

Bozeman, Montana: Lots to see and do in an upscale but homespun and hip haven

Lee Daley , SF Upscale Travel Examiner



Known as a cowboy town and home to **Montana State University**, Bozeman, with its friendly semi-bohemian character, has evolved into a mini-metropolis loved by residents and visitors alike. First-time visitors are often astounded and pleased, as I was, at the overflowing cup that is Bozeman. History and culture blend in seamlessly with the city's nearby access to outdoor adventure. Environmental awareness is high too. That is no surprise seeing how Montana's big sky and stunning mountain ranges envelop everything with their magic.

Where to Start:

Aim high and get your overview of Bozeman with a hike. Numerous trails ranging from gentle to strenuous in elevations from 4,500 to more than 10,000 feet are close by. A good first choice is the Main Street to the Mountains trail system, starting at several points throughout town. If you are even more adventurous, join a horseback ride into the nearby mountains.

An overview of the Rocky Mountains at the first-class Museum of the Rockies is also mandatory. The museum's new Siebel Dinosaur Complex is one of the premier paleontology centers in the world. Four major exhibit halls follow the known history of dinosaur existence. A life-size *Torosaurus* model stands next to a genuine 9-foot skull. Can you imagine the daily caloric intake?



The museum's Taylor Planetarium simulates flying through space in three dimensions. A recent huge screen documentary brought to life the Lewis and Clark expedition, comparing its daring and discovery to the U. S. space program. www.museumoftherockies.org. Tel: (406) 994-3466. Combination museum/planetarium passes available. Located on the Montana State University campus at 600 W. Kagy Blvd. Tel: (406) 994-3466.

Artists abound in Bozeman. The area is reputed to have more artists per capita than any city in the country. Open to the public, **The Emerson Center for Arts and Culture**, a converted children's home, now houses studios of art, dance, photography, drama, a theater and a ballroom. Two dining venues complete the picture. **The Emerson Grill** serves Italian fare with a focus on organic and "farm to table" regionally grown produce.

The seasonal **"Lunch on the Lawn"** is an Emerson summertime tradition. In addition to live music from local and regional bands, food vendors sell an array of lunchtime cuisine including burgers, bratwurst, sandwiches, salads, and sweet treats. Website: www.theemerson.org. Tel: (406) 587-9797. 111 S. Grand Avenue, Bozeman. Admission: Free.

More Places to Eat:

Be sure and check out the vintage saddles in the front windows of Wild Joe's Organic Coffee House and Roastery. This Main Street gathering spot sports lots of comfortable seating with plenty of room to sprawl, connect to wi-fi or relax with a novel.

www.wildjoescoffee.com.

Over the Tapas. Many places in Bozeman serve bison burgers so you will have your pick. For something different, try Bozeman's only restaurant specializing in tapas or small plates. Waiting lines on weekend nights attest to the fresh appeal of this mid-priced downtown favorite. The eclectic menu reflects a Spanish and Mediterranean influence but some Asian and Italian items add to the mix. Good beer and wine selections, heavy on the Spanish and South American vintages, enhance the dining experience. Website www.bozemantapas.com. Tel: (406) 556-8282.

With Yellowstone National Park and Gallatin National Forest in Bozeman's backyard, outdoor lovers will find no shortage of camping, boating, hiking and fishing opportunities. In fact, fly fishing reigns supreme in Bozeman. Literally, every third or fourth shop in the downtown area sells some kind of sporting goods or fishing gear. Looking for a guide to any of the area's adventures? Just stop into one of five fly shops in town for a recommendation.



Where to Stay: Although it is not directly in town, the Wyndham was my lodging of choice. For the price of a single room, I enjoyed the spaciousness of a suite and use of a pool. Complimentary pickup at the airport and free shuttle service into town and back was always available. The room price included a full buffet-style breakfast, much needed fuel for the day ahead. Wingate by Wyndham. Website: www.wingatebozeman.com. Tel: (405) 582-4995.

The Bozeman Chamber of Commerce offers up lots of good advice for travelers to Bozeman. Visit their website at www.bozemanchamber.com www.bozemanchamber.com

For information on travel in Yellowstone, America's largest and oldest national park, visit. www.yellowstonecountry.net