

## **7-day Southwestern Montana Lewis & Clark Birding Trail**

This itinerary describes the "car-camping" tour. If you choose to join a tour that provides hotels/cabins, the stops and locations are approximately the same. We recommend the camping tour because we will see more birds and wildlife while staying at the campgrounds. We have wonderfully comfortable tents and sleeping pads, and you can even request a cot.

**Day 0, Bozeman:** You will need to arrive in Bozeman the night before the tour starts. There are many non-stop flights to the Bozeman Yellowstone International Airport (BZN) from major U.S. cities. You are responsible for booking and paying for your hotel in Bozeman. The elevation of Bozeman is 4,793 feet.

**Day 1, Birding Bozeman:** Bozeman is an excellent area for birding, and we will spend the day birding numerous areas close to town and in the Gallatin Valley. The day will end at the Lewis and Clark Caverns State Park. We will take the scenic route, following the Jefferson River for the best birding locations and similar route taken by Lewis and Clark. This park is 3,000-acres and one of the most decorated and largest limestone caverns in the Northwestern United States. We will camp here for 2-nights. The elevation of this area is 5,300 feet.

**Day 2, Lewis and Clark Caverns:** The morning will be spent birding riparian areas along the Jefferson River. Guided tours of the caverns are available from May 1st - September 30th. In the afternoon, we will travel to locations in the surrounding mountains for higher elevation habitats for birding.

**Day 3, Bannack:** From our camp, it is 95 miles to the next location at Bannack State Park, we will take the scenic route and stop at Ennis Lake and locations along the Madison River. We will travel through the historic towns of Silver City and Two Bridges, making stops along the Jefferson River Valley for birding. Bannack is a ghost town located along Grasshopper Creek, where the creek joins with the Beaverhead River south of Dillon. Founded in 1862, the town operates as a National Historic Landmark. This "Old West" town was the site of Montana's first major gold discovery in 1862 and Montana's first territorial capital.

**Day 4, Bannack:** The elevation of Bannock is 5,837 feet and it is centrally located among numerous excellent birding areas, including the Clark Canyon Reservoir and locations in the Dillon area.

**Day 5, Canyon Ferry and The Missouri River:** From Bannock, we will travel 135 miles to Deer Lodge, where we will visit an historic ranch, and then travel to the Missouri River reservoir outside of Helena. There will be numerous stops along the way, for birding and wildlife viewing and will arrive at the campground along the Missouri River in the late afternoon, where we will spend 2-nights. The area is along the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail.

**Day 6, Canyon Ferry and The Missouri River:** We will spend the day birding various locations along the Missouri River and sites at the edge of the mountains for higher elevation birds and also locations in the Helena area. The Missouri River provides great habitats for birds and wildlife. The elevation of the Helena area is 3,875 feet.

**Day 7, Drop off in Bozeman:** From Helena, it is a 2-hour (115 miles), but we will take our time and visit numerous birding sites along the way and in the Bozeman area. In the late afternoon, you will be dropped off at your hotel in Bozeman.

## **Details**

- **Travel Dates:** By request or join an already scheduled trip
- **Group size:** 2 - 6, plus guide, contact us for solo traveler rate
- **Trip Length:** 7 days (6 nights)
- **Included:** Lodging, camping gear: Tents, sleeping bags and sleeping pads. All cooking supplies: Stove, fuel, pots, pans, plates, bowls, cups, utensils, etc. Food: Breakfast and lunch, Dinner included with car-camping, not included with hotel stays, please contact us for details.
- **Not included:** Airfare to Bozeman (BZN), snacks in between meals

**Price:** 7-day "car-camping" tour at state parks and local campgrounds is \$1,995 per person (based on double occupancy). 7-day birding tour at **hotels/cabins** is \$2,555 per person (based on double occupancy). Please contact us for solo traveler rate.

**Tour includes:** Hotel/cabin lodging or car-camping gear: Tents, sleeping bags and sleeping pads. All cooking supplies: Stove, fuel, pots, pans, plates, bowls, cups, utensils, etc. Food: Breakfast and lunch, Dinner included with car-camping, not included with hotel stays, please contact us for details.

**Lodging:** We recommend "car-camping" tours because we will see more birds and wildlife while staying at the campgrounds. We have wonderfully comfortable tents and sleeping pads. If you choose to join a tour that provides hotels/cabins, the stops and locations are approximately the same. The hotel/cabin lodging is basic, not fancy.

**Gear you need to bring:** Outdoor clothes including hiking boots, rain jacket and pants and warm clothes, including hats and gloves. The mountains can be cold even in the summer. Everyone should have their own head lamp and/or flashlight, refillable water bottle, day pack for hiking and a personal small emergency kit.

**Meals for car-camping tour:** We travel with a mini-Weber Charcoal Grill, and we can grill steaks, hamburgers, chicken, or fish. Sometimes we have hotdogs and s'mores on the fire. We also travel with a Dutch Oven and cook shrimp stir-fry, pasta dishes and other delicious meals. We can accommodate **vegetarians and vegans**, no problem! Breakfast will be cooked on the grill or on the fire at camp. Lunch will be picnic style, sandwiches, fruit, etc. Dinner will be cooked on the grill or on the fire at camp.

**Meals for hotel tour:** Breakfast buffet at hotel, lunch is picnic style, dinner is not included. Please contact us for details.

**Electricity:** There will be electricity at some of the campsites. We travel with a lithium generator, and you will have access to power for recharging your equipment.

**Campfires:** Most all locations permit campfires (when there is not a fire ban).

**Showers:** There are pay showers at most of the local and state park campgrounds.