

CLEARWATER, BLACKFOOT & SWAN VALLEYS

MONTANA

VISITOR AND RESOURCE GUIDE



DREAM, EXPLORE, DISCOVER 2021-2022

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Photo Leon Kauffman

WELCOME TO OUR ROCKY MOUNTAIN PARADISE!

Our Visitor and Resource Guide features some of the most popular area information, attractions and activities for the Clearwater, Blackfoot and Swan Valleys - the Tri Valleys.

The Guide has been created by the Seeley Lake Area Chamber of Commerce with help from guests, residents, artists, experts and novices. We proudly support and sponsor the best recreational opportunities and business services across 2,500 square miles in the Swan, Clearwater and Blackfoot Valleys.

The recreational opportunities our area has to offer are the best in Montana, but don't just take our word for it. Come and see for yourself. The Tri Valleys are a popular destination every month of the year, for both residents and non-residents alike.

Are you planning an adventure that will take you into the Bob Marshall or Mission Mountains Wildernesses? Our valleys are where you will find the best access points.

Perhaps you are looking to unwind on an 18-hole golf course? We can show you the way.

Do you want to venture off the beaten path to find that perfect stretch of river to catch native trout or fish lakes for monster northern pike? There is no better place to search than right here.

Do you feel the urge to come in the winter months to play in the snow? We have some of the best cross country ski trails in the area and over 300 miles of groomed snowmobile trails that access countless acres of open country. Bring your snowmobile, cross country skis, snowshoes or maybe

even arrange for a winter ride behind a dog sled team.

The amenities and events offered are far too great to include in this Guide, so we encourage you to put our hospitality to the test. Whether you spend the night in a tent, under the stars, or in the comfort of one of our local accommodations, you'll find it all here. There's a reason 9 out of 10 visitors say they will be returning to the Seeley Lake area for more fun in the near future.

No matter what brought you here, we're glad you made it and we want to help fill your days and nights with the best we have to offer. We hope you enjoy your time with us and are already looking forward to your next visit!

If you have questions, need more specific details or if you simply want more information about an area event or location, visit the Chamber website seeeylakechamber.com or seeeyinfo.org or. You can also call the Visitors Center at 406-677-2990. If you are in the area we would love to meet you. Stop in and visit us at the Seeley Lake Historical Museum and Visitors Center, 2990 Highway 83.

*Sincerely,
Your friends at the Seeley Lake
Area Chamber of Commerce*



SPECIAL THANKS

We would like to thank everyone who contributed to the production of this Guide: Chamber Executive Director Lisa Hayhurst; Cartographer Ben Stone; Designer Zoie Koostra; Photographers Leon Kauffman, Juan de Santa Anna, Eric Hayhurst, Kathy Schoendoerfer, Thom Harris, Carrie Sokoloski, Ryan Sokoloski and the Seeley Swan Pathfinder; Writers Carrie Sokoloski, Sarah Wilburn, Chantel Lynch and the Seeley Swan Pathfinder staff; and all of the local Chamber members who advertised in the Guide and support the Chamber throughout the year.

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COVER PHOTO: A view of McDonald Peak in late July from the end of Rice Ridge Road where it turns into Morrell-Clearwater Road. Photo Leon Kauffman

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COMMUNITY DIRECTORY

Emergency

Ambulance, Fire, Police	911
Highway Patrol Dispatch	855-647-3777
Sheriff (non-emergency)	406-258-4810
Seeley Lake Fire Hall	406-677-2400

Government Agencies

Missoula County Animal Control	406-541-7387
Missoula County	
Outdoor Burn Line	406-677-2899
Missoula County Satellite Office	406-258-4847
Montana Department	
of Fish and Wildlife & Parks	406-542-5500
Seeley Lake Post Office	406-677-2474
Seeley Lake Ranger Station	406-677-2233
Seeley Lake Refuse District	406-677-3809
Swan Lake Ranger District	406-837-7500
Road Conditions	511

Libraries

Potomac Library	406-721-2665
Seeley Lake Library	406-677-8995
Swan Valley Library	406-754-2521

Schools

Ovando Elementary School	406-793-5722
Potomac Elementary School	406-244-5581
Seeley Lake Elementary	406-677-2265
Seeley-Swan High School	406-677-2224
Swan Valley Elementary School	406-754-2320
Sunset Elementary School	406-244-5542

Services

Missoula Aging Services/ Seeley Swan Resource	406-541-7688
Seeley Lake Area Chamber of Commerce	406-677-2880
Seeley Lake Cemetery	406-677-3409
Seeley Lake Museum & Visitors Center	406-677-2990
Seeley Lake Senior Citizens Center	406-677-2008
Seeley-Swan Community Food Bank	406-677-5025
Seeley-Swan Medical Center (Partnership)	406-677-2277
Seeley Swan Pharmacy	406-677-8989
Veterans and Families of Seeley Lake	406-677-2543



OUR AREA

WHAT MAKES US SPECIAL

Photo Juan de Santa Anna juansphotography.com
A view of the Swan Range across Seeley Lake

HISTORY OF THE AREA

Long before the railroads, sawmills and ranches reached the Clearwater, Swan and Blackfoot Valleys, these areas were inhabited by Native Americans. Western Montana was home to many different tribes. Their movements are still evident today through the trails that criss-cross our valley floors. One of these trails, near the Gordon Ranch and Holland Lake, is still a popular entry point into the Bob Marshall Wilderness.

The tribes known to inhabit our valleys were the Kootenai Salish (Flathead), Pend d'Oreille (Kalispell), Crow, Shoshone, Gros Ventre, Nez Perce, the Semte'use (Seeley Lake area) and Blackfeet. Their subsistence lifestyle was dependent on a diet of wild game, fish, berries and starchy roots – all plentiful in our valleys.

The late 1800s brought a desire for westward expansion fueled by railroads, timber and ranching. Ranching was king in the Blackfoot while timber ruled the Clearwater and Swan.

Ranches sprung up in the Blackfoot as early as the 1870s. The population throughout the region was growing and in 1889 Montana received statehood. The first school in the area was built near Ovando in 1884.

In the late 1920s Montana's popularity was bringing travelers to enjoy the beauty at lakeside cabins and dude ranches throughout the valleys. Guests from back east were spending their summers at places like the Gordon Ranch in Condon, the Tamaracks Resort and Double Arrow Ranch in Seeley Lake, E Bar L Ranch in Greenough and the Circle W Ranch in the Blackfoot Valley.

