

CHAPTER 1

THIS IS MONTANA

- What is Montana like?
- How does its climate, geography, and geology affect its people?



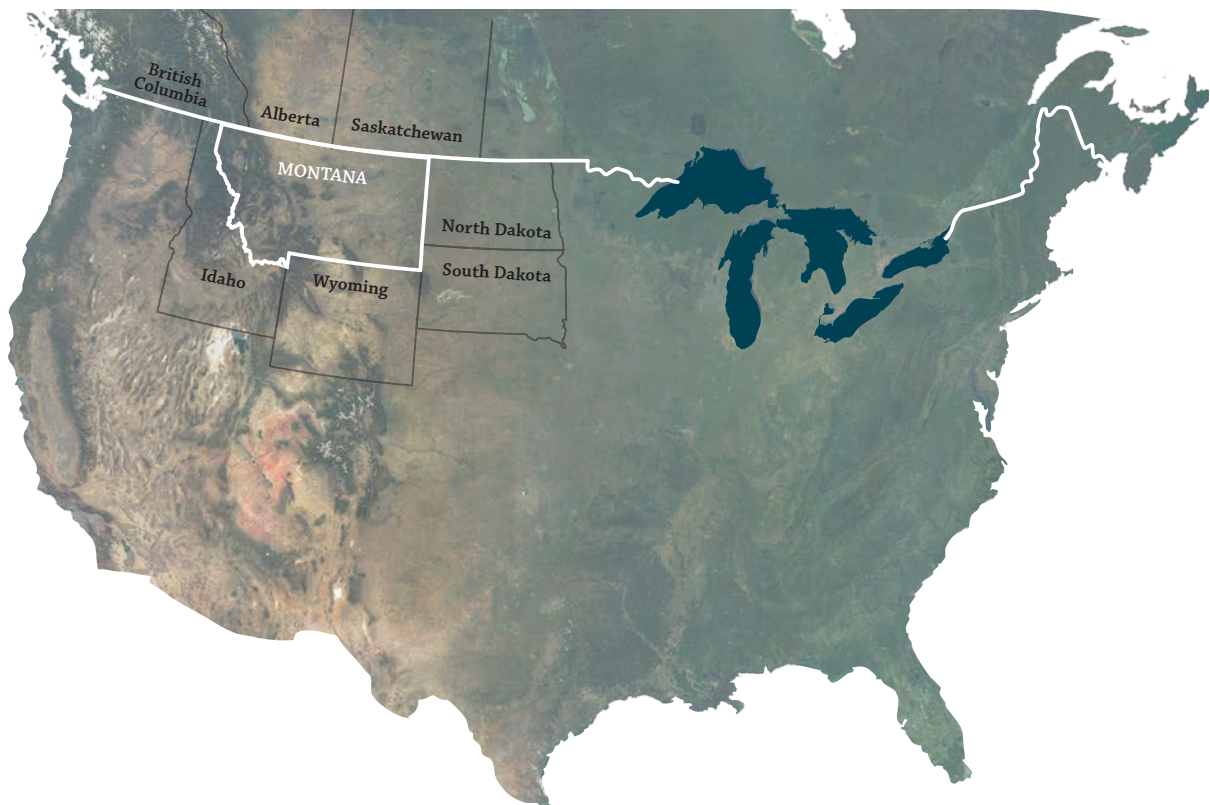
Montanans live in many different types of places. Some people live in the mountains while others live on the prairie.

Montana is known for its natural beauty and wildlife. If you drive across Montana, you will see mountains, **foothills** (hills at the edge of a mountain range), **badlands** (an area created by **erosion** of rocks and hills with little vegetation), and **prairies** (flat grasslands). It is hard to believe one state can contain so many different landscapes.

FAST FACTS

Montana is the fourth-largest state in the United States. It contains 147,042 square miles. Only Alaska, Texas, and California have more land. However, compared to most states, not very many people live here. In 2020, a little more than one million people lived in Montana. That sounds like a big number, but it isn't when you compare it with other places. For example, New York City has about 8.3 million people all living in 302 square miles.

