

Visit Big Sky *Press Kit*



For More Information Contact

Kitty Clemens

WORK: 406-995-3000

CELL: 406-599-9490

kitty@bigskychamber.com

BIG SKY OVERVIEW

Travel is not something one does, it's a state of being. Travelers seek meaningful experiences and want to create memories with friends and family, learn something new, ignite a passion, be challenged, and gain perspective and fulfillment.

It's no wonder then that Big Sky, Montana is, for many, the place to "just be" - whether that means being at the top of Lone Peak at 11,166 feet overlooking three states and two national parks; being invigorated by the cool water of the pristine Gallatin River while white water rafting; or being in the moment with family and friends around the warm fire after a chuck wagon ride and barbecue dinner.

The secret is out: Big Sky is the little town that's next to everything.

BIG SKY'S HISTORY

Known as the "Gateway to Yellowstone," the community of Big Sky, Montana began as a small and remote ranching community dating back as early as the 1890s. Big Sky's first visitors were Native Americans including those from the Shoshone, Bannock, Nez Perce, Crow and other tribes who used the area for seasonal resources for at least 9,000 years.

After the establishment of Yellowstone National Park in 1872, ranchers began moving herds of sheep, cattle and horses up the Gallatin Canyon logging road in summer months.

By the late 1890s after adoption the Homestead Act and Land Revision Act, a few ranchers began building cabins in what is now the Big Sky area. One of these homesteaders was Augustus Franklin Crail who set up his homestead that still stands today as the Historic Crail Ranch, now on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Crail family turned their small homestead into a thriving ranch, which operated longer than any other ranch in the area. When Augustus died in 1924, his son Emmett worked the ranch until 1950 when he sold it to the Hume family.

Big Sky's ascent in popularity as a ski resort destination began when former NBC newscaster and Montana native, Chet Huntley, opened Big Sky Resort in 1973. Huntley's plans for Big Sky Resort included a Meadow Village and a Mountain Village. Huntley worked with investors such as Chrysler, Burlington Northern, Continental Oil and Northwest Airlines to eventually help him transform Lone Mountain into a ski mountain. Huntley never saw his dream fully realized: Huntley died in March after the resort opened the previous December.

Boyne Resorts then purchased the ski resort in 1976, and Big Sky Resort began to grow. In 1995, Big Sky Resort built the Lone Peak Tram, increasing Big Sky's vertical drop to 4,180 feet. In 2003, the exclusive Moonlight Basin opened on the North side of Lone Peak, and in 2006, the resort partnered to offer a combined lift ticket to both resorts, creating the Biggest Skiing in America® with the combined trails encompassing around 5,500 acres. In 2013, Moonlight Basin was integrated into Big Sky Resort and the terrain of Spanish Peaks Mountain Club, Spirit Mountain, became one resort known today as Big Sky Resort with over 5,800 skiable acres, 300 named runs, and 4,180 vertical feet.

Big Sky, however, is much more than just a ski resort. Big Sky is a year-round destination, attractive to people seeking a cool summer escape; and for adventure travelers who want to explore Big Sky's mountains, rivers and ranches. Big Sky continues to see visitation increases each year due, in part, to comfortable summer temperatures, spectacular outdoor offerings, and adventure-based activities.

The town is split into three main areas – the Canyon, Meadow, and Mountain Village, home to Big Sky Resort.

MEADOW VILLAGE/TOWN CENTER

Big Sky Town Center is centrally located 7 miles below Lone Mountain. In the early 1970s after Chet Huntley announced that his plans for Big Sky included Meadow Village and Mountain Village, Bob Simkins and Jim Taylor bought the Sappington Ranch, which contained the Town Center project. Since then, Town Center has evolved into a 165-acre mixed-use, walkable village community with 50 businesses including restaurants, a movie theater, art galleries, sporting goods stores, an ice skating and hockey rink and more. In 2015, the Bozeman Health Big Sky Medical Center opened, along with the Peaks Crossfit Gym, Beehive Basin Brewery, and other businesses.

Town Center is also the site of the popular Big Sky Farmers Market, held every Wednesday in late June through September. Center Stage at Town Center Park is the music venue for Music in the Mountains – a free summer concert series presented by the Arts Council of Big Sky each Thursday evening.