After World War II, the country's appetite for wild west adventure increased. Outfitting became more popular as well as excursions into the Flathead Primitive Area (later named the Bob Marshall Wilderness). The trips gave individuals the opportunity to see what life was like in the "Old West." Many of these outfitters are still operating today.

THE TRI VALLEYS

BLACKFOOT VALLEY

Glaciers initially cut the Blackfoot Valley leaving sharp mountains and rolling hills. Water flows westward from neighboring mountains to the Blackfoot River's depths. Ranches can be found on the grassy hills that first inhabited these regions.

Today, ranching and logging are the area's primary industries. Residents are as fiercely independent, resilient and yet welcoming as the first homesteaders who settled in the Blackfoot Valley in the late 1800s.

CLEARWATER VALLEY

Aside from traveling Native Americans, the Clearwater Valley wasn't settled until it was recognized as a valuable lumber resource in the late 1800s. With limited space to ranch and a climate too harsh for farming, the first permanent residents lived a subsistence lifestyle.

Today, it's a modern community that still thrives on logging and recreation. Every summer weekend, you will find the local campgrounds and establishments full of people eager to experience Clearwater Valley's beauty.

SWAN VALLEY

The Swan Valley's rich history began in the late 1800s with those adventurous few who braved the elements. Many fraternized with Native Americans to learn about local resources. Outfitters took eager adventurers into the Mission Mountains and Bob Marshall Wilderness. Outfitter and trapper cabins can still be found throughout the area.

Programs like the Montana Legacy Project have protected the landscape from development. Today, ranching, logging, guiding and recreation are primary businesses.

DISCOVER OUR LAKES

OUR AREA

4

SALMON LAKE

Salmon Lake is a 630-acre lake located 5 miles south of Seeley Lake and is situated along the Clearwater River Chain of Lakes. Resting along Highway 83 between the Mission and Swan Ranges, the lake is home to Salmon Lake State Park and features a campground, swimming beach, day use area and a public boat launch. This popular lake draws recreationists year round and is especially popular for ice fishermen looking for northern pike. Regardless of the season, there's something for everyone.



Ice fishing on Salmon Lake.

Photo Pathfinder

5

SEELEY LAKE

Seeley Lake is arguably the most well-known and visited of the lakes along the Clearwater River Chain of Lakes. The 1,025-acre, glacial lake is surrounded by campsites and provides multiple recreation opportunities for fishing, boating, skiing, paddleboarding and wildlife enthusiasts alike. On the north end, the Clearwater Canoe Trail is a unique canoe and kayak experience that gives guests an up-close opportunity to immerse themselves in our local plants and wildlife.



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Photo Eric Hayhurst

Lisa Hayhurst paddleboarding in early spring on Holland Lake with the Swan Range as the backdrop

1

LAKE ALVA

Lake Alva is located approximately 11 miles north of Seeley Lake. Without housing development, two developed campgrounds (group sites are day-use only due to safety concerns) and "no-wake" speed allowed for motorized watercraft, the 300-acre body of water is a favored location for kayakers, paddleboarders and fishermen. Not only are the views of the Swan Mountains breathtaking, the lake is teeming with perch, rainbow trout and pumpkinseed sunfish. The island on the lake is a designated loon nesting area and is closed to hiking. Visitors can experience the loon's enchanting call and if lucky enough, may even see the magnificent bird.

2

HOLLAND LAKE

Holland Lake rests at the base of the Swan Range in the Flathead National Forest. The crystal clear lake encompasses just over 400 acres and is home to a wide variety of fish species. Guests can take advantage of the campgrounds, a swim beach or relax at the historic Holland Lake Lodge. The scenic Holland Falls National Recreational Trail leads enthusiasts to Holland Falls and also serves as one of the major westerly routes into the Bob Marshall Wilderness.

3

PLACID LAKE

At just over 1,210 acres, Placid Lake is the largest of our area's lakes. The dark blue waters of the arrowhead-shaped lake boasts views of the Swan Range. Placid Lake State Park at the eastern end provides an easy access point for recreation and its broad waters are perfect for a variety of water sports. Many species of fish, from trout to bass, make the lake a popular fishing spot. The lake is fed by Placid Creek to the west and drains into Owl creek, which eventually leads into Salmon Lake and the Chain of Lakes to the east.

EXPLORE OUR UNIQUE PLANTS

Montana is home to many unique plants.

- Fairy Slippers are a member of the Orchid family. The purple and white flowers were named to indicate how delicate they are. If the flower is picked, the roots are so fragile, the whole plant will die.
- The best time to see Glacier Lilies is right as the snow begins to melt. Seeley Lake is known to have an abundance of Glacier Lilies,



Indian Paintbrush Photo Pathfinder

including a white, creme-colored one that doesn't bloom anywhere else in Montana.

- Indian Paintbrush, also known as Prairie-Fire, can be found along the Seeley Lake Canoe Trail. The trail creates the perfect environment for these beautiful, red flowers. From bathing, to medicine, to storytelling, Indian Paintbrush played a very important role in the Native Americans' culture.
- Beargrass looks fluffy and delicate, but don't let it fool you. It's able to withstand freezing temperatures and even live through a late frost after blooming. Beargrass blooms in five to seven year cycles and can grow five feet tall.
- Larch trees are the only deciduous conifer in the area and cover the landscape with yellow in the fall. They shed their needles in fall as a natural way to preserve nutrients. You might get lucky enough to find



Beargrass in full bloom Photo Pathfinder

a larch ball along area lakeshores. The balls are created when waves roll the larch needles together. An incredible phenomenon, where nature uses its own mysterious techniques, to combine two parts of flora to create a new, completely different assembly of nature.

For help in determining a local plant, flower or berry, visit fs.fed.us or fieldguide.mt.gov.

AND WILDLIFE

If you are traveling through our valleys, there are many unique species of animals you might be lucky enough to see. In fact, even some Montanans have yet to experience spotting some of these magnificent animals. Many of them are nocturnal (meaning they are active at night).

A few animals that Montana is known for are grizzly bears, black bears, mountain lions, lynx, bighorn sheep, coyotes, wolves, deer, moose and elk. In addition to eagles, osprey and loons, there are over 200 species of birds. Any opportunity to observe wildlife in their natural habitat is a real privilege.

If you are interested in bird watching, loons are an interesting aquatic bird. Similar in size to a large duck, loons have webbed feet and are great divers. Their feet are positioned

back on their bodies, making it nearly impossible for them to walk. Lake Alva has a small island specifically designated for these unique birds. You cannot go onto the island but, if you bring your binoculars, you can see them from the shore.

