



Tobacco Valley
COUNTRY
VISITORS GUIDE
2023-2024

Published by the
Tobacco Valley NEWS



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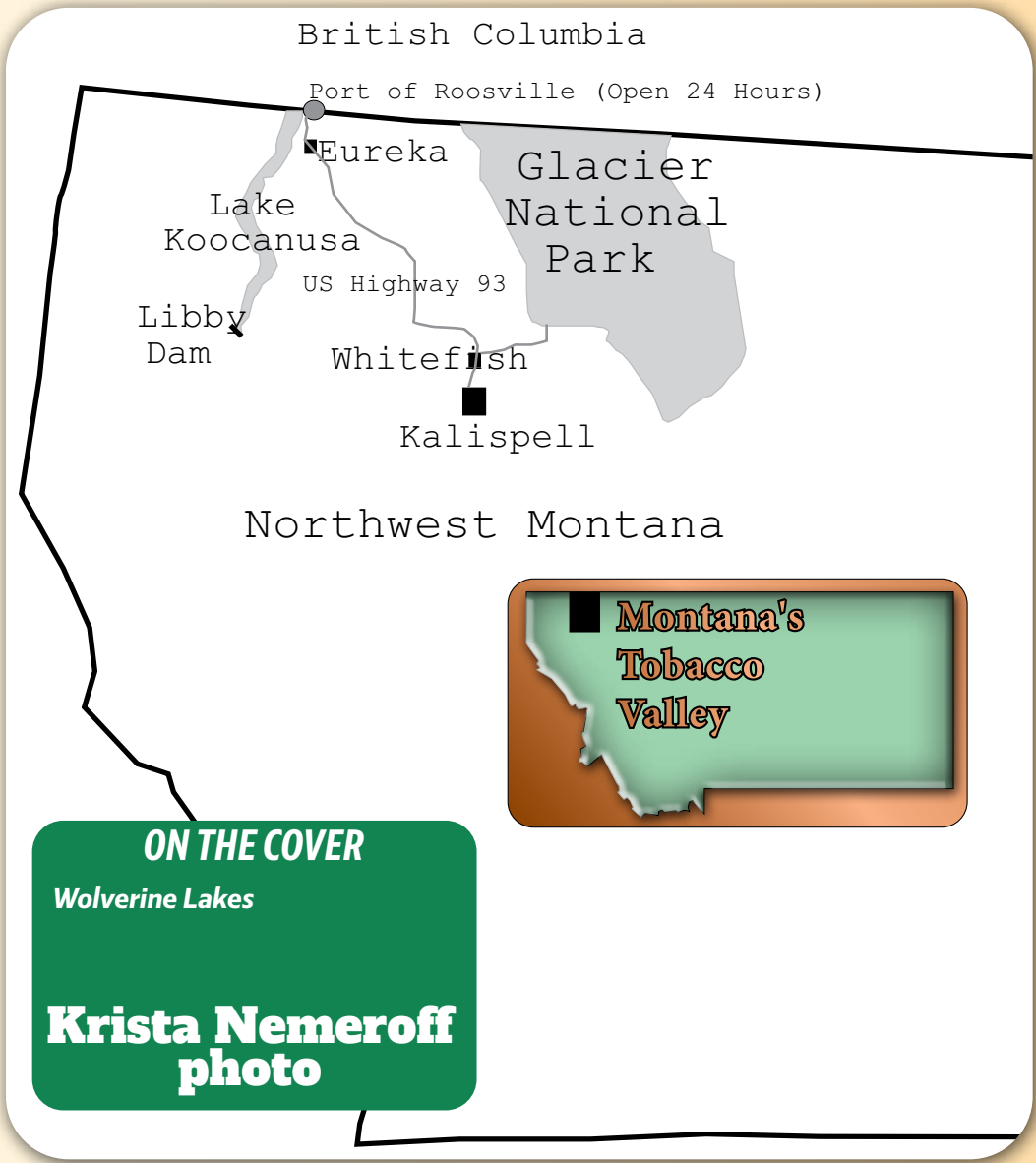
Welcome to Montana's Tobacco Valley Country

Whether true tobacco ever grew in the region now called the Tobacco Valley remains the subject of conjecture. Most attribute the region's English nickname to Canadian explorer David Thompson, who reported that the area's original residents, the Kootenai people, used a smoking plant either found or grown here.

The Tobacco Valley straddles the Canadian border to the north, stretching from the settlement of Stryker in the south to the Whitefish

Mountains in the east and the Purcell Mountains on the western edge.

With many acres of public land available, the area's recreational activities are many and varied. Hunting and fishing remain strong traditions of local residents and draw visitors from around the country. Camping, hiking, paddling and dirt biking or OHV riding are popular too, and opportunities continue to grow with the area's population as others discover the wonders of the Tobacco Valley.



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Randy Miller of Eureka Public Works repaints a sign at the entrance to the town.

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Youngsters splash in the Tobacco River on a warm summer evening.

Emergency Response

Emergency services in the Tobacco Valley are provided by voluntary organizations. Neither the county nor the incorporated towns operate round-the-clock-staffed fire departments or emergency medical services.

In an emergency, dial 911 to reach fire, ambulance or law enforcement.

Most fire and ambulance responders hold day jobs and respond to emergency calls on a voluntary basis.

Three volunteer fire departments serve the valley. The services provide mutual aid to one another as needed, and to wildland fire crews from the U.S. Fire Service.

The Eureka Volunteer Fire Department covers the Town of Eureka and outlying rural areas. Firefighters are alerted to calls by both radio page and a town-wide siren. Listen for the daily 7 p.m. double blast of the siren, which serves as a pager check from dispatch to local emergency responders.

The Trego-Fortine-Stryker Volunteer Fire Department serves the area south of Eureka, including the three unincorporated settlements in its name and the surrounding countryside. It maintains two fire stations.

The West Kootenai Volunteer Fire Department serves the region west of Lake Koocanusa. Some firefighters are trained as emergency medical responders and can take vital signs or offer oxygen on the scene of an emergency until EMTs from the

ambulance service arrive.

Eureka Volunteer Ambulance Service provides emergency medical response to the 500 square service miles of the Tobacco Valley. The service typically transports patients to the nearest hospitals in Whitefish or Kalispell, or can meet with the Kalispell-based medical helicopter ALERT.

EVAS has some members and equipment in the West Kootenai region who when available can respond directly to a scene while an ambulance makes its way the 45 minutes from the barn in Eureka.

The Lincoln County Sheriff's Office responds to emergency calls, conducts patrols and criminal investigations, and handles animal control. The county sheriff is elected by voters. LCSO operates the county jail and a central dispatch center in Libby.

The Town of Eureka maintains its own police department. The police chief is an employee hired by the town.

The Montana Highway Patrol is responsible for traffic safety and crash investigations.

The U.S. Border Patrol patrols the U.S. border with Canada, and may assist other agencies as needed.

The non-emergency number for Eureka Dispatch is 406-297-2121.

The non-emergency number for Lincoln County Sheriff's Office is 406-293-4112.



EMT instructor Syliva Moeller, center, gives a tour of the interior of an ambulance to a group of elementary students.

Annual Events

The Tobacco Valley is never a boring place to be. Any season of the year, a fun event is just around the corner. Given the area's natural beauty, many are outdoor focused.

Kick the year off with the Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club annual ride and fund-raiser. The Ray Peterson Fun Run is held mid-winter and includes a route on the club's groomed trails, followed by dinner and an auction.

The Tobacco Valley Animal Shelter's winter warmer fund-raiser is typically held around Valentines Day each year, with a dinner, auction and contests to enjoy.

Easter weekend egg hunts are held at the Trego Civic Center and the LCHS football field on Sunday.

The last weekend in April is Rendezvous Days, a festival celebrating the arrival of spring.

In May, The Creative Arts Dance Studio holds its spring show.

The Eureka Farmers Market runs Wednesdays through the summer at Memorial Park.

The second Saturday of June brings the Amish Auction, held on the West Kootenai and featuring hand-made wares and chow.