Montana is in the northwestern region of the United States. It borders three Canadian provinces on the north. To the west, it borders Idaho. To the south, it borders Wyoming, and to the east it borders North and South Dakota.



THE CONTINENTAL DIVIDE

The **Continental Divide** (a mountain ridge that separates North America) runs through Montana. On the west side of the Continental Divide, rivers drain into the Pacific Ocean. On the east side of the divide, rivers drain into the Atlantic Ocean.

Montana is home to Triple Divide Peak. That's where the Continental Divide and the **Northern Divide** meet. (The Northern Divide separates waters that flow north from waters that flow south. Waters north of the Northern Divide flow into the Arctic Ocean.) A raindrop that falls on Triple Divide Peak, in Glacier National Park, can flow into either the Pacific, Atlantic, or Arctic Oceans.



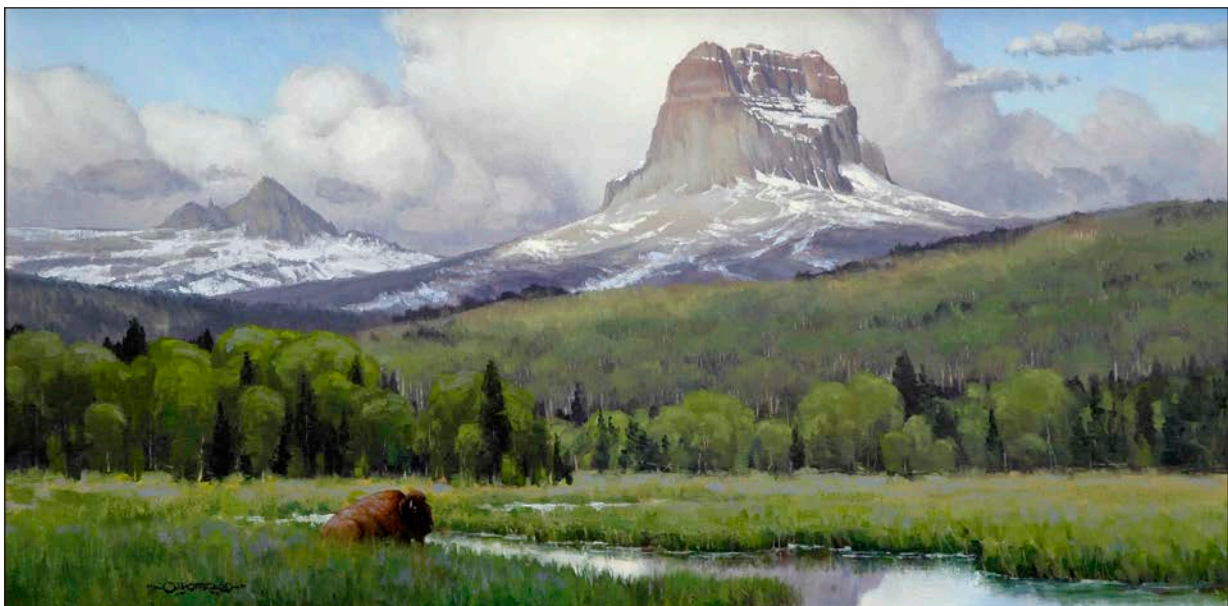
MONTANA'S THREE REGIONS

Montana has three **distinct** (separate) regions with very different **climates** (typical weather conditions) and **natural resources** (things found in nature and used by people). Because each region's geography is different, each region's history is also different.

Western Montana

Flathead Lake is the largest natural freshwater body west of the Great Lakes.

Western Montana has tall mountains, winding rivers, and thick forests. Western Montana sees more rain than any other part of the state. Between the mountains are wide, **fertile** (good for growing things) valleys. Western Montana's mountains are rich in gold, silver, and copper.



Chief Mountain near Glacier National Park in Western Montana is an important landmark to many Montanans.