FALL & WINTER ACTIVITIES IN BIG SKY

Snow seekers and spa enthusiasts alike will agree that a winter day in Big Sky always involves breathtaking scenery and a casual, relaxed lifestyle that comes with alpine living. Activities in Big Sky during winter include:

SKIING AND SNOWBOARDING

Located in Southwest Montana, Big Sky is lucky to be its own ski town. With an average annual snowfall of 400 inches which translates to prime conditions for snow sports and a winter haven, Big Sky is home to [the Biggest Skiing in America®](#) with 5,800 acres of skiable terrain and 4,350 feet of vertical spanning across four different mountains, plus we're known for no-wait lift lines! You can take in the view of 3 states and 2 national parks from the top of Lone Peak at 11,166 feet. Take the mid-mountain tram up and either ski down or enjoy the scenic ride back down. Big Sky Resort has the best mix of terrain:

- Beginner – 15%
- Intermediate – 25%
- Advanced – 42%
- Expert – 15%

CROSS COUNTRY SKIING

Big Sky is home to Lone Mountain Ranch, voted the #1 Nordic Ski Resort in North America by Cross Country Skier magazine. With 85 kilometers of groomed trails and a trail system that encompasses 2,200 vertical feet, there is terrain for all abilities and enough space to feel a sense of quiet alpine solitude without having to bust your own trail. Lone Mountain Ranch has Professional Ski Instructors of America (PSIA) certified instructors to teach all levels, guided tours and gear rentals. Both season passes and day tickets are available.

Along with Lone Mountain Ranch's groomed trails, there are a number of backcountry trails to explore throughout the Gallatin National Forest, ranging from mellow gliding to more rigorous terrain. Some popular trails include Porcupine Creek, Teepee Creek, and Beehive Basin, among many others. Area outdoor shops can recommend trails with the best ski conditions.

DOG SLEDDING

Traveling Montana's backcountry trails on the back of a dog-powered sled is a one-of-a-kind Western experience. [Spirit of the North Dogsled Adventures](#) takes off from the entrance to Moonlight Basin, with half-day trips featuring tours and hands-on instructions for those eager to drive their own team of dogs.

Featured in the *New York Times* and *National Geographic* Channel, [Yellowstone Dog Sled Adventures](#) offers small group dog sled adventures to create an intimate experience that emphasizes interaction with the dogs and surroundings. Both adventure tours and rides are available including "Learn to Mush" where participants get to drive their own team of sled dogs.

FLY FISHING

Even in winter, travelers can experience world-class fly fishing. As the river breaks through the snow and ice, you are surrounded only with the peaceful sounds of quiet waters. Fishing in Big Sky is truly an unforgettable experience. Many fly shops offer guided trips year round. Big Sky, Montana is surrounded by blue ribbon trout fishing, with rivers, alpine lakes and mountain streams, making the area a fly fishing paradise. The legendary Gallatin River, where scenes from “A River Runs Through It” were filmed, flows right through Big Sky’s Gallatin Canyon.

Throughout the winding canyon are numerous fishing holes and walk/wade access for all experience levels, along with spectacular scenery. The Madison and Yellowstone Rivers, also known for their legendary fishing waters, are only an hour drive from Big Sky. A list of guide services in the area include: [Big Sky Trout](#), [Cache Creek Outfitters](#), [Gallatin River Guides](#), [Lone Mountain Ranch](#), [East Slope Outdoors](#) and [Wild Trout Outfitters](#).

HUNTING

Surrounded by national forest lands, Big Sky country offers some of the finest opportunities for big game hunting, with antelope, elk, and deer, among other animals.

Area outfitters know the lay of the land and where the animals tend to travel. Many offer multi-day hunts on horseback or by foot.

Hunting licenses are required by law and are available through Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks. Archery season is open from August – October and rifle open October – November for elk, deer (whitetail or mule), and antelope. For special game hunts, including moose, bighorn sheep, bison and wolf, you can go through a licensed outfitter or apply for a draw through the state.

ICE SKATING

An ice skating excursion can top off a perfect winter day in Big Sky. Big Sky’s Town Center features a full-size hockey and ice-skating rink. Ice skate rentals are available at some of the outdoor shops in Town Center. Rental equipment is available at [Grizzly Outfitters Ski & Backcountry Sports](#).

SLEDDING

Skis and snowboards aren’t the only way to zip around the hills of Big Sky. Big Sky has a designated sledding hill behind Town Center. Sleds aren’t a typical item for rent, but you can purchase them at some outdoor or grocery stores!

SLEIGH RIDES

Snuggle under a blanket and enjoy an old-fashion Western sleigh ride adventure, with a team of horses traveling under the stars through snow filled forest trails. Area outfitters offer evening sleigh rides, with options to dine at a backcountry yurt or cabin where there’s a meal waiting and fire to warm you up.

