

MONTANA'S INDIAN COUNTRY

CULTURE, HISTORY AND HERITAGE

Long before Montana became known as the land of the "Big Sky," Indian nations and Indian people lived here and knew this place as "Home." Their histories, philosophies and religions were inherently connected to what is now the state of Montana. Montana is a sacred place. The stories of Indian people are part of the land and the spirit of Montana. Take time to explore the culture, history and heritage of Montana's original residents.

Montana's Tribes, Their Reservations and Signature Events:

- ✚ **Blackfoot ~ "Oki"** (Browning, Glacier Country) – Bordering Glacier National Park, Canada and the Rocky Mountain Front, the Blackfeet were once referred to as the "Lord of the Plains." *North American Indian Days* ~ 2nd weekend in July ~ (Browning) www.blackfeetnation.com
- ✚ **Chippewa-Cree ~ "Tansi"** (Box Elder, Russell Country) – The Rocky Boy Reservation in northcentral Montana, near the Canadian border, was named after the Chippewa Chief Stone Child, which was incorrectly translated to evolve into "Rocky Boy." *Rocky Boy's Annual Pow Wow* ~ early August (Box Elder) www.rockyboy.org
- ✚ **Salish & Kootenai ~ "Xext sxlxalt" (Salish) and "Ki'suk kuykyit" (Kootenai)** (Pablo, Glacier Country) – These two confederated tribes compose the Flathead Reservation on the shores of Flathead Lake. Scenic beauty, watchable wildlife and "The People's Center" offer unique perspectives into their culture. *Arlee 4th of July Celebration* ~ 1st week of July (Arlee) – www.peoplescenter.org; *Standing Arrow Pow Wow* ~ mid-July (Elmo) www.cskt.org
- ✚ **Crow ~ "Kahay"** (Crow Agency, Custer Country) – This tribe calls itself the "Apsaalooke" (meaning "children of the large-beaked bird") but that was misinterpreted as the word "crow." During the annual Crow Fair, this area becomes the "Tepee Capital of the World." *Custer's Last Stand Reenactment* ~ 4th week in June (Hardin) www.custerslaststand.org; *Valley of the Chiefs Powwow* ~ early June (Lodge Grass); *Crow Fair & Rodeo* ~ 3rd week in August (Crow Agency) www.crow-fair.com
- ✚ **Gros Ventre & Assiniboine ~ "A'aninin" (Gros Ventre) and "Nakoda" (Assiniboine)** (Fort Belknap, Russell Country) – These two tribes, creating the Fort Belknap Reservation, are called "The White Clay People" and "The Generous Ones" respectively and reside in the rolling plains of central Montana. *Hays Powwow* ~ mid-July (Hays); *Milk River Indian Days* ~ 4th week of July (Fort Belknap) www.ftbelknap-nsn.gov
- ✚ **Assiniboine & Sioux ~ "Nakoda"** (Poplar, Missouri River Country) – The Fort Peck Reservation, bordering the Missouri River, is home to two separate Indian nations, each composed of numerous bands and divisions. *Red Bottom Celebration* ~ mid-June (Fraser); *Badlands Celebration* ~ late June (Brockton); *Wadopana Celebration* ~ 1st week in August (Wolfpoint); *Poplar Indian Days* ~ Labor Day weekend (Poplar) www.fortpecktribes.org
- ✚ **Northern Cheyenne ~ "Haahe"** (Lame Deer, Custer Country) – The rugged Northern Cheyenne Reservation bounded by the Tongue River and the Crow Reservation, are known in Cheyenne as Notamésêhese meaning "Northern Eaters." *4th of July Pow Wow* ~ 1st week of July (Lame Deer); *Ashland Labor Day Powwow* ~ Labor Day weekend (Ashland)
- ✚ **Little Shell ~ "Annii"** (Great Falls, Russell Country) – A tribe without a reservation, this state-recognized band of the Chippewa tribe is petitioning for federal recognition.



Tips For Your Visit

Come with an open mind. Indians are as varied in physique, personality and style as any other group of people. There is also a difference in the "look" of Indian communities from other communities. Here are some suggestions on how to enjoy your trip for years to come:

- ✚ Take only pictures; both tribal and federal law prohibits tampering with or removing archeological items.
- ✚ Ask permission before taking pictures of any person, sacred sites and ceremonies.
- ✚ Unless invited, don't enter sweat lodges, sun dances, cemeteries or homes.
- ✚ Experience local cuisine, discover beautiful arts, crafts and jewelry and support local community efforts.