It's important to remember that if you're recreating in our valleys, you should avoid contact with wildlife, keep food secured and follow safety guidelines while enjoying the outdoors. Even animals that appear tame are still wild and if they become habituated to humans, they may eventually have to be captured and removed.

To learn more about bears and other predators, including activity in the area visit missoulabears.org/.



Bobcat Photo Ryan Sokoloski

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SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR SUMMER AND WINTER

Although the Tri Valleys are full of adventure and the exciting unknown, we must be aware of the inherent risks and dangers present. Please follow these guidelines to keep yourself safe, protect our wildlife and preserve the area we all love.

Drown your campfire and never leave it unattended. Always use a designated campfire ring. Check fire restrictions in the area you are visiting before lighting a fire. **For more information visit mcfpa.org**



Watch for black bears and grizzly bears. If you encounter a bear, maintain eye contact, back away slowly and leave the area. For more information visit nps.gov/subjects/bears/safety.htm and missoulabears.org



Bear's sense of smell is 2,100 times that of humans. Use bear proof storage containers and keep a clean camp to avoid a visit.

Pack it in, pack it out. Leave nothing behind. Know your area and your abilities so you can safely return from your adventure.

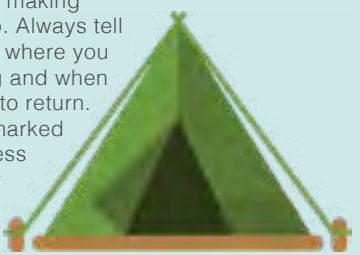


Watch for bear signs while picking berries. Piles of fresh bear scat, tracks and broken branches are all signs bears were in the area.



Carry bear spray and make yourself known. You can talk, sing, whistle, or even have a bell tied onto your bag to let animals know you are coming.

Always travel with water and be prepared to spend the night even if you are making a day trip. Always tell someone where you are going and when you plan to return. Stay on marked trails unless you know the area.



AND WINTER



Check the avalanche reports at missoulaavalanche.org and flatheadavalanche.org before heading into the mountains.



When driving in winter conditions: slow down, avoid overcorrecting or braking too hard, and watch for animals on the road. Be cautious of black ice, especially around shaded corners. Check the road report before leaving and carry survival gear in your vehicle. Call 411 for local road conditions or visit roadreport.mdt.mt.gov/travinfromobile/

Test the ice thickness before going out. Ice is thinner above moving water or springs, something common in the Chain of Lakes. When venturing out on the ice, carry self-rescuing gear. If you fall through, place your arms on the unbroken surface, kick your feet to become parallel with the surface and pull yourself out with ice picks. Lay flat on the ice and roll or crawl away from the hole to keep your weight spread out. If performing an ice rescue, call 911 immediately. Do not approach the hole. Instead reach with an object from shore or throw a rope to the victim so you can pull them to safety.



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FUN FACTS ABOUT OUR COMMUNITIES

POTOMAC

- The pink houses you can see from Highway 200 on the west end of Potomac belong to Mrs. Floyd Cheff. Even after the ranch was sold and reacquired several times, Cheff would always repaint the houses the same pink color.
- On the east end of Hall meadow, on the north side of Highway 200 in Potomac, is a group of ramshackle log buildings that once belonged to the Big Blackfoot Milling Company.
- Potomac's first school was built in 1888. A larger school was built in 1913 and is still used today.

SEELEY LAKE

- The first bridge was built north of Seeley Lake in 1907.
- Seeley is a misspelling of the last name of the town's first resident and the first Forest Service Ranger Jasper Seely.
- Prior to being named Seeley Lake, the lake was called Clearwater Lake and Moose Lake.
- The original townsite was called Corlett and was located at the south end of town near where Morrell Creek and the Clearwater River merge.
- The first modern road was completed from Clearwater Junction to 15 miles north of Seeley Lake in 1952.

OVANDO

- The original proposed town name was supposed to be Sadiesville.
- Melinda Hoyt, sister of Ovando Hoyt, the town's namesake, is credited with bringing in the problematic dandelions that can still be seen around town today.
- Ovando was the home of Blackfoot Telephone, with the first line running to the town of Drummond.
- A devastating wildfire in 1919 burned down a large portion of the town.
- The first school was built in Ovando in 1884.

SWAN VALLEY

- Charles Lindbergh flew into the Swan Valley for a vacation in 1927.
- Bob Marshall made his first epic trip through the wilderness in 1928, emerging near Holland Lake.
- The first schools were built in the Swan Valley in 1918.
- The Blackfoot name for Swan River was "Sweat House River" because of the numerous Kootenai sweathouses along the course of the stream.
- Holland Lake is named after Ben Holland, who's believed to be the first settler between Seeley Lake and Swan Lake. The ranch was later sold to Doc Gordon in 1905, who changed the name to Gordon Ranch.



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PHOTO BY ANDREA DININO

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RECREATION

FUN ACTIVITIES FOR THE OUTDOOR ENTHUSIAST

Photo Pathfinder
Fishermen enjoy the last light on Clearwater Lake.

ALL TERRAIN VEHICLES

ATV riding is an extremely popular pastime around Western Montana. While there are no areas on public land designated for off-road use in our area, all county and Forest Service roads are open to ride from May 1 - Nov. 30, unless closed due to poor road conditions by the Seeley Lake District Ranger. Residents of Montana need to have a registration sticker and a resident trail pass before utilizing trails or public lands. The pass is valid for two calendar years, expiring on Dec. 31 of the second year of purchase. Nonresidents must purchase an annual Nonresident Temporary Use Permit, which is valid for the calendar year Jan. 1 to Dec. 31.

For more information, please visit fwp.mt.gov/activities/off-highway-vehicles. For ATV rides and other events visit seeleyswanatvclub.org/

BACKPACKING

There are many areas in the Clearwater, Swan and Blackfoot Valleys to fulfill your desire to backpack. A great region to start your exploration journey is the Bob Marshall Wilderness. This fascinating and breathtaking land was named in honor of the Wilderness Society cofounder Bob Marshall. The Bob Marshall is a designated protected region that encompasses over 1.5 million acres. It's great for hiking, backpacking and camping.

Go to fs.usda.gov/atmain/flathead/specialplaces to learn more.

Another great backpacking adventure awaits in the Mission Mountains Wilderness. This area is favored by backpackers and other outdoor enthusiasts. The range covers over 73,207 acres that runs through the wilderness area and has more than 11 major peaks. Although many well-traveled trails run through this remarkable wilderness, it still remains home to a variety of wild animals. Remember to practice and enjoy the 'leave no trace' atmosphere in wilderness areas.

For more information on the Mission Mountains Wilderness go to wilderness.net/visit-wilderness and search Mission Mountains.

BEACHES & SWIMMING

The Valleys give beach enthusiasts many areas for fun in the sun. In the Swan Valley, Holland Lake not only offers breathtaking views but also clear, cool water for swimming during the summer months.

The Clearwater Valley has several beach options. For a little peace and quiet, Lake Alva is perfect. With few campsites, no houses, easy access and no-wake designation, it's a peaceful place to swim.

Big Larch, on Seeley Lake's eastern shore, is always a crowd favorite with plenty of space. Seeley Lake's western side has River Point and Seeley Lake Campgrounds, both of which have developed swim, camping and recreation areas.

Further south, Placid Lake State Park operates as both a developed campground with full amenities and a day use site. Salmon Lake State Park is located along Highway 83 and has a marked swim beach with covered picnic tables and facilities.

The Blackfoot River has multiple swimming holes that are easily accessible from fishing sites. Be sure to use caution and read warnings and signage wherever you recreate.

BIKING: MOUNTAIN & ROAD

There are numerous mountain biking trails for cyclists to explore while in the area. Some of the most popular trails include: Rice Ridge, Morrell Falls, South Morrell Trail #30, Town Connector and the Seeley Creek Nordic Trails. In the winter, the 300+ miles of groomed snowmobile trails are also great for riding fat tire bikes.

Named Montana's Community of the Year in 2018, for their collaboration and hospitality to travelers, Ovando is a world-renowned stop on anyone's cycling trip. Ovando has built a reputation by welcoming Tour Divide riders, while they travel through the area on the self-supported 2,745-mile mountain bike race, as well as those traveling the Great Divide Mountain Bike Route and Lewis and Clark Trail.

For more information on the difficulty, location, and other restrictions for trails in the area visit trailforks.com then search Seeley Lake, MT.

Dream

AS BIG AS THE SKIES OF MONTANA

Explore

PLACES YOU THOUGHT ONLY EXISTED IN STORYBOOKS

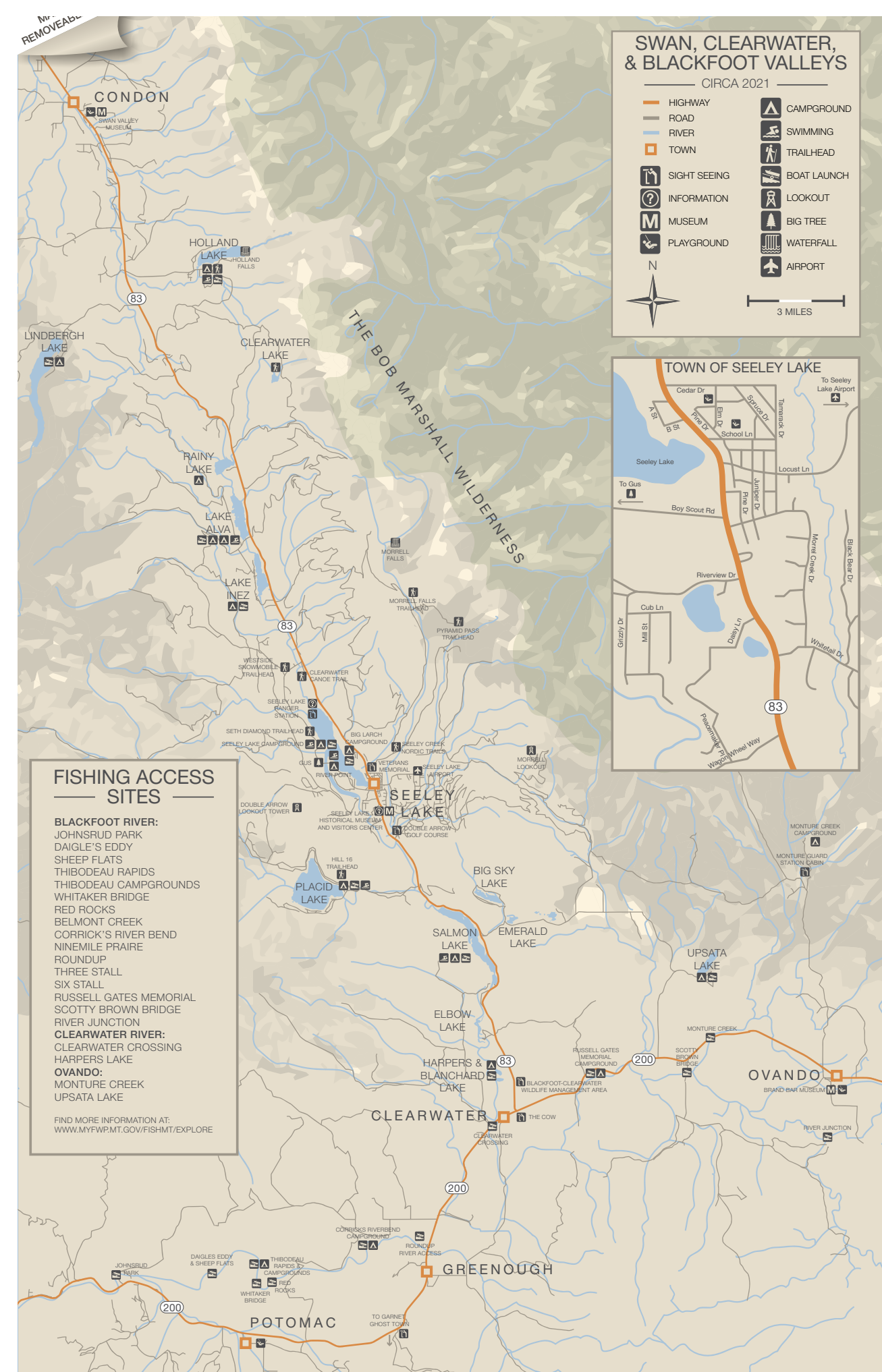
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CAMPING AND CAMPGROUNDS

Nearly a dozen developed campgrounds are dispersed throughout our valleys providing a wide array of camping experiences. These are managed by either the US Forest Service (USFS) or Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP). Fees and amenities vary by campground. USFS campsites are filled on a first-come-first-served basis, except River Point and Lakeside, while FWP campsites must be reserved in advance.

For more information on any of Montana's 55 State Parks, or to book a reservation, visit www.stateparks.mt.gov. USFS campground information can be found at fs.usda.gov.

Forest Service Cabin Rentals

- Double Arrow Lookout (closed for the 2021 season)

- Monture Guard Station
- Mission Lookout Cabin
- Old Condon Ranger Station
- Owl Creek Cabin
- Swan Guard Station

For information about the cabin rental program through the USFS and rentals in the area visit recreation.gov

Forest Service Campgrounds

- Van Lake Campground - 6 dispersed campsites
- Holland Lake Campground - 40 Campsites
- Lindbergh Lake Campground - 11 Campsites
- Rainy Lake Campground - 6 Campsites
- Lake Alva Campground - 41 Campsites

- Lakeside Campground (Lake Alva) - 6 Campsites *Reservation only
- Lake Inez Campground - 6 Campsites
- Big Larch Campground (Seeley Lake) - 48 Campsites
- Seeley Lake Campground - 29 Campsites
- River Point Campground (Seeley Lake) - 27 Campsites *Reservation only
- Monture Creek (Ovando) - 6 Campsites

Fish, Wildlife & Parks Campgrounds

- Salmon Lake State Park - 24 Campsites
- Placid Lake State Park - 40 Campsites

HIKING & WALKING TRAILS

The Tri Valleys have endless hiking trails. Whether you are looking for a nature walk with the family or a challenging hike to the top of a peak, you'll never run out of options. Trails are easily accessed in the summer; and many are groomed in the winter. Dogs should be leashed at the trailheads and are welcome, except at the Seeley Creek Nordic Trails in the winter.

Some of the local favorite hikes in the Tri Valleys include Holland Lake Falls, Glacier Lake, Clearwater Lakes, Morrell Falls, the Canoe Trail and Garnet Ghost Town. The community trail around Boy Scout Road includes the Seth Diamond Trailhead and Girard Grove which leads to Gus, the record-setting larch tree. More adventurous hikers will take on Holland Peak and Pyramid Pass.

For more trail info check out seeleyinfo.org/recreational-opportunity-guides or download a trail app.



A view of the Swan Range from Double Arrow Golf Course

Photo Thom Harris

GOLFING

If you're looking for a great game of golf in an amazing setting, head to the Double Arrow Golf Course in Seeley Lake. The 18-hole course is one of Montana's premiere courses open to the public. Each hole includes three sets of tees to challenge golfers of all abilities. **For more information visit**

doublearrowresort.com/golf-course.

For an indoor, virtual golf experience stop in at Big Dog Dad's Indoor Golf Simulator. Along with offering leagues in the fall and spring, golfers of any level can keep their skills polished during the offseason.

For more information visit bigdogdadsgolf.com.

FISHING IN THE BLACKFOOT

The Blackfoot River is one of Montana's most popular streams for fly-fishing, rafting and floating. The beautiful scenery, coupled with exceptional trout habitat make it a perfect place to fish for Montana's prized brown, bull, cutthroat and rainbow trout. The pristine watershed begins in the Continental Divide from the mountains near Lincoln, and stretches 130 miles to the west in Missoula. There are multiple public fishing access sites along the river. Numerous tributaries, coupled with varying terrain, moderate rapids and deep pools along its route make for a dynamic riverscape. Aside from fish, it provides habitat for a wide array of animals.

Long before modern settlement, the Blackfoot River was a historical route for many Native American tribes, who used it as a travel route to and from their ancestral hunting grounds. The Nez Perce called the Blackfoot River "Cokahalishkit," which means 'river of the road to the buffalo.'

Meriwether Lewis explored the length of the Blackfoot in 1806 as part of the Corps of Discovery. Seaman Creek near Ovando is named after a Newfoundland dog that accompanied the explorers on their journey.



The Blackfoot River

Photo Kathy Schoendoerfer

Around the turn of the last century, the Blackfoot was used as a means to float valuable timber from the forests of the Clearwater and Blackfoot Valleys to the mill in Bonner.

Norman Maclean further added to the Blackfoot's fame and popularity when he wrote his semi-autobiographical novella "A River Runs Through It." It tells the story of his life growing up with his younger

brother Paul, under the strict direction of his father and fly-fishing the Big Blackfoot. Later, in 1992, Robert Redford adapted the book to the screen and released a film. The film romanticizes life in Montana in the early 1900s and only served to entice outdoor enthusiasts to visit the area. The Maclean family still holds one of the first Forest Service leases on Seeley Lake.




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HORSEBACK RIDING

Montana is made for horseback riding. Take a step back from life and come view the big open skies, and take in the wide-eye surrounding wilderness. The Valleys offers two kinds of wilderness experiences with plenty of access for your horses in the Mission Mountains and the Bob Marshall Wildernesses. If you don't have your own horses, you can book your trip of a life-time through a local outfitter.

You are also free to ride on public land if you act "in a safe and responsible manner." When riding through town, something that is legal in Montana, it is common courtesy to stay off sidewalks and clean up any major messes. With very few laws that govern horseback riders in Montana the opportunities are great. However, please be safe, share the trail and have fun.

HUNTING

It's no secret that Montana is a hunter's paradise. There are multiple big game species including black bear, mountain lion, deer and elk. The valleys also provide excellent hunting opportunities for upland game birds such as grouse and turkeys. There are strict regulations with regard to wearing hunter's orange, hunting districts, as well as archery and firearm seasons. The general rifle season runs from mid-October to the end of November.

Check out the Montana hunting regulations for exact dates, other seasons and other important information fwp.mt.gov/hunt/regulations.



Photo Pathfinder
A horse waits for its rider on the Blackfoot-Clearwater Wildlife Management Area



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Photo Carrie Sokoloski

MOTORIZED BOATING & WATERSPORTS

Watersports are a popular Western Montana pastime in the summer. Whether you enjoy water skiing, boating, tubing or if you're just looking for a place to get your boat in the water, we have a great area for it!

Aquatic Invasive Species are a serious concern in Montana. Visitors must have their boats checked at watercraft inspection stations across the state every time. Look for Zebra Mussels and please clean, drain and dry all watercraft and wading accessories.

The major public access boat ramps are:

Swan Valley

- Holland Lake
- Lindbergh Lake

Clearwater Valley

- Big Larch Campground
- Lake Inez
- Placid Lake State Park
- Seeley Lake Campground
- Salmon Lake State Park

The Blackfoot River provides enthusiasts multiple access points along its 130-mile span. **For a full list of points, visit myfwp.mt.gov.fishMT/explore.**



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WINTER RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

CROSS COUNTRY SKIING

Seeley Lake is home to the Seeley Creek Nordic Ski Trails originally built in 1978. The trails are consistently groomed for an optimal skate and classical ski experience. There is a variety of terrain for both experts and beginners with loops starting at 3K. Facilities include a yurt and a pit toilet. Dogs are not allowed on ski trails.

For more information visit seeleylakenordic.org.

Those looking for a more leisurely experience can visit the Double Arrow Golf Course during the winter season. The flat course provides beautiful views of the Swan Range and offers a great workout.

ICE FISHING

Ice fishing is a spectacular experience and a true test of skill.

The best times to ice fish are early morning and late afternoon which are prime feeding times. Overcast days are normally better than sunny days and when ice fishing, you will want to remain quiet to avoid scaring the fish. Salmon Lake is a great ice fishing destination and is popular for its prized northern pike. A few other tips: test the ice thickness prior to going out; carry self-rescuing gear; avoid areas of moving water where the ice is thinner and dress for the weather. **For more information, please visit fwp.mt.gov/fish/ice-fishing**



Randy Teague with a 42 inch, 23 pound northern pike pulled through the ice in the area in 2020.



Photo Pathfinder
Community Ice Skating Rink

SKATING/HOCKEY

Ice skating and hockey are gaining popularity in our area. There are community skating rinks at the Condon Arena, Highway 83, Seeley Lake Elementary School and Lions Club Pond on Elm Drive in Seeley Lake. The annual Seeley Lake Pond Hockey Tournament takes place in January on Seeley Lake. It is always a fan favorite, drawing teams from around the region. **For information search "Seeley Lake Pond Hockey" on Facebook.**

SNOWMOBILING

Snowmobiling is an unforgettable experience here in Montana. The average valley snowfall is over 100 inches annually. From Dec. 1 - April 30 local Forest Service Roads are closed to wheeled vehicles and are converted into over 300 miles of groomed snowmobile trails. All mechanized vehicles need a trail pass to ride on groomed trails. These can be purchased at ols.fwp.mt.gov.

For more information on the groomer's route, area trails and snowmobiling events visit driftriders.org



Snowmobiling from the West Side trailhead.

Photo Pathfinder

SNOWSHOEING

Snowshoeing makes walking on snow, trails and in the backcountry possible during the winter. This easy and family-friendly sport is a must-do winter activity that's bound to leave you with some pretty incredible Montana memories.

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POINTS OF INTEREST

LEARN, EXPLORE AND EXPERIENCE OUR VALLEYS

Photo Leon Kauffman
A barn in the Swan Valley with the Mission Mountains as the backdrop

SEELEY LAKE VISITORS CENTER

The Seeley Lake Historical Museum and Visitors Center is located in the historic Barn on the south end of town. The Visitors Center is a clearinghouse for regional knowledge and the museum features historical displays from the region.

The Barn was built in the winter of 1929-1930. The Stallion Barn was originally located in Trail Creek Meadow (now the Double Arrow Golf Course). It was one of 13 buildings built by business partners Jan Boissevain and Colonel George F. Weisel who then started the Double Arrow Dude Ranch.

The Barn was remodeled in the late 1950s when C.B. and Helen Rich purchased the property to operate

a guest ranch and provide outfitting services. They sold the Ranch in 1966 but continued operating the outfitting business from the old Barn until they moved their operations out to Kozy Korner. The gambrel roof collapsed under the 100-year snow event in the 1997-1998 winter.

Through federal, state, county and local donations and countless hours of volunteer time and commitment, the Barn was moved to its current location north of the Double Arrow Golf Course on Highway 83. It opened as the Seeley Lake Historical Museum and Visitors Center in 2003.

Since the summer of 2015, an average of more than 1,000 visitors

stop at the Visitors Center annually. It is a must stop for information about the Tri Valleys. It offers brochures, maps and a gift shop.

The Visitors Center is staffed by a small number of paid employees, most of whom are connected to the Seeley Lake Historical Society. The staff is an incredible resource to learn about upcoming events, find out what services are available in the area as well as get a local perspective about what to see and do tailored to your activity level and interests.

For more information on the Visitors Center and Museum, visit seeleyinfo.org or call 406-677-2990. Hours vary by the season.

AREA MUSEUMS

BRAND BAR MUSEUM

**314 Main St. | Ovando Town Square
406-793-5685**

Ovando's Brand Bar Museum offers a collection of local history and relics from the town's colorful past. It came about by the hard efforts of Marie McNally, and opened in 1992 and is now run by the Ovando Historical Society. View the collection of local memorabilia, maps of early homesteads or read stories of early area settlers. Spend an afternoon and enjoy a stroll through the past, in this once-bustling, early west cowtown. The grounds are complete with a Hoosgow (jail for visitors).

SEELEY LAKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND MUSEUM

**2920 MT Hwy 83N | Seeley Lake
406-677-2990**

The Seeley Lake Historical Society and Museum is located in the restored Double Arrow Ranch barn. The original horse stalls house themed displays. Visitors can take multiple self-guided tours through each stall. Themes include homesteading, the Big Burn of 1910, old-time logging and the history of local business among others. Outside are additional displays including the furnished 1920s Maloney cabin, Blackfoot Indian lodge, a dugout canoe and more.

SWAN VALLEY MUSEUM

**6774 MT Hwy 83N | Condon
406-754-2745**

The Swan Valley Museum has wonderful displays and interpretive materials for all ages and interests. One of the newest exhibits is a Selish-Ql'ispe Place Names Map featuring Pend d'Oreille Indian names of area landmarks. Other displays include Swan Valley Homesteader Family Trees and the Upper Swan Oral History Project. Also, it's worth visiting the Maki, Whalen and Messerer cabins on site.

HISTORICAL POINTS



Garnet Ghost Town

Photo Pathfinder

DOUBLE ARROW LOOKOUT

Built in 1932, the Double Arrow Lookout offers a panoramic view of the Clearwater Valley and Swan Mountain Range. The Lookout is a 14 x 14 foot structure on a 20 foot pole tower. It was manned in the summers for wildfire detection until the early 1990s when it was removed from the ground detection network. The Forest Service restored it for public use in 2006 and it is also listed on the National Historic Lookout Register.

The Double Arrow Lookout is part of the Forest Service Recreation Cabin Rental program. It can be reserved at recreation.gov. Unfortunately, the Lookout will be closed the summer of 2021 for maintenance. The Forest Service hopes to complete the maintenance in 2021, but it may be closed part/all of the 2022 summer as well.

While you can drive up just for the view, a high-clearance vehicle is recommended in the summer and it is only accessible by snowmobile in the winter. The road is also gated below the Lookout. Unless you have rented the Lookout and have the code for the gate, expect a short hike the rest of the way.

For more information about the Lookout, directions from Seeley Lake and availability visit recreation.gov or call the Seeley Lake Ranger Station at 406-677-2233.

GARNET GHOST TOWN

Take the opportunity to step back in time and visit Montana's best preserved ghost town. In 1897, the townsite was named Garnet for the semi-precious, ruby-colored stone found in the area. The surrounding mountains were also rich in gold-bearing quartz. By January of 1898, Garnet boasted 1,000 residents, a school, four hotels, a doctor's office, 13 saloons and four stores, among other enterprises. Twenty gold mines were in operation at the time.

Today, Garnet Ghost Town offers many opportunities to experience the past. Visitors can take a hike along the Warren Park Trail, Placer Trail or take a self-guided tour on the Sierra Mine Loop Trail. In the Ghost Town itself, learn about the remaining structures and the miners' daily lives. There is also a gift shop and visitor's center for more information and to purchase your own memory in time. Other activities, including panning for gold are offered throughout the summer.

Garnet Ghost Town is located in the Garnet Mountain Range. Turn south on the Garnet Range Road between mile markers 22 and 23 on Highway 200. Follow the signs for approximately 11 miles to Garnet's parking area. Make sure to bring cash for the entry fee.

For more information visit garnetghosttown.org

MONTURE GUARD STATION

The Monture Guard Station Cabin is an old Forest Ranger Station, located on Cottonwood Lakes Road, between Seeley Lake and Ovando. The cabin has been completely remodeled and is available for rent from December 1 to April 14 through recreation.gov. In the summer, the Guard Station is used for backcountry operations on the Seeley Lake Ranger District.

For more information on this cabin visit fs.usda.gov/recrea/lolo/recreation/wintersports/recrea.



Monture Guard Station

Photo Pathfinder



Morrell Lookout

Photo Pathfinder

MORRELL LOOKOUT

Located atop a point near Morrell Peak, the original tower was built in 1921. It's the only actively-staffed fire tower in the valley. A 45-minute drive from the town of Seeley Lake, the views are well-worth the effort and it makes a great day trip. You may even be lucky enough to be invited up for a tour! High-clearance vehicles are recommended. Call the Seeley Lake Ranger District at 406-677-2233 to find out if the road to the lookout is open before making the trip. As road conditions can be unpredictable due to the high elevation even in summer!



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SCENIC VIEWS & PHOTO OPS

4 MORRELL FALLS

If you are looking for a great day trip to a Montana waterfall, there's an amazing hike close to the town of Seeley Lake. The Morrell Falls National Recreational Trail is just 8 miles from Seeley Lake. Taking Morrell Creek Road to West Morrell Road and then Pyramid Pass, will lead you through the burn scar from the 2017 Rice Ridge Fire, to the Morrell Falls trailhead. It's a three-mile hike into the falls and the trail is also open to bikes and horses. The terrain is rolling and the trail ends at the falls. The moderate trail is mostly wooded and is great for hikers of all skill levels. Remember to pack some water and a lunch and don't forget to take time to enjoy the scenery. **For more information visit fs.usda.gov/recarea/lolo.**



Morrell Falls

Photo Pathfinder



Holland Falls

Photo Pathfinder

3 HOLLAND FALLS

Holland Falls National Recreation Trail is located in the Swan Valley near Condon. The trailhead begins at the Holland Lake Campground and meanders around the lakeshore and before emerging at a breathtaking view of the falls. The trail is 1.6 miles long and changes 750 feet in elevation. **For more information on this amazing location visit fs.usda.gov/recarea/flathead/recreation.**

1 THE COW

Near Clearwater Junction, where Highways 200 and 83 intersect, sits a Sinclair gas station Clearwater Stop-N-Go. Out front is a statue of a bull. "The Cow," as it's affectionately referred to by locals, is an important landmark in driving directions. The Cow is also famous because it's featured in Far Cry 5, a video game (rated 17+ for mature audiences), down to every detail including his little Sinclair dinosaur friend. The game includes other familiar landmarks and allows you to explore the surrounding area.

2 GUS

Along with many other attractions, Seeley Lake is home to the world's largest western larch tree named Gus, estimated to be more than 1,000 years old. If you visit in the late fall, you will likely see Gus in a golden yellow/orange stage. Gus is located just down Boy Scout Road in Seeley Lake, you will find a small pull off that leads to the Girard Grove trailhead. After a short walk, you will find yourself at the base of Gus.



Photo Pathfinder

The bull at Clearwater Stop-N-Go, affectionately named 'The Cow.'

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Seeley Lake Museum and Visitor's Center

The museum is "Fostering knowledge and understanding the history in the Seeley Lake area."

The museum is open year round and by appointment.

Hours are posted on our website: SeeleyHistory.org

Visit us on Facebook: [Facebook.com/SeeleyLakeHistoricalSociety/](https://www.facebook.com/SeeleyLakeHistoricalSociety/)

Contact us by email: slhistory@blackfoot.net



2990 Highway 83 N,
Seeley Lake, MT 59868

406-677-2990

The Visitor Center is dedicated to serving the community and visitors with education, guidance and resources for a better understanding of the area, and its opportunities.

Open year round.

Hours and info: SeeleyInfo.org

Calendar of events: SeeleySwanEvents.net

Contact us by email: SeeleyVIC@gmail.com

Cultural Displays - Guides and Information - Gift shop with logo wear, cards, books - Little Free Library



SUMMERTIME SPECIAL EVENTS

- **Loon and Fish Festival:** A celebration of art and nature in the Valleys. alpineartisans.org/special-events
- **Seeley Lake Market:** Sunday farmers and crafters market all summer on the lawn of the Seeley Lake Community Foundation building.
- **Fourth of July Parades:** Seeley Lake, Condon and Ovando.
- **Fourth of July Fireworks:** Seeley Lake and Condon at dusk.
- **Condon O-Mok-See:** Games on horseback July 4, Condon Arena, Highway 83.
- **Seeley Lake Duck Race:** Rubber duck race on the Clearwater River at Wagon Wheel Way bridge, July 4.
- **The Bob Marshall Music Festival:** A weekend of great music, camping and fun. First weekend in August. thebobmusic.com
- **Seeley Lake Challenge Biathlon and Triathlon:** Individual or team biathlon (run, bike, run) or triathlon (swim, bike, run) in August. River Point Campground. trisignup.com/Race/MT/SeeleyLake/YFCSeeleyLakeChallenge
- **Swan Lake Huckleberry Festival:**



Seeley Lake Fourth of July Parade

Photo Pathfinder

Vendors, baking contest, live music and other activities. Swan Lake Day Use Area in August. More information on Facebook

- **Helmville Rodeo:** Labor Day weekend. Helmville Rodeo Grounds. Find the Helmville Rodeo Club on Facebook

- **In the Footsteps of Norman Maclean Literary Festival:** macleanfootsteps.com

- **Tour of the Arts:** Local Studio Tour in mid-October. alpineartisans.org/tour-of-the-arts

For a full list of events visit seeleyswanevents.org.



Condon O-Mok-See

Photo Pathfinder

WINTERTIME SPECIAL EVENTS

- **Ovando's Old West Christmas Fest:** Annual town-wide celebration including a visit from Cowboy Claus, gingerbread house decorating, sleigh rides, Taste of Ovando Cook-off and craft show.
- **Christmas Comes Homes to Potomac:** Sleigh rides, activities, craft fair and a live nativity, Potomac/Greenough Community Center.
- **Frostbite Festival and Holiday Bazaar:** Arts and crafts sale, the best bake sale in the valley and other activities for young and old alike. SwanValleyHistoricalSociety.org
- **Seeley Lake Pond Hockey Tournament:** Draws teams from all over to play pond hockey on Seeley Lake in January. Find Seeley Lake Pond Hockey on Facebook.
- **Seeley Lake Driftriders Snow Ball and Fun Run:** Snowmobilers gather in January for a weekend of fundraising and fun in the snow. driftriders.org/
- **Over Seeley's Creeks and Ridges (OSCR) 10K, 25K & 50K Ski Races:** Last weekend in January, Seeley Creek Nordic Trails. seeleylakenordic.org/events
- **Skiesta:** Classic and skate ski races



The annual OSCR start.

Photo Pathfinder

for all ages, Seeley Creek Nordic Trails seeleylakenordic.org/events

- **Seeley Lake Biathlon** is the only citizens biathlon (ski-shoot) in Montana. Seeley Creek Nordic Trails. seeleylakenordic.org/events

- **Race to the Sky 100-mile and 300-mile Sled Dog Races:** Start in Lincoln the second weekend in February. Both races finish in Seeley Lake. racetothsky.org

- **Snow Joke Half Marathon:** 13.1-mile race around Seeley Lake, last weekend in February. mtsnowjoke.com

For a full list of events visit seeleyswanevents.org.

POINTS OF INTEREST



Cowboy Claus rides into Ovando during Ovando's Old West Christmas Fest.

Photo Pathfinder



- Forest Restoration
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The Blackfoot-Clearwater Wildlife Management Area, locally known as "The Game Range," is located near Clearwater Junction. At nearly 45,000 acres, its primary function is to provide elk and deer winter range. The Game Range is open to motorized vehicles on designated roads and all other non-motorized travel from May 15 - Nov. 10. A limited number of hunting tags and trapping permits are also available. Camping is permitted for a maximum of 16 days and food storage orders must be followed due to bears frequenting the area.



Huckleberries can be found in the area from mid-July through August. Photo Pathfinder

HUCKLEBERRIES

Huckleberries are a Montana delicacy! This purple treat can be found scattered on hillsides and forest floors beginning mid-July. Picking huckleberries is a great pastime for the whole family! When ripe, they turn a blackish purple color. Plants take 3 years to mature so don't be discouraged if you find a plant with no berries - there's bound to be more nearby! The plants are delicate so be gentle when picking.

MOREL MUSHROOMS

Much like a phoenix, morel mushrooms rise from the ashes after wildfires. These mushrooms are often small and have a coral-like pattern. When hiking, you may get lucky and find some. Morels must be cut in half for personal harvest and true morels have a hollow stem. "False morels," a poisonous look-alike, have a solid stem. **Be sure to educate yourself before mushroom hunting by visiting mushroom-appreciation.com**

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE DIRECTORY

POINTS OF INTEREST

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Deer Creek Excavating	406-677-2823	25
Lake Country Builders	406-677-3448	24
Top Notch Tile & Renovations	406-240-5473	35
Dining		
Chicken Coop	406-677-2980	20
Double Arrow Lodge	406-677-2777	19, 36
Pop's Place	406-677-2970	15
Stagline Pizza	406-677-0016	9
The BBQ Pit	406-677-4227	24
The Ice Cream Place	406-677-2090	13
The Filling Station	406-677-2080	10
Lodging		
Double Arrow Lodge	406-677-2777	19, 36
Seeley Swan Vacations	406-677-6600	MAP
Tamaracks Resort	406-677-2433	3, 33
Nonprofits		
Seeley Lake Community Foundation	406-677-3506	NA
Seeley Lake Lions Club	541-921-1809	34
Swan Valley Connections	406-754-3137	14
Upper Swan Valley Historical Society	406-754-2745	33
Professional		
Citizens Alliance Bank	406-677-2464	15
Emily Rindal Insurance	406-677-3090	21
The Johnson Management Group	406-499-2482	NA
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Berkshire Hathaway Properties	406-677-6565	2
Carey Kanavel Clearwater MT Properties	406-880-2335	23

BUSINESS	PHONE #	PAGE # IN GUIDE
Recreation		
Heritage Outdoors	406-304-8271	23
Tamaracks Resort	406-677-2433	3, 33
Services		
1-Stop Convenience Store	406-677-2004	22
Energy Partners	406-677-3656	11
Fat Hippie	406-207-5672	21
Glen's Automotive	406-677-2141	20
Heritage Outdoors	406-304-8271	23
ReMarkable Cleaning Pro	406-529-4497	13
ReMarkable Floral	406-677-3200	22
Sanitation Solutions	406-499-0293	34
Seeley Office Stop	406-677-3838	NA
Seeley Swan Pathfinder	406-677-2022	32
Shopping		
Cory's Valley Market	406-677-2121	30
Deer Country Quilts	406-677-2730	11
Good Times	406-677-2140	30
Grizzly Claw	406-677-0008	29
Rovero's	406-677-2445	12
Seeley Lake Liquor Store	406-677-2492	25
Timber		
Bull Creek Forestry	406-210-4688	32
Visitors Resources		
Seeley Lake Museum & Visitors Center	406-677-2990	31



WE CARE ABOUT SERVING OUR COMMUNITY

- Maintaining and improving The Lions Club Park
- Providing financial aid to students
- Providing free annual children's Easter Egg Hunt
- Providing vision screening for elementary schools
- Providing many other community projects

Want to volunteer or contribute? Send us an email at seeleylakelionsclub@gmail.com

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