Refuge extends for about 200 km/125 mi along the shores of Fort Peck Lake. Eroded rocks in the Montana badlands – in Makoshika and Medicine Rocks state parks – are also major tourist attractions.

There are ten national forests covering 77,000 sq km/29,700 sq mi. Montana is home to one of the largest freshwater springs in the world, Giant Springs, and Great Falls is the largest waterfall on the Missouri River.
Montana's wilderness spaces are an important part of the state's recreational resources, and vacation resorts play a central role in communities. Camping, mountain climbing, skiing, dog-sledding, snowboarding, prospecting, and fossil hunting are popular activities. Hunting big game such as elk and buffalo is popular, as is fishing. Montana's winter ski resorts include Red Lodge Mountain; Big Mountain, near Whitefish; Montana Snow Bowl, near Missoula; and Big Sky and Bridger Bowl, near Bozeman.

Historic sites in Montana are relatively few and date mainly from the 19th century. The Missouri River Headwaters State Park near Three Forks commemorates the Lewis and Clark expedition (1804–06), as does the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center (1998) in Great Falls. St Mary's Mission in Stevensville was Montana's first permanent white settlement, established in 1841 to serve Indian peoples and later functioning as a trading post. The pioneer-period trading post of Fort Owen (1851) is preserved near Stevensville. The historic former gold-rush town of Bannack is located in Bannack State Park near Dillon; other historic frontier towns include Elkhorn, Garnet, Granite, Nevada City, and Virginia City. The Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument near Hardin marks the site of the defeat of Lt Col George Custer at the hands of Sioux and Cheyenne warriors in 1876. The Big Hole National Battlefield near Wisdom and Bear's Paw Battleground south of Chinook mark the sites of battles with, and the surrender of the Nez Percé to, US forces. The Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site near Deer Lodge reflects Montana's cattle ranching history. The University of Montana (1893) in Missoula was Montana's first university. The historic district in the mining town of Butte has some of the USA's first skyscrapers.

Museums in Montana largely reflect regional history. In Helena, the Montana Historical Society (1865) houses the Montana Homeland exhibit and provides a narrative history of the state. Montana State University's Museum of the Rockies (1957) in Bozeman, centres on the work of palaeontologist Jack Horner and is also home to the Taylor Planetarium. The Western Heritage Center (1971) in Billings and the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula (1975) feature extensive exhibitions on regional history. The Mineral Museum and World Museum of Mining (1963) are both located in Butte, where one of the richest veins of copper in the world was discovered at the Anaconda Copper Mine. Throughout the state there are numerous preserved homesteads and small county museums.

Art museums in Montana focus on regional artists. The Missoula Art Museum (1975) has a particular emphasis on present-day Montana artists, and includes a Contemporary American Indian Art Collection. The C M Russell Museum (1953) in Great Falls is dedicated to the life and work of the cowboy artist Charles Russell. The Holter Museum of Art (1987) in Helena is primarily an exhibition centre. The Montana Museum of Art and Culture at the University of Montana, Missoula, features antiques, ceramics, and a collection of prints and paintings, that includes work by Marc Chagall, Salvador Dalí, Edgar Degas, Rockwell Kent, Kathe Kollwitz, William Merritt Chase, and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. The collection also includes numerous works depicting northwestern and Great Plains life. The Yellowstone Art Museum (1964) in Billings is home to the Montana Collection, reflecting the history of regional painting and depictions of Great Plains and frontier life. It is also the site of the Virginia Snook Collection, the largest public collection of the drawings, paintings, books, and memorabilia of cowboy illustrator Will James. Also in Helena is the Archie Bray Foundation (1951), dedicated to the ceramic arts. The Kootenai Galleries (1972) in Bigfork are famous for exhibiting contemporary Rocky Mountain art.

There are seven American Indian reservations in Montana, representing 11 peoples. The reservations feature a wealth of cultural institutions, including the Museum of the Plains Indian (1941) in Browning; the Ninepipes Museum of Early Montana (1998) in Charlo, detailing the history and culture of the Flathead
Indian Reservation; Chief Plenty Coups State Park in Pryor; St Labre Indian School (1884) at Ashland; and the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Culture Center and Museum in Poplar.

**Culture** The American Indian peoples who originally lived in the area were forced onto reservations during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Many descendants of Montana's indigenous peoples still live in the reservations that account for 9% of Montana's land base. On the reservations, events such as the Crow Fair Powwow, Rodeo, and Race Meet are held. There are many other similar American Indian celebrations throughout the year and traditional arts and crafts remain significant. Casinos are economically important on the reservations. Montana's white population includes descendants of English, Irish, Slavic, and other European settlers. Irish Roman Catholics make up the largest immigrant group to arrive in Montana, but Protestants, Lutherans, and Methodists also figure largely in the population's make-up.

