

# *Flathead Valley*

Kalispell, Whitefish, Columbia Falls, Bigfork, Lakeside & Somers, Montana

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## WELCOME TO THE FLATHEAD VALLEY

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**I**N THE NORTHWEST CORNER OF MONTANA, near Glacier Park, lies the picturesque Flathead Valley. Known for its lakes, mountains, and streams, the Flathead is home to more than 100,000 people, and is one of Montana's most popular tourist destinations. It includes Flathead County, part of Lake County, and the northern reaches of Flathead Lake and the Flathead Indian Reservation. Prominent towns are Kalispell, Whitefish, Columbia Falls, and Bigfork.

The cultural and economic hub of the region is Kalispell, which was named for the Salish-speaking Kalispel tribe. One of the fastest growing cities in the Treasure State, the city is located in a wide basin surrounded by mountains, rolling hills, rivers, ponds, parks, and lakes. Some of the historic buildings lining its downtown streets are home to the community's arts and culture organizations, such as the Hockaday Museum of Art, the Central School Museum, and the Conrad Mansion Museum, the former home of one of Kalispell's first residents.

Theatre, concerts, festivals, and art exhibits are part of everyday life in Kalispell. The nearby communities of Whitefish and Bigfork also contribute to the rich variety of culture in the region. Montana's seventh largest town, Kalispell is the county seat of Flathead County. Home to Flathead Community College and Kalispell Regional Medical Center, it was founded in 1891 by James J. Hill as part of the westward expansion of the Great Northern Railroad. The Flathead Valley is a financial, retail, health care, education, and commercial service center with a secondary trade area of more than 150,000 people.

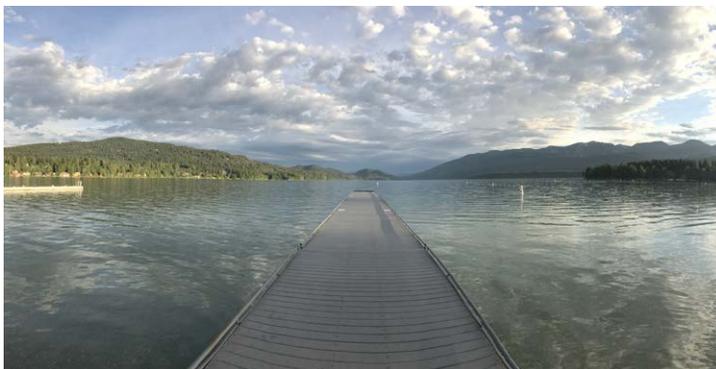
Whitefish is an eclectic community of 8,000 that's at the center of year-round recreational opportunities, including skiing, snowboarding, snowmobiling, horseback riding, water sports, hiking, and zip-lining.



Woodland Park in Kalispell

Eight miles north of town rises Big Mountain, home to Whitefish Mountain Resort, one of America's premier destination skiing venues. On some days, the clouds are low enough that skiers can literally ski above them. The little city itself, on Whitefish Lake, offers theater, art festivals, music venues, a dozen art galleries and a vibrant night life.

Bigfork is located at the spot where the Swan River pours into Flathead Lake. A number of art galleries are located along Electric Avenue, as well as the Big Fork Center for the Performing Arts, which is the home of the Bigfork Summer Theatre. Bigfork boasts a 27-hole golf course, live theatre and an annual arts festival. Visitors can rent boats or take a chartered tour of the lake. Nearby Jewel Basin offers hiking. Glacier National Park and the Bob Marshall Wilderness are short drives away.



A dock at City Beach on Whitefish Lake. (Photo courtesy of the City of Whitefish)




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## KALISPELL PROFILE

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EAST/WEST HIGHWAY 2 and North/South Highway 93 intersect Kalispell, making the city the gateway to several of America's most visited recreational areas. About thirty miles to the east lies spectacular Glacier National Park. Seventeen miles north is one of the nation's largest and most popular ski areas, Whitefish Mountain Resort at Big Mountain. Seven miles south of Kalispell is Flathead Lake, the largest and one of the purest freshwater lakes west of the Mississippi. Glacier International airport is seven miles north of Kalispell. The city and the surrounding smaller communities are located in the midst of 2.3 million acres of federally protected public land, including the Flathead National Forest and two wilderness areas—the Bob Marshall Wilderness and the Mission Mountain Wilderness. As Montana's seventh largest city, Kalispell is the trade center for a three-county area and serves as the county seat for Flathead County.

Some of the surrounding communities include Bigfork, Columbia Falls, Lakeside, Somers, and Whitefish.

### POPULATION

	2010	2017	2019
Kalispell	20,069	23,212	24,951
Whitefish	6,386	7,608	7,924
Columbia Falls	4,701	5,355	5,697
Flathead County	90,853	100,106	102,106

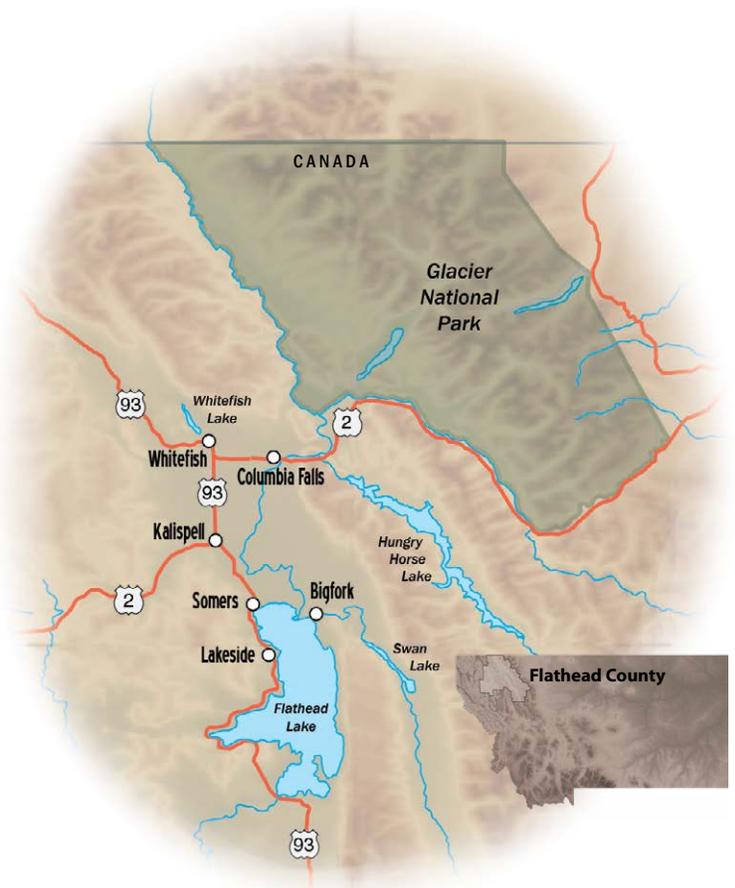
SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2019 figures are estimates)

### CLIMATE & TOPOGRAPHY

Kalispell is set in a relatively flat and fertile area surrounded by rolling hills giving way to more rugged mountainous terrain. The elevation in town is 2,959 feet. The higher mountains to the east and west protect the residents from the harsh extremes east of the Continental Divide as well as the coastal moisture from the west. The surrounding lakes and rivers moderate the temperatures both in summer and in winter.

Summers are warm and dry with daytime highs in the 80's cooling off nicely at night. Early fall brings crisp mornings, but temperatures can still reach into the eighties during September with little humidity. Mid fall often brings an early snowfall making for a spectacular display of bright oranges, gold, and dusting while over the landscape. Winters will usually drop enough accumulation of snow to participate in all the winter recreational activities so popular in Northwest Montana. Spring can at times come early but more often the weather does not settle until about the middle of May.

Most of the moisture falls during the winter and spring seasons with precipitation of about 16 inches annually in the valley floor, and 100 inches on the mountain peaks. The growing season varies depending on location and proximity to the lake, ranging from 105-130 days. Late frost will usually be felt around the 3rd week in May with an early frost averaging mid-September.



### AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

	Minimum	Maximum
January	14° F	29° F
April	31	56
July	47	80
October	28	55

### AIR, WATER AND SUN

Average annual precipitation: 15.7 inches  
 Average annual snowfall: 62.2 inches  
 Average growing season: 130 days  
 Air quality: excellent  
 Water quality: excellent  
 Hours of daylight in June: 16+ hours

SOURCE: www.weather.com



## FLATHEAD ECONOMIC PROFILE

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FLATHEAD COUNTY'S ECONOMY is dominated by the tourism industry. Because of the high number of seasonal jobs the area has its lowest unemployment rates in the summer. For much of the year there are 42,000 to 43,000 jobs in the Flathead, but that number jumps to 47,000 during summer, according to the Montana Department of Labor and Industry.

Fueled by record-breaking attendance in Glacier National Park, Flathead County attracted the second highest visitor spending in Montana in 2016, according to the most recent available figures compiled by the Institute of Tourism and Recreation Research at the University of Montana. Tourists spent more than \$500 million in the county in 2016, almost one quarter of that on food and alcohol. Norma Nickerson, director of the ITRR, said Montana's abundant outdoors remain the primary attraction that keeps visitors coming. "That's what we are here—we are about outdoor recreation. That's why people come," she said. "The main attractions are the parks and forests and streams and mountains."

However, growth in the health care industry has outpaced every other economic driver in the Flathead. In 2019 it is expected to surpass the wood products and manufacturing sectors. Expansions in services since 2016 include new specialty care facilities such as the Montana Children's Medical Center, the Digestive Health Center of Montana and the upgrade and modernization of the Kalispell Regional Medical Center's emergency room. Since 1990 health care employment in Kalispell has doubled and it is Flathead County's largest industry, employing almost 7,000 people. The recent and sustained boom in this sector has led to the Flathead Valley being more attractive to firms and individuals for relocation and subsequently, means area residents are no longer required to travel long distances to receive care. Additionally, health care is expected to continue to grow over the next decade. Economists are predicting another 21 percent increase in health care employment opportunities.

Since the end of the recession real estate and construction are also seeing a boom in the Flathead, with housing prices growing 26.8 percent in Whitefish since 2012 and 19.3 percent in Kalispell.

Sources: University of Montana Bureau of Business and Economic Research and the Flathead Beacon

### PER CAPITA HOUSEHOLD INCOME, 2018

United States	\$53,820
Montana	\$47,120
Flathead County	\$51,410 (estimated)

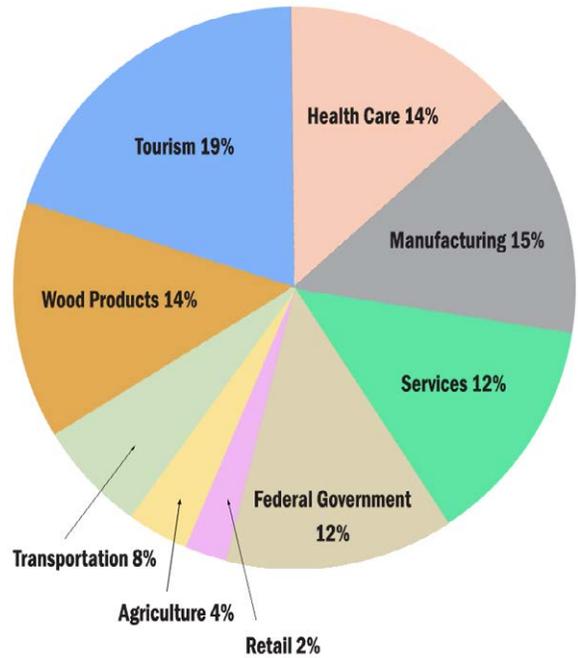
SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

### AVERAGE ANNUAL WAGE, 2018

United States	\$59,898
Montana	\$43,406
Flathead County	\$41,550

SOURCE: Montana Department of Labor & Industry

### ECONOMIC DRIVERS



SOURCE: Bureau of Business and Economic Research, University of Montana

### TOP PRIVATE EMPLOYERS IN FLATHEAD COUNTY

- Kalispell Regional Medical Center
- Weyerhaeuser
- Super 1 Foods
- AON Service Corporation
- Glacier Bank
- Health Center Northwest
- Applied Materials
- North Valley Hospital
- Wal-Mart
- Brendan House
- Immanuel Lutheran Home
- McDonald's
- North Valley Hospital
- Teletech
- Whitefish Mountain Resort

SOURCE: Montana Department of Labor & Industry

### UNEMPLOYMENT

United States:	3.6 percent
Montana	3.6 percent
Flathead County	4.9 percent

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Labor



## HEALTH CARE

.....

**T**HE HEART OF THE MEDICAL INDUSTRY in the Flathead Valley is Kalispell Regional Healthcare (KRH). This complex includes three acute-care hospitals—North Valley Hospital in Whitefish and, in Kalispell, The Health Center and Kalispell Regional Medical Center, a 353-bed facility located on a 250-acre campus along Highway 93 north of downtown. KRH features the Montana Children’s Medical Center, the Digestive Health Institute, cancer treatment facilities, family health care, a pharmacy, rehabilitation programs, the Montana Mental Health Center, and an expanded Emergency Department, among other services.

The **Montana Children’s Medical Center** is a three-story, 190,000 square-foot facility completed in 2019. The only such facility of its kind in Montana, it offers the services of more than 100 pediatric primary care providers, more than 40 pediatric specialty providers, pediatric acute care (including both pediatric and neonatal intensive care) and a range of outpatient care and support services. There are technology and play areas, sleep rooms, family lounges and large patient rooms, which are designed to provide the essential amenities families need during their stay. Locally blown glass fish hang from the ceiling in the main lobby and holographic fish “swim” on the floor. There are two secure playgrounds, and a garden in front of the building.

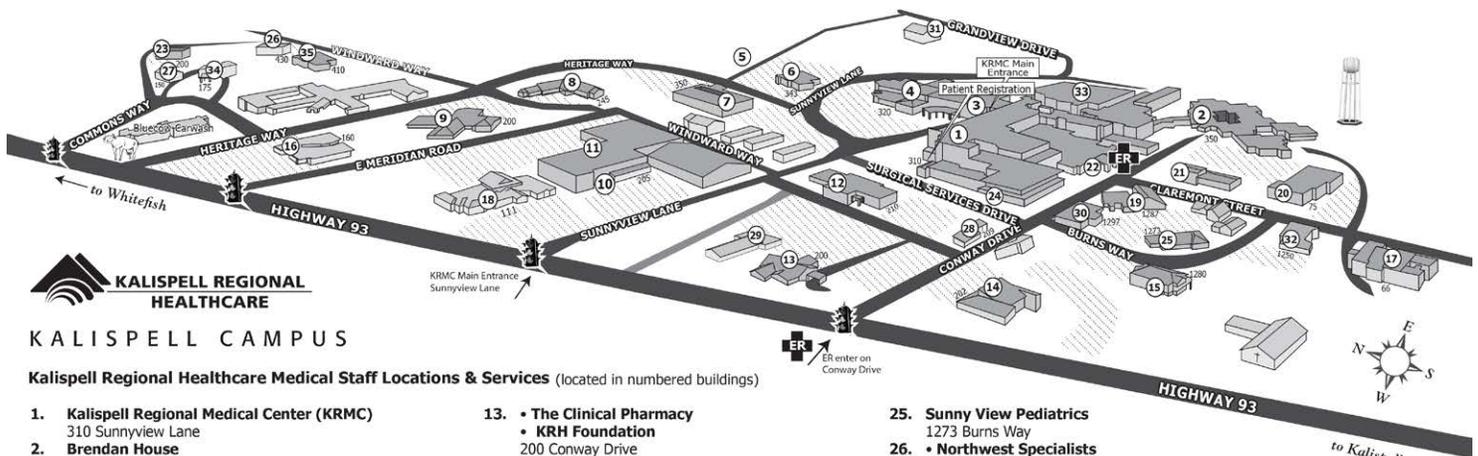
According to an article in the *Flathead Beacon*, “The first floor

is dedicated to inpatient services, featuring a 12-bed pediatric unit, six-bed pediatric intensive care unit (PICU) and 12-bed neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) with six additional beds shelled for future growth. The center also employs child-life specialists who are trained to incorporate therapy and play as they work with kids and families experiencing the trauma of a serious illness or medical procedure.

“A portion of the second floor will offer a coffee-bistro and balcony seating, while the rest of the floor and the entire third floor are shelled for future growth, including an outpatient clinic, oncology inpatient and outpatient services, additional inpatient rooms and expanded child-life areas.”

Four core departments comprise **North Valley Hospital**: The Emergency Department, the Center for Orthopedics, The Birth Center, and the Center for Minimally Invasive Surgery, which utilizes the da Vinci Surgical System to make operations as minimally invasive as possible. (The da Vinci Surgical System is a collection of robotic procedures controlled by a surgeon from a console.)

A joint venture of local physicians and Kalispell Regional Healthcare, **The Health Center** provides a relaxing environment for patients who need diagnostic imaging or specialized surgery. The Health Center elicits interest health care professionals across the country, both for its approach to patient care and its collaborative relationship with local physicians.



### KALISPELL CAMPUS

Kalispell Regional Healthcare Medical Staff Locations & Services (located in numbered buildings)

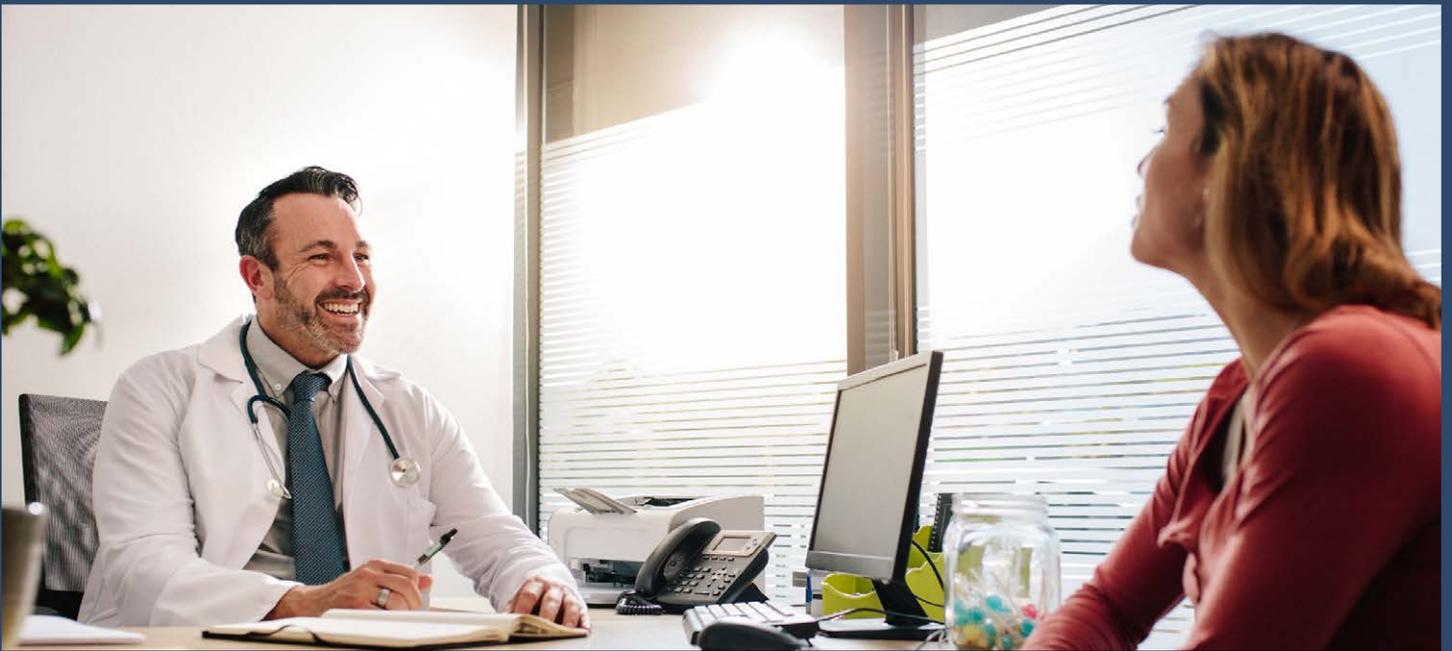
- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Kalispell Regional Medical Center (KRMC)</b><br/>310 Sunnyview Lane</li> <li>2. <b>Brendan House</b><br/>350 Conway Drive</li> <li>3. <b>KRMC Bass Breast Center</b><br/>310 Sunnyview Lane</li> <li>4. <b>The Health Center</b><br/>320 Sunnyview Lane</li> <li>5. <b>KRH RV Parking</b></li> <li>6. <b>Northwest Montana Radiation Oncology</b><br/>343 Sunnyview Lane</li> <li>7. <b>The Rock Building</b><br/>350 Heritage Way</li> <li>8. <b>The Montana Center for Wellness &amp; Pain Management</b><br/>245 Windward Way</li> <li>9. <b>Pathways<sup>SM</sup> Treatment Center</b><br/>200 Heritage Way</li> <li>10. • <b>KRMC Outpatient Rehabilitation</b><br/>• <b>Department of Physical Medicine &amp; Rehabilitation</b><br/>205 Sunnyview Lane</li> <li>11. <b>The Summit Medical Fitness Center</b><br/>East Meridian Road</li> <li>12. <b>Medical Arts Building</b><br/>210 Sunnyview Lane</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>13. • <b>The Clinical Pharmacy</b><br/>• <b>KRH Foundation</b><br/>200 Conway Drive</li> <li>14. <b>Montana Children’s Specialists</b><br/>202 Conway Drive</li> <li>15. • <b>Kalispell Medical Offices and Bone Health</b><br/>• <b>ASSIST</b><br/>1280 Burns Way</li> <li>16. <b>Two Medicine Building</b><br/>160 Heritage Way, Suite 102</li> <li>17. <b>Kid Kare</b><br/>66 Claremont Street</li> <li>18. <b>The Cedars Building</b><br/>111 Sunnyview Lane</li> <li>19. <b>Family Health Care</b><br/>1287 Burns Way</li> <li>20. <b>Northwest Professional Plaza</b><br/>75 Claremont Street</li> <li>21. <b>KRMC A.L.E.R.T. Hangar</b></li> <li>22. <b>KRMC Emergency Department</b><br/>250 Conway Drive</li> <li>23. <b>Neuroscience &amp; Spine Institute</b><br/>200 Commons Way</li> <li>24. <b>Surgical Clinics at KRH</b><br/>1333 Surgical Services Drive</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>25. <b>Sunny View Pediatrics</b><br/>1273 Burns Way</li> <li>26. • <b>Northwest Specialists</b><br/>• <b>Diabetes Education and Prevention</b><br/>430 Windward Way</li> <li>27. <b>KRH Rheumatology Specialists</b><br/>150 Commons Way</li> <li>28. • <b>Outpatient Laboratory Services</b><br/>• <b>Medical Arts Pharmacy</b><br/>209 Conway Drive</li> <li>29. <b>Glacier Conference Center</b><br/>1375 US Highway 93 N</li> <li>30. <b>Dino-Sore</b><br/>1297 Burns Way, Suite 3</li> <li>31. <b>Pediatric Family Housing</b><br/>110 and 112 Grandview Drive</li> <li>32. <b>Family Health Care – South</b><br/>1250 Burns Way, Basement</li> <li>33. <b>Montana Children’s</b><br/>370 Sunnyview Lane</li> <li>34. • <b>Dermatology Associates*</b><br/>• <b>Step Ahead Foot and Ankle Clinic*</b><br/>175 Commons Loop</li> <li>35. <b>Western Montana Mental Health Center*</b><br/>410 Windward Way</li> </ol> |
|---|---|--|

indicates patient parking areas

Valet parking (406) 471-3648

\* independently owned and operated clinic with providers on KRH medical staff

More details about the clinics or departments within each building can be found on the backside.



## WHEN IT COMES TO YOUR HEALTH, THERE IS NOTHING MORE SIGNIFICANT THAN FINDING A PRIMARY CARE PROVIDER WHO UNDERSTANDS YOU.

Whether it's infancy to geriatric, good health starts with your primary care provider. The person who knows your history, your family history and your health needs better than anyone. The person who:

- ***Provides routine preventive care for fewer long-term problems and complications***
- ***Provides personalized care***
- ***Helps to improve your quality of life***
- ***Manages your major health-related conditions***
- ***Coordinates your care with a specialist if you need one***

It's important that you develop a trusting, ongoing relationship with a health care provider. If you don't currently have a designated primary care provider, please visit [krh.org/services/family-health](http://krh.org/services/family-health) to see provider bios and find the right fit. A little bit of homework goes a long way in this important professional relationship.

### **BIGFORK**

Bigfork Medical Clinic\*

### **COLUMBIA FALLS**

Family Health Care Columbia Falls Clinic  
North Valley Professional Center

### **EUREKA**

Eureka Healthcare Primary Care\*

### **KALISPELL**

Big Sky Family Medicine\*  
Family Health Care\*  
Kalispell Medical Offices and Bone Health  
Northwest Family Medicine  
Sunny View Pediatrics  
Woodland Clinic

### **LAKESIDE**

Westshore Medical Clinic\*

### **POLSON**

Polson Health\*

\* These clinics offer walk-in care.

**[krh.org/services/family-health](http://krh.org/services/family-health)**

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## RESOURCES

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### CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

#### Kalispell Chamber

15 Depot Park, Kalispell MT 59901, (406) 758-2800  
www.kalispellchamber.com

#### Lakeside-Somers Chamber

P.O. Box 177, Lakeside MT 59922  
www.lakesidesomerschamber.org

#### Whitefish Chamber

307 Spokane Ave. #103, Whitefish MT 59937, (406) 862-3501  
www.whitefishchamber.org

#### Columbia Falls Chamber

P.O. Box 312, Columbia Falls MT 59912, (406) 892-2072  
www.columbiafallschamber.com

#### Bigfork Chamber

P.O. Box 237, Bigfork MT 59911, (406) 837-5888  
www.bigfork.org

### LIBRARIES

#### Flathead County Library

247 1st Ave East, Kalispell 59901, (406) 758-5820  
www.flathead.mt.gov/library

#### Bigfork Branch Library

525 Electric Ave 59991, (406) 837-6976

#### Columbia Falls Public Library

130 6th St W, Columbia Falls, MT 59912, (406) 892-5919

#### Whitefish Community Library

9 Spokane Ave, Whitefish, MT 59937, (406)862-9914,  
www.whitefishlibrary.org

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[www.qualitypromotionsads.com](http://www.qualitypromotionsads.com)

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### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

#### City of Kalispell Community Development Department

P.O. Box 1997, Kalispell MT 59903, (406) 758-7740  
www.kalispell.com/164/Community-Development

#### Montana West Economic Development

44 2nd Ave W, Kalispell, MT 59901, (406) 257-7711  
www.dobusinessinmontana.com

#### Kalispell Small Business Development Center

15 Depot Park, Kalispell MT 59901, (406) 758-2802  
www.kalispellsmallbusiness.com

### MORE RESOURCES

#### Flathead County Animal Shelter

225 Cemetery Road, Kalispell, (406) 752-1310  
www.flathead.mt.gov/animal

#### Humane Society of Northwest Montana

100 Adopt A Pet Way, Kalispell, (406) 752-7297  
www.humanesocietypets.com

#### Flathead County Agency on Aging

40 11th St. W., Suite 100, Kalispell, (406) 758-5730  
www.flathead.mt.gov/aging

#### Flathead City-County Health Department

1035 1st Ave W, Kalispell, (406) 751-8100  
www.flatheadhealth.org

#### Community Health/Nursing Services

1035 1st Ave W, Kalispell 406-751-8110  
www.flatheadhealth.org

#### Flathead/Lake County Job Service

P.O. Box 1879, Kalispell MT 59903, (406) 758-6200,  
www.wsd.dli.mt.gov/local/kalispell

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## EDUCATION

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### **KALISPELL PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**K**ALISPELL SCHOOL DISTRICT #5 (KPS) administers six elementary schools, one middle school, two high schools, and two alternative high schools. Total school enrollment is about six thousand students. As part of the national Edible Schoolyard Project KPS in partnership with FoodCorps Montana operates six gardens and an orchard that supply the district's lunchrooms with fresh fruits and vegetables.



#### **Flathead High School**

*Glacier High School*

With an enrollment of 1,492 students, Kalispell's oldest high school is a four-year comprehensive educational facility offering academic, technical, and occupational education programs. It was ranked number 11 among Montana's 166 high schools and 3,160 among 17,245 American high schools, according to an evaluation by *U.S. News World Report*. Schools are ranked according to their performance on state-required tests, graduation rates and how well they prepare students for college. FHS was Montana's first authorized International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme School. International Baccalaureate offers a comprehensive two-year curriculum for juniors and seniors that allow students to fulfill requirements of various national education systems and to meet admissions requirements of universities throughout the world. 644 4th Street, (406) 751-3500.

#### **Glacier High School**

Opened in 2007, this quarter-million square-foot facility sits on a 60-acre campus that's ringed by mountains. The enrollment of Glacier High is 1,345, of which 8 percent are minority students. The student-to-teacher ratio is 17:1. According to *U.S. News*, Glacier ranks number 12 among Montana high schools and 3,780 nationally. In 2014 the Glacier High School Wolfpack won its first Football State Championship only seven years after the school opened its doors. This is the second fastest time span in the history of AA Montana football. Address: 375 Wolfpack Way. Phone: (406) 758-8600.

#### **Linderman Education Center**

One of Kalispell's two alternative high schools, Linderman is designed for students who are seeking an educational experience in a setting that differs from the structure of a traditional high school. Students have the same set of required courses and standards as other high schools, but they can complete their studies in whichever order they want and at their own pace, with half-day or night sessions available. In 2016 Linderman graduated 83 students. Address: 124 3rd Avenue East. Phone: (406) 751-3990.

#### **Agriculture Education Center**

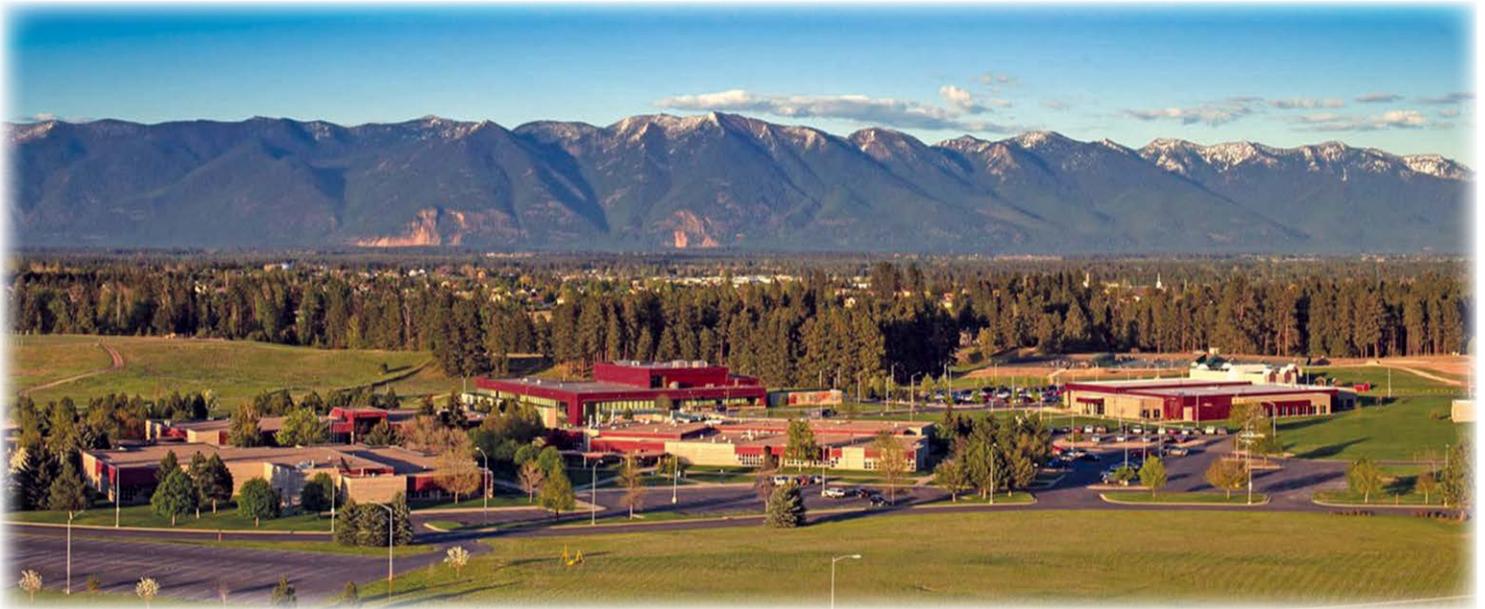
The Agricultural Education program offers courses designed to prepare students for careers in the global agriculture, food, fiber, and natural resources industries. Taught at the Agricultural Education Center, the curriculum emphasizes animal science, plant science, agricultural mechanics and business, plus natural resources management. Agricultural education programs are built on three core areas: classroom and laboratory instruction, supervised agricultural experience programs, and Future Farmers of America activities. Classes offer traditional experience in livestock and crops, and they also teach skills in GPS and precision agriculture, science, engineering, business, marketing, and sales. Address: 310 FFA Drive. Phone: (406) 751-3950.

#### **Kalispell Middle School**

The school enrolls 1,016 student in grades eight and nine, the school offers classes in science, English, and business, career and technical education. The school also provides lessons in foreign language, music, mathematics, social studies, communication arts and reading skills development. The school maintains a library and special services department, and provides online educational resources for students and teachers. It organizes a variety of camps and field trips. The school provides opportunities for sports activities, such as basketball and football. Address: 205 NW Lane. Phone: (406) 751-3800.

#### **Kalispell Elementary Schools**

- Peterson Elementary, 1119 Second St. West, (406) 751-3737.
- Hedges Elementary, 827 4th Avenue East, (406) 751-4090.
- Edgerton Elementary, 1400 Whitefish Stage Road, (406) 751-4040.
- Russell Elementary, 227 W. Nevada Street, (406) 751-3900.
- Elrod Elementary, 413 3rd Avenue West, (406) 751-3700.
- Rankin Elementary, 2155 Airport Road, (406) 300-0600.



The Kalispell campus of Flathead Valley Community College

## KALISPELL RURAL SCHOOLS

There are several school districts in the greater Kalispell area. The Superintendent of Flathead County Schools has detailed information and area maps. Call (406) 758-5720 or go online to [www.co.flathead.mt.us/schools](http://www.co.flathead.mt.us/schools). Note that not all rural schools offer public transportation or bus service to and from school.

- West Valley School, District #1; K-8; 2290 Farm to Market Rd.  
(406) 755-7239
- Fair-Mont-Egan, District #3; K-8; 797 Fairmont Rd.  
(406) 755-7072
- Creston School, District #9; K-6; 4495 Montana Highway 35  
(406) 755-2859
- Cayuse Prairie School, District #10; K-8; 897 Lake Blaine Rd.  
(406) 756-4562
- Helena Flats School, District #15; K-8; 1000 Helena Flats Rd.  
(406) 257-2301
- Evergreen School, District #50; K-8; 18 West Evergreen Dr.  
(406) 751-1111
- Smith Valley School, District #89; K-8; 2901 Hwy 2 West  
(406) 756-4535

## FLATHEAD VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Located on campuses in Kalispell and nearby Lincoln County, FVCC offers an affordable two-year curriculum that awards associate degrees to students who want to enter the workforce or continue on to a four-year college. Founded in 1967, the school is one of only three community colleges in Montana that are independent of the state's university system. Enrollment is 2,216. The student-to-teacher ratio is 16:1. Tuition is charged on a per-credit basis. For example, a Flathead County resident taking 10 credits would pay \$1,730 for the semester (only \$423 for a senior citizen).

Students seeking degrees can choose from more than 100 programs. High school students can earn college credit through the Running Start Program. Lifelong learners can take continuing education classes to brush up on skills or learn new ones. Students planning to transfer to a four-year

college can pursue an Associate of Arts (AA) or Associate of Science (AS) degree in General Studies. Degrees are offered in fields as diverse as forensic science and geology to history, art and pre-medicine. Students planning to go to work can get an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) career or technical degree in welding, entrepreneurship, goldsmithing, and firearms technology, to name a few of the courses of study.

In 2012 FVCC broke ground on the Rebecca Chaney Broussard Center for Nursing and Health Science building with a \$4 million gift from the Broussard family. In 2015 the college created the Center for Manufacturing Advancement and the Brewing Science program, the first of its kind in Montana.

FVCC is fully accredited by the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges. Kalispell campus: 777 Grandview Drive, (406) 756-3822. [www.fvcc.edu](http://www.fvcc.edu).

## FLATHEAD VALLEY PRIVATE SCHOOLS

During the 2018-19 school year, there were 14 private schools operating in Flathead County, serving 1,292 students. These included:

- Children's House Montessori School (Kindergarten), 1301 E 7th St., Whitefish, (406) 863-4685, [chmswhitefish.org](http://chmswhitefish.org).



Some of the 375 students at Rankin Elementary, Kalispell's newest school, as they study a life cycle experiment. (PHOTO COURTESY OF THE RANKIN SCHOOL)

- Farming For The Future Academy, 400 Veterans Drive, Columbia Falls, (406) 253-4369, [www.farmingforthefutureacademyinc.org](http://www.farmingforthefutureacademyinc.org).
- The Kalispell Montessori Center (grades 1-6), 349 Willow Glen Drive, Kalispell, (406) 755-3826, [www.kalispellmontessori.com](http://www.kalispellmontessori.com).
- Individualized Ed Center (a pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten Montessori school), 310 Sunnyview Lane, Kalispell, (406) 758-2065
- Montana Academy (a therapeutic boarding school, emphasizing both treatment and education for teens), 9705 Lost Prairie Road, Marion, (406) 858-2339, [www.montanaacademy.com](http://www.montanaacademy.com).
- Woodland Montessori (Montana-licensed day care and early childhood school for children ages 27 months to kindergarten), (406) 755-3824, [www.kalmont.com](http://www.kalmont.com).
- St. Matthews Catholic School (K-8), (406) 752-6303, [www.st-mattsaints.org](http://www.st-mattsaints.org);
- Stillwater Christian School (Middle–High School), (406) 752-4400; [www.stillwaterchristianschool.org](http://www.stillwaterchristianschool.org).
- Woodland Montessori School (ages 2– 6), Parkhill Road, Kalispell, (406) 755-3824, [woodlandmontessori.weebly.com](http://woodlandmontessori.weebly.com).
- Valley Adventist Christian School (grades 1-8), 1275 Helena Flats Road, Kalispell, (406) 752-0830, [www.kalispelladventistschool.org](http://www.kalispelladventistschool.org).
- Trinity Lutheran School, 495 5th Avenue, Kalispell, (406) 257-6716, [www.trinityed.org](http://www.trinityed.org).
- Sunlight Montessori School, Po Box 4942, Whitefish, (406) 862-7662, [chmswhitefish.org](http://chmswhitefish.org).
- Summit Preparatory School, 1605 Danielson Road, Kalispell, (406) 758-8100, [www.summitprepschool.org](http://www.summitprepschool.org).
- Rocky Mountain Education (grades 4-9), 105 Blue Crest Drive, Kalispell, (406) 755-0490.

## WHITEFISH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The district has more than 1,500 plus students attending classes in four facilities. Business expansions in one of Montana's fastest growing towns have helped solidify the district's tax base. In addition to a full classroom curriculum offered to all K-12 students the district offers a Virtual High School (VHS) for students in the 8th grade and beyond. More than 300 courses are available to students who have an interest and aptitude to challenge them in a diverse curriculum taught by nationally known instructors. Student must have advanced computer skills for on-line success with VHS offerings. Dual credit for most classes is accepted by WHS for graduation purposes.

Students also have the option of attending Flathead Valley Community College by taking classes of their choice in the Running Start program, which provides eligible high school juniors and seniors the opportunity to get a start on their college career by earning dual credit simultaneously with Whitefish High School and Flathead Valley Community College.

### Whitefish High School

According to the 2019 evaluation completed by *U.S. News and World Report*, Whitefish High (9-12) is ranked sixth among Montana's 166 high schools. Among 17,245 high schools in America Whitefish High is ranked #2,826. Schools are ranked according to their performance on state-required tests, graduation rates and how well they prepare students for college. Enrollment is 482 and the student-to-teacher ratio is 14:1. 1143 E. 4th Street, (406) 862.8600, [www.whs.wsd44.org](http://www.whs.wsd44.org).

- Whitefish Independent High School provides a non-traditional setting for students in grades 10-12., 1143 E. 4th Street, (406) 862-8688, [www.ihs.wsd44.org](http://www.ihs.wsd44.org).
- Whitefish Middle School, 600 East 2nd Street, (406) 862-8650, [www.wms.wsd44.org](http://www.wms.wsd44.org).
- Muldown Elementary School, 1500 East 7th Street, (406) 862-8620, [www.muldown.wsd44.org](http://www.muldown.wsd44.org).

## COLUMBIA FALLS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

School District Six covers a large area of northern Flathead County, south of Glacier National Park. Enrollment includes about 2400 students in two elementary schools, one junior high school and one high school. The administration's offices are at 501 6th Avenue West, (406) 892-6550, [www.cfmtschoools.net](http://www.cfmtschoools.net).

- Columbia Falls High School was built in 1959. The original CFHS campus was designed to accommodate 650 students in the main building and administration offices in the CFHS Annex. Additions and renovations took place in 1990, when an academic wing of seven classrooms was added. In 1995, the Industrial Tech area was expanded to accommodate additional classroom and shop space. The main high school building and the annex houses classrooms and activity space for more than 850 students. 610 13th Street West, (406) 892-6500), [www.cfhighschool.org](http://www.cfhighschool.org).
- Columbia Falls Junior High School enrolls about 500 students in grades six through eight. 1805 Talbot Road (406) 892-6530, [www.cfjuniorhigh.org](http://www.cfjuniorhigh.org).
- Glacier Gateway Elementary, 440 4th Avenue West (406) 892-6540, [www.glaciergateway.org](http://www.glaciergateway.org).
- Columbia Falls Ruder Elementary, 1550 12th Avenue West, (406) 892-6570, [www.ruderelementary.org](http://www.ruderelementary.org).



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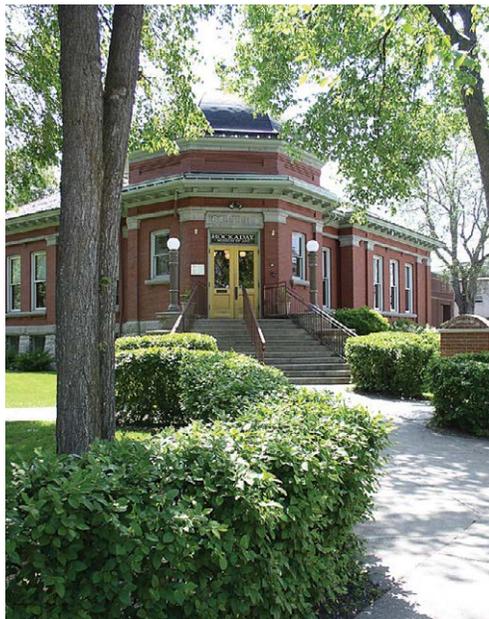
## MUSEUMS



### HOCKADAY MUSEUM OF ART

Located in the historic downtown section of Kalispell, the museum is housed in the turn-of-the-century Carnegie Library Building, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Opened in 1904, the red-brick building has undergone significant renovations to create a sophisticated museum setting while retaining the building's historic ambiance. The museum's namesake Hugh Hockaday moved to the Flathead Valley after a successful career as a commercial artist. He passed away during the conversion of the Carnegie Library to an art center and the building was renamed in his honor in 1969. The Hockaday Museum of Art focuses on the arts and culture of Montana with an emphasis on the art and artists of Glacier National Park. Permanent exhibits include the "Crown of the Continent: Glacier National Park," highlighting significant works by photographers and painters, along with collectables featuring the rich history of the park. In addition to its permanent collection, the museum offers rotating exhibits of works by nationally renowned and emerging artists. Children enjoy the "Discovery Gallery" with hands-on activities that change along with the exhibits. The museum also offers on going events and programs for children and adults, along with outreach and artists-in-residence programs.

The Hockaday Museum hosts "Arts in the Park"—Northwest Montana's largest and longest running art and entertainment fair. This event takes place every 4th weekend of July at Depot Park in downtown Kalispell. This juried art show is a favorite for browsing the



*The Hockaday Museum of Art in Kalispell*

artistic creations of local, regional, and national artists during the lazy days of summer. Here one can find high quality jewelry, clothing, photography, paintings, pottery, glass, and other unique artwork by Montana artists and others from several states and Canada. This annual benefit for the Hockaday Museum of Art has more than 100 booths, all featuring fine artists and craftsmen, along with a variety of food vendors and great live entertainment from talented musicians and exciting dance performances along with hands-on art activities for children.

The Hockaday Museum of Art is located two blocks east of Main at the corner of Third Street and Second Ave. For more information call (406) 755-5268 or go to [www.hockaday-museum.org](http://www.hockaday-museum.org).

### THE MUSEUM AT CENTRAL SCHOOL

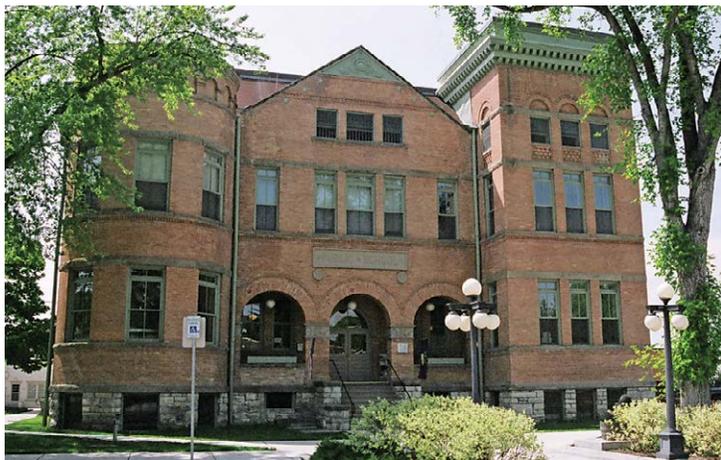
This museum houses an intriguing collection of Northwest Montana history in a historic building erected in 1894 as Kalispell's first school. The four-story stone and brick structure served the educational needs of the Flathead Valley for nearly 95 years before being fully restored in the late 1990s. Here you can discover the story of early Kalispell from its founding in the late 1800s to turn of the century Demersville and up through the 1950s. You will also learn about the life and times of Frank Bird Linderman—author, statesman, and trusted friend of northwest Indians. On display are genuine artifacts more than a century old including toys, weapons, tools and an authentic 1900s era sawmill. Also there is an extensive collection of Indian artifacts and a full-size replica of a 1933 forest fire lookout. Inside the museum you'll also find a coffee house serving specialty coffees and teas, lunches, home-baked sweets. Wireless internet service is also available.

The museum is operated by the Northwest Montana Historical Society and is located at 124 2nd Avenue East in downtown Kalispell. Call (406) 756-8381 or visit [www.yourmuseum.org](http://www.yourmuseum.org)

### THE CONRAD MANSION MUSEUM

The Conrad Mansion is one of the most outstanding examples of luxurious and elegant pioneer living and period architecture in the Pacific Northwest. The mansion sits on the edge of the original town site of Kalispell overlooking the valley and the Swan Mountain Range in close vicinity to the city's beautiful Woodland Park.

Charles E. Conrad—a founder of Kalispell—and his wife, Alicia, arrived in the Flathead Valley in 1891 when the town was but a dream and the area a wilderness. Conrad saw a good investment opportunity as well as a permanent home for his family and descendants. Owner-



*The Museum At Central School*

ship and occupation of this beautiful Norman-style mansion remained in the family until 1974, when the Conrads' youngest daughter, Alicia Conrad McCutcheon Campbell donated the home its and contents to the city of Kalispell to be maintained in perpetuity as a historic site in memory of her parents.

Visiting the Conrad Mansion today provides an extraordinary glimpse into the life of this wealthy family that entertained political leaders, pioneers, and artists, as well as family and friends.

The structure itself remains unchanged since Washington architect Kirkland Cutter designed and built the home for the Conrads in 1895. Arches, long gables, bay windows, and massive native stone chimneys punctuated the homes exterior. Architecturally untouched, the mansion's three floors totaling 13,000 square feet, have been totally restored to their original beauty. The "Great Hall" with its massive sandstone fireplace and golden oak woodwork, the original Chippendale dining table, the kitchens custom made stove, imported marble lavatories, sleigh beds, and canopied four-posters, all appear as they did when guests arrived over 125 years ago. The beautifully landscaped grounds invite a stroll with its winding walkways, massive



*The entrance to the grounds of the Conrad Mansion in Kalispell*

shade trees, old-fashioned gazebo, iron gates, and old-fashioned flower beds.

Special events at The Mansion include **Death by Chocolate**. This is an annual fun and interactive murder mystery with a devout cast of characters. Guest try and solve the mystery while enjoying hors d'oeuvres, beer, wine, desserts, and chocolate. Prizes are given for best costume as well as a silent auction. An old-fashioned ice cream social held at the mansion grounds after the **Fourth of July** parade. Then there's **Tea & Tour**, a personalized tour followed by tea, sandwiches, and special desserts served at the original dining room table used by the Conrads for their special guests. During **Christmas at the Mansion** visitors can enjoy the holiday season with music, arts & crafts sale, champagne, and hors d'oeuvres.

The Conrad Mansion grounds are also available for weddings and receptions. The Mansion Museum is open for tours May-October 15. A gift shop features period reproductions, antiques, and the work of local artisans. Located on Woodland Ave in downtown Kalispell, across from Woodland Park. (406) 755-2166, [www.conradmansion.com](http://www.conradmansion.com).

## THE WHITEFISH RAILWAY DEPOT

Recently restored to serve as the Stumptown Historical Society Museum, this original train station is still a functioning Amtrak station as well. It is one of the busiest Amtrak Empire Builder stations on the Great Northern Railway (which crosses from St. Paul to Seattle) boarding or departing some 200 passengers a day. The Stumptown Historical Society owns the station and the parking lot, while BNSF Railway, which leases offices on the second floor, retains ownership of the platform and track.

Visitors you can explore the area's railroad history, which began on October 4, 1904 when the first train arrived. The Museum also chronicles the impact both the railroad and logging industries had on the Flathead Valley and the Northwest. Featured is a fully restored diesel locomotive that was operated by the Great Northern Railroad. No admission is charged. Donations are accepted.

The Stumptown Historical Society offices are located in the Depot at 500 Depot Street, Suite 101, (406) 862-0067, [www.stumptownhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.stumptownhistoricalsociety.org).



*The Conrad Mansion Museum in Kalispell*



*Inside the Conrad Mansion Museum in Kalispell*



*The Stumptown Historical Museum and Amtrak station in Whitefish*



## ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



**T**HE ARTS, LIVE MUSIC, AND THEATRE are an essential part of life in the Flathead Valley. Residents and visitors alike thrive in this culturally rich environment. Studios, galleries, festivals, and museums showcase the work of more than 2,000 artists and craft people. Theater presentations and live music are performed all summer.

**The Whitefish Theatre Company** is a non-profit, community-based performing arts company that performs in the 326-seat I.A. O'Shaughnessy Center, located at 1 Central Avenue in Whitefish, Montana. The company, now in its 40th year, presents plays, concerts, music, dance and summer camps for local schools in the region. Events are supported with grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Western States Arts Federation, and the Whitefish Community Foundation. For more information call (406) 862-5371, or go online at [www.whitefishtheatreco.org](http://www.whitefishtheatreco.org).

**Alpine Theatre Project** (ATP) was founded in Whitefish in 2004 by three Broadway veterans, Betsi Morrison (*Broadway's The Sound of Music*), Luke Walrath (*Broadway's 42nd Street*), and David Ackroyd (*Broadway's Children of a Lesser God*) Bringing Broadway talent, production, and education to Flathead Valley residents since 2004, ATP's artists have performed in more than 190 Broadway productions, won 4 Tony Awards, 7 Emmy Awards, 4 Golden Globe Awards, and 1 Academy Award. Since its founding, ATP has become one of the most talked-about and unique cultural institutions in the Inland Northwest, with notices in the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *American Theatre Magazine*, and *Frommer's Budget Travel Magazine*, which named ATP as one of the attractions that make Whitefish, Montana "One of the Top 10 Coolest Small Towns in America."

2019 productions include *Hound of the Baskervilles*, *Dare to Dream: The Road to Broadway*, *Frozen*, and *Yuletide Affair 16*. Contact ATP for tickets for more information regarding upcoming events. Box office: (406) 862-7469; ATP office: (406) 862-9050, [www.atpwhitefish.org](http://www.atpwhitefish.org). Performances are held at the Whitefish Performing Arts Center, 127 Spokane Avenue.

Kalispell's popular summer event **Picnic in the Park** features a variety of local talented musicians who perform on the outdoor stage at Depot Park Tuesday evenings and Wednesday afternoons. Bigfork Riverbend Park and Columbia Falls Marenette Park also host summer concert series.

**Glacier Symphony, Orchestra and Chorale** is the most active symphonic organization in Montana, performing up to 24 concerts and events per season, with year-round programming. During our Masterworks season the musical ensemble offers a variety of Symphonic, Holiday Pops and Chorale concerts from October through February, a three-concert series in April for our Easter Festival, and a special "Jazz Night with the Maestro" concert in May.

Summer programming includes outdoor Summer Pops concerts at Rebecca Farm, northwest of Kalispell, a unique, week-long, Festival Amadeus featuring in 2019, Mozart's comic opera *Così fan tutte*. Interwoven throughout the entire year is an expanding Wild About Music (WAM) education and outreach program. 69 North Main Street, Kalispell, (406) 407-7000, [www.gscmusic.org](http://www.gscmusic.org).

The **Bigfork Center for the Performing Arts** is a venue for plays, musical theatre, live music, concerts, and movies. Sixty years old in 2019, the Center Located in the heart of Bigfork, the picturesque village on the bay, the Center features a beautiful entry and lobby area with a 435-seat theater.

Twenty-eight years ago the Bigfork Center for the Performing Arts opened its doors for the first time. The old theatre, which had housed summer stock productions since 1960, was deemed unsafe. Recognizing the pivotal role theatre had played in the village, indeed the Flathead Valley, local folks established a non-profit foundation in 1984 enabling them to raise funds for the new structure and the

Bigfork Center for the Performing Arts Foundation came into existence. Since that time the Center and its foundation have been managed by a volunteer board of directors who are dedicated to the promotion and preservation of this iconic Bigfork facility. 526 Electric Avenue, 406-837-4885, [www.bigforkcenter.org](http://www.bigforkcenter.org)

The center is also home to the Bigfork Summer Playhouse, which celebrates its 59th Season of live professional theatre in 2018. Known by many as the "theatre by the bay," the Bigfork Summer Playhouse is a past recipient of the Montana Governor's Award for the Arts. This year's repertory theatre productions will be: *The Totally Radical 80s Revue*, *Disney's The Little Mermaid*, *Singin' In The Rain*, *All Shook Up*, and *Into The Woods*. They also have a late summer show, *Hits From the 50s, 60s, and 70s*.

Box office phone: 406-837-4886. Open May 15–August 24, Monday–Saturday from 12–5pm (or through showtime).

[www.bigforksummerplayhouse.com](http://www.bigforksummerplayhouse.com)



## SPORTS AND RECREATION

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### KALISPELL CITY PARKS

Kalispell has an abundance of recreational opportunities and facilities. There are thirty city parks. The largest, oldest, and most popular is the 38-acre **Woodland Park**, which was once the private game preserve for the city's founder, Charles Conrad. It is located on the east side of Kalispell in close proximity to the Conrad Mansion. Central to the park is a beautiful lagoon that is home to a variety of waterfowl, a rose garden, a formal flower garden, a playground, and a one-mile paved walking loop trail. New additions are a water park complete with a swimming pool and slide, and a skate park. The lagoon is transformed into a skating rink during the cold months. This is an ideal place to photograph waterfowl, birds, and other small animals. **Lawrence Park**, is another great place to watch wildlife, enjoy a picnic, or walk the nature trails. The park also features playgrounds and playing fields. **Depot Park** is home to Picnic in the Park, a summer series of afternoon and evening concerts. **Kid Sport Youth Athletic Complex** is located across from Flathead Community College and provides 140 acres of fields for youth soccer and baseball. There are a dozen **public**

**tennis courts** available around town. Community College. **County Parks and Recreation Department** offers fun activities for children, youth, and adults. [www.co.flathead.mt.us/parksrec/parkuse.html](http://www.co.flathead.mt.us/parksrec/parkuse.html).

### FLATHEAD COUNTY PARKS

Flathead County maintains more than 40 accessible parks and facilities. **Conrad Complex Sports Facility** is located off Highway 2 and includes several playing fields, volleyball courts, basketball court, picnic tables, and rest rooms. **Leisure Island Park** is located off Leisure Drive and adjacent to the Stillwater Park. It features a natural boat ramp and is a local favorite bird watching area for spotting eagles, ospreys, and upland game birds. **Foys Lake Park**, located 3.5 miles south of Kalispell on the 235-acre lake brimming with trout and kokanee, has a swimming area, boat dock, benches, and rest rooms. **Iven Herron Memorial Park**, on Foys Lake Road, offers equestrian jumps, horse stalls, dressage arenas, a great sledding hill and cross country ski trails. **Foys Community Center**, located four miles south of Kalispell, includes full rental facilities.

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## FLATHEAD LAKE

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**F**LATHEAD LAKE IS ONE OF THE 300 largest natural lakes in the world and is the largest natural freshwater lake in the western United States. Of those large lakes, Flathead is one of the cleanest. Studies at the University of Montana's Biological Station show that water quality in Flathead Lake is among the best in the world. The Lake has a maximum depth of 370 feet, is 15.5 miles wide and 23.3 miles in length. Flathead Lake has 161 miles of shoreline.

- The lake's major tributaries are the Flathead and Swan rivers. Numerous small streams flow directly into the Lake at its shoreline, particularly on the wetter East Shore.

- Kerr Dam is located at the outlet of Flathead Lake in Polson, at the southern end. Regulation of outflow by the dam maintains the lake's level between 2,883 and 2,893 feet above sea level.

- Due to its massive volume and normally active winds over the surface Flathead Lake does not freeze over most winters, although the bays often have winter ice cover.

- Open space on the shoreline includes the federal Flathead Wetland Management District located on the north shore surrounding the mouth of the Flathead River. Wildhorse Island, near Big Arms Bay, is the largest island in the lake, at 2,100 acres. It's managed by the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks as a wildlife refuge. It is noted for its herd of Rocky Mountain Bighorn sheep and several wild horses. Native grasses and flowers are abundant.

- Bird Island near The Narrows is state-owned and managed by the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks as a bird refuge. Geese, osprey, heron, and eagles frequent the island.

- Flathead Lake Biological Station is operated year-round by the University of Montana as an academic and research facility mainly dealing with aquatic studies. Average surface temperatures of the lake range from 2.3 C (36 F) in mid-January, to 13.5 C (56 F) in mid-June, to 20.3 C (68 F) in mid-August.

- Of the 25 fish species most commonly found in the Flathead River-Lake ecosystem, 10 species are native and 15 have been introduced, according to Melissa Holmes of Flathead Biological Station. The native species include redbside shiner, peamouth minnow, squawfish minnow, largescale sucker, longnose sucker, sculpin, bull trout, cutthroat trout, pygmy whitefish, and yellow perch are the most common non-natives and have increased in abundance since 1970 .

- All sorts of water sports are enjoyed on Flathead Lake's 200 square miles of surface. Several state parks and lake shore communities have boat launches and marinas on the Lake. You can book a boat tour or rent a canoe, kayak, wind-surfer, sea-doo, sailboat or fishing boat. Serious anglers can probe the 300-foot depth of the lake for trophy-sized catches. For license information call the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks at (406) 444-2535.

### FLATHEAD LAKE STATE PARKS

**Big Arm/Flathead Lake State Park.** At Big Arm, camping, a long beach, a nature trail, and a yurt rental area are available. This park

is a popular jump-off point to Wildhorse Island, where visitors can use the ramp to launch their boats. A nature trail provides excellent bird watching opportunities.

**Wildhorse Island.** Boat access to this day-use-only primitive park is regulated to protect the 2,000-acre island. Wildhorse was used by the Salish-Kootenai Indians to pasture horses to keep them from being stolen by other tribes. The island preserves an endangered Palouse prairie environment and incredible wildlife, and historic resources.

**West Shore.** Glacially carved rock outcrops rise from Flathead Lake to overlooks with spectacular views of the lakeshore and the Swan and Mission Mountains. Considered the most private park on Flathead Lake, this site is distinguished by a mature fir, pine, and larch forest, and a rocky beach.

**Wayfarers.** This site just outside Bigfork is located on the northeast shore of Flathead Lake. A boat launch and nature walks over the rocky shoreline to the cliffs are popular with excellent views of the water.

**Finley Point** is located in a secluded, mature pine forest near the south end of Flathead Lake. There are 16 sites to explore, boat slips, and boat moorings. The kokanee salmon and lake trout fishing is excellent.



*Big Arm/Flathead Lake State Park*

### Other State Parks in the Flathead Valley

- Lake Mary Ronan is seven miles west of Flathead Lake. Off the beaten path, this park provides a quiet opportunity to pick huckleberries and hunt for mushrooms.

- Lone Pine: This day-use-only park provides information about the Valley's cultural and natural history with a visitor center providing nature interpretive programs as well as picnicking, and a self-guided nature trail and horse trails.

- Whitefish Lake: This small park provides a mature forest, a pleasant campground, and a beach. Sheltered from the wind, the lake is ideal for waterskiing.

- Yellow Bay offers four walk-in tent camping spots and a wide sandy beach for swimming, boat launching, and fishing.



## FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST

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**T**HE FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST encompasses 2.3 million acres. Over 270,000 acres of State of Montana and private land are within the Flathead National Forest boundary. The Bob Marshall, Great Bear, and Mission Mountains Wildernesses comprise approximately 46 percent of the Forest's total land base.

### **The Bob Marshall/Great Bear Wilderness Complex**

Considered the crown jewel of America's wilderness areas, "The Bob" comprises of 1.5 million acres of high mountain lakes, crystal clear rivers, remote valleys, and high alpine meadows. The complex is home to elk, moose, black bear, mountain goat, mountain sheep, white tail and mule deer, and mountain lion and provides critical habitat for the grizzly bear and gray wolf. The "Bob" is accessible only by trails, making it a true outback experience for hiking, fishing, hunting, horsebacking, pack trips, river floating, and camping.

♦ **Camping:** There are 34 developed campsites within the Flathead National Forest with a total of 40 family units available; some have a small daily use fee while others are free. In addition to developed campsites, camping is allowed throughout the Flathead National Forest.

♦ **Hiking:** The Forest has 2,600 miles of hiking trails and 200 miles of designated National Recreation Trails, mostly in designated wilderness areas. The Danny On Memorial Trail is very popular and located within the Big Mountain ski area north of Whitefish. This self-guided trail provides you with an opportunity to observe and learn about plants and animals of the high country. Flathead National Forest's Jewel Basin is a 15,000-acre hiking area and maintained exclusively for hiking and camping. The Jewel Basin is located at the north end of Sawm Mountain Range east of Kalispell and is used heavily everyday throughout the summer.

♦ **Huckleberry Picking:** The Flathead National Forest hosts some of the best huckleberry picking in Montana. Huckleberries are ripe from mid-July to October.

### **The Mission Mountain Wilderness**

Popularly known as the American Alps, the western face of the Missions rises 7,000 feet above the valley floor. The apex of the range is a glacier-studded 9,280-foot McDonald Peak in the south, where a dozen other summits rise above 9,000 feet. Permanent snow fields feed hundreds of gem-like tarns (glacier formed lakes). Waterfalls are abundant, with the best known being the 1,000-foot plunges of Elizabeth and Mission Falls.

In 1979 the Confederated Salish and Kootenai tribes designated 89,500 acres of privately owned tribal lands along the western slopes as Wilderness. This is the only Tribal Wilderness in the nation to be established by the actual tribe.

### **The Flathead River**

♦ **The North Fork of the Flathead River** originates 50 miles across the border in British Columbia, Canada. The remoteness is what brings people to this part of Montana and its the scenic beauty that keeps bringing them back. The North Fork of Flathead River divides the Flathead National Forest from Glacier National park. The upper 41 miles above Camas Creek Bridge are classified as Scenic.

The lower 17 mile section to Blankenship Bridge and the confluence of the Middle Fork is classified as Recreational. Fish in the North Fork run on the small size (8-12 inches) due to lack of nutrients in the cold water. Before spring runoff, you can catch larger westslope cutthroat trout that migrate from Flathead Lake on the spring spawning runs. Species present: Westslope Cutthroat Trout, Bull Trout, and Mountain Whitefish. None-native Rainbow Trout are becoming increasingly more common in the lower section of the river. Season opening is the third Saturday in May through November 30.

♦ **The Middle Fork of the Flathead River** originates in the Bob Marshall Wilderness at the confluence of Strawberry and Bowl creeks. Better known for its whitewater than its fishing, the river is perhaps the best whitewater river in Montana, living up to its designation as a Wild and Scenic River. The upper 46 miles from its start to the confluence with Bear Creek is designated as "wild" while the lower 49 miles to the confluence with the North Fork is designated as "recreational." Rapids with names such as "Jaws" and "Bone-crusher" proved sheer exhilaration. Fish in the Middle Fork run on the small size as well, and species are the same as present in the North Fork. The river is catch-and-release for cutthroat trout and a daily limit of two for rainbow trout. The best whitewater action can be found during and just after runoff in June and July. Fishing typically picks up in late July through September.

Primary access is by horseback and backpack. About 890 miles of trail navigate you around the "Bob," as it is affectionately called by locals. The headwaters can be accessed by trailhead near the communities of Seeley Lake to the west or from the south near Ovando.

♦ **The South Fork of the Flathead River** originates at the confluence of Danaher and Youngs creeks and flows north for 57 miles into Hungry Horse Reservoir. The upper 50 miles of the South Fork, from the headwaters to the Spotted Bear River is classified as a Wild River. It is here that the best fishing is found. Wilderness limits apply in the south Fork which is three fish daily and in possession, no fish can be over 12 inches.

The South Fork below Meadow Creek Gorge downstream to the reservoir offers good fishing for the roadside angler with short hikes to the water. There are a few places where an angler can experience fishing as it was at the turn of the century. The South Fork is unique in that, with a few exceptions, it supports an intact native fish assemblage. So come prepared to battle a native Montanan—the westslope cutthroat—in the solitude of the Bob Marshall Wilderness.





## GLACIER NATIONAL PARK

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**I**N THE RUGGED NORTHERN SECTION of the Montana Rockies lies some of the most spectacular and pristine wilderness in the U.S. Jagged peaks carved by glacial ice, hanging valleys that end in towering cliffs and 300 foot waterfalls, hundreds of species of trees, shrubs and wildflowers describes this "Crown Jewel of the Continent." Almost every species of wildlife native to Montana resides in the park, including grizzly bear, mountain goat and bighorn sheep, wolves, lynx, elk, deer and moose. Glacier has one of the largest remaining grizzly populations anywhere in the lower 48 states. The vast variety of wildlife combined with the numerous natural predators sets Glacier apart from nearly every other national park. The park has 272 known bird species, 63 different mammals, 23 fish species, five types of amphibians and three types of reptiles.

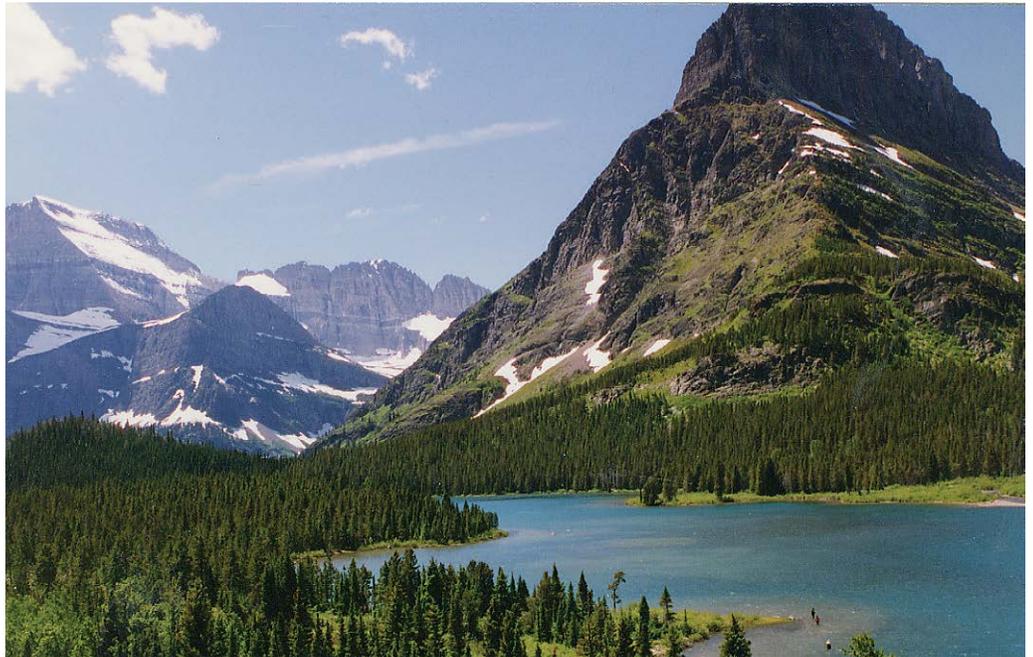
Glacier Park is the vast ecosystem stretching from the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex north to British Columbia, Alberta, and Canada's Waterton Lakes National Park.

The park contains an unusual diversity of terrain. Windswept peaks, rolling grassland, forested hillsides, and alpine tundra, with a climate ranging from rain forest in the west to high mountain desert in the eastern side of the park. There are over 175 named mountains, six are over 10,000 feet. The Continental Divide meanders 106 miles through the backbone of the park. There are 762 lakes in Glacier, with Lake McDonald the largest at 6,823 acres, followed by St. Mary at 3,923 acres. Carved from immense glaciers, both lakes lie at the bottom of deep gorges and offer dramatic scenery. St. Mary and McDonald Lakes have exceptionally beautiful settings that have made them some of the most photographed lakes in the U.S.

With over 730 miles of trails, Glacier is a hikers paradise for those seeking wilderness and solitude. The Northern Highline Trail is one of America's premier hiking trails. Bring your camera, as the height of summer creates a splash of color with the abundance of wildflowers along the trails, on the hillsides and in the valleys. Fall is the best time to photograph wildlife, as they are more apt to be out in the open. Other activities within the park include ranger led walks, horseback riding, cycling, fishing, and camping along with cross-country skiing and snow-shoeing during fall and winter.

The 52-mile Going-to-the-Sun Road, a National Historic Landmark, spans the width of Glacier, crossing the Continental Divide at 6,646-foot Logan Pass. The road passes through every type of terrain in the park from large glacial lakes to ancient cedar forests with numerous viewpoints and pullouts so motorists can stop for extended

views and photos. Early morning and early evening gives the best light and time for photographing wildlife and spectacular sights. The road is well worth traveling in both directions, as views from one side are much different than that of the other. The western upper-half presents an unending sea of choppy peaks, whereas the opposite outlook is equally dramatic, with the abrupt switch from mountain peaks to Montana plains and prairie.



*Hidden Lake in Glacier National Park*



*Going-to-the-Sun Road in Glacier National Park*



## COMMUNITIES

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### WHITEFISH

Although known primarily for the Big Mountain Ski Resort, which has long been a popular hill with skiers of all skill levels, Whitefish also offers abundant summer activities. Glacier National Park, the Flathead River and the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area are all nearby, giving visitors to Whitefish an opportunity to enjoy an array of outdoor settings. Then there are water sports at Whitefish Lake State Park and golf at Whitefish Lake Golf Club, home to a 36-hole course. The outdoor fun is complimented by a host of accommodations, restaurants and services, ensuring a comfortable stay regardless of the season. The town also offers a number of art galleries representing artists from across the United States. For a festival atmosphere, experience Whitefish during July 4th for the Fireworks at City Beach Independence Day celebration.

Whitefish was ranked by *Architectural Digest* as one of the best twenty-five small towns in America.

### COLUMBIA FALLS

This small town is just ten miles from Whitefish and eighteen miles south of West Glacier Park. The town maintains about 28 acres of parkland with playing fields and picnic areas along with the Pinewood Aquatic Center, which features a 25-meter competitive swimming pool.

At par 72, Meadow Lake Golf Course was rated by *Golf Digest* as a 4-1/2 Star Course and one of the top four public play golf courses in Montana. *Golf Magazine* says Meadow Lake Golf Course is a “must play” course.

Big Sky Waterslide offers water slides of all levels and speeds, as well as mini golf, an arcade, and a river ride alternative for those avoiding the Flathead River itself. Other summer ventures include numerous concerts, and Heritage Days with a rodeo, parade, street dance, craft fair, car show, basketball tournament, and 5k and 10k runs. Fisherman can travel to the nearby Hungry Horse Dam and Reservoir. These local bodies of water are also popular for boating, waterskiing, and even casual rafting. In the winter there are miles of prepared snowmobiling trails.

Columbia Falls is home to a variety of industrial businesses. Plum Creek Timber Company and Stoltze Land and Lumber are among its largest companies and employers in the area.

### BIGFORK

Nestled inside a coil of the Swan River just before it empties into Flathead Lake, this small community is home to more than a dozen art galleries. Many of them house the studios of working artists. In addition to its artistic reputation, Bigfork is known for its scenic beauty, fine restaurants, professional theatre and unique shops. Every spring, melting snows create the Swan River’s “Wild Mile,” in which kayakers race the rapids during the annual Whitewater Festival. That event opens a summer full of activities in town, on the water and in the sur-



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Kayaking on Flathead Lake



The little town of Bigfork with the Mission Mountains in the background. Photo courtesy of bigfork.org

rounding mountains. The Bigfork Summer Pro Rodeo is held in July. The Flathead National Forest contains the Jewel Basin Hiking area as well as miles of national forest trails for hiking, horseback riding and wildlife watching. Laid out on the shores of the lake, Eagle Bend Golf Club offers affordable, quality golf on three nine-hole courses, one of which was designed by Jack Nicklaus, Jr.

The Bigfork Center for the Performing Arts is home to the Bigfork Summer Playhouse, children's theatre, concerts, plays and performances throughout the year. As a community of just over 1,500 full-time residents, Bigfork offers a number of features and services not always found in larger communities. The Bigfork Area Chamber of Commerce boasts more than 350 active members, including four banks, financial services, professional services, medical and dental practices, businesses and community service organizations. For more information visit [www.bigfork.org](http://www.bigfork.org)

## LAKESIDE & SOMERS

Lakeside and Somers are neighboring communities that encompass 13 miles of lake frontage along the northwest shore of Flathead Lake. These quaint lakeside communities are home to a variety of shops including art galleries, studios, some excellent restaurants, hardware stores, food stores, motels, bed & breakfasts, and a variety of services.



The New Klondike, a steamship that plied Flathead Lake in the early 1900s.

For additional shopping and services, Kalispell, the largest trade center is only minutes away.

Steamers plied the lake until the mid-thirties, making regular stops in Lakeside with passengers and freight. Prior to the 1900s the town of Lakeside was called "Stoner" after the first postmaster, who built and operated a hotel where the creek that still bears his name flows into the lake. In 1920 after a few more name changes, the town became known as Lakeside.

Somers began as a company town of the Great Northern Railway. To extend the company's tracks throughout the west, railroad ties were needed and the timber surrounding Flathead Lake made the north end of the lake an ideal mill site, as well as the start of Somers Lumber Company. The first general store and other historic buildings from the turn of the century are still in use.

Today life in Lakeside and Somers continues to revolve around the lake, and both communities have swimming beaches, boat launches, and a yacht club. Recreational activities are abundant with such activities as hiking, cross-country and downhill skiing, fishing, and of course water sports in the largest freshwater lake west of the Mississippi out their front door.



## COMMUNITY SERVICES

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### UTILITIES

♦ **Electricity:** Flathead Electric Cooperative has grown from 117 members to more than 50,000 members. With 4,500 miles of overhead and underground power lines, it serves the entire Flathead Valley and is the second largest electric utility in Montana. 406-751-4483, or toll-free at 800-735-8489, [www.flatheadelectric.com](http://www.flatheadelectric.com).

♦ **Water:** The cities of Kalispell, Whitefish, and Columbia Falls have full water systems with ground water as primary sources. Whitefish also uses surface water as an important source.

♦ **Natural Gas:** Natural Gas is available in Northwest Montana. Visit the Northwestern Energy website to find specific information about rate schedules and availability., [www.northwesternenergy.com](http://www.northwesternenergy.com).

♦ **CenturyTel** provides products and services in advanced telecommunications technologies. It is also one of the largest local exchange companies in the United States. 290 North Main, Kalispell, (406) 758-1000, [www.flathead.centurytel.net](http://www.flathead.centurytel.net).

♦ **Television/Cable Companies:** Spectrum, 855-401-8643; DirectTV, (888) 438-2427.

♦ **Sewer:** Kalispell, Whitefish, and Columbia Falls operate tertiary

treatment plants that serve the municipalities and surrounding areas. Bigfork, Lakeside, and Somers also have centralized collection and treatment systems. Most treatment in county areas is by septic system.

### HOUSING

As one of the most desirable areas in the U.S., the Flathead Valley has experienced a strong and steady growth during the past decade. The median home value in Flathead County is \$231,800. Flathead County home values have gone up 7.4 percent over the past year and Zillow predicts they will rise 2.3% within the next year. The median list price per square foot in Flathead County is \$258, which is the same as the Kalispell Metro average of \$258. The median price of homes currently listed in Flathead County is \$429,950. The percent of delinquent mortgages in Flathead County is 0.6%, which is lower than the national value of 1.1%.

The median house rental price in Flathead County is \$1,750, which is the same as the Kalispell Metro median of \$1,750.

Homes in Whitefish, Somers, Lakeside, and Bigfork vary drastically in large part due to lake front property being so highly coveted.

### TAXES

Montana is one of five states that does not collect sales taxes. Montanans pay from 1 to 6.9 percent of their income in income tax. The highest rate applies to incomes over \$17,600.

The median property tax in Flathead County is \$1,777 per year for a home worth a median value of \$231,800. Flathead County collects, on average, 0.77 percent of a property's assessed fair market value as property tax.

Flathead County has one of the highest median property taxes in the United States, and is ranked 585th of the 3143 counties in order of median property taxes. The average yearly property tax paid by Flathead County residents amounts to about 3.34% of their yearly income. Flathead County is ranked 440th highest of the 3143 counties for property taxes as a percentage of median income. (Sources: Zillow, [www.tax-rates.org](http://www.tax-rates.org))

### AIR SERVICE

Glacier Park International Airport, nine miles northeast of Kalispell, is the air transportation gateway to Glacier Park and Northwestern Montana. Twenty-one flights are scheduled daily to major hubs by five airlines: Delta, United, Alaska Airlines, and Allegiant. For airline reservations call: Allegiant 702-505-8888, Delta 800-221-1212, Alaska 800-252-7522 or United 800-241-6522.

### AMTRAK

East-bound and West-bound service is provided aboard the Chicago to Seattle Empire Builder. For more information visit [www.amtrak.com](http://www.amtrak.com) or call 800-872-7245.



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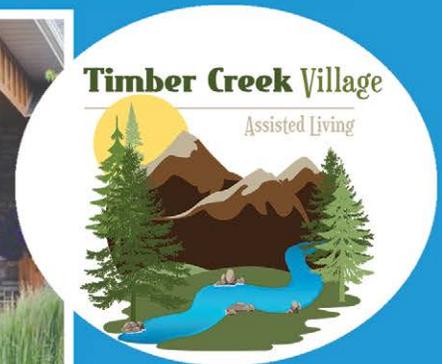
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