

# Vacationing under the big sky

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In an obscure land lies Lone Mountain Peak. It soars into the Montana sky at 11, 166 feet, and towers over the tiny community of Big Sky. This remote area is home to the Big Sky Ski Resort that was built in the 1970's by the late news broadcaster Chet Huntley. It also houses the newly built Moonlight Basin Resort. The small town of Big Sky has grown to be one of Montana's most sought out year-round playground for recreationists. During the summer months, Big Sky is a golfer's paradise, a fly fisher's sanctuary and a whitewater rafter's dream.

As the temperature drops and winter emerges, strap on a set of snowskis and tear up the softest powder on one of 220 ski trails. Of course if Lone Mountain is too difficult of an undertaking, then hop on a snowmobile and take a nice and peaceful trip through the scenic trails of the Gallatin National Forest. Gallatin National Forest spans across 1. 8 million acres of land and includes six mountain ranges. As anyone can see, whether travelers are looking for a summer or winter destination, Big Sky Montana offers many fun-filled activities to meet everyone's needs.

In the beginning Big Sky was not the hotspot it is today. The U. S. obtained the territory that is now the State of Montana with the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. During this time the territory was home to twelve Indian tribes, the Blackfeet, the Crow, and the Sioux just to name a few. The Indians called this territory " the first best place" and to them the land was very sacred. In the late 1890s, homesteaders began to settle in this area which prompted the U. S. and the Tribal Nations to construct a treaty creating what we know today as Indian reservations.

In 1902, Augustus Franklin Crail, a small time rancher set up his homestead in what is now called Big Sky's Meadow. After this, Big Sky was known as home to a small group of ranchers. In 1973, retired NBC newscaster Chet Huntley opened Big Sky Resort, and finally saw his dream come to life. Unfortunately, Huntley died of lung cancer in 1974 and never got to see its full potential. After his death, Boyne USA Resorts purchased the ski mountain and soon after Big Sky began to develop into what it is today.

In 1995, Big Sky Resort built the Lone Peak Tram, escalating Big Sky's vertical drop to 4, 180 feet. In 2003, Moonlight Basin Resort opened its doors on the North side of Lone Peak. This resort was built to cater to adults seeking a rejuvenating getaway. In 2006, the two resorts partnered up to offer the Lone Peak Ticket, creating the biggest skiing area in America which is a total of, 5, 512 acres. Today, Big Sky's year-round population only adds up to about 2, 200 residents. The ski mountain attracts 400 more seasonal residents in the winter, plus thousands of travelers from all over the world.

As a result of the partnership and one of the largest ski areas around, the slopes are seldom crowded and Big Sky maintains its genuine small-town vibe. As the summer months approach and Big Sky thaws out the land comes to life. The summer season starts in June and ends in September. This is the best time to see the state's historical, cultural and sightseeing attractions. Yellowstone National Park is a great choice for a passionate photographer looking for the next amazing shot. The park is swarming with an array of wildlife and astonishing natural features such as geysers and hot springs.

In addition to sightseeing Big Sky offers many activities for the outdoor enthusiast. First go horseback riding in the fresh air through the Gallatin Valley. And then, jump on a mountain bike and navigate down one of many treacherous trails at Moonlight Basin. Next, take a chair lift ride through the tree tops to one of the three zip lines sure to thrill the adrenaline junky. Finally, take a swing at one of the three challenging golf courses designed by professional golfers. As far as Big Sky fishing the possibilities are endless.

Madison and Gallatin Rivers sustain populations of Cutthroat, Rainbow, Brown and Brook trout as well as native Montana White Fish and Arctic Grayling. The Gallatin River also presents the most challenging rapids for the eager kayaker or whitewater rafter. When the snow falls, Big Sky flourishes. Skiers and snowboarders flock to Big Sky to shred up the largest area of ski terrain in North America. Skiing and snowboarding are Big Sky's most popular winter activity. Altogether, Big Sky Resort and Moonlight Basin offer 5, 512 acres, 220 ski runs, and 4, 350 vertical feet, of accessible ski terrain.