The Tobacco Valley Rodeo held July 21-22, 2023 at the fairgrounds arena attracts talent from all over the state and region with its friendly atmosphere and big purses.

Touted as the "most colorful day of the year," the Eureka Montana Quilt Show takes over downtown with hundreds of quilts on the first Saturday in August.

The Lincoln County Fair includes exhibits, the 4-H dance and livestock auction, vendors, good food and music, and a Saturday night bull-riding spectacle. It's held Aug. 24-27, 2023.

The VFW and American Legion hold a service each Memorial Day and Veteran's Day to commemorate soldiers now gone and the contributions of veterans.

On the Saturday following Thanksgiving, Tobacco Valley proprietors promote "Shop Small," an opportunity to support local small businesses.

The first Friday of December, the Eureka Area Chamber of Commerce hosts a parade of lights, followed by a visit from Santa. The weekend sees dozens of bazaars around the valley which offer holiday shopping from crafters, bakers and artists.



A youngster visits with Santa after the 2022 parade of lights .

Historical Village: A Proud Preservation of Heritage

As travelers cruise into Eureka from the south - or ramble down Dewey Avenue from the north - a lush park greets them adjacent to the Tobacco River, with grassy lawns and picnic tables shaded by stocky trees.

Placed about the park, local historic buildings are windows in time, enticing visitors to peek within. A newly renovated red caboose beckons, a vintage lookout tower observes the scene. A playground swing set tempts the tykes.

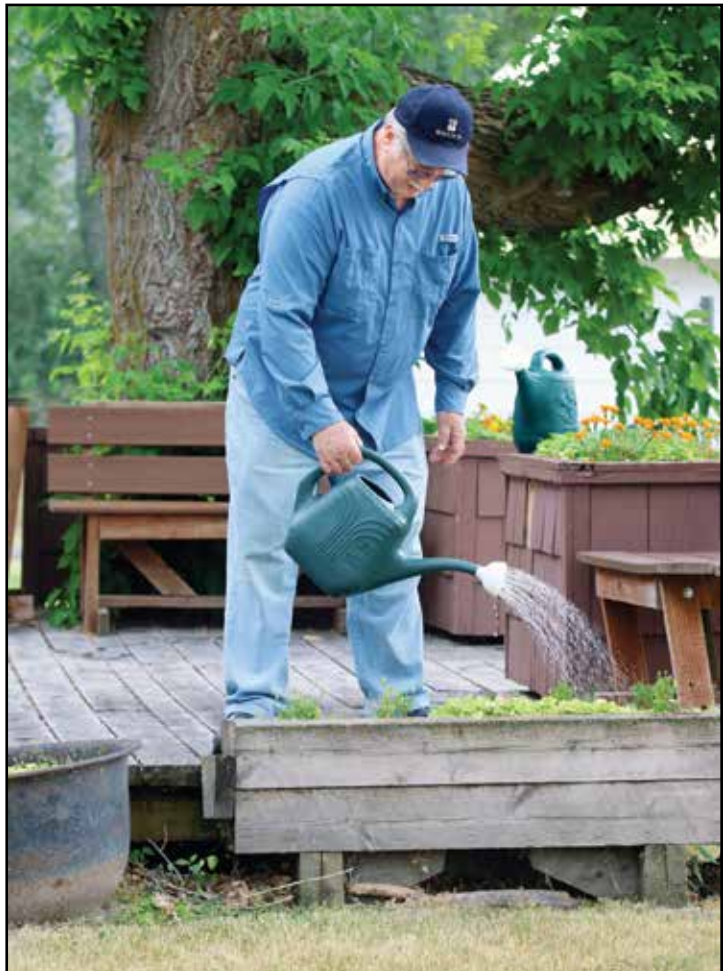
This is the Historical Village, developed and maintained by volunteers and donations for over 50 years.

Some of the village buildings date back to 1890 and include log homesteads, a store from the old Rexford town site that was flooded when Libby Dam was built, a library, a school, a church, and a Forest Service cabin.

The Fewkes Store museum building is staffed between Memorial Day weekend and Labor Day. It is open seven days a week from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. during the summer season. Visitors may take themselves on a self-guided tour through the village to learn how the area was settled, how the native Kootenai people and others moved through the valley, and how the town grew to become present-day Eureka. Each year a new photo exhibit is set up in the library with images pulled from the board's extensive archives.

Near the museum, a sturdy, charismatic box elder tree provides shade during adjacent performances and events.

The Tobacco Valley Board



Volunteer Rick Smith waters the flowers growing on the deck of the Fewkes Store at the Historical Village in Eureka.

of History is the non-profit organization responsible for the upkeep of the village, which requires about \$15,000 per year to keep its lawns green and mowed and its utilities in running order. Then there's the added cost of keeping buildings and boardwalks in good repair. Much of the money for upkeep routinely comes from fund-raisers.

A local quilting group provides a steady trickle of funds. Its members gather at the historic schoolhouse each week in fall

and winter, hand-stitching quilts for a fee with all profits going to maintenance of the village. The quilters also donate some of their work toward local charities.

And then there are the volunteers. People sign up for an hour to repair a door here, a day to clean the buildings there. Some volunteers sign up to staff the museum store on a weekly basis, where visitors may stop by to ask questions, peruse the displays, or shop for local crafts and books.



Hikers descend off of Lake Mountain, located southwest of Eureka between the Tobacco Valley and the North Fork River.

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Summer tours available in and around Libby Dam

Built and run by the Army Corps of Engineers, the massive Libby Dam offers a visitor center with information on fish, floods, and generating electricity, as well as family-friendly displays, videos and a gift shop.

As of press time, campgrounds and outdoor recreation areas near the dam were open, and the visitor center was aiming to open by Memorial Day once again this year.

The visitor center is reached from the west side of the reservoir at 260 Souse Gulch Road. From Eureka, head south on Highway 37, cross the reservoir bridge and continue south on the Forest Development Road for a scenic drive of a little over 30 miles, or take Highway 37 nearly to Libby, then head north a few miles on Road 228. Park rangers warn that the route has little cell reception and suggest enjoying the drive with viewpoints of the dam and wildlife viewing opportunities along the way.

The visitor center is open Wednesday through Sunday for 2023 from June 1 through Sept. 30. Open hours are 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Free guided tours of the dam and power house are offered from the visitor center on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays at 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. Hours may be expanded for July and August, with schedule updates posted on the Libby Dam Facebook page.

Photo identification is required to go on the tour, and those under 18 must be accompanied by an adult.

As a security measure, the top of the dam is closed to visitors. The dam is 422 feet tall and 3,055 feet long, built to withstand an earthquake

of up to 6.5 on the Richter scale with no structural damage.

Souse Gulch Day use area, immediately adjacent to the dam visitor center, offers picnic sites, restrooms, a volleyball court, horseshoe pits, two playgrounds and a disc golf course.

Three group shelters are available for larger picnics. Each shelter has tables, grills and sinks with running water and electricity. Large groups should call the visitor center to schedule a free reservation. Otherwise, the shelters are offered to the public on a first-come, first served basis.

The Souse Gulch boat ramp and visitor parking are available year round. Visitors planning to camp on their boats can make special arrangements for parking vehicles and boat trailers at Souse Gulch by contacting the park rangers at the visitor center. If you are planning to be on the water, remember your life jacket. There is no cell phone reception in the area.

Just below the dam is a wildlife watching area with bald eagles and osprey. A variety of campsites are available in Dunn Creek and Blackwell campgrounds, both located on the Kootenai River downstream of Libby Dam. Some are pull-through sites, each with a fire ring and picnic table, and are free to stay with a 14-day time limit. Each campground has a boat ramp. The Kootenai River downstream of the dam is considered a "Blue Ribbon" trout stream.

If you have questions or need additional information, contact the Libby Dam Visitor Center, 406-293-5577.



Morning light strikes the ridge above Libby Dam.

Annual Amish Auction draws in crowds

Curious visitors and bargain hunters stream to the annual West Kootenai Amish Auction each June for a spectacle of silver-tongued auctioneers holding court against a scenic backdrop of mountain peaks.

The auction is always held the second weekend in June.