Montana has among the lowest population densities of the 50 states. The number of ranches – for which the state was once famous – has declined, but traditional cowboy skills persist. Almost every town has an annual rodeo and the Livingston Roundup and Wolf Point Wild Horse Stampede are popular summer events. Montana festivals tend to reflect an individual town's main industry, for example the Great Falls Railroad Show in June, Libby Logger Days in July, and the Threshing Bee in Choteau every September. These generally feature folk music, including bluegrass and country and western, for which Montana is well known. The Montana State Fair is held in July–August in Great Falls. The annual Cottonwood Folk Festival in Great Falls features a variety of traditional skills, from shoeing horses and panning for gold to cowboy poetry and watermelon-seed spitting contests. Country fairs, chilli festivals, cowboy dances, antiques fairs, brew festivals, mule days, parades, quilt shows, and fruit festivals are all popular throughout the state.

Theatre in Montana is centred in Missoula and Bozeman, and there are several community theatre companies across the state. There is a symphony orchestra in Butte, and the Mother Lode Theatre, a restored 1920s theatre, is a major venue for touring stage companies as well as local productions. Montana's numerous folk music festivals include Music in the Mountains in Big Sky, the Bitterroot Valley Bluegrass Festival in Hamilton, and the annual Last Chance Bluegrass Festival in Helena. The Montana Traditional Dixieland Jazz Festival is held annually in Great Falls. An International Wildlife Film Festival takes place in Missoula every spring.

**Government**

Montana's state constitution The current constitution was adopted in 1972, replacing the original constitution of 1889. Montana elects two senators and one representative to the US Congress, and has three electoral votes in presidential elections.

Structure of state government The Montana legislature is made up of a Senate of 50 members and a House of Representatives of 100 members. Senators serve four-year terms and representatives two-year terms.

The governor, lieutenant governor, secretary of state, auditor, attorney general, and superintendent of public instruction are all elected for four-year terms. Democrat Steve Bullock took the governorship in January 2013.

The Supreme Court consists of seven justices elected on a nonpartisan ballot for eight-year terms. The district courts are organized into 22 judicial districts.

There are 56 counties. Municipal governments, of which there are 129, are divided into different
classes according to population size. Every ten years they are given the resources to reassess their governmental organizations, propose alternative styles of government, and vote for the political system for the next decade.

American Indians on the reservations are self-governing and are not subject to state laws, although major offences on the reservations can be tried in federal courts.

**Economy** Mining has traditionally been very important to the state’s economy. Metallic minerals found here include copper, silver, gold, lead, zinc, and tungsten; non-metallic minerals include sand and gravel, limestone, phosphates, bentonite, fluorite, vermiculite, and gemstones. Coal is mined by way of strip-mining operations that produce low-sulphur coal used for coal-fired electricity generation. Natural gas is mainly present in southeastern and eastern Montana. Platinum, palladium, zinc, and copper are still mined. Montana is the leading producer of talc in the USA, and industrial-grade garnet is also produced. The timber industry is based in the mountainous west and is mainly devoted to softwood. Products include wood pulp for paper and lumber for construction, mine timbers, telephone and telegraph poles, railroad ties, and fuel. Montana is also a major producer of Christmas trees.

Wheat is Montana’s leading crop, and barley, oats, alfalfa, flaxseed, and mustard are also important. Sugar beets, potatoes, beans, cherries, strawberries, and apples are also grown. Cattle and calves are key to the state's livestock economy. Montana's manufacturing industries include wood products, foodstuffs, printed matter, electrical and electronic devices, flour and sugar, tinned fruit and vegetables, and cement.

**History**

**Exploration** Montana’s first inhabitants were American Indian peoples including the Salish (Flathead), Kalispel, Kootenai, Blackfeet, Crow, Sioux, Gros Ventre, Assiniboine, and Cheyenne. Nomadic tribes, such as the Nez Percé, the Arapaho, and the Teton were frequent visitors to the region, hunting the bison and buffalo of the Great Plains. French-Canadian fur trappers visited the region and traded with American Indians during the 18th century, but France lost any claim to the area as a result of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. The Rocky Mountains of Montana formed a western boundary to the Louisiana Purchase territory. In 1804 Thomas Jefferson sent Meriwether Lewis and William Clark to look for a navigable water route connecting the Pacific west to the Atlantic. On 25 April 1805, Lewis and Clark discovered the confluence of the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers, and by July 1805 the expedition had reached the three headwaters of the Missouri River, called the Three Forks, and had named the Jefferson, the Gallatin, and the Madison rivers. The expedition set the scene for later War Department surveys for a railroad that would connect the Pacific and Atlantic coasts.

**The fur trade** During the early 1800s, fur trappers from the North West Company, the Hudson's Bay Company, the Missouri and Rocky Mountain Fur companies, and the American Fur Company competed fiercely for trapping territory. Three major competitive forts were established: on the Bighorn River; at Fort Benton on the Missouri River; and near Libby. During the 1840s the fur trade declined as fashions changed and wildlife resources dwindled, but the local American Indian culture had already been irrevocably altered. Many Indians died as a result of smallpox introduced to the area, and relations between Indian peoples were complicated by commercial pressures and competition. During the 1830s some tribes sought out the aid of Christian missions.