Central Montana

Central Montana spreads east from the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. Its small, scattered mountain ranges rise above gently rolling **plains** (flat land). Both the Missouri River and the Yellowstone River begin in central Montana. These are Montana's two longest rivers.



The Missouri River flows through Central Montana. It is important not only to people, but to wildlife as well.

Eastern Montana

Eastern Montana is a land of rolling plains and endless sky. It is dry and windy. Temperatures here are often colder in winter and hotter in summer than in the rest of the state. It is rich in

coal and natural gas. The grass that grows here is very good for grazing animals, including buffalo, cattle, and sheep.



Winter weather can make life hard for people and animals living in Eastern Montana.

MONTANA'S CLIMATE

Montana is known as a “state of extremes.” It can get very cold. In the winter of 1954, on Rogers Pass, the temperature dropped to a record low: -70° F! It can get very hot, too. In the summer of 1893, in Glendive, temperatures rose to 117° F.

Montana's mountains affect its climate. West of the Continental Divide, winters are generally milder and summers are cooler. There is also more **precipitation** (rain and snow).

Central Montana is known for its **chinooks**. Chinooks are warm winds that blow down the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains. These winds melt the snow and bring warm weather in the middle of winter. However, soon the temperature drops again. On January 15, 1972, Loma, Montana, experienced a chinook. In one day, the temperature rose from -54°F to 48°F . How many degrees total is that?

Eastern Montana is drier and hotter than Western Montana, but it can get very cold there, too!

MONTANA'S RESERVATIONS AND TRIBAL NATIONS



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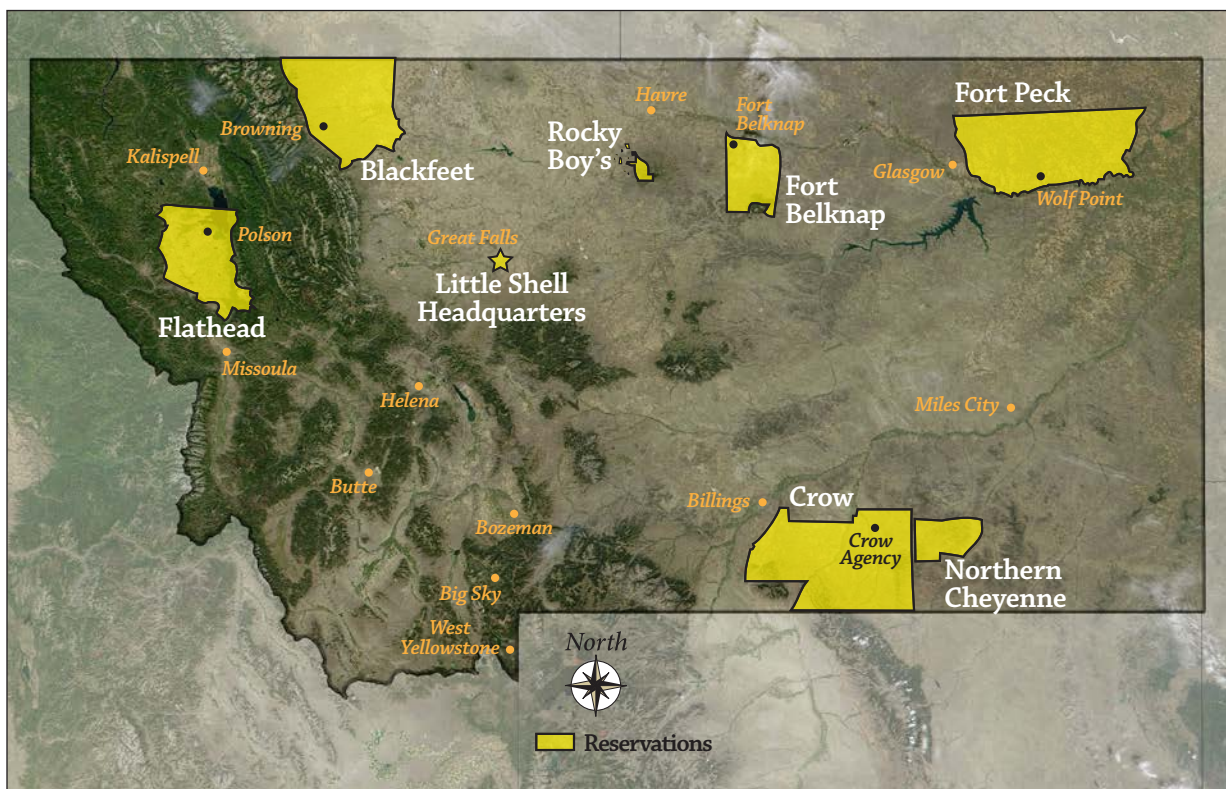
My success as a visual storyteller is the direct result of the guidance and inspiration of the many mentors I've had throughout my life. Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike. Their unselfish desire to teach me inspires me to pass on my knowledge and passion. It is of vital importance that Indigenous people take back our own narrative; that we are the ones to tell our story.