Organizers added Friday night bidding in 2022 and will continue as a two-day event for 2023. Bidding gets underway on Friday, June 9 at 6 p.m. and continues Saturday, June 10 at 9 a.m. Saturday's bidding typically wraps up mid-afternoon between 3 p.m. and 4 p.m.

Furniture and quilts anchor the auction, along with second-hand treasures. After a few years without any on offer, cabins are back for 2023. "We are going to have some log cabins again," spokesperson Dan Yoder said.

The auction is adding one large auction tent for 2023, Yoder said.

Handcrafted furniture, antiques, gazebos and birdhouses are typically popular items, as are jew-

el-toned jars of jam, hanging baskets overflowing with blossoms, and garden starts. Amish and visitors alike are welcome to consign items to the auction.

Proceeds from sellers' commissions go to support the community's Mountain View School, which enrolls students in grades one through eight.

The community serves a tasty grilled chicken lunch, as well as baked goods. Food vendors are often on hand to offer other treats including hand-churned ice cream and big sacks of kettlecorn popped on site.

The auction is a scenic 45 minute drive from Eureka, despite being only a few miles across the water as the crow flies. Out of Eureka, head south on Highway 37 and cross Lake Kooconusa at the big bridge. On the west side, head right for a pretty drive north, staying right on West Kootenai Road. Stay with the curve on Whitetail Road and look for signs and parking attendants.

Free parking and camping is available.



Volunteers hoist a bench for sale at the 2022 West Kootenai Amish Auction.

Tobacco Valley Rodeo

The Tobacco Valley has a long tradition of rodeo behind it. And each summer, people keep coming back for more.

With years of rodeo experience behind them, members of the Tobacco Valley Rodeo Association work every year to produce a great traditional rodeo.

This year's event is set for July 21 and July 22 at the Lincoln County Fairgrounds. Rodeo action starts at 8 p.m. both nights. The events include bareback and saddle broncs, bulls, team roping, barrel racing, breakaway roping and others.

The rodeo typically draws competitors and spectators from Canada and across the Northwest. The audience can get in on the fun too with giveaways and spectator games.

The Tobacco Valley's rodeo is known as "The

NRA's richest rodeo," with more money given away than any other event in the association.

Back again this year is the teeter totter bullfight, which involves a four-person teeter totter and a fighting bull that attempts to knock audience volunteers from the teeter totter.

The rodeo association also produces the popular Bull Thing, a high-adrenaline night of bull riding. The event is set to take place during the Lincoln County Fair on Saturday, Aug. 26, 2023 at 7 p.m.

The Bull Thing is sanctioned by the Professional Bull Riders as part of the PBR Challenger Series, with up-and-coming superstar riders matching up against top bulls for a heart-stopping show.

The rodeo arena put on a fresh face in recent years with the additions of a new sky box with six seating units and expanded hillside bleachers.



A contestant competes in the tie down roping at the 2022 rodeo.



Local rider Gerald Eash gets ready for his ride in the 2022 rodeo.



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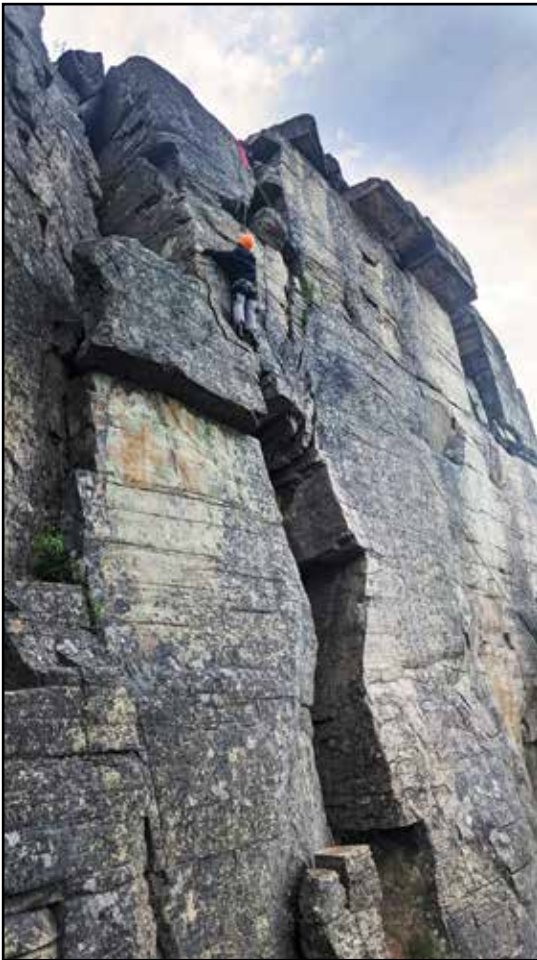


Young rider Lara Cote cools off with a sweet treat.

Climbers can challenge valley's own Stone Hill

With hundreds of routes, solid rock and easy road access, the Stone Hill climbing area south of Eureka on Highway 37 is some of the best climbing in northwest Montana.

The main area is located about three miles south of the Koozanusa bridge. There is an outhouse here, as well as parking on both shoulders of the road. Climbs are located on several tiers both above and below the road. More climbing can be found on the west side of the reservoir.



A climber tackles a route at Moriah's Ledge in the Stone Hill climbing area.

Climbing is on outcroppings of hard metamorphic quartzite. Long finger, hand and off-width cracks promise bloody knuckles, while face climbs full of crimped dime-edge holds guarantee exhausted fingers and forearms. Most climbs are vertical or overhanging.

Room With a View is one of the most dramatic climbs at Stone Hill, located on the south end of a buttress on the west side of the road at the main area. There's an overhang, big exposure and fantastic views of the lake and forest below. Cripple Crack is another classic; the moves are relatively easy but the climb is long. Nearby is Duck Wall, with a handful of easy and moderate routes that are fun to climb, and as a bonus get climbers away from the dust and noise of the highway. About half a mile north of Peck Gulch on the east side of Highway 37 are a handful of beginner climbs above the highway. Advanced routes below the highway can be reached via a new trail from the Peck Gulch boat launch.

And if there's a line for the most popular spots, Stone Hill offers dozens more hidden crags to those ready to explore.

Most routes are set up with a series of permanent bolts for sport climbing, though many crack climbs remain un-bolted or sparsely bolted; the ethos at Stone Hill is not to bolt climbs that can be protected using removable "trad" climbing gear. Most climbs that are visible from the highway have a walk-around top-rope access, though some of the more distant climbs must be led or rappelled into.

The rock at Stone Hill is hard and cleaves into sharp edges. Many top-rope bolts are set back from the lip of the crag, and only a few have chains. A few older bolts of questionable quality are scattered throughout the area. They're mostly recognizable but it's worth checking before clipping in.

Other climbing in the area includes the uniquely eroded canyon of the Stillwater River near Stryker, accessed by a quirky maze of user trails and misleading cairns. The cliffs near Point of Rocks on Highway 93 also offer dozens of routes, many bolted.



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Sophie Lake, located northwest of Eureka, is a popular spot for picnics, swimming, boating, birding, and fishing. An access with a dock is maintained by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks.



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Glacier National Park

Created in 1910, Glacier National Park is a 1 million acre spectacle of nature's most dramatic scenery and wildlife.

Its glaciers are now receding, but the topography of the park still reflects their legacy, from knife-edge ridges to alpine tarns.

The summit of each of Glacier's many peaks is a geological wonder. The sedimentary rock is a billion years old, some of the earth's oldest.

Hikers in the park have access to over 700 miles of backcountry trails.

The popular West Glacier entrance to the park is about a 90-minute drive from Eureka on paved highways.

All visitors need a park pass to enter. For the summer season of 2023, the park is expanding its ticketed vehicle reservation program to more entrances. Construction projects will also be ongoing around the park.

Between May 26 and Sept. 10, reservations are required to drive into the park between 6 a.m. and 3 p.m. on the west side, including Going to the Sun Road entrances and North Fork entrances.

From July 1 to Sept. 10, reservations are required for east side entrances, which expanded for 2023 to also include Many Glacier and Two Medicine.