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Montana's Indian reservations are rich strongholds of Native American heritage. They are places where Indian culture can be experienced in sacred landscapes and at annual gatherings (powwows) where traditional dress is worn and tribal customs are carried on and passed down. Remarkable art and crafts reflect a unique connection between Montana Indians and the natural world. From the splendor of Flathead Lake to the historic Little Bighorn Battlefield to the scenic beauty of the Bears Paw Mountains, there are a multitude of cultural and scenic treasures that make the tribal lands of Montana wondrous places.

Indian Sites and Attractions

- ✚ **Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument** (Crow Agency, Custer Country) – This National Park Services site memorializes where armies of Sitting Bull and Custer fought in one of the last armed efforts of the Northern Plains Indians to preserve their ancestral way of life. Visitor center, museum and self-guided and guided tours are available. (year-round) www.nps.gov/libi
- ✚ **Nez Perce National Historical Park** – From Oregon to Montana, this 1,170 mile (1,883 km) National Park Service trail explores 38 sites through four states, including the Big Hole National Battlefield and ending at the Bear Paw Battlefield. www.nps.gov/nepe
 - ☞ **Big Hole National Battlefield** (Wisdom, Gold West Country) – Visitor Center, self-guided tours and ranger programs allow you to explore the site of the turning point of the Nez Perce War between U.S. Army and the Nez Perce Indians. (year-round) www.nps.gov/biho
 - ☞ **Bear Paw Battlefield** (Chinook, Russell Country) – This Battlefield commemorates the final battle of the Nez Perce War of 1877. A good place to start your visit is at the Blaine County Museum (the interim visitor center) for the presentation “40 Miles From Freedom.” (year-round) www.nps.gov/nepe
- ✚ **First Peoples Buffalo Jump State Park** (Ulm, Russell Country) – Located above and below the cliffs that 14 tribes used to hunt buffalo, this jump site provides walking trails and a visitor center that explains the importance of the buffalo to the tribes. (year-round) www.fwp.mt.gov/parks
- ✚ **Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center** (Great Falls, Russell Country) – This Center chronicles the Corps of Discovery from beginning to end as well as the important experiences they had with the Plains and Northwest Indians along their amazing journey. (year-round) www.fs.fed.us/r1/lewisclark/lcic
- ✚ **The People's Center** (Pablo, Glacier Country) – This unique cultural center is a vital, living encounter with Native American culture, as centuries-old wisdom for living harmoniously with the earth is practiced and taught. It features an exhibit gallery, educational programs and interpretive tours focusing on Native American heritage, natural history and cultural interpretation. (year-round) www.peoplescenter.org



In many communities, Native Americans own or operate their own businesses, which showcase their unique perspective on their history and culture. Throughout Montana, you may stop at local galleries or cafés that feature Native American craftwork or food, take a guided tour of Glacier National Park, the Little Bighorn Battlefield or a reservation with a local guide sharing the resident viewpoint or stay at a ranch or in a tepee. For more ideas on a Montana vacation, explore www.indiannations.visitmt.com or www.visitmt.com.



Powwow Etiquette

A powwow is a gathering where Native American dancing, singing and celebration take place. It may also include encampments, feasting, handgames and parades. The powwow brings the circle of people closer to their family, friends and Native American culture. When in doubt, ask!



- ✚ **Be Patient** – Powwow events may not start exactly at the time indicated in the program. Be patient, enjoy the atmosphere and the event will take place in due time.
- ✚ **Please stand and remove caps or hats during the Grand Entry and Exit and during any “Honor Song.”**
- ✚ **If you're invited to attend a ceremony, dress modestly, observe quietly, don't applaud and refrain from touching ceremonial clothing, outfits or regalia.**
- ✚ **Listen to the announcer (or emcee) for the Round or Friendship Dance, an Intertribal Dance or others. Join in the celebration and form a circle, dance clockwise and make new friends!**

Remember, there are no spectators at a powwow. Everyone is considered a participant, even if you don't do anything but lend your presence. Everyone has a place in the circle of people.