


SKY

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JAMES PATTERSON


// FLY-FISHING
IN MONTANA

Charlize's First Love

South Africa through the eyes of people who call this intriguing (and complicated) country home.

THE WORLD CUP

Do the Spaniards have what it takes?


Gates, Clinton,
Diaz and Mizrahi
all love TED.
Do you?

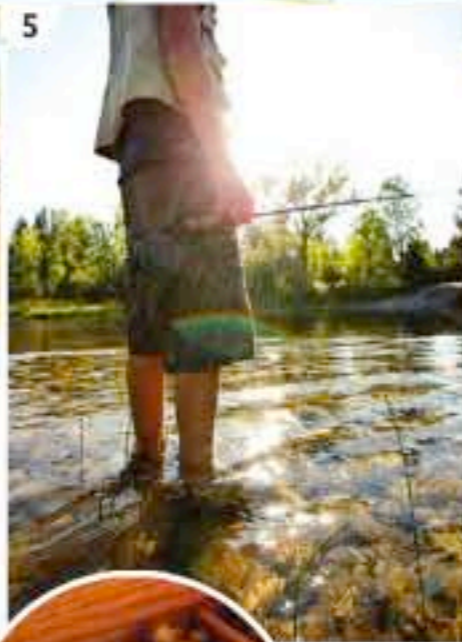


Great Escapes // Missoula, Montana and Other Places to Wet a Line

Western Montana's chill-billy bastion of mountain culture is just a long fly cast from half a dozen world-class trout streams. Grab your rod and ditch your watch—you're on river time. By Brian Kevin

Fly-fishing in western Montana is equal parts sportsmanship, backcountry adventure and meditation. Not surprisingly, the state's richest trout streams also tend to be its most scenic, and for many die-hard anglers in Bitterroot country, the quest for lunker trout is secondary to the search for solitude and mountain beauty. Though catch-and-release is the norm for most serious Montana anglers, regulations vary from stream to stream. **Missoula's** plentiful fly shops can hook you up with info, plus a fishing license, a few woolly buggers and maybe a guide.

The Kingfisher is a local fave, with a cornucopia of flies. **The Missoulian Angler** is another—return rental gear on the right night and you might catch a reading by nature writers from the University of Montana. Twenty minutes east of town along Interstate 90, **Rock Creek** is to many Montana anglers what Whistler is to skiers, a kind of sacred ground. Wade-fishing is the order of the day, and spunky brook, rainbow, cutthroat and brown trout hide in the creek's myriad pockets and riffles. You might spot one of the area's resident bighorn



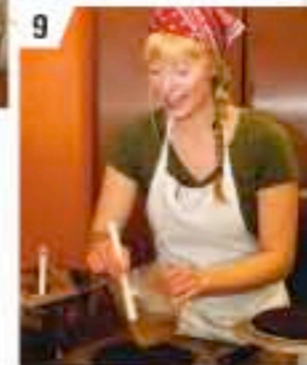
- 1 A fishing trophy
- 2 Locals hanging out in Missoula
- 3 Fly-fishing in western Montana
- 4 Brown trout from the Blackfoot River
- 5 Fishing in solitude
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Lures are aplenty at The Kingfisher fly shop.



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Brad Pitt single-handedly made fly-fishing sexy when he chartered the Blackfoot in the 1992 movie *A River Runs Through It*.



sheep on your way in, and near the end of the 50-mile, mostly gravel Rock Creek Road, tiny **Philipsburg** has a soda-shoppe main street that hasn't changed much in 50 years.

Rock Creek feeds the 320-mile **Clark Fork River**, which runs through downtown Missoula. East of the city, the upper river has been ecologically damaged from mining waste, but float-fishing west of town will turn up fat rainbows and knockout views of the Bitterroot Mountain foothills. Just take out before the **Alberton Gorge**, where Missoula rafting guides run trips through frothy class III and IV whitewater.

The **Blackfoot River** is a classic "freestone" stream—fast, cold

and fed by mountain runoff—that joins the Clark Fork just east of town. Its 60 fishable miles are wooded and tranquil, so it's a favorite spot of anglers seeking seclusion and Montana's gorgeous native cutthroats. Take a side trip off the adjacent State Highway 200 to see clapboard shanties at **Garnet Ghost Town**, one of the West's best-preserved turn-of-the-century mining outposts.

In its namesake valley south of Missoula, the slower **Bitterroot River** is alive with insect hatches all summer, great for fishing with dry flies. Floaters gawk at the 9,000-foot peaks of the **Bitterroot Mountains**, a jagged skyline paralleling the river's entire course. Towns in the Bitterroot Valley don't offer many tourist attractions, but bird nerds flock to marshy **Lee Metcalf**

National Wildlife Refuge to spot bald eagles, osprey and herds of migrating waterfowl.

For Missoula's crowds of Carhartt hipsters, angling is a sacrament that is rivaled only by beer-drinking, and lovers of suds will find five excellent microbreweries serving the region. To better accommodate river trips, the **Kettle House Brewing Co.** cans beers such as its Double Haul IPA (named for a fly-fishing technique), and in the Bitterroot, Stevensville's **Blacksmith Brewing Company** stays packed with adventure types coming off the river or the mountain. Grab a stool, order a pint and start lamenting the one that got away.

Where to Stay: **Doubletree Hotel Missoula/Edgewater** has a riverside location where anglers wade directly into the Clark Fork from the snazzy cocktail deck. Outside of town, **The Ranch at Rock Creek** is Montana's newest rustic-luxe sporting lodge.

Where to Eat: **Bernice's Bakery** is a local institution known for breakfast pastries, and the **Saturday Farmers Market** can outfit you with everything from fresh produce to game meat. Along the Blackfoot corridor, **Pomp at The Resort at Paws Up** is one of Montana's only five-star dining rooms.



On the Clark Fork in downtown Missoula, bally paddlers line up to shoot the man-made curl called Brennan's Wave, the site of this year's U.S. Freestyle Kayak Team Trials.

