



SURF'S UP DOWNTOWN AT BRENNAN'S WAVE.



## ADVENTURE AT ANY PACE

With the Clark Fork River flowing through town, many rent canoes or kayaks from outfitters such as the Trail Head to explore the scenery. I prefer to cruise around town on a mountain bike. A morning ride along the 3.5-mile Riverfront Trail followed by a leisurely pedal to Missoula's Saturday-morning farmers market for freshly baked scones is a gentle pleasure that never gets old. In the afternoon, why not create your own *A River Runs Through It* moment? (Missoula was a setting in the Norman Maclean novella.) Sign up at the Grizzly Hackle Fly Shop for a half-day outing to discover the area's legendary, trout-rich waters, which include the Blackfoot and Bitterroot rivers. Nestled along the Clark Fork, downtown's Caras Park is a magnet for locals and visitors. Its free summer concert series includes lunchtime performances on Wednesdays and evening shows on Thursdays. Any day of the week, you can watch surfers ride Brennan's Wave, the man-made white-water feature next to the park. On warm summer nights, as the sun slips behind the distant Bitterroots in fiery displays of pink and red, I am reminded of Maclean's words, "Eventually, all things merge into one, and a river runs through it." >>>

### DISCOVER LOCAL BOUNTY AT THE MISSOULA FARMERS' MARKET.



# MISSOULA

A BIG SKY SHINES OVER A VIBRANT DOWNTOWN AND OUTDOOR PARADISE BY MICHAEL HAMILTON

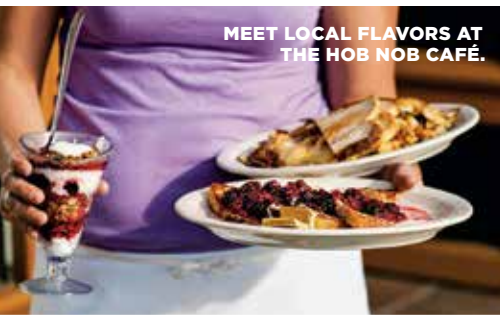
It's nearly 6:30 a.m., and I'm racing a summer sunrise of glowing reds coming up fast behind Mount Sentinel in Missoula, Montana. Looking ahead, I see one more zigzag in the 13 switchbacks that lead up to the giant white concrete "M," a symbol of the University of Montana, on the west face of the mountain. I pause to catch my breath and marvel at the streaks of color smeared like paint across the morning sky. Since 1908, the short (less than a mile), strenuous hike up to the landmark has been a favorite excursion for young and old. I reach the M just as the sun crests the ridge, illuminating the Bitterroot Valley and surrounding snowcapped mountains. Below me, a Mayberry-esque downtown will soon come to life, its cafés, galleries, boutiques, parks and other gathering spaces reflecting a vibrancy shaped by Western traditions, modern sensibilities and a boundless passion for the outdoors.



HEAR TOURING ARTISTS ROCK THE WILMA.

## « BIG SKY BOOGIE

Missoula's music scene is off the charts. You can dance the night away (or just chill) at the summer outdoor concert series at the amphitheater outside **Big Sky Brewing Co.**'s brewpub. This summer's lineup includes Sublime with Rome (July 4), Ben Harper & the Innocent Criminals (July 18), UB40 (July 19), and a two-day music festival headlined by The Decemberists (Aug. 12-13). **The Wilma** theater, which opened as a vaudeville house in 1921, and the new, 4,000-person capacity **KettleHouse Amphitheater**, about 7 miles east of town, bring additional touring acts to the area, while venues such as **Top Hat Lounge**, **The Badlander** and **Monk's** showcase local and regional talent throughout the week.



MEET LOCAL FLAVORS AT THE HOB NOB CAFÉ.



FIND ROOFTOP REVELRY AT PLONK.

## NOSHES AND THEN SOME

**W**ith homemade breads and a menu offering everything from *migas* to sourdough pancakes for breakfast and seared ahi BLTs and veggie Tex-Mex burgers for lunch, the cozy **Hob Nob Café** is a great place to sample the town's eclectic tastes. ● Barbecue is good anytime, right? **The Notorious P.I.G. BBQ** serves tender, smoky ribs, succulent pulled pork, brisket, sandwiches and classic sides for lunch and dinner. Ask for extra napkins. ● At **Plonk** wine bar and bistro, the long, curved bar and stylish décor make you feel as though you've walked into a Manhattan hot spot. ● **The Depot Bar & Restaurant** satisfies with hand-cut steaks and hearty chicken and seafood entrees. ● There's a reason why the lines are so long at **Big Dipper Ice Cream**. The shop's homemade selections, in tantalizing flavors such as green tea, maple walnut and vanilla-Reese's, among others, are a perfect dessert any time of day.

### FIND 'EM

#### TASTE

**Big Dipper Ice Cream**  
631 S. Higgins  
406.543.5722, bigdippericecream.com.

**The Depot Bar & Restaurant**  
201 W. Railroad St.  
406.728.7007, depotmissoula.com.

**Hob Nob Café**  
531 S. Higgins Ave.  
406.541.4622, hobnobhobnoghiggins.com.

**The Notorious P.I.G. BBQ**  
247 W. Front St.  
406.926.1344, thenotoriouspigbbq.com.

**Plonk**  
322 N. Higgins Ave.  
406.926.1791, plonkwine.com.

#### EXPLORE:

**Grizzly Hackle Fly Shop**  
215 W. Front St.  
406.721.8996, grizzlyhackle.com.

**Missoula Bicycle Works**  
708 S. Higgins Ave.  
406.721.6525 (rentals available),  
missoulabicycleworks.com.

**Missoula Farmers' Market**  
N. Higgins Ave. at E. Alder St.  
Open Tues. eves/Sat. mornings  
406.274.3042,  
missoulafarmersmarket.com.

**The Trail Head**  
221 E. Front St.  
406.543.6966, trailheadmontana.net.

#### LISTEN

**The Badlander**  
208 Ryman St.  
facebook.com/thebadlandermisoula.

**Big Sky Brewing Co.**  
5417 Trumpeter Way  
406.549.2777, bigskybrew.com.

**KettleHouse Amphitheater**  
605 Cold Smoke Lane, Bonner  
406.830.4640,  
kettlehouseamphitheater.com.

**Monk's**  
221 Ryman St.  
406.549.0439, monksbart.com.

**Top Hat Lounge**  
134 W. Front St.  
406.830.4640, tophatlounge.com.

**The Wilma**  
131 S. Higgins Ave.  
406.830.4640, thewilma.com.

#### STAY

**DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Missoula-Edgewater**  
100 Madison St.  
406.728.3100,  
missoulaedgewater.doubletree.com.

**Holiday Inn Missoula Downtown**  
200 S. Pattee St.  
406.721.8550, holidayinn.com. 