

Barr Suggestions:

Rapid City to Whitefish to Chicago

What follows are a few routes and places that anyone going from the MTFCI Tour in Rapid City, SD to the MTFCA Tour in Whitefish, MT might want experience. Not sure it will take you a whole week, but you can improvise on the way. I have also included some suggestions for getting from Whitefish to Chicago using the Montana 200-I90 route that we normally take when visiting Montana.

Yellowstone Park Route (415 miles): Head west on I90 towards Spearfish where you have two options if you want to visit Devils Tower: Take exit 23 for SD 34 W towards Whitewood and continue onto WY-24 W to Devils Tower National Monument (104 miles). Or, stay on I90 to Sundance, WY and take exit 185 toward WY-116, turn right on US-14 W, and turn right again on WY-24 E to Devils Tower (107 miles). The first route will be slower with less interstate.

On to Sheridan, WY for a late lunch. Head back to I90 and go west for 128 miles. You are now about 148 miles from Cody, WY where I suggest you quit for the evening so you have a full day to get through Yellowstone Park.

ON to Cody: There are two routes to Cody. I would take the Northern route via US-14, US-14 Alt W (closed in the winter), US-310 through Lovell and Powell (where my father's family fist homestead after leaving NY), and finally US-14 again into Cody. The Southern route is about the same distance, but it follows US-14 W all of the way and is pretty boring.

After enjoying Buffalo Bill's town for the evening. Get ready for the climb into Yellowstone Park. The plan is to drive through Yellowstone Park to West Yellowstone, MT via a northern route (133 miles, but slow). Take US-14 W for 78 miles and you are in Yellowstone. Take Grand Loop Road right, Norris Canyon Road left, Grand Loop Road left, and turn right at the W entrance road taking you to West Yellowstone. If you have time, take the Model T back into the park to see the sights like they did in the past. Spend the night in West Yellowstone and explore some more the next day, but make sure you get back to West Yellowstone by 3 PM so you can pack up and head to Bozeman, MT. Don't miss going back into the Yellowstone cauldron and West Thumb. It is only 48 miles and not that mountainous.

On to Bozeman, MT via US-191 down the Gallatin River Canyon (89 miles). Take your time, it is beautiful here. Turn right at Four Corners and head into Bozeman for the evening. This is where John and Mary Ellen (from Kalispell) went to college, met, and decided to get married. Our son David was born in Bozeman, went to college here and met his wife Karen (also from Kalispell). The campus is a nice spot to walk around, and there are a number of restaurants down town that are fun.

Custer Battlefield Route: Take the same routes though Devils Tower National Monument but take your time and plan on spending the night in Sheridan, WY (267 miles). A nice cowboy town on the high plains, and only 73 miles from Custer Battlefield.

Leave early so you can make it for the 10AM Battle Talk and movie. You should plan on leaving the park no later than 1PM and heading west to Bozeman, MT via I90. You will go past Billings (largest city in MT), Big Timber (Chet Huntley ranch), and Livingston. Nice drive with some of it along the Yellowstone River. Watch for antelope. Lots of motels and hotels in Bozeman. See above for a little on Bozeman. You might want to take the T out and drive a ways up Gallatin Canyon or up to Hyalite Reservoir if you have time and want to stay a little longer.

On to Helena, MT: State capitol of Montana and home of Last Chance Gulch (120 miles). Two stops on the way: Missouri River Headwaters State Park and Lewis and Clark Caverns. Head West on I90 (it goes all the way to Seattle so get used to it) to Three Forks, MT and the Headwaters State Park. Leaving Three Forks, take MT-2 W along the Jefferson River to Lewis and Clark Caverns. The Jefferson, Madison and Gallatin Rivers are the three forks of the Missouri River. Continue on US-2 W from the caverns and turn right on MT-69 N towards Boulder, MT. If you get in trouble here John's best friend from high school lives down the road in Whitehall, MT. Follow I15 N into Helena, MT. Find nice hotel, drop the T, and take some time to visit some of the old areas of town. Some nice Victorian houses and mansions.

On to Missoula, MT: We are getting close, but spend some time in Missoula and the Bitterroot Valley (114 miles). Leaving Helena, take US-12 W up and over the continental divide to Garrison, MT. This is a great motorcycle road, but a steep climb (four lane) with a trailer. If you want, you can head south on I90 to Deer Lodge and visit the old Montana State Prison Museum and have lunch. Head west on I90 (we will say good-bye to I90 in Missoula) to Missoula. Missoula is where John was a professor of Computer Science at the University of Montana, Mary Ellen started her teaching career, and David graduated from high school. If you want to see where we suffered the Montana winters, visit our old house at 810 Continental Way. While there, spend some time in one of the brew pubs down town.