Four blocks of advance vehicle reservations were released through the winter and spring; another portion of the reservations are held and released 24 hours ahead of time on a rolling basis beginning May 25, 2023.

Visitors arriving on foot or bicycle do not need a day-use entry reservation ticket, but are required to have a pass or pay an entry fee. Details are available on the park website.

A must in Glacier National Park is a popular drive over 50-mile long Going-to-the-Sun Road, completed in 1933. On its journey over Logan Pass, the road takes you into the heart of the park, allowing magnificent views of hanging valleys, waterfalls, majestic peaks and wildlife. The Going-to-the-Sun Road is accessible via the West Glacier or St. Mary entrances.

For an off the beaten path approach, try heading just south of Eureka on Highway 93 and up Grave Creek Road instead. Then veer onto Lewis Creek

Road, which later becomes Trail Creek Road.

This scenic route will take you over the divide to the North Fork of the Flathead River and the western boundary of Glacier. On a clear day, peak views abound. If it's socked in, the twists and bends of the river, framed by the stark silhouettes of burnt snags or regal larch, can be equally compelling.

Four-wheel drive, decent tires and a higher clearance vehicle may come in handy for this bumpy gravel road adventure. Try it in summer only. The road is typically cleared by early July, depending on the previous winter's avalanche activity and subsequent cleanup required.



A hiker takes in a view of Baring Falls, located just east of Logan Pass on Going to the Sun Road in Glacier National Park.

Murray Springs Fish Hatchery

Murray Springs Fish Hatchery raises Gerrard rainbow trout to stock Lake Kooconusa and some two dozen smaller lakes around the area.

The hatchery historically stocked out other species of trout as well, but once it obtained Gerrard brood stock, the risk of accidental interbreeding was too high to keep other strains on the premises.

Murray Springs is the only hatchery source of Gerrards in the United States, hatching out around 1.5 million eggs each year. Spawning takes place in January through March, followed by one round of stocking in the spring and another in the fall.

About 60,000 trout are stocked in Lake Kooconusa each year, and another 45,000 in other small lakes. Those that end up in Lake Kooconusa are

sterile, per an agreement with Canadian biologists to prevent interbreeding with other fish strains upstream in Canada.

The hatchery has become a popular destination for tours. Drop-in tours are offered daily between 10 a.m. and 12 p.m. or between 1 p.m. and 4 p.m., subject to the availability of staff, who must also tend to the fish and facilities. Large groups are asked to schedule tours ahead of time.

All visitors need to follow biosecurity protocols to prevent cross contamination of the fish in the hatchery. Visitors with wet or muddy shoes and clothing aren't able to take tours.

The hatchery is located at 5475 Sophie Lake Rd, about 10 minutes northwest of Eureka. The phone number is 406-889-3489 to inquire about tours.



Hatchery manager Jason Nachtmann transfers fish to tanks for transport to a stocking location.



Crowds flock to Abayance Bay for an open air summer concert.



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Lincoln County Fair

The Lincoln County Fair is held each year in Eureka and is known for its well-kept grounds and family fun. The theme for 2023 is "Red, White and Blue: This Fair is for You." The dates of the fair are set for Aug. 24-27.

The fair is known as a traditional, family-friendly country fair where community members go to meet up with friends and catch up on old times.

The fair offers something of interest for one and all: Delicious food stands, garden and art displays, live entertainment, game and vendor booths, livestock shows and auctions, and a kids carnival.

Kidsville is packed all weekend with children enjoying attractions like bouncy houses and old-fashioned booth games.

The Lincoln County Fairgrounds Fish Pond recently got an upgrade after being dry for years. Now the pond teems with trout, drawing folks of all ages to fish by the shore or hang out in the nearby pavilion.

Friday's evening events include a family night of games like three-legged races, mutton busting, and a chicken scramble at the arena, followed by a family dance at the fish pond pavilion.

Saturday afternoon is the 4-H livestock auction, which fetches generous prices for local animal project participants.

The community garden operates all summer. Much of the produce is donated to the local food pantry.

Saturday night, Aug. 26, the rodeo stands fill with spectators for one of the fair's biggest attractions, The Bull Thing.

The Lincoln County Fairgrounds are found on Osloski Road in Eureka, stretching from the community garden at one end of the grounds to the fishing pond at the other. Grassy lawn is shaded by mature trees around the property.

The fair office contact number is 406-297-3471.

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4-H member Jaxson Flanagan prepares to show his steer in the 2022 livestock show and auction at the Lincoln County Fair.



Children play on the swings at the Historical Village against a colorful backdrop of quilts at the 2022 Eureka Montana Quilt Show.

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See hundreds of quilts at annual show downtown

On the first Saturday of August each summer, the town of Eureka is bedecked in hundreds of quilts for the annual Eureka Montana Quilt Show.

From Memorial Park to the Historical Village, quilts are hung from storefronts on downtown businesses and displayed on frames in parks.

More quilts drape their cheery patterns and hues from the time-honored buildings of the Historical Village, which serves as "Quilt Central" for the event. Shopping, raffles, and displays are set up on the grounds. A special collection of miniature quilts

hangs in one area. Quilting enthusiasts and admirers come from far and wide to stroll the streets and admire the displays.

This year the Eureka Montana Quilt Show is Saturday, Aug. 5, 2023 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The quilt show has been running since 2005.

EMQS is an un-judged show and all quilters are welcome to enter and share their work for everyone to enjoy.

Registration forms for quilts, vendor applications, and more information can be found online at eurekaquiltshow.com.



Volunteers help hang quilts on the front of the Eureka Town Hall ahead of the EMQS.

Sunburst Arts cultural events

Throughout the year, the nonprofit Sunburst Arts and Education brings many arts and cultural events to the Tobacco Valley.

A centerpiece of the Sunburst Arts program is Montana Shakespeare in the Parks, with a free performance staged in the Historical Village each year. Bring a blanket and spread out a picnic for this year's play, "Measure for Measure," to be performed at 6 p.m. on Aug. 22.

An outdoor summer performing arts series is back, with three free events held at Indian Springs Ranch.

This year's lineup includes local musician Connie Frank and the Harp Choir under her direction, playing June 25. That's followed by slide guitarist Dan Dubuque on July 23 and Trego-based Helnore Highwater Band on Aug. 13. All summer series performances begin at 5 p.m.

Throughout the fall and winter months, Sunburst brings a variety of professional performing groups to Eureka to play its performing arts series. The 2023-2024 season will be the 25th incarnation of

the series. On Oct. 26, international duo Tom and Kalissa Landa will perform in three languages on a variety of instruments. Five-piece band Robin Layne and the Rhythm Makers follow on Nov. 11, with a style blurring jazz and folk. Champagne Sunday is set for a show on Jan. 5, bringing a "glam folk" sound. Series alum Rebecca Folsom returns to Eureka for the third time on Feb. 15, this time with back-up singers and a pianist. The series wraps up on March 12 with the Cascade Quartet, the string ensemble of the Great Falls Symphony.

During the school year, Sunburst collaborates with Eureka Public Schools to host the week-long Missoula Children's Theatre residency, with 50 to 60 local students rehearsing and performing a full-scale musical each fall. This year's show is "King Arthur's Quest," rehearsed Nov. 13-17 and performed Nov. 18.

A popular fund-raising event for Sunburst is the Toast of the Town, a wine tasting event held on Sept. 8 this year. A fund-raising walk is held July 1 on the Rails to Trails path along the Tobacco River, featuring live music by local musicians and art displayed among the trees lining the trail.

For more information, visit Sunburst online at www.sunburstarts.org, or call 406-297-0197.

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Actors perform in Eureka as part of the 2022 tour of Montana Shakespeare in the Parks.



Local musicians play for attendees along the Kootenai Trail at Sunburst's annual "Do the Trail" event in 2022.