Indian Education
Montana Office of Public Instruction

Making Montana PROUD

Photographer Adam Sing in the Timber (Apsáalooke) is one of many Montana tribal members “Making Montana Proud.”

Montana is home to seven reservations and twelve tribal nations. Tribal people were in Montana long before Europeans came to this **continent** (one of the main areas of land on earth). Today members of Montana Indian tribes live in every Montana city as well as on reservations. **Reservations** are tribal land that the tribes **reserved** (kept) for their own use when they made **treaties** (agreements between nations) with the U.S. government.



Here is a list of Montana's reservations and tribes:

Blackfeet Reservation: Home to the Blackfeet tribe, also known as the Amp Ska Pii Pii Kun Nii

Crow Reservation: Home to the Crow tribe, also known as the Apsáalooke

Flathead Reservation: Home to the Salish, Kootenai, and Pend d'Oreille tribes, also known as the Séliš, Ksanka (Ktunaxa), and Qíispé

Fort Belknap Reservation: Home to the Assiniboine and Gros Ventre tribes, also known as the Nakoda and Aaniiihnen (White Clay)

Fort Peck Reservation: Home to the Assiniboine and Sioux tribes, also known as the Nakoda, Dakota, and Lakota

Northern Cheyenne Reservation: Home to the Northern Cheyenne tribe, also known as the Tsetsêhesêstâhase/Sotaeo'ó

Rocky Boy's Reservation: Home to the Chippewa and Cree tribes, also known as the Annishinabe and Ne-i-yah-wahk

The Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa Indians of Montana (Anishinabe and Métis) do not have a reservation. Its headquarters is in Great Falls.

MONTANA'S ECONOMY

Montana's **economy** (businesses and jobs) has a lot to do with its **geography** (where it is on a map) and its **geology** (minerals, rocks, and soil). Montana is a large, rural state, far from the ocean and major population centers. It does not have any huge factories because it would cost too much to get the things large factories make to the people who want to buy them. Instead of



Animals like cattle and sheep play an important role in Montana's economy. Even some dogs have a job to do!

working in factories, many Montanans work in service jobs. A service job is anything that helps other people. Service workers include doctors and nurses, cooks and teachers, store clerks and car mechanics. Many other Montanans work in construction, building everything from houses to hospitals.

Montana's size also means that many people work in transportation. It takes a lot of workers to keep the roads in good shape, to run the railroads, and to drive the trucks that carry things in and out of the state.

Some of the most important parts of Montana's economy are agriculture, tourism, and mining. All of these **industries** (types of businesses) rely on the state's natural resources. Tourists

visit Montana to enjoy its natural beauty, and you can't mine without rich deposits of coal, oil, gas, copper, silver, or gold. To raise cattle or grow crops, you need fertile soil and clean water.