Depending on the snow conditions, most sleigh ride dinners run from mid-December late March/early April. Private sleigh rides available for special occasions! Related businesses include: [320 Guest Ranch](#), [Cache Creek Outfitters](#), and [Lone Mountain Ranch Montana Dinner Yurt](#).

SNOWCOACH TOURS

Experience Yellowstone's magic in the winter from the warmth and comfort of a snowcoach. Snowcoach tours are available for all ages and physical abilities. They are very similar to a van or bus, but with snow tracks instead of wheels. These excursions leave from West Yellowstone, MT and travel to places that are closed to vehicle traffic from mid-December through March, weather permitting.

Tours stop at the world-famous Old Faithful Geyser, the historic Old Faithful Snow Lodge, the Grand Canyon of Yellowstone and include many opportunities for photos! Watch wildlife wander through the snow while the steam from geysers and hot pots shoot into the cold air. Public or private tours available.

SNOWMOBILING

Cruise through open meadows, spectacular alpine scenery, and powder fields, experiencing Big Sky and Yellowstone National Park by snowmobile. Many of the beautiful views in the surrounding Greater Yellowstone region can be accessed on a guided tour or by yourself. There are miles of backcountry trails for the adventurous individuals and groomed trail options for family-friendly outings. Unfortunately snowmobile use is not permitted in the Meadow/Town Center or Mountain areas of Big Sky. There are trails to ride on in the Canyon! Outfitters include: [Big Boys Toys and All Terrain Rentals](#), [Canyon Adventures](#), [Rendezvous Snowmobile Rental](#), [Travelers Snowmobile Rentals](#), and [Two Top Yellowstone Winter Tours](#).

SNOWSHOEING

Trek through the snow and experience the tranquility of the winter backcountry at your own pace, with snowshoe excursions on many miles of Big Sky trails. Explore on your own, or travel with a guide to learn more about the winter wildlife and the Big Sky environment. Lone Mountain Ranch has 18 km of trails for snowshoeing! Snowshoe rentals and trail info is available at many of the outdoor shops. Outfitters include: [Basecamp to Yellowstone Park](#), [Grizzly Outfitters](#), [Gallatin Alpine Sports](#), [East Slope Outdoors](#) and [Big Sky Sports](#).

YELLOWSTONE TOURS

Let someone else handle the driving, so you can experience the beauty and wonder of Yellowstone National Park on a guided tour. Bus tours for large groups or small custom tours can take you on memorable adventure that includes everything from wildlife watching to hiking to horseback riding while you explore the Park's awe-inspiring features. Tours are a great way to learn about the history of the Park and the creatures that live inside. Wildlife spottings can include: deer, elk, bison, wolves, bear, eagles and more!

You can also experience Yellowstone's magic in the winter from the warmth and comfort of a snowcoach. Snowcoach tours are available for all ages and physical abilities. They are very similar to a van or bus, but with snow tracks instead of wheels. These excursions leave from West Yellowstone, MT and travel to places that are closed to vehicle traffic from mid-December through March, weather permitting. Several [tour companies](#) offer tours.

SPRING & SUMMER ACTIVITIES IN BIG SKY

It's a good thing that the sun doesn't set until well after 9:00 p.m. during a Big Sky summer, leaving plenty of light to make the most of every day. Summer in Big Sky is a treasured time of year for visitors and residents, opening up endless options for the adventure minded and the relaxation seekers alike. Summer activities in Big Sky include:

FLY FISHING

Big Sky, Montana is surrounded by blue ribbon trout fishing, with rivers, alpine lakes and mountain streams, making the area a fly-fishing paradise. The legendary Gallatin River, where scenes from "A River Runs Through It" were filmed, flows right through Big Sky's Gallatin Canyon. Throughout the winding canyon are numerous fishing holes and walk/wade access for all experience levels, along with spectacular scenery.

There are a number of fly-fishing shops with guide services, offering trips on the Gallatin, Madison, and Yellowstone Rivers and sometimes to more remote alpine lakes and spring creeks. For those new to fishing, experienced guides can teach you everything from how to tie knots to the perfect casting techniques and for those more experience, you can learn about the best fishing holes and which flies to throw during that time of year. Lucky for us, fly fishing isn't just a summer activity. You can fish anytime of the year!