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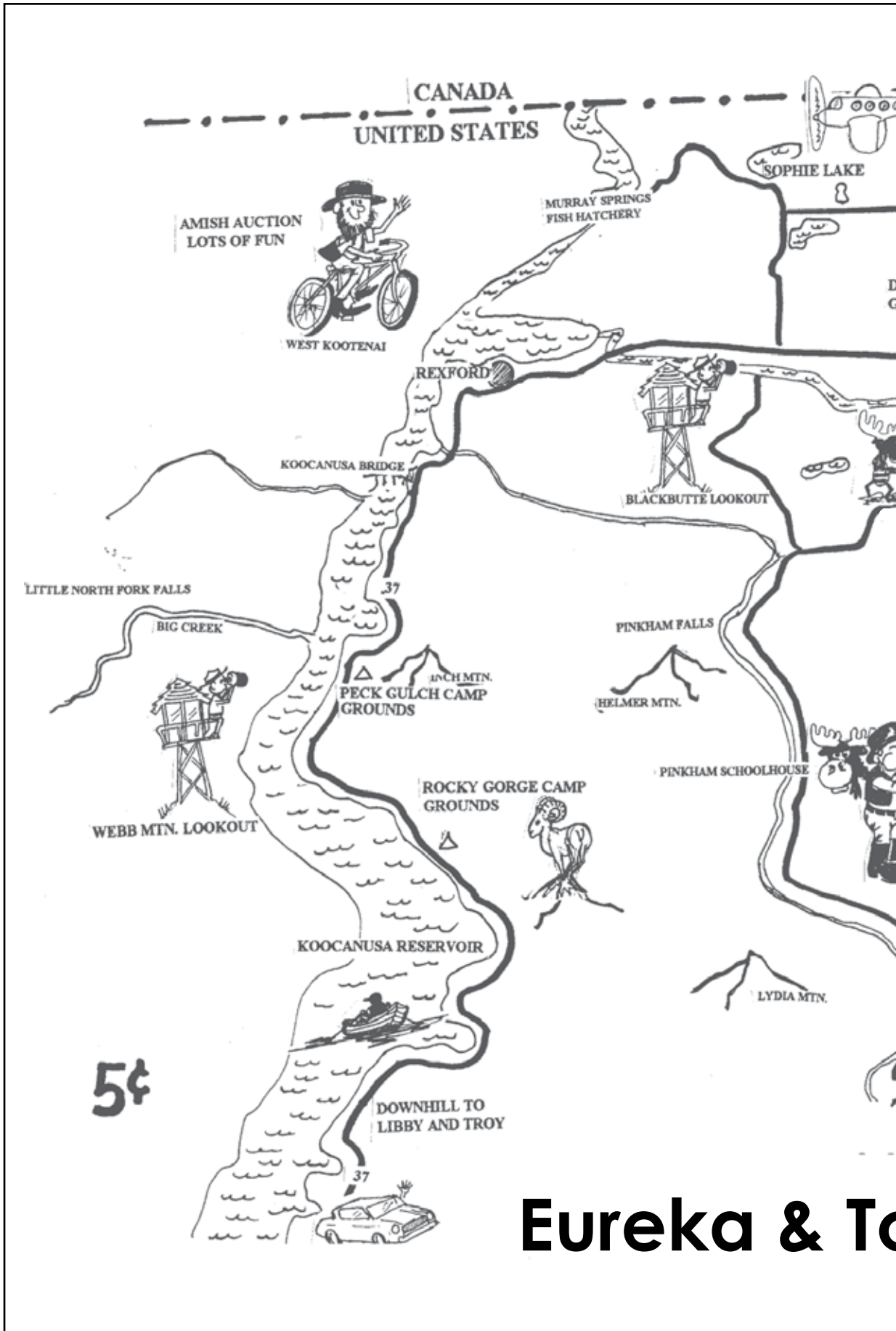
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Eureka & T...



Tobacco Valley Country

Area shown not in actual scale

Rexford Fortine Ranger District

The Eureka Ranger Station is located at 949 Hwy 93 N, Eureka MT 59917. The district, one of four districts in the Kootenai National Forest, encompasses the Whitefish Mountain Range and the Ten Lakes Wilderness Study Area to the east, Lake Koocanusa and part of the Yaak region to the west, and borders Canada to the north. The district's entire northern boundary is contiguous with Canada.

TIDBITS

Office Hours Mon – Fri	8 Am – 4:30 Pm
Telephone	406-296-2536
Forest Home page	https://www.fs.usda.gov/kootenai
Facebook page	https://www.facebook.com/kootenainf/
Reservations	https://www.recreation.gov/

Acreage Information

National Forest System Land	574,300 Acres
Wilderness Study Area	14,945 Acres
Lake Koocanusa	90 Miles long
Total Acreage for the District	613,500

ELEVATIONS

Eureka RS – 2,582 feet
Murphy Lake RS – 3,148 feet
Poorman Mtn. (tallest mtn on District) – 7,832 feet
Stahl Peak – 7,435 feet
Ksanka Peak – 7,497 feet
Webb Mtn. – 5,988 feet
McGuire Mtn. – 6,991 feet
Mt. Marston – 7,343 feet
Lake Koocanusa – 2,459 feet at full pool



Ten Lakes Wilderness Study Area



Lake Koocanusa

MILEAGES FROM EUREKA TO:

Ten Lake WSA – 37.4 miles
US/Canada Border – 14 miles
Rexford – 7.7 miles
Whitefish – 51.2 miles
Kalispell – 64.9 miles
Glacier Nat'l Park – 77.5 miles
Flathead Lake – 74.3 miles
Missoula – 186.1 miles
Libby – 68.7 miles
Spokane – 223.5 miles

Hunting opportunities

The Tobacco Valley area offers a diverse range of hunting opportunities, as Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks biologist Ethan Lula points out.

A bulk of the hunting occurs in the fall, starting with a six-week archery season. That is followed by a five-week general season and nine-day muzzle-loader season. Season length, timing and license requirements vary by species and hunting district.

Hunting seasons, district boundaries, quotas and licensing requirements may change by the year, so hunters should familiarize themselves with and follow the current year's hunting regulations. The latest Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks hunting regulations can be found online.

The Tobacco Valley offers multiple types of game for hunters to choose from. White-tailed deer are the most abundant game in the area and can be found at all elevations. Mule deer are the next largest population of game animals. Due to lower populations, mule deer hunting is limited to antlered bucks.

Elk populations are spread throughout the mountain ranges and migratory elk from British Columbia use the valley during the late winter season.

Black bears are fairly common throughout the valley. The location of bear populations varies based on the availability of that year's forage. Hunting occurs during spring or late fall. Black bear hunting is monitored and harvesting has a 48-hour reporting requirement.

Merriam and Eastern wild turkeys are common in the Tobacco Valley. The population is large enough to support a spring and fall hunting season.

Northwest Montana has excellent mountain lion habitat. Hunting is controlled via a quota and reporting requirement. Hunting occurs primarily during the winter months using hounds.

Gray wolves roam the mountain ranges surrounding the valley. Hunting is monitored with a 24-hour mandatory reporting requirement and inspection.

Ruffed, Spruce and Dusky "Blue" grouse can also be found in the forest areas of the valley.

Due to low populations, moose and bighorn sheep are regulated through limited-draw license. Moose can be found throughout the Salish and Whitefish Mountain ranges.

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White-tailed deer are abundant in the Tobacco Valley.

Ten Lakes Scenic Area has year-round recreation

Way up north, way up high, lies the Ksanka District's scenic showpiece. The Ten Lakes area is a patch of wild country full of alpine lakes, sweeping talus fields, and meadows generously scattered with wildflowers - when they aren't buried under snow.

The vicinity includes both a designated scenic area and a larger wilderness study area, but technically excludes two of its most popular attractions, Big and Little Therriault Lakes. Whatever you call it, the area should not be missed. Hiking, fishing and camping are popular in the Ten Lakes and its environs, as is riding - whether that's on board a horse, a snowmobile, or a mountain bike.

Bluebird Lake is a much-frequented five mile roundtrip. Most of the distance to the lake is a steady climb. Not far from Bluebird Lake, the trail first takes you past Paradise Lake, which sits in a serene series of alpine meadows. A final half-mile trapeze through a stretch of wildflowers practically begs you to settle down for a picnic.

Bluebird Lake itself delivers on the hue promised by its name. Its shores lap at the edge of a prominent headwall, and provide a few choice boulders perfect for sunning or leaping. Listen for the distinctive whistling of the pika, a short-eared relative of the rabbit.

From Bluebird, it's possible to add an extra 1.5 mile scramble to reach the peak of Mt. Ksanka. User trails peter out but a topo map, compass and some common sense will get you there.

The Bluebird-Wolverine Loop is a classic day hike with no shuttle needed. Head up and admire Bluebird, then take the Highline Trail north out of the basin and up a decent climb to a high, grassy shelf below the ridgeline of Green Mountain. Drop off the plateau through dense coniferous forest to the tranquil Wolverine Lakes and the old Border Patrol cabin there, then make a knee-crunching descent down to the road. Catch the mostly flat cut-off trail that returns to the Bluebird parking area to complete the 11 mile trip.

Therriault Pass is easily visible from Highway 93 south of Eureka. The broad groove was once part of a route used by Kootenai tribes to access the plains east of the mountains, and now provides easy access to many of the lakes and trails inside the Ten Lakes area.

A round trip to the pass and back down to the road is a scant three miles. The lower portion passes through lush thimbleberry and nettle, then switchbacks up into huckleberry country.

From the pass, it's possible to drop down the back side to Therriault Lakes, passing unnamed, driftwood-matted potholes en route. A swift trail runner might make the traverse quicker than a driver could creep the all the way around on the dusty, frequently washboarded, single-lane route up Grave Creek road. Or stay right from the pass to mount 7,200-foot Stahl Peak, and check out the views into Glacier National Park and the Canadian Rockies from the white clapboard lookout on top.

Eureka Ranger Station is located on Highway 93 heading north out of Eureka, or may be reached by phone at 406-296-2536. Trail maps are available at the station and online.



Campers set up for dinner at Bluebird Lake.

Trails for biking and running

Eureka offers plenty of opportunities for a melow day trip on foot or bicycle and is a great stopping point for a rest day on a months-long tour.

One easy-to-reach low elevation path for biking, hiking and running is the Kootenai Trail, also known as Rails to Trails. The trailhead is right in town, with a parking area just across the Tobacco River from Riverside Park at the south end of Eureka. The trail follows the river, mostly on former railroad grade. It crosses the river at Pigeon Bridge and continues to the river's outlet where it flows into Lake Koocanusa. From there the trail climbs a short but steep set of switchbacks up a bluff to gain Rexford Bench and reach a Forest Service campground set in the woods. A few more miles of trail follow the edge of the reservoir to the Abayance Bay Marina.

The trail is unpaved. The rail section is mostly gravel, navigable by mountain bikes and hardier touring bikes but less ideal for more lightweight road bikes. Past Pigeon Bridge the surface is mostly dirt.

A loop ride is possible by ducking off the Kootenai Trail at Pigeon Bridge and taking Highway 37 back

to town, using the paved pedestrian-cyclist Ksan-ka Trail on the north side of the highway. A couple miles south on Highway 93's generous shoulders completes the loop. Tack on another mile or two on the Riverwalk, a no-vehicles path that begins at the Historical Village a few hundred yards from the trailhead for the Kootenai Trail.

Indian Springs Ranch maintains several miles of trails, open to walkers, runners, bikers, skiers and dogs. The trails wind along a wooded creek bottom with options to venture up into the drumlin hills above the golf course, and are a great option for a spring walk before higher elevation trails melt out or a quick after work outing.

A campground and trailhead designed for horses is located at Swisher Lake, accessed from Sophie Lake Road north of Eureka. The trails offer unique vegetation and topography, with short out and back trips to the small Swisher Lake or longer loops to the Gateway beach area on Lake Koocanusa and along the border cut.

The Tobacco Valley lies at the intersection of two long routes that are mostly off-road, and is on another two road-based bike touring routes.

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Spring Rendezvous marks the end of winter

Muzzleloaders and musicians, valley residents and visitors alike enjoy Rendezvous Days each spring during the last weekend in April.

Montana and local history combine as the backdrop of the event.

Throughout the weekend Eureka turns into a thriving center of activity. Activities include: A craft and vendor area at the Historical Village, food vendors at Riverside Park, quilt show at the county fairgrounds, "Gold Rush" for children, noon parade, arm wrestling tournament, fun run, keg toss, musical festival and mud bog, among other events.

Many local businesses host their own events and meals during the weekend.

At a black powder shoot north of Eureka, attendees can enjoy the scent of wood smoke and the sound of black powder shooting against the mountain backdrop. The David Thompson Black Powder Shoot draws participants and observers for a weekend of competition and camaraderie. The shoot is held throughout the weekend. Visitors are welcome to watch the contests and tour the primitive camp.

Rendezvous is hosted by the Eureka Area Chamber of Commerce and attracts local residents and visitors from north of the border, throughout the state and across the Northwest. Held every year as a celebration of spring, the Rendezvous is an event no one should miss.

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The 2023 Rendezvous Parade makes its way south along Dewey Avenue through Eureka. Keith Taylor photo.

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A skiff of snow dusts the hills in a swath of state land located above Black Lake, west of Eureka.

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February: Fun Run
March: Family BBQ Fun Run

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Lake Koocanusa

Lake Koocanusa provides a myriad of boating and fishing opportunities. Major launch sites along the lake include Rexford Bench, Abayance Bay Marina, Peck Gulch, Rocky Gorge and Koocanusa Marina. A small boat launch site also provides access near Murray Springs fish hatchery.

In peak summer months, many sun-loving visitors and residents flock to the docks, water toys in tow.

Broad sandy beaches at the northern-U.S. end of the 90-mile-long reservoir are speckled with colorful encampments of beach umbrellas, and waterskiers carve the more sheltered bays.

Launch sites are considerably quieter outside of July and August, left predominantly to year-long residents and anglers.

The fish most sought after in Lake Koocanusa are rainbow trout, kokanee salmon and cutthroat trout. Murray Springs Fish Hatchery raises tens of thousands of rainbow trout annually, stocking Lake Koocanusa and other nearby waters. The trophy Gerrard rainbow trout stocked in Lake Koocanusa

feed on kokanee salmon, reaching sizes of over 20 pounds.

Summer is the busiest time for fishing locally. Lake Koocanusa draws a number of fish-seeking visitors every summer. A fall kokanee snagging season also reels in folks during the fish's spawning run in Koocanusa tributaries like Grave Creek and the Tobacco River.

Of course, even as the ice sets in and the lakes freeze, the fishing doesn't stop. Lake Koocanusa normally doesn't freeze and can be fished through the winter, while other lakes are prime for ice fishing. Sophie Lake, Dickey Lake and Murphy Lake are heavily frequented, as are many tiny lakes hidden throughout the valley.

The Ryan Wagner Memorial ice fishing derby is held each year on Murphy Lake in February, with growing numbers of people spending the day out on the lake and enjoying various contests and activities that occur.

Fishing regulations vary in the Tobacco Valley and visitors are encouraged to get copies.



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WILDFIRE PREVENTION MESSAGE:

- Make sure your campfire is DEAD OUT before leaving your campsite.
- Keep your campfire small and never leave it unattended. Always have a shovel and a bucket of water ready.
- Make sure that trailer chains are secured to your vehicle and will not drag and throw sparks.
- Do not park or drive through dried grass.
- Clear around your home.

DEBRIS BURN REMINDERS & DATES:

December 1- February 28	Burn Season Closed
March 1 – April 30	Spring open burn season (no permit required)
May 1 - June 30	Burn permits required
July 1 – September 30	NO BURNING FIRE SEASON
October 1 – November 30	Fall open burning (no permit)

- Have tools, water, and a clear area around your burn site.
- Never leave a debris burn unattended. Understand how the wind may influence your burn.
- Do NOT burn trash or other household debris.

You are responsible for suppression costs if your debris burn escapes.

Please check the MT/ID Smoke Airshed Group before you burn by logging onto <https://mi.airshedgroup.org/>. Look for restrictions in Airshed 1/NW Montana.

For more information call the Rexford/Fortine Ranger District 406-296-2536.

Chamber Visitor Center

The Eureka Area Chamber of Commerce Visitors Center is open for business in its downtown location in the Eureka Town Hall building.

With an office that houses information on area services and events, the visitors center may surprise even the informed local.

The visitors center is located at 11 Dewey Avenue. Staff is on hand Tuesday and Thursday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and Wednesday from 11 a.m. until 3 p.m. An information kiosk is available in the office vestibule.

The chamber's spotlight fund-raiser and annual community event is the Eureka Rendezvous.

In early December the Chamber hosts a tree lighting ceremony, parade of lights, and visit from Santa in Eureka to kick off the Tobacco Valley's

holiday bazaar weekend. The Chamber also hosts other events such as a golf tournament and a circus.

One of the ongoing ventures sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce is a Farmers Market, held every Wednesday afternoon from June 7 through Sept. 6 at Memorial Park. Local growers sell their veggies, flowers and plants. Other vendors sell crafts, jewelry, jams, bread and baked goods. The county Zero to Five early childhood initiative will set up a station with activities for kids on July 5, Aug. 2 and Aug. 16 this year.


For further information, the Chamber of Commerce Visitors Center may be reached at 406-297-4636 and via the chamber website, welcome2eureka.com.

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A hardy crowd celebrates Independence Day at Indian Springs Ranch in 2022 despite rainy weather.

Golfing the Tobacco Valley

Golfers in the Tobacco Valley have their choice of courses to enjoy, from friendly hometown nine-holers to one of the top-rated golf courses in Montana.

Two resort courses offer a full 18 holes of golf, along with lessons, restaurants, pro shops, homes and building sites, and recreational facilities.

North of Eureka on Highway 93, Indian Springs Ranch offers an 18 hole links-style public golf course, designed to fit into the natural landscape with long, narrow fairways and native grass in the roughs. Open season is April through the end of October, weather permitting. Indian Springs provides 6,600 yards of play and a practice facility with a driving range, golf simulator, putting greens, sand trap and suites to stay on site. Indian Springs welcomes walkers and runners on its trail network year-round, and has hosted community events ranging from July 4 fireworks and festivities to fun runs.

Tucked off of Sophie Lake Road is the Wilder-

ness Club gated community and family resort, with an 18 hole championship course which is open to the public and has earned accolades from the press and local golfers alike. Play is characterized by "gently rolling topography" and sprinkled with attractive pine trees "for an interesting mix of woodland and links-style qualities," according to golf champ and co-designer Nick Faldo.

The course was ranked No. 1 in the state by two different golf magazines, and offers scenic and challenging play on its undulating terrain. Off the course, Wilderness Club members and guests can enjoy its many other amenities.

The Tobacco Valley also boasts two "chip-n-putt" courses, one in Eureka and another in Fortine. The Silverado campground and motel offers nine holes, located near the intersection of Highway 37 and Highway 93 in Eureka, while Jerry's Saloon in Fortine presents a nine hole, par-three course.

Snowmobiling paradise

Once winter blankets the Tobacco Valley with a good snowbase, many roads and trails become winter routes for snowmobilers. The Kootenai National Forest and the Stillwater State Forest offer some of the finest snowmobiling in the state. Whether you like cruising ridgetops and open bowls or prefer to stay on the miles of groomed trails available, you'll find a wide array of snowmobiling options for both the novice and the expert rider.

The snowmobiling season generally runs from mid-December to early April, with variations depending on location and snowfall.

Avalanches are always a risk in high country. Carry a beacon, shovel and probe, know how to use them, and be careful. Check the Flathead Avalanche Center website, www.flatheadavalanche.org, for the latest avalanche report and report any avalanches encountered to the center.

Locally a favorite place to ride is the Birch Creek Recreation Area. This area accesses the high country around the Ten Lakes area.

Take Grave Creek Road and follow it for approximately eight miles until the plowing stops and the

trails begin. Many miles of groomed trails lead to ungroomed backcountry riding.

The Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club maintains many trails and is the host of three events: the Ray Peterson Annual Fun Run, banquet and auction the last week of January, a February open fun run, and a family-focused fun run in March.

Mount Marston and the Stryker Ridge area is another popular destination for snowmobilers. Take Highway 93 to the trailhead about 20 miles south of Eureka. Take the turn to Mount Marston at Stryker, then turn right onto Forest Road 900. The trail takes you over the Whitefish Divide to the groomed Upper Whitefish Lake trail.

Unplowed roads in the Pinkham drainage also attract snowmobilers, who often park at the cattle guard about 15 miles southwest of Eureka on Pinkham Creek Road.

Snowmobile trail maps are available at the Forest Service office in Eureka.

A \$10 state land use permit is required for off-trail riding in the Stillwater State Forest.

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Mountain trails provide great cross country skiing

A handful of groomed trails and plenty of DIY adventures await cross country skiers come winter.

The Tobacco Valley Nordic Club maintains a number of trails and gated roads as conditions allow. The club uses a snowmobile to groom snow and set tracks where possible, and also breaks trail on foot in less accessible locations.

The club often hosts group outings throughout the winter. Updates on trail conditions and recent groomings can be found at tobaccovalleynordic.org, and on the club's social media page.

Early season snow can often be found up Edna Creek or Pinkham Creek at higher elevations.

One popular lollipop loop is nicknamed the Still Creek Loop. It begins at the bridge on the west fork of Pinkham Creek Road, heads up FR 7951, then makes a fun descent down FR 7935 back to the stem of the lollipop a few yards from the bridge.

Virginia Hill offers the 9-kilometer exterior "Orbit Loop" trail, with more interior trails within its boundary. From Pinkham Creek Road, the area is reached from FR 7147-K and FR 7147-E. Near the parking area is an info box stocked with maps.

Gated or unplowed road segments off FR 756 (Therriault Pass Road) are also favorites. Also known as Foothills, the area around the junction of FR 756 and FR 7077 is accessed from Glen Lake Road.

At lower elevations in good snow winters, the

club occasionally sets track on the Indian Springs Ranch golf course.

Tobacco Valley skiing is best suited for skiers who use a classic stride. For skiing in deeper snow, especially when exploring areas where tracks have not been set, a wider ski for flotation with metal edges for control on turns is handy.

Other trail systems in the region include Dog Creek Lodge in Olney, where skiers can pay a fee to ski groomed trails winding through woods and around Dog Lake. At Round Meadow north of Whitefish, skiers have free access to trails groomed weekly. Others include Glacier Nordic Center at Whitefish Lake Golf Course, and cross country ski trails at Whitefish Mountain Resort.

Virtually any closed or unplowed road can make for a snowy adventure on skis. Ask where logging is active any given winter to find out which roads will be plowed, and use them to access snowy country otherwise out of reach.



A volunteer hangs garland in downtown Eureka ahead of the 2022 holiday season.

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Enjoy the Eureka Riverwalk

Eureka's three-acre Riverwalk Park begins on Critter Lane at the south end of town in the Historical Village and winds upstream along the scenic Tobacco River with a series of connected short loops. Flat and paved, the Riverwalk is an accessible stroll for kids, trikes, dogs or wheelchairs.

Along the way, stop at one of the calisthenic stations for a round of crunches or stretches, or pause at one of many well-researched interpretive signs sharing Tobacco Valley stories and natural history. Many original signs were replaced with fresh versions in spring of 2022.

One sign describes the "River Pigs," men who worked for the Eureka Lumber Company, who were responsible for walking out onto log jams in order to break them up. Over 50 million board feet of timber were floated downstream between dams along the Tobacco River before it was diverted to its current channel.

More signs explain the importance of the buffalo, the arrival of the railroad, the introduction of electricity to the valley, and the era when Eureka was known as the Christmas tree capital of the world.

In spring, many songbirds nest in the riparian habitat along the trail, including in some years the veery and the American redstart, both species that are relatively hard to find in northwest Montana. Year round, common birds like black capped chickadees, flickers and song sparrows can be found along the path. Ducks and geese often paddle by on the river, and raptors soar overhead. Beavers and deer are also observed.

Volunteers pitch in to clear leaves and snow from the trail, and to raise money for updates.

All dogs must be on a leash; pick-up bags and a trash can are provided.



Eureka's Riverwalk is popular with bikers, walkers and family dogs.

Events and trails for dirt biking, OHVs & more

The Tobacco Valley and surrounding area holds abundant opportunities for those who enjoy motorized recreation.

There are several organized events with varying levels of competition and skill requirements.

Eureka Dunerunners put on the popular mud bog event at Rendezvous Days every year, and in 2023 have an additional mud bog event scheduled for June 17.

Koocanusa Fundays is a weekend of camping and racing on Lake Koocanusa held in spring, usu-

ally the first weekend in May.

Outside of organized events, people can explore different terrain in the valley. Popular areas around Eureka include Douglas Hill and the sand below the high water mark on the Koocanusa Reservoir.

Stop by the Eureka Ranger Station to get maps and to find out more about places to go, and places that are off limits.

Vehicles must always be road and highway legal to travel on Forest Service or county roads, including up-to-date licensing and working headlights.



Racers soar off a jump in a motocross race held in Eureka in 2021.



Players navigate a disc golf course at the Wilderness Club.

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Border crossing

The international border has become an increasingly vital part of the Tobacco Valley. In recent years, many visitors are Canadians arriving from the north both in summer and winter, and many have second homes in the valley.

Traffic flows north as well, with a number of American tourists on their way to take in the majestic scenes of national parks and hot springs in British Columbia and Alberta.

Beginning on May 12, 2023, visitors to the United States crossing a land border will no longer be required to be vaccinated for Covid, according to the Department of Homeland Security press release.

Canada no longer has Covid testing, vaccination, or quarantine requirements to enter the country via air, land or sea, according to the Canada Border Services Agency.

U.S. citizens need a passport, passport card, or trusted traveler card to re-enter the country via a land border. U.S. children under the age of 16 may return from Canada with a birth certificate. Unless accompanied by both parents, children must have

a notarized letter giving them permission to travel with the named adult.

Declare anything you've acquired while in Canada, whether you think it's significant or not, U.S. Port authorities suggest. Certain agricultural items, especially meats, fruits, vegetables and plants, must be inspected, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection. Adults may bring one liter of alcohol, 200 cigarettes, and 100 cigars for personal use into the U.S. duty-free. Travelers are prohibited from possessing marijuana when crossing the U.S. border.

Proof of citizenship is required for U.S. citizens and permanent residents to enter Canada, according to the CBSA.

Rules on hand guns are very strict in Canada, and there are regulations on fruits, vegetables, and meats crossing the border. Limited quantities of alcohol, tobacco, and other items are allowed tax-free. Transporting cannabis across the border without a permit is a serious criminal offense, according to CBSA.



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Historic cabins are popular back country destinations

Weasel and Wolverine cabins are popular year-round with locals and visitors.

The two-story Weasel Cabin, which is easily accessible just off Grave Creek Road, was built in the early 1950s by the U.S. Forest Service.

Weasel rests in the shade of big old trees along a peacefully babbling Weasel Creek.

To visit the cabin by road, drive about 23 miles up Grave Creek Road until you hit the "Y" at Forest Road 114. From there, just follow the signs.

The more remote Wolverine Cabin was built in the summer of 1943 by Loy West and volunteers. The cabin was built for the Border Patrol during World War II to guard against potential intruders crossing the border, and was also used as a stop-over between Waterton Park and Roosville. To build the cabin, logs were skidded in by horse from as far away as one-half mile.

Wolverine Cabin sits near the Wolverine Lakes, mountain gems shadowed by the ridge joining Green and Poorman Mountains.

Both Wolverine and Weasel cabins are open for public use, free of rent. They are maintained by the Forest Service, and volunteers pitch in as well.

To get to Wolverine Cabin, take Grave Creek Road toward Therriault Lakes. Watch for the Wolverine Trail and follow the signs to the trailhead. The trail is about 2.5 miles of moderate hiking to the cabin and Wolverine Lakes. Backpackers can also access the cabin and lakes via the Highline Trail. The Highline Trail may be reached at a number of points. Kootenai National Forest maps are available at the Eureka Ranger Station north of Eureka on U.S. Highway 93.

A handful of retired fire lookouts are also available to rent for a fee. Spaces fill quickly and may

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be reserved online at [recreation.gov](https://www.recreation.gov). For more information call the Eureka Ranger Station at 406-296-2536.

Each summer the Northwest Montana Forest Fire Lookout Association works in conjunction with

the local USFS district - and districts across the region - to restore old fire lookouts. For 2023, the nonprofit group has two local projects at the lookouts on Mt. Wam and Mt. McGuire.



Volunteers work on a restoration project at the Mt. McGuire lookout in the summer of 2021.

Kootenai National Forest offers recreation aplenty

Located in the northwest corner of the state, the Kootenai National Forest surrounds the Tobacco Valley. The forest is bordered by Canada to the north and Idaho to the west. Its 2.25 million acres offer 35 campgrounds, some of which are open all year.

Over 300,000 acres of backcountry are available to recreationists; permits are not necessary. Hiking is popular in the summer, and snowmobiling is a popular winter activity. Hunting, fishing, horseback riding, mountain biking, and boating are also favorites. A handful of retired fire lookouts are available for rental atop a few remote mountain peaks.

Two major rivers - the Kootenai and the Yaak - flow through the Kootenai National Forest. More than 100 lakes are found within the forest's boundaries. Lake Koocanusa, a 90-mile long reservoir backed up behind Libby Dam, is formed from the Kootenai River.

The Kootenai National Forest includes the Cabi-

net Mountains Wilderness, the Ten Lakes Scenic Area, the Northwest Peaks Scenic Area, and the Ross Creek Scenic Area. Forest and trail maps are available at local ranger stations around the forest. Maps are also posted online.

Two districts in the Tobacco Valley are combined under unified management and staffing. The Fortine and Rexford Districts operate out of the Eureka Ranger Station. As of spring 2023, District Ranger Seth Carbonari says that an effort is underway to formally combine and rename them. Informally, the joint district is often referred to as the Ksanka District.

The front office at the Eureka Ranger Station is open to walk-in traffic for maps and information, and can answer questions via phone at 406-296-2536.

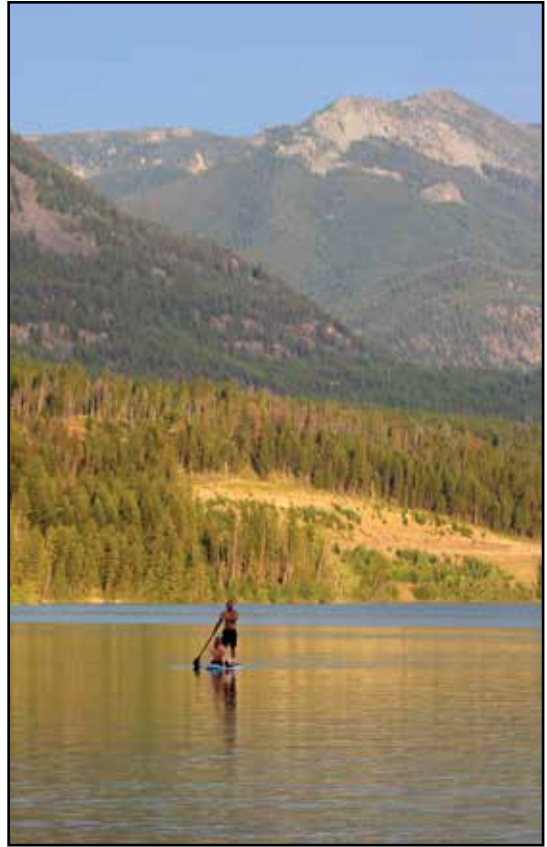
Visitors can reserve a spot in a campground or rent a night atop a mountain by logging onto recreation.gov online. Reservations are recommended during the busy summer months.



Sunrise illuminates the retired fire lookout cabin on Mt. Wam.



Grave Creek tumbles below larch trees turning golden with autumn.



Paddlers drift across Dickey Lake on a warm summer evening.



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