Even though agriculture and mining are very important to our state, they are not as important as they were fifty or one hundred years ago. Unlike many states that rely on a few big industries to provide most of their jobs, Montana is home to many different types of businesses. Montanans work in banks and law offices, sell real estate, design software, conduct scientific experiments, clean up abandoned mines, create art, and build furniture. This **diversity** (variety) is one of Montana's greatest economic strengths.

MONTANA: LAND AND PEOPLE

Montana's climate, geology, and geography have shaped the state's history. They continue to shape the lives of Montanans today. How have these factors affected your life?

GLOSSARY

Abandon leave

Adapted changed to fit new conditions

Allies friends

Allotment portion

Allotment policy dividing Indian reservations into separate farms for each family

Amber yellow

Ancestors family members who lived long ago

Ancient very old

Archaeologists scientists who study the past by analyzing objects people have left behind

Artifacts objects created by people

Assimilate/assimilation to be absorbed into the majority culture, in this case, the white American culture

Atlatl a spear thrower

Bacteriology the study of bacteria

Badlands an area created by erosion of rocks and hills with little vegetation

Band group

Bison buffalo

Boom time of great prosperity or rapid growth

Capotes coats made from thick wool blankets

Chinook a warm wind that blows down the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains

Claim take for their own

Climate typical weather condition

Communal group

Constitution document that sets the rules for government

Continent one of the main areas of land on earth

Continental Divide a mountain ridge that separates North America and determines whether water flows east to the Atlantic Ocean or west to the Pacific Ocean

Culture a shared system of behavior, attitudes, and understandings; language, customs, and ideas

Descendants a person's children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, etc.

Discrimination treating a group of people unfairly

Disease sickness

Distinct separate

Diversity variety

Drought lack of rain

Economy businesses and jobs

Environment land, water, climate

Epidemic rapid spread of disease

Erosion the process by which rock or soil is gradually taken away by wind, rain, or water

Essential most important

Extinct gone

Extinction death of a species

Fell cut down trees

Fertile good for growing things

Foothills hills at the edge of a mountain range

Geography where things are, the study of particular places

Geologists scientists who study the earth

Geology minerals, rocks, and soil and the study of these things

Great Plains the flat land region west of the Mississippi River and east of the Rocky Mountains

Homesteader someone who received land from the U.S. government in exchange for farming that land

Immigrant someone who moves to a new country to live

Immigrate move from one country to another

Indian agent a person (usually non-Indian) who the government put in charge of a reservation

Industries types of businesses

Leased rented

Lumber wood for building

Mechanization using machines to do the work that people once did

Natural resources things found in nature and used by people

Negotiate discuss to come to an agreement

Northern Divide landform that separates water that flows north from water that flows south

Opportunities chances for something better

Oral histories important stories people pass down

Pacifist someone who believes that problems cannot be solved by fighting

Pelts skins

Plains flat land

Poultry birds raised on farms, like chickens and turkeys

Poverty being poor

Prairies flat grasslands

Precipitation rain and snow

Predate come before

Prospectors people looking for gold or other precious metals

Published printed

Pull factors things that make people want to move to a new place

Push factors things that make people want to leave their homes

Push-pull factors things that influence immigration (that push you out of your home country and pull you to another place)

Reservation an area of land that a tribe or tribes reserved (kept) for their own use

Reserved kept

Residents people who live in a place

Resilience strength

Resourceful good at figuring things out

Resources useful things

Sovereign self-governing

Sovereignty self-rule

Spacious large

Specific exact

Strike gold discovery

Suffrage vote

Suffrage activist someone working to win women the right to vote

Surplus extra

Taxes money people pay the government so the government can provide services

Timber wood for building

Time immemorial as long as anyone can remember

Toxic poisonous

Traditional old

Transcontinental all the way across the continent

Transport move

Treasurer the person who keeps track of an organization's money

Treaty agreement between nations

Union an organization that stands up for workers' rights and fights for better pay

Unique not the same as any other

IMAGE CREDITS

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Montana Historical Society is abbreviated as MHS.

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