The twenty-six lifts are capable of moving 35, 000 people per hour, but usually only carry about 2, 500 riders per day. As a result there is no such thing as long waits in line at the lifts. For the kids at heart, Big Sky recently added an area to zip down a 500-foot run on a sled-like inner tube. In addition, explore hundreds of miles of trails in Big Sky and nearby areas via a snowmobile. There is a 120-mile trail designated just for this between Bozeman and West Yellowstone called the Big Sky Snowmobile Trail.

On this ride you will see incredible snow covered mountain vistas and a wide variety of wildlife. Another popular form of transportation is a horse-drawn

sleigh. Whether it is a romantic dinner for two or a relaxing outing with the whole family, the enchantment of a horse-drawn sleigh ride is sure to be an unforgettable one. Journey through and discover Yellowstone National Park by way of a snowmobile, snow coach, ski, or snowshoe. Most of the wildlife and geothermal sites are still active in Yellowstone during the winter months. However, tourists are few and far between.

The parks wide variety of wildlife roams freely through the winter wonderland. Another site to be seen is when boiling water from one of the many hot springs breaks through the frozen surface hissing steam into the cold winter air. Winter in Yellowstone is spectacular, making it a surprisingly picturesque time to visit. Over the past forty years, Big Sky Montana has grown from a small ski town into a frequently sought out vacation destination. With the endless list of both summer and winter activities who could deny the fact that Big Sky is an awesome place to visit?

In short, Big Sky Montana started out as one man's dream and has flourished into one of the most desirable vacation destinations.

## **Annotated Bibliography**

- All Trips: Big Sky Montana. All Trips, 1995/2012. Web. 28 Aug. 2012

This website is a tell all guide for prospective vacationers looking to explore Big Sky Montana. It describes in depth the area's geographical statistics such as maps, elevation, and general location. It also lists recreational activities for the spring, summer and winter months like: hiking, fishing, skiing, snowmobiling, horseback riding, and sightseeing in Yellowstone National Park.

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It describes lodging at Big Sky Resort, and Moonlight Basin Resort, and also mentions the local entertainment and dining options. The site has many links to other related websites that would also be helpful in exploring the area. This website is a very reliable and helpful resource for writing my essay. It gave me the information I needed to accurately describe what Big Sky Montana has to offer to vacationers.

- Big Sky Montana. org. N. p. , n. d. Web. 28 Aug. 2012

This website is a guide to exploring the remote area of Big Sky Montana. It provides you with all the necessary information pertinent to the area like the terrain, including the details of the mountains surrounding the area. It lists and gives a brief description of all the activities, lodging, local entertainment, and current events. The main page also has a link to look for vacancy at all the local resorts and hotels. It is a one stop place to answer all your questions about vacationing in Big Sky Montana. This website is a very reliable and helpful resource for writing my essay. It gave me the information I needed for my essay to accurately describe what the small town of Big Sky Montana has to offer to its vacationers.

- Juneau, Denise. " Indian Education for All: Montana Indians - Their History and Location. " Montana Office of Public Instruction, April 2009. Web. 5 Oct 2012

This eighty-three page pamphlet was published as an educational tool by the State of Montana's Public Instruction Office for use in Montana's public schools. It discusses in length the history, culture and traditions of each of the twelve Montana Indian tribes. It explains the changes that have occurred

since the treaty between the U. S. and Tribal Nations which formed the Indian reservations that are still there today.

Lastly it lists chronologically each major event that impacted the Indian tribes. This list starts in 1972 with Montana legislature adopting a new article stating that the State recognizes the unique cultural heritage of the American Indian, and committing to its educational goalsto the preservation of their cultural heritage. This article supplied the facts on needed for my essay about the history of the territory which is now the State of Montana.