Day trips around Missoula:

Bitterroot Valley – Head south on US93 all the way to Darby (64 miles). John's dad delivered fuel oil from Cut Bank, MT to the Rocky Mountain Laboratory (this is where they discovered Rocky Mountain spotted fever) during the 40's. Ted Turner's ranch is also down this way. I would also recommend heading up Lolo Canyon to the hot springs if you have time. Another great motorcycle road.

Seeley-Swan Area (62 miles): Head west on MT-200 E and turn left at MT-83 N. The Bob Marshall wilderness area is just northwest of Seeley Lake. Lunch here and you go further north and turn around when it is time to head home. You may notice rafters floating down the river along MT 200.

On to Whitefish, MT: You are only 136 miles from Whitefish. The most direct route is straight (the road isn't, but you get the idea) north on US93. There was some

construction here last year, but it may be over now. We are going to tour some of this route on the MTFCA tour, but there is a great vista of the Mission mountains just as you come down the hill into St. Ignatius that I will always remember. The alternate route is to take US200 W to MT-83N via the Seeley-Swan valley (160 miles). Some beautiful views on this route as well.

Just before you get to Whitefish you will pass through Kalispell, MT. Mary Ellen was born and raised in Kalispell and so was our daughter-in-law. David, Karen and the grand children live in Kalispell and Mary Ellen's Dad is still there as well. We should have the grand children with us July 31 and August 1, but won't have them on the tour as we don't have room for them. We will spend most of the week with them before the tour.

Hiking Alternative: For those that like to hike in the mountains, you may want to just head for the Kalispell/Whitefish area and plan on spending a couple of days in the park hiking. There will not be time for hiking while on the MTFCA tour. Our favorite places to hike are Avalanche Lake (4-5 hours), the summit and start of the garden wall (2-3 hours), and the Many Glacier area. You could easily spend 3 days in Glacier Park.

Coming Back Home to the Chicago Area

Whitefish to Lewistown (325 miles): Note that when you get to Lewistown you are halfway across Montana as Lewistown is the geographic center of Montana. Take US2 E to Browning. We usually leave early and have breakfast in East Glacier (81 miles). You can visit the East Glacier Park Lodge, but I would recommend breakfast in town along US-2. Take US 89 S out of Browning and then I15 into Great Falls. Malmstrom AFB is here and it was the center of the Minuteman Missile defense system installed while we were in high school. Take US-87/US-89/MT-200 S to Lewistown. John was born in Great Falls while his family was living in Stanford, MT. Our 1910 Model T was purchased by Forrest Mack who lived in Great Falls.

Utica and Yogo Sapphire Village Side Trip (extra 25 miles): Turn right on MT-541 in Windham (about 10 miles south of Stanford, MT). When you get to Utica (10 miles) turn right on Pigeon Road into Utica. You can stop at the museum if you want, but take the time to drive up to the site of the Yogo Sapphire Mine (now Sapphire Village). Our 1910 Model T was modified into a grocery delivery truck to serve the Yogo Sapphire Mine area out of Utica. Roads were not as nice then. This is also Charlie Russell country.

John's Dad grew up in Hobson, MT and John's Mom grew up in Kolin, MT (on the other side of US-87/89. John's family lived in Stanford from 1946-1953 when they moved to Lewistown where John graduated from high school in 1965. Other than being the typical teenager with wheels (not always legal) who knew most of the police department, one of John's fond memories is being part of the club that started the King Kam Drag Strip just north of Lewistown. Of course I raced a motorcycle.

Stay overnight in Lewistown at the Super 8, Mountain View, B&B, or the Yogo Inn (pricey). The Central Montana Fair was the last weekend in July so it should not be that crowded. Super 8 is best. Make sure you have dinner at the Mint Bar and if you want breakfast, the Empire Café is a good place.

Lewistown, MT to Dickinson, ND (344 miles) or Bismarck, ND (441 miles): We usually make to Bismarck or farther in the M5, but with a trailer, Bismarck may be the limit. Bismarck is still 800 miles from Chicago, which can be done in one day, but it is a long haul. In any case, take US-87 S to Grass Range (this is where my 1929 Dodge started out owned by a country school teacher) and take MT-200 E all the way to Glendive, MT where you join up with I94. We usually stay at Holiday Inn Express in Dickenson, Bismarck, or St. Cloud, MN. Pace yourself for a long drive home.

You won't see many other cars between Grass Range and Jordan, MT, so make sure you manage your gas consumption well. Winnett (where John's grandparents homestead), Jordan and Circle are your only stops for 230 miles. MT-200 is a nice two lane highway that is the shortest route home.

Alternate Route Home: There are two alternates routes you can take to get from Whitefish to Chicago area: One is to go South and pick-up I90 (1,723 miles). If you take I94 instead of I90 out of Billings it is 1,689 miles. The other route is the high line (US-2 across Montana) and going by Fort Peck Dam down to Glendive to connect with I94 (1,552 miles). The route I have planned in only 1, 559 miles, but there is a long stretch between Grass Range and Glendive where you need to watch your gas consumption.

Note: This is a first draft. Let me know if you have questions.

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