GOLFING

Tee-off right in the heart of Big Sky's Meadow Village, with a backdrop of the towering Lone Peak at the Arnold Palmer-designed Big Sky Resort Golf Course. This scenic 18-hole, par-72 course is at an elevation of 6,500 feet, with sweeping views, long drives, and the occasional deer, moose, or elk crossing the greens.

The Big Sky Golf Course has a full-service pro shop with gear sales and rentals along with golf lessons, clinics and tournaments throughout the summer. The Bunker Bar & Grill serves up tasty meals and refreshments throughout the day. Head over there on Mondays during the summer for their beer & burger night – \$12 for a delicious burger and draft beer!

HIKING

Imagine standing on a peak, looking out over the sprawling Rocky Mountains at many more peaks looming in the distance as far as the eye can see. Big Sky, Montana is cradled between the Spanish Peaks and the Gallatin Mountain Ranges, with the Madison Range in the distance. The abundant hiking opportunities in Big Sky include trails for all levels, from meandering wildflower walks to more rugged climbs, and everything in between. No matter your ability or location, you should always carry bear spray with you!

Many of the more popular hikes lead to amazing destinations, making each journey well worth the effort, with high mountain lakes – Lava Lake, Hidden Lakes, Beehive Basin and Ramshorn Lake – and towering lookouts at Cinnamon, Garnet, and Storm Castle. Many outdoor shops in the area have trail maps, hiking books and experienced hikers on staff to lead you towards a trail that's perfect for your skill level.

The boundary of Yellowstone National Park is just 15 miles south of Big Sky. There are many options for day hikes or overnights within the Park, but remember you must get a permit to camp overnight.

HORSEBACK RIDING

There's nothing like exploring Big Sky Country on the back of a horse. Not only is it the quintessential Western way to travel, but it's also an exciting way to get further into the backcountry. Hop into the saddle with one of the area's outfitters, and head out for half or full-day journey into the wilderness in both summer and winter. With trails for all skill levels, experienced wranglers can explain the basics to beginners and explore more exciting terrain with advanced riders. Outfitters include: [320 Guest Ranch](#), [Cache Creek Outfitters](#), [Canyon Adventures](#), [Jake's Horses, Inc.](#) and [Lone Mountain Ranch](#).

LONE PEAK EXPEDITION

The [Lone Peak Expedition](#), Tram to the Top, a 3-part tour guided adventure including a scenic chair lift ride, a safari style rugged truck taking you on a journey through time as the tour guide explains the geology and history surrounding Big Sky and stops at the base of the Lone Peak Tram. The group ascends to the top of Lone Peak at 11,166 feet in elevation with views of three states and two national parks. It's a fun adventure for any age.

ROAD & MOUNTAIN BIKING

There are many opportunities for road biking, mountain biking, or just cruising around town in Big Sky. A well-maintained bike path travels from the popular Ousel Falls trailhead passed the Big Sky Town Center through the Meadow Village, down to the Canyon and south along Highway 191 to Ophir School.

Big Sky area bike shops can provide trail maps and all the gear you'll need, to rent or for purchase.

Road bikers can travel the scenic mountain roads and highways, choosing routes through the twists and turns of the Gallatin Canyon/Highway 191 from the Bozeman area into the boundaries of Yellowstone National Park and on to West Yellowstone. Some pedal right from their door to the Big Sky Spur Road, for a 10-plus mile journey that heads up from Big Sky's Meadow Village to the Big Sky Mountain Village and on to Moonlight Basin.

Slay the singletrack and pedal your way to some mountain peaks and great views with numerous well-maintained trails and mountain bike friendly dirt roads around the Big Sky area. The mountain bike terrain ranges from mild to rigorous with most trails leading to some of the best views in the Rockies. Some popular trails include: Porcupine, Garnet Mountain, Ramshorn Lake, Mica Creek and many more.

Some of the best single track and downhill mountain biking can also be found on Lone Mountain at Big Sky Resort, with lift access and a well-kept trail system with terrain for all levels. Outfitters include: [Big Sky Resort](#), [Big Sky Sports](#), [Gallatin Alpine Sports](#), and [Grizzly Outfitters Ski and Backcountry Sports](#).

ROCK & ICE CLIMBING

The Gallatin Canyon is home to many exciting rock climbing features, with routes for all levels that lead to some of the best views of the surrounding landscapes. Gallatin Tower climbs up above the Gallatin River, the Waltz route sits just opposite and Black Line Buttress lays to the east. Big Sky's outdoor shops can point climbers in the right direction and provide any necessary gear. For a guided experience contact [Montana Alpine Guides](#).

Big Sky Resort features a 25-foot rock climbing wall at the base of Lone Peak through [Basecamp to Yellowstone](#), with guides to help harness and belay climbers. [Geyser Whitewater](#), located in the Gallatin Canyon, has an indoor

climbing wall for year round use. The climbing wall is also available for special event rental, and shoes and harnesses are available for a small fee.

WHITEWATER RAFTING

Take on the wild and scenic Gallatin River, which travels through the spectacular Gallatin Canyon and the Big Sky area. Experienced river guides can take you for half-day (3 hours) or full-day (6 hours) raft trips on some exciting and challenging whitewater sections (think wave trains and big rides). Here's a tip: for an experience to remember, ask about the Mad Mile! Both Geyser Whitewater Expeditions and Montana Whitewater Raft & Zipline Company offer half or full day rafting trips.

ZIPLINE & HIGH ROPES COURSE

Enjoy the fast-paced thrills of a ziplining adventure, and get a bird's eyed view of Big Sky as you fly through the air and land at the next perch. Big Sky features zipline courses over the scenic Gallatin River, within the canopy of the Gallatin National Forest, and up top at the Mountain Village right below Lone Peak.

Many of the area outfitters offer a package deal when combining a zipline or high ropes excursion with another activity like whitewater rafting, horseback riding, fly-fishing, or even lodging! Most operate from end of May until beginning of October. Zipline outfitters include: Basecamp to Yellowstone, Yellowstone Aerial Adventures and Montana Whitewater Raft & Zipline Company.

SIGNATURE ANNUAL EVENTS

There are many world-class events that take place throughout the year that give visitors a chance to sample life in Big Sky, from Music in the Mountains to the Big Sky Farmer's Market to Professional Bull Riding Touring Pro Division. A few annual events include:

- **BIG SKY BIG GRASS**- the largest Bluegrass Festival in the Rockies, the event features some of the country's finest music groups. It takes place annually at Big Sky Resort in February.
- **POND SKIM** - Prepare to get wet and wild as competitors in costumes try to ski down Ambush, then ski across an ice-cold pond followed by an evening of live music. Held at Big Sky Resort in April.
- **BIG SKY FARMERS MARKET** - Every Wednesday from late June through September, over 90 vendors sell everything from jewelry and fresh produce to art, clothing, and woodworking.
- **MUSIC IN THE MOUNTAINS** - In the summer, the sounds of Big Sky come alive with Music in the Mountains at Center Stage in Town Center Park. The free concerts are held every Thursday evening from late June to late August and feature a variety of national touring musicians performing in a truly spectacular setting. Presented by the Arts Council of Big Sky.
- **TASTE OF BIG SKY** - Over a dozen Big Sky area restaurants showcase the best of their menus. Held outside of Buck's T-4 in July.
- **BIG SKY FLY FISHING FESTIVAL** - A multi-day family friendly event celebrating fly fishing on the Gallatin River. Activities include casting contests, fly tying, live and silent auctions, product demonstrations and more. Held in July by the Blue Water Task Force.
- **PROFESSIONAL BULL RIDING (PBR)** - located in Town Center, the Big Sky PBR is a summertime favorite. Unlike roping, PBR is a chance to watch the best riders try to stay on bulls for as long as possible. The two-day PBR has been voted the event of the year by the riders for two years running. The event is part of the BlueDEF Velocity Tour.
- **BIG SKY CLASSICAL MUSIC FESTIVAL**- This three-day event is designed to bring the country's finest classical musicians together in Big Sky, as well as showcase local and regional talent. Presented by the Arts Council of Big Sky.
- **THE BIG SKY CHRISTMAS STROLL** – This long-standing event has been a favorite to locals and visitors alike. Town Center comes alive with the singing of Christmas carols, photos with Santa, snowy sleigh rides, ice-skating, and fireworks!
- **BIG SKY BREWFEST** – The 11th Annual Brewfest features tastings from over 30 Montana and National breweries, food, music, kid's activities and more.
- **THE RUT RACE** - Big Sky Resort and the International SkyRunning Federation and Salomon for the Rut put on this running & ultra marathon event with a VK, 11K, 28K and 50K. Run the Rut.
- **BIG SKY VINE & DINE** – Big Sky Resort's 3rd annual Vine & Dine Festival of Wine, Food, and Arts offers a variety of experience in the Mountain Village that are designed to increase your knowledge and enjoyment of wine and food by providing exciting activities, seminars, and demos.

Additional information about all events throughout the year can be found on the Visit Big Sky Official Visitor's Guide.