**The gold-rush years** In 1858 James and Granville Stuart and Reece Anderson found gold at Gold Creek in Montana. A gold rush began in earnest after further strikes were made at Grasshopper Creek, and boom towns sprang up, including Bannack City, Virginia City, and Helena. The establishment of silver
and copper mines drew more settlers to the areas to work in the mining industries. Roads and railroads were built to link the makeshift towns, and steamboats were used along the Missouri River for transport. Montana, formerly administered as part of the Louisiana, Missouri, Oregon, Washington, Nebraska, Dakota, and Idaho territories, became a territory of its own on 26 May 1864. The capital was initially Virginia City but in 1875 was moved to Helena.

**Conflict with American Indians** Competition for land, abuses of power by white settlers, and Indian tribal infighting all combined to produce tension during the period of territorial expansion. The Fort Laramie Treaty (1868) was designed to calm the situation and to designate lands: the Blackfeet were given part of north-central Montana, the Crow were given a part of the Yellowstone Valley, and the Assiniboine were awarded lands in northeastern Montana. The Flathead, Pend d'Oreille, and Kootenai were moved to the Jocko Indian Reservation on the south of Flathead Lake and the Blackfeet signed a treaty binding them to lands in northern Montana. In protest at the increasing number of white settlers, violent attacks by American Indian peoples increased in frequency and white settlers demanded forts from the federal government for protection. In 1869, military action left 173 Blackfeet dead at a massacre. Seeking to preserve their territories, the Sioux started to attack travellers on the Bozeman Trail. Sioux leaders Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse gathered a large following and were able to resist US troops, led by Lt Col Custer. On 25 June 1876 the Sioux won a victory against Custer's troops at the Battle of Little Bighorn, during which Custer was killed. Crazy Horse was forced to surrender in 1877, however, and Sitting Bull surrendered in 1881. This brought an end to organized American Indian uprisings, although later relations with the white community were not always peaceful.

**Expansion** Farmers in Montana and neighbouring states soon recognized the potential for profit by raising beef cattle on the territory's rich grasslands. Associated industries developed around the cattle industry and Billings, Miles City, Culbertson, and Havre became important stockyards and shipping points. Railway development in the area further promoted trade. In 1875 silver was discovered at Butte. A smelter and stamping mill were built, and miners and silversmiths moved to the area. By 1883 the Montana Territory had become one of the leading silver producers in the USA. Copper was also discovered at Butte, and the Anaconda Copper Mine became highly productive.

**Statehood** Despite this period of growth, Montana struggled to achieve statehood because of its sparse population. Finally, on 8 November 1889, after a third constitutional convention, Montana was admitted to the Union as the 41st state. The early days of statehood were marked by power struggles as mining magnates Marcus Daly and William Clark, known as the 'Copper Kings', fiercely competed for mining interests and senatorial campaigns. In the 1890s, the Populist Party, or People's Party, gained support in Montana as many of its campaign issues appealed to mining communities. Once elected, the Populist Party passed mining safety reforms and introduced an eight-hour working day. In 1917, the feminist and reformer Jeannette Rankin was elected to the House of Representatives, becoming the first woman to hold a seat in Congress.

**20th century** Montana farmers prospered during World War I when wheat prices were inflated, but a drought in 1917 was compounded by a loss of topsoil, plagues of grasshoppers, and falling wheat prices, and many farmers were ruined. During the Great Depression in the 1930s the copper industry dramatically contracted as foreign competition flooded the market. Droughts continued to threaten farming communities, and many farmers abandoned their homesteads. The New Deal measures helped, particularly the Silver Purchase Act of 1934 and the construction of Fort Peck Dam on the Missouri River. The industrial demands of World War II promoted the growth of manufacturing in Montana, and

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the lumber industry expanded. Oil production also increased during the 1950s and 1960s, and a major
gas field was discovered in the Bear Paw Mountains in 1967. As energy prices became depressed in
the 1980s, however, oil and gas production declined sharply. From the 1980s, tourism and the service
industries grew rapidly, and extensive reforestation, watershed management, fire protection, and other
conservation efforts became major priorities.

Politically, Montana is a ‘swing’ state, with voters tending to return candidates from both the Republican
and Democratic parties to elected federal and state positions.

**Famous peoplesport**  'Evil' Knievel (1938–2007) motorcycle stunt performer

**the arts** Gary Cooper (1901–1961), actor; Myrna Loy (1905–1993), actor; Dorothy Baker (1907–1968),
author; David Lynch (1946– ), film director

**science** Jack Horner (1946– ), palaeontologist

**economics** William Clark (1839–1925) mining magnate; Marcus Daly (1841–1900), mining magnate;
Lester Thurow (1938– ), economist

**politics and law** Jeannette Rankin (1880–1973), politician; Michael Mansfield (1903–2001), educator
and politician.

**images**

Montana